



EMBARGOED UNTIL 0001 HRS WEDNESDAY 20TH NOVEMBER 2013

Hard to get a break?

Hours, leave and barriers to re-entering the Australian workforce

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The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors, as is the responsibility for any errors or oversight. They should not be regarded as representing the official position of the organisations involved.

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Summary

Problems getting enough work, breaking back into the workforce or getting a break from overwork are taking their toll on millions of Australian workers, making us sick and leading to less productive and enjoyable workplaces. Whether employees are overworked, underworked or out of work, millions are feeling stressed and their mental health and general health is suffering as a consequence.

This paper explores the reasons Australians are struggling to achieve a healthy work-life balance and the impacts this is having on mental health and workplace environments.

Taking a longer break in the form of annual leave is considered crucial to prevent burnout and poor health, yet the majority of Australian workers do not take their full leave each year.

Over half of the respondents to this survey (52 per cent) did not take their full leave entitlements in 2012. Australian workers are stockpiling their annual leave, accruing 128 million days in annual leave – or more than 350,000 years – of holidays in 2012.

The survey found a strong correlation between work-related stress and not taking leave breaks. Respondents who did not take all their annual leave in 2012 were markedly more likely to report having negative feelings about work: 39 per cent felt stressed about work; 28 per cent felt anxious; 24 per cent were worried and 21 per cent were overwhelmed.

Taking a daily lunch break also seems to be becoming a thing of the past – 3.8 million Australian workers routinely don't take a lunch break, with one in two of them saying it's because they are 'too busy'.

This report also finds that returning to the workforce after a lengthy break – for example, to act as a carer – is more difficult when you're older.

A large majority of respondents (63 per cent) report that they, or someone they know, have been out of the workforce for more than three months in the past two years. One third has experienced this themselves.

A large percentage of young people (53 per cent) say the reason they are out of the workforce is because they cannot find a job, while the top reason for those aged 55–64 is sickness or ill-health.

One in four respondents who were out of work identified age discrimination as the main barrier to workforce re-entry. This increases with age – 41 per cent of those in the 55–64 age group and 66 per cent of those over 65 identified this barrier.

The youngest and oldest age groups, however, are less inclined to take a pay cut to return to work. One in five people over 65 (19 per cent) and one in four of 17–24 year olds (26 per cent) say they would consider taking a substantial pay cut compared to an average 44 per cent across the other age groups.

The findings of this survey clearly indicate that involuntary time out of the workforce is predominantly a negative experience for most people. Loss of confidence, depression and anxiety were the most commonly reported experiences as a result of time out of work, after financial worries.

This paper also explores the experiences of the ‘overworked’ and the ‘underworked’. Of those who feel overworked, one in four report anxiety, 3.3 million experience loss of sleep and 50 per cent would like to spend more time with their family. Meanwhile, 1.1 million Australians found involuntary time out of the workforce demoralising and one in five experience anxiety due to their time out of the workforce.

While there is no single solution for a problem as diverse and deep seated as the inability of the labour market to deliver the hours of work desired by the population, there is a range of partial solutions that can both reduce the nature and extent of the mismatch and mitigate the adverse impacts.

Such measures include:

- 1) Redistributing the unpaid overtime performed by the overworked to the millions of Australians who desire additional hours of work.
- 2) Promoting the value of older workers in the workforce who are more likely to report underemployment.
- 3) Improving workplace practices around recognising and responding to work-related stress so that employees are able to address their workload issues before it becomes a serious problem.
- 4) Commencing a national dialogue about smart technologies and the potential impact this may have on workers’ mental health due to the 24/7 nature of technology.
- 5) Providing specific written advice to staff about expected hours of work and including specific discussion of actual and desired hours of work in annual appraisals of staff performance.
- 6) Providing staff with a range of specific options for improving work-life balance, such as four-day weeks and annual-leave purchasing, and actively promoting such options within the workplace.

- 7) Requiring all organisations that employ more than 100 staff to publish the results of an externally conducted, and nationally consistent, survey of employee satisfaction.
- 8) Introducing a simple measure of mentally healthy workplaces along with national targets to increase the number of mentally healthy workplaces in Australia.
- 9) Providing information and resources to managers to help them identify warning signs in staff who may be experiencing stress and anxiety.

1 Introduction

Millions of Australian workers can't get the break they need – whether it be getting enough work, breaking back into the workforce or taking a break from overwork. This is making us sick and leading to less productive and enjoyable workplaces. This paper provides a snapshot of Australian workplaces, revealing that whether employees¹ are overworked, underworked or out of work, millions of them are feeling stressed and their mental health and general health is suffering as a consequence. The adverse effects of work-related stress flow on to families, communities and fellow workers.

Increased productivity is the key to Australia's economic health, according to politicians, business leaders and many economists. A strong economy will be achieved with more productive and efficient workplaces that are flexible, maximise the advantages of new technologies and, importantly, increase the participation of women and older workers. Workplace culture and practices that support good mental and physical health of employees are essential to providing the framework for this productive labour force.

This paper examines how the reality of Australian workplaces matches these aspirations. The findings from this fifth survey conducted by The Australia Institute, in partnership with *beyondblue*, reveal that, in 2013, millions of Australian workers can't get a break when it comes to working jobs that meet their social, economic and mental health needs. Despite much of the productivity rhetoric, the current labour environment is contributing to high levels of stress and anxiety; sleep loss and depression for many Australians. This has adverse effects on their health, family life and relationships and, paradoxically, the national goal for greater economic productivity.

Whether they are working too many hours or too few, millions of Australians are unhappy with their current work arrangements. The number of workers who are dissatisfied has grown since 2012. This year around six million workers (52 per cent of the work force) said they were dissatisfied with their work hours.² This is an increase of more than 600, 000 over the past 12 months.³ The mismatch between the actual and the desired hours people work, identified in previous Australia Institute surveys, continues – the results of this survey find that nearly one in three Australians are working more hours than they desired, on average full time employees are working 10.6 hours per week more than they want, and one in four want to work more hours.

¹ Throughout this paper 'employee' refers to anyone with an employment contract. This includes managers and executives but excludes small business owners and sub-contractors.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) Labour Force, Australia, July 2013 Cat No: 6202.0

³ Denniss R & Baker D (2012) An Unhealthy Obsession? The impact of work hours and workplace culture on Australia's health, The Australia Institute, Canberra

Australians continue to work some of the longest hours in the developed world. Full time employees in Australia work an average of 43.2 hours per week, ranking this country ninth highest out of the 31 OECD countries for which data is available for the average number of hours worked per week.⁴ Often workers are not paid for the extra hours they put in to their job. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, only one in four workers doing overtime are compensated.⁵ The data reported here show that Australians on average are adding an extra five hours per week in unpaid overtime, with full time employees putting in more than seven hours per week. This marks a significant increase in the amount of unpaid overtime compared to earlier surveys,⁶ with Australian workers now contributing unpaid labour worth an estimated \$110 billion per year to their employers. This comes at a significant cost to their personal lives and mental health, with families paying a heavy price. Fifty per cent of workers say they would spend more time with their families if they worked less. Notably, one in four workers are experiencing workplace stress, with 3.3 million Australians suffering from sleep loss as a result of work stress.

Despite the long hours worked by millions of Australians, they often don't feel able to take the breaks from work to which they are entitled – breaks that are critical to maintaining a healthy, well balanced life. On a daily basis, one in five workers do not take a lunch break, despite general acknowledgement that taking a full lunch break lowers stress levels, improves concentration and productivity and increases their enjoyment of work. Moreover, more than half – around six million workers – did not take all their annual leave in 2012. This is time lost for rest and recuperation, holidaying with family and friends and engaging in activities that help restore and maintain good physical and mental health as well as strong family and social relationships.

After a number of years of low unemployment rates, there is now a gradual trend upwards in the number of Australians out of work. The rate of unemployment in August was 5.8 per cent, reflecting an upward trend in the two years from July 2011.⁷ This is predicted to continue to rise to 6.25 per cent by June 2014.⁸ While the official ABS figures record a decrease in male full time employment and female part time employment, these data do not account for the extent of 'hidden'

⁴ OECD (2011) Labour Force Statistics – Average usual weekly hours worked on main job
<http://stats.oecd.org>

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) Working Time Arrangements, Australia, November 2012 Cat No:6342.0

⁶ Fear J & Denniss R (2009) Something for Nothing: Unpaid overtime in Australia, The Australia Institute, Canberra

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) Labour Force, Australia, August 2013 Cat No: 6202.0
<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/6202.0>; Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) Labour Force, Australia, July 2013 Cat No: 6202.0

⁸ Treasury (2013) Pre election economic and fiscal outlook 2013
<http://www.treasury.gov.au/PublicationsAndMedia/Publications/2013/PEFO-2013>

unemployment in Australia. When those people who do not have a job but want one and those who are underemployed – that is, they have a job but want more hours – are included the unemployment rate is considerably higher.⁹

Given this economic context, this survey asked respondents about their experience of involuntary time out of the workforce and their efforts to return to work. Sixty-three per cent of respondents have either been out of the workforce or know someone who has been out of work for more than three months in the past two years. One third have been out of the workforce themselves, and this was more likely to be the case for workers aged 45 and over. More than a quarter of a million Australians, predominantly women, are involuntarily out of the workforce because they are caring for children, grandchildren, other family members or a sick or elderly relative. In addition to increased financial insecurity, the health consequences due to involuntary time out of the workforce are significant, including depression, anxiety and loss of confidence. One in four Australians report experiencing depression as a result of their time out of work and one in three cite loss of confidence as one of the most debilitating consequences. Not only does this have a detrimental effect on their ability and commitment to break back into the labour market, it also impacts on their mental well-being and relationships.

There is evidence to suggest that work-related stress in Australia is increasing,¹⁰ although there is insufficient data to show its prevalence – that said, the substantial research evidence pointing to increased stress caused by the work-life imbalance and the intrusion of work into personal and family time¹¹ corresponds with the trend towards out-of-hours work and the disjunction between the number of hours people actually work and the hours that they would like to work. Similarly, a shrinking job market and growth in unemployment can be expected to contribute to higher levels of personal stress, leading to anxiety and depression in some people. These figures highlight an imbalance in the flexibility equation and indicate a need for workplace and labour force policy reform. The economic benefits of addressing this imbalance are reflected in the rising costs associated with work-related stress and mental illness. Expenditure on supporting people with mental

⁹ The Australia Institute (2010) The hidden unemployed The Australia Institute Newsletter
<http://www.tai.org.au/node/254>

¹⁰ Casey, L (2012) Stress and wellbeing in Australia in 2012: A state-of-the-nation survey The Australian Psychological Society, Melbourne pp26-27 <http://www.psychology.org.au/npw/survey/>; Safe Work Australia (2013) Incidence of Accepted Workers' Compensation Claims for Mental Stress in Australia, Safe Work Australia, Canberra

¹¹ Skinner N, Hutchinson C & Pocock B (2012) The Big Squeeze: Work, Life and Care in 2012 - The Australian Work and Life Index, Centre for Work + Life, University of South Australia, Adelaide; Pocock B, Skinner N, & Williams P (2012) Time Bomb: Work, rest and play in Australia today, New South Publishing, Sydney; Fear J (2011) Polluted Time: Blurring the boundaries between work and life Policy Brief: 32 The Australia Institute, Canberra

illness in Australia has recently been assessed at \$28.6 billion per year¹² and this figure does not include indirect costs such as lost productivity linked to the stress and anxiety caused by too much or too little work. If those factors are taken into account the cost to the Australian community is even larger.

This report presents the findings of a new survey that examines the following three aspects of the current Australian labour market:

- workers who can't get a break from work,
- those who can't get a break for more work and
- those who are trying to break back into work.

The following section compares the current survey data with previous workplace research conducted by The Australia Institute and *beyondblue* to analyse the trends in working hours, the mismatch between employees' actual hours and preferred hours, and the extent of unpaid overtime and out-of-hours work. Section three discusses the impact of unsatisfactory working arrangements on mental health and well-being. In section four, workplace culture and the practice of taking a break, whether a structured lunch hour, an impromptu break or annual leave, is examined. Section five focuses on the experience of workers who have been or continue to be involuntarily out of the workforce. Trying to break back into the labour market after a period out of work, whether due to caring responsibilities or ill health, is increasingly difficult, particularly for older workers and women. Given that the increased participation in the workforce of these groups has been identified as a priority for a strong Australian economy, the data provide useful insights into their experiences of involuntary time out of the workforce and the difficulties they face re-entering it. In conclusion, the report discusses some policy options that will enable workplaces to better meet the needs of overworked, underworked and out of work Australians as well as increase productivity.

¹² Medibank Private & Nous Group (2013) The Case for Mental Health Reform in Australia: a Review of Expenditure and System Design https://www.medibankhealth.com.au/Mental_Health_Reform

2 Overworked or underworked: a snapshot of trends in Australians' work hours

In July 2013 The Australia Institute conducted an online survey of 1409 people to get a better understanding of their experience in the workplace, specifically their working hours, workplace practices and how these impact on their mental well-being and personal life. The number of respondents who were employed at the time was 812.¹³ Sections two and three of the paper present the results of responses from this group to the survey questions provided in the appendix of this report.

Despite a persistent call by business and government on workers to increase productivity and economic growth by 'working smarter not harder', with the promise of technological advances, the trend is for longer hours in most Australian workplaces and no growth in productivity. The productivity catch cry of 'working smarter' is simply code for workers producing more but with fewer resources to do it. The only way individual workers can manage their increased workload is to work longer hours to complete their tasks. In economic terms, this means that productivity is actually declining as employees spend more time producing the output expected by their workplace.¹⁴ Further undermining the productivity growth idea that new technologies reduce workload, research shows that technologies have in fact increased it, enabling longer working hours and greater work-life interference.¹⁵ The culture of working longer and harder is pervasive in Australian workplaces, even where work outside normal working hours is not explicitly expected.

Each of the previous four Go Home on Time Day surveys conducted by The Australia Institute has identified the growth in hours of overtime worked, including unpaid work out of normal hours, and the marked mismatch between the actual hours worked and hours workers would prefer to work. The unpredictability around hours and job security has been shown to correspond with the increase in extra hours. The results from this year's survey highlight the continuing trend at the heart of the productivity problem. A significant number of respondents are working long hours, more than 40 hours each week, including unpaid overtime. This is matched by an only slightly smaller proportion of Australian workers who would

¹³ The term 'employed' refers to those respondents who were in paid work. This includes managers and executives but excludes small business owners and sub-contractors. Respondents were sourced from a reputable independent online panel who earn reward points to participate. Results were post weighted by age and gender based on the profile of the adult Australian population. Small variations in sample size can occur from rounding errors as a result of the weighting process.

