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QUALITY AT WORK – THE QUALITY PART TIME WORK IMPERATIVE

ACCOMPANYING REPORT:
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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CONTENTS

1	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
1.1	WHAT ARE THE FEATURES OF QUALITY PART TIME WORK?	1
1.2	CHOICES AND TRADE-OFFS ASSOCIATED WITH PART TIME WORK	2
1.3	DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PART TIME AND FULL TIME WORKERS IN AUSTRALIA	3
1.4	THE BUSINESS CASE FOR QUALITY PART TIME WORK	4
1.5	QUALITY PART TIME WORK AND LIFE CYCLE TRANSITIONS	5
2	THE SAFEWORK QUALITY PART TIME PROJECT	6
2.1	BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT	6
2.2	PROJECT AIMS	6
2.3	PROJECT TERMS OF REFERENCE	6
2.4	PROJECT TEAM	7
3	WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ‘QUALITY’ PART TIME WORK?	8
3.1	INTRODUCTION.....	8
3.1.1	<i>Summarising characteristics associated with quality part time work.....</i>	<i>9</i>
3.1.2	<i>Characteristics associated with poor quality part time work.....</i>	<i>11</i>
3.1.3	<i>Part Time Work Trade-offs, Penalties and Premiums</i>	<i>12</i>
3.2	MOVING BETWEEN PART TIME AND FULL TIME WORK	13
3.2.1	<i>Involuntary part time work</i>	<i>13</i>
3.2.2	<i>Full Time Workers who want to Work part time.....</i>	<i>14</i>
3.2.3	<i>Moving to part time work and changing employers.....</i>	<i>14</i>
3.3	INDIVIDUAL FEATURES OF QUALITY PART TIME WORK	15
3.3.1	<i>Part time work and pay parity</i>	<i>15</i>
3.3.2	<i>Part time work and roles, responsibilities and training</i>	<i>15</i>
3.3.3	<i>Work scheduling and regularity of hours.....</i>	<i>16</i>
3.3.4	<i>Benefits and entitlements</i>	<i>16</i>
3.3.5	<i>Access to flexible work conditions.....</i>	<i>17</i>
3.3.6	<i>Career progression.....</i>	<i>17</i>
3.3.7	<i>Job satisfaction</i>	<i>18</i>
3.3.8	<i>Impact of work on life and work life balance.....</i>	<i>18</i>
3.3.9	<i>The business case for quality part time work.....</i>	<i>18</i>
4	PART TIME WORK AS A RESPONSE TO LIFE CYCLE STAGES	20

4.1	PART TIME WORK AND TRANSITIONS IN THE LIFE CYCLE	20
4.2	PART TIME WORK AND PARENTING.....	21
4.3	PART TIME WORK AND CAREGIVING.....	21
4.4	PART TIME WORK AND STUDY.....	22
4.5	PART TIME WORK AND TRANSITION TO RETIREMENT	22
5	CONCLUSIONS	23
6	REFERENCES	25
7	APPENDIX 1: FEATURES OF PART TIME WORK IN AUSTRALIA.....	29
7.1	DEFINING AND MEASURING PART TIME WORK	29
7.1.1	<i>Part time work and multiple job holders.....</i>	<i>29</i>
7.2	PART TIME WORK: A GROWING FEATURE OF AUSTRALIAN EMPLOYMENT	29
7.3	PART TIME WORK, CASUAL WORK AND NON STANDARD WORK	30
7.3.1	<i>Part time work and casual work</i>	<i>30</i>
7.3.2	<i>Part time work and nonstandard work.....</i>	<i>31</i>
7.4	WHO WORKS PART TIME IN AUSTRALIA?.....	31
7.4.1	<i>Gender based changes in part time employment over time</i>	<i>31</i>
7.4.2	<i>Location and part time work.....</i>	<i>32</i>
7.4.3	<i>Part time work and health and disability.....</i>	<i>32</i>
7.4.4	<i>Part time work and educational qualifications.....</i>	<i>32</i>
7.4.5	<i>Part time work by industry and occupation.....</i>	<i>32</i>
7.5	MODELLING PART TIME EMPLOYMENT	33
8	APPENDIX II: PART TIME WORK IN THE RETAIL SECTOR	34
8.1	SUMMARY OF THE RETAIL INDUSTRY PROFILE	34
8.2	CRITICAL FACTORS SHAPING THE RETAIL INDUSTRY	34

Table of tables

TABLE 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITY PART TIME WORK IDENTIFIED IN THE LITERATURE.....	10
TABLE 2: OPERATIONALISING QUALITY PART TIME WORK	11
TABLE 3: RETENTION AND SECONDARY PART TIME WORK CHARACTERISTICS	11

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Part time work (defined by the ABS as involving employment of *less than 35 hours per week*) is now a key feature of employment in Australia having grown significantly over the past two decades. Traditionally seen as the ‘poor cousin of full time work’, part time work has evolved and now can have the features of a quality experience traditionally associated with full time work.

1.1 WHAT ARE THE FEATURES OF QUALITY PART TIME WORK?

Much of the literature reviewed identifies features that essentially mean **quality part time work involves the same benefits, rights and conditions (including training and professional development and a range of leave entitlements) as comparable full time work – in other words, that a reduction in hours from full time should not bring disadvantage or inequity.** The following characteristics of quality part time work have been identified by numerous researchers:

- ☑ **Pay** is equivalent to comparable full time work
- ☑ **Promotion and career development** opportunities are provided
- ☑ **Training and skill development** opportunities, equivalent to full time conditions, are provided
- ☑ **Protections and entitlements** equivalent to full time work are provided, in particular, regarding contracted hours, leave, and job security.
- ☑ Equivalent **representation in the workplace** to full time
- ☑ Involves **substantial hours** ie at least 20-25 hours¹ (as opposed to a small number of hours)
- ☑ **Job content** has equivalent skill demands and task autonomy as full time
- ☑ It is **accessible for both women and men**, at all levels
- ☑ It is **accessible at all occupational levels**, including senior and management roles
- ☑ There is ready **movement between part time and full time**, in either direction – without having to change employers
- ☑ It enables **acceptable Work Life Balance**
- ☑ It has equivalent (to full time) **job satisfaction** levels
- ☑ It meets the needs of both employers and employees regarding **flexibility**.

These features will be reflected in workplaces where quality part time work is an integral feature of work conditions and wider workplace culture. This will be evident in a range of processes and provisions that facilitate individual employees to negotiate their part time work conditions while supporting employers and managers to make consistent and informed decisions regarding the use of part time work in their organisation.

¹ The number of hours worked by part time employees can also be an indicator of quality, but is not an independent variable. Poor quality has been found to be associated most with ‘marginal’ jobs involving less than 15 hours a week. Working fewer hours has been linked to reduced promotion opportunities, and to reduced opportunities to be in supervisory roles (Industrial Relations Victoria 2005a)

One of the major **barriers** facing the wider application of quality part time work principles and characteristics is attitudinal – a belief by some that working less hours equates to less commitment to the employing organisation. Prevailing work culture has been found to inhibit the availability of part time work at senior management levels, while leadership provided at these levels can do much to change beliefs that measure employee commitment and productivity in terms of hours spent in the workplace. A number of Australian researchers have identified the negative impact of work culture that values full time work or long work hours, and devalues part time workers (Industrial Relations Victoria 2005a – citing Burgess & Whittard 2004 and Junor 2000; Charlesworth *et al* 2002).

