

World-first international convention to protect gig workers' rights

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Australian Unions are celebrating a new International Convention on the rights of gig and platform workers as a big breakthrough that will significantly uplift the working lives of millions of gig and platform workers around the world.

Following world-leading rights in the Australian gig economy with legislation passed by the Albanese government, the Convention was adopted by the UN's International Labor Organisation (ILO) in Geneva on Friday (AEST) and will come into force to protect gig workers' rights.

The ACTU and the Transport Workers Union, which have been instrumental in pushing for protections for gig workers in Australia, were part of leading the push to secure the new Convention which extends rights to workers in the gig and platform economy, including the right to be part of a union and to bargain as a group, regardless of whether they are considered employees.

ACTU President Michele O'Neil and TWU National Secretary Michael Kaine represented Australian unions in the Geneva negotiations.

Gig and platform workers will no longer be able to be unfairly sacked or 'deactivated' by an automated system, using algorithms to hire and fire. The Convention means workers must receive a written explanation and the right to appeal any decision that jeopardises their ability to get work from a digital labour platform and protects their personal data.

The Convention will also help to ensure that gig workers are not misclassified, get paid on time and at rates that at least match their country's minimum wage.

In another win, gig and platform workers will have the right to remove themselves from a work situation that presents an imminent and serious danger to their life or health, without being penalised.

Gig and platform workers must also be protected from violence and harassment at work either online or involving the clients and customers of the platform company. Countries that are signatories to the Convention will also have to take action to prevent work accidents.

The World Bank estimates that there are between 154 million and 435 million app based gig workers globally.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President, Michele O'Neil:

"This historic decision will make a real difference in the lives of millions of gig and platform workers in the world, who are finally recognised internationally as being workers with rights.

"It builds on the groundbreaking Australian gig worker legislation introduced in 2024.

"It breaks into the business model of some of the largest and most profitable companies in the world who have designed ways of getting work done which have left workers without minimum standards of pay, conditions and safety.

“It means for platform workers that whether you are an employee or a contractor, however you might be classified, or described, you have rights at work.

“For the worker injured while rushing to complete a delivery, it mean that their safety, their health, their lives matter.

“For the worker who fears waking up one morning to find their account deactivated and their income gone, it means fairness, transparency and the right to be heard.

“Behind each of these provisions are real people. People who are working long hours to support their families. People who face risks every day simply to earn a living. People who too often feel invisible but no longer will be thanks to this landmark convention.”

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