



Online submission					
First name	Anonymous		Surname		
Age	51-60	Gender	Male	State	VIC
Occupation (if available)	Teacher				
Text of submission	<p>In 1990, I had difficulty finding a job but did manual work where I could. To improve my job prospects, I did off-campus studies and then went full time to university. I acknowledge financial help from the government in achieving this goal. When I graduated from university, I won an award for academic excellence and outstanding scholastic achievement: the top student of the faculty.</p> <p>Thereafter, I completed another year of study to become a qualified teacher. I was already 45 years old. The university and the lecturers in education said that mature people, males, high academic achievers, and even martial arts proponents (I was a martial arts champion and coach) were sought after in the teaching profession.</p> <p>However, when I went out into the work force, the reality was far different. Teaching had been given over to principals to hire and fire and I soon learned that the system was rife with cronyism. High academic achievement was not valued at all; age (over 40 years old) was a huge liability, and employers didn't give a toss whether you were male or female. The only work I could get was part-time and casual in schools and even then they invented ways to skew the hours to get around paying the proper amount. Schools/colleges/universities are operational for 40 weeks a year. For the other twelve weeks, they are closed, so that casual teachers can't practice our profession and we don't get holiday pay or any sort of remuneration. On two occasions (two academic semesters), I worked as a tutorial lecturer at university but was only paid for face-to-face contact hours with students in tutorials. In other words, I was paid for three hours per week but the actual time I spent in preparation and marking papers and assignments, counselling students etc. was more like 20 hours a week. I got no travel allowance and was not allocated an office on campus. My preparation and other work had to be done at home with my own equipment and under my own steam.</p> <p>Moreover, I might have had a tutorial for an hour one day which meant that I couldn't accept any other work, casual or otherwise, for fear of breaking the contract with the university: also because of personal responsibility to my students.</p>				

Schools treated casual staff (in my experience) like rubbish. For instance, a school coordinator may have called at 8 a.m. and asked me to come in for the day and to be on duty by 8:30. If I already had a previous work engagement with another school or university, the caller might become obviously angry and I knew I would be put on their black list. I never understood how I could be expected to sit and wait by the phone in case a particular school happened to call up on the off chance. Some of the schools understood but others were extremely unreasonable.

Naturally, all of this uncertainty placed pressure on family life. It was a struggle to cope financially but we managed very carefully. My children who were teenagers or close to it by now worked hard at school and had become vigilant in applying for scholarships in an effort to bring some much needed money into the household. At secondary school, two of the four children learnt the clarinet and the other two learned to play the flute. On weekends and public holidays, they would go street busking in the township to earn pocket money. They had also come to understand that we, as parents, were unable to afford Christmas or birthday presents. For clothing, locals used to leave bags of second hand children's clothes at our front gate. We never bought our kids anything new.

However, the discrimination in the work place in Australia brought me down. I became very depressed and suicidal. The only thing that kept me going was my children. In 2004, I was offered a job teaching in China. It came through a Chinese professor at one of the universities in Australia. Reluctantly, I went. Up until then, our family's poverty and social ostracism had made us all very close. However, when I went to work overseas, my absence put an inevitable strain on the family unit.

After that job, I was offered a decent salary to teach for Australian TAFE in China. Again it was a short-term contract but the best on offer. In the ensuing years, I went back and forth between China and Australia working short-term (20 week) contracts for TAFE in China and come what may in Australia. TAFE did not employ me directly. Instead, they went through a recruiting agent in Sydney who decreed that I had to register an Australian Business Number (ABN) which made me an individual teaching contractor and negated any responsibility by TAFE as my employer. On three occasions I was the Director of Studies for TAFE, running their programs at specific colleges in China according to TAFE rules, regulations and guidelines and answerable to them. Yet, apparently, I was not employed by them. Tax and superannuation were none of their business. It was all up to me. In order to be a director of studies for the TAFE program, I had to complete a certificate IV in training and assessment which I paid for out of my own pocket because I was officially not an employee of TAFE. If I didn't do the course, I wouldn't be employable by them so I did the further study and completed the certificate. The fee was \$1,400. That may not seem like a lot of money to some people but it was a fortune to me.

At one of the colleges in China, our Chinese counterparts were rorting the system in a brazen way. There was rampant cheating by students most often with the help of their teachers. Chinese teachers under my supervision were taking English classes using Chinese language (strictly forbidden) and were not delivering the TAFE program anywhere near the expected standards. I brought this to the attention of the TAFE institute in Sydney and set about giving the program some sort of credibility. After all, these students would graduate with a certificate from an Australian tertiary institution. However, at the end of my 20 week contract, I was sacked by TAFE because the Chinese college didn't like conforming to a meritorious system. The Chinese students on the TAFE program were notoriously wealthy and expected to pass by using their parents influence.

A short-term contract favours an employer in every way, especially if the employee has the status of contractor. Employers don't have to make taxation deductions or pay superannuation, severance or holiday pay. If, as an employee, you don't kowtow to your masters in every regard, including the comprise and unconscionable (if not illegal) lowering of standards, they get rid of you. That unuttered threat is always there. Employers don't need any grounds for dismissal because they cleverly set up their employees as contractors which absolves the employer of any responsibility. In my case, I always worked much longer hours than what I was contracted to do because of the hope of being reinstated with another contract at the end of the current one. It's like living on a knife-edge.

Your employer who has none of the responsibilities of an employer may not notify you until the last minute whether you are needed again or not. Thus, the projection you have for your work at any given time work that requires a university education, professional registration and years of training is days, weeks or months at the most.

The long absences from home put strains on the family. My children left home one by one for university or work but at various times each of them had issues. As head of the family, I should have been at home for them but often could only provide a voice on the telephone or correspondence via email or msn. My youngest child, who was very clever at school and a top sports person, lapsed into drug addiction and anorexia. At the age of 20, her substance abuse and eating disorder caused her to be taken to the coronary unit in hospital where she almost died of a heart attack.

My wife and I, previously inseparable, are now divorced. There are no more TAFE jobs because it seems I have been labelled a trouble-maker simply because I wouldn't utterly compromise all of my standards. The only jobs I am able to procure these days are short-term teaching positions in China that pay less than the dole in Australia. What's more, I am in my mid 50s which makes it difficult even to get a job working for peanuts overseas.

	<p>Here I am, reasonably well educated and experienced but unemployed with no prospects for employment in the future and only a couple of hundred dollars in superannuation after a lifetimes work. Moreover, my children are scattered about in different towns and cities and my wife has left me. Australia is a good place in that there is no obvious, endemic corruption in society like there is in China and other countries. Furthermore, we still have a national health system, even if we don't have a national dental system. My youngest daughter would be dead now if it wasn't for the health care she received free of charge.</p> <p>The move towards breaking the back of the citizenry and the rights and protections of paid workers has been underway for quite some time regardless of which side of politics happens to be in power. To me personally, Australia is not the lucky country and not a clever country either, except perhaps in the ironic sense depicted by Donald Horne in his famous book of 1964. Australia is not a nice place to live in if you happen to be on the receiving end of industrial relations policy.</p>
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<http://securejobs.org.au/independent-inquiry-into-insecure-work-in-australia/>

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