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**Government's latest workplace changes designed to drive down wages, conditions**

The latest instalment of the Abbott Government's anti-worker agenda attacks basic workplace rights and will make it harder for workers to get pay rises.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said the proposed changes deliver what business and employers want, and swing the pendulum back to them.

"These changes will make it harder for workers to enter into enterprise agreements that include decent wage increases," Ms Kearney said.

"We know that when the Government talks about productivity they're really talking about cuts.

"The proposal by Minister Abetz is a bizarre throwback to the old centralised wage-fixing system, except this time the Commission's job is to stop people getting pay rises. This is actually another free kick to the resources industry by further restricting the right to strike.

"The Minister has never seen pay-rise he agreed with. Currently in public sector negotiations he argues that working longer hours is productivity. Given this approach all workers have a right to be worried."

The proposed changes to the Fair Work Act will include a requirement for enterprise bargaining agreements to consider productivity improvements as well require the commission to be satisfied that bargaining claims are "realistic and sensible" before the tribunal can approve an application to take protected industrial action.

CPSU National Secretary, Nadine Flood, said that the new changes lead the way to employers asking employees to work longer hours for less money.

"The proposed changes will take workplace relations towards the struggle already experienced by public servants. Workers are facing deep cuts to conditions and rights in return for a less than a 1% pay rise," Ms Flood said.

"Senator Abetz's regressive approach to workplace relations means productivity is simply a code for cuts and it is responsible for driving disputes in his workforce.

"The Abbott government's approach to bargaining with its own workforce bears no resemblance to a modern approach to workplace relations with genuine productivity through innovation, service improvements and workplace change.

"None of the myriad changes in the public sector that can actually improve the quality of services are counted in Senator Abetz' bizarre, alternative industrial universe.

"Senator Abetz' productivity in Federal Government is defined as cutting employee conditions, hourly wages and classifications. Paying less for less. So that means working mums in Medicare and Centrelink face losing flexible working arrangements, working up to 52 hours extra a month without overtime, a cut in hourly wages and possibly a 5.9% cut in super contribution – all for less than a 1% annual pay rise.

“Workers in Human Services are already doing more with less. There are 4,000 fewer of them answering more calls and helping more people, yet Senator Abetz doesn’t recognise that. He is going after their conditions and using productivity as a cover for his ideological attack on workers. It’s no surprise that Centrelink and Medicare workers are concerned enough to consider taking industrial action.”

Ms Kearney said that the Government’s agenda starts with changes to the Fair Work Amendment Bill and is followed up with a Productivity Commission review of workplace laws with terms of reference that may as well have been written by big business.

“Whatever the Government calls it and however they plan to do it, the end result is still the same – workers will be worse off under the Government’s anti-worker agenda,” Ms Kearney said.

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