The research literature has identified a number of trends regarding the **implementation of quality part time work**, namely:

- ✓ Part time work is part of a broader workplace culture that values its employees, and values work-life-balance
- ✓ Part time work is part of a broader suite of flexible work and leave options
- ✓ Part time work includes predictable hours and worker-sensitive scheduling and rostering and is available in hours that don't conflict with family and personal life
- ✓ Senior management demonstrates leadership and commitment to quality part time levels, at all levels in the organisation, and consistent responses to requests for part time work
- ✓ Backfill/shadowing is provided to support quality part time work at all levels
- ✓ Processes are in place to ensure all managers are informed of their responsibilities and all employees are informed of their entitlements regarding quality part time work
- ✓ Training and guidelines are provided for a) negotiating and b) managing quality part time work
- ✓ Quality part time work is part of a whole of organisation approach.

1.2 CHOICES AND TRADE-OFFS ASSOCIATED WITH PART TIME WORK

Choosing to work part time is likely to involve a decision making process that takes into account the advantages and disadvantages involved. In other words, for many workers, part time employment involves a *trade-off* where a disadvantage or 'penalty' (like reduced income) is exchanged for a 'premium' like increased flexibility and work-life-family balance.

Movement between full and part time work, regardless of the direction taken, may involve changing employers, and losing pay and other benefits in the process – this is known as *downgrading*. Echoing OECD (2010) findings on Penalties and Premiums associated with part time work, *downgrading* has been found to represent a trade-off for better work life balance and for meeting family related responsibilities. One study found that occupational downgrading occurred for over a third of women in highly skilled occupations who moved employer when changing to part time work, compared with only 8% being downgraded when remaining with the same employer (Connolly and Gregory 2008).

This highlights another feature of quality part time work – the capacity to move between full and part time work without incurring a long term penalty.

Not all workers can fulfil the aspiration to work part time or full time, and it is usually easier to move from part time to full time than the reverse. Research findings show that -

- For every part time employee seeking full time hours, there are more than two full time workers who want to move to part time work.
- Around 10% of full time male workers were found to want to work part time – a figure higher than existing levels of male part time employment. The opposite trend applied to women with a quarter of full time female workers wanting to work part time - lower than existing levels of female part time employment.
- Age-based differences are also evident with aspirational part time workers more prevalent in older age groups, despite workers aged 55 and over already having a high rate of part time employment. (Productivity Commission 2008).

1.3 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PART TIME AND FULL TIME WORKERS IN AUSTRALIA

Analysis of research findings and key data sources identifies a number of differences between full time and part workers in Australia. In particular, the following are evident.

1. **Parity of pay.** On average, Australian male part time workers earn less per hour than full time male workers while females earn similar hourly rates in both part and full time work. However, the difference in pay parity between part and full time work can be removed or reversed by features that include *age, education level, industry of employment, occupation and job tenure* (Productivity Commission 2008).
2. **Training provisions.** Researchers investigating the amount of training provided to part time women workers in Australia and in the United Kingdom (Harley & Whitehouse 2001) found a direct association between hours worked and training provided, with fewer hours being linked to less training. Those working the least number of hours (less than 10 per week) had the lowest levels of training compared with other workers. Similar trends were identified in Australia regarding access to training and work roles involving responsibility (Whittard 2003; Productivity Commission 2008).
3. **Responsibilities.** Compared to full time workers, part time workers –
 - ⇒ are much less likely to have supervisory duties;
 - ⇒ perceive themselves as less influential in their work;
 - ⇒ are less likely to feel that their job requires new (or even their current level of) skills; and
 - ⇒ are less likely to believe their job is difficult (Productivity Commission 2008).
4. **Work scheduling** (number of days worked per week, the time of day work is undertaken, and the regularity of work shifts) Discernible differences have been identified between full time and part time workers in relation to how their work is scheduled. Around 20% of part time workers and 10% of full time workers did not having a regular and fixed set of work days each week (Productivity Commission 2008).
5. **Awards and entitlements.** Most awards in Australia provide for permanent part time employees to receive pro rata benefits equating to full time work in the same job. International agreements on part time work (e.g. the *European Directive on Part Time Work*

1997) are also designed to promote equity between full time and part time workers. The two most common benefits involve paid holiday and sick leave, which are available differentially to full and part time workers and between casual and other workers. Among casual workers, 3% of part time employees and 10% of full time employees had access to both benefits (Productivity Commission 2008). These benefits (paid holidays and sick leave) also vary with different occupational and skill groups, being more common in those with jobs requiring a higher level of skills (Productivity Commission 2008).

6. **Flexibility.** In Australia, casual part time workers are most likely to have flexible start and finish times, and just as likely as full time casuals to have access to home based work. However, part time workers are only marginally more likely than full time workers to have access to flexible start and finish times and almost as likely to have access to home-based work and child care provisions (Productivity Commission 2008).
7. **Career Advancement and Promotion.** Most researchers agree that part time workers' opportunities for career advancement and promotion are poorer than those of full time workers (Sandor 2011; Lyonette *et al* 2010; Manning and Petrongolo 2008; Whittard 2003; Hakim 2003; Productivity Commission 2008). However, there is less agreement about the reasons for this disparity. It could be a reflection of choices and compromises made by individual employees as they balance work and life commitments, it could be a reflection of individual skills and experience, or it could be reduced access to training and job related responsibilities. It could also be the lack of more senior jobs that are available on a part time basis (Lyonette *et al* 2010).
8. **Job satisfaction.** Researchers use job satisfaction as one indicator of quality of work. A number of dimensions affect overall job satisfaction including pay, job security, work hours, nature of work and flexibility. Across all of these dimensions, part time and full time workers have been found to report similar levels of satisfaction (Productivity Commission 2008). The only clear differences being in relation to working hours and flexibility – with part time workers slightly more satisfied with these elements than full time workers.
9. **Work-life balance.** European research has found that those working fewer hours (30 hours a week or less) rated their work, family and life balance more positively than those working more hours, while those working 50 hours or more each week were the least satisfied with their work life balance (Sandor 2011). Similarly, full time Australian workers regard the amount of time they spend working as negatively affecting their time and energy for parenting and participation in family activities (Productivity Commission 2008).

1.4 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR QUALITY PART TIME WORK

Just as part time work can represent a viable choice for individuals at different stages of the life cycle, so too does it provide an appropriate choice for employers in response to fluctuations in the business cycle and the wider economy. This is most evident in periods of economic downturn when employers reduce hours, and when they create more full time jobs to meet increased demand during upswings (Sandor

2011; OECD 2010a). Among the benefits identified by researchers for business of providing for quality part time work are the following:

- ☑ enhanced recruitment and retention of experienced and skilled staff;
- ☑ increased workforce morale, productivity and efficiency; and
- ☑ a range of benefits associated with becoming an employer of choice (Lyonette *et al* 2010; Industrial Relations Victoria 2005c).

1.5 QUALITY PART TIME WORK AND LIFE CYCLE TRANSITIONS

Part time work is a critical mechanism for balancing work and non work activities at different stages of the life cycle. Sometimes life events, such as sickness or disability, or other factors that inhibit full time participation in paid work, mean that part time employment provides the most viable means of remaining in the labour force. Quality part time work is critical to the following transition points -

- full time study
- having a family
- moving into retirement
- caregiving responsibilities
- sickness or disability.

Quality part time work provides a critical mechanism for smoothly managing major transitions across the life cycle. It can mean the difference between working and not working, and for successfully balancing work and other key life responsibilities. This illustrates the importance from a policy perspective, of locating part time work within a *life course framework* as well as within labour market policy.

