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Tasmanians losing out: Less than 5% of casual workers who want permanent jobs can secure one

An estimated 11,200 long term casual workers in Tasmania 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.

Casual employees now earn \$11.90 less than their permanently employed counterparts: \$31 an hour compared to \$42.90 per hour when compared on a median basis. This is a 27.7% pay gap. This is the largest gap ever in both dollar and relative terms.

In Tasmania, the situation for casual workers is even worse: The median weekly earnings of casuals in Australia is \$642, compared to median weekly earnings of \$600 for casuals in Tasmania, or a gap of \$42.

Casual workers in Tasmania are also more likely to be women: 58% of casuals in Tasmania are women compared to 53% nationally.

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 and Unions Tasmania are united in 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 Unions Tasmania Secretary Jessica Munday:

"Tasmanian workers are losing out with too many casuals being casuals in name only. Many casuals are working the same hours week in week out, these workers should have the option to convert to a permanent job to get the basic protections of sick pay and holiday pay that many of us take for granted.

"The Morrison Coalition Government made this erosion of job security completely lawful, with less than 5% of workers being able to make that switch it's clear that the current pathways to permanent work for casuals are clearly deeply flawed. The proposed new laws will ensure the right to conversion will be a much easier process and are long overdue.

“If we are to tackle this cost-of-living crisis Tasmanian 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”.

ENDS

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