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New push to give casual workers the right to permanent work

Unions are pushing to give more than two million casual workers in Australia the right to become permanent employees.

In making the announcement on World Day for Decent Work, ACTU President Ged Kearney said it was unfair that many casuals work regular shifts and rosters but miss out on important entitlements like sick leave and annual leave.

"Unions are pushing to have a clause entered into modern awards that will allow casual employees to become permanent staff members," said Ms Kearney.

"This will recognise people who are permanent workers in everything but name."

The ACTU is preparing to lodge the claim with the Fair Work Commission under the review of the modern award system that is currently underway.

There are 2.2 million casual workers (19% of the workforce) in Australia according to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures released in May.

"That's one in five Australian workers who deserve the respect and recognition of decent work," said Ms Kearney.

"People are not just tools for employers to use - they have lives and families and deserve to be given the respect of decent, secure work.

"Casual employees, even if they are working regular hours, live with the knowledge that their jobs are not secure. This makes it harder for them to get loans, rent a house and get access to training and promotion opportunities."

Ms Kearney said the clause would be cost neutral for employers.

"Employers already pay casual workers a loading to make up for them not having sick or holiday pay - so making people permanent will simply give workers those entitlements at no extra cost."

Ms Kearney said the proposed change is targeted at workers who are permanent in everything but name, not genuine casuals such as students who work irregular shifts in bars or restaurants.

"This is about the teachers, receptionists, disability support and aged care workers who are already genuinely working permanent hours and deserve to have that recognised.

"If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck - it's not a rooster. These workers are permanent in all but name and recognition of entitlements."

The ACTU will lodge its submission for the casuals claim with the Fair Work Commission next month.

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