



University of
South Australia

Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia
Level 6, 365 Queen St,
Melbourne VIC 3000

9 January 2012

Please find attached a submission from the Centre for Work + Life, University of South Australia, to the Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia.

The submission comprises four reports from the annual Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI) survey, and a copy of the book 'Time Bomb' which discusses the Centre's work since 2006.

Over the past six years the Centre for Work and Life has conducted both qualitative and quantitative research on Australians' working lives, including research on the impact of insecure work on work-life outcomes and wellbeing.

This work has included a set of nationally representative surveys, the 'Australian Work and Life Index' (AWALI), of working Australians in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010.

In the AWALI research insecure working conditions are mainly explored with regard to casual employment. It has been a consistent finding across four years of research surveying over 9800 working Australians that casual work does not benefit the work-life balance of workers. Indeed, when the effect of casual workers' shorter work hours are statistically controlled, then casual workers' work-life conflict is either equivalent or slightly higher than workers employed on other more secure arrangements such as fixed-term or continuous contracts.

Furthermore, we have found no evidence that casual work benefits women's work-life balance. Women are the main providers of child and elder care to family members, and who are also over-represented in the casual workforce. However, female casual workers have worse work-life conflict compared to their male counterparts, and this is the case despite working shorter hours (on average) (AWALI 2010, p. 54).

In the most recent 2010 AWALI report we also observed that casual work does not provide a better fit of work hours to workers' preferences, with many casual workers preferring an increase of at least half a day (4 hours) a week.

The Centre has also examined the implications of insecure work for work-life outcomes and wellbeing in the new book 'Time Bomb. Work, Rest and Play in Australia Today' which will be released in February 2012. A copy of this book is included in this submission.

In this book we explore additional aspects of casual and insecure employment that place work-life strains on employees. These include patterns of gender inequity where women with caring responsibilities are more likely to be employed casually compared to their male counterparts. The lack of paid leave provisions and opportunities for education and training in these positions places women, especially those with caring responsibilities, at greater disadvantage with regard to financial security, work-life balance and future career opportunities.

Centre for Work + Life
Hawke Research Institute
University of South Australia

GPO Box 2471
Adelaide
South Australia 5001
Australia

t: +61 8 8302 4175
f: +61 8 8302 4258
e: Barbara.pocock@unisa.edu.au

www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/cwl/default.asp

CRICOS Provider Number 00121B

In sum, the Centre for Work + Life's research clearly shows that casual work provides no benefit to work-life outcomes, and may in fact make balancing work and care more difficult for many workers, especially women.

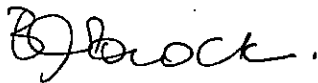
The Centre's research shows that providing greater access to secure work will benefit men's and women's wellbeing and their capacity to successfully engage in paid work and meet family and other care responsibilities. This research also supports the strengthening of casual workers' entitlements such as access to paid leave. New Zealand, for example, provides an entitlement to four weeks annual paid leave to all workers, including those on casual contracts with a regular work pattern and/or an expectation of ongoing employment.

For a more detailed discussion of AWALI findings please refer to the enclosed AWALI reports (2007, p. 20; 2008 p. 38; 2009, p. 51, 2010 p. 54).

The reports are also available to download from the Centre for Work + Life website: <http://www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/cwl/projects/awali.asp>

The Centre for Work + Life would welcome an opportunity to appear at an Inquiry hearing to further discuss our research findings.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Barbara Pocock
Director
Centre for Work + Life,
University of South Australia