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Profits defy pandemic recession while workers continue to battle stagnant wages and rising insecurity

ACTU President Michele O’Neil will address a Senate Inquiry on job security to tell Senators that while Australian businesses netted a 17.9 per cent increase in profits over the last 18 months, workers continue to inch towards a decade of record low wage growth.

Casual workers have suffered the most: being more likely to be fired or lose hours and trying to survive without access to sick leave during a pandemic.

If wages for a casual worker had increased at the same rate as profits through the pandemic, they would be \$5000 per year better off – a life-changing difference for millions struggling to make ends meet, according to a new analysis by the Centre for Future Work for the ACTU.

In previous recessions profits have dropped faster and further than the economy at large, but thanks to Australia’s insecure work crisis, working people cushioned the fall for business owners, who were able to fire millions of workers without severance payments.

Rather than using the recovery from the pandemic as an opportunity to address the systemic issues in our workforce, the Morrison Government has looked on as insecure work has exploded once again, and legislated to make it easier for employers to deem workers casual – accelerating an issue which is already a national crisis.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O’Neil:

“Working people have borne the brunt of this crisis on every front. They have put themselves in harms way in frontline professions like health and aged care, retail and transport.

“But they have also faced the toughest economic consequences of the pandemic – shielding businesses that have enjoyed record profits while millions fell out of work.

“If the wages of casual workers were growing at the same pace as profits, they would each have an extra \$5000 in their pockets. Instead, thanks to the insecurity which runs through the entire Australian workforce, we have record profits and record numbers of people working multiple jobs.

“The Morrison Government should be taking the opportunity presented by the recovery from the pandemic to create secure jobs and boost wages, but instead they are encouraging more insecure work and a record-breaking stretch of low wage growth.

“Rather than acting to address the problem, the Morrison Government has actively contributed to it – legislating to make it easier for employers to class workers as casual simply to cut pay and avoid providing basic workplace entitlements.”

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