

Thursday, 23 July 2026

## Unions welcome new Fair Work Court to fast-track justice for workers

Australian Unions welcome the Prime Minister's announcement today of a new Fair Work Court to make it easier, faster and cheaper for workers to access justice and recover unpaid wages.

The new court will provide Australians with a simpler means to enforce their workplace rights, rather than the current system, where well-resourced employers can drag out cases and deter workers from pursuing claims.

Under the current system, workers who pursue wage underpayment claims can wait up to two years to get a ruling and in some cases, the cost of going to court outweighs the money they are owed.

Lengthy delays also deny workers justice when they urgently need to recover wages when they have lost their jobs.

A hospitality worker, who raised underpayment concerns, and was then sacked by their employer in March 2026, is still waiting for a court date and will wait one to two years for a final ruling.

A retail worker, who was sacked from a café after being injured at work, will have to wait more than 12 months for an initial mediation court date and even longer for a court decision.

The new federal Fair Work Court will be staffed by specialist judges with employment law expertise and work with the Fair Work Commission to support faster, easier and cheaper access to dispute resolution.

Unions have been pursuing a national employment court since the Howard Government abolished the Industrial Relations Court of Australia in 1997, transferring its functions to the Federal Court of Australia.

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

"The Fair Work Court will make it simpler, easier and faster to get justice so Australians can enforce their workplace rights.

"Justice delayed is justice denied. If your boss owes you money, you should not have to wait one or even two years to get it back. Too many employers can drag out court cases and grind workers into the dust while making them wait to get a fair hearing.

"We all know someone who was ripped off at work but didn't think it was worth the time, the stress or the money to go after their wages. This court will make it simpler for workers to recover wage underpayments and get other matters dealt with without waiting for years.

"Unions have been calling for a national employment court ever since the Howard Government abolished the last industrial relations court in 1997. Today's announcement recognises that workers' rights matter and justice is not only there for companies that can afford law firms from the big end of town.

"The new Fair Work Court will make it harder for dodgy employers to operate outside of the law because they think they won't get caught, which is hardly fair for all of the businesses that do the right thing and pay their workers properly and on time."

**ENDS**

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