

Tuesday 6 April 2010

Abbott spells out key elements of Liberals' IR plan — WorkChoices by another name

On ABC TV last night Tony Abbott spelt out in clear terms the key elements of the industrial relations policy the Liberal Party will take to this year's Federal election, including a return to individual contracts and cuts to unfair dismissal protection.

Despite acknowledging that WorkChoices was the main reason working Australians turned against the Liberals at the last election, Mr Abbott confirmed he would bring back the reviled policy.

ACTU President Sharan Burrow said Mr Abbott's admissions were a sign of his extreme views on removing workers' rights and showed the Liberals were still wedded to Howard-era policies.

"Mr Abbott has repeatedly stated he would bring back the worst aspects of WorkChoices.

"Before a national television audience last night Mr Abbott used the same terms as when he addressed an audience of business executives last month.

"He said he would 'take the monkey off the back' of business by removing the protection workers in small businesses have against being dismissed unfairly.

"Mr Abbott also said that he would bring back individual contracts, giving employers the power to negotiate one-on-one with employees and to undermine collective bargaining.

"Together, these two changes would significantly alter the balance of power in the workplace, once again swinging the pendulum too far in favour of employers at the expense of employees, especially young and other vulnerable workers,

"Workers would be faced with the situation so many people found under WorkChoices where they would not get a job unless they signed an individual contract that cut their pay, conditions and rights.

"Working Australians rejected these policies at the last election but Mr Abbott is determined to put them back on the national agenda.

"Under the Rudd Labor Government's Fair Work laws, all Australians including those working in small businesses now have protection from unfair dismissal and new individual contracts have been banned.

"Mr Abbott's industrial relations policies would take Australia backwards and unions are determined to make sure this does not happen," said Ms Burrow.

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