



CHURCH GROUPS, UNIONS TAKE JOB REFORM CONCERNS TO PARLIAMENT

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Catholic Social Services Australia has joined its voice with the St Vincent de Paul Society, Anglicare and the Australian Council of Trade Unions in opposing proposed changes to industrial relations law.

CSSA chief executive officer Ursula Stephens, Vinnies CEO Toby oConnor, Anglicare's Kasy Chambers and Michele O'Neil from the ACTU have spent time at Parliament this week outlining their concerns about changes to the Fair Work Act currently being considered.

Dr Stephens said despite the bill to amend the Fair Work Act being subtitled "Supporting Australia's Jobs and Economic Recovery", it rests on an assumption that Australia's economic recovery requires a further degradation of the rights and incomes of working people.

"The view that people who have been left without work due to the impact of the pandemic will be desperate enough to accept a job with lower rates of pay and greater insecurity of income than they had before clearly underpins the proposed amendments to the Fair Work Act contained in the bill," she said.

"At the heart of the bill are proposed changes to the operation and regulation of enterprise bargaining, as well as proposals for further entrenching casualisation and insecure work into our economy."

Dr Stephens said euphemisms and misnomers abound in the legislation and in the rhetoric being used to garner support within and beyond the Parliament.

"Provisions of the bill that are aimed at providing 'greater flexibility' for employers and workers will actually systematically weaken existing conditions for workers, further entrenching wage stagnation and deepening insecurity within the Australian labour market," she said.

"They are designed to further dilute the power of trade unions to organise and bargain for better wages for workers."

Ms O'Neil said the legislation would see life become harder for millions of workers and prolong what is a very difficult period of many.

"We cannot let struggling Australians whose lives are precarious and vulnerable be further marginalised by the damaging measures in this bill," she said this week.

Mr oConnor expressed specific concerns about the impact of the pandemic and job insecurity among younger workers, who suffered much worse job losses in the initial months of the pandemic.

"While workers over 35 have fully recovered to pre-pandemic employment levels, younger workers are still experiencing major job losses," he said.

[Click here](#) to access CSSA's submission to the Inquiry into Fair Work Amendment (Supporting Australia's Jobs and Economic Recovery) Bill 2020.

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