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Minimum wage workers \$136 per week worse off under business audit cuts

Australia's minimum wage will be reduced to 44% of average weekly earnings, wiping off \$136 per week in today's dollars, if the Commission of Audit recommendations are accepted by the Government.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said this radical move represented the biggest attack on Australian wages since the Great depression.

"Tony Abbott asked the head of the business lobby to tell him what to do with the Federal Budget but what they've actually done is go after the wages of Australia's lowest paid workers," Ms Kearney said.

"The minimum wage has nothing to do with the Federal budget but what this shows is that the Government and Big Business will take any opportunity to drive down the wages of working people.

"The changes Prime Minister Abbott is considering would see \$136 wiped off the minimum wage per week - in today's dollars - taking the minimum wage down to around \$480 per week, or just \$12 per hour.

"Low paid workers in this country are already doing it tough - cutting the minimum wage like this would make it even harder for them to make ends meet."

The government's Commission of Audit has proposed:

- That the independent umpire which sets the minimum wage be abolished
- Cut the real value of the minimum wage each year for ten years
- that the national minimum wage be abolished in ten year's time
- that the states engage in a race to the bottom on the minimum wage after that.

"This is big businesses' plan to drive down wages across the community that will attack the Australian way of life, and the scary thing is Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey are taking it seriously," Ms Kearney said.

"The big business strategy is clear, if you bust apart the wages safety net you can drive everyone's wages down.

"This is more than an attack on the low paid - it is an attack on all of us.

"Australian unions will defend our wages safety net and the conditions that working people have built up over 100 years."

Ms Kearney said that cuts to the minimum wage coupled with savage and genuinely shocking cuts to Australia's universal health system, the education system and delivering a privatisation agenda for the benefit of business would leave Australian workers and their families worse off.

"This is a recipe straight out of the United States - pushing down the minimum wage, getting rid of decent health services and privatising core Government services," Ms Kearney said.

"The cuts Prime Minister Abbott has before him unreasonably and disproportionately affect the most vulnerable in our community and those that can least afford it."

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