

## ACTU Apprentice Wages push

There is an urgent need to lift the wages of apprentices and trainees and it is important that Fair Work Australia goes ahead with its proposed review, the ACTU says.

The tribunal in January put on hold plans for a review of apprentice and trainee wages and conditions until after this year's minimum wage review

A key reason it cited for the delay was that an expert panel set up by the federal government to advise on reforming the apprenticeship system was at that time yet to hand down its report.

However, the panel in late February delivered its report to Workplace Relations Minister Senator Chris Evans, and unions say that means the way is now clear for FWA to go ahead with its review.

Speaking outside the ACTU executive meeting in Melbourne today, AMWU national secretary Dave Oliver said low wages were a major reason for apprentice completion rates languishing below 50% on average.

He said FWA's review should go ahead "sooner rather than later" and include a comparison of market and apprentice wage rates.

Oliver said unions also believed the federal government had been too quick to rule out introducing a levy in some industries – with rebates for employers that provided adequate training – to fund a central apprentice training pool

"Employers can't complain about skills shortages on one hand, and refuse to invest in training on the other," he said. *Editorial comment: The THA strongly encourages in principle members taking on apprentice to help solve the hospitality skills shortage but is not convinced increased wages are necessarily the solution*

ACTU president Ged Kearney said affiliates at the executive meeting would also discuss the peak body's planned campaign against insecure employment – which she said would be launched mid-year - and the position it would take to this year's minimum wage review.

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