



“TIME TO CARE” Campaign Lobbying Kit

*working arrangements to help balance
paid work and unpaid care responsibilities*

Information for community supporters

Includes:

- Introduction
- Sample Email from Community Organisations to Members
- Sample email to MPs
- Sample letter to MPs
- Sample petition to MPs
- Suggested Messages for MPs and Community Conversations
- Campaign information and resources
 - Report
 - Media Release
 - Articles
 - Videos

Urgent Action - messages for supporters

As you might know unions are campaigning for 3 main changes to workplace laws, being considered by Government:

- Better access to arbitration;
- Effective Right of Entry provisions; and
- Enforceable Rights to Request flexible work to help balance caring responsibilities.

Our best chance to influence the politicians is right now!

The *Time to Care* campaign asks that in amending the Fair Work Act, the entitlement to request flexible work to assist with caring responsibilities needs to be strengthened.

We have a window of less than 4 weeks to lobby politicians to support our proposed amendments to the right to request flexible work provisions of the Fair Work Act.

Whilst amendments are still being considered we need community members to lobby their MPs now, if we are to see the campaign for stronger laws succeed.

We you can do:

Please send either a letter or email as soon as possible to our politicians before the end of May 2013. You can also ask your colleagues & community to sign a petition & attach it to your letter.

1. We have produced a **letter/email and petition** (specifically for key Government and Independent Members of Parliament) which you can sign on to and send yourself.

We encourage supporters to contact the Independents, (particularly, but not ONLY, if you are a member of their electorate) but we also encourage you to send similar messages to the Prime Minister, the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, the Minister for the Status of Women and any other MP you like really!

2. We also have some suggested messages to help you **visit your local Member of Parliament.**

We need to ask Members of Parliament to agree to support the Fair Work Amendments but also to support the ACTU's proposed amendments to the right to request flexible work.

What's the Issue?

Currently, the Fair Work Act entitles certain employees to request flexible work arrangements in order to meet their family or caring responsibilities.

The Government has proposed some welcome amendments to the Act including expanding the number of employees eligible to request flexible working arrangements and outlining the reasonable business grounds upon which employers may refuse a request.

But, to ensure better outcomes for employees who are refused, we ask that the laws should:

- (1) outline the process by which employers should consider such a request, and
- (2) provide an appeal mechanism for employees where an employer does not genuinely consider, or unreasonably refuses, the request.

We are not asking for all businesses to approve all requests. Only that the laws stop employers from simply saying 'no' unreasonably, by allowing workers a right to appeal.

Further Information:

Please go to <http://www.securejobs.org.au/Home/Campaigns/Time-to-care.aspx> for

- articles to share
- videos to share
- to read the *Australians Want Time to Care* report

And if you are on Facebook, **please “like” Unions Australia**, to be up to date will future campaign activities.

Further Action Planned:

After the Government decides on the final draft of the Fair Work Amendment Bill 2013 the Time to Care campaign WILL continue.

Supporters will need to make sure ALL MPs support the Bill, AND commit to its future after the federal election is held.

The ACTU will continue to produce campaign material to:

- Assist supporters to have conversations about the issues within their communities and with Members of Parliament and candidates;
- Spread the message about the threat to job security that carers face in their task to stay in paid employment but continue to fulfil the caring needs of loved ones – children, partners, the elderly, people with disability etc.
- Hold the Government, the Opposition and all political parties to account for commitments made around supporting the needs of carers and putting maximum pressure on parties who refuse to support our campaign objectives for better workplace rights.

The ACTU's Secure Jobs campaign will include messages and campaign material for use during the election period, and included will be a focus on Time to Care.

You are strongly encouraged to therefore sign up to be part of the union effort in targeted seats.

There is a lot of hard work to do but by talking to the community about issues they want to see action on, we send a clear message about the future of politics and our expectations of politicians in this country.

Thank you for adding your voice.

