

Tuesday, 24 January 2012

Howe Inquiry swamped with stories and submissions about insecure work; hearings begin next month

More than 450 workers, unions, community and other representative groups have lodged a submission with the Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said the overwhelming response to the inquiry, chaired by former Deputy Prime Minister Brian Howe, showed insecure jobs were clearly a major concern for Australian workers and their families.

The inquiry began taking submissions in November. They closed last Friday, after they were extended due to enormous public interest.

Ms Kearney said 412 workers had told of their individual experiences in insecure work through its website, and almost 60 organisations had also lodged submissions to the inquiry. More submissions will be received in coming days after further extensions were granted.

“The Howe Inquiry is one of the most important investigations into the changing nature of Australian work in recent times, with the use of casual, fixed or short-term contracts, and labour hire almost doubling in the last two decades to make up about 40% of the workforce now,” Ms Kearney said.

“The submissions will provide valuable evidence for the inquiry panel to consider the impact insecure work has on people’s ability to plan for their future, to make ends meet and to spend time with family and friends.

“The Howe Inquiry is investigating all of these issues and it is important that we hear from as many in the community affected by insecure work as possible.”

Mr Howe said the Inquiry panel was delighted with the number of submissions, which provided insights into the impact of insecure work on individuals and on families, as well as providing policy recommendations from unions, community organisations and other workplace representatives who deal directly with the consequences of insecure work.

“The submissions provide a depth of knowledge and understanding about this issue that has not been explored in Australia before, and we look forward to investigating the issue and exploring policy solutions through hearings around Australia that begin next month,” Mr Howe said.

Hearing dates in capital cities and regional centres will be announced shortly.

Ms Kearney said that many business and employer groups and other representatives have been vocal in their campaign to remove workers’ rights, yet when given the opportunity to provide evidence to support their claims, they were silent, choosing not to lodge a submission to the Howe Inquiry.

“Despite our open invitation to all sectors, business and employer groups were missing in action during the submissions process. These organisations can hardly complain about the Howe Inquiry when they chose not to have their voices heard,” she said.

Submissions will be available at securejobs.org.au from this afternoon.

Media contact for interviews with Ged Kearney or Brian Howe:
Rebecca Tucker (03) 9664 7359 or 0408 031 269; rtucker@actu.org.au