

Media release

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Today is national Go Home On Time Day

Today is national Go Home On Time Day – the day Australia bucks the trend of working the longest hours in the western world and says no to last-minute meetings and unpaid overtime.

While many workers and employers have taken steps to bring about more flexibility and better working arrangements, only one in five Australians are working the hours they want to work.

Among full time workers, the amount of unwanted overtime is 6.6 hours per week on average. Over the course of a year this is equivalent to 319 hours or more than double the typical annual leave requirement (150 hours).

Go Home On Time Day is an initiative of The Australia Institute to raise awareness of the extent of overwork in Australia and the important workplace, health and social consequences it has. Anyone can get a personalised 'leave pass' from www.gohomeontimeday.org.au.

"Overtime is now entrenched in Australian workplaces. While we might console ourselves that our annual leave makes up for it, this is not the case. We're now working so much overtime that we're effectively donating our annual leave entitlements back to our employers," said Dr Richard Denniss, Executive Director of The Australia Institute.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said work and family is a balancing act for too many employees. "Long working hours and unpaid overtime are symptoms of a growing crisis of job security in Australia. Many employees are worried they will lose their job if they leave on time or take the leave they are entitled to. We need to change the attitudes of employers and ensure everyone is properly paid for the hours they put in and that their jobs are secure."

Research conducted for Go Home On Time Day also revealed:

- Each year, Australians work more than 2 billion hours of *unpaid* overtime
- That's a \$72 billion 'gift' to employers
- One in two (50%) Australians, and 61 per cent of those working overtime, were prevented from spending enough time with family in the week leading up to the survey because of work
- One in two (46%), and 58 per cent of those working overtime, said work had stopped them doing physical exercise
- Work prevented one in three (35%) from eating healthy meals

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA), which is supporting GHOTD, is particularly concerned about the findings relating to exercise and diet.

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“If people are prevented from eating healthily and exercising, this will have long term implications for their health and ability to prevent or even manage illness. Ultimately it will lead to more sick days being taken, so it raises concerns for employers as well,” said Melanie Walker, Deputy CEO of PHAA.

beyondblue, VicHealth, Finance Sector Union, Queensland Public Sector Union, Australian Health Promotion Association, Oxfam, the Media Arts and Entertainment Alliance and Progressive PSA are also supporting GHOTD.

Notes for editors

- The Australia Institute conducted an online survey of 1,786 adult Australians in June 2010. Survey respondents were sourced through a reputable independent online pan provider. To ensure a representative sample of the broader Australian population, interlocking quotas were applied by gender, age and state/territory.
- *Long time, no see: the impact of time poverty on Australian workers* can be downloaded at www.tai.org.au or www.gohomeontimeday.org.au