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Casual workers win right to convert job to permanent position

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EMPLOYMENT

CASUAL workers have won the right to choose to have their job made permanent after six months' regular work in the position. The landmark decision by the NSW **Industrial Relations Commission** yesterday will have a huge impact on the thousands of people who work casually under state awards, the secretary of Unions NSW, John Robertson, said.

"These people will go from sitting waiting for the phone to ring, to being able to budget for the first time; to having some security past the next pay cheque," he said.

Unions NSW successfully argued before the commission that although casual work was designed to allow employers to take people on to do specific short-term jobs, it was increasingly being used by employers to avoid meeting some obligations they had to full-time workers.

A spokeswoman on industrial relations for an employers' group, Australian Business Limited, said the decision could increase unemployment. "What happens to employers in hospitality if they have a bad night," Minna Knight asked. Some employers could stop using casuals, rather than take on permanent staff they did not need, she said.

The finding was one of several arising from a test case in the lead-up to the introduction of the Federal Government's new workplace laws that will strip the commission of much of its work.

Unions NSW was unsuccessful in its attempt to make companies that use labour-hire firms responsible for ensuring their staff received the same pay and conditions as equivalent permanent staff.

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