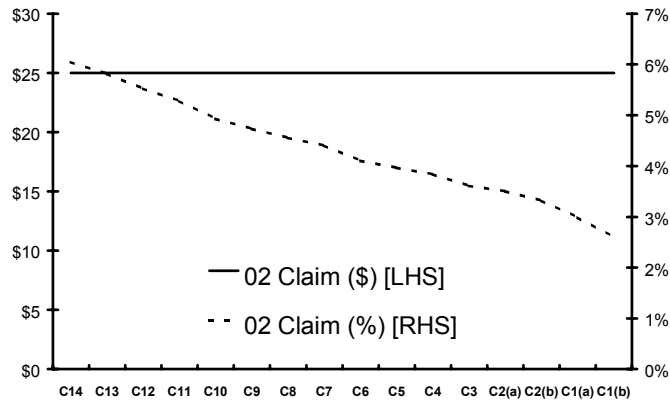


[1.10] On this occasion, the ACTU has abandoned the practice of seeking higher increases for those earning above any particular cut off (Figure 3).

Figure 3 - Structure of the 2002 ACTU Wage Claim



[1.11] Although it has not abandoned ambit and excessive claims, the ACTU’s decision to abandon its previous claim structure is welcome. ACCI has previously argued this was inconsistent with the schema of the *Workplace Relations Act 1996*, including an appropriate focus on the lower paid.

[1.12] ACCI found it particularly difficult to reconcile approaches that would see those on rates well in excess of average weekly earnings (AWOTE) gain a wage increase almost double that of those on the minimum wage.⁵

[1.13] There were also clear evidentiary difficulties with this approach, given that the primary needs material advanced by the ACTU centred on those at the lowest award classifications. (Such difficulties continue to confront the current claim.)

[1.14] The change in claim structure does not however alter the fundamentally ambit character of the current ACTU claim, nor its status as yet another inflated demand that does not reflect economic and labour market reality. The following figure shows that in percentage terms, the current claim broadly repeats the level of ambit claim consistently rejected by this Commission in recent years.