2 THE SAFEWORK QUALITY PART TIME PROJECT

2.1 BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

The *Quality Part-Time Work Project* has been initiated by the *SafeWork SA WorkLife Balance Strategy* in response to the important role that part-time work plays in South Australia and to focus attention on the dimensions and importance of quality part-time work in the context of work-life balance objectives.

In May 2010, *SafeWork SA* commenced a related project investigating part-time work in the South Australian retail sector. The focus of this project is to expand the status of part-time work to 'quality part-time work' with the aim of improving the quality of life of all South Australians through maintenance of a healthy work-life balance. A statistical analysis of part-time work in the South Australian retail sector and a preliminary literature review was undertaken to consider what determines 'quality part-time work'.

2.2 PROJECT AIMS

The Project aims to develop and inform current and future quality part-time work opportunities by:

- I. Undertaking a cross-industry investigation of support strategies, identifying cutting edge initiatives and/or problem solving opportunities to enable the provision of quality part-time work in order to implement quality part-time work in South Australia.
- II. Producing a research report that provides an educational tool for employers and employees to encourage them to examine how best the quality of the part-time work experience can be improved.
- III. Providing a deeper understanding of the role of quality part-time work.

The project focuses on four sectors which are:

- ⇒ Health and Community Services;
- ⇒ Education;
- ⇒ Resources; and
- ⇒ Retail.

2.3 PROJECT TERMS OF REFERENCE

The following terms of reference guide the project:

1. Use current Australian data to provide a statistical overview of part-time work in South Australia.

2. Review Australian and International research on issues impacting on the provision of quality part-time work.
3. Analyse the retail sector in South Australia to consider what structural requirements are needed to enable equitable access to the provision of quality part-time work.

This report addresses the second Term of Reference. It is based on a review of international and Australian research of part time work and explores the key features of *quality* part time work. It is designed to increase understanding of what is meant by quality part time work. The indicators of quality part time work elicited from the research review inform the statistical overview that addresses the Project's first Term of Reference. Both the literature review and the statistical overview will be presented as accompanying reports to a main report that synthesises the findings from both.

2.4 PROJECT TEAM

The Project is being undertaken by the Australian Institute for Social Research, on behalf of Safework SA and its **Work Life Balance Advisory Committee** and as part of Safework SA's *Work Life Balance Strategy*.

The Project is being managed by –

- Ms Michelle Hogan, Manager, Work Life Balance Strategy, Safework SA
- Ms Sarah Andrews, Senior Policy Officer, Work Life Balance Strategy, Safework SA
- Ms Jaspreet Kaur, A/Assistant Project Officer, Work Life Balance Strategy, Safework SA
- Ms Carolyn Porter, Assistant Project Officer, Work Life Balance Strategy, Safework SA

The AISR Project Team members are:

- Dr Kate Barnett, Deputy Executive Director
- Dr Ann-Louise Hordacre, Senior Research Fellow
- Dr Rasika Ranasinghe, Senior Research Associate.

3 WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'QUALITY' PART TIME WORK?

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Part time work is now a key feature of employment in Australia having grown significantly over the past two decades (see *APPENDIX 1: Features of Part Time Work in Australia*, for a detailed picture of this pattern of growth, and how it is associated with particular occupations and industries, and different groups of people). Traditionally seen as the 'poor cousin of full time work', part time work has evolved and now can have the features of a quality experience traditionally associated with full time work.

In Australia, part time work is defined by the ABS as involving employment of *less than 35 hours per week*. This recognised benchmark is used throughout this report except where otherwise stated². As we will discuss, there is significant diversity in part time workers, particularly in terms of gender and age, but also in relation to different stages of the life course - for example, parenting, studying and phasing to retirement.

There are many dimensions to working part time that add to its diversity and which determine whether or not the experience is positive. These relate to conditions and working arrangements and, more subjectively, to whether individual choices have brought the outcomes sought. Whether or not part time work has been voluntarily sought also affects the quality of the experience.

Issues of **choice** and **equity** are important in quality part time employment. People seeking to balance work and life, at different life cycle stages, may or may not have a degree of choice in the decisions they make. As a rule, low skilled workers have less capacity for choice while those whose skills are in demand have more scope for negotiation and choice regarding the type of work they undertake and the hours they work. Reduced choice is associated with poorer quality of employment and greater inequity. Part time workers are more likely to work in low skilled occupations compared with full time workers (Productivity Commission 2008). However, not all part time occupations involve low levels of skill.

In an analysis of part time work, the OECD (2010a) describes the trade-offs that shape people's decision-making regarding part time work. These are described in terms of 'penalties' and 'premiums'. Penalties in OECD countries can relate to reduced wages, training, promotion, job security and union membership while Premiums can relate to greater control over working time, flexible working hours and better work life balance. The OECD has found some evidence that Penalties may be compensated by Premiums - for example, short term sacrifice of access to training may have a negative long term impact on career progression. In *Section 3.1.3*, the different Penalties and Premiums are explored in more detail.

Determining what is meant by 'quality part time work' requires a broader understanding of the concept of quality work, regardless of the hours involved. The research literature has identified a number of characteristics, both objective and subjective, that are associated with quality employment, and these tend to fall into clusters that are discussed in *Section 3.1.1*.

... a quality part time job can be understood as a 'good' or 'decent' job ... comparable to a full-time job, apart from reduced hours, in its conditions, opportunities and benefits (Charlesworth & Whittenbury 2007: 36).

² Noting that the OECD standard definition is less than 30 hours per week

What then do we mean by a ‘good job’? Many of the definitions highlight the interrelationship between *work* and *health* and *well being*. For example –

The objective must be to ensure that ... work ... is a source of wellbeing, personal growth, fulfilment, autonomy and meaning – in other words, that the jobs available in today’s labour market should offer ‘Good Work’. A significant weight of evidence supports the argument that job quality, employee health, and an employee’s ability to perform productively at work, are closely linked (Constable *et al* 2009: 3).

This definition presents the business case for quality work as well as its benefits for workers and is discussed further in *Section 3.3.9*. Another way of describing quality work is as a **balancing** mechanism – meeting the needs of employers and employees, while enabling work and life responsibilities to be as harmonious as possible. This is discussed in more detail in *Section 3.3.8*.

There is not a great deal of research on quality part time work and most of the existing literature derives from research in Australia, the United States of America and Europe, and more recently, the United Kingdom. **Much of the literature reviewed identifies features that essentially mean quality part time work involves the same benefits, rights and conditions as comparable full time work – in other words, that a reduction in hours from full time should not bring disadvantage or inequity.**

The common base for all ‘quality’ part-time jobs will be that they provide the same (pro-rata) terms and conditions, as well as training and development opportunities, as a comparable full-time job (Lyonette *et al* 2010: 10)

... secure, worthwhile work which reflects the skills, training and expertise of workers, and offers equivalent opportunities for job satisfaction and career development to jobs undertaken on a full time basis (NSW Government 2009 – Quality Part Time Work Roundtable).

3.1.1 SUMMARISING CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH QUALITY PART TIME WORK

There are a number of *dimensions* of quality work that are repeatedly identified in the research literature. *Table 1* summarises those factors that have been identified by multiple research studies, against the key sources that have identified them.

