

JOB SECURITY

Motion

HON ADELE FARINA (South West) [11.27 am] — without notice: I move —

That we acknowledge job insecurity has negative impacts on the mental health of workers and job productivity, and call on businesses operating in Western Australia not to terminate permanent jobs in favour of short-term contract jobs.

During private members' business on 13 September I moved the Alcoa enterprise bargaining agreement motion, and the opposition put the proposition that the strike was about the capacity of a business or an employer to decide what its workforce looks like and manage it appropriately when circumstances change. This echoed the comments of Michael Parker, Alcoa's chairman and managing director, in his media releases that the strike was about Alcoa being able to manage its business according to increasingly volatile growth or operating demands, and about Alcoa remaining internationally competitive. These views have little regard for the impact of insecure work on employees; they focus solely on what is in the best interests of the employer.

The motion today provides the house with an opportunity to consider, albeit briefly due to time limitations on the debate, some of the academic research on the impact of insecure work on the productivity and mental health of workers, to not only provide balance, but also challenge the view that workforce flexibility results in greater competitiveness and productivity for businesses or employers. Any gain is short-lived, and the consequences for society and workers are significant.

It was reported in an ABC news article dated 2 June 2012 that beyondblue, one of the nation's most prominent mental health organisations, had identified job insecurity as one of the leading risk factors for depression and even heart disease. In the article titled "Job insecurity could spark health crisis, experts warn", the then beyondblue CEO, Kate Carnell, was quoted as saying —

"There is no doubt that job insecurity is a major cause of job strain and job strain is a major risk factor for depression.

She was further quoted as saying —

"So we're seeing more depression in the workplace, we're seeing more absenteeism and almost more importantly more presenteeism—people who are coming to work when they are depressed —

Or simply unwell —

without the capacity to concentrate enough ...

This can present issues for co-workers in the workplace. For people in insecure work with no paid sick leave and underemployment, becoming ill is really not an option. Not taking time off is paramount, because to do so would impact their pay and possibly their continued employment, causing a whole lot of other stresses that just snowball. This, of course, makes people employed in insecure work more susceptible to burnout or periods of no pay if they do indeed need to take time off for sick leave. Our welfare system has a requirement of a qualifying period of six weeks without pay before a person can access any of that welfare. This basically means that it does not provide a safety net for people in insecure work who may be between jobs or who may need to take time off for sick-leave purposes. People in insecure jobs with no paid sick leave are going to work simply because they are too scared of losing their jobs. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that one in four Australians are in casual work—many not because they want to be but because it is the only work they can get. In 2016, Roy Morgan Research found that 46 per cent of workers who rated their job security as very poor reported suffering anxiety, stress and/or depression within the preceding 12 months.

The negative impacts of insecure work on the mental health of workers is supported by a growing body of research work, as is the finding that the growth of casual employment is not necessarily a path to productivity or cost savings. In fact, increasing evidence shows that there are a number of hidden costs in employing significant numbers of casual workers. Indeed, the 1991 book *Job Insecurity: Coping with Jobs at Risk* by J. Hartley and others, together with this growing body of research, shows that stress engendered by job insecurity depends on the perceived probability and the perceived severity of the job loss, and that perceived job insecurity acts as a chronic stressor. Research published in this area since the mid-1980s has documented consistent adverse effects on psychological morbidity due to the stresses of insecure work. The robustness of the association has been enhanced by longitudinal studies in Sweden, Finland and the United Kingdom, which all support this. Whitehall II was a longitudinal study of white-collar civil servants. It collected baseline data from employees in 20 government departments. Long after this baseline data was collected, one of the 20 departments participating in the study was sold to the private sector—a transfer of business in which most of the workforce lost their jobs. Three years before the sale, when privatisation was just a rumour, increases in nearly every measure of self-reported morbidity were

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seen in both genders. Increases were relative not only to the control participants in the departments not exposed to job insecurity, but also, crucially, to the pre-existing morbidity at baseline.