¹⁴ For example, Quiggan J (2012) Is working harder and longer really worth it? The Drum, Australian Broadcasting Commission 4 June 2012 <http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/4047396.html>

¹⁵ Pocock B & Skinner N (2013) Morning, Noon and Night: The infiltration of work email into personal and family life Centre for Work + Life, University of South Australia, Adelaide; Fear J (2011) Polluted time: Blurring the boundaries between work and life Policy Brief No: 32, The Australia Institute, Canberra

like more hours than they currently work, demonstrating a considerable mismatch in both workers' work arrangement preferences and the rhetoric of a flexible and efficient labour market. Just over half of the survey respondents (52 per cent) are dissatisfied with their current work arrangements, with nearly one-third (28 per cent) wanting fewer hours and one-quarter (24 per cent) wanting more work. More women are unhappy with their current working arrangement compared to 2012, with 10 per cent more women expressing dissatisfaction.

Overwork

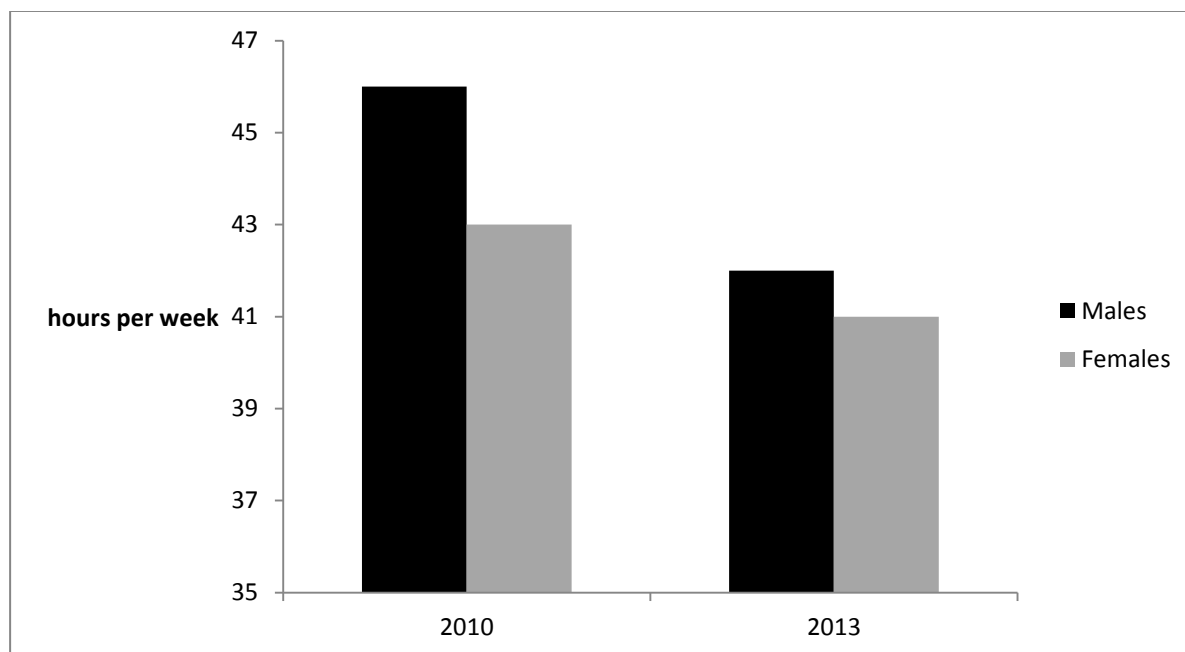
Compared to workers in the other developed OECD countries, Australian full time workers record among the highest number of hours per week. In 2011, OECD statistics show Australians employed in full time jobs worked an average of 43.2 hours per week, with men working 44.9 hours and women 40.3 hours. Only workers in Turkey, Korea, Mexico, Israel, Chile, Iceland and Greece work longer hours while New Zealanders work an equivalent 43.5 hours a week.¹⁶

The full time respondents in this survey reflected a similar trend as previous surveys, reporting that they are working long hours each week: an average of 42 hours per week. But as Figure 1 shows, both males and females are working fewer hours now than they were in 2010. Full time males report working an average of 42 hours in 2013, down from 46 hours in 2010, females are now working 41 hours per week on average, down from the 43 hours reported in 2010.¹⁷

¹⁶ OECD (2011) Labour Force Statistics – Average usual weekly hours worked on main job
<http://stats.oecd.org>

¹⁷ Fear J, Rogers S & Denniss R (2010) Long time, no see: The impact of time poverty on Australian workers Policy Brief No: 20, The Australia Institute, Canberra

Figure 1: Comparison of working hours for full time males and females in 2013 and 2010



The mismatch between the hours actually worked and the respondents' preferred work hours is significant. When those who wanted to work less were asked how many hours they would prefer to work, taking account of the effect on their income, on average full time male respondents said they would prefer a 35-hour week and full time female respondents preferred to work 33 hours. This amounts to eleven hours less for males and ten hours less for females, an average 10.6 hours less overall for those respondents who are working more hours than they want. Given that women are effectively working a day more than they would like to, it is not surprising that this year there are more women who wanted to work fewer hours – close to one in three (29 per cent) in 2013 compared to around one in four (23 per cent) in 2012. The proportion of men desiring fewer hours remained stable, down two percentage points in 2013. It is reasonable to conclude that the increasingly long hours being worked by women are not the result of choice. Respondents in the 35–44 age group were most likely to want to reduce their working hours – 36 per cent of this group compared to the average of 28 per cent across all age groups. This result provides further evidence that a work pattern of long hours is particularly incompatible with the demands of caring for young children, which typically arise at this time of life. Younger workers aged 17–24 were twice as likely as other age groups to want more hours.

The majority of Australians working extra hours or hours outside of normal work hours do so in order to meet the expectations of their job. Almost 60 per cent of respondents report this, with 45 per cent saying that this extra work is necessary often or sometimes. This represents 5.2 million Australian workers who are working extra hours to keep their workload under control and on target. These

data are similar to the findings of the 2009 Australia Institute survey¹⁸ highlighting the continuing incompatibility between workplace demands and what was once considered the typical working day and 35-hour week.

Unpaid overtime

Millions of Australian workers are not paid for the extra hours they work. Consistent with the idea that ‘working smarter’ is code for ‘doing more with less’ the survey results show a significant increase in the number of employees working unpaid overtime in the past five years. In 2013, around seven million workers (60 per cent) are not paid for the extra hours they work, compared to 45 per cent in 2009.¹⁹ When the data on unpaid overtime from this survey are extrapolated to the national context, they reveal that Australian workers are contributing the equivalent of \$110 billion of unpaid overtime to their employers.²⁰

Working extra unpaid hours is now the norm in Australian workplaces. More than half (54 per cent) of survey respondents report that working extra hours without pay is expected or not expected but not discouraged in their workplace. More than one in five (22 per cent) respondents say that it is expected and more than one in three respondents (32 per cent) say their workplace does not expect but does not discourage it. In other words, the practice and culture of the workplace make this the norm. This normative pressure is felt more by women, with 36 per cent of women reporting this attitude compared to 29 per cent of men. The effect of workplace culture is reported in workplaces of all sizes, but is most likely to be felt by workers in larger workplaces with more than 100 employees. These findings reflect similar trends in unpaid overtime reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, which found that one in four employees who usually worked extra hours were not compensated for doing so.²¹ Furthermore, the ABS reports that women are more likely to work extra hours without pay than men, with one in three women not being compensated compared to one in five men.

The survey found that Australians are working an average of five hours of unpaid overtime per week – but of the respondents who report working unpaid overtime, the number of hours has increased to 7.1 hours per week or 85 minutes per day. In 2009, the average employee worked 49 unpaid minutes per day or 4.1 hours per week. The amount of unpaid overtime has increased for all categories of work; full time, part time and casual compared to 2009, but the most marked increase is

¹⁸ Fear J & Denniss R (2009) Something for Nothing: Unpaid overtime in Australia Policy Brief No: 7, The Australia Institute, Canberra

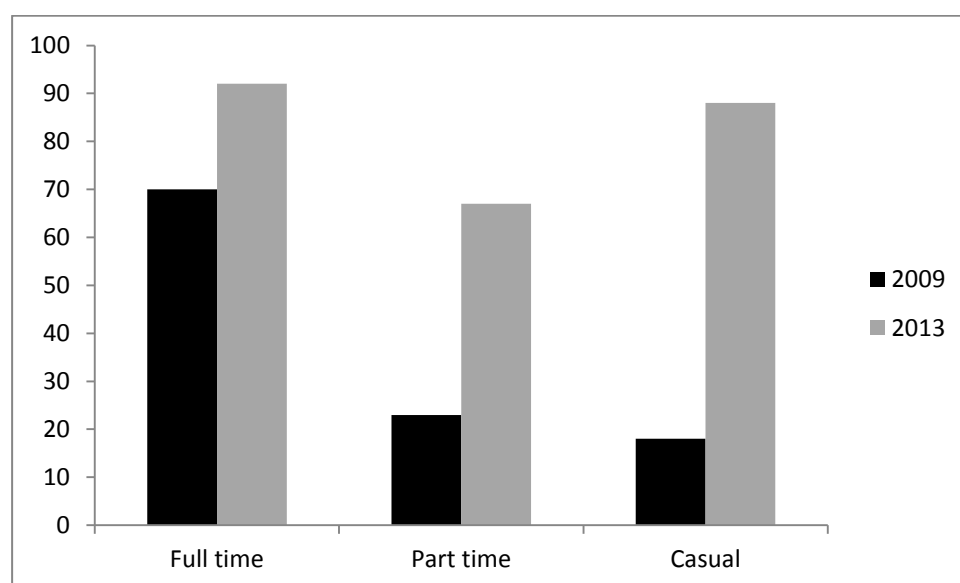
¹⁹ Fear J & Denniss R (2009) Something for Nothing: Unpaid overtime in Australia Policy Brief No: 7 The Australia Institute, Canberra

²⁰ Based on the ABS estimate of the total wages bill and adjusted for the survey results of proportion of unpaid hours. ABS (2012) *Australian System of National Accounts*

²¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) Working Time Arrangements, Australia, November 2012 Cat No:6342.0

for casual workers who report working an average 88 minutes of unpaid overtime in a typical day, significantly up from an average 18 minutes per day reported in 2009. As Figure 2 shows, full time employees are now working an average 92 minutes per day, 22 minutes more than in 2009 and part time employees are working 67 minutes of unpaid overtime, an increase of 44 minutes from 2009.

Figure 2: Comparison of unpaid overtime worked by full time, part time and casual workers in 2013 and 2009



The significant increase in unpaid overtime reported by casual workers revealed in this survey is indicative of the casualisation of work in Australia, a trend occurring over the past decade. According to the ABS statistics, 37 per cent of Australians were casual employees in 2012 – that is, they considered their job to be casual. This comprises employees without paid leave entitlements (19 per cent) independent contractors (nine per cent) and other business operators (nine per cent).²² Non-permanent forms of work, including casual employment, fixed-term contracts, independent contracting and labour hire agencies are now routinely used across all industry sectors.²³ Casual workers, like permanent employees, may now be working longer unpaid hours to fulfil the expectations of their job but with the additional pressure of insecure employment.

²² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) Forms of Employment, Australia, November 2012 Cat No: 6359.0

²³ Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work (2012) Lives on Hold: Unlocking the Potential of Australia's Workforce Report of the Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work p14-15 <<http://www.securejobs.org.au/Home/Howe-Inquiry.aspx>>; Featherstone, T (2013) Keeping it casual Sydney Morning Herald June 19 2013 <<http://www.smh.com.au/small-business/managing/blogs/the-venture/keeping-it-casual-20130618-2of0w.html>>

Working at home outside normal hours

Fuelled by the ubiquitous use of smart technologies, the growing incidence of work-life interference and ‘polluted time’ in the work patterns of Australians is now well established. The blurred boundaries between work and home are associated with a range of adverse effects including increased stress levels, burnout and poor physical health, and damaged relationships with family and partners.²⁴ There is widening recognition that the interference of work into non-work time is a source of workplace stress. In Germany, for example, the labour ministry has recently joined other large German corporations including Volkswagen, BMW and Puma, in placing restrictions on out-of-hours emailing for their staff, explicitly designed to protect workers’ mental health.²⁵

There is a slight trend away from workplaces expecting out-of-hours work in Australia when the data from this survey is compared with the Australia Institute survey in 2011.²⁶ This year, around 39 per cent of respondents report that this is expected or not discouraged in their workplace, with 14 per cent of the survey respondents, on average, saying it is expected. Men are more likely to report this to be the case than women (17 per cent compared to 11 per cent). This is a smaller figure than in 2011, when 23 per cent of respondents reported that working outside normal hours was expected in the workplace. Similarly, fewer workers in 2013 than 2011 reported working at home outside normal hours, although it was ‘not expected but not discouraged’ – one in four compared to 37 per cent in 2011. Only one in ten respondents currently report that working unpaid overtime and working at home outside normal hours is actively discouraged in their workplaces.

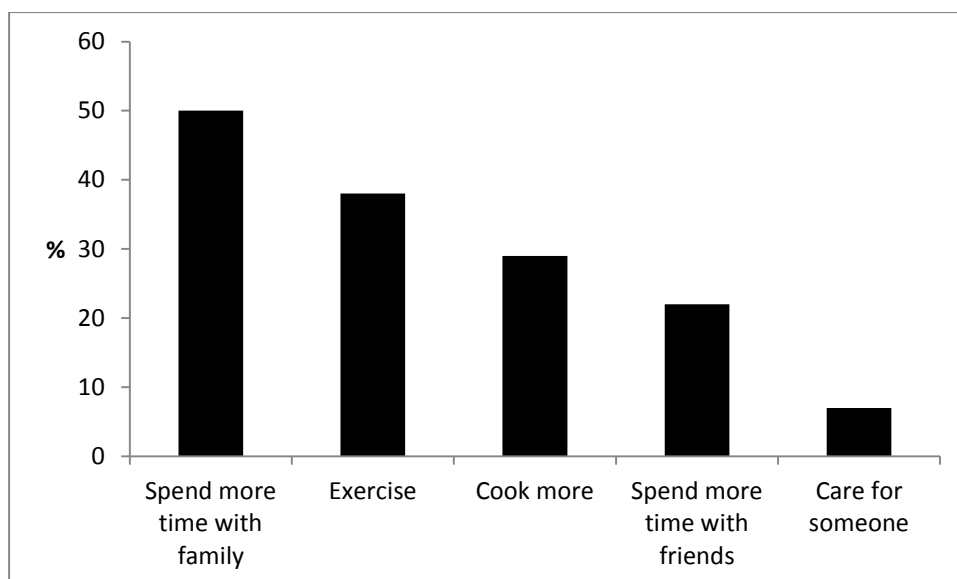
The cost of working extra hours

Working overtime has a significant effect on the lives of Australian workers and their families. One in five of the respondents, equating to around 2.3 million Australian workers, report that the impact is severe or moderate. Spending time with family and friends, as well as health and caring duties, are compromised by work hours, as shown in Figure 3.