Dave Oliver – ACTU Secretary

Ged Kearney – ACTU President

Sample Email from Community Organisations to Members

Dear member,

The *Time to Care* campaign, to improve laws supporting employees' right to request flexible work to help them with their caring responsibilities, is in a critical stage.

Amendments to the Fair Work Act are currently being considered by federal parliament and so we need as many MPs as possible committing to support stronger laws.

In particular, the Independents will be critical to the success of the amendments.

Please find attached letters to:

- The Prime Minister, Julia Gillard.
- The Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Bill Shorten.
- The Minister for the Status of Women, Julie Collins.
- Member for Denison, Mr Andrew Wilkie and a map to check if you are in his electorate.
- Member for Lyne, Mr Robert Oakeshott and a map to check if you are in his electorate.
- Member for New England, Mr Tony Windsor and a map to check if you are in his electorate.

If you support the right of carers to seek flexible work, if you want to see employers seriously consider these requests including laws for a decent appeal for when employers refuse requests unreasonably, please sign and send this letter to these independent members of parliament.

In addition, go to <http://www.securejobs.org.au/Home/Campaigns/Time-to-care.aspx> for some more facts and campaign articles and videos.

Time is ticking so thank you so much for your support!

Sample Email from supporters to MPs

Dear Honourable Member,

I believe that Australia is facing a time bomb if the lack of balance between work and care is not addressed.

I urge you to support the changes being proposed through the *Fair Work Amendment Bill 2013* for a stronger right to request flexible work, for those with caring responsibilities.

I understand that the Government is proposing that a wider range of carers (including care for children, people with illness or disability or the elderly) should be able to make formal requests to change their start and finish times, hours of work or their location of work to assist them with their caring responsibilities, and that employers can only refuse them on *reasonable* business grounds.

I believe that it is not fair for carers to be forced into insecure work or lose their jobs altogether just because the sort of flexibility they desperately need is considered too hard for some employers.

I strongly encourage you to support the current proposals, but an additional change needs to be made to the laws to ensure there is an ability to appeal when an employer *unreasonably* refuses an employees request.

I understand that it might not be possible for an employer to say 'yes' to every request, but the problem is that if the employer just says 'no' without giving the request serious consideration, then there is nowhere to go to have the employer's decision reviewed. I think this is unfair.

I know that many employers are already supporting their employees, but I fear that without strong laws to encourage better workplace cultures, many will continue to be treated unfairly.

From my experience, these changes are very important for employees who are carers and do incredibly valuable unpaid work and so I seek your support for stronger laws to help workers stay employed.

Yours sincerely,

Sample Letter to Government and Independent MPs:

Prime Minister
The Hon Julia Gillard, MP
PO Locked Bag 14
Werribee, VIC, 3030

To the Hon Prime Minister,

I write to you regarding the current debate about changes to the Fair Work Act.

I believe that Australia is facing a time bomb if the lack of balance between work and care is not addressed.

I urge you to support the changes being proposed through the Fair Work Amendment Bill 2013 for a stronger right to request flexible work, for those with caring responsibilities.

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Yours sincerely,

Name: _____

Address: _____

Union: _____

Signature: _____

Mr Bill Shorten MP

Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
Member for Maribyrnong
PO Box 214
Moonee Ponds, VIC, 3039

To the Hon Mr Shorten,

I write to you regarding the current debate about changes to the Fair Work Act.

I believe that Australia is facing a time bomb if the lack of balance between work and care is not addressed.

I urge you to support the changes being proposed through the Fair Work Amendment Bill 2013 for a stronger right to request flexible work, for those with caring responsibilities.

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Yours sincerely,

Name: _____

Address: _____

Union: _____

Signature: _____

The Hon Julie Collins MP
Minister for the Status of Women
Member for Franklin
PO Box 38
Rosny Park, TAS, 7018

To the Hon Ms Collins,

I write to you regarding the current debate about changes to the Fair Work Act.