A number of studies have shown raised blood pressure and cholesterol in both blue-collar workers and white-collar workers before redundancy. I point members to a 1970 paper by Kasl and Cobb, “Blood pressure changes in men undergoing job loss: a preliminary report”; Kasl’s 1979 paper “Changes in mental health status associated with job loss and retirement”; and the 1984 paper by S.A. James and others about blood pressure differences among men and the role of that as an occupational stressor. In her paper “Is job insecurity harmful to health?”, Dr Jane Ferrie pointed to a study in Finland that revealed that high job insecurity was found to increase long-term sick leave by 30 per cent and short-term sick leave, being three days or less, by 20 per cent compared with low job insecurity. Her paper also referenced a number of other studies that showed that job insecurity increased the need to consult a physician and health service use, including hospital attendances. In a 2016 paper entitled “Does job insecurity deteriorate health?” by Caroli and Godard, the researchers found that the effect of perceived job insecurity on health is likely to be stronger for workers with low employability—that is, with a low probability of finding a new job.

In a 2015 paper by Imran and others, titled “Impact of Organizational Justice, Job Security and Job satisfaction on Organizational Productivity”, the researchers reviewed an extensive number of past studies that showed a strong positive relationship between organisational justice, organisational commitment and employee satisfaction, and went on to investigate the relationship of organisational justice and job security with organisational productivity. They found that by focusing on employee job security, job satisfaction and organisational justice, productivity of any organisation can be increased. In essence, they identified what they referred to as a new path to increased productivity that is likely to be more successful than the short-term gains identified with workforce flexibility. They went on to say that in this new era of globalisation, the business world is facing strong competition, yet in this competitive age, it is those organisations that focus on employee satisfaction, justice and security and have strong human resource management that will not only grow their productivity, but also survive in the long term. That completely counters the point of view that we need workforce flexibility to compete in the global market, remain competitive and increase productivity. This particular research paper found the complete opposite.

Numerous studies in recent years have noted the disparity in outcomes for casual workers and permanent workers performing the same tasks. Some of the notable disparities are identified in a 2006 paper by Maria McNamara of the University of New South Wales, titled “The Hidden Health and Safety Costs of Casual Employment”. McNamara reviewed a body of international research linking casual employment to negative effects, such as decreased job satisfaction, motivation, productivity and performance, as well as increased turnover, stress, occupational injury and illness levels. She referred to previous research—a 2000 paper by Allan, a 1980 paper by Goldstein, a 1995 paper by Huselid, and a 1999 paper by Janssen. McNamara found that these adverse outcomes are costly for organisations, and that employers should have a higher regard for the added risk of casual employment.

McNamara then focused in the article on the adverse occupational safety and health outcomes associated with casual work and job insecurity. Adverse occupational safety and health outcomes include an increased number of fatalities, higher rates of illness and psychological distress, decreased reporting propensity, fewer training and career opportunities, as well as inferior knowledge and compliance with OSH entitlements, standards and regulations. She sourced a number of research papers to support those arguments—a 1999 paper by Aronsson, a 2001 paper by Park and Butler, and a 2001 paper by Quinlan, Mayhew and Bohle. McNamara also noted that there is at least one test case—Secure Employment Test Case [2006] NSWIRComm 38—that acknowledged that casual employment has adverse OSH outcomes.

Obviously, we have moved on a fair bit from 2006 and a significant number of additional cases support that evidence. McNamara says that adverse OSH outcomes are associated with job insecurity because casual workers are more likely to be under greater pressure in terms of competition for work, retention of that work and pressure to earn a liveable income. We can add to this inadequate training, induction and supervision, inability of outsourced workers to organise and protect themselves and a reluctance of casual workers to raise occupational safety and health issues for fear of losing their jobs. McNamara also notes that the cost of psychological injury claims are significantly higher than other injuries because they tend to involve longer periods off work and higher medical, legal and other claims. McNamara also reviews studies that identify reduced job performance and involvement, lower organisational commitment —

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Member, I am sorry to interrupt. Are you reading your speech or just quoting from copious notes?

