

Embargoed until 6am: Thursday, 15 December 2011

Workers have an extra month to tell their story to Inquiry into Insecure Work

Workers, unions, community and other representative groups have an extra month to contribute their experiences to the Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia, with the deadline for submissions now extended until late-January.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said 317 workers, community organisations, unions and academics had already lodged submissions by Tuesday.

“Submissions were due to close this Friday, but the inquiry panel, chaired by former Deputy Prime Minister Brian Howe, has extended the deadline until 20 January 2012, in recognition of the amount of preparation needed, particularly for organisations, and the pressures to complete other work before the Christmas-New Year break,” Ms Kearney said.

“The submissions received have already provided valuable evidence for the Inquiry 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.

“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.

“This inquiry intends to examine the impacts of insecure work and propose policy actions.”

Ms Kearney said once submissions closed, the Inquiry would then conduct hearings around the country in February and March next year, before preparing a report for the ACTU.

The ACTU recently prepared for the Inquiry an options paper, *The future of work in Australia: dealing with insecurity and risk*, which found half of all casual workers would prefer to have a standard, secure job.

“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,” Ms Kearney said. “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.”

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

Submissions can be lodged on the campaign website, securejobs.org.au, by email to inquiry@securejobs.org.au, or by phoning a special hotline on 1300 362 223 (toll free).

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