

Letter to the Editor  
Australian Financial Review

**November 2005**

As workers across Sydney participate in the National Day of Protest, labour hire firms like ours have been deluged with work orders for casual staff, allowing businesses across the nation to continue operations. It speaks volumes to the way business operates today.

20 years ago, before Enterprise Bargaining Agreements enabled flexible and scalable workforces, companies were shackled by a rigid employee structure that created tremendous inefficiency and affected the business' ongoing viability. Similarly, casual workers were poorly regarded and not appreciated for the value they could provide to a company's varying production requirements.

Today, tapping into an approximate pool of more than 2 million Australian casuals has become a key strategy for organisations looking to maximize productivity via the use of pre-qualified staff employed on an as needed basis. Further, casual workers are committed like never before, working on a variety of job sites and being paid a premium. They're an empowered, more professional group than in the past who will consider rates of pay ahead of time, as well as judge the appeal of a given worksite.

The implication of the proposed IR reforms for casual workers indicate one major change: a shift from state-based awards to a federal award. Federal awards are lower than the state-based rates, however in this low-unemployment environment employers will still need to pay competitive rates of pay to get the quality they have come to expect.

The National Day of Protest may have given paucity to the question of whether these IR Reforms are really necessary. However, the overall impact of these rallies ironically serves to underline just how robust and flexible the Australian workplace has become.

Luba Charlton  
Managing Director  
Charlton Management Consulting

Charlton  
Management Consulting

Level 1, 32-34  
Ross Street  
North Parramatta  
NSW 2151

T 02 9890 2072  
F 02 9890 2140