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Government must broaden JobKeeper to include all freelancers and casuals

Thousands of freelance and casual employees who work in the arts, events and entertainment sectors will fall through the cracks of the JobKeeper income subsidy scheme unless the eligibility criteria is broadened over the next 48 hours.

With the \$130 billion package set to go before a Parliamentary vote on Wednesday, the Federal Government must move fast to ensure that these workers are covered by the subsidy.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance urges the government to proceed with a expansion of the eligibility criteria flagged in news reports today which would see an extra 1.1 million workers covered.

MEAA has identified two groups who as the scheme is currently set up would not qualify for income support:

- Freelance performers and crew who are engaged as direct employees on short-term contracts on a production by production basis but are not registered as a business.
- Casual workers who have not been with the same employer for 12 months.

“The Federal Government must not abandon the arts and entertainment workforce at this time,” said MEAA Chief Executive Paul Murphy.

“But as JobKeeper currently stands, a large proportion of the industry’s workforce will miss out unless it is amended before this week’s vote.

“This is due to the unique complexities of employment in the live theatre and screen sectors, which has inadvertently resulted in freelancers – people whose work is episodic and from gig to gig – being excluded.

“We call on the government to revisit the proposal floated in news reports today to widen eligibility for the new subsidy to people who have worked for multiple employers within the industry over the past year.

“We urge Attorney-General Christian Porter to continue negotiations with unions about broadening the scope of the subsidy to include all freelance and casual employees so no worker is left behind.”

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