²⁴ Skinner N, Hutchinson C & Pocock B (2012) *The Big Squeeze: Work, Life and Care in 2012 - The Australian Work and Life Index*, Centre for Work + Life, University of South Australia, Adelaide; Pocock B, Skinner N, & Williams P (2012) *Time Bomb: Work, rest and play in Australia today*, New South Publishing, Sydney; Fear J (2011) *Polluted Time: Blurring the boundaries between work and life Policy Brief: 32* The Australia Institute, Canberra

²⁵ Vasagar J (2013) “Out of hours working banned by German labour ministry” <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/germany/10276815/Out-of-hours-working-banned-by-German-labour-ministry.html>

²⁶ Fear J (2011) *Polluted Time: Blurring the boundaries between work and life Policy Brief: 32* The Australia Institute, Canberra

Figure 3: Activities that would occur if people left work on time

Extrapolated across the population, the results indicate work is taking time from 5.8 million families; over 815,000 people are missing out on care from someone close to them and 4.4 million Australians would reap the health benefits of exercise. It is reasonable to conclude that this pattern of overwork comes at great cost to the social, emotional and physical health of the community.

Underwork

The number of Australians who are overworked is almost matched by the proportion of Australians who are underworked and seeking more hours. Based on the results of this survey, around 2.8 million workers require additional working hours to meet their financial and other needs. On average, almost one quarter of male and female respondents (24 per cent) would like to work more hours, compared to 28 per cent who want to work fewer hours. Given that women are almost twice as likely as men to be underemployed – 8.5 per cent compared to 4.8 per cent of men²⁷ – a gender difference might have been expected, although compared to 2012 there is a slight increase in the number of women seeking more hours, up to 24 per cent from 20 per cent. Unsurprisingly, younger workers were most likely to be seeking more hours, with more than half (53 per cent) aged 17–24 indicating they wanted more work and those in the lowest income group, with a household income of less than \$40,000, significantly more likely to want more hours of work (45 per cent) than other income groups.

²⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) Gender Indicators, Australia August 2013 Cat No: 4125.0

3 Physical, mental and social impact of unsatisfactory working arrangements

As in previous surveys, the findings from this survey indicate that a significant mismatch exists between the working lives of participants in this survey and the pattern of work they would prefer. The data show that Australians continue to work long and irregular hours, which impacts negatively on their personal lives, their families and their ability to engage in activities outside work, including exercising, playing team sport and cooking meals. For many employees the demands of extra hours on the job affect their sleep patterns as well. All of these factors affect the physical, mental and social well-being of those workers, their families and their communities.

Extensive international and Australian analyses confirm that stress at work is associated with a range of health problems including cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, gastrointestinal disorders, metabolic syndrome and diabetes.²⁸ The demands of a job, such as a high workload and the intensity of the work contribute to adverse health effects, as does the degree of job autonomy the employee has, including the level of control over work times and tasks.²⁹ Unsatisfactory work arrangements and feeling compelled to work long and irregular hours incompatible with family and personal needs creates a constant sense of feeling pressured. Often the combination of lack of time and fatigue results in poor diet, inadequate exercise and increased alcohol consumption, all contributing to general poor health.³⁰ Research also shows that underemployment or insufficient work hours are linked to stress and stress-related health problems, in particular the stress caused by financial insecurity.³¹

The harmful effects of work-related stress on mental well-being are also well documented in the academic literature. High levels of sustained stress in the workplace can lead to a range of mental health problems including nervousness,

²⁸ Leka S & Jain A (2010) Health Impact of the Psychosocial Hazards of Work: An Overview World Health Organisation, Geneva; Medibank Private (2008) The cost of workplace stress in Australia, Medibank Private, Melbourne; Cox L (2010) 'Working 10 hour days hurts your heart' ABC News May 11 <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/HeartHealth/working-overtime-hurts-heart/story?id=10614406>

²⁹ Skinner N, Hutchinson C & Pocock B (2012) The Big Squeeze: Work, Life and Care in 2012 - The Australian Work and Life Index, Centre for Work + Life, University of South Australia, Adelaide

³⁰ For example, Dorrian J, Skinner N, & Pisaniello S (2010) Work Quality, not just Quantity: Work-Related Predictors of Psychological Distress, Work-Family Interaction and Alcohol Consumption. Adelaide: Centre for Work + Life, University of South Australia, Adelaide

³¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2010) Underemployment: Australian Social Trends Cat No: 4102.0 June 2010; Scott-Marshall H, Tompa E & Trevithick S (2007) The social patterning of underemployment and its health consequences International Journal of Contemporary Sociology 44: p 7-35; Tompa E, Scott-Marshall H, Dolinschi R, Trevithick S & Bhattacharyya S (2007) Precarious employment experiences and their health consequences: Towards a theoretical framework Work (28) 209-224

tension, difficulty sleeping, burnout, anxiety and depression.³² Disrupted sleep patterns arising from work stress contribute to fatigue and, in turn, to increased injuries and accidents in the workplace.³³ When combined with the increasingly typical pattern of long and irregular work hours and the intrusion of work into personal and family life, it is not surprising that there has been a significant increase in work-related stress in Australia.³⁴ In a recent report, Safe Work Australia found that mental stress caused by work pressure made up one-third of all mental stress compensation claims between 2008 and 2011 – far more than the number of claims made for stress relating to harassment and bullying, workplace violence and other mental stress factors.³⁵ Given that 70 per cent of employees who report mental stress do not apply for compensation, this is a conservative representation of work-related stress in Australian workplaces.³⁶

As well as resulting in a range of mental health problems for employees, workplace stress is also costly for employers and the national economy. In 2008 it was estimated that workplace stress was costing the Australian economy around \$14.81 billion per year. The financial impact of employee absenteeism and presenteeism – attending but being unable to work at an optimal level for a range of reasons – was directly costing employers \$10.11 billion per year.³⁷ This is partially explained by the fact that absences for work pressure stress claims are the most costly of all mental stress claims because the absences are typically longer – 8.4 weeks compared to a median 6.1 weeks.³⁸ The current expenditure on mental illness in Australia, including stress, depression and anxiety caused by work and the lack of it, is estimated to be \$28.6 billion per year.³⁹

³² La Montagne AD, Sanderson K & Cocker F (2010) Estimating the economic benefits of eliminating job strain as a risk factor for depression, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) Carlton

³³ Arlinghaus A, Lombardi DA, Willetts JL, Folkard S & Christiani D (2012) A structural equation modeling approach to fatigue-related risk factors for occupational injury *American Journal of Epidemiology* 176(7): 597- 607

³⁴ Safe Work Australia (2013) *Incidence of Accepted Workers' Compensation Claims for Mental Stress in Australia*, Safe Work Australia, Canberra; Medibank Private (2008) *The cost of workplace stress in Australia*, Medibank Private, Melbourne

³⁵ Safe Work Australia (2013) *Incidence of Accepted Workers' Compensation Claims for Mental Stress in Australia*, Safe Work Australia, Canberra

³⁶ Safe Work Australia (2013) *Incidence of Accepted Workers' Compensation Claims for Mental Stress in Australia*, Safe Work Australia, Canberra p2

³⁷ Medibank Private (2008) *The cost of workplace stress in Australia*, Medibank Private, Melbourne

³⁸ Safe Work Australia (2013) *Incidence of Accepted Workers' Compensation Claims for Mental Stress in Australia*, Safe Work Australia, Canberra p.19

³⁹ Medibank Private & Nous Group (2013) *The Case for Mental Health Reform in Australia: a Review of Expenditure and System Design* https://www.medibankhealth.com.au/Mental_Health_Reform

The consequences of unsatisfactory working arrangements on health and well-being

These survey findings expose a snapshot of Australian workers who are experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety related to long and irregular hours and the consequent pressure created by the intrusion of work into their personal lives. They also highlight that many Australian workers experience stress and anxiety, sleep loss and poor health as a result of not having enough work and the pressure caused by financial worries and trying to secure more work. The negative health consequences of working arrangements that do not match the employee's preferences are reflected in the survey data, indicating that for millions of Australians work or the lack of it is bad for their mental health.

In response to a question asking how they had felt about work outside of normal working hours (i.e. evenings and weekends) in the previous week, over one-third (34 per cent) of respondents, equivalent to four million workers, reported feeling stressed. One in four respondents (26 per cent), the equivalent of three million workers, felt anxious, more than one in five (22 per cent), or 2.6 million workers, said they were worried about their work and close to one in five (18 per cent), or two million workers, said they felt overwhelmed.

When asked how their current working arrangement impacts on their lives (Table 1), more than one in three (34 per cent) said it made them stressed and anxious. Women were almost 10 per cent more likely to experience this than men (39 per cent compared to 30 per cent). Nearly one third of respondents (28 per cent) said their sleep was affected and more than one in five (22 per cent) reported that they had experienced an adverse impact on their physical health. Close to one in five workers reported that their mental well-being had been adversely affected by their current working arrangement. A negative impact on their relationships with their partner and friends was identified by almost one in five (18 per cent) respondents.

Table 1: Negative consequences of work arrangements

	Gender		All
	Male	Female	
Stress or anxiety levels	30%	39%	34%
None of these	33%	30%	32%
Sleep	28%	28%	28%
Physical health	21%	23%	22%
Mood most of the day	17%	20%	18%

Relationships	19%	18%	18%
Mental wellbeing	16%	18%	17%
Ability to enjoy daily activities	16%	15%	16%
Family commitments	17%	16%	16%
Ability to participate in regular events	15%	14%	15%
Financial security	13%	15%	14%
Ability to concentrate	10%	9%	10%
Career progression and opportunities	10%	10%	10%
Productivity at work	9%	9%	9%
Ability to secure a home or car loan	7%	6%	7%
Housing security	4%	3%	4%
Ability to attend work	5%	2%	4%
Ability to secure a rental property	4%	2%	3%
Alcohol or other drug use	4%	3%	3%
n	442	365	807

While the negative consequences were significant for both groups, the respondents who wanted to work fewer hours were more likely to report physical and mental consequences than those who wanted more work. Close to half (49 per cent) of the overworked respondents reported being stressed and anxious, although one-third (33 per cent) of their underworked counterparts also reported this. Those working too many hours are more likely to have disrupted sleep than the underworked and are nearly twice as likely to report a detrimental affect on their physical health. Adverse impacts on their mental health were reported by a significant proportion of both overworked and underworked respondents, with one in four (24 per cent) of the overworked and one in five (20 per cent) of underworked respondents saying their mental health is suffering as a result of their work situation.

Stress-related time off from work

These survey findings provide evidence of the high levels of stress and anxiety widely experienced by Australian workers. One consequence of the high level of work-related stress is reflected in the amount of time off taken by workers due to

stress, estimated at 3.2 days per worker per year.⁴⁰ As shown in Table 2, eleven per cent of respondents (1.3 million workers) reported taking a day off work in the previous three months due to the stress of their job and a further four per cent (466,000 workers) took a day off because of work worries. Other work-related reasons cited for taking a day off included bullying or harassment (three per cent), difficult work relationships (five per cent), or difficult workplace situation or issue (five per cent). Notably, three per cent of respondents (349,500 workers) had taken a day off from work because of worries related to their carer responsibilities and four per cent had done so due to financial worries, highlighting the tensions in work-life interactions.

Table 2: Reasons for taking time off work in the last three months

	Gender		All
	Male	Female	
The stress of your job	10%	12%	11%
Other concerns	10%	9%	10%
Difficult working relationships	5%	5%	5%
A difficult workplace situation or issue	5%	6%	5%
Worries about finances	4%	4%	4%
Worries about work	4%	3%	4%
Bullying or harassment in the workplace	3%	3%	3%
Worries about carer responsibilities	3%	4%	3%
n	441	365	805

In addition to the concerns about the mental well-being of workers, these findings reinforce the burden on workplaces caused by work stress related leave. Sustained work stress can lead to illness and a prolonged period of absence for recovery, requiring positions to be temporarily filled over time. High stress workplaces have a higher staff turnover, with the associated costs of recruitment

⁴⁰ Medibank Private (2008) The cost of workplace stress in Australia, Medibank Private, Melbourne

and training, and people who are stressed at work are not able to reach their optimal levels of job satisfaction and productivity.⁴¹

These findings illustrate the adverse mental health effects of mismatched work hours, excessive overtime and subsequent loss of personal and family time for workers. These excess hours offer the potential to create the desired hours for those who seek them and new jobs for those who can't find them. Based on the survey data, the net excess hours worked total 21.32 million hours per week. These excess hours could have created 711,000 new jobs with a mix of full and part time workers averaging 30 hours a week.

⁴¹ Medibank Private (2008) The cost of workplace stress in Australia, Medibank Private, Melbourne; La Montagne AD, Sanderson K & Cocker F (2010) Estimating the economic benefits of eliminating job strain as a risk factor for depression, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) Carlton

4 Too stressed to take a break: the impact of foregone lunch breaks and annual leave

Not only are Australian workers putting in long hours outside normal working times, they are also abandoning mandated breaks in their workplaces. Lunch breaks and annual leave have long been established workplace entitlements for most Australian workers, introduced to protect and promote worker safety, health and well-being. Taking a break, whether it is four weeks of annual leave, a lunch break or even a short break to clear your head is good for your health and well-being, relieving stress and increasing concentration, productivity, job satisfaction and enjoyment in work. The social benefits of leaving work on time and taking an annual holiday include more time with family and friends and opportunities to participate in community activities such as sport and volunteering. From an organisational perspective, less stressed and healthier, happier workers mean higher performance and productivity and lower turnover of staff, as well as reduced workplace accidents.⁴² By contrast, this analysis shows, in a workplace culture where employees feel pressured by the demands of their job and anxious about their job security, more and more workers are foregoing breaks to manage their job commitments.

Who doesn't take a lunch break?

