

## Legal advice confirms all workers at risk from Dutton's WFH policy

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Australian Unions say Peter Dutton's apparent backflip on forcing workers back to the office five days a week does not mean that access to flexible work would be safe under a future Coalition Government.

Peter Dutton voted against strengthened working from home rights introduced by the Albanese Government in late 2022. He has also confused working from home with job share and continually implied that people working from home are not actually working. Other Coalition spokespeople have attacked work from home as 'unproductive' and a 'holiday' for workers.

Legal advice from John Agius SC obtained by the ACTU confirms that a Dutton-led Coalition Government could only take work from home arrangements away from public sector workers through legislative change that would also take away work from home rights from all Australian workers.

Amendments to the Fair Work Act would strike out work from home arrangements for Australian workers in both the public and the private sector, enabling the Coalition to implement its mandatory 5-day return to the office and allowing other employers to do the same.

Coalition Leader, Peter Dutton has committed to also repealing the right to disconnect, rights for casuals and to "reviewing" other Albanese Government workplace reforms that have got wages moving. He also refuses to back real wage increases for the 3 million lowest paid workers in the upcoming annual wage review.

### Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary, Sally McManus:

"We were extremely concerned when Peter Dutton moved to mandate a return to 5-days of working from the office for the public sector, especially because we knew this was not possible without changing the laws that allow working from home for all workers.

"Peter Dutton's repeated comments questioning the work ethic of people who are working from their homes has been deeply offensive to the many hundreds of thousands of working people who have been doing so for some time. These arrangements have been a win-win and allowed families to better manage, saving both time and money, while having less tired and stressed workers delivering better work for employers. Flexibility is not a one-way street.

"Everyone who uses our roads and public transport knows Mondays and Fridays are better for everyone with less congestion as these are the most popular days for working from home. The savings for families with childcare, petrol, tolls and stress is considerable.

"This is yet another back flip on workers' rights in less than a week and shows Australians cannot trust Peter Dutton with our rights at work. Given the chance, he will do the bidding of employers who want their wage cutting schemes back and the power to force everyone back to offices."

**ENDS**

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**Notes:**

The legal advice was prepared by John Agius SC, a Senior Counsel and Head of Wardell Chambers. He has a wealth of experience as Senior Counsel assisting commissions of inquiry and complex coronial inquests, including under the Howard Government, and maintains an expansive general law practice.