

Saturday, 2 November 2013

Workers should be worried about Abbott's changes to Fair Work Commission

The Abbott Government's attempt to introduce an appeals body to amend decisions made by the Fair Work Commission is another attempt to strip back workers' rights, the ACTU said today.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said media reports today made it clear that the Abbott Government wanted to reduce the FWC's power to stand up for workers, and make it easier for employers to push through bids to cut wages and reduce conditions such as penalty rates.

"We are concerned that this is an attempt by the Abbott Government to reduce the ability of the Fair Work Commission to make balanced decisions that respect the rights of workers."

"Fair Work is the independent body that decides such things as the annual increase to the minimum wage – increases that big business always say are far too generous."

"It has also knocked back attempts by business to reduce penalty rates in certain industries."

"There is no reason for the Abbott Government to bring in an appeals body unless it wants to reduce the power of the Fair Work Commission and make it easier for business to implement its agenda to cut wages and conditions.

"The Abbott Government has refused to enshrine penalty rates in law, and it is clear that they will not stand in the way of business's attempts to cut them."

"Workplace Minister Eric Abetz has also said the government wants the Fair Work Commission to overrule negotiated agreements that he believes are too generous to workers. This is an attack on workers' right to negotiate collectively with employers."

"He has also said today that the Abbott Government will push ahead with attempts to introduce a national construction code which will punish construction companies which enter into agreements with unions, by denying them the chance to work on federal government projects. This is a measure which will do nothing to improve productivity and will simply result in more red tape for businesses."

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