

Wednesday, 16 May 2012

Secure Jobs. Better Future

Preamble

Despite strong and sustained economic growth, recent decades have seen a worrying and dramatic rise of insecure work in Australia.

Today, only about 60% of workers are in full-time or part-time ongoing employment; the rest – some 4 million workers – are engaged as casuals, on short-term contracts, in labour hire, or as independent contractors.

Insecure work leaves a large section of the workforce not sharing in our national economic prosperity. They have inferior rights, entitlements and job security to their counterparts in ongoing employment. It makes it tough for working families to plan for their future when they cannot rely on regular incomes, but have rising household costs and are shouldering more and more household debt.

The rise of insecure work in Australia is the result of a business model that shifts the risks from the employer to the employee. Australian unions do not believe a strong, prosperous economy must come at the expense of quality jobs, of respect for workers' rights, and of workers exercising some control over their working lives.

Resolution

Congress welcomes the report of the Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia and thanks the Inquiry panel for their work.

The report we have heard today demonstrates that this issue is not confined to the margins of the Australian labour market. Insecure work can affect any worker – blue collar, white collar, private sector, public sector. It affects younger and older workers and, disproportionately, women, indigenous workers and workers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

It affects the high skilled as well as the low skilled.

But there is no reason why we should accept that a modern economy must drive insecurity at work.

Congress commits to a properly resourced Secure Jobs. Better Future campaign.

Congress recommends that the report be properly considered with appropriate recommendations incorporated into a detailed campaign plan to be submitted for approval at the next meeting of ACTU Executive.

The campaign will work actively to diminish the incidence of insecure work in the Australian labour market and will be aimed at actively and effectively involving the ACTU, Trades and Labour Councils, National and State unions and community partners.

The campaign will be multi-layered and will involve workplace, industrial, political, and community strategies to tackle the issue. It will include a clear framework for legislative changes and will outline a high profile communications strategy.

We believe reliable workers should have jobs they and their families can rely on with:

- Fair and predictable pay and hours of work;
- A say about how, where, and when they work, and to be consulted about change;
- Access to important conditions like annual leave, paid sick leave, overtime, penalty rates and long service leave;
- Protection from unfair dismissal;
- Quality skills and training and career opportunities; and
- A healthy and safe work environment.

To achieve these aims, Congress determines, as part of the Secure Jobs. Better Future campaign, to pursue an industrial and legislative agenda that includes:

- Improved regulation of the labour market that provides all workers with a universal set of protections and entitlements;
- Reducing and removing the ability of employers to shift economic risk onto their workforce;
- Measures to provide better protections to workers employed indirectly through labour hire and agency arrangements, and eliminate disguised employment arrangements like sham contracting; and
- Measures that empower workers in insecure work to build a working life based on dignity, respect and fair recognition of their work.

Moved: Paul Howes, AWU

Seconded: Louise Persse, CPSU