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## Income and job security biggest election issues for working people

Australian workers are worried about paying their bills and keeping their jobs as they head into the federal election, the biggest ever survey of union members has found.

The ACTU has undertaken a record 102,000 telephone surveys of workers across a range of industries including nurses, construction workers, public servants, teachers, factory workers and tradespeople over the past 14 weeks to talk about election issues.

Across all states, cost of living (20.6 percent) and 'job security and protecting rights at work' (16.3 percent) were the issues considered most important. The next most important issues were health and education, while asylum seeker policy barely rated.

"Clearly, Australian workers are under the pump on cost of living but they're also very worried about hanging on to their jobs and protecting their rights at work," said ACTU President Ged Kearney.

"Issues like protecting overtime and penalty rate payments, protection against unfair dismissal and the threat of job cuts go right to the heart of these concerns.

"When working people think about 'economic management' this election, they are thinking about the way the parties' policies will impact on their income security and their jobs.

"We know people also care deeply about access strong public services like health and education – people are concerned about how they will be funded and whether we'll see cuts or investment."

There was variation by state, with 'job security and protecting rights at work' nominated as the number one issue in both Tasmania and Queensland – states that are experiencing above-average unemployment.

Protecting manufacturing jobs rated significantly more highly in South Australia (8.9 percent), home of the struggling auto manufacturing industry, than in other states.

The survey public sector workers were more worried about job security and work rights heading into the election than private sector workers.

Union members were particularly focused on issues affecting their industries, with teachers concerned about the impact on education of funding promises by the parties and manufacturing workers worried about how government policy would support manufacturing jobs.

Some issues dominating the political agenda, like asylum seeker policy, barely rated among union members – with only 2.1 percent nationally nominating border security as the most important issue.

"These days there is enormous pressure on the people's working lives," said Ms Kearney.

"Jobs are becoming casualised, outsourced and off-shored, we're seeing job cuts in the public and private sector while business is continually campaigning to further wind back conditions like penalty rates.

"The message from working people to politicians this election is clear: invest in jobs and services; don't attack our wages and work rights."

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(Key findings attached)

Key findings:

- Cost of living and 'job security and protecting rights at work' were the biggest concerns across all states, with 'job security and protecting rights at work' the number one issue in Queensland and Tasmania.
- Cost of living concerns were higher in Sydney (22.6 percent) than Melbourne (18.7 percent) or Brisbane (20.8 percent).
- The region with the greatest concern about job security and work rights was Central Queensland (24.3 percent)
- Public sector workers (19.6 percent) were more likely to nominate job security and work rights as their top concern heading into the election than private sector workers (14.6 percent).
- White and pink collar workers were more likely to rate health and education as top election concerns than blue collar workers, who were more concerned about party leadership, taxes and protecting manufacturing jobs.
- Overall, superannuation was considered a more important election issue than either border protection or balancing the federal budget.
- Strongest support for protecting manufacturing jobs as the top election issue was in South Australia (8.9 percent) where it was rated the third most important issue.