

Submission by a Worker – Inquiry Into the On-Demand Workforce in Victoria

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The prevalence and nature of on-demand work in Victoria

The Inquiry wants to understand the extent of and issues for the on-demand workforce. We welcome examples or case studies that illustrate the experience of individuals and the perspective of workers in the on-demand economy. The following questions are prompts for people working in the on-demand economy – you do not need to answer all of them or, if you prefer, you can say whatever you like at the end under ‘additional information’.

1. How frequently are you offered on-demand work in Victoria?

Very varied according to the season but on average on a weekly basis

2. How much on-demand work do you do each week?

Very varied according to the season – 1 booking in winter vs 5 to 6 in summer

3. In what industries or regions do you work, when working for an on-demand business or platform?

In Tourism, mostly in Melbourne and in and around Melbourne – occasionally interstate

4. Do you have another job and what kind of other job(s) do you have?

No I do not

The legal status of on-demand workers

The status of workers in the on-demand economy is a fundamental issue that determines how regulatory frameworks apply to workers. The answer to this question impacts on the rights and obligations of workers, platforms, businesses, consumers and the community. It dictates where a person might go for help or advice if something goes wrong and what remedies might be available.

A fundamental question that the Inquiry must consider is whether and how regulators are able to resolve the question of whether the laws they are invested with enforcing on behalf of the community apply to these arrangements and the extent to which users and workers are able to understand their rights and obligations and seek assistance if something goes wrong. The Inquiry therefore seeks submissions about the following:

5. How were you recruited and engaged to perform work?

I trained as a guide with the Council of Adult Education, joined the Professional Tour Guide Association and my reputation evolved through word of mouth

6. Please outline how your work arrangements were put in place?

Same as above: I trained as a guide with the Council of Adult Education, joined the Professional Tour Guide Association and my reputation evolved through word of mouth

7. Did you discuss or negotiate the details of your work arrangement with the platform and/or the end user?

I try and have the conversation with all the companies are work for as the award under which Tour guides come in does not recognise qualifications and seniority.

8. Do you decide how and where you work?

I try to select the companies which pay the most if given the opportunity but I mostly take on any work which is offered provided I am free to accept.

9. Are you free to provide the same services to more than one on-demand platform and/or client at the same time?

I cannot accompany 2 groups at once if this is the question. It is a matter of one booking at a time through one company at a time.

10. What do you do if you have a dispute or concern about your work? Where and from whom can you seek help in resolving disputes?

I would take the matter up with the consultant who has hired me and escalate it to the manager if the occasion arose.

11. How is the quality of your work assessed? In what situations if any might you lose the right to obtain work via the platform?

Most of the companies I work for ask for feedback from their clients – this is how my works gets rated and how my reputation grows.

The impact of on-demand work for workers, including vulnerable workers

The impact of on-demand work on workers is multi-dimensional and complex. In considering the question of 'impact' the Inquiry wants to hear about the experience of individual on-demand workers, but also seeks to understand the broader impact of the emergence of on-demand work on both the on-demand cohort, but also workers in 'traditional' arrangements.

12. What and how are you paid?

I am paid according to the rates given out by the companies I work for unless I have negotiated my personal rate with them. I then invoice the company and get paid according to their pay cycle – most companies have their pay cycles in place and do not respond to my 7 day request for payment.

13. Why do you engage in on-demand work?

I engage in on-demand works as it is a job I can do and I am good at – I am 60 and there are not many jobs going for 60 year olds.

14. How often do you participate in on-demand work? Is on-demand work some, most or all of the paid work that you do? Do you also work outside of the on-demand economy?

I participate in on-demand work as often as I can fit the work in my work schedule – this includes weekends and public holidays.
On demand work is my only source of income.

15. Do you experience any differences when you work under on-demand arrangements or 'traditional' arrangements?

Yes – as an on-demand worker I do not get social cover that is to say no paid leave, no sick leave and no superannuation. Only one of the 18 companies which have me on their books pay super.

16. Are there any training or development opportunities made available to you when you work with an on-demand business or platform?

Yes in some instances some companies do a training program to up skills - they are not the norm – most companies do not offer training.

17. How do you raise issues or concerns about your workplace arrangements? Do you feel confident to do this?

I don't always feel confident to do this as I am afraid I might be black listed and not be given work.

18. What happens when you are unable to work due to a physical or psychological injury, illness?

I do not earn an income

19. How are workplace injuries addressed if you are injured?

I am not certain – I have not been in that situation to date

20. Are you paid superannuation?

Only one of the companies out of the 18 who have me on their books pays super – it would be great

if the law could be enforced – that is that if you work to the value of \$450 per month for the company – that they pay superannuation for the work you provide

21. What tax do you pay and how do you ensure your tax liabilities are met?

I pay tax according to my income and I get a bit of a rebate as I am qualified as low income earner

Your views

It would be great if the law could be enforced – that is that if you work to the value of \$450 per month for the company – that they pay superannuation for the work you provide
It would be great if tour guides had their own award and were not lobbed in with hospitality desk operators at conferences. A good guide has to train and keep training to keep being a good guide as every thing, every figure is forever changing – tourism nets Australia a huge amount of income via people such as me who provide the experience for the visitors on the ground and are the face of their Australian experience – our work is undervalued and we have very little social protection,