

Wednesday, February 6th, 2013

All parties must commit to preserving the weekend and tackling insecure work

The ACTU has called on all parties to ensure that they make secure jobs an election issue and to enshrine penalty rates in law to preserve the weekend for Australian workers.

Speaking at the National Press Club in Canberra today, ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver also called for an “entitlement portability” scheme to ensure workers in insecure work had access to sick leave and annual leave.

Mr Oliver said the union movement would make its push for secure jobs a major part of its campaigning this year, up to and beyond the Federal Election.

“Finding a solution for the rise of insecure work, and its effects on workers, families and communities should be a priority for all political parties,” Mr Oliver said.

“40 per cent of Australians are in insecure work of some kind and many are not able to access sick leave, carers leave or annual leave.”

“These workers are often low-paid and need these entitlements to cope with family emergencies.”

Mr Oliver said that the union movement would campaign for a system of portable entitlements to ensure that workers in insecure work were able to benefit from sick leave and annual leave.

“We believe that the decent wages and entitlements that have made Australian jobs the best jobs in the world need to be defended.

“The union movement does not accept it is necessary or desirable to transfer risk on to the shoulders of workers.”

“In many parts of the construction industry, entitlements travel with workers from job to job, and there is no reason why this cannot be extended to other sectors.”

Mr Oliver said that all political parties needed to commit to enshrining penalty rates in law to ensure that workers required to work week-ends were adequately compensated.

“Week-end work is often necessary, but there should be recognition that weekend workers sacrifice time with friends and family, and penalty rates provide that.”

“That’s why we’ll be asking the government to enshrine penalty rates for weekends and public holidays in legislation, and protect them forever.”

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