Hon ADELE FARINA: I am relying on copious notes because I am referring to research papers and I need to get the titles, dates and findings correct. I am heavily relying on my notes.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Please proceed.

Hon ADELE FARINA: McNamara identified that a range of other issues also impacted on this. She reviewed a number of papers that identified that reduced job performance and involvement and lower organisational commitment is associated with casual jobs. There is considerable research on this point. McNamara states that the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005 figures show that 37 per cent of all casual workers want more hours of work because they need the income and 61 per cent of casual workers experience variations in their weekly earnings. In addition, casual workers find it harder to get loans or mortgages and she noted that in the 2005 ABS figures only 35 per cent of casual workers own their home, compared with 60 per cent of permanent workers. Members will recall that I have raised this issue previously. If we are to increase the incidence of casualised work, the result will be that those people will find it very difficult to secure a mortgage and, therefore, will not be in a position to own their home. Governments are very ill prepared to address this looming problem in that we are not building the public housing stock at a fast enough rate to deal with this looming and real problem that we need to address. It is a significant matter. I note that I am running out of time.

McNamara also reviews the hidden cost to employers of presenteeism. As I explained, this is when employees turn up for work but they are not really fit enough to be at work and are suffering from ailments that impact their performance and productivity. In addition, they will often infect other workers, leading to further presenteeism and absenteeism. In a 2004 paper, Hemp labelled presenteeism as “an almost invisible but significant drain on productivity”. He found that the cost of presenteeism to US companies was much more substantial than absenteeism. Lost productivity was significantly greater from days at work while sick, estimated at 72 per cent, compared with missed days due to illness, at 28 per cent. Also, in relation to the estimated annual cost of lost productivity of \$250 billion per annum, it is estimated that the presenteeism cost is about \$180 billion. It is a significant issue.

I conclude by saying that this is a real issue. We cannot simply look at how it might benefit employers. We need to identify the impact on workers.

HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan) [11.44 am]: Before I start my presentation today, I want to say that when legislation leaves a vacuum, competitive forces can force even good employers to do the wrong thing. I think we have done a pretty good job of looking at employer responsibilities in providing a safe work environment. Unfortunately, I do not think we have done as good a job in making sure that employers fulfil their responsibility in making a safe environment for the mental wellbeing of their staff. The Fair Work Commission refers to casual employment as employment without guaranteed hours and with unusual patterns of work, and employment that can terminate at any time without notice. In my view, that also fills all the requirements of precarious employment. I think that the terms can be interchangeable. The *Macquarie Dictionary* refers to “precarious” as meaning dependent on the circumstances beyond a person’s control or being at the will or pleasure of somebody else. There is no doubt in my mind that this form of employment creates stress and anxiety for the vast majority of employees who take this form of employment, not because they have a choice in the matter but because they have to.

I want to talk about a couple of examples and I will refer to retail because that is the industry I know best. My time in retail is a few years ago now, but even then, looking back at casual or precarious employment, we saw many examples of the stress and anxiety that that sort of employment creates. We are coming into the Christmas period, so maybe that is a good example. Coming into the Christmas period, parents still have responsibility for their children and organising child care and such, but often the employer requires them to work more than their normal allotted hours. I often saw circumstances in which people were told that they had to be in early to set up for sales at Christmas. We would often see a stressed parent experiencing great anxiety trying to work out what they would do with their seven-year-old child at six o’clock in the morning when they had to come in early every day for a week. They had these sorts of additional pressures. Casual employment seems to suggest that people take the extra hours by choice and there is a mutual agreement to do additional hours. That was never the case. Of course, the employer needed the employee to do the additional hours and if they did not do those additional hours, they may not have had as many hours the following week; someone might have had fewer hours or might not have been on the roster at all. They were not terminated, but they might not receive any hours. Then we get the dual concern with casual employment—that is, someone needs an income. Whether it is a first or second income into the household, a person needs an income and because they are at the pleasure of another person, that income can be severely impacted or diminished altogether if they do not continue to please that employer. Satisfying those sorts of work commitments is beyond what is reasonable and many employers take advantage of that.

