

Friday, 31 July 2015

Call for Corangamite MP Sarah Henderson to protect penalty rates for Geelong and Colac workers

ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver led a rally outside the office of Corangamite MP Sarah Henderson today calling for her to take action to protect penalty rates for thousands of workers in the Geelong, Colac and Surf Coast regions.

Unions have written to Ms Henderson asking her to come out publicly in support of penalty rates but have not received any response.

Thousands of workers in Ms Henderson's electorate, including nurses, waiters, security guards, retail staff and cleaners rely on penalty rates to make ends meet and as compensation for giving up precious time with family to work on weekends and late nights.

These Geelong, Colac and Surf Coast residents deserve the support of their local MP.

In just three days, around 500 local residents have signed a petition delivered to Ms Henderson's office at the rally calling on the Corangamite MP to:

- Ask the Prime Minister and her Parliamentary colleagues to withdraw the Fair Work Amendment Bill that would allow employers to pressure employees to trade away penalty rates on unfair individual contracts
- Amend the terms of reference of the Abbott Government's Productivity Commission inquiry into workplace relations to exclude any consideration of cutting penalty rates
- Make a submission supporting penalty rates to the review of modern awards currently underway in the Fair Work Commission
- Legislate to protect penalty rates

Today's rally is part of a local campaign by Australian Unions to 'Save Our Weekend' and protect penalty rates.

Local weekend workers including nurses, paramedics, cleaners and hospitality staff will be door knocking homes, holding rallies and community events throughout the region to encourage people to support the campaign and help protect their wages.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver:

"Cutting penalty rates would be a sudden pay cut for thousands of people in Geelong, Colac and the Surf Coast. These workers need an MP who is going to stand up for them and protect their wages and rights at work."

"The Abbott Government is working hand in glove with business groups to cut penalty rates and lower take home pays - Sarah Henderson needs to put the interests of workers in her electorate first and come out publicly in support of penalty rates."

"The Geelong region has already been hit hard by job losses in the refinery and auto industries - the last thing the local economy needs is for thousands of people to have their penalty rates cut leaving them with less money to spend in local businesses."

"The truth is that cutting penalty rates has nothing to do with job creation or productivity - it is about cutting people's pay packets."

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