These variables have been grouped them into three dimensions that differentiate quality part time work from other forms of part time employment–

- **Work Conditions**, including pay and job security;
- **Access and Equity**, including access across occupational levels and the capacity to move between full and part time work; and
- **Outcomes**, including work life balance and job satisfaction, and meeting the needs of both employer and employee.

Table 1: Characteristics of quality part time work identified in the literature

Quality part time work characteristic	Literature Sources
Work Conditions associated with quality part time work	
Pay is equivalent to comparable full time work	OECD 2010a; Lyonette et al 2010; Charlesworth 2009; Morgan 2009, 2005; Bardoel et al 2007; Chalmers et al 2005; Industrial Relations Victoria 2005a, 2005c; Charlesworth et al 2002; Tilly 1996
Job security	OECD 2010a; Bardoel et al 2007; Industrial Relations Victoria 2005c; Chalmers et al 2005; Charlesworth et al 2002; Tilly 1996
Provides promotion & career development opportunities	OECD 2010a; Lyonette et al 2010; NSW Government 2009; Charlesworth 2009; Morgan 2009, 2005; Industrial Relations Victoria 2005a, 2005c; Charlesworth et al 2002; Tilly 1996
Provides equivalent training and skill development opportunities	OECD 2010a; Lyonette et al 2010; NSW Government 2009; Charlesworth 2009; Morgan 2009, 2005; Bardoel et al 2007; Industrial Relations Victoria 2005a, 2005c; Chalmers et al 2005; Tilly 1996
Equivalent protections and entitlements as full time workers regarding contracted hours, leave, job security and discrimination	Chalmers et al 2005; Charlesworth 2009; Morgan 2009, 2005; Industrial Relations Victoria 2005a, 2005c; Charlesworth et al 2002; Tilly 1996
Equivalent representation in the workplace to full time	OECD 2010a; Charlesworth 2009; NSW Government 2009; Morgan 2009, 2005; Bardoel et al 2007; Chalmers et al 2005
Involves substantial hours ie at least 20-25 hours ³	Industrial Relations Victoria 2005a citing Hakim 2002 & Tam 1999; Charlesworth et al 2002
Job content has equivalent skill demands and task autonomy as full time	OECD 2010a; Lyonette et al 2010; Charlesworth 2009; NSW Government 2009; Morgan 2009, 2005; Bardoel et al 2007; Chalmers et al 2005
Access and equity features associated with quality part time work	
Is accessible for both women and men, at all levels	OECD 2010a; Industrial Relations Victoria 2005c; Charlesworth et al 2002
Is accessible at all occupational levels, including senior and management roles	Morgan 2009, 2005; Industrial Relations Victoria 2005a, 2005b; Charlesworth et al 2002
Ready movement between part time and full time, in either direction – without having to change employers	Lyonette et al 2010; NSW Government 2009; Charlesworth 2009; Morgan 2009, 2005; Bardoel et al 2007; Industrial Relations Victoria 2005a, 2005c; Chalmers et al 2005; Charlesworth et al 2002
Outcomes associated with quality part time work	
Enables acceptable Work Life Balance	OECD 2010a; Lyonette et al 2010
Equivalent (to full time) job satisfaction levels	OECD 2010a; NSW Government 2009
Meets needs of both employers and employees	Lyonette et al 2010

The research literature also yields a number of characteristics associated with the *operationalisation* of quality part time work – for example, predictable hours and management being informed of the policies in place to support part time work. Many of the criteria are subjective and therefore, difficult to measure – such as those associated with workplace culture. However, they have important practical value and are summarised in *Table 2*.

³ The number of hours worked by part time employees can also be an indicator of quality, but is not an independent variable. Poor quality has been found to be associated most with ‘marginal’ jobs involving less than 15 hours a week. Working fewer hours has been linked to reduced promotion opportunities, and to reduced opportunities to be in supervisory roles (Industrial Relations Victoria 2005a)

Table 2: Operationalising quality part time work

Quality part time work characteristic	Literature Sources
Part time work is part of a broader workplace culture that values its employees, and values work-life-balance	Lyonette <i>et al</i> 2010; Morgan 2009, 2005; Industrial Relations Victoria 2005a, 2005b, 2005c
Part time work is part of a broader suite of flexible work and leave options	Industrial Relations Victoria 2005b
Part time work includes predictable hours and worker-sensitive scheduling and rostering and is available in hours that don't conflict with family and personal life	Charlesworth 2009; NSW Government 2009; Bardoel <i>et al</i> 2007; Chalmers <i>et al</i> 2005; Industrial Relations Victoria 2005b, 2005c
Senior management demonstrates leadership and commitment to quality part time levels, at all levels in the organisation, and consistent responses to requests for part time work	Industrial Relations Victoria 2005b
Backfill/shadowing is provided to support quality part time work at all levels	Industrial Relations Victoria 2005b
Processes are in place to ensure all managers are informed of their responsibilities and all employees are informed of their entitlements regarding quality part time work	NSW Government 2009; Industrial Relations Victoria 2005b
Training and guidelines are provided for a) negotiating and b) managing quality part time work	Industrial Relations Victoria 2005b
Quality part time work is part of a whole of organisation approach	Industrial Relations Victoria 2005b

The characteristics summarised in *Table 2* highlight **the importance of quality part time work as an integral feature of work conditions and wider workplace culture**. This is evident in a range of processes and provisions that facilitate individual employees to negotiate their part time work conditions while supporting employers and managers to make consistent and informed decisions regarding the use of part time work in their organisation -

... assessing the content of jobs and the way work is organised is critical in improving the quality of part time work (NSW Government 2009: 4).

3.1.2 CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH POOR QUALITY PART TIME WORK

Much can be understood about quality part time work by also understanding what is involved in its opposite. Earlier research by Tilly (1996) distinguished between 'retention part time workers' and 'secondary part time workers' in order to demonstrate the differences encompassed within part time work. *Table 3* summarises these differences.

Table 3: Retention and Secondary part time work characteristics

Retention (quality) part time work	Secondary part time work
Designed to attract and retain valued workers who prefer to work part time	Work with little prospect of career progression
Located in primary labour markets	Located in secondary labour markets
Worker has skills which are valued, and receive training	Worker has low skill levels and receives minimal or no training
Worker receives the same 'pro rata' salary and benefits as full time workers	Worker receives lower hourly pay and reduced or no benefits
Workers are employed in positions that have security	Workers are employed in high turnover positions
Worker has a degree of mobility opportunities and are usually connected to middle level job ladders	Worker has no opportunities for advancement and are not connected to internal job ladders

In their review of the literature, Industrial Relations Victoria (2005a) extended Tilly's findings and concluded that the following characteristics negatively impact the quality of part time work:

- ✘ Most part time jobs are casual, particularly for men.
- ✘ Many part time workers are seeking more hours (although it is easier to move from part time to full time than it is for full time workers to obtain less hours)
- ✘ Hourly wages may be lower than full time equivalent.
- ✘ Traditional work culture devalues part time workers.
- ✘ Part time work is gender-segmented.
- ✘ Many part time workers have limited access to training.
- ✘ Work intensification and a focus on results rather than hours worked often impacts negatively on part time workers.
- ✘ It can be difficult to move between full time and part time work.

Similarly, the Productivity Commission (2008) found these differences in the quality of part time work compared with full time work. Part time work -

- ✘ involves less responsibility;
- ✘ is less challenging;
- ✘ Is less likely to be recognised for promotion;
- ✘ is more likely to involve irregular work days; and
- ✘ is less likely to provide access to entitlements, such as paid holiday and sick leave.

