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Media release

Women's labour market position worsens in August

Today's headline official unemployment rate conceals more than it reveals, according to David Richardson, Senior Research Fellow at The Australia Institute.

"While the headline rate may have remained steady at 5.8 per cent, an analysis of the figures shows that the labour market position for women has deteriorated," said Mr Richardson.

The Australia Institute recently released a report *The impact of the recession on women* which documented the hidden world of female unemployment. Today's unemployment figures confirm the disadvantage faced by women in the labour market.

"In August, women's unemployment increased by 0.2 percentage points while men's fell by 0.2 percentage points. The female underutilisation rate increased by 1.0 percentage points to 15.5 per cent while men's actually fell 0.6 percentage points to 11.9 per cent," said Mr Richardson.

Underutilisation is the combination of unemployment and underemployment—people working fewer hours than they want to work.

"Women's participation rate fell 0.4 percentage points from 58.6 per cent to 58.2 per cent. That usually indicates an increase in hidden unemployment.

"Sure enough, 152,000 women, or 2.9 per cent of the female labour force went from employment to right out of the labour force in August. Most of these women would fit the common sense meaning of unemployed even if they don't fit the narrow definition of the Australian Bureau of Statistics," concluded Mr Richardson.

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Notes for Editors

The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines a person as unemployed if they are:

Persons aged 15 years and over who were not employed during the reference week, and

- had actively looked for full time or part time work at any time in the four weeks up to the end of the reference week; and,
- were available for work in the reference week; or,
- were waiting to start a new job within four weeks from the end of the reference week and could have started in the reference week if the job had been available then.