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Yours sincerely,

Name: _____

Address: _____

Union: _____

Signature: _____

Mr Tony Windsor MP
Member for New England, New South Wales
PO Box 963
Tamworth, NSW, 2340
Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au

To the Hon Mr Windsor,

I write to you regarding the current debate about changes to the Fair Work Act.

I believe that Australia is facing a time bomb if the lack of balance between work and care is not addressed.

I urge you to support the changes being proposed through the Fair Work Amendment Bill 2013 for a stronger right to request flexible work, for those with caring responsibilities.

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Yours sincerely,

Name: _____

Address: _____

Union: _____

Signature: _____

Mr Robert Oakeshott MP
Member for Lyne, New South Wales
PO Box 1112
Port Macquarie NSW 2444
robert.oakeshott.mp@aph.gov.au

To the Hon Mr Oakeshott,

I write to you regarding the current debate about changes to the Fair Work Act.

I believe that Australia is facing a time bomb if the lack of balance between work and care is not addressed.

I urge you to support the changes being proposed through the Fair Work Amendment Bill 2013 for a stronger right to request flexible work, for those with caring responsibilities.

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Yours sincerely,

Name: _____

Address: _____

Union: _____

Signature: _____

Hon Andrew Wilkie
Member for Denison
GPO Box 32
HOBART TAS 7001
Email: andrew.wilkie.mp@aph.gov.au

To the Hon Mr Wilkie,

I write to you regarding the current debate about changes to the Fair Work Act.

I believe that Australia is facing a time bomb if the lack of balance between work and care is not addressed.

I urge you to support the changes being proposed through the Fair Work Amendment Bill 2013 for a stronger right to request flexible work, for those with caring responsibilities.

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Name: _____

Address: _____

Union: _____

Signature: _____

Sample Petitions Independent MPs: (see over page)

Suggested Messages for MPs & Community Conversations:

There are many ways to argue for change, so the following messages can be used depending on the circumstances, the audience and key concern requiring a response.

The speaking points are a combination of:

- a statement of the values and aspirations of the campaign,
- ways to discuss and respond to the views of opponents as well as obstacles in the way of success,
- being clear about the campaign goals, and
- what action needs to be taken.

The range of talking points below can be used when you speak with either a member of parliament, a colleague, or a member of your community.

Overarching theme: Australians Unions believe all workers should be able to have the time to work and time to care for their loved ones without jeopardising their job security. Unions believe a culture change is needed in workplaces to understand the needs of modern families and modern workers.

(see table over the page)

Key point

The modern worker

The workforce is changing and that workplaces need to change with it.

The cost of living means that two incomes are the norm in the majority of households and people who have dependants to care for need to remain in the workforce.

Whether it's care for children, people with illness or disability or the elderly, workers need time to work and time to care.

Unions want employers to understand these dual roles and accommodate them by seriously considering arrangements to help balance their caring responsibilities.

Our economy needs people with caring responsibilities to work

The Australian economy can no longer afford to lose skilled workers because they have loved ones who depend on their care.

There are 4.1 million workers who have caring responsibilities.

Australia needs to keep as many carers in paid work as possible. Internationally we are behind many countries who already give workers the right to flexible work arrangements to balance work and family.

Business benefits by retaining skilled and loyal workers if they do accommodate caring needs by granting flexible work requests. It costs business more to lose workers and retrain new ones.

Unions believe it is not fair for workers to be pushed into insecure work or lose their jobs altogether just because business cannot adapt to the needs of modern workers.

Workers with caring responsibilities need decent work choices

Despite popular belief, the majority of carers are in paid work. 70% of people who provide unpaid care for children are in the workforce. And 55% of people who care for the ill and disabled are in the workforce.

However, carers are more likely to be in jobs that are insecure, have unpredictable hours, have fewer entitlements to assist them balance work and care and less likelihood of having paid leave.

Even workers in more secure jobs, are reluctant to seek changes that would help with their caring responsibilities because they too feel their job security would be threatened.