However, these penalties can be trade-offs for the following benefits -

- ✓ Part time employees are marginally more likely to be given home based work and flexible start and finish times.
- ✓ They are slightly less likely to report that their jobs have a negative impact on their parenting, or on the quality or quantity of their family time.

International research has found that part time workers generally have lower paid, and less skilled work than full time workers (Sandor 2011, citing Connolly and Gregory 2008; Manning and Petrongolo 2007; McDonald Bradley and Brown 2009). The Australian situation is different to many OECD countries, where member countries have a poverty rate among part time workers twice that of full time workers. This is closely related to job instability among part time workers (OECD 2010a).

3.1.3 PART TIME WORK TRADE-OFFS, PENALTIES AND PREMIUMS

The Productivity Commission's analysis highlights the fact that choosing to work part time may well involve a decision making process that takes into account the advantages and disadvantages involved. In other words, for many workers, part time employment involves a *trade-off* where a disadvantage like reduced income is exchanged for increased flexibility and work-family balance. This of course, assumes that **choice** is involved – and that is patently not the case for many part time workers.

The OECD's review also discusses this trade-off and identifies a number of Penalties experienced by part time workers in OECD countries, including the following:

- ⌘ Lower hourly wages, resulting in the average part time worker facing a poverty rate that is more than twice that of full time workers. *However, this Penalty is smaller in countries (like Australia) where part time work is more widespread.*
- ⌘ Differences in working conditions with a high concentration of part time workers on temporary contracts, and with this varying across occupations.
- ⌘ Reduced access to training and promotion opportunities. However, in the countries studied, part time work was associated with employment in *smaller size firms* and with *workers with lower education levels*. *Lower levels of training opportunity were also more pronounced in countries with lower than average levels of training* (OECD 2010a).

Because Australia is one OECD country where part time work is more widespread, and where levels of training are more widely provided, this needs to be taken into account in relation to the Penalties identified by the OECD. The degree to which Penalties and Premiums determine the quality of the part time work experience is also determined by the degree of choice involved (voluntary or involuntary part time work), on whether or not part time work was negotiated with an existing employer or required moving jobs, and the ease of movement between part time work and full time work opportunities. These issues are explored in *Section 3.2*.

3.2 MOVING BETWEEN PART TIME AND FULL TIME WORK

Australian research (Drago *et al* 2004) has identified particular difficulties in moving from part time to full time work for women (compared with men), and those employed in professional or management roles. Involuntary part time employment is associated with women as well as the mature and younger male cohorts (see *Section 3.2.1*). Those who work full time but want to reduce their hours are defined as ‘aspirational’ part time workers (see *Section 3.2.2*), however -

... such movements are not always seamless and involve more than simply reducing the hours of work with the existing employer (Productivity Commission 2008: xxii).

3.2.1 INVOLUNTARY PART TIME WORK

Involuntary part time employment is a ‘precarious’ form of employment that may represent for some workers a transition to unemployment. During 2006, 3.4% of involuntary part time workers became unemployed each month, four times the proportion (0.8%) of voluntary part time workers and eight times the proportion (0.4%) of full time employed workers (Productivity Commission 2008).

Associated with the involuntary part time employed are those who may be trapped on the periphery of the workforce.... [and] ... the challenge is to ensure that some workers are not trapped in such jobs. In this regard there does appear to be a significant share of part time workers who want full time work, but find it difficult to move to full time employment even in the current situation of a strong national labour market. There may also be part time workers who are unable to find jobs that better utilise their skills as these require a full time commitment, which is a more subtle form of underemployment (Productivity Commission 2008: 204).

Involuntary part time employment has increased over the past thirty years, particularly during the economic recessions of the early 1980s and early 1990s, and during the economic slowdown of 2001.

Both women and men have experienced similar increases to their share of involuntary part time employment (Productivity Commission 2008).

The Productivity Commission's research also identified a very high rate of involuntary part time work, persisting for many years, among the small number of Indigenous respondents studied. Because the numbers were too small for in-depth analysis, the Commission recommended that further research be undertaken on this issue (Productivity Commission 2008: 207).

3.2.2 FULL TIME WORKERS WHO WANT TO WORK PART TIME

The number of 'aspirational' part time workers (full time workers who want to work part time) exceeds the number of part time workers who want to work full time. **For every part time employee seeking full time hours, there are more than two full time workers who want to move to part time work.**

There is ... a substantial pool of full time workers who want to work part time. These workers tend to be concentrated in the older age groups. The existence of this group indicates that there may be less part time jobs desired by people who want to work. Not only may the size of this group actually exceed the part time workers who want to work more hours, but people who desire less hours typically take longer to achieve their objective than people who want to increase their work hours (Productivity Commission 2008: 204).

There are interesting gender-based differences in aspirational part time workers. Around 10% of full time male workers were found to want to work part time – a figure higher than existing levels of male part time employment. The opposite trend applied to women with a quarter of full time female workers wanting to work part time - lower than existing levels of female part time employment (Productivity Commission 2008).

Age-based differences are also evident with aspirational part time workers more prevalent in older age groups, despite workers aged 55 and over already having a high rate of part time employment. Full time working women aged 35 to 64 years are most likely to seek to work part time – as child care responsibilities diminish or as they approach retirement (Productivity Commission 2008).

In summary, there appears to be a large pool of full time workers who would prefer to work part time. This group of aspirational part time workers is substantially larger than the part time workers who would prefer to work full time. As such, if more people could achieve their desired hours of work, it is likely that the rate of part time work would increase (Productivity Commission 2008: 150).

Finally, it is important to see involuntary part time work as a fluid rather than fixed state as the labour market is dynamic, and nearly half of involuntary part time workers move out of this form of employment within three months (Productivity Commission 2008).

3.2.3 MOVING TO PART TIME WORK AND CHANGING EMPLOYERS

Movement between full and part time work, regardless of the direction taken, may involve changing employers, and losing pay and other benefits in the process. Echoing OECD (2010) findings on Penalties and Premiums associated with part time work, *downgrading* has been found to represent a trade-off for better work life balance and for meeting family related responsibilities. One study identified that occupational downgrading occurred for over a third of women in highly skilled occupations who moved

employer when changing to part time work, compared with only 8% being downgraded when remaining with the same employer (Connolly and Gregory 2008).

Longitudinal research in the United Kingdom found the likelihood of downgrading declined over time for mothers who returned to work full time (Lyonette *et al* 2010). Another British study identified that some women choose to work at lower levels due to the intensity of demands at full time senior levels of work, and because of an absence of effective work life balance policies and practices in their workplace (Grant *et al* 2005).

From a policy perspective, at issue is whether the clear choice made in trade-off decisions has longer term, unexpected effects. Some researchers have identified long term effects with lower earnings for women over ten years (Connolly and Gregory 2008) and an associated loss of confidence in abilities and skills that can trap women in lower level part time jobs (Grant *et al* 2005). **This highlights another feature of quality part time work – the capacity to move between full and part time work without incurring a long term penalty.**

3.3 INDIVIDUAL FEATURES OF QUALITY PART TIME WORK

This section explores in more detail information from the research regarding the most commonly identified characteristics of quality part time work referred to in *Section 3.1.1*.

3.3.1 PART TIME WORK AND PAY PARITY

On average, Australian male part time workers earn less per hour than full time male workers while females earn similar hourly rates in both part and full time work. In 2006, ABS data show that part time workers received some 93% of the hourly wage of full time workers, mainly due to the gap between the average hourly rate of male part time and full time workers (approximately 88%). In contrast, female part time and full time workers received almost the same wage rate in 2006 (some 99% of the full time rate) (Productivity Commission 2008).