The previous speaker spoke about the inability to get a mortgage. I had the fortune of being in America earlier this century. One of the things that struck me over there was that people often had two or three jobs, and none of them was a permanent job. They had a casual job somewhere and when they finished that job, they went to a restaurant and worked there in the evenings. They had many forms of casual work to form a living wage. I have a fear that we are moving towards that situation. We may have a whole generation of people who go through their lives without having a permanent job and who have multiple forms of casual employment or labour hire employment, which presents the same issues. The previous speaker spoke about being able to afford a mortgage. Obviously, to

move into retirement with some sort of comfort, people inevitably need to own their own home. The concern about having not just a living wage, but also a guaranteed wage that allows people to get a mortgage and fulfil the great Australian dream of owning their own home, is another form of anxiety and stress.

I have a couple of examples about an employer. I will not name them because I do not think they were doing anything more than other employers were put in a position of doing through market forces. I was involved in a set of negotiations with a major discount store and I remember trying to negotiate the terms and conditions of the agreement. One of the things that the employer really wanted was split shifts. In retail, split shifts have never been part of a retailer's normal work pattern. Basically, split shifts means that the employer wants an experienced employee to come in for two hours in the morning and maybe for two hours in the evening, and they are their four hours for the day. Of course, those hours may or may not fit in with their family life. Another thing that I thought was quite interesting in those negotiations was that the employer had a whole lot of casuals. Managers tend to roll with the punches and try to take the easiest way forward, so the casuals would often be on the same roster not just for weeks on end, but for months or years on end. We put in a claim suggesting that casual employees who had been on the same roster for years should have an opportunity to move over to at least part-time work or, hopefully, full-time work if it could be managed. The employer resisted it and I could never understand why. If it was seasonal work, that would be one issue, but this was not seasonal work; this work occurred every week of the year, yet the employer resisted the claim.

The other thing that happened during those negotiations was that the employer had worked out through the registers exactly how much stock was sold during different hours of the day. The discount store wanted to have just enough staff in the store at any one time to match the requirements of the stock going out the door. They wanted a lot of flexibility with their rostering to cope with that, so split shifts was one thing that they wanted, without having any regard for the impact on the employee. That is a problem. Occupational health and safety regulations have been in place and employers have improved occupational health and safety practices in many workplaces because of the legislation and regulations we have put in place. I think there may be regulation or legislation for threats to mental health, but it is not applied in the same way as regulation or legislation for physical threats. When legislation abandons a field, it is left to market forces, and those market forces put pressure on employers to do the wrong thing.

If I had more time, I could go into many more things that have occurred. One thing I want to say in the last part of my contribution is that this is a growing phenomenon. For many reasons, manufacturing production was high prior to 1980 and that allowed there to be more regular hours, but there was tremendous growth between 1980 and 1998 in the use of casual and labour hire employment. This does not lend itself to a good society. It is not the sort of society that we should leave our kids. We should become more involved in legislation to ensure that all employers know what the legislation requires and abide by that legislation. The use of temporary employment in the form of casual and labour hire employment should be on the decline, not the incline.

HON ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan) [11.54 am]: I rise on behalf of the Greens to indicate our support for this important motion and thank Hon Adele Farina for bringing the matter of the correlation between precarious employment and mental health issues to the attention of this house. It is a very important issue. We know from research that precarious employment is, unfortunately, on the increase. I note the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre report "Future of Work in Australia", released in April this year, which found that precarious employment is a growing concern for government, industry and community sectors as we move forward. That encapsulates not only the inadequacy of working hours and employment benefits, which has already been spoken about, but also the insecurity of the job itself and, importantly, a lack of employment rights and entitlements.

