

Quality Part-time Work in Australia: Background & Context

NSW Quality Part-time Work Roundtable
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1. Background to:

- ‘Quality’ of PT work in Australia
- Victorian government action
- Assessing the quality of PT work

2. The broader context:

- Full-time work
- Gender context
- International quality or ‘decent’ work agendas

Background:

Deep-seated structural changes in families & labour markets:

- Increase in female employment rates
- Erosion of male breadwinner/female model → dual earner families

But women still do most of the unpaid family work

- Global pressures on business and deregulation of labour markets
 - decline in minimum standards *and* enforcement of these
 - growth of 'non-standard' work, including PT work

But labour markets and many workplaces still based on 'ideal FT worker'

= Tensions balancing work and family responsibilities

In Australia PT work (by women) seen as *main solution* to work family imbalance:

- 45% of employed women work PT
- 15% of employed men work PT

So What's the Problem with PT Work in Australia?

- Very short hours, esp for women:
 - 38% women PT employees work 15 hours or less (ABS 2008):
 - of mothers who work as PT employees (LSAC Wave 2):
 - 35% with 2-3 years olds work 15 hours or less
 - 31% with 6-7 year olds work 15 hours or less
- Not enough hours: (ABS 2008)
 - 22% of PT workers want more hours
 - 27% of those who work 15 hours or less want more hours
- Casualisation:
 - 58% of PT workers are casual
- Declining relative wages
- Poor access to training & advancement
- Little specific regulatory protection
- Segregated by industry, within industries & in workplaces

How can we make PT work an integrated rather than a marginalised form of employment?

Background to Victorian Government Action

Policy Options for Work & Family Balance Project

- Policy and strategies need to be underpinned by goals of enhancing:
 - quality of work, family and community life
 - gender equality
 - labour market efficiency
- Improving the quality of PT work inc through:
 - better protection through AD regulation
 - pilot projects, inc in public sector
 - industry partnerships

QPTW key feature of 'Action Agenda for Work and Family Balance'

How Can We Assess the Quality of PT Work?

Dimensions of Quality	Assessing Part-time Work
Number of hours	Is the quantum of hours sufficient to maintain an attachment to the workplace, provide sufficient income, and provide genuine opportunities to maintain skills?
Schedules	How are the reduced hours scheduled/rostered over a fortnight, over a year? Do they include 'unsocial hours'? What impact do they have on health and well-being?
Variation/flexibility in the number of hours and schedules	Are hours/schedules predictable? To what extent do workers have control over variation & flexibility of hours? Is notice provided of changes in schedules/rosters?
Ability to move between full-time and part-time hours in the one job	How easily can workers move between full and part-time hours?
Wages	Is the reduction in wages in a part-time job pro rata against its full-time equivalent in all its components, including access to overtime payments, bonuses, employer superannuation contributions?
Employment benefits	Do part-time workers receive pro-rata benefits such as annual leave, sick leave, etc?
Employment security	Are part-time workers protected against unfair dismissal, redundancy and discrimination in same way as full-time workers?
Access to training and career progression	Do part-time workers have same opportunities to develop new skills and progress in a career? Are job promotion and pay increments based on time served or on skills and competencies?
Employee voice	Can part-time workers participate in the workplace to the same extent as full-time workers? Are the interests of part-time workers represented in the organisation and industrially?
Content of jobs	Do part-time jobs have the same skill demands and task autonomy as full-time jobs with a pro-rata workload? Do they have the same 'value' as full-time jobs?

The Broader Context: The Organisation of FT Work

PT Solicitors:

- *Long* hours FT norm: 'part time of what?'
- Job size: FT work on a PT wage?
- Advancement: work performance measured by long hours, job content

PT Police Officers:

- FT work norm: 'part-time part-committed'
- Way work is organised
- Job Content: operational duties
- Advancement: 'acting up' duties/ 'masculine' areas

→ In considering the quality of PT work focus on way FT work organised

→ Improving the quality of PT work not possible without significant change to organisational culture and practices

But focus on alternative work arrangements, such as PT work, is an important strategy to bring about real organisational change

The Broader Gender Context:

PT work occurs within a highly gendered polarised working time regime in Australia

- Women much more likely to work part time, esp short PT hours
 - Men much more likely to work FT, esp long FT hours
- Reinforces the 'gendered specialization' of 'work and care'

Need for a stated goal of gender equality:

- To inform policy development, inc around PT work
- To measure the outcomes of policies such as around PT work.

Even where policy aims to improve work/family balance, often gendered consequences: eg UK right to request laws

- Men much less likely to make a request but more likely to have request refused
- Half of those who changed working arrangements reported adverse consequences

The Broader Context: The Decent Work Agenda

We need to look at improving the quality of work at all levels:

- Decent work involves ‘... opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.’ (ILO 1999)

ILO 2008/09 Campaign: Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work

- ‘Decent work’ offers:
 - a gender sensitive lens through which to review practice & context of work (PT & FT)
 - a vital underpinning to regulatory, institutional and policy action to improve the (e)quality of work more broadly