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ACTU welcomes first steps towards right to request part-time work but calls for further protections for working mothers

ACTU President Ged Kearney said she welcomed the Prime Minister's focus on issues faced by working mothers but more was needed to ensure genuine rights were achieved.

"We welcome today's announcement on the right to request part-time or flexible work for mothers returning from maternity leave," Ms Kearney said.

"This is a good first step towards achieving a fairer working environment for working mothers but the Prime Minister must go further to ensure these rights are meaningful."

"Parents' and carers' right to request family-friendly work hours should be backed up with a dispute resolution procedure, otherwise employers can simply say that they do not offer part-time work.

"We know that not all employers are in a position to offer part-time work, but those that are should be required to genuinely consider requests from workers."

"The right to request should also be extended for all workers with caring responsibilities, whether for children, adults with disability or frail and elderly parents."

Ms Kearney said the Prime Minister's announcement that she will increase protections against sudden changes of rosters and hours is another positive step, but again an appeals process was needed.

"Sudden and unreasonable roster changes can play havoc with childcare arrangements and cause huge disruption to families."

"Employer refusal of family friendly working arrangements is one of the leading reasons that women are over represented in insecure work."

"Workers should not have to choose between work and caring responsibilities. As our population ages more and more workers, particularly women, will also be carers. Finding a balance between work and family responsibilities is one of our key challenges as a society."

Ms Kearney said the majority of OECD countries had a right to request part-time work, including access to independent dispute resolution.

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