

Monday, 28 June 2010

Unions welcome appointment of Simon Crean as new Workplace Relations Minister

Unions welcome the opportunity to work with new Workplace Relations and Education Minister Simon Crean to progress an agenda for the future of Australian workplaces and rights at work.

ACTU Secretary Jeff Lawrence said Mr Crean understood the importance of preventing a return to WorkChoices and would be a steady pair of hands on this important portfolio.

“Simon Crean is someone working people can trust and unions know well and can work with,” Mr Lawrence said.

“We expect to have a constructive relationship with Mr Crean to build on the improvements to rights at work under the Labor Government. We need to go forwards on workers’ rights, not backwards to the Liberals’ new version of WorkChoices. Unions look forward to Mr Crean continuing the Government’s positive agenda for working Australians.

“We are keen to explain to Mr Crean our ideas for the future of Australian workplaces to create and sustain good secure jobs and to drive productivity and economic growth.

“There need to be further improvements to workers’ rights, including a positive conception of rights for delegates and workplace representatives, ensuring workers have the right to join and have good access to their union without discrimination, intimidation and harassment, and to ensure that workers have a real say in their workplaces and control over their working life.

“All workers should enjoy the same rights and there needs to be a renewed focus on health and safety standards in Australian workplaces.”

Mr Lawrence paid tribute to Prime Minister Julia Gillard, who had secured important gains for workers during her period as the Opposition spokesperson and Minister for Workplace Relations.

“In opposition, Ms Gillard crafted the Labor policy that presented a clear alternative to WorkChoices and strove to restore fairness and rights at work,” Mr Lawrence said.

“As Minister, she successfully negotiated the passage of the Fair Work Act, a substantial achievement given the obstructionism of the Senate to so much else of the Government’s agenda. We have no doubt that she will continue to support rights at work as Prime Minister.”

“The Fair Work Act has restored protection for all workers from unfair dismissal, the rights to collective bargaining, better access and representation from unions in the workplace, a proper safety net, and the abolition of Australian Workplace Agreements. These are all significant reforms on which unions will seek to build.

“Later this week more than a million workers will receive their first pay rise for 20 months, an extra \$26 a week. This would not have happened under a Coalition Government. There’s no doubt that if the Tony Abbott’s Liberals were in government, working Australians would be worse off, not better off.”

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