More than one in five of the respondents, equivalent to around 3.8 million workers, reported that they don't usually take a lunch break. This was consistent across gender, age, income groups and occupation types. Employees in small workplaces (up to 10 employees) were slightly more likely to skip their lunch break than those in larger workplaces. Of those who do take lunch, 72 per cent reported that they cut short, work through or postpone their break. As Table 3 illustrates, of those who do take a lunch break, over half (53 per cent) say that they cut their break short to return to work and a significant number, 44 per cent, say that they eat lunch while continuing to work. One in three workers find themselves eating lunch in the middle of the afternoon and around one in four say that they sometimes skip lunch altogether. Professionals and those in the higher income group, earning more than \$80,000, are more likely than those in other income groups to cut short, skip, postpone or work during their lunch breaks.

⁴² For example, Page KM & Vella-Brodrick DA (2009) The 'What' 'Why' and 'How' of Employee Well-being: A new model Social Indicators Research 90:441–458

Table 3: Missed or interrupted lunch breaks

	Gender		All
	Male	Female	
Cut your lunch break short to return to work	55%	52%	53%
Skip your lunch break	29%	25%	27%
Eat your lunch while continuing to work	42%	47%	44%
Find yourself having lunch in the middle of the afternoon	36%	30%	33%
Run errands during your lunch break	29%	39%	34%
Exercise during your lunch break	7%	7%	8%
None of these	19%	16%	18%
n	297	245	542

Why are lunch breaks missed?

Most people say they are too busy to take their lunch break (Table 4). Almost half the respondents (48 per cent) give this as the reason, with women more likely to report this than men (54 per cent compared to 44 per cent). Of the occupational groups, professionals and those on incomes above \$40,000 are most likely to say they are too busy to stop for lunch. Professionals are twice as likely as those in service, trade and other occupations to give this reason for missing lunch. Workplace size is also a contributing factor, with the proportion of respondents saying they are too busy to take a lunch break corresponding to the size of the workplace. Those in larger workplaces are most likely to report being too busy to have a break for lunch.

One in five respondents (21 per cent) say they don't take a lunch break because they work part time, and this is particularly true in the case of lower income earners (those earning less than \$40,000) with 50 per cent of this group citing their part time work as the reason. Part time workers are entitled to a lunch break if they are working five hours or more, but as these breaks are unpaid it is not surprising that part time workers are more likely to forgo lunch breaks. Women are slightly more likely (22 per cent) than men (19 per cent) to give part time work as the reason.

Given that the majority of part time workers are women, making up 43.3 per cent of the total labour force,⁴³ it might be expected that more female respondents would report that they worked through their lunch break to ensure they completed their work.

Table 4: Reasons for foregoing lunch breaks

	Gender		All
	Male	Female	
You are too busy	44%	54%	48%
None of these	28%	16%	23%
You work part time	19%	22%	21%
Your workplace culture is to skip lunch	12%	13%	12%
Others do not take a lunch break	7%	5%	6%
There is nowhere for you to have lunch	5%	6%	6%
Your manager would disapprove	2%	1%	2%
n	93	76	171

The data show that the practice of skipping, working through or cutting short your lunch break is clearly the norm for the majority of Australian workers and the most commonly cited reason for this is the pressure to meet job expectations. Combined with the dominant ethos of 'producing more with less' discussed earlier, the culture and attitude of individual workplaces informs this practice. Organisational culture is expressed through the implicit and explicit expectations of managers and colleagues about what is considered normal and necessary to 'get the job done'. These expectations and behaviours also influence how employees can demonstrate their dedication and suitability for promotion, providing impetus for longer hours and greater workloads.⁴⁴ Although only a very small number of respondents (two per cent) report that they work through lunch to avoid the disapproval of their manager, a further 12 per cent say that skipping lunch is the

⁴³ ABS (2013) Gender Indicators, Australia August 2013 Cat No: 4125.0

⁴⁴ Skinner N, Hutchinson C & Pocock B (2012) The Big Squeeze: Work, Life and Care in 2012 - The Australian Work and Life Index, Centre for Work + Life, University of South Australia, Adelaide p4

culture in their workplace. Other factors that are indicative of the values and norms in workplace cultures, including managerial expectations (two per cent), actions of colleagues (six per cent) and no lunchroom (six per cent), also contribute to Australian workers regularly failing to take a lunch break.

The benefits of taking a break

In Australia, scheduled breaks at work are covered under modern awards and enterprise agreements or contracts and as such are subject to some variation across states and territories and industries – but generally, the lunch break is between 30 minutes and one hour and is unpaid. Employers' duty of care to provide safe systems of work for their employees is also covered under work health and safety legislation. The health and safety benefits of scheduled breaks are determined by occupation and type of work but, generally speaking, breaks from work reduce physical and mental fatigue and assist the body's response to physical and mental stress. For people doing heavy manual labour, breaks reduce the risk of accident and injury; for employees working long hours on computers, breaks are important to prevent eyestrain and interrupt prolonged periods of sedentary, repetitive or monotonous work. Taking a break increases general productivity and decision-making ability, and helps to sustain concentration and energy levels to process information better.⁴⁵

These findings show that employees recognise and appreciate the benefits they experience when they do take a full lunch break. As Table 5 shows, one in four (26 per cent) respondents said that when they do take a full lunch break they find their work to be less stressful. One in three reported that they are able to concentrate better (31 per cent); one in four considered themselves to be more productive (26 per cent) and one in three enjoyed their work more (30 per cent). This effect is most noticeable in large workplaces. Four out of five respondents (79 per cent) believe that taking a break, even a short break to clear the head, makes them more productive. Despite this, more than one in four, 26 per cent of respondents, say they are not able or not usually able to take a short break to clear their head if they are finding it difficult to concentrate.

45 'Take back your lunch break' The Sydney Morning Herald 23 July 2013

<<http://www.smh.com.au/executive-style/management/blogs/performance-matters/take-back-your-lunch-break-20130722-2qdec.html>>; Rest/meal breaks - what am I entitled to?

<<http://www.ohsrep.org.au/law-rights/rights/workers-rights/restmeal-breaks-what-am-i-entitled-to>> (updated June 2013)

Table 5: The benefits of taking a break

	Gender		All
	Male	Female	
Work is less stressful	23%	29%	26%
You can concentrate better	29%	33%	31%
You are more productive	30%	35%	26%
You enjoy your work more	28%	32%	30%
None of these	39%	36%	26%
N	400	324	724

These results show that workers have personal experience and understanding of the positive effects of breaks on their attitude to work as well as their ability to manage their workload effectively and safely. The detrimental impact on employee productivity from not taking a break is equally evident in the data. The respondents in the survey who reported that they were usually too busy to take a lunch break were also more likely to report that they felt stressed, anxious, overwhelmed and worried about work. Compared to the respondents who gave other reasons for not usually taking a lunch break, the ‘too busy’ group were 23 per cent more likely to report feeling stressed; 10 per cent more anxious; 13 per cent more overwhelmed and 11 per cent more worried about work. Yet it appears that the increasing pressure of workload and job demands means that health- and safety-promoting activities, like lunch breaks and the ability to take short breaks as necessary, are going by the wayside in many Australian workplaces.

Annual leave – why taking a break matters

Australian workers are entitled to four weeks or 20 days paid annual leave a year, with one additional week for shift workers in the National Employment Standards under the Fair Work Act. This entitlement is smaller than in some OECD countries, such as France, where workers have 30 days annual leave, and Finland, Sweden and Norway, which provide 25 days of paid holiday leave. Australian workers are better off than their counterparts in Canada and Japan, who have 10 days of annual leave, and well ahead of the US, where there is no mandatory annual leave requirement.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Ray R & Schmitt J (2007) No vacation nation USA- a comparison of leave and holiday in OECD countries
European Economic and Employment Policy Brief No: 3-2007
<www.law.harvard.edu/programs/lwp/papers/No_Holidays.pdf>

Time to rest and recover from the increasing intensity and demands of the workplace is more important than ever for Australian workers. The traditional extended holiday break gives people a chance to de-stress and catch up on sleep and time with family and friends lost through the working year. The long break of annual leave is considered critical to prevent burnout and poor health, as well as maintaining job safety and satisfaction.⁴⁷ Yet the majority of Australian workers do not take their full leave each year,⁴⁸ preferring instead to ‘stockpile’ their leave rather than take the holiday break. In 2012, Australians had accrued 128 million days in annual leave or more than 350,000 years of holidays.⁴⁹ This pattern of work comes at a cost to mental and physical well-being, as well as increasing the risk of work-family strain.

Australian research into ‘stockpiling’ annual leave has found workload management is a key reason for this practice.⁵⁰ According to a University of New South Wales report, fear of a build up of work before and after a holiday deters many workers from taking leave. This is exacerbated by managers’ failure to ensure work is properly covered during the worker’s absence and an inability to schedule breaks when desired or to fit in with particular projects. Importantly, research shows that job insecurity is a major factor driving many workers to forgo their holidays and accrue their leave as ‘income protection’ if they lose their job.

The findings of this survey confirm this situation. Over half of the respondents (52 per cent), equating to six million workers, did not take all their leave in 2012. Higher earners, with incomes over \$80,000, are less likely to take all their leave and those in large workplaces (with more than 100 employees) are less likely to take their full annual leave: 69 per cent of respondents working in organisations of 100–200 employees and 59 per cent in organisations with more than 200 employees, compared to an average 48 per cent of respondents across all other workplaces. It is worth noting, however, that half of respondents in all workplaces with up to 100 employees reported that they did not take all their annual leave entitlement in 2012. Just fewer than half the respondents (45 per cent) would choose a four per cent pay rise (the equivalent to an additional two weeks leave) to extra leave.

⁴⁷ Denniss R (2003) Annual leave in Australia: An analysis of entitlements, usage and preferences Discussion Paper No: 56 The Australia Institute, Canberra

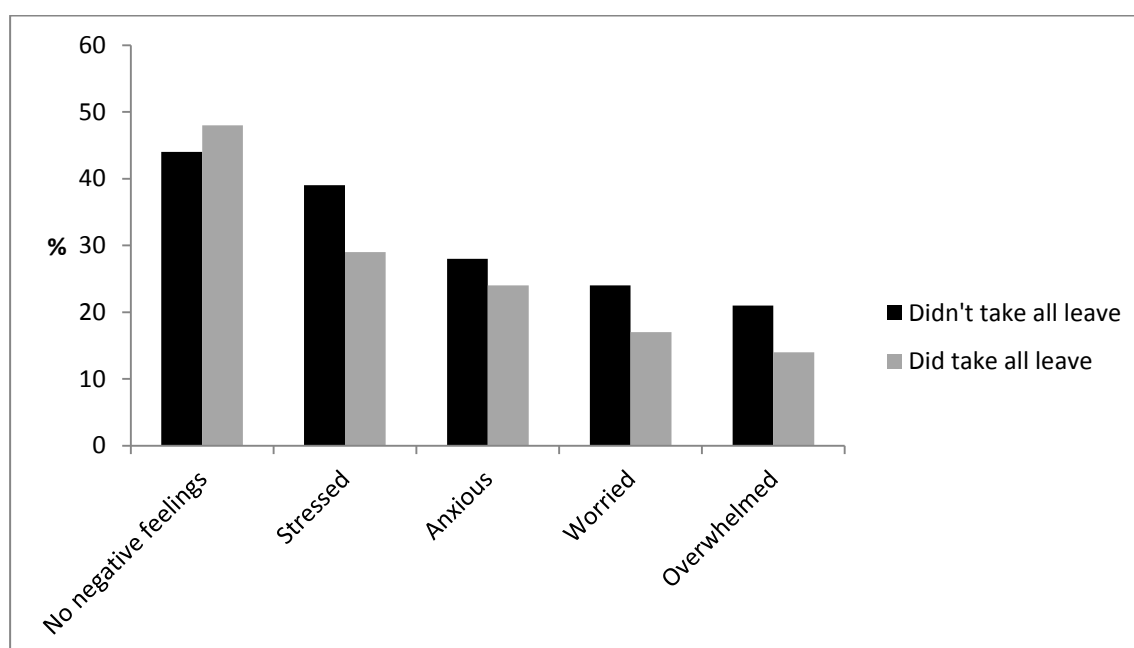
⁴⁸ Wooden M & Warren D (2007) Paid Annual Leave and Working Hours Melbourne Institute Working Paper Series, Working Paper No 20/07 Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research The University of Melbourne

⁴⁹ Tourism Australia “No leave no life” campaign <<http://tourism.australia.com/campaigns/no-leave-no-life/8299.aspx>> viewed 15 September 2013

⁵⁰ “Leave up your sleeve: Productive or destructive?” Knowledge@Australian School of Business 13 July 2010 <<http://knowledge.asb.unsw.edu.au/article.cfm?articleid=1175>>

The survey results indicate a strong correlation between work-related stress and anxiety and not taking leave breaks. Just as the respondents who said they were too busy to take a lunch break were more likely to experience feeling stressed and anxious about work, respondents who did not take all their annual leave in 2012 were markedly more likely to report having negative feelings about work than those who did take all their leave entitlement. As Table 7 shows of the group who didn't take their full leave, 39 per cent felt stressed about work; 28 per cent felt anxious; 24 per cent were worried and 21 per cent were overwhelmed by their work – by comparison, of those who did take their full annual leave, 29 per cent were stressed; 24 per cent were anxious; 17 per cent were worried and 14 per cent felt overwhelmed by their work.

Figure 4: Taking full annual leave and feelings about work



As the results of this survey suggest, taking a break at work is becoming a relic of the past in many Australian workplaces, as work demands increasingly encroach on the time and the health of employees. To meet the expectations of their job, around three in every four workers, (71 per cent), representing around 8.3 million Australians, miss lunch altogether or work through, cut short or postpone their lunch break. Almost half of the survey respondents (48 per cent) who report that they don't take a lunch break say that this is because they are too busy at work. One in four workers report that they don't feel able to take a short break to clear their head when they are finding concentration difficult. Furthermore, more than half of all Australian workers, around six million, did not take their full annual leave in 2012.

The effects of dissatisfaction with working hours and breaks

These findings show the extent of Australian workers' dissatisfaction with their working lives. Six million Australians are unhappy with their current work arrangements; and work adversely affects the lives of 2.3 million Australians, keeping them from their families, from caring for others and from engaging in healthy activities. Millions of employees feel too stressed about their work to take a break – 3.8 million routinely miss their lunch break and around six million workers did not take their full holiday break last year. The high incidence of work-related stress and anxiety experienced by workers in relation to working long hours, meeting the expectations of their job and the mismatch between actual hours worked and preferred hours is evidence of an increase in worker dissatisfaction and poor mental health. As discussed previously, prolonged periods of stress, anxiety and sleep disruption have serious short- and long-term consequences for physical and mental health. The costs of this work culture will also be borne by the health system and, more broadly, by the national economy, because productivity is stalled due to worker burnout, absences due to sickness and work-related stress, and high staff turnover.

