

**Submission to Australian Council of Trade Unions**

**INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO INSECURE WORK IN AUSTRALIA**

**Submitted by  
Australian Young Christian Workers (AYCW)  
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# INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO INSECURE WORK IN AUSTRALIA

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Australian YCW**

This submission is presented on behalf of The Australian Young Christian Workers movement (YCW), a movement that educates, represents, and provides services for young adults. It is autonomously run by, for and with young workers. The YCW seeks to organise, educate and empower young people to be leaders of positive change within their own lives and the community. The YCW believes that both personal and collective action is the starting point for building justice, dignity and harmony into the fabric of society.

The YCW operates out of specific goals and beliefs:

- That each young worker should be able to live and work in dignified conditions
- That each young worker should be able to find value and meaning in work.
- That each young worker should be empowered to assume responsibility for finding solutions to work situations at the local, national, and international levels, in order to create a better world for all.

This submission will focus on the effect of insecure work on young workers, particularly in the areas of human dignity, wages, conditions, security of employment. The submissions are the answers to the following questions:

1. Tell us about yourself.
2. What is your work status
3. Describe your workplace
4. What are your career prospects?
5. Your financial situation
6. Social/family impact
7. Recommendations to the inquiry

**1. Tell us about yourself.**

Matthew Mifsud, age 19, single, living with parent, not a member of a union.

**2. What is your work status**

Not currently employed, last workplace was as casual PT at Bargain Steel Centre. Only hired for Christmas period (employment ended on 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2011).

**3. Describe your workplace**

I found out through a close friend that almost all workers were casual, hired on for the Christmas rush, and that they were going to be let go after the rush. The reason employer's use this kind of work is because it is cheap, easy labour that doesn't require a constant upkeep (i.e.: it's a small monetary drain for 2 months, then after letting the 20 odd extra hands go, there is still that small skeleton crew left for the company to operate on.)

**4. What are your career prospects?**

Not a whole lot. Because I was moving from section to section (I was hired to help out the areas that had been lacking for the rush) there wasn't much formal training going on, as that would take up more time than they had to give. So, the training was minimalistic, as they needed people to run the machines ASAP.

**5. Your financial situation**

It was never all that important to know how much I was getting paid, just how I would spend it during the week when I went out, or had things to buy, or bills to pay at the end of the month.

During a regular working week, I would be paid around \$300 a week, which was more than enough for what I needed, Even after tax, expenses and general self-indulgences, I would usually have around \$150 left each week, which would remain in my account till I needed it again.

Since my contract has expired, I have needed to resort to Centrelink payments in order to pay my monthly bills on time. The amount per fortnight is enough for me to get by on, and I don't have that many problems in keeping myself from going completely under.

**6. Social/family impact**

While I was at work, everything was okay. I guess that feeling of security in the fact that I had a job was keeping me going. However, now that I'm back where I started, I realise how hard it was to secure an interview – let alone a job – in the first place. Nobody will hire someone with no or little experience. It pulls on the nerves, both on myself and on those pressuring me to get a job.

**7. Recommendations to the inquiry**

Actually going back to casual work wouldn't be too bad for me. I liked the fact that my hours weren't always the same – it gave me a chance to be flexible, to catch up with friends on days when I would usually be working.

Holding down permanent work wouldn't be too bad. Like I say, work is work, and work is

money. Permanent work would definitely bring in more money, and may even give that job security that I felt I had when I started working.

**1. Tell us about yourself.**

My name is Tara Smith, I am almost 19 years of age and single with no dependants. I currently live at home with my mother and brother. I am part of the SDA union.

**2. What is your work status**

I currently work at Target in Salisbury downs. I have worked there for almost 3 years, and am only a casual worker.

**3. Describe your workplace**

There are quite a few casuals at my workplace. I believe so many are hired as casuals so that their hours can be cut down whenever budget restraints force them to be. I don't have access to any type of leave, although I can book days off work. There have been times where I have been given extra shifts and not notified, although I am told that we are supposed to have at least 1 day's notice. We have monthly Safe Workplace Practices that we have to read and sign. There have been times where I have had an issue with hours or some other topic, and have not been able to confront someone in case my hours got cut.

**4. What are your career prospects?**

There are minimal opportunities for promotion and progression in my job. I have been out of school for a year, and wanting to go on a contract or somehow have more hours. I have received the basic training needed to be a floor staff member, and that is all.

**5. Your financial situation**

I rely on knowing how much I get paid each week, so then I can work out how much I will have after bills and such have been deducted. I have never had to get a loan or get a cash advance on my pay, even though money is tight. I don't have much left over after I buy the necessities.

**6. Social/family impact**

I find myself very stressed at my workplace. I find that I work extremely hard, and my work doesn't get recognized. I am able to swap shifts or book days off without many hurdles, just trying to find someone to cover my shift. Sometimes I only get a week's notice, sometimes a month's notice of my weekly roster.

**7. Recommendations to the inquiry**

I think that having some form of set shifts at work would greatly improve my working conditions. It would help me plan around work and fit in my other commitments. It doesn't necessarily have to be contract work (although that would be brilliant) but having some set shifts would benefit me greatly.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Australian Young Christian workers if you require additional information.