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Rising unemployment shows Abbott needs to put jobs first

Unemployment figures showing the jobless rate at a four-year high of 5.8 per cent show that the new government must make jobs its priority, the ACTU said today.

ACTU president Ged Kearney said the Coalition Government needed to avoid austerity policies and cuts which would put jobs at risk.

“These figures show the difficulties faced by workers especially those in casual or short-term work who are worried about job security,” Ms Kearney said.

“With unemployment rising, the last thing that Australian workers need is for the new Prime Minister to start cutting jobs or removing assistance to industry.”

“Mr Abbott needs to focus on jobs. This is not the time to be cutting public service jobs, industry support and infrastructure.

“It’s definitely not the time to be pulling funding from critical industries like auto manufacturing. With Holden’s future in Australia in the balance the Coalition must immediately review its plan to cut \$500 million in co-investment funding for car manufacturers.”

Ms Kearney said the figures showed a drop in both full-time and part-time employment as well as in the total number of people in work or looking for work. They also showed that youth unemployment rose to 17.3 per cent, its highest level since 2010.

“The rise in unemployment should not be used by business groups as an excuse to attack wages and conditions such as penalty rates,” Ms Kearney said.

“Taking money out of workers’ pockets will simply take customers away from businesses and do nothing to increase employment.”

“While Australia is still a strong economy, we need to look at how we improve productivity in the long-term.

“This involves education and training, especially apprenticeships for young people, investment in infrastructure and new technology and real efforts to engage with workers.”

“Taking the low-road of reducing wages and conditions or pushing workers on to individual contracts will do nothing to keep Australia competitive in the long-term.”

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