

Thursday, 16 February 2023

ACTU calls for end to rate rises and focus on full employment as labour market deteriorates

Today's labour market figures clearly demonstrate that Australian workers are going backwards, and that both the Federal Government and Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) need to adopt a sharper focus on maintaining full employment.

The unemployment rate has worsened to 3.7%, an increase of 0.2%, with the number of people in employment falling by 11,500 while those looking for work (unemployed) grew by 21,900. Underemployment – those workers wanting more hours but unable to secure them – has also increased.

These figures send a clear signal that the RBA's rapid rate rises risk pushing workers and the economy off a cliff.

The ACTU repeats its call for a pause in any further interest rate rises and for the RBA to instead focus on its full employment goal.

The Federal Government should also have regard to the weakening jobs market by delivering a Budget in May that can drive new and secure jobs.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus

“The deteriorating labour market makes it clear that Australian workers and their families are going backwards. Unemployment is worsening, and more Australians are looking for additional hours to make ends meet.

“The RBA must not ignore its other key objective, which is full employment. Forcing unemployment up is a decision that hurts real people and real businesses. The RBA must stop pushing workers and the economy off a cliff with rapid rate rises.

“The ACTU calls on businesses to stop price gouging. The fact that many big businesses are using the opportunity to increase prices more than necessary to fatten their profits is seriously hurting ordinary Australians. Business needs to do its part, it is not fair or reasonable that ordinary Australians are the ones paying the price with their jobs and their rapidly diminishing bank accounts.

“While the Albanese Government has committed to action, today's figures strengthen the case for a tight focus on providing secure jobs and delivering full employment, particularly in the upcoming May Federal Budget. We look forward to continuing to work with the government to deliver on these commitments.

“Australian workers should not be left to bear the brunt of deflating an inflationary bubble caused by unchecked profiteering during an unprecedented set of national and international crises.”

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