

Friday, 30 January 2015

Biggest study of workplace relations in 20 years shows no need for Abbott's Productivity Commission inquiry

A new report by the Fair Work Commission shows there is no evidence to support the need for a Productivity Commission inquiry into workplace relations.

The *Australian Workplace Relations Study* (AWRS) is one of the most significant studies of Australian workplace relations in 20 years, involving 3,000 businesses and 8,000 employees.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said the study provides hard evidence that claims by the Abbott government and employers about high wages and low productivity are simply not true.

"Wages account for only a minor part of sales and services revenue for 90 per cent of businesses," said Ms Kearney.

"It's simply not true for employers to claim they can't afford to open on weekends or public holidays because of penalty rates.

Ms Kearney said labour productivity has also remained steady or improved for 85 per cent of businesses.

"Australians are productive and working hard yet employers and the Abbott government are obsessed with driving down wages and are trying to use the Productivity Commission inquiry to do so.

"The evidence can't be ignored. This study shows quite clearly that the Productivity Commission inquiry and the Abbott government's four industrial relations bills are part of an ideological agenda – not based on fact."

Ms Kearney said the original *Australian Workplace Relations Survey* was scrapped by the Howard government to hide the effects of its draconian industrial relations laws.

"It's somewhat ironic that the independent umpire's first comprehensive study since then busts open the myth that the Fair Work Act is hampering productivity and comes just a week after Tony Abbott launched his own attack on wages and rights at work."

KEY FACTS:

- Wages and salaries account for only a minor proportion of sales and services revenue for almost 90% of enterprises that operate for profit and less than a third for 60% (table 3.8)
- Labour productivity remained steady or increased in the past year for 85% of enterprises (figure 3.1)
- More than a fifth of all employees are casuals (table 4.1)
- The award safety net matters greatly for women who are the majority of workers in small and medium size firms, retail, accommodation and food, health care, social assistance, arts and recreation (table 5.5)
- Junior rates are paid in more than a quarter of retail enterprises and more than a third of accommodation and food enterprises (table 5.7)
- Workers' job satisfaction scores were lowest for total pay, job security, voice at work, and hours worked (table 6.1)
- Balancing work and life was the most important issue for workers (figure 6.1)

The Fair Work Commission report: <https://www.fwc.gov.au/first-findings-report/about-report>

Media contact: Carla De Campo, 0410 579 575 or Kara Douglas, 0418 793 885