We know that precarious employment has been increasing for both men and women since 2009 but, interestingly, even more rapidly for men than for women. The issue of casualisation is anticipated to become an even greater concern in the future, particularly if more and more workers are recruited on casual terms to positions that previously would have attracted a permanent or fixed-term contract. The other part that we need to be concerned about as we move into the future is that the overall gap between the youngest cohort and older workers has widened by nearly 30 per cent since the start of this decade. Casual workers now make up a significant subset of those people who are precariously employed.

Another publication that was released in 2015 provided an overview of casual employment in Australia. This is about the issue of casual workers in comparison with ongoing workers. It was found that they tend to be significantly younger, with 39.3 per cent of all casuals aged under 25; they are more likely to have no superannuation coverage, which is a huge concern as we move forward; they are more likely to have a preference for working even more hours and are more likely to work at unsociable hours, and I include weekends in that definition; they are less likely to usually work overtime or get opportunities for overtime; and they tend to have quite a lot of variation in their earnings from week to week, which creates a significant financial stress. Concerningly—I do not think this is a coincidence—they also tend to be less likely to be a member of a union and are also 50 per cent less likely to receive training from their employers. I say this because it is important that we

note that, although increasing casualisation and job insecurity is a concern for workers right across the spectrum, it is having a disproportionate impact particularly on younger workers.

As has already been well canvassed, many studies show that there is a very strong connection between job insecurity and poor physical and mental health. This is effectively creating a mental health crisis for young people. Insecure work is absolutely playing a role in this. We know that the size of the effect of job insecurity on health and mental health can be as large as the effect of unemployment. Simply, people who are in safe and secure jobs cope better with stressful working conditions and life events. A lot of this is self-evident. They are more likely to have secure housing, they are more likely to plan for the future and they are more likely to meet ongoing expenses, and they are less likely to be left in a position in which they have to work week to week—all the circumstances that will significantly impact on people's resilience and capacity to maintain mental health and deal with stress levels. The benefit of promoting levels of secure work is broader than just to the individual worker. We need to think about this as a community. When a significant section of our workforce is under that level of mental strain, that overflows into the community and has an impact on people's home and family lives. In fact, the evidence shows us that the higher the level of job security, the higher the level of productivity. If people are not particularly concerned about the fundamental humanity of their fellow citizens, surely at the very least they would be concerned to ensure that they are getting the absolute best from people working, and that would mean they would seriously want to look at addressing the issue of job insecurity and casualisation.

Simply, we need to make sure that young people in particular, the younger generations, are not going to be left behind in this regard. Government has a role to play and could take responsibility for recognising the changing nature of work. That means that we need to be all supporting legislation that upholds young workers' rights in particular—all workers, but noting the impact on young workers—including fair pay and conditions. It is also about noting the important role that training plays in this area. We need to ensure that bodies such as skills training councils are able to be effective and engage with industry to ensure the training sector is getting the right information so the right courses are being built to prepare people for the jobs of the future. This is young people as well as people who need or seek to transition into other areas of works. These reskilling opportunities are going to need to be accessible and affordable. It is highly problematic when people are discouraged from being able to undertake these training opportunities simply because of cost. We need to ensure the training delivered gives people high-level transferable skills that have the capacity to form a key part of a range of jobs or opportunities for people's careers going into the future. We need to address this issue. I thank the honourable member for bringing this matter to the attention of the house. It is one that we should all be taking very seriously.

HON MATTHEW SWINBOURN (East Metropolitan) [12.01 pm]: Firstly, I would like to thank Hon Adele Farina for bringing this motion into the house. I appreciate the remarks she made, and also those of Hon Martin Pritchard and Hon Alison Xamon.

