



Australian Council of Trade Unions

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 14 January 2010

Welcome news on jobs, but underlying problems mean stimulus must continue: unions

A drop in Australia's unemployment rate for the third month in a row is encouraging and may indicate that the peak has passed, but December's over-reliance on part-time jobs growth may also be masking underlying problems, say unions.

Unemployment fell to 5.5% last month, but we must not lose sight of the fact that there are still 639,400 Australians out of work and 118,300 more jobseekers than a year ago.

ACTU President Sharan Burrow said most of the 35,200 new jobs in December were part-time, and much of this was due to retailers adding extra staff for a short period before Christmas.

Additionally, the underemployment rate remains unchanged at 7.8%, while aggregate hours worked actually fell by a million hours.

"While the fall in the unemployment rate is welcome, full-time jobs growth in December was weaker than the previous few months, while part-time work always increases before Christmas because shops are busier," Ms Burrow said.

"We will have to wait for January's data before we can make any judgement about how sustainable the recent growth in part-time work is.

"But there is no doubt that many working families are still struggling, particularly after the minimum wage was frozen last year.

"The latest data shows almost 900,000 Australians wanted to work more hours – that is 170,000 more than a year ago.

"This suggests that tens of thousands of Australians are finding it difficult to meet their costs and service their debts.

"It would be counter-productive to accelerate the winding back of the economic stimulus program at this stage."

Media contact: Mark Phillips ph: (03) 8676 7266 or 0422 009 011; email: mphillips@actu.asn.au

www.actu.asn.au

your rights at work — worth fighting for