



Online submission					
First name	Pat		Surname	Francis	
Age	Not specified	Gender	Female	State	NSW
Occupation (if available)	Transcriptionist				
Text of submission	<p>My name is Pat Francis. I live alone in the inner eastern suburbs, an area I have live in for 33 years. I am not currently a member of a union although I have been a member of the United Services Union off and on when my budget allows which is not that often now.</p> <p>I am currently working, being employed in my present position since 2004, a casual position at Merrill Corporation, a GOVERNMENT contractor, where I can work anywhere from a few hours up to 50/60 hours a week. This is presently done on an outworker basis although not under ABN because I refused this option when offered, preferring to stay as an employee, a decision which I later found out saved me from having workers comp, superannuation and long service leave stripped from me.</p> <p>Other workers have been given the option of taking the ABN outworker option or nothing and have been denied their long service leave. These other workers are working under what is referred to as sham contracting. Other casuals have also been tricked out of their long service leave entitlements. People have been sacked just before Christmas on several occasions.</p> <p>I have no control over my work. I am given whatever is available, from a few hours to so many hours that I regularly end up working early mornings, late nights, almost every weekend and almost every holiday (I just finished doing some work for them just now before I started this submission, Sunday). Also, if I don't have the work ready in the two day time period I am allotted they threaten to take it away. Additionally, I and all other workers are laid put off over the Christmas period with no work at all, ranging from about three weeks to up to six weeks in my case. This does not suit me at all in fact, it makes life extra hard.</p> <p>About three quarters of my co-workers are employed on an ABN basis. Of the people who are in the office about half are casual and half full time (the full timers were hired many years ago. All the casual positions have arisen in latter times). I know the company uses this kind of employment because it relieves them of any obligations at all to any of their workers other than on a piece rate. I have not had a raise at all in over four years</p>				

and I would say this is true of the other workers as well, apart from the minimum wage raises for the casuals and the full time staff working in the office. I am a transcriptionist and my piece rate has been \$1.30 per hundred words typed since I moved out of the office in about 2007.

I don't bring up issues directly with the other employees who give me the work as they have the power to drop me from doing the work. The only time I ever asked for a raise it was dismissed.

We have never had OH&S training. I would suspect (through knowledge of dealings others have had with this corporation) that they would try to deny any responsibility and I would have to go to Industrial Relations or Fair Work to have any issue resolved.

I have no access to any sick leave, annual leave, family leave, redundancy pay, notice of termination, paid parental leave or notice of change of hours, none.

There was no training provided for my job except for (large) manuals that I am supposed to read on my own time. When I took up this issue this my supervisor lost his temper, saying I (and others before me) were unreasonable on the matter. Because I will not read the manuals thoroughly there is some work that I cannot do for this company as it would bring my wages down too low to cover my weekly expenses. This company offers no opportunity for training, no opportunity for development of skills and there are no opportunities at all for promotion or progression in my job.

It is very important that I know how much I will be paid weekly. No one can budget in these sorts of circumstances. The only thing that saves me from complete penury is that I managed to gain several customers under my own ABN so that I get several different payments to cover expenses. If my job at Merrill Corporation was my only position I would be out on the street. I have no money left at the end of the week and am often juggling bills and some bills have been left unpaid. I am currently on a payment plan for my electricity bill and have been twice before. This severely impacts my life. I go nowhere, do nothing, even small treats are seldom. In the first three years of working for Merrill Corporation my savings disappeared, from \$17,000 down to nothing. So far I have not had to approach a charity for assistance but I have had to hock my jewellery twice this year and also borrowed from friends at least a dozen times. The hocking experience was a very expensive but less humiliating way to go. No one likes to have to borrow from friends all the time.

My work situation affects my stress levels enormously. I am constantly under stress - which is not good for either my health or social relationships. I am always worried.

	<p>The challenges I face for my future are enormous. My rent is half my wage under normal circumstances and sometimes much more than my wage but I can't afford to move. I also find it hard to live with another person because this work I do forces me to work at home. I have found it hard to get another job as lack of money makes dental care less than adequate and I don't feel I present as well as I could. Lack of money for appropriate clothes and proper hairdressing as well as the time it takes to prepare and attend an interview deter me from trying to get a better position. This all relates back to the amount of money I get paid. No one should have to live this way!</p> <p>I get no notice of the hours I am to work and when it does come I have to do it and it very, very, very often interferes with the very few social things that I can afford to do. I would like to take up some other (volunteer or community) activities but find it impossible in my present situation. I have not had a holiday to anywhere except a few days with friends since I began this job in 2004 - it is simply unaffordable. This kind of job takes an awful toll.</p> <p>Recommendations for improvement: Companies should not be allowed to hire people this way. More particularly, companies that undertake government contracts, as this one does, should be bound by conditions to not be able to employ people this way, either as outworkers or through the sham contracts that they do. There should be investigation of these sorts of practices, proper enforcement and punishment, severe, for breach of conditions. Wages have gone down while expenses have gone up; workers need all their entitlements to live a decent life. Casual work should not be allowed to extend beyond say three months under LAW, not under conditions that say the employee has to request to be made full time. And if people are replaced every three months questions should be asked why. Additionally, companies should not be allowed to outsource their workforce overseas, especially under GOVERNMENT contracts. So, in short, improvement could be made by outlawing of casual and outsourced work and full policing and penalties applied under laws regulated by a proper independent authority. The union should also find out ways to reach and get casually employed people to join. Union dues may be fair if you are earning a decent wage, they are impossible if you are not. There should be special arrangements for the casually employed, maybe at half the rate but with a higher deductible, as it were, in case of help needed or something. There is definitely a feeling that as far as casual workers go the union is not interested. Further training should also be given and commitment to the union expected of all employees of the union as a lot of the attitude and advice given is poor, sloppy and misinformed.</p>
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<http://securejobs.org.au/independent-inquiry-into-insecure-work-in-australia/>

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