Like many younger workers, I was subject to workplace insecurity. I worked in a job for six years as a casual employee—the same job, fairly regular hours, but no long service leave, no sick leave and no annual leave. I was working 30 hours a week and there was no good reason that I could not have been put in the position on a more permanent basis, but it suited the employers at the time, so they were the circumstances I faced. Of course, with that came the uncertainty and insecurity that arises. I appreciate the thrust of this motion. The situation I just described was in the 1990s. We are now almost in the third decade of the twenty-first century and these things are still very much present.

Job insecurity is incredibly stressful for workers. I am sure some of us here at one point or another in our lives have experienced it, and if they have not, they are probably part of the lucky few. Despite our jobs being precarious due to us having to face elections, none of us in this house can truly say we face job insecurity like many of our fellow Western Australians. We are given the certainty of a four-year term. The precarious nature of the job market has become more prevalent in recent years and this high level of job insecurity does not just impact people economically; it impacts their mental and physical health as well, and we heard about that from the other speakers. Much of this job insecurity has now become structurally ingrained in our job markets and workplaces. Through waves of labour market deregulation, the position of our most vulnerable workers has become more and more tenuous in the drive for so-called workplace flexibility. Workplace flexibility has been sold to us on the basis that the employer and employee can come together, sit down as equal bargaining partners and mutually agree to workplace terms that meet both their needs and all that sort of stuff, but in reality most workplace flexibility is about giving employers the opportunity to make work more insecure and less well paid and to move risks from the employer onto the employee. That risk was identified by Hon Martin Pritchard when he talked about split shifts. That is a classic example of an employer seeking to shift the risk of the vagaries of their custom, in a retail environment, onto the worker—"I only want someone when I am certain that there will be customers walking through the door, and if it is a bit quiet, you do not get paid, you go home." The employees do not get that security. One of the other things about split shifts is that, again, they are often at the lower end of the labour market—lower paid workers and people on minimum wages. What happens in those circumstances as well is that those workers often have to travel some distance to get to their workplaces,

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so they are often incurring additional public transport or parking costs, because they have to park in the morning and then go home, and they have to park in the evening and then go home again. I recall circumstances of restaurants employing workers on split shifts during the notorious Court Liberal years when the third wave and those sorts of industrial laws came through. There would be workers actually sitting at the tables of restaurants not being paid and waiting for things to pick up, and the employer would then say that they would start paying the worker because there was some work to be done. That shifts the risk of managing those things onto the worker, who is the person probably least able to bear those risks and losses. As I say, workplace flexibility has been sold to us in those terms.

Members should please not take anything I say here as meaning there is not a role for casual employment in the labour market. There are certainly very legitimate circumstances in which casual or labour hire-type arrangements are perfectly legitimate. I will give the example of my son, who is 15 years old and works at McDonald's. He is truly a casual employee. He is offered shifts on an occasional basis and there is no regularity to them, but he has the benefit of not having to rely on that income to pay for his rent, food and all those things, because he has the bank of mum and dad to support him, and he certainly goes to that bank a lot!

Also, my experiences are informed by my 15 years working for trade unions. I worked for a number of trade unions. The first was what was in those days known as the Australian Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union, which is now known as United Voice. In my capacity there I dealt with cleaners and security guards, amongst other workers, and they were also at the brunt of workplace deregulation in the 1990s. Even in government, where people were employed as cleaners in the education department, those arrangements were privatised. Government decided it no longer wanted to be in the business of employing the people who cleaned its schools, so it outsourced the work to contractors. Obviously, the biggest cost in that business is labour, so if a company wants to make a profit, cut costs or increase its profit, what does it do? It cuts its labour costs. There was an increase in the precarious nature of that work, so there were fewer cleaners doing the cleaning. By all accounts the cleaning was done more poorly and people were paid less as they were put on what were then workplace agreements, and those agreements undercut the award conditions as they only had to comply with the Minimum Conditions of Employment Act. I dealt with the precarious nature of work in that sector and I dealt with workers who had gone from a secure working arrangement to an insecure one for no really good, solid reason. Then, fortunately, school cleaning was brought back in-house in most instances under the Gallop and Carpenter governments.