The persistent mismatch in the actual hours worked and people's preferred hours is a source of stress for workers, whether it is the extra hours at work that interfere with family time and life outside work, or the need for more hours for financial or other reasons. A well functioning labour market should be able to allow a closer match to the benefit of employees and employers. The potential to do this is evident in the number of additional jobs or hours that could be taken up by underemployed workers and job seekers.

Long hours, unpaid overtime and stressed, sleep-deprived and anxious workers steal time and emotional energy from families and the broader community. The dominant view of the 'ideal worker' and the so-called efficiency model of 'doing more with less' underpin this pattern of work, despite the growing evidence that flexible work arrangements generate greater productivity.⁵¹ The findings in this survey show a workforce with little flexibility to accommodate their personal and family needs with those of their employer. Workers' desire for flexible work arrangements is growing but this is not matched by the necessary cultural and practical changes in workplaces. A high proportion of younger men express the desire for flexibility around the time they start and finish work, the number of hours

⁵¹ Ernst & Young (2013) Untapped opportunity: The role of women in unlocking Australia's productivity potential <[http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Untapped_opportunity_-_The_role_of_women_in_unlocking_Australias_productivity_potential/\\$FILE/EY-Untapped-opportunity-The-role-of-women-in-unlocking-Australias-productivity-potential.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Untapped_opportunity_-_The_role_of_women_in_unlocking_Australias_productivity_potential/$FILE/EY-Untapped-opportunity-The-role-of-women-in-unlocking-Australias-productivity-potential.pdf)>

they work, working part time and working from home, but only a small proportion actually do have these flexible work arrangements.⁵²

The research shows that concerns about being viewed as not 'serious' or 'committed' to their work, thereby damaging their chance of promotion and career prospects, are among the reasons that men don't make requests for flexible arrangements. Yet not being happy with working hours has been shown to increase stress levels and exacerbate conflict and tension in the family resulting in burnout. Men who have greater flexibility and control over their working hours are less likely to take sick leave and more likely to remain in their job for longer. Moreover, men having more work flexibility and more involvement in caring for children and other family members increases the opportunities for others seeking more work by freeing up available work. Women, in particular, would be able to work more hours if their partners had a greater share of the caring responsibilities.

There is clearly a pressing need to realign workplace culture and practices with the protection and promotion of workers' health and safety. The detrimental effect on employees in workplaces where long uninterrupted work hours are modelled and rewarded contributes to the high levels of stress, anxiety and work-related worry reported here. These findings point strongly to the need for more flexible work arrangements combined with a workplace culture that explicitly recognises productivity as an outcome of workers who are physically and mentally healthy and able to enjoy their work.

⁵² Workplace Gender Equality Agency (2013) Engaging men in flexible working arrangements Perspective Paper WGEA, Canberra
<http://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/20130829_PP_engaging_men_flex_work_2.pdf> p3

5 Breaking back into work – it's harder if you're older

After a number of years of low unemployment and a strong labour market, Australians are beginning to feel the effects of the slowing economy. Although the number of Australians seeking work has been gradually rising since 2009,⁵³ the strong growth in the resources sector has tended to mask this fact for all but those who have not been trying to find a job themselves. More recently attention has shifted to the issues of unemployment and job creation with the rate of unemployment in August up to 5.8 per cent, a steady increase since July 2011,⁵⁴ and Treasury forecasts predicting this trend will continue with an unemployment rate of 6.25 per cent by June 2014.⁵⁵ While the official ABS figures record a decrease in male full time employment and female part time employment, these data do not account for the extent of 'hidden' unemployment in Australia. When those people who do not have a job but want one and those who are underemployed – that is, they have a job but want more hours – are included the actual unemployment rate rises to 19 per cent.⁵⁶ The economic picture painted by these statistics is one in which Australian workers with a full time job are working longer and harder to keep it, those with a part time job are doing all they can to secure more hours and those seeking a job are finding it increasingly difficult.

Given the economic context and trend in unemployment, this year The Australia Institute has included the experiences of people who have recently been or still are involuntarily out of the workforce in the past two years in this survey. Of the 1,409 survey respondents, 896 meet these criteria: 466 respondents have been or still are involuntarily out of the workforce and 430 know someone in this situation. The analysis in this section of the report draws on their responses to provide an insight into the demographic characteristics and experiences of this group and, importantly, the mental and physical health consequences of being out of paid work and trying to re-enter the workforce.

The respondents answered survey questions on the following broad themes:

- the length of time, reasons for and their experience of being out of the workforce;

⁵³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) Measures of Australia's Progress: Summary Indicators, 2012 Cat No: 1370.0.0.55.001

⁵⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) Labour Force, Australia, August 2013 Cat No: 6202.0 <<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/6202.0>>; Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) Labour Force, Australia, July 2013 Cat No: 6202.0

⁵⁵ Treasury (2013) Pre election economic and fiscal outlook 2013 <http://www.treasury.gov.au/PublicationsAndMedia/Publications/2013/PEFO-2013>

⁵⁶ The Australia Institute (2010) The hidden unemployed The Australia Institute Newsletter <http://www.tai.org.au/node/254> The 19 percent rate combines the current unemployment data with 784,000 underemployed and 918,000 marginally attached ABS (2012) Persons not in the Labour Force, Australia, September 2012 Cat No: 6220.0 <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6220.0>

- the difficulties they experienced and the barriers they faced re-entering the workforce;
- what they were prepared to do to find work; and
- the psychological, financial, physical and social consequences of their time out of the workforce.

A large majority of respondents, 63 per cent, report that they, or someone they know, have been out of the workforce for more than three months in past two years. One third are or have been in this situation themselves, with a further 30 per cent knowing someone: a family member, friend or work colleague. There is an equal distribution between genders, but older workers, those aged 45 and above⁵⁷, were more likely than the younger groups (under 45 years) to report they had been out of the workforce themselves. Around half the respondents (48 per cent) in the lowest income group, with a household income less than \$40,000, reported that they were out of work, suggesting that income level is also a key factor. Similarly respondents who work in a service or trade or other occupation are more likely than professionals to be in this situation themselves.

The mental and physical health effects of unemployment

There is extensive international and national research on the adverse health effects of unemployment. Unemployment is one of the key social determinants of poor health, along with age, level of education, access to affordable housing, income level and other social factors.⁵⁸ The financial insecurity and reduced income caused by a lack of paid work impacts immediately on health and well-being in a variety of ways. The research shows that unemployment is linked to a less healthy diet and lifestyle, often accompanied by increased alcohol and tobacco consumption. The high levels of stress associated with unemployment impacts on people's physical and psychological health. Unemployed people are at greater risk of cardiovascular disease and lung cancer and make greater use of health services than employed people, with more visits to general practitioners and increased hospital admissions.⁵⁹

The negative impact on the mental well-being of people out of work is significant. The research confirms that unemployment increases the risk of anxiety and depression, as people experience feelings of loss of control and helplessness, lowered self-esteem and loss of confidence, becoming more vulnerable the longer

⁵⁷ This report defines those aged over 45 and over as older people or workers consistent with the ABS definition of people of this age as 'mature age workers'

⁵⁸ For example, Marmot M & Wilkinson R (Eds.)(2009) Social determinants of health Oxford University Press, Oxford

⁵⁹ For example Bartley M (1994) Unemployment and ill health: understanding the relationship Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health 48:333-337; Jin RL, Shah CP & Svoboda TJ (1995) The impact of unemployment on health: a review of the evidence. Canadian Medical Association Journal 153: 529; Wilson SH, Walker GM (1993) Unemployment and health: a review. Public Health 107: 153-162;

they are unable to find work.⁶⁰ Long-term unemployment is linked with increased risks of suicide and suicide attempts, particularly for men.⁶¹ While being out of the labour force and trying to return to paid work can be stressful for everyone who experiences it, this can be particularly difficult for older people. People aged over 45, who are often forced to leave their jobs involuntarily due to sickness or ill health or take on caring responsibilities for family members, find that once they are out of the workforce, breaking back into work is harder and takes longer.⁶² The impact on their mental well-being can be dramatic.

Why are people out of work?

The survey respondents were asked to identify the reason they or the person they know spent time out of the workforce. The main reason given by one in three respondents was the inability to find work (33 per cent). Being retrenched was another common explanation given by the respondents, with 14 per cent citing this as the reason for time out of the workforce. This means that close to half of the respondents (47 per cent) identify labour market issues – a lack of jobs and a loss of jobs – as the reason, indicative of the shifts occurring in the Australian labour market and the rising unemployment rate discussed previously.

Of the respondents who are or have been out of work themselves (Table 6), one in four cite being unable to find work as the reason for their time out of work. Younger people, particularly those aged between 17 and 24, were most likely to cite inability to find work as the reason, with more than half reporting this. The second most common reason for being out of the workforce was sickness or ill health, with one in five respondents reporting this. Older people were more likely to give ill health as a reason. Taking time out of paid work to care for family members was another important reason given. Around 14 per cent of respondents, four times as many women as men, were providing care for children, grandchildren and immediate family or for a sick or elderly relative. Significantly, a further nine per cent, close to one in ten, identified mental health reasons. It is possible to speculate that in some instances, this could be reflection of the work-related stress and high-pressure workplaces identified by workers in the survey findings outlined in previous sections of this report. Respondents in the older age group were more likely than their younger counterparts to be involuntarily out of the workforce – that is, for reasons other than caring responsibilities or taking time out to study,

⁶⁰ For example, Backhans MC & Hemmingsson T (2011) Unemployment and mental health—who is (not) affected?, *European Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 429–433; Gill T, Koster C, Taylor A, Chittleborough C, & Winefield H. (2009) Employment Status and Psychological Distress in South Australia: Summary of Results. *Discipline of Psychiatry*, University of Adelaide.

⁶¹ Milner A, Page A & LaMontagne AD (2013) Long-Term Unemployment and Suicide: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis 8(1) e51333 *Plos One* www.plosone.org

⁶² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2010) Older People and the Labour Market, *Australian Social Trends*, September 2010 Cat No: 4102.0

including retrenchment, inability to find work, mental illness, their own or a family member's ill health or workplace injury.

Table 6: Reasons for time out of the workforce – respondents who are or have been out of work themselves

	Age						All
	17-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
Unable to find work	53%	40%	17%	20%	19%	3%	23%
Sickness or ill health	5%	13%	17%	39%	35%	7%	20%
Caring	11%	20%	32%	15%	7%	2%	14%
Voluntary time out of the workforce	2%	10%	4%	15%	10%	14%	10%
Retrenchment	4%	8%	11%	10%	11%	7%	9%
Mental health reasons	12%	14%	13%	13%	3%	0%	9%
Taking leave to study/retrain	19%	11%	3%	0%	0%	0%	5%
Work place injury	4%	4%	6%	9%	3%	3%	5%
Maternity leave	0%	16%	4%	0%	0%	0%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
n	57	80	72	87	71	99	466

Time out of the workforce

The length of time a person is unemployed has an important effect on their ability to re-enter the labour force and on their mental health and well-being. The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines 'long-term unemployment' as a period of unemployment of 12 months or more. People who have been out of the workforce for longer periods face greater barriers to finding work, including the negative perceptions of employers about their lack of recent work experience and relevant skills. Additionally, long-term unemployment has a 'scarring effect': loss of confidence, along with the loss of social and work connections that help people to re-enter the workplace.⁶³

The extent of long-term unemployment in Australia is revealed in these survey findings, with one third of respondents reporting that they or the person they know

⁶³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006) Australian Labour Market Statistics, Jan 2006 Cat No: 6105.0

has been unemployed for more than 12 months. One in five respondents said it took more than two years for the person to re-enter the workforce and a further 10 per cent said the period out of work was between one and two years. Around one in four (23 per cent) said they or the person they knew found work after a period of three to six months.

The contributing effect of age in determining the length of time the person is unemployed is shown through the group of respondents who are or have been out of work themselves (Table 7). Older people are twice as likely as those under 45 to take more than two years to re-enter the workforce and one in three of the older age group is still out of work compared to one in four of those aged 17 to 44 years. In the older age group, 19 per cent were re-employed within 12 months; 35 per cent took more than two years to find a job and 34 per cent are still not employed. This compares with respondents aged under 45, half of whom found a job within 12 months; 16 per cent took more than two years and 25 per cent are still out of work.

Table 7: Time out of work by age – people who are or have been out of work themselves

	Age		All
	Under 45 years	Over 45 years	
3 to 6 months	28%	12%	19%
6 to 9 months	10%	3%	6%
9 to 12 months	11%	4%	7%
1 to 2 years	7%	8%	8%
More than 2 years	16%	35%	27%
Have not re-entered the workforce yet	25%	34%	30%
Not sure/Don't know	2%	4%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%
n	208	258	466

Gender is also a contributing factor when considered in combination with the effect of age in the group of respondents who are or have been out of the workforce themselves. Older men are twice as likely as men under 45 not to have re-entered work, 31 per cent compared to 14 per cent, and also more likely to take longer than two years to find a job, 34 per cent of older male workers and 24 per cent of

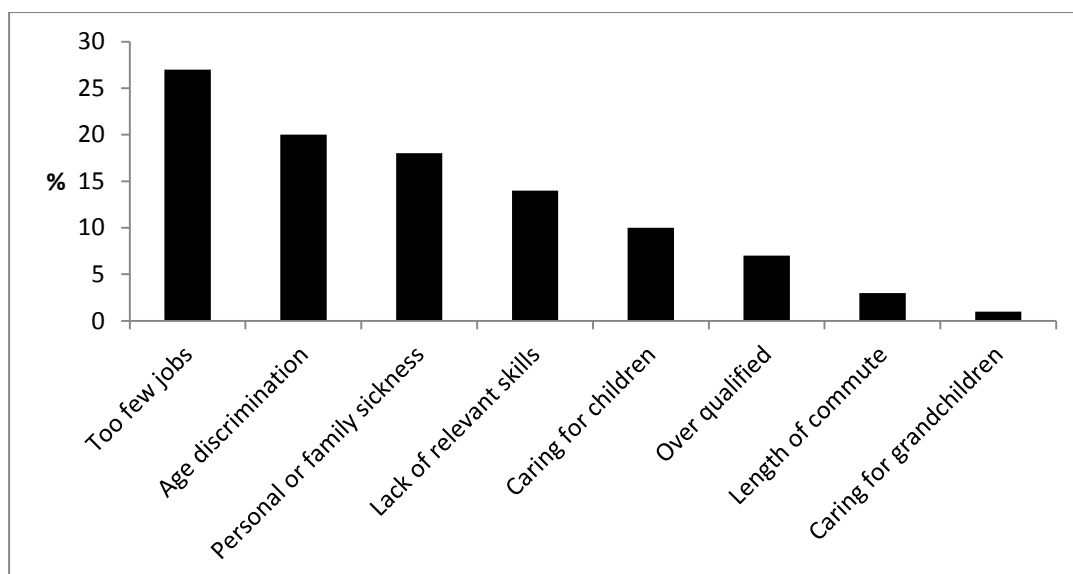
their younger counterparts. Older men, however, are twice as likely as older women to find a job within six months – 16 per cent compared to nine per cent. While women in the older age group are three times more likely to take more than two years to find work compared to younger women, a similar proportion of women in both age groups report that they are still out of the workforce. In the younger age group, men are again more likely to have re-entered the workforce than women and more likely to have done so in a short timeframe.

