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MEDIA RELEASE

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Small biz left hanging after Govt withdraws PPL changes

The Coalition has called on the Gillard Labor Government to bring on its legislation for administrative changes to the Paid Parental Leave (PPL) scheme this week after it disappeared off the House of Representatives agenda.

Shadow Small Business Minister Bruce Billson said Labor has left small business in suspense about its position in response to a Coalition initiative which seeks to relieve the sector of the compliance burden of being the ‘pay clerk’ for the PPL scheme.

The Government had scheduled debate on legislative amendments to the PPL scheme for Monday but pulled them after the Coalition flagged further amendments to remove the ‘pay clerk’ burden imposed on business.

“Labor is now scrambling to find a way out of an embarrassing defeat after the small business community sent the Government a clear message that it wants to be freed of the ‘pay clerk’ burden,” Mr Billson said.

“The Gillard Government is so out of touch with small business that it under-estimated how important these changes are for small business people.

“It’s time a Labor Small Business Minister stood up for the sector they are supposed to represent to see these changes are passed and not delayed.

“This isn’t about reinventing the legislation or changing the Government-funded parental leave benefits, it’s about making sure small businesses don’t have to deal with more unwarranted red tape.”

Mr Billson said he was not surprised Jenny Macklin and Mark Arbib launched an attack on the man instead of the ball in their joint media release on the issue yesterday, because they have no credible reason, other than protecting a union campaign, not to support the Coalition amendments.

According to Mr Billson a secret internal union circular revealed that the true reason for the coordinated Labor/union attack on the commonsense Coalition proposal for the Family Assistance Office to continue to administer the Government’s scheme is that it would “restrict union’s capacity to improve and enforce PPL in workplaces.”

“The Government is desperately trying to hide its deal with the unions to burden employers with costly administrative systems changes that will assist industrial campaigns that aim to force

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businesses to pay more in PPL entitlements to address the known deficiencies in the Government scheme,” Mr Billson said.

“Unions have made it clear their agenda is to force employer-funded ‘top ups’ to the deficient PPL system through industrial campaigns, but the Government knows if it backs the Coalition amendments it would remove the secret ‘clear run’ they have gifted the unions’ campaign.

“If the Government backs away from cutting red tape for small business on this occasion it will be clear to the sector that Labor is more interested in pleasing the unions than backing sensible measures to reduce compliance burdens for business.”