However, the difference in pay parity between part and full time work can be removed or reversed by features that include age, education level, industry of employment, occupation and job tenure -

...simple comparison of the wages of part time work with full time work indicates a small wage penalty associated with part time employment. This difference appears to be eliminated, or even reversed, when the differing characteristics of part time workers and the differing occupational/industrial and skill mix of part and full time work are taken into account (Productivity Commission 2008: 204).

3.3.2 PART TIME WORK AND ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND TRAINING

In the European Union, part time workers are less likely to have work roles involving complex tasks, problem solving or planning responsibilities, or to receive training from their employers (Sandor 2011; Lyonette *et al* 2010; Fagan & Burchell 2002).

Researchers investigating the amount of training provided to part time women workers in Australia and in the United Kingdom (Harley & Whitehouse 2001) found a direct association between hours worked

and training provided, with fewer hours being linked to less training. Those working the least number of hours (less than 10 per week) had the lowest levels of training compared with other workers.

Similar trends were identified in Australia regarding access to training and work roles involving responsibility (Whittard 2003; Productivity Commission 2008). In addition, compared to full time workers, part time workers –

- ▣ were much less likely to have supervisory duties;
- ▣ perceived themselves as less influential in their work;
- ▣ were less likely to feel that their job required new (or even their current level of) skills; and
- ▣ were less likely to believe their job was difficult.

3.3.3 WORK SCHEDULING AND REGULARITY OF HOURS

Work scheduling addresses the number of days worked per week, the time of day work is undertaken, and the regularity of work shifts. When part time work represents a choice in order to meet non-work responsibilities or to address the demands of particular life cycle stages, then work scheduling has a critical bearing on the fulfilment of those choices.

Discernible differences have been identified between full time and part time workers in relation to how their work is scheduled. Around 20% of part time workers and 10% of full time workers did not having a regular and fixed set of work days each week (Productivity Commission 2008). Casualty of the work did not explain the difference, as casual and permanent part time workers reported a similar proportion of irregular working days. Nor could it be explained by comparing full and part time work scheduling, as most part time workers followed the traditional work scheduling associated with full time work. Nor were part time workers with family or education commitments more likely than other part time workers to work a standard set of days (Productivity Commission 2008).

However, a slightly higher proportion of part time workers compared with full time workers were working on weekends, and there was an association between casual work and working nights, regardless of whether full time or part time employment was involved (Productivity Commission 2008).

3.3.4 BENEFITS AND ENTITLEMENTS

In Australia work benefits are enshrined in legislation and awards, and most awards provide for permanent part time employees to receive pro rata benefits equating to full time work in the same job. International agreements on part time work (e.g. the *European Directive on Part Time Work 1997* and *ILO Convention Clause 156 and Recommendation 182 on Part Time Work 1994*) are also designed to promote equity between full time and part time workers. The *Lisbon Strategy 2000* included in the objectives of the European Employment Strategy the promotion of quality of work (Sandor 2011).

These policy interventions are likely to have increased the desirability of part time work as a valid choice, enshrining the right of part time workers to the same (pro rata) pay and working conditions as full time workers. Policy has also been reinforced by an increasing awareness of the importance of work life balance.

However, access to benefits is impacted by different working arrangements particularly those affecting casual as opposed to ongoing work. Therefore, as more part time (than full time) workers are engaged in casual employment, overall access to benefits for the part time workforce will be lower (Productivity

Commission 2008). The two most common benefits involve paid holiday and sick leave, which are available differentially to full and part time workers and between casual and other workers. Among casual workers, 3% of part time employees and 10% of full time employees had access to both benefits (Productivity Commission 2008). *Section 7.3* provides more information about casual employment.

These benefits (paid holidays and sick leave) also vary with different occupational and skill groups, being more common in those with jobs requiring a higher level of skills (as determined by Australian Standard Classification of Occupations). Full time workers at higher skill levels were more likely to have access to home based work, child care provisions and flexible work times than other full time workers. However these benefits were common at the middle skill levels among part time workers. Comparison between full time and part time workers also varied with different occupational groups (Productivity Commission 2008).

3.3.5 ACCESS TO FLEXIBLE WORK CONDITIONS

In Australia, casual part time workers are most likely to have flexible start and finish times, and just as likely as full time casuals to have access to home based work.

However, part time workers are only marginally more likely than full time workers to have access to flexible start and finish times and almost as likely to have access to home-based work and child care provisions (Productivity Commission 2008).

3.3.6 CAREER PROGRESSION

Most researchers agree that part time workers' opportunities for career advancement and promotion are poorer than those of full time workers (Sandor 2011; Lyonette *et al* 2010; Manning and Petrongolo 2008; Whittard 2003; Hakim 2003; Productivity Commission 2008). However, there is less agreement about the reasons for this disparity. It could be a reflection of choices and compromises made by individual employees as they balance work and life commitments, it could be a reflection of individual skills and experience, or it could be reduced access to training and job related responsibilities. It could also be the lack of more senior jobs that are available on a part time basis (Lyonette *et al* 2010).

The United Kingdom's Women and Work Commission (2006) found that that many highly qualified women seeking part time work were under-employed in lower level jobs that did not fully utilise their skills while the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2009) identified that only a quarter of European firms have part time workers in highly skilled positions. Other research from the United Kingdom has identified significant difficulties faced by women in moving from part time to full time work once their children have become less dependent on their care (Connolly and Gregory 2008).

International researchers have associated reduced promotion prospects for part time workers with non-standard employment where career progression is less available (McGovern 2004). One study found that temporary full time workers were more likely than regular part time or temporary part time workers to be promoted, and this was particularly the case for women who were more likely to be in non-standard jobs (Zeytinoglu & Cooke 2008).

3.3.7 JOB SATISFACTION

Job satisfaction can be difficult to measure due to the diversity in individual expectations of work. Taking into account this subjectivity, researchers use job satisfaction as one indicator of quality of work. A number of dimensions affect overall job satisfaction including pay, job security, work hours, nature of work and flexibility. Across all of these dimensions, part time and full time workers have been found to report similar levels of satisfaction (Productivity Commission 2008). The only clear differences being in relation to working hours and flexibility – with part time workers slightly more satisfied with these elements than full time workers. European research has yielded similar findings, with part time and full time workers expressing similar levels of satisfaction with their conditions of work (Sandor 2011).

Job satisfaction has been found to vary by age, although not by gender, with younger part time workers reporting lower satisfaction with job security compared with older part time workers (Productivity Commission 2008). In the older cohort, part time workers were more satisfied with work hours – possibly reflecting changing life stage priorities. Satisfaction levels were also affected by contract type, and by occupation and skill group:

- ⇒ Casual part time workers were less satisfied with work hours.
- ⇒ Casual workers (both full and part time) were less satisfied with the nature of work.
- ⇒ Contract workers were much more satisfied with their pay than permanent workers.
- ⇒ Highly skilled part time workers were more satisfied with their pay than their full time equivalents, and more satisfied with their work hours in contrast to those in lower skill levels.

3.3.8 IMPACT OF WORK ON LIFE AND WORK LIFE BALANCE

European research has found that those working fewer hours (30 hours a week or less) rated their work, family and life balance more positively than those working more hours, while those working 50 hours or more each week were the least satisfied with their work life balance (Sandor 2011). Similarly, full time Australian workers regard the amount of time they spend working as negatively affecting their time and energy for parenting and participation in family activities (Productivity Commission 2008). However, the same research found that work-related stress was only marginally lower for part time employees.

