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Half of casual workers would prefer to have a secure job, official data finds

Half of all casual workers would prefer to have a standard, secure job, according to new research released by the ACTU today.

The research, based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data, found that 1.1 million casuals would prefer to be a standard employee. A similar amount have been employed casually for more than two years, but have not been offered permanent work, and 1 million have pay that varies from week to week.

About 706,000 do not receive a casual loading, and almost half a million have no choice about when they take holidays.

The research is contained in a new options paper prepared by the ACTU to foster discussion and debate about how to deal with the growth of insecure work in Australia.

The options paper, *The future of work in Australia: dealing with insecurity and risk*, has been prepared for the Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia, chaired by former Deputy Prime Minister Brian Howe. The inquiry has already received more than 120 submissions, with just over two weeks to go before submissions close.

The paper acknowledges that solutions to the growth of job and income insecurity in Australia will be complex and diverse, but should aim at improving the rights and conditions of all work for all workers. Approaches to insecure work should also ensure that non-standard forms of employment are used for their legitimate purpose and not as a cheap substitute to ongoing employment.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said the options paper would make an important contribution to the inquiry, but was not intended to provide any definitive policy solutions.

"This paper will be part of a comprehensive and long overdue discussion about the way we work in Australia today and into the future," she said.

"We know that insecure work – casual, fixed or short-term contracts, labour hire, and contracting – has almost doubled in the last two decades to make up about 40% of the workforce now.

"We know from research we have conducted, that for workers, insecure work often means lower pay and fewer rights and entitlements at work. It makes it harder for them to manage their household finances, to spend time with their family and friends, and to plan for the future."

Ms Kearney said there was a range of views on job security, and the inquiry wants to hear from as diverse a representation of the Australian community and economy as possible.

It is especially keen to hear from more business and employer groups who have different views to those of unions, she said. Submissions can be lodged on the campaign website, securejobs.org.au, or by phoning a special insecure work hotline on 1300 362 223 (toll free).

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