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Abbott's workplace review: unions warn of dangers to penalty rates, unfair dismissal, overtime

A national television ad campaign starting today highlights the risks to work conditions like penalty rates, overtime and unfair dismissal this federal election.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said that while the Coalition did not want to talk about Industrial Relations, the fine print of its IR policy coupled with its promised review of the Fair Work Act meant conditions were at risk.

"We know what the business agenda is: abolish penalty rates, cut wages, introduce individual contracts, make it harder for workers to bargain collectively and make it easier to sack people in the name of flexibility," Ms Kearney said.

"Tony Abbott is trying to have a bob each way by saying to business: 'don't worry, we'll review it all after the election.'

"We are calling on the Coalition to release the terms of reference of the proposed inquiry so we know what's in and what's out.

"We know that when he had the opportunity, Tony Abbott voted against enshrining penalty rates in laws. If penalty rates aren't up for grabs, then why won't he rule them out of the inquiry?"

"We also want certainty on unfair dismissal laws and exactly what Tony Abbott's revised Individual Flexibility Agreements will look like."

Ms Kearney said that while unions didn't have the same resources as big business, they do have a network of committed members who will fight any attempts to wind back work rights.

Unions have recently completed telephone surveys of 120,000 union members nation-wide, identifying 25,000 activists ready to take part in election campaigning over the next four weeks.

The surveys showed that top issues of concern for union members nationally include cost of living, job security and rights at work.

"The biggest threat to cost of living is the threat of having your pay packet cut – through losing penalty rates or overtime," said Ms Kearney.

The TV ads will start screening tonight at 6pm in Sydney, Victoria and Tasmania in programs including Australia's Got Talent, the X Factor, The Project and Big Brother. Ads focusing on Campbell Newman's public sector cuts will screen in Queensland.

MEDIA ALERT: ACTU President Ged Kearney will launch the TV ad campaign in Brisbane today at 11am, Bowen Park, Brisbane.

View the National ad here: <http://youtu.be/G2brZAK1KSs>

View the Qld ad here: <http://youtu.be/hNdwgRvppfw>

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