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President Michele O'Neil Secretary Sally McManus

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
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20 October 2022

Dear Committee Secretary

International Labour Organisation Convention No. 138: Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) is the peak trade union body in Australia, with 43 affiliated unions and state and regional trades and labour councils, representing almost 2 million workers across the country. The ACTU also represents Australian workers at the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The ACTU welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties inquiry into the ratification of the ILO *Minimum Age Convention (No. 138)*. The ACTU supports the ratification of C138, which is one of the ten fundamental ILO Conventions and a key international instrument in the fight to eliminate child labour and forced labour.

The primary purpose of the Convention is to set the minimum age for admission to employment and to ensure the effective abolition of child labour. We note that the combination of law and practice at the Commonwealth, State and Territory levels means Australia achieves broad compliance with the Convention. Ratification would signal the Australian Government's commitment to addressing modern slavery and achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7, which commits the global community to end child labour by 2025 and forced labour by 2030.

Ratifying this Convention will put Australia on the path towards ratifying all fundamental ILO Conventions, with the *Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention (No. 187)*, which was elevated to the status of a fundamental Convention by the International Labour Conference in June 2022, the remaining unratified fundamental Convention. The ACTU supports the Australian Government ratifying all fundamental conventions as a matter of priority to demonstrate its commitment to the fundamental principles and rights at work.

The ACTU urges the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties to recommend that the Australian Parliament proceed with the ratification of this important International Labour Standard.

Yours sincerely,



Michele O'Neil
President