

# CASUAL EMPLOYMENT

Casual employment is an increasingly widespread form of employment in Australia. This information provides a summary of the entitlements of casual workers and sets out how they vary from those of permanent workers.

**Casual work** is a term that is used to describe a range of employment situations where the work is not permanent (ie. ongoing) or for a fixed period. The essence of casual work is that there is no entitlement to ongoing employment or certainty in the days, hours or shifts you will work.

Casual workers are entitled to a higher minimum rate of pay and they have different entitlements to permanent and fixed-term employees.

Ascertaining whether you are a permanent or casual employee is sometimes difficult. As a general guide, you are likely to be a casual if:-

- you were told at the start of your employment that you were a casual;
- you work irregular hours and you are paid a higher hourly rate of pay (which includes a casual loading);
- you do not get paid annual or personal leave (including sick and carer's leave).

On the other hand, you are likely to be a permanent employee if you work regular hours and you accrue annual leave and personal leave.



**Job Watch Inc is .....**

an independent, not for profit, employment rights legal centre. It provides a free, confidential telephone information and referral service and other assistance to Victorian workers.

**Hours:- Monday – Friday 9am-5pm**  
(Except Tuesday 12-2pm)

**Phone: (03) 9662 1933 or**  
**1800 331 617**

**Website: [www.job-watch.org.au](http://www.job-watch.org.au)**

## *Flexibility vs Uncertainty*

Casual work suits some employees because it offers a greater level of flexibility about working hours than other forms of employment and it provides a higher rate of pay. However, this flexibility can also be a disadvantage, because it means that you have no certainty about your working hours and no guarantees about ongoing work.

If you are truly a casual employee, your shifts can be cancelled or you can be sent home early if you are not needed by your employer. While in theory you may decline work, it can be difficult to refuse hours if you are relying on your employer to offer you work in the future.

## *Casual Loading*

If you are a casual, you are **not entitled** to paid holiday or personal leave (including sick and carer's leave). However, you are paid a higher hourly rate of pay to make up for this. This extra money is called a **casual loading**; it is generally between 15% and 25% of the hourly rate paid to permanent workers. This loading is also compensation for the uncertainty of your continuing employment.

Whether you should be paid a casual loading, and at what level, will depend upon what type of employment arrangement covers you.

**Contact the Workplace Infoline on  
1300 363 264 to find out the correct rate of pay  
for your type of work.**

## *Conditions and entitlements for casual workers*

In Victoria, your minimum terms and conditions will be specified by one or more of the following:

- A **Federal Award** (this is a document that contains terms and conditions of employment)

for employees in particular occupations or industries. You can find out whether you are covered by an award by calling the Workplace Infoline on 1300 363 264);

- A **Workplace Agreement** (this can either be a collective agreement or an individual Australian Workplace Agreement (AWA)); or
- The **Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Standard** (this is a basic set of five minimum conditions).

If you are a casual employee whose minimum terms and conditions **are not** regulated by an award or workplace agreement, the following conditions apply (unless you can negotiate better terms with your employer):

- you are entitled to a flat hourly pay rate (including the casual loading) for every hour you work. You **are not** entitled to penalty rates for working overtime or on the weekend;
- you are entitled to a 30 minute break for each 5 continuous hours worked;
- you **do not** accrue paid leave entitlements such as annual leave or personal leave (ie, you do not get paid sick or carer's leave);
- you are entitled to up to two days of unpaid carer's leave for each time a member of your immediate family or household requires care or support because of illness or injury or because of an unexpected emergency. This period of leave may be taken as a single unbroken period or it may be broken up as agreed between you and your employer. Unpaid carer's leave is subject to you notifying your employer as soon as reasonably practicable that you need the leave and providing a medical certificate or statutory declaration;
- you **are not** entitled to payment if you do not work on a gazetted public holiday, even if the public holiday falls on a day when you would usually work;
- there is no minimum or maximum number of hours that you must be rostered to work;
- you are not entitled to notice of termination and you do not have to give notice if you wish to resign;
- you are entitled to be paid long service leave on a pro rata basis, however you need to have continuous employment under a continuing contract with your employer for at least 7 years;

- you have an entitlement to unpaid parental leave (including maternity, paternity and adoption leave) if you are a casual employee who has been engaged on a regular and systematic basis for at least 12 months.

If your employment is covered by an award or workplace agreement (collective agreement or AWA), then your minimum terms and conditions of employment may be different than those outlined above. For example:

- you may be entitled to overtime penalty rates if you are required to work outside of the normal span of hours (eg time and a half or double time for working at night or on weekends);
- you may be entitled to be paid long service leave on a pro rata basis after completing a period of continuous employment under a continuing contract with your employer for a period of less than 7 years;
- you may not be entitled to a meal break;
- there may be a minimum number of hours for which you must be rostered to work on any one shift.

**To find out what your specific minimum entitlements are under an award or collective agreement, contact the Workplace Infoline on 1300 363 264.**

In addition, the following applies to all casuals in Victoria:

- an employer must make superannuation contributions into an approved superannuation fund for employees who earn more than \$450 gross per month. However, an employer does not have to make contributions for employees under 18 years of age who work less than 30 hours per week. You can get more information about this by reading the Job Watch leaflet on *Superannuation*;
- like permanent employees, casual employees may be entitled to compensation for lost earnings and/or for medical expenses if they are injured at work;
- casuals are protected by the same occupational health and safety laws that protect other workers, meaning that employers are required to provide and maintain a safe and healthy workplace;

- casuals can use equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws in the same way as other workers;
- casuals are entitled to join a union.

## Termination of Employment

As a casual employee, you are only protected by the **unfair dismissal laws** if, at the time of your termination of employment, you:

- worked on a regular and systematic basis for at least 12 months and you had a reasonable expectation of continuing employment with that employer; and
- your employer had more than 100 employees.

However, even if you have worked with your employer for less than 12 months, or your employer has 100 employees or fewer, you may still be eligible to apply for a remedy under **unlawful dismissal laws**.

Under these laws, it is unlawful for an employer to dismiss you for prohibited reasons, including for example:-

- a temporary absence from work due to illness or injury;
- filing a complaint against your employer to proper authorities;
- refusing to sign an AWA; or
- discrimination on the basis of your sex, race, pregnancy status etc.

If you are in any doubt about whether you are a casual employee or whether you have grounds for making a claim, it is important to ask for more information from Job Watch, your union or a solicitor. You must act urgently because there is a **time limit of 21 days** for making a claim of unfair and/or unlawful dismissal to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

**For more information see Job Watch's *Unfair and Unlawful Dismissal* information sheet.**

As an alternative to unfair and/or unlawful dismissal, consider whether your termination of employment was somehow discriminatory on the basis of one of the protected characteristics (eg, sex, race, disability, age etc).

**For more information about anti-discrimination laws, contact the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission or the federal Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.**

## Where to get help

**Job Watch Inc:**  
(03) 9662 1933 (metro);  
1800 331 617 (rural)

**Workplace Rights Inquiry Line (WRIL)** 1300 882 648

**Workplace Infoline:** 1300 363 264

**Workplace Ombudsman:** 1300 724 200

**Workplace Authority:** 1300 366 632

**Australian Industrial Relations Commission:** 1300 79 9675

**Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission:**  
(03) 9281 7111  
1800 134 142

**ACTU Worker Information line**  
(for referral to a union): 1300 362 223

**Law Institute of Victoria**  
(for referral to a lawyer): (03) 9607 9550

### Important disclaimer

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