I also worked for the Health Services Union, and working for that union I dealt with health professionals and clerical, administrative and managerial staff. Particularly amongst clerical staff there was this insecure arrangement in respect of continuing short-term, fixed-term contracts—so three-month contracts continually rolled over. Workers would come to us, members of the union, who had been on those arrangements for literally years for no good reason, and they were doing the same job. They had the insecurity and uncertainty, and that affected their mental health. Suddenly there was a change of manager and the manager was of the view that they did not need to have this worker for any good reason, and suddenly thrust upon the worker were all these fears, emotions and insecurities that come with that arrangement. It is pleasing that the McGowan government is doing something about that and is looking to bring those workers back into a more secure employment relationship. As a government, we should be a model employer. We should not look for the sharpest employment practices possible to squeeze as much as we can possibly get out of workers—usually at the lower end of the labour market—who are already living and working in precarious circumstances.

Before I came here I worked for the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union. The construction industry is inherently insecure because of its nature, and that has always been the case. Most tradesmen and labourers were engaged on a daily-hire basis rather than a full-time basis because the work was attached to projects. Having said that, in that industry we have seen a rise of labour-hire arrangements and casual employment, which was unheard of in that industry originally. Labour-hire arrangements are particularly precarious for the reasons identified by other members, including the fear to speak up and the fear of not having a job the next day.

I have not had much chance to connect job insecurity with mental health issues, but in my actual and anecdotal experience with workers, those in precarious employment situations are more stressed and unwell. A range of other issues go with that. I give a shout-out to Mates in Construction, which is an organisation set up in cooperation between unions, employers and other groups to try to improve the mental health of workers in that area and give them somewhere to go to when they have issues. Ultimately, if we want to address the underlying causes of some of the mental health issues in that industry, we need to address the structural issues and the precarious employment relationships. Insecure work is a common reason for people in that industry to be stressed. They come home and cannot pay their bills, support their families, or take the kids out to the movies. I commend this motion to the house and thank Hon Adele Farina for bringing it forward.

HON PIERRE YANG (South Metropolitan) [12.11 pm]: At the outset I would like to thank Hon Adele Farina for moving this motion and the previous speakers for their contributions. Job insecurity is a worrying trend in Australia, but it is not unique to Australia. Job insecurity has increased in a range of countries in the developed

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world, such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Sweden and many others. At the end of the day, it affects the economy and productivity.

If we compare a worker who has long-term secure employment with a worker who is on a short-term contract or, even worse, no contract and is working in an arrangement under which they do not know when their employment will be terminated—not in the sense of the contract being finished, but in the sense that if they do not get on the roster, they do not get work—clearly one is better for the overall mental health of the worker and the other is a lot worse. At the end of the day, that will affect the productivity of the worker's company and the economy through the means of employment. We have seen that develop in other nations. More and more people are working in the so-called gig economy. They have very little protection, with near to no workers' compensation insurance, no holiday pay, no sick leave, no bereavement leave, nor a range of other entitlements that a worker should have. The union movement has been fighting for centuries to ensure that workers have decent wages and conditions so they can better work and live and have a decent life.

Centuries ago, the average worker's working conditions were a lot worse. We have all heard stories of workers having to work 10, 12 or 15 hours nearly seven days a week. Thanks to the union movement, we have what we have in Australia. We have decent conditions for people to go to work. When they come home, they can spend time with their families and rest. This trend is gradually eroding and taking away what the union movement has been fighting to preserve. We must be aware of and debate that to find the best way to protect workers' rights. That will be good for business as well. A happy and excited worker who wants to go to work and help their employer will be better for productivity and ensure that employers can make the profits they need to make.

