

Tuesday, 30 April 2013

Abbott shows true colours on penalty rates

Tony Abbott needs to be honest with workers about whether he will get rid of penalty rates if elected, the ACTU said today.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said Mr Abbott had been caught out telling a community forum in South Australia that a Coalition Government might back applications to Fair Work Australia to change penalty rates.

“Mr Abbott has been trying to avoid scrutiny of the Coalition’s IR policy, but remarks like this show that a Coalition government would put penalty rates at risk,” Ms Kearney said.

“The Coalition needs to spell out exactly what it plans to do to penalty rates if elected, so workers have a clear choice.

“Removing penalty rates would be a pay cut for 500,000 workers,” Ms Kearney said.

“With millions of Australian workers in insecure forms of work, penalty rates are more important than ever for casual and low-paid workers struggling to pay the bills.”

“Working late nights or week-ends is still a sacrifice for workers, particularly those with families and penalty rates must remain to reflect this.”

“It is a huge concern for workers that Mr Abbott appears to be backing the big employer groups and their war on penalty rates.”

Ms Kearney said that a recent bid by major employers to remove penalty rates had been rejected by the Fair Work Commission, which found employers did not have evidence to back up their claims.

“The Fair Work Commission also found that a high proportion of workers in retail, food and accommodation were low paid and had a high reliance on their pay being set by awards, which include penalty rates,” Ms Kearney said.

“The union movement will continue to fight this push by employers to get rid of penalty rates because it will take money from the pockets of some of Australia’s lowest-paid workers.”

“The Government has promised to enshrine penalty rates in law, to give workers greater certainty, Mr Abbott needs to match this commitment.

“Tony Abbott appears to think that the only way to create jobs is to slash pay and conditions for workers. He forgets that the money low-paid workers get in penalty rates goes straight back into the economy.”

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