The duration of time out of the workforce is also influenced by income level. Respondents in the higher income group earning over \$80,000 were most likely to report that they re-entered the workforce in the shortest timeframe and the least likely of all the income groups to say that it took longer than two years. Lower income groups, those earning less than \$80,000, took longer to get back into work, with one in three respondents taking more than two years before returning to work compared to 15 per cent of the higher income group.

For many Australians breaking back into work can be a very difficult experience. This is reinforced by a majority of survey respondents (61 per cent) who report that it was very or somewhat difficult for them or someone they know to re-enter the workforce. Of the 28 per cent who found it very difficult, this was far more likely to be the case for older workers, who are almost twice as likely as those under 45 to report this experience. Within the older age group, those in the 55–64 age group are most likely to find it very hard – 48 per cent compared to 36 per cent of those aged 45–54 years.

Barriers to re-entering the workforce

When asked to identify the main barrier preventing them or someone they know from re-entering the workforce, almost one in three respondents (27 per cent) cited the lack of jobs. As Figure 5 shows, this was the most commonly identified barrier, again illustrating the impact of the current economic climate on the labour market. Notably, age discrimination is the second most commonly reported barrier to workforce re-entry after a lack of jobs, with one in five respondents identifying this factor. Almost one in five respondents reported that ill health, their own or a family member's, was a barrier.

Figure 5: Barriers to re-entering the workforce – all respondents

The main barrier identified by just the respondents who were out of work themselves was age discrimination, as shown in Table 8. One in four respondents identified age discrimination as the main barrier to workforce re-entry. Not surprisingly, this was particularly true for those aged over 55 years, with 41 per cent in the 55–64 age group and 66 per cent of the over-65 group naming this barrier. These findings graphically illustrate the combined effects of a shrinking labour market and a culture of age bias in the workplace in creating barriers to employment.

Those who are or have been out of work themselves identified ill health as the second most common barrier. Those people aged 45–54 were twice as likely to identify this as a barrier than average (44 per cent in this group compared to an average of 22 per cent). One in ten respondents reported that caring for children was the barrier to finding employment. Predictably, these respondents were more likely to be female aged between 25 and 44.

Younger workers aged 17-24 years were most likely to identify the lack of jobs and their own lack of relevant skills as the main barrier to them finding a job than the other age groups. In the younger group, 36 per cent considered the lack of jobs the key problem compared to the average of 20 per cent across the other age groups. Similarly, 31 per cent of this group felt the appropriateness of their skills was the most important issue compared with the average of 13 per cent.

Table 8: Barriers to re-entering the workforce by age – respondents who are or have been out of the workforce themselves

	Age						All
	17-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
Age discrimination	5%	5%	4%	19%	41%	66%	26%
Personal or family sickness	8%	11%	25%	44%	30%	12%	22%
Too few jobs	36%	31%	14%	16%	20%	8%	20%
Lack of relevant skills	31%	20%	20%	12%	3%	2%	13%
Caring for children	7%	19%	25%	5%	0%	1%	9%
Over qualified	5%	12%	7%	5%	4%	6%	7%
Length of commute	5%	2%	4%	0%	3%	3%	3%
Caring for grandchildren	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
n	58	80	71	88	70	99	466

What lengths will people go to in order to find a job?

The survey asked a series of questions about the lengths people are prepared to go to in order to find a job. Respondents were asked whether they would consider taking a job with different hours and different security, including full time, part time, casual and contract work, compared to their previous position; if they would be prepared to work in a different job or different sector and if they would accept a substantial drop in pay compared to what they had been earning before. They were also asked if they would move house or take a longer commute to work if it meant they were able to re-enter the workforce.

The data reveals respondents had a strong preparedness across genders and all age and income groups to adapt their job and financial expectations to break back into the workforce. This was particularly evident for older workers. As shown in Table 9, around half the respondents (49 per cent) reported that they would be willing to accept work with different hours and security to their previous position, with nearly one in four respondents (22 per cent) saying they were open to any hours and security.

Table 9: Open to different hours and security – respondents who are or have been out of the workforce themselves

	Age						All
	17-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
Yes, full-time	3%	13%	8%	7%	3%	3%	6%
Yes, part-time	19%	9%	18%	9%	14%	1%	11%
Yes, casual	14%	8%	10%	9%	3%	9%	9%
Yes, contract	3%	0%	1%	0%	0%	3%	1%
Yes, was open to any hours and security	22%	30%	27%	26%	23%	10%	22%
No	19%	26%	23%	43%	45%	62%	38%
Not sure/Don't know	19%	15%	13%	6%	13%	12%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
n	58	80	71	88	71	100	468

A further one in three respondents would be prepared to take any job in any sector and 36 per cent would consider taking a job with substantially lower salary than their previous position, as shown in Tables 10 and 11. In both cases, this again was more likely to be the case for workers aged 45 and older, with almost half (47 per cent) of the 45 to 54 group saying they would take a pay cut. Respondents who earned above \$40,000 were more likely to consider these options than those who earned less than \$40,000.

Table 10: Open to taking a different job or working in another sector – respondents who are or have been out of the workforce themselves

	Age						All
	17-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
Yes, different job	5%	18%	18%	15%	6%	6%	11%
Yes, different sector	21%	18%	13%	8%	10%	4%	11%
Yes, was open to any job in any sector	35%	30%	32%	38%	38%	16%	31%
No	18%	24%	25%	33%	39%	66%	36%
Not sure/Don't know	21%	11%	11%	6%	8%	8%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
n	57	80	71	87	72	100	467

Table 11: Open to taking a substantial pay cut – respondents who are or have been out of the workforce themselves

	Age						All
	17-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
Yes	26%	44%	44%	47%	40%	19%	36%
No	40%	38%	32%	38%	36%	65%	43%
Not sure/Don't know	33%	17%	24%	15%	24%	16%	21%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
n	57	81	71	86	72	99	466

The respondents who were or had been out of the workforce themselves demonstrated a readiness to make compromises if it helped them find a job. Half of this group reported that they were willing to consider taking a job with different hours and security from their previous position, with men more prepared than women to do this. Similarly, men in this group were more prepared than women to move house or commute for longer to get back into work. Respondents in the group aged 17 to 44 indicated a greater willingness to make compromises on job hours and security than the older age group. When considering their readiness to take a substantial pay cut to find a job, men were slightly more likely than women

Hard to get a break?

to be prepared to do this – 40 per cent compared to 33 per cent. The youngest and oldest respondents were more reluctant to take a substantial pay cut to get work. Those over 65 and younger people aged 17–24 were the least inclined of all age groups to consider a pay cut, with one in five people over 65 (19 per cent) and one in four of the youngest group (26 per cent) saying that they would consider this, compared to an average of 44 per cent across all the other age groups.

Although these results show a strong preparedness to make considerable compromises in order to find a job, respondents were less willing to move house or take a longer commute of over an hour for a job. While the majority (56 per cent) stated that they or the person they know would not consider this, one in ten would be prepared to move house and a sizeable number of respondents (16 per cent) said they or the person they know would be prepared to commute for over an hour. The reluctance shown by respondents is arguably a positive outcome for their mental well-being and physical health given that relocation and extended daily commutes to work would likely have an adverse impact on their family life and social network as well as increasing the time-work pressure they experienced.

The mental health consequences of unemployment

The mental health consequences of unemployment are well established by research – the presence of common mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression increases the likelihood and duration of unemployment.⁶⁴ Although there is academic debate about a conclusive causal link, no one argues that being unemployed is bad for mental well-being and that the longer the duration of unemployment the worse the mental health impact will be. This is further compounded by the poor mental health itself, which makes it more difficult to break back into work. Financial stress and social isolation, as well as the loss of confidence and social identity that come with a job, are all factors contributing to the psychological distress experienced as a result of unemployment. Gender is also a factor, with research showing that men are more affected by the adverse mental health effects of unemployment than women and are more likely to be out of work for longer as a result.⁶⁵

To explore the psychological and social consequences of being out of the workforce the survey asked two questions addressing this issue. One question asked respondents to select up to three responses that best described their own experience, or the experience of the person they know, of time out of the

⁶⁴ For example, Backhans MC & Hemmingsson T (2011) Unemployment and mental health—who is (not) affected? *European Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 429–433; Gill T, Koster C, Taylor A, Chittleborough C, & Winefield H. (2009) *Employment Status and Psychological Distress in South Australia: Summary of Results*. Discipline of Psychiatry, University of Adelaide.

⁶⁵ Butterworth P, Leach LS, Pirkis J & Kelaheer M (2012) Poor mental health influences risk and duration of unemployment: a prospective study *Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology* June 47(6): 1013-21

workforce, and the second, which asked respondents to identify three consequences of the experience and rank them in order of effect. The options for both questions are listed in the appendix. The following section analyses these responses.

The experience of involuntary time out of the workforce

The findings clearly indicate that the experience of involuntary time out of the workforce is predominantly a negative one for most people. While some respondents report experiencing some benefits, such as being able to spend more time with friends and family or using the time to volunteer or retrain, as Table 12 illustrates, the majority of respondents reported a negative emotional response.

Table 12: Experience of time out of the workforce by age and gender – respondents who are or have been out of the workforce themselves

	Gender		Age						All
	Male	Female	17-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
Depressing	39%	31%	33%	49%	35%	52%	35%	11%	35%
Demoralising	37%	23%	37%	35%	25%	38%	35%	15%	30%
Extra time for family/ friends	21%	37%	39%	29%	34%	29%	25%	25%	29%
Volunteered	18%	18%	9%	6%	18%	14%	25%	32%	18%
Overwhelming	13%	13%	14%	6%	21%	20%	18%	4%	13%
Study/retrain	11%	13%	30%	20%	10%	8%	7%	5%	12%
Detrimental to health	14%	10%	18%	14%	10%	11%	11%	8%	12%
Necessary to find the right job	8%	9%	9%	16%	15%	9%	1%	3%	9%
Allowed a partner to work more	5%	4%	0%	10%	6%	3%	6%	2%	5%
n	227	239	57	80	71	87	72	99	466

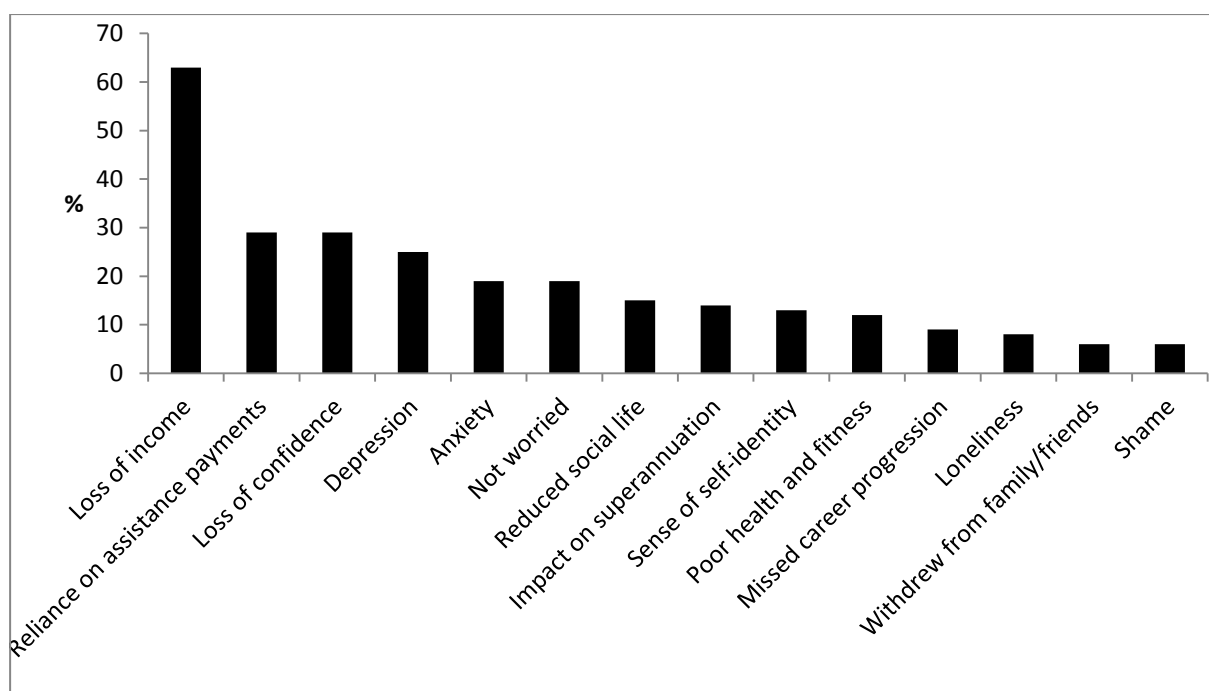
Of all the options to describe the experience of time out the workforce, depressing was the most commonly cited, with 35 per cent of respondents reported experiencing this. More than half (52 per cent) of those in the 45 to 54 age group

describe the experience as depressing. Otherwise this was a common experience across gender, income and occupation types. One in three respondents, (30 per cent) found the experience demoralising. Men were more likely to say they felt demoralised than women – 37 per cent compared to 23 per cent of women. In contrast, more than one in four respondents (29 per cent) reported that it afforded the benefit of spending extra time with family and friends. This was particularly the case for women, with 37 per cent of women and 21 per cent of men choosing this response. Conforming to expectation, younger people in the 17–24 age group were twice as likely as other age groups to use the experience as an opportunity to study or retrain and people in the 65 and over age group were twice as likely to undertake volunteer work when they were out of work.

