



***CUPUW: Casualised, Unemployed, Precarious University Workers***  
Monday 21 February 2022

**For immediate release:**

**Casual university workers call for sector-wide reforms to tackle underpayment**

Today casual university workers called for sector-wide reforms to tackle wage theft. 'The current system does not work,' states Dr Siobhan Irving, a casual academic at Macquarie University and representative for CUPUW (Casualised, Unemployed and Precarious University Workers). 'Wage theft is rife in the university sector, and to end it we must end its underlying causes.'

Irving is one of several casual university staff testifying today to the Senate Standing Committee on Economics' hearing into Unlawful Underpayment of Employees' Remuneration. She called for a comprehensive suite of reforms to payment and work structure for academics, including ending piece rates and legalising industrial action by unions.

'We want to see a regular, independent government audit of the hours casual staff work compared to what they are paid,' said Dr Yaegan Doran on behalf of CUPUW. 'University managers have shown that they cannot be trusted to audit their own payment regimes.'

Also testifying to the committee was Ben Nunquam, a casual academic from Ballarat's Federation University. 'Regional universities function differently to the big metropolitan universities,' he said, 'but wage theft is absolutely occurring in the regions too.' Nunquam wants to see industrial legislation reformed. 'Current industrial relations laws that make it illegal to take industrial action for years on end must be abolished. If we're going to solve the crisis of exploitation and insecure work, we must be free to take action whenever we need to.'

Dr. Irving also drew attention to the plight experienced by many casual organisers who have suddenly found themselves out of work after successful wage theft campaigns. 'There's no doubt that it's risky work to draw attention to these practices,' she said. 'Even though it's illegal to target workers who do this, our work is so insecure that many workers have lost work after speaking out.'

CUPUW representatives available for comment:

Siobhan Irving – 0434 871 007

Yaegan Doran – 0408 401 168

Ben Nunquam – 0400 582 862