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Casualties of a broken system: Less than 5% of casual workers who want permanent jobs can secure one

An estimated 554,000 long term casual workers would prefer to be permanent according to a new ACTU analysis of ABS data released today.

Despite this strong demand, less than 5% of those casuals have been able to convert to permanent work under the current law. The law reflects the Morrison Government's flawed changes to casual work in the Fair Work Act in 2021.

The remaining parts of the Closing Loopholes Bill which will be debated again by Parliament in early February seek to fix this by introducing a commonsense definition of casual employment, and a fairer way for an eligible worker to choose to become permanent or remain a casual.

The new ABS survey finds that 70% of casuals have been with their employer for more than 12 months. 29% of these long-term casuals want to change to permanent work and list job security (61.2%) and paid leave entitlements (20.2%) as their top reasons for wanting to do so.

The ACTU research also finds that despite entitlements to extra loading, casuals employees earn \$11.90 less than their permanently employed counterparts. \$31 an hour compared to \$42.90 per hour – the highest pay gap ever in both dollar and percentage terms. There are also now 2.73 million casual workers in Australia – the highest number ever.

The research also shows that the cost-of-living crisis is hurting workers in casual and other forms of insecure work the hardest. 53% of insecure workers now report being financially worse off than they were 12 months ago, a 20% increase since 2021, and higher than any other group of workers.

The ACTU is calling on the Parliament to urgently pass the Closing Loopholes Bill No.2 which is due to be debated in February 2024.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"Too many casuals are casuals in name only. Most casuals work regular hours, week in week out, and have been in their job for more than a year. The Morrison Coalition Government made this erosion of job security completely lawful.

"If we are to tackle this cost-of-living crisis Australian workers need reliable jobs so they can have reliable incomes. Workers whose jobs are regular and ongoing should have the choice to become permanent workers.

"We need to stop employers rorting the system and ensure that the right to conversion for workers who chose to be permanent is clear and accessible"

ENDS

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