We will all either be a carer or need to be cared for in our lifetime.

Unions believe that it should be recognised as a norm not a luxury to be granted work arrangements that help balance responsibilities to our loved ones.

What we are asking for is reasonable

Australian Unions want employers to seriously consider requests for flexible work, by those with caring responsibilities.

We aren't asking for all businesses to approve all requests.

What we do want is the ability to seek flexible work and for employers to be reasonable with their response.

Many workplaces are already offering suitable options for workers who have caring responsibilities.

Evidence tells us though that employees are only asking when they are fairly confident they have a supportive boss otherwise without protections against being discriminated they don't risk it.

All unions are asking is that the laws stop employers from simply saying 'no' unreasonably, by allowing workers a right to appeal the process that lead to a refusal.

Improving these laws will help women in particular

The Government has been commendable in its attempts to put forward workplace laws that support the workforce participation of parents and carers.

The introduction of paid parental leave, dad and partner pay, support for equal pay for community sector workers and improving opportunities for decent flexible work have changed things for the better.

They have shown a greater understanding of modern workers than the Opposition who had 11 years to respond to, what John Howard called 'the bbq stopper,' yet did nothing to address this significant challenge.

We need your support

Will you support the Time to Care campaign to join with workers, carers, the community and Australian Unions to campaign for secure jobs and a better balance between work and care?

Will you join your union to help achieve this?

Will you vote for the Fair Work Amendment Bill and also support the proposed ACTU amendments to the right to request clause?

Campaign information:

The Time to Care campaign, has to date, produced a number of reports, articles and presentations to assist with educating the community about the issues.

Unions have been sent a number of ACTU Circulars which include the details of the campaign.

However, we are now at a critical stage and need to make sure that union leaders and organisers can mobilise members to put pressure on all MPs as they consider changes to the Fair Work Act. The Independents in particular are crucial.

The Secure Jobs website, contains all of the campaign information listed below, should you wish to direct your members to it:

<http://www.securejobs.org.au/Home/Campaigns/Time-to-care.aspx>

The following information might also assist unions to explain the campaign to your Executives and members and we encourage you to do so.

- **Report**

Australians want Time to Care report:

<http://www.securejobs.org.au/Home/Campaigns/Time-to-care/ACTU-Time-to-Care-report-2013.aspx>

- **ACTU media release**

http://www.actu.org.au/Media/Mediareleases/Newreportcallsforurgentactionagainststunreasenableemployerswhorefusetheneedsofmodernworkers.aspx?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter

- **Articles**

- **“Workplaces need to adapt to needs of modern families”**

<http://workinglife.org.au/2013/04/15/workplaces-need-to-adapt-to-needs-of-modern-families/>

- **“Surely I don’t deserve to lose my ability to earn an income just because I have a child”**

<http://workinglife.org.au/2013/04/16/surely-i-dont-deserve-to-lose-my-ability-to-earn-an-income-just-because-i-have-a-child/>

- **“The cost of caring”**

<http://workinglife.org.au/2013/02/28/the-cost-of-caring/>

- **Videos**

A short video from the launch of ***Australians want Time to Care*** report:

<http://youtu.be/i9JfNqwuTMM>

- **Minister’s Announcement**

<http://ministers.deewr.gov.au/shorten/modern-families-central-fair-work-act-improvements#>

Appendix:

MP addresses:

Prime Minister
The Hon Julia Gillard, MP
PO Locked Bag 14
Werribee, VIC, 3030

Mr Bill Shorten MP
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
Member for Maribyrnong
PO Box 214
Moonee Ponds, VIC, 3039

The Hon Julie Collins MP
Minister for the Status of Women
Member for Franklin
PO Box 38
Rosny Park, TAS, 7018

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Member for New England, New South Wales
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Tamworth, NSW, 2340
Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au

Hon Andrew Wilkie
Member for Denison
GPO Box 32
HOBART TAS 7001
Email: andrew.wilkie.mp@aph.gov.au