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Casual Conversion test case: Unions plug small hole in casualisation crisis

Australian Unions have won a first battle in the fight against the epidemic of casualisation.

The Fair Work Commission (FWC) has ruled that casual workers who work on a long term regular basis must be provided with the option to convert to permanent employment.

Forty per cent of the Australian workforce is in insecure work. A generation of young people have never known a job with a paid sick day or other basic entitlements. The rules at work are broken.

Insecure work impacts on every part of people's lives. There are four forms of insecure work:

- Rolling contracts,
- Labour hire,
- Casual employment
- And forcing employees to get ABNs

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

"Australian Unions fought for this improvement but it only plugs one small hole in a nationwide crisis.

"Casual workers earn less wages and lower superannuation. Women are more often in casual employment than men, and casualisation contributes to the gender pay gap.

"Too many employers have been abusing the term casual, and use it as a business model to drive down wages.

"Today's decision is the first small step towards addressing the crisis of insecure work and casualisation in Australia's workforce.

"While the Commission accepted the ACTU's argument around the impact casualisation has on people's lives, it is unable to address the bigger problem. We need political action to achieve that.

"Business too often organises its workforce and its capital to avoid the protections that were supposed to be there for working people. This decision deals with just one of the forms of casualisation that have prevented modern workplaces keeping pace with modern life."

"Working people with long term regular patterns of work that have been trapped in insecure, casual work contracts can now request permanent positions, but only after 12 months."

"Permanent positions allow people to plan for the future, to get loans, to budget, and to have a decent quality of living."

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