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Australias biggest Ever Online Petition Urges Barnaby Joyce To VOTE NO On IR

ACTU

Monday, 28 November 2005

The fastest and the biggest ever online-petition with more than 85,000 signatures from people opposing the Governments new workplace laws will be presented today by ACTU President Sharan Burrow to Queensland National Party Senator Barnaby Joyce.

The petition calls on Senator Joyce to take a stand for working Australians and vote no to the Governments WorkChoices IR legislation when it comes before the Senate this week.

Presenting the petition to Senator Joyce in Canberra today, ACTU President Sharan Burrow said:

85,189 Australians have asked Senator Joyce to use his vote to throw the Government's proposed new workplace laws out of the Senate.

The National Party has proposed amendments to protect ``iconic'' public holidays but these proposals are an admission that the laws are fundamentally unfair and families will be worse off by the changes.

Workers who don't have bargaining power will be vulnerable to losing shift, overtime and other penalty rates for the whole year not just on public holidays.



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The laws will also allow employers to put workers onto individual contracts that cut their take-home pay and reduce employment conditions to only five minimum standards. And the loss of protection from unfair dismissal means workers who refuse to sign may fear being sacked.

Senator Joyce is on the record as acknowledging there is not a strong economic argument for the changes (The Age, 16/11/05) and that they are a recipe for exploitation (The Age, 31/10/05). It would be hypocritical of him to now pass the laws.

Senator Joyce has the power to send the Government back to the drawing board. Not pass it, not amend it, not fix some little technicalities - throw WorkChoices out.

When 85,000 Australians speak up, you have to listen. A record number of signatures, many accompanied by detailed comments, were gathered at a rate of 17,000 a day in just 5 days on the ACTUs campaign website, www.rightsatwork.com.au

Comments made on the petition include:

Martin QLD: *Barnaby this isn't about political ideology this is about ensuring that our children are given the same opportunities that our parents gave us. In particular a safe work environment where workers don't have to beg for the same rights that your family and friends enjoy today.*

Penny, NSW: *If every worker was extremely smart, articulate, educated/qualified, had a degree of power in the bargaining situation, was skilled in negotiating, and was not vulnerable in the work force, individual AWA's may be OK. Given that it is not a level playing field and many in the community are very vulnerable, it is crucial that you vote no on this legislation.*

The ACTU is continuing to use innovative new online campaign techniques, said Ms Burrow. We have now launched a new campaign encouraging people to call a Coalition senator in their State and ask them to take a short walk across the chamber to vote against the WorkChoices IR laws it can be found at: www.rightsatwork.com.au/campaigns/dotherightthing

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Ian Wilson
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