



MEDIA RELEASE

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FAIR WORK COMMISSION CUTS TO PENALTY RATES

Catholic Religious Australia, the peak body of religious institutes in Australia, stands with the people in the retail, fast food, hospitality and pharmacy industries who have been affected by the Fair Work Commission decision to cut Sunday and Public Holiday penalty rates from their existing levels. As politicians claim compensation for travel and absence from their families, people who of necessity work on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays deserve fair compensation. Catholic Religious Australia is concerned that the Fair Work Commission's decision will increase inequity and adversely affect the most vulnerable people: the young, women, students.

Company profits have surged while wages have declined sharply in the last eight years. In the 3 months to December 2016, profits jumped by 20 per cent while wages have grown by only 0.5 per cent compared to a wage growth of 1.9 per cent over the past year. [In fact wages are at record lows](#), according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Wage Price Index. Despite this, the Government is arguing for a \$50 billion company tax cut.

Catholic Social Teaching consistently argues that workers' rights take priority over profit maximisation. It calls for the protection of people who endure hardship, unemployment and illness. The decision of the Fair Work Commission is another indirect attack on the social security safety net.

Catholic Religious Australia is disturbed by the political discussion which focuses on opponents rather than inequity that will result from the decision. It is irrelevant that the Fair Work Commission is an independent umpire in the eyes of the Government and big business.

It is relevant that the pay cut is a political issue which ensures that penalty rates are to be cut. Most relevant is that vulnerable people, young people, will suffer because of this unjust decision. It is a distraction to rely on the discredited economic principle of trickle-down effect where more money given to corporations as tax cuts will lead to wage rises. The reality of the trickle-down myth is that the lowest paid workers do not benefit. This does not lead to a just society where the principles of fairness, equity and decency are upheld.

Poor and vulnerable workers must not have their rights undermined and dissolved. They must not be demonised or blamed to satisfy the need for more and more profits that benefit the few.

Australia cannot go the way of few winners and increased losers.

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Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) is the peak body for leaders of Religious Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life resident in Australia. Our membership comprises more than 130 congregations of Sisters, Brothers and Religious Priests living and working in all states and territories.

For more information on Catholic Religious Australia go to: www.catholicreligiousaustralia.org.au.