

Unions welcome record pay rises for workers on new collective agreements

The ACTU welcomes recently released data by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations for the December 2023 quarter showing that average pay rises for workers covered by new collective agreements reached a 15-year high of 4.3 percent.

Reflecting the impact of the Albanese government's Secure Jobs Better Pay reforms, the boost to workers' incomes was fuelled by an increase in 227,000 more workers covered by collective agreements than a year earlier, with coverage reaching 2 million workers in total, or 16.7 percent of the workforce, up from 15.2 percent in December 2022.

The 4.3 percent increase represents the highest quarterly average pay rise for workers on newly approved collective agreements since 2009, exceeding the 3.0 percent average increase in December 2022.

Despite the Trends in Federal Enterprise Bargaining report revealing a boost in wages over this period, ABS data showed inflation slowing, from 7.8 percent in the year to December 2022 to 4.1 percent in December 2023.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"Collective bargaining is how working people can win pay increases beyond the bare minimum. Under the decade of Coalition government, the number of workers covered by collective agreements collapsed and wages stagnated. Since the Albanese government's workplace reforms, we have seen this trend start to reverse – more workers are on collective agreements, and as a result, they're winning higher pay.

"If you're a working person, the best way to get a pay rise is to join your union and be covered by a collective agreement.

"Despite wage growth for workers on new collective agreements reaching a 15-year high, inflation during this period dropped from 7.8 percent to 4.1 percent. The next time employers argue against higher pay for working families, they should be reminded of that fact."

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