The *Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI)* is a national survey of work-life balance that is applied over time. It shows that work-life strain has increased for –

- ⇒ people working long hours (48+ each week) – which is more likely to be men than women
- ⇒ women more than for men, mainly because of worsening strain for mothers.

Working less hours, that is part time, assists in achieving this balance. Findings from the AWALI Index found little difference in work-life strain between men and women working full time. However, women working part time are more likely to experience this strain than are men working part time – possibly due to non-work responsibilities (Skinner & Pisaniello 2010; Pocock, Skinner & Pisaniello 2010).

3.3.9 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR QUALITY PART TIME WORK

Just as part time work can represent a viable choice for individuals at different stages of the life cycle, so too does it provide an appropriate choice for employers in response to fluctuations in the business cycle and the wider economy. This is most evident in periods of economic downturn when employers reduce

hours, and when they create more full time jobs to meet increased demand during upswings (Sandor 2011; OECD 2010a).

Viewed from the perspective of providing 'good jobs' there are wider benefits that include increased labour productivity, healthier workforces, greater workforce stability, reduced sickness and absenteeism, safer workplaces, and more engaged employees (Constable *et al* 2009). In their analysis of European workforce data and job quality across different countries, the United Kingdom Work Foundation concluded that countries with higher overall job quality were characterised by well established, publicly funded programs of workplace reform. Northern European countries like Finland and Sweden exemplified such countries. Many of the reform programs promote job quality as good business, linking -

... concern about the quality of working life to wider concerns about organisational performance, productivity and innovation (Constable *et al* 2009: 14).

The Victorian *Quality Part Time Work Project* identified a strong business case for quality part time employment, citing enhanced recruitment and retention of experienced and skilled staff, increased workforce morale, productivity and efficiency and a range of benefits associated with becoming an employer of choice (Industrial Relations Victoria 2005c). Lyonette *et al*'s review of the literature on quality part time work also identified a business case, arguing that the needs of both employer and employee need to be met in negotiating work roles and conditions on a part time basis, and in designing work conditions which meet the flexibility needs of both employer and employee (2010).

However, despite the depth of research evidence identifying positive associations between worker health, well being, and organisational productivity, challenges persist in translating this knowledge into practice at the workplace level.

While there is compelling evidence that work is good for health in the vast majority of cases, we still lack the capacity at workplace level to translate what we know from epidemiological and other research into simple, consistent and business-friendly actions to improve job quality, work organisation, health promotion and other drivers of positive health at work. As is so often the case, our analysis of the problem is impeccable but our track-record of delivery and execution at firm level is, at best, patchy (Bevan 2010: 3-4).

In their overview of research to identify what constitutes a 'good job', Constable *et al* (2009) concluded there is a need to ensure that all businesses, including those that are smaller in size, are persuaded of the business benefits of quality employment conditions, and are provided with the practical support they need to apply the learnings that now exist in a comprehensive evidence base.

There are two major challenges for policy makers, researchers and practitioners. The first is to make a more compelling and accessible case for Good Jobs to businesses, especially among small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which are often hard to reach and offer less training than their larger counterparts, and also to organisations in sectors where low skill demand is widespread and which are therefore less likely to be offering Good Jobs. The second challenge is to provide these employers with practical support to improve job quality in a way that cuts with the grain of business expectations. The role for policy makers is not to accumulate more evidence about the benefits of Good Jobs ... this evidence is already plentiful. Rather, it is to gather evidence that will persuade, support or incentivise employers to translate their tacit understanding of these ideas and benefits into tangible changes to work organisation and job design at workplace level (Constable *et al* 2009: 6-7).

4 PART TIME WORK AS A RESPONSE TO LIFE CYCLE STAGES

4.1 PART TIME WORK AND TRANSITIONS IN THE LIFE CYCLE

Part time work is a critical mechanism for balancing work and non work activities at different stages of the life cycle. In particular, **full time study, having a family, and moving into retirement** emerge as key points where part time rather than full time employment is a choice. Sometimes life events, such as sickness or disability, or other factors that inhibit full time participation in paid work, mean that part time employment provides the most viable means of remaining in the labour force. This is the case in Australia and in other OECD countries.

Part time work was found to play an important role in providing flexibility for individuals to combine work with non-work activities at significant stages of their life. Specifically, full time study, raising a family and preparing for retirement were found to be significant life cycle events that impact on an individual's likelihood of working part time. Further analysis of the likelihood of an individual transitioning into and out of part time work at particular stages of their life cycle may provide a better understanding of who works part time and why. This would require the development of an extended longitudinal data base (Productivity Commission 2008: 206).

Quality part time work provides a critical mechanism for smoothly managing major transitions across the life cycle. It can mean the difference between working and not working, and for successfully balancing work and other key life responsibilities.

The degree to which this understanding is reflected in policy and in working conditions is variable. One study of working time options over a lifetime concluded that most European countries have yet to implement policies around social protection and tax systems that reflect a life course perspective. As a result, gender and age discrimination persists in the use of different working time arrangements (Sandor 2011, citing Eurofound 2006).

Assessments of the quality of part time jobs should reflect the differing motivations and interests of many of those who undertake part time employment. Some groups of part time workers obtain their education and training elsewhere off the job, such as younger part time workers combining work and tertiary education. Other part time workers, such as older workers, transiting to retirement can be expected to have limited interest in ongoing training and career paths (Productivity Commission 2008: 203).

Men and women show clear gender based differences in reasons for choosing part time work. Women cite childcare, a preference for part time work and study as principal motivators for engaging in part time work. Whereas men choose part time work due to study, a preference for part time or the inability to find full time work (Industrial Relations Victoria 2005a; Productivity Commission 2008).

The preference for part time work can be shaped by non work aspects of life, in particular, a wish for *work life balance*, and as the sections which follow illustrate, this tends to also be associated with age groups and transitioning to different phases of life. **This illustrates the importance from a policy perspective, of locating part time work within a life course framework as well as within labour market policy.**

4.2 PART TIME WORK AND PARENTING

In the majority of OECD countries, part time work is the key means of achieving flexibility in work hours and in balancing family and work responsibilities, particularly for working mothers. At the same time this flexibility can assist employers to adjust to market fluctuations (ILO 2003).

However, it is important to view the benefits arising from reducing hours against the working conditions associated with them in distinguishing quality part time work from other forms of part time employment.

Reduced hours of paid work through part-time employment can be an important aid in balancing caring responsibilities and paid work. It can allow workers to take more time for caring while still retaining attachment to the world of work.... Some people go on to conclude that part-time work is therefore by definition a 'family friendly' measure. However ... it is necessary to look beyond the number of hours to the other conditions of the job if we are to reach a full assessment of family friendliness. In short it is necessary to look at the quality of part-time work (Campbell & Charlesworth 2004: 47).

Women's participation in part time work, viewed across population cohorts, increases significantly over the child rearing years, particularly between the ages of 30 and 44, after which time it decreases. (Lyonette *et al* 2010). This usually reflects a choice that gives parenting priority over full time work. However, analysis of UK labour force data reveals lower levels of part time work by women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, compared with women born in the United Kingdom (Lyonette *et al* 2010, citing Grant *et al* 2005).

