

Coalition must back action on jobs and climate change and pass Federal Budget

The Coalition must vote for jobs and action on the environment, and assist the quick passage of the Federal Budget, say unions.

After leaving working Australians with record levels of personal debt, Malcolm Turnbull and the Coalition must back the Government's plan to safeguard jobs and set the nation on the path to economic recovery, ACTU President Sharan Burrow said today.

She said last night's Budget response from Mr Turnbull was full of negative rhetoric and would avoid tough decisions by retaining tax breaks for wealthy Australians with private health insurance.

The Coalition must not put jobs at risk again as it did when it blocked the \$42 billion stimulus package in February, Ms Burrow said.

"This is the party that in good times failed to invest in infrastructure and skills, allowed private debt to run away, and put big business ahead of working Australians by taking away workplace rights that lowered real wages during an economic boom," she said.

"The Government has begun in this Budget to address the massive deficit left behind by the Howard-Costello Government – a deficit in social and economic infrastructure that threatens to hold Australia back.

"The Budget is aimed directly at jobs – protecting jobs now and creating jobs in the future.

"The Budget papers show that without the action taken by the Government to stimulate the economy, the unemployment rate next year would rise to 10% next year, leaving another 210,000 Australians looking for work.

"The Rudd Government is heeding the call from the International Monetary Fund for governments in developed countries to spend 2% of global GDP on economic stimulus measures to counter the worldwide recession.

"This Budget also lays the building blocks for the recovery.

"Its massive \$22 billion investment in road, rail, ports, clean energy, communications, schools and health infrastructure, will set up the Australian economy to be more prosperous and productive.

"Treasury's forecasts confirm that doing nothing is not a responsible option in the face of a dire economic outlook.

"The Coalition and the cross-bench Senators have a choice: they can say no to jobs, no to action on climate change, and no to helping pensioners, or they can support this Budget."

Media Contact: Mark Phillips ph: (03) 8676 7266 or 0422 009 011; email: mphillips@actu.asn.au