

MINISTER - DEWR OPENING STATEMENT

Thanks for the opportunity to appear here today – first time as the Minister in this portfolio. So I'm looking forward to a very engaging discussion, as we always have in this committee.

Under the Albanese Government, I'm very pleased to say **more** Australians are working, they're **earning** more and **keeping** more of what they earn.

We very much recognise that many Australians are doing it tough at the moment, and there's a lot more work to do. But it is excellent to see that as a result of our policies, including in the workplace relations space, more Australians are working, they're earning more and keeping more of what they earn.

Our government has overseen the largest increase in employment in a single Parliamentary term in Australia's history – a million new jobs under Labor. And I congratulate all Australian employers, unions and workers for their collective efforts to achieve this record.

Importantly nearly two-thirds of those jobs are full time.

The rate of job creation since the election is faster than any major advanced economy on the planet.

There's nothing more important than having a well-paid job to deal with cost of living pressures. And delivering those well-paid jobs is what the Albanese Government is doing.

And under the Albanese Government, more Australian women are getting into work than ever before.

Since forming government, around half of all growth in full time jobs have been for women. Female workforce participation stands at a record high, and the gender pay gap is at its lowest level on record at 11.5%.

More than 347,000 more women are now in full-time work than when our predecessors were in government.

Now claims made by the Opposition that Labor's jobs growth represents a surge in bureaucracy are baseless – private sector jobs represented 75% of the growth in jobs filled over the two years June 2022-24.

Labor has created more jobs in the market sector than any first term Government in recorded history at 309,000 in just two years.

That's 89,000 more market sector jobs than the first term of the Abbott Government, and 125,000 more than the Howard Government.

While also creating thousands of valuable, good quality jobs in the care, education, health and other sectors.

And I have noted some commentators and some Coalition figures making light of the growth of jobs in those important sectors.

And I challenge any of them to say whether they prefer to see fewer aged care workers and fewer childhood care workers, among other sectors.

We're also delivering a range of workplace relations changes including increased bargaining, rights for casuals and gig workers, and safer workplaces.

We're standing alongside workers to deliver the better pay, more secure and safer workplaces they deserve.

Our workplace reforms are getting wages moving again, just like we said they would.

We've dramatically increased the minimum wage - 2.6 million low paid workers saw their pay packets increase because the Albanese Government advocated for them in the Fair Work Commission, three years in a row.

We've closed loopholes, ensuring that labour hire can't be used as a wage-cutting exercise, and that gig workers and truckies can seek minimum standards of pay.

We made gender equality an objective of the Fair Work Act and banned pay secrecy clauses.

We've delivered significant pay rises to specific occupations that have been shamefully undervalued for far too long – like up to a 28.5 per cent increase for aged care workers, and 15 per cent for early childhood education and care workers.

And we've also legislated a fair, objective definition of casual work, streamlined the process for casuals to convert to permanent work, limited the use of unending fixed-term contracts, and protected workers from disciplinary action if they exercised their right to disconnect.

Our historic Respect@Work legislation significantly progresses gender equality by ensuring women are able to earn a living in safe, respectful, sexual harassment-free workplaces.

We introduced paid family and domestic violence leave – so no one has to choose between their safety and their pay.

We took further action to prevent workers from silicosis, by banning the importation of engineered stone benchtops.

And introduced industrial manslaughter laws, after the Coalition refused to act on workplace deaths.

And world-leading minimum standards for gig workers and truckies have now been introduced, delivering better pay and conditions and keeping Australian gig workers safe.

Now we need to understand that all of this is at risk at the next election.

Under the previous Coalition government, unemployment was higher, employment lower, wage growth and jobs growth weaker, and the gender pay gap was bigger.

It took them double the time to reach the jobs growth we achieved in our first two years and four months.

And now, at a time that many Australians are doing it tough, Mr Dutton has promised to make things worse, by cutting wages and conditions and making it easier to get the sack.

I'm sure we'll have a good discussion about all of these issues over the course of the day.

Thanks again for the chance to appear.

ENDS