

Thursday 23 September 2021

Casual workers bearing brunt of pandemic with millions of hours of work lost and 174,000 losing work

Casual workers are bearing the brunt of the pandemic with 8.5 million in total weekly hours lost and 174,000 losing work between May to August this year as revealed by the ABS today. Retail, hospitality, and the arts are the hardest hit.

Casual workers lost employment 2.5 per cent higher than permanent workers, who fell by 68,000 during the same period.

From February 2020 to August 2021 there have been falls of employment in Arts and recreation of 19.8 per cent, 13.8 per cent in hospitality and 4.2 per cent in retail.

Looking at the more recent data from May to August 2021, retail workers lost 1.7 million hours, hospitality lost 6.6 million, and arts and recreation saw a drop of 0.6 million hours.

Women are disproportionately represented in casual employment and have experienced job losses far worse than their male counterparts, with female employment from May to August falling by 90,000 compared to 25,000 for men. Women also stopped looking for work in much larger numbers than men, 119,000 compared to 80,000.

Casual employment puts millions of workers at risk, as they are more likely to lose hours and employment and live their lives in constant uncertainty – often not knowing how many hours they'll work or what their pay will be. This takes a significant toll on the mental health of workers.

The Morrison Government has condemned more workers to a life of insecure work by recently legislating that an employer can label any worker a casual, irrespective of the true nature of their work.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

“Casual workers have lost 8.5 million in total weekly hours from May to August who now face lockdowns and a pandemic without pay or job security, because the Morrison Government refuses to bring in JobKeeper 2.0 or regulate the overuse of casual employment.

“Casual workers go week to week not knowing what their hours or pay might be, making it hard for them to plan ahead, budget and often meet ends meet. This takes a significant toll on their mental health.

“We are seeing women disproportionately represented in insecure and casual employment and therefore losing work at more than twice the rate of men – with 90,000 women losing their jobs compared to 25,000 men between May and August.

“The pandemic has shone a light on the overuse of casual employment and as we move towards recovery from the pandemic, we should be ensuring workers have stable employment and money to help rebuild. The Federal Government must regulate the overuse of casual contracts.”

Media contact: Isabella Tilley 0414 894 040