

Thursday 20 May 2021

More than one million Australians desperate for more hours and reliable incomes

The headline unemployment figure, sitting at 5.5 per cent according to data released this morning by the ABS, does not capture the reality of working life for millions of Australians unable to find enough work to support themselves or their families, or trapped in insecure, unreliable employment.

More than 1 million people are underemployed, unable to find enough work.

The Morrison Government has been exclusively referring to the unemployment data as evidence that the economic recovery is being shared by working people, but this figure hides the impact of underemployment and insecure work, both of which are systemic issues.

The number of people needing more work than they can find, working multiple jobs to make ends meet and in insecure employment are much higher than in other developed economies recovering from the pandemic.

The resurgence of insecure jobs in the aftermath of the pandemic is recreating extreme vulnerability for millions of Australians. It is forcing many Australians to piece together a living from multiple part-time, insecure jobs. The number of people working two, three or more jobs has reached the highest share in the history of ABS statistics on this issue.

Instead of acting to create more secure, reliable employment, the Morrison Government recently legislated to make it easier for employers to designate any worker as casual, regardless of the reality of their employment.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

“The headline unemployment number hides the reality that millions of Australian workers are living with – desperate for more hours or trapped in multiple insecure, unreliable jobs.

“This problem has become worse with the largest surge of insecure jobs in our nation’s history in the last six months.

“Job insecurity feeds low wage growth. The budget assumes consumer spending will increase, but how will it increase if wages go backwards?

“The recovery – such as it is – is being driven by consumer spending, which is unsustainable without wage rises and more job security for working people. The Morrison Government can act immediately to address both these issues.

“We need a recovery which provides for the working people who carried us through the pandemic.”

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