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New data shows Central Queensland leads the country in insecure jobs

Insecure work is at crisis levels in Central Queensland, with nearly 4 in 10 workers (38.7 per cent) in casual work, well above the Australian average of 21.9 per cent, according to report released today by the Queensland Council of Unions and the ACTU.

The report finds that if all forms of insecure work are included, up to half of workers in Central Queensland do not have a permanent job.

Key industries such as mining, meat processing and manufacturing – some of the biggest employers in Central Queensland – have been deliberately replacing permanent jobs with insecure ones.

The report found that levels of permanent work in the mining industry had gone from almost all permanent in 1996 to less than half this year.

Those workers are on casual or labour hire arrangements earning 30 to 40 per cent less than permanent workers employed directly by mine operators doing exactly the same work – this is despite the industry making at least \$35 billion in profits last year.

Agriculture, healthcare and retail are also employing casual workers at higher rates.

Insecure work puts workers lives on hold, with uncertainty over hours, lower pay and no job security putting tremendous financial and emotional strain on families.

Insecure work has made it harder for communities to fight the pandemic, with workers lacking job security and leave entitlements extremely vulnerable if they contract the virus. This will be a greater challenge for Central Queensland once borders reopen.

The Federal Government must take action to make it harder for employers to turn permanent work into insecure work. This includes:

- Passing a law ensuring ‘same job same pay’. Workers doing the same job should get the same pay regardless of whether they are on the books of a labour hire company or directly employed.
- Tearing up new laws that make it even easier for an employer to call someone a casual, even if they’ve done regular hours for years.
- Ensuring that workers in aged care, and all caring professions get fair pay and hours, and that employers are required to maintain staffing levels to ensure quality care.
- Limiting the use of fixed term contracts, like nearly all other developed countries do.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

“Insecure work is at crisis level in Central Queensland, with nearly 4 in 10 workers in casual work. These workers are under tremendous financial and emotional stress as insecure work means no regular hours and pay, making it harder to save or plan ahead.

“Mining, aged care, meat processing and manufacturing are key areas of work in Central Queensland and employers are deliberately replacing permanent jobs with insecure ones. This is not only bad for workers, but bad for communities who rely on workers with money in their pockets to spend.

“Nearly all workers in mining had permanent work in 1996, now it’s less than half. They are on casual or labour hire arrangements earning 30 to 40 per cent less than permanent workers employed directly by mine operators doing exactly the same work – this is despite the industry making at least \$35 billion in profits last year.

“More than half of aged care workers in Central Queensland report needing more hours to get by, and nearly 1 in 6 are forced to work multiple jobs because of low pay and hours.

“Casual employment gives all the power to employers, making it difficult for workers to bargain for better pay or rights – and the Morrison Government has condemned more workers into insecurity by passing laws earlier this year that ensure employers can label any worker as a casual irrespective of the true nature of their work.

“To stop the uberisation of the Australian workforce, the Morrison Government must protect workers and pass laws ensuring ‘same job same pay’. Workers doing the same job should get the same pay regardless if they are on the books of a labour hire company or directly employed.”

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