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SDA welcomes Senate Inquiry call to restore penalty rates for 700,000 workers

The SDA has welcomed the Senate Committee Inquiry Report which calls for Sunday and public holiday penalty rates to be restored for 700,000 workers who received the first of several cuts to their take home pay on July 1 this year.

SDA National Secretary Gerard Dwyer said the Report, tabled by the Senate Education and Employment Committee today also made some important observations on the fight to restore and protect the take home pay of some of Australia's lowest paid workers.

"The Turnbull Government supports pay cuts that retail and fast food workers don't deserve and can't afford. We are pleased this Senate Inquiry has found that those penalty rates must be restored to workers."

"Importantly, the Report found that workers of all ages rely on penalty rates to make ends meet, and slashing take home pay will not boost employment or improve economic growth as claimed by the Government. In fact, reducing incomes will do the opposite."

The SDA also supported the Report's suggestions that the Fair Work Commission's 'Better Off Overall Test' (BOOT) be improved and strengthened.

"The SDA has always bargained in accordance with the rules as determined by the Commission of the day. We are currently working toward negotiating new BOOT complaint enterprise agreements to deliver strong wages and good working conditions for all retail and fast food workers."

Mr Dwyer also said that the Report was accurate in highlighting the flawed analysis on penalty rates used by both business lobbyists and the Turnbull Government.

"Unlike sections of the media, business sector and Liberal Party, who purposely cherry pick and distort data on penalty rates to support their political attacks we're pleased that this Report finally sets the record straight."

"Enterprise agreements must be considered in the entirety of take home pay and superior conditions they deliver to workers, often over a quarterly cycle. To do otherwise is empirically disingenuous."

Mr Dwyer said he was pleased the Senate Committee Inquiry acknowledged that the actual wage rates paid to workers were significantly higher than those published by the Commission, a fact routinely overlooked by both the Government and in media reporting.

"We are happy to have a debate on wages and working conditions but we want that debate based on the facts. Unfortunately, the Turnbull Government has shown it has no interest in that."

"Given the Liberal Party's 25-year track record of attacking workers wages and conditions, and their recent, deeply unpopular penalty rate cuts for 700,000 workers, its little wonder the Turnbull Government is desperate to distract voters with dishonest attacks on unions and ALP."

“We have always said that cutting penalty rates for retail and fast food workers was just thin end of the wedge.”

“Now that the Turnbull Government has proven this to be true with its latest attacks on hairdressers, they can rest assured that the SDA and other relevant unions will again vigorously oppose every attempt to slash weekend penalty rates and working conditions.”

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