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Legal definition of casual employee a crucial IR reform

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) sees the introduction of an objective test to determine the definition of a casual employee as having a fundamentally positive impact on millions of Australian workers.

In its submission to the Productivity Commission's inquiry into workplace relations in 2015, the ACTU specifically asked the commission to consider a legal definition of a casual worker.

Shadow Employment Minister Brendan O'Connor today announced that Labor would set an objective test for when a person is a casual worker and when they are not if voted into government at the 2 July election.

The ACTU has been calling for casual workers to be better protected, as employment in Australia becomes increasingly precarious, with record levels of unemployment and a drastically falling number of permanent employees.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Ged Kearney:

"There are more than 2.2 million casual workers in Australia, mostly low paid women, many of whom have to contend with erratic schedules and hours, low wages and insecure employment."

"Australian Unions have long asked for insecure work and the casualisation of the workforce to be addressed and we welcome this objective test."

"Australia's workforce is increasingly insecure and there needs to be legislative intervention to better protect employment security."

"With the average tenure of casual employment now at over four years, the ACTU is particularly concerned about the use of casual employees who work on a long-term and regular basis and are permanent workers in all but name and yet are denied paid leave and the security and basic entitlements of permanent employment."

"A legal definition of casual employment would help ensure that workers receive the entitlements that reflect the reality of how they work so employers are not able to evade the standard obligations and entitlements owed to permanent employees merely by paying a casual loading."

"This test is a crucial industrial relations reform that will stop the use of oxymoronic terms like 'permanent casual' employee and will help ensure casual employees who in fact work as though they were permanent workers enjoy the basic rights and entitlements of permanent employment that they deserve. "

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