I note the negative impact of job insecurity on workers and their families. Not long ago during private members' business we debated a motion moved by Hon Matthew Swinbourn about the negative impact of increasing automation on our society. I think this motion is very relevant to that debate. Increasing job insecurity will have a negative impact. Hon Martin Pritchard mentioned his visit to the United States of America. I had the opportunity to visit the United States some seven or eight years ago. A restaurant I visited had a note on the wall stating that the minimum wage in the state I visited was \$8 an hour. People cannot survive on that. If they work eight hours a day, that gives them \$64, which is not a living wage. Surely, we do not want to go back to that wage in Australia. We have every need to protect what our workers have. Job insecurity will have a negative impact.

Job insecurity causes mental stress to workers. Workers have financial commitments such as mortgages, car loans, school fees, and the need to feed and clothe their children. If an employee is working on a casual basis or is on a short-term contract and does not know whether they will be able to afford these things, that will definitely cause a lot of mental anguish and stress. It is timely that we debate this motion. I would encourage speakers from other parties to put their views and make a contribution to this debate. I thank Hon Alison Xamon for her contribution. I ask other members to also look at this issue and at how we can ensure that workers are looked after and protected, and that businesses can thrive and make a profit. I understand that Hon Simon O'Brien seeks the call. I am very happy to hear what he has to contribute, so I will conclude my remarks at this stage.

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [12.20 pm]: Hon Adele Farina has raised some very important issues today in this motion, as have other members. I want to indicate my support in spirit, as well as in fact, for the issues she has raised. I believe this will be an increasingly severe challenge for our community in the future. If members want evidence of that, they need only look—as some members have already alluded to—at what is happening in other parts of the world as they proceed down a similar path. As was predicted some years ago, because of automation and the rapid changes in technology, many of the jobs of yesteryear have ceased to exist; they have disappeared. That raises the question of what the workers of the future will be doing. It has been said that the employment of hairdressers is probably guaranteed. However, many non-practical occupations are disappearing.

Another phenomenon is that permanent jobs are being replaced with casual or impermanent positions. Arguments can be put by both employees and employers about the pros and cons of that. Members might like to think about what is happening in their own electorate offices, for example. Electorate office staff may be working part-time or full-time, and over the years staff will go and other staff will come in to fill those positions. I do not know what happens in the electorate offices of other members, but over the years I have seen various staff come and go. I pride myself on having long-term staff, because we like to have a good, happy and productive environment in our office, but, nonetheless, people go off on maternity leave, to pursue interests in other occupations, or perhaps to move interstate. This is what happens. From time to time we have people in our office who are employed temporarily, perhaps while they were on probation, and they are classed by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet as casual employees. It has happened several times in my experience in my office that they then face the question of whether to maintain their status as a casual for as long as they can to receive a higher rate of pay or seek to change their classification to permanent, along with the benefits that then accrue to them. From the employee's point of view, there are pros and cons about being a casual. It is in

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the interests of some people to work in a job for a discrete period on a casual basis and make some money prior to moving on. However, that is not what we are talking about with this motion. We are talking about the insecurity caused by the ongoing casualisation of employment.

Like Hon Adele Farina, Hon Martin Pritchard and others, I do not want our society to become a place in which casual or impermanent employment is the norm. That is not good for people's mental health, as was raised by Hon Adele Farina in her motion. That is a very important consideration. Casual employment also has other negatives. People need to have some degree of permanence when they apply for a mortgage for a house. People need to know that this time next year, they will be able to pay their household expenses, whether it is to supplement a child's education or for their medical insurance or whatever it may be. As I said earlier, from time to time it may be convenient and mutually beneficial for both employees and employers to use the device of casual employment and the terms that go with it. That is fine. However, I do not like the fact that casual employment is increasingly becoming the norm in many areas of industry and employment across all sectors. I therefore want to offer some support for this motion from across the great divide. I am very concerned about the future prospects of our overall community in aggregate. Our community is the sum total of all the very important individuals who make it up. If casualisation becomes the norm, as it is increasingly becoming in some sectors, that will ultimately weaken us all and threaten every pillar of our community. That is why it is timely for this matter to come to our attention, and I thank members for their attention to it.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.