

## Award system letting down women and carers

The ACTU's response to the Fair Work Commission's Work and Care discussion paper outlines changes that need to be made to awards to update them to reflect the needs of a modern workforce.

Despite some significant improvements, awards still reflect a long outdated idea that the average worker does not have any caring responsibilities as their partner looks after this at home while they are available to work full time.

Women's workforce participation is a record high and the vast majority of couples both work, including when they have children. People are also living longer meaning working aged people are also often have caring responsibilities for parents or grandparents. Awards were made a time this was not the case and so do not reflect the needs of women and carers.

The ACTU made 26 recommendations to update awards so they reflect the need for flexibility in today's workplaces for carers.

These include:

- Greater roster predictability for part-time workers so they can better manage care and child care
- A minimum number of part time hours to workers receive predictable minimum incomes
- Awards should be varied to provide workers with the right to request work from home arrangements on an individual and collective basis
- A minimum engagement of four hours for all workers
- The right to regular and predictable patterns of work so workers can manage work and care

### Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

"Working people are also carers. Gone are the days of families having one person doing full-time care for children and elderly parents. Most families have to juggle work and care, our system of workplace rights needs to be updated and modernised to reflect today's workforce.

"Workers who are carers need access to more predictable and regular hours so they can manage caring for children and childcare. Whilst more workers are carers, workplaces have become less family friendly and flexible because of the use of technology. Many employers have automated their rostering where the algorithm has no concern for the needs of humans for regular hours to arrange child care or a predictable monthly income to pay the bills.

"Sensible changes can be made to our Awards that finally bring them into the reality of 2024. This includes the right to work from home, and flexibility that is two way, not one way. These changes would mean that software will need to be written to ensure rosters include the needs of workers as humans, not as units allocated to achieve one way flexibility for a business. In the end, respecting the needs of workers as carers is good for employers as well.

**ENDS**

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