

Monday, 24 July 2023

Australian workers deserve reliable incomes. Minister Burke's speech welcomed.

The ACTU welcomes Minister Burke's speech to the Sydney Institute today where he foreshadowed legislation that will finally give casual workers who have been essentially working a permanent job the option of permanent rights.

As of May 2023, there were more than 2.6 million casual workers in Australia, a little under 1 in 4 of the Australian workforce. This means a significant number of workers with no job security and without access to basic entitlements like sick leave.

Based on OECD 2018 figures, the latest available data comparable to ABS data, Australia has one of the highest rates of casual workers among OECD countries.

Casual work was designed for short term needs for labour and for employees whose availability for work varied period to period. It wasn't intended for people working regular shifts for long periods of time – that's what part-time work is for.

Despite this, most casual employees work the same hours, week in, week out.

ABS data shows that 59% of casuals (1.5 million) say they work the same hours each week.

ABS data also shows over half (51.7%) of casuals have been with their employer for more than a year with 15% saying they have been with their employer for longer than 5 years.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

"What the Government is proposing is sensible and fair, it will put the decision in the hands of workers - do they want to remain casual or not? Right now, too many workers are working jobs that are casual in name only, denying workers both pay and rights.

"Australian workers deserve reliable incomes. Secure jobs allow people to build secure futures. It allows them to plan, get a loan and stay at home when they are sick. It allows them to have a paid holiday, all the basics permanent jobs should have.

"Employer lobby groups have been in denial for far too long on the importance of secure jobs. They have wanted one-way flexibility to the detriment of working families, it's gone too far and been used as a way of driving down wages.

"So many workers, many who put their health on the line during the pandemic with no paid sick leave, have been waiting a long time for a government to understand the issues and to do what is right. The Morrison Government took the rights of casual workers backwards, finally under an Albanese Government they can have hope of better job security with the rights they deserve.

ENDS

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