

Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia

Chair: Brian Howe AO

Deputy Chair: Paul Munro

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7 December 2011

Ken Phillips
Executive Director
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Dear Mr Phillips,

As you may be aware, I have agreed to chair the Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia, initiated by the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

Despite the incidence of non-permanent work increasing in the last two decades, this independent inquiry will be the first comprehensive inquiry in Australia.

It will investigate the use of casual work, short and fixed term contracts, labour hire employment and dependent/independent contractors, and their impact on work and social life.

The inquiry will examine the experiences of workers, employers, community organisations, and academic research in the area, to outline the extent of the issue and proposed recommendations about the future of work in Australia.

The inquiry began taking submissions at the start of November, and has been met with wide interest and an unanticipated number of submissions to date.

Due to the tight deadline closing on 16 December, we have also received a large number of requests from people and organisations who would like more time to prepare their submissions.

There are a range of views on this issue, and I am committed to providing the opportunity for all sectors of the community to input into the Inquiry.

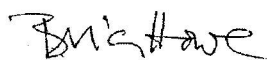
Knowing of your interest and knowledge about this topic, I am writing to extend to your organisation and its members an extension of the deadline to 20 January 2012.

I hope this will assist your organisation in having active participation on the significant matter of the future of work in Australia.

A series of public hearings will be held in capital cities and some regional centres in February and early March 2012. I have attached the terms of reference for your information.

I look forward to ongoing engagement on this increasingly important issue for working Australians and their families.

Yours faithfully,



Brian Howe, AO
Chairman
Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia



we've got your back

11 December 2011

Dear Mr Howe,

Thank you for your letter of 7 December 2011 inviting Independent Contractors Australia to contribute to your inquiry into 'Insecure Work In Australia.' Whilst we appreciate the courtesy of your approach, ICA will not be making a submission.

We have made this decision because we believe that the inquiry, by virtue of its terms of reference and the attitudes of the organization funding it:

- Is not a legitimate inquiry into work in Australia
- Is designed and intended to identify 'insecure work' only as a 'problem'
- Has no reference or brief to consider how alleged 'insecure work' contributes to the well-being of individuals, families and society in general.

In fact the very notion of considering any form of work that is not full-time and permanent as 'insecure' and 'a problem' displays a significant disconnect from the aspirations and lives of vast numbers of Australians.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions, the financier of your inquiry, is actively pushing an industrial, academic and political agenda that argues that only full-time, permanent work is legitimate or moral. Those of us who do not want to work this way are somehow being portrayed as immoral—a nonsense and an insult.

Contrary to this narrow and singular view of the ACTU, we contend that people no longer seek 'security of work'. Rather what people want is reliability and continuity of income. How they achieve that income is not fixed. It can come through many means, including casual employment, being self-employed (ICA's interest and speciality), investments, through labour hire and, yes, full-time permanent work. All these forms of work are legitimate and moral but no one is more moral than any other.

We contend that the ACTU's campaign to enforce only full-time permanent work on our society is not legitimate. It reflects an organization with a culture that has a strange desire to see working Australians bonded in the 'wage slavery' of employment.

At ICA we have different aspirations, namely that people can free themselves from this antiquated wage slavery. We aspire to the true empowerment of the working individual. We see the ACTU as campaigning against this aspiration.

Given this wide gulf between the ACTU and ICA we believe that, should we make a submission, we run the high risk of our involvement being construed and misused as somehow being supportive of the ACTU agenda.

We have evidence to support our concern. Recently the ACTU released a survey of 40,000 unionists and their attitudes to secure work. That survey showed that the unionists did not hold 'permanent secure work' as a high motivating factor in their working lives. Yet the ACTU claims the survey supports its campaigning.

Our analysis is here:

<http://www.independentcontractors.net.au/announcements/actu-survey-disproves-actu-campaign>

Whilst we do not question your independence, we do not see the inquiry as 'independent' but rather a publicity and marketing tool of the ACTU. Consequently we must decline your offer of involvement.

Regards

Ken Phillips
Executive Director, ICA