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## Productivity Commission report show insecure work remains a major problem

A new report by the Productivity Commission has confirmed that millions of Australians are in insecure work.

The *Forms of Work in Australia* report shows that the proportion of the workforce employed casually doubled and has not fallen since it began rapidly rising two decades ago.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said the report confirmed that the growth of insecure work was a long-term problem that had not been stemmed despite a period of economic prosperity.

“This report is useful, but the debate about insecure work isn’t about numbers on a graph,” Ms Kearney said.

“We need to talk about the very real way in which insecure work is hurting workers and their families, and despite overwhelming evidence from the voices of working Australians wherever you go, business and employers remain in denial about this issue.

“When we talk about insecure work, we are not just talking about casual work, although that is a big part of it, we are talking about work through labour hire companies, short-term contracts and employees forced to become independent contractors to get a job.

“We are talking about the cleaners who wait on a text message to tell them if they need to come to work that day, and if they’ll get paid. We’re talking about the young teachers who can only get one-year contracts to do the job they love. We’re talking about a situation where more than two million Australians, often those in low-paid work, have no access to sick leave, carers leave or annual leave.

“The lack of job and income security experienced by millions of Australians is a long-term, systemic problem. It affects their ability to take out a mortgage and plan for the future.

“It is pushing us closer to a US-style working poor and the growth of a class of workers who are under-skilled and on the periphery of the economy.

“For too many, insecure work is a trap rather than a bridge to permanent employment. It is not something they have chosen, it is something they’ve had to accept to get a job.

“For example, half of all casuals have been in their current job for over a year, and up to 15 per cent have been in their current job for five years. That’s a long time to be missing out on leave entitlements such as sick leave and annual leave.

“We renew our call for urgent action to give workers the job security they deserve. The alternative is that Australian workers experience more insecurity without hope or relief.”

“Workers who are in effect permanent, should be able to choose to have the same rights as permanent workers.”

“It is not fair that workers are expected to shoulder the risk of being in insecure work, while the profit share of the economy continues to rise compared with wages.”

“Business groups are burying their heads in the sand about the extent of insecure work and its effects. They need to wake to reality and start working with unions and governments to lessen the impact of insecure work on Australian workers.”

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