The consequences of being out of the workforce

To ascertain the impact of time out of the workforce on people’s lives respondents were asked to select from a list of psychological, emotional, financial, physical and social consequences and rank three in order of effect. As Figure 6 shows, unsurprisingly, the majority listed issues relating to financial insecurity, including loss of income and reliance on assistance payments, as the primary consequence of their time out of the workforce. That said, loss of confidence, depression and anxiety were ranked as the most significant consequences after financial impact. It is important to note that throughout this research paper when we refer to depression and anxiety this is based on self-reporting by respondents and we cannot distinguish whether the person has been clinically diagnosed.

Figure 6: Ranking of consequences of time out of the workforce – all respondents



Financial insecurity

A large majority of all survey respondents (63 per cent) ranked loss of income as one of the three most significant consequences of being out of work. Almost 60 per cent of those out of work themselves identified this as one of the major consequences. A further 29 per cent listed being reliant on assistance payments and around 14 per cent of all respondents were concerned about the impact it would have on their superannuation. For those out of the workforce themselves, women were slightly more affected by loss of income than men, with 62 per cent of women compared to 56 per cent of men selecting this option. In the group of respondents who had been out of work themselves, those in the under 45 age group were almost twice as likely to rate financial insecurity as a serious consequence than the older group, with almost 60 per cent citing loss of income compared to 33 per cent of the older age group. In the older age group, men were twice as likely to report being affected by income loss due to unemployment than women – 57 per cent compared to 33 per cent of older women.

Consequences of being unemployed for mental well-being

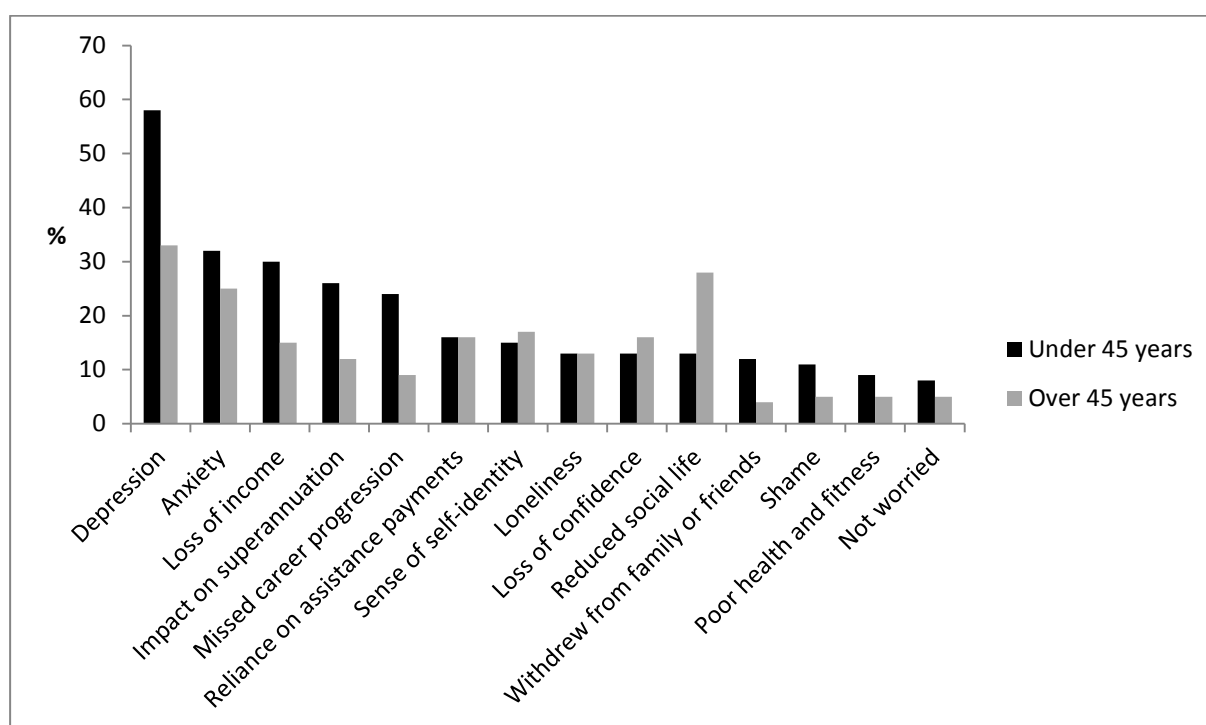
The detrimental consequences on mental health caused by involuntary time out of work are strongly demonstrated in the survey data. Loss of confidence, depression and anxiety are ranked by respondents as being the consequences with the greatest effect on their lives after loss of income and reliance on assistance payments. The stress and anxiety arising from the loss of a waged income and being reliant on the limited income provided by assistance payments are clearly contributing factors to poor mental health, including the high incidence of depression reported in this group.

Almost one in three survey respondents (29 per cent) ranked loss of confidence as one of the three most significant consequences of time out of the workforce. A further one in four survey respondents reported that depression was one of the three most significant effects of being out of work. For the group of respondents who are out of work themselves, the difference between genders is notable, with men being twice as likely as women to report experiencing depression (30 per cent of men compared to 17 per cent of women). In relation to those who were out of work themselves as well as those who knew someone who was out of work, anxiety was reported by almost one in five respondents (19 per cent) and 13 per cent reported that a sense of self-identity was affected by being out of the workforce. Other consequences likely to have an indirect impact on mental well-being, such as a reduced social life, were reported by 15 per cent of respondents.

Figure 7 illustrates the effects of age in the group of respondents who have been out of work themselves. In this group, those aged under 45 were significantly more likely to report experiencing depression and anxiety than the older age group,

more than twice as likely to report experiencing depression and almost three times more likely to experience anxiety. In the older age group, men were more than three times more likely to report having depression than women. The younger group also reported experiencing loss of confidence at a higher rate than their older counterparts.

Figure 7: Consequences of being out of work – respondents who are or have been out of the workforce themselves



The data have provided a bleak picture of the experiences of Australians who have been out of the workforce over the past two years. The significant impact on their mental health is evident in the findings, with a high incidence of reported anxiety and depression experienced by the respondents as a result of their involuntary time out of work. When considered together with the prevalence of work-related stress and anxiety reported by respondents who were currently in work, the situation facing millions of Australians holds dire consequences for their mental health and well-being now and in the future. The following section of the report discusses these findings.

Implications

Financial insecurity – the costs to health and the economy

Survey respondents have overwhelmingly identified loss of income and financial insecurity as the most detrimental consequence of time out of the workforce. As discussed above, there is ample evidence to show that the stress and anxiety caused by loss of income is directly linked to poor health and psychological

distress, defined as heightened levels of nervousness, agitation, depression and fatigue.⁶⁶ The results of this survey provide further evidence to support this. That financial insecurity is a primary cause of psychological distress among people out of work highlights the problems in the Australian social support system, in particular the inadequacy of the unemployment income support to ensure a decent standard of living. With a shrinking job market, the need for adequate income support for people unable to find paid work becomes increasingly important.

Recently there has been a broad-based call from across the community, union and business sectors for an increase to the Newstart Allowance on the basis of fairness and adequacy.⁶⁷ These groups are calling for a \$50-a-week increase in the single person payment of Newstart Allowance, noting that, rather than acting as an incentive to find work, the low payment entrenches poverty and unemployment. Under the current allowance, a single unemployed person on Newstart is required to meet regular rigorous work tests to receive \$35.50 per day, less than 40 per cent of the minimum wage.

Concerns about the inadequacy of this payment are reinforced by the fact that long-term unemployment is increasing in Australia.⁶⁸ Two-thirds of Newstart recipients have been out of work for more than one year, with two years the average period of unemployment.⁶⁹ Consistent with the findings of this survey, the evidence shows that older people find it harder to re-enter the workforce once they leave it, whether involuntarily or by choice. One third of those receiving the Newstart Allowance are over 50, and this group makes up 46 per cent of the long-term unemployed – that is, those unemployed for more than a year. In 2010-2011 33 per cent of unemployed people aged 55–64 were long term unemployed.⁷⁰ Given that prolonged periods of unemployment are a common experience and older people are most likely to be out of work and reliant on income support for a

⁶⁶ The concept of psychological distress describes a person's mental well-being in terms of their nervousness, agitation and psychological fatigue and depression. The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10), a globally used tool to measure mental health assesses the levels these experiences over the previous month. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) Australian Health Survey: First Results, 2011-12 Cat No: 4364.0.55.001 <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4364.0.55.001Chapter2502011-12>

⁶⁷ Australian Council of Social Services (2012) Surviving not Living Submission to the Senate Employment Committee on the adequacy of 'allowance' payments ACOSS Paper 192; Business Council of Australia (2012) Submission to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee Inquiry into the Adequacy of the Allowance Payment System for Jobseekers and Others; Richardson, D (2012) Submission Inquiry into the Adequacy of the Allowance Payment System for Jobseekers and Others, The Australia Institute, Canberra

⁶⁸ Johnson, M (2013) Tackling poverty should be a budget priority Online Opinion <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=14969>

⁶⁹ Australian Council of Social Services (2013) Partnerships for Participation Submission to Minister for Employment Participation on reform of employment services ACOSS Paper:200

⁷⁰ Fowkes, L (2011) Long-term unemployment in Australia Australian Policy Online <http://apo.org.au/guide/long-term-unemployment-australia>

longer time, it is critical that they receive adequate financial assistance to sustain a decent standard of living to maintain their health and well-being.

The cost of not providing adequate income support when people are unemployed is highlighted by these findings. The increased rates of stress, depression and anxiety associated with being out of work, and the accompanying financial insecurity, will have a significant and costly impact on health services that are already under pressure to meet demand. The increased burden would see expenditure on mental illness in Australia blowing out well beyond the current \$28.6 billion per year.⁷¹ The cost of increasing the single payment Newstart Allowance by \$50 per week has been estimated to be around \$2 billion per year.⁷²

Increasing the participation of older worker and age discrimination

Increasing the workforce participation of women and older workers has been identified as one of the key 'game-changers' to economic growth, a reform that could contribute economic benefits estimated at \$70 billion a year over the next decade.⁷³ Yet as the findings of this report show, older people, far from being encouraged back into the workforce, experience discrimination and great difficulty breaking back into work.

These findings provide further evidence that unemployed people aged 45 years or older are more likely to be long-term unemployed than other age groups.⁷⁴ There is less evidence in these data, however, to support the reasons that tend to be given to explain this, such as older people's greater selectivity about jobs because of their skills and experience, lower mobility, a reduced capacity for job-hunting and less transferable skills. The primary barrier to workforce re-entry identified by respondents in this survey is age discrimination – an experience reported by 43 per cent of respondents aged over 45, compared to five per cent of those aged under 45. Overcoming these barriers may prove so difficult that many older workers withdraw from the labour force entirely; forced into early retirement and joining the ranks of the 'hidden unemployed'. In a recent study, 60 per cent of older aged participants stated that age discrimination affected their desire to work.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Medibank Private & Nour Group (2013) The Case for Mental Health Reform in Australia: a Review of Expenditure and System Design https://www.medibankhealth.com.au/Mental_Health_Reform

⁷² Johnson, M (2013) Tackling poverty should be a budget priority Online Opinion <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=14969>

⁷³ Daley J, McGannon C & Ginnivan L (2012) Game-changers: Economic reform priorities for Australia, Grattan Institute, Melbourne

⁷⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006) Australian Labour Market Statistics, Jan 2006 Cat No: 6105.0; Fowkes, L (2011) Long-term unemployment in Australia Australian Policy Online <http://apo.org.au/guide/long-term-unemployment-australia>

⁷⁵ Productive Ageing Centre (2013) Age Discrimination in the Labour Market: Experiences and Perceptions of Mature Age Australians Age Discrimination in the Labour Market National Seniors Australia Canberra p9

Age discrimination in recruitment has been described as rampant, systemic and the area of employment decision-making where managers use age to differentiate between people most extensively.⁷⁶ It was the most common experience of participants in the recent Australian Human Rights Commission report into this form of discrimination.⁷⁷ Close to 70 per cent (67 per cent) of respondents aged 55 years and over had experienced being turned down for a job on the basis of age. Other forms of age discrimination included invisibility, lack of respect, being refused service or being denied access to a service or product, with a direct impact on people's sense of self-worth and emotional well-being. Many participants in the AHRC study report feeling devalued, depressed and isolated after experiencing discrimination on the grounds of age.

The entrenched and systemic nature of age discrimination in the workplace is reflected in the AHRC report finding that almost half (47 per cent) of business respondents hold 'predominantly negative attitudes' towards older people in the workplace. Half of the business decision makers surveyed believe that older employees are at higher risk of being made redundant. More than one third (36 per cent) think they are less likely to be promoted and 29 per cent believe that older employees have difficulty adapting to change. Around one quarter (23 per cent) agree that older employees will not be in the role as long as younger employees and that it is difficult to teach older workers new things. More generally, the perceptions of older workers include that they don't want to work long hours, are forgetful, don't like being told what to do by someone younger and are resistant to change, that they have difficulty learning new and complex tasks and prefer not to use technology and are less likely to contribute at work.⁷⁸ Contrary to these discriminatory perceptions of older workers, research shows that they bring high motivation levels, reliability, sustained job performance and a lifetime's accumulation of experience, knowledge and skills to the workplace.⁷⁹

Australia's ageing population and longer life expectancy means that people need to work for longer to contribute to the national tax base for as long as possible and to ensure their financial security in retirement. As the findings of this report have shown, many productive older people are being excluded from the workforce, which in many cases forces them prematurely to rely on income support payments, including the aged pension, for the rest of their lives, which could be a period of 30 or 40 years. This is particularly true for women who, as well as living

⁷⁶ Australian Human Rights Commission (2010) Age Discrimination – Exposing the Hidden Barrier for Mature Age Workers AHRC, Sydney p23

⁷⁷ Australian Human Rights Commission (2013) Fact or Fiction? Stereotypes of older Australians Research Report AHRC, Sydney

⁷⁸ Australian Human Rights Commission (2013) Fact or Fiction? Stereotypes of older Australians Research Report AHRC, Sydney p32-33

⁷⁹ Tilly J, O'Leary J & Russell G (2013) Older women matter: Harnessing the talents of Australia's older female workforce Diversity Council of Australia, Sydney <http://www.dca.org.au/dca-research.html> p10

longer than men, experience significant financial disadvantage throughout their lives resulting in inadequate or non-existent savings in retirement.⁸⁰ As well as financial security, being in the paid workforce improves the social support network, personal satisfaction and self-esteem and mental well-being of older people.⁸¹ The adverse impact on mental health of being excluded from work is reflected in the high rates of depression and loss of confidence experienced by older people in the data reported here. The inability of older workers to continue their participation in the labour force has long-term consequences for the economy through lost skills and expertise as well as the costs to the tax base and the national budget.

