

OMNIBUS BILL OUT OF TOUCH WITH WORKER REALITY

The Morrison Government's IR Omnibus Bill does nothing to address the reality faced by frontline health and social care workers, the Health Services Union (HSU) argued at a Senate Inquiry hearing today.

HSU National Secretary Lloyd Williams and aged care and disability support worker Teagan Heatley gave evidence to Friday's public hearing, appearing via video link.

In his opening statement Mr Williams told the hearing that the Bill does not fix the problems of job and wage insecurity that workers in healthcare face.

"The Bill works from a series of falsehoods - that employers are not already casualising permanent work at a whim; that employers need even more flexibility with rosters; and that employees are on an even playing field with their employer," he said.

"When health and care workers do not have secure work, our most vulnerable community members miss out – people with disability, older Australians, those with mental illness.

"The Bill should be rejected."

In 2020, Mr Williams was a participant of the working group discussions involving Federal Minister for Industrial Relations, Christian Porter, and various employers. Senator Jacqui Lambie questioned Mr Williams in the hearing about whether the Bill reflected anything that was discussed during those IR working groups.

"The Bill does reflect things that were discussed, the Bill delivers everything that the *employers* wanted in those discussions," Mr Williams said.

In delivering her statement to the hearing, HSU member Teagan told the Committee that since her partner was diagnosed with cancer, her employer has cut her hours. Teagan is employed part-time but for three years, regularly worked full-time hours at her employer's request.

Teagan described the devastating impact the loss of work has had on a job she loves, and the financial hardship it has caused her and her partner while they survive solely on her wage.

"I would love to be able to support my local community as the economy rebuilds, but how can I do that when I barely earn enough to survive?" she said.

"My pattern of work and willingness to help my employer over the years have turned out not to mean anything.

"It's not accurate for the Government to say employers need more flexibility or are hard done by. This is completely out of touch."

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About the HSU | The Health Services Union (HSU) is a growing member-based union with over 90,000 members working across the health and community services sectors in every state and territory of Australia.