⁸⁰ Cameron P (2013) What's choice got to do with it? Women's lifetime financial disadvantage and the superannuation pay gap The Australia Institute, Canberra

⁸¹ Tilly J, O'Leary J & Russell G (2013) Older women matter: Harnessing the talents of Australia's older female workforce Diversity Council of Australia, Sydney <<http://www.dca.org.au/dca-research.html>> p11

6 Recommendations

The Australia Institute has been conducting research into the perceptions of Australians about their working hours, and the impact of their working hours in their lives, for five years. Over that time people report that their satisfaction with their hours of work is declining and the adverse impact of the mismatch between their desired and actual hours of work is increasing. The research suggests that unless things change, these trends will likely continue and, in turn, the adverse impacts on the physical health, mental health, relationship health and productivity of the workforce will continue to be harmed.

While there is no single solution for a problem as diverse and deep seated as the inability of the labour market to deliver the hours of work desired by the population, there are a range of partial solutions that can both reduce the nature and extent of the mismatch and mitigate the adverse impacts.

Such measures include:

- 1) Redistributing the unpaid overtime performed by the overworked to the millions of Australians who desire additional hours of work.
- 2) Promoting the value of older workers in the workforce who are more likely to report underemployment.
- 3) Improving workplace practices around recognising and responding to work-related stress so that employees are able to address their workload issues before it becomes a serious problem.
- 4) Commencing a national dialogue about smart technologies and the potential impact this may have on workers' mental health due to the 24/7 nature of technology.
- 5) Providing specific written advice to staff about expected hours of work and including specific discussion of actual and desired hours of work in annual appraisals of staff performance.
- 6) Providing staff with a range of specific options for improving work-life balance, such as four-day weeks and annual leave purchasing, and actively promoting such options within the workplace.
- 7) Requiring all organisations that employ more than 100 staff to publish the results of an externally conducted, and nationally consistent, survey of employee satisfaction.
- 8) Providing information and resources to managers to help them identify warning signs in staff who may be experiencing stress and anxiety.

- 9) Introducing a simple measure of mentally healthy workplaces along with national targets to increase the number of mentally healthy workplaces in Australia.

Finally, the most important thing that employers and employees can do is simply to begin to talk more about both their desired amount of work, the consequences of those desires not being met, and possible options for improving work-life balance. After 20 years of governments pursuing a 'flexible' labour market the majority of Australian employees are unhappy with their actual hours of work. While regulation needs to change, such change will not happen without a broad conversation in workplaces and society more generally. Changing the law without changing workplace culture and the expectations of individual employees and managers would not alone solve the problem.

7 Conclusion

This fifth annual survey of Australian workers conducted by The Australia Institute has found that millions of Australians can't get a break when it comes to working in jobs that meet their social, psychological and economic needs. For many Australian workers, meeting the demands of their job is causing heightened levels of stress and anxiety; many feel unable to take a lunch break or their full holiday entitlements and increasing numbers of employees need to work outside normal hours. This has widespread and concerning mental health consequences, with 3.3 million Australians (28 per cent) suffering from sleep loss as a result of work and four million feeling stressed (34 per cent). Worry about work is affecting 2.6 million employees (22 per cent).

In 2013, many of the issues identified in previous Australia Institute reports continue to affect employees, and in many instances, the adverse effects are more pervasive. The number of workers who are dissatisfied with their hours has grown to around six million, an increase of 600,000 since 2012. One in three Australians are now working more hours than they want, on average seven hours more, with full time employees working over 10 hours more. The mismatch between the actual and desired work hours is also reflected in the number of workers who would like more hours: one in four workers or 2.8 million Australians do not have sufficient work to meet their financial and other needs.

Pressure to meet job expectations has also seen an increase in the amount of unpaid overtime since 2009 across all job categories. In 2013 the average employee worked 7.1 hours a week compared to 4.1 hours per week in 2009. This increase is most marked in the hours of unpaid overtime worked by casual employees, who report working an additional 70 minutes per day more than they did in 2009, up to 88 minutes from 18 previously – or 7.3 hours per week compared to 1.5 hours. This is a dramatic illustration of the casualisation of employment in the Australian labour market, with increasing numbers of workers employed in non-permanent work arrangements such as casual contracts and agency labour hire and as independent contractors. Combined with the lack of workplace entitlements and job insecurity that accompanies these arrangements, the increase in unpaid work by this group of employees is indicative of the pressures and work practices in the contemporary Australian workplace.

This change is also reflected in the disappearance of the lunch break and the long summer holiday. This report found that more than one in five Australian workers don't take a lunch break, and half of them say it is because they are too busy. Workers who didn't take a break, either a lunch break or their full annual leave were more likely to report feeling stressed and anxious about work – the benefits of a break are widely acknowledged, with workers reporting feeling less stressed, better able to concentrate, more productive and enjoying work more when they

take time out. Changing workplace culture and practices can have significant influence on these behaviours, making lunch breaks and time out the norm.

These findings have provided evidence of the adverse mental health effects of mismatched work hours, excessive overtime hours and the pressure to meet job demands, with the subsequent loss of personal and family time for workers. There is an opportunity to create a better work-life balance on an individual and collective level by re-distributing the excess hours to those who seek them and creating new jobs for those who can't find them. Based on the survey data, Australians are working 21.32 million net excess hours. These excess hours are equivalent to 711,000 new jobs with an even mix of full and part time workers averaging 30 hours a week.⁸²

The final section of this report examined the situation of people who are trying to re-enter the workforce. The results confirmed that, as the labour market tightens, older people aged 45 years and over are particularly at risk of long-term unemployment. Older people are twice as likely as those under 45 years to take more than two years to re-enter the workforce and are more likely to remain out of work. Age discrimination is a major barrier to re-employment. Despite considerable research and reporting of this form of discrimination in Australia, these findings suggest it is as pervasive as ever with the adverse consequences for individuals, workplaces and the national economy continuing to take a considerable human and economic toll. Unsurprisingly, involuntary time out of work is shown to have a detrimental effect on the mental health and well-being across age and gender, primarily through the loss of income and financial security and the reliance on assistance payments. Loss of confidence, depression and anxiety were most commonly reported experiences as a result of time out of work, after financial worries.

⁸² Based on ABS figures of 8.13 million full time workers. ABS (2013) Labour force, Australia, Sep 2013, Cat no 6202.0, 10 October.

Appendix

Q1. Have you or someone you know spent more than 3 months out of the workforce in the past two years.

- Yes, me
- Yes, a member of my family
- Yes, a friend of mine
- Yes, a colleague at work
- No
- Not sure/Don't know

Q2. What was the reason for this time out of the workforce

- Retrenchment
- Unable to find work
- Maternity leave
- Mental health reasons
- Caring for children
- Caring for grandchildren
- Caring for a member of the immediate family
- Caring for a sick or elderly relative
- Taking leave from work to study or retrain
- Sickness or ill health
- Work place injury
- Voluntary time out of the workforce
- Other

Q3. How long were you or the person you know of out of the work force?

- 3 to 6 months
- 6 to 9 months
- 9 to 12 months
- 1 to 2 years
- More than 2 years
- Have not re-entered the workforce yet
- Not sure/Don't know

Q4. Did (have) you or the person you know use(d) a Job Networks provider while looking for work? If so, how satisfactory would you say the help you got was?

- Satisfactory
- Somewhat satisfactory
- Neither satisfactory nor unsatisfactory
- Somewhat unsatisfactory
- Unsatisfactory
- Did not use the Job Network
- Don't know

Q5. Were you or the person you knew advised to retrain to improve the chance of finding a job?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Q6. Can you recall how much this training was going to or did cost you? If so, please select the cost range below.

- less than \$500
- \$501 to \$1000
- \$1001 to \$2000
- more than \$2000
- Don't know/Can't recall

<Split sample>

Q7. How difficult was it for you or the person you know of to re-enter the workforce?

- Very difficult
- Somewhat difficult
- Not that difficult
- Not difficult
- Not sure/Don't know

Q8. How easy was it for you or the person you know of to re-enter the workforce?

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Not that easy
- Not easy
- Not sure/Don't know

Q9. How did (have) you or the person you know of experience his/her time out of the workforce? You may select up to three responses.

- Overwhelming
- Demoralising
- Depressing
- Detrimental to their health
- Benefited from extra time for family and friends
- An opportunity to study or retrain
- Took opportunity to volunteer
- Necessary to find the right job
- Allowed a partner to work more
- Other
- Not sure/Don't know

Q10. What were the consequences of this experience for you or the person you know? You may select up to three in order of effect.

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Loss of income
- Impact on superannuation
- Missed career progression
- Reliance on assistance payments
- Sense of self-identity
- Loneliness
- Loss of confidence
- Reduced social life
- Withdrew from family or friends
- Shame
- Poor health and fitness
- Other
- Not sure/Don't know
- Not worried

Q11. Did (have) you or the person you know of consider taking a job with different hours or security to their previous position?

- Yes, full-time
- Yes, part-time
- Yes, casual
- Yes, contract
- Yes, was open to any hours and security
- No
- Not sure/Don't know

Q12. Did (have) you or the person you know of consider taking a different job or working in another sector compared to their previous position?

- Yes, different job
- Yes, different sector
- Yes, was open to any job in any sector
- No
- Not sure/Don't know

Q13. Did (have) you or the person you know of consider taking a job that meant taking a substantial pay cut compared to their previous position?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure/Don't know

Q14. Did (have) you or the person you know of consider moving house or commuting for more than an hour for a job?

- Yes, willing to move house
- Yes, was willing to commute more than an hour
- Yes, was open to moving or a longer commute
- No
- Not sure/Don't know

Q15. What was or has been the main barrier for you or the person you know, in re-entering the workforce?

- Personal or family member's ill health
- Responsibility for children
- Responsibility for grandchildren
- Age discrimination
- Lack of relevant skills
- Over qualified
- Length of commute
- Too few jobs

Lunch breaks

Q16. Do you usually take your lunch break?

- Yes
- No
- I don't get a lunch break
- Not sure

Q17. How satisfactory would you say the lunch room at your work is?

- Satisfactory
- Somewhat satisfactory
- Neither satisfactory nor unsatisfactory
- Somewhat unsatisfactory
- Unsatisfactory
- There is no lunch room

Q18. You said you usually take a lunch break. Do you ever...?

- Cut your lunch break short to return to work
- Skip your lunch break
- Eat your lunch while continuing to work
- Find yourself having lunch in the middle of the afternoon
- Run errands during your lunch break
- Exercise during your lunch break
- None of these

Q19. You said you do not usually take your lunch break. Is this because...?

- You are too busy
- Your manager would disapprove

Hard to get a break?

- Others do not take a lunch break
- You work part time
- There is nowhere for you to have lunch
- Your workplace culture is to skip lunch
- None of these

Q20. When you do take your full lunch break do you find that ...?

- Work is less stressful
- You can concentrate better
- You are more productive
- You enjoy your work more
- None of these

Q21. When you do not take your full lunch break do you find that ...?

- Work can be more stressful
- You can find concentrating harder
- You are probably less productive
- You don't enjoy your work as much
- None of these

Taking a break

Q22. If you are finding it hard to concentrate on your job are you able to take a short break to clear your head?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- Not usually
- No
- Not sure

Q23. How often would you take a break to clear your head?

- Every hour
- Every couple of hours
- Twice a day
- Once a day
- Not every day
- Twice a week
- Once a week
- Not sure

Q24. Do you think taking a break makes you more productive?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Don't know

Q25. Thinking about the last three months, did you take a day off work because of ...?

- The stress of your job
- Difficult working relationships
- Bullying or harassment in the workplace
- A difficult workplace situation or issue
- Worries about finances
- Worries about carer responsibilities
- Worries about work
- Other concerns

Q26. In the past week, have you found yourself feeling about work outside of your normal working hours (e.g. evenings, weekends)?

- Worried
- Stressed
- Anxious
- Overwhelmed
- None of these

Work hours

Q27. How many hours a week do you work?

Q28. Would you like to work....?

- more hours;
- less hours;
- my hours are about right

Q29. Taking into account the effect on your income, how many hours would you prefer to work per week?

Q30. Bearing in mind that two weeks is about four per cent of a full year, if you had a choice between a four per cent pay rise or an additional two weeks of paid leave each year, which one would you prefer to have?

- 4 per cent pay rise
- Additional 2 weeks holiday leave
- Don't know

Q31. Thinking now about the paid leave that you were entitled to during 2012, did you take all the leave you were entitled to during 2012?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q32. When you go to work each day do you....?

- Know exactly what time you will finish work (plus or minus 5 mins)
- Have a pretty good idea what time you will finish work (plus or minus half an hour)
- Not have a very good idea about what time you will finish (30-60 mins)
- Have very little idea what time you will finish (more than 1 hour)

Q33. How many unpaid hours do you work per week on average?

Q34. In your workplace, is working extra hours without pay...?

- Expected
- Not expected, but also not discouraged
- Discouraged
- Not applicable
- Not sure

Q35. In your workplace, is working at home outside of normal working hours...?

- Expected
- Not expected, but also not discouraged
- Discouraged
- Not applicable
- Not sure

Q36. Do you feel that it is necessary to work extra hours or outside of normal work hours in order to meet the expectations of your job?

- Yes - often
- Yes – sometimes
- Yes – rarely
- No
- Not sure

Q37. In the past week, have you needed to do any of the following for work purposes outside of your normal working hours (eg evenings, weekends)?

- Read emails
- Respond to emails
- Make phone calls
- Answer phone calls
- Meet someone in person
- Travel somewhere else
- Some other work task
- None of these

Q38. To what extent does unpaid work affect your life outside of work?

- Severely
- Moderately
- Slightly
- Not at all
- Not sure/not applicable

Q39. If you left work on time each day, what would you do with your time? [select all that apply]

- Exercise
- Study
- Spend more time with family
- Spend more time with friends
- Look after someone who needs you
- Watch TV
- Cook more meals
- Other (specify)
- Not sure

Q40. Do your current working arrangements negatively impact on your [select all that apply]

- physical health
- stress or anxiety levels
- mood most of the day
- ability to enjoy daily activities
- sleep
- ability to concentrate
- mental wellbeing
- family commitments
- relationships with friends/partner
- housing security
- financial security
- productivity at work
- career progression and opportunities
- ability to attend work
- ability to secure a home or car loan
- ability to secure a rental property
- alcohol or other drug use
- ability to participate in regular events (e.g. team sport, dance classes, book groups)
- none of these

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