The OECD (2010) reported that the high rate of female participation in part time work was not explained by high child care costs, citing countries like Australia where child care costs are relatively affordable, and where there are very high rates of part time employment. Other international research has established a strong and positive link between the fertility and part time employment rates, indicating that part time work enables women to combine paid work with care of their children (Sandor 2011, citing Buddelmeyer, Mourre & Ward 2008).

Men's engagement in work part time is often involuntary and due to the inability to find full time work. Where choice is involved, men are most likely to be working part time for study reasons. In contrast to women, men are unlikely to cite parenting responsibilities as a main reason for part time work. This finding is supported by an OECD study which found men did not use part time work to balance work and parenting responsibilities (2010).

4.3 PART TIME WORK AND CAREGIVING

In 2003, more than a third of carers spent 40 or more hours each week providing care and a further 18% spent between 20 and 39 hours (Productivity Commission 2008). Due to the number of hours primary carers (other than parents) spend each week providing care, participation in paid work can be dependent on access to part time hours. Not surprisingly, while carers are less likely to be in paid employment overall, those who are working are more likely to be in part time work compared to non-carers (Productivity Commission 2008).

4.4 PART TIME WORK AND STUDY

In most countries, young people choose part time work to supplement their income while completing education. Once this is achieved, they usually seek full time employment (Sandor 2011; Lyonette *et al* 2010). As discussed in *Section 7.4*, full time students comprised around one-fifth of all part time employment in 2003 (Industrial Relations Victoria 2005a).

4.5 PART TIME WORK AND TRANSITION TO RETIREMENT

Research findings in both Australia and other OECD countries, highlight a distinct trend for part time work to increase prior to retirement (Lyonette *et al* 2010). In addition, older people may prefer part time work because of health problems (see *Section 7.4.3*) or because of a desire for better work life balance. Therefore, as the population ages the demand for part time work within this cohort can be expected to increase.

In Australia, transition to retirement schemes, together with policy directions designed to encourage mature age participation in paid work, provide incentives to work part time. However, depending on how they are structured, superannuation rules may act as incentives or disincentives and should be factored in to the decisions and choices made by older workers about the degree and nature of their engagement with paid work. In other countries, the choice can be affected by disincentives in the form of pension rights being calculated on the last five years of the working career, or regulations that require older workers to reduce their working hours with less than a proportional sacrifice of their wages (Sandor 2011).

The Productivity Commission's analysis of a special supplement to the HILDA survey examined retirement intentions and strategies being used to transition to retirement. Slightly more than 40% of those who moved from full time to part time work in order to transition to retirement indicated that they would not be working if their only option was full time employment (Productivity Commission 2008).

5 CONCLUSIONS

Part time work can provide a mechanism for people at different life stages to combine, even balance, work with other activities that matter to them – for example, raising a family, caring for family members, studying or further skill development. It can make the difference between workforce participation for those with health or disability issues who are unable to work full time. It is therefore critical that policy directions concerning quality part time work are located within a *life course framework as well as within labour market policy*, with a view to enhancing access to all Australians to better balance their work and non-work lives at different stages of the life cycle.

The findings from research yield a number of features of quality part time work and these form a core set of indicators about which there is significant agreement. However, it is also important to acknowledge the diversity of the part time workforce, with individuals having varying reasons for seeking less than full time hours. If part time work is voluntary, it is likely that individuals have exercised choice because of their skills and/or experience. For those without this choice, especially if their skills require development or their health limits their choices, it is less likely that they will have access to quality part time work. This is the group requiring a range of specific support and policy interventions -

...quality of work is particularly significant for people with less power in the workplace (NSW Government 2009: 4).

One of the major barriers facing the wider application of quality part time work principles and characteristics is attitudinal – a belief by some that working less hours equates to less commitment to the employing organisation. Prevailing work culture has been found to inhibit the availability of part time work at senior management levels, while leadership provided at these levels can do much to change beliefs that measure employee commitment and productivity in terms of hours spent in the workplace.

A number of Australian researchers have identified the negative impact of work culture that values full time work or long work hours, and devalues part time workers (Industrial Relations Victoria 2005a – citing Burgess & Whittard 2004 and Junor 2000; Charlesworth *et al* 2002).

Organisational value systems defined part time work negatively in relation to commitment and career ...[and] resulted in a culture of ‘competitive presenteeism’ Commitment was symbolised in terms of hours sacrificed to the organisation [creating] a clawing back of time from the private spheres. Hence part time professionals were seen to be less committed workers and therefore of less value to the organisation. Women in management were aware that part time working conveyed a lack of seriousness about a career (Jenkins 2004: 327).

One of the themes of discussion at the NSW *Quality Part Time Work Roundtable* (2009) concerned the need to raise the credibility and status of part time work in workplaces, and in the process, to reconceptualise how work is viewed, challenging the notion that the full time worker is the ideal worker. In part, this was seen to require support at senior levels of organisations as well as part time workplace champions and role models.

To this end, a key recommendation arising from the review of the directions set by the Women and Work Commission in the UK (Women and Work Commission 2009) was that a UK-wide *Quality Part Time Work Change Initiative* be established in order to achieve the culture change needed to make part time work acceptable at senior management levels.

For the workforce as a whole, quality part time (and full time) work must be seen as inherently linked to national productivity and to the broader quality of life of Australian workers.

The focus here is on the nature and quality of workplace relationships and the extent to which the quality of working life is seen as both an industrial and a political priority. Important factors include the balance of power between capital and labour ... the commitment to creating quality employment for all, and the extent to which a focus on the quality of working life at enterprise level translates into a national political conversation about the quality of work – often as part of a wider politics of the quality of life (Constable *et al* 2009: 14).

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7 APPENDIX 1: FEATURES OF PART TIME WORK IN AUSTRALIA

7.1 DEFINING AND MEASURING PART TIME WORK

This Appendix provides further details about the patterns and features of part time work in Australia⁴.

7.1.1 PART TIME WORK AND MULTIPLE JOB HOLDERS

As previously state, the ABS categorise those working 35 or more hours per week as ‘full time’ employees regardless of whether this total is reached through multiple jobs of less than 35 hours each (Industrial Relations Victoria 2005). This categorisation is likely to lead to an under-statement of the number of part time workers in Australia.

The Productivity Commission calculates that more than 20% of part time jobs are worked in parallel with another job (2008). Previously unpublished ABS data reported by the Productivity Commission (2008) identifies around 8% of part workers were simultaneously holding two or more jobs. In fact, 206,000 part time workers and 360,000 full time workers held more than one job at the last Census⁵.

Women are more likely to be multiple job holders, with ABS data indicating that they account for three-fifths of such workers. Furthermore, multiple job holders are almost twice as likely as other workers to be working for 50 hours or more each week – raising concerns about the quality of their employment experience and the quality of their lives as a whole. In South Australia, 7.9% of employed women, compared with 5.2% of men were holding two or more jobs at July 2007 (ABS 2009).

7.2 PART TIME WORK: A GROWING FEATURE OF AUSTRALIAN EMPLOYMENT

Relative to other OECD countries, Australia has a much higher rate of part time employment (24.7%), compared to the OECD average of (16.2%) - noting that the OECD common definition measures part time employment as less than 30 hours per week (OECD 2010). However, in contrast to other OECD countries where part time workers earn much less than full time workers, the hourly remuneration in Australia for part time work similar to that of full time work in comparable jobs (Productivity Commission 2008).

Part time employment has risen significantly in recent years in response to a range of economic and social changes in Australia. It is now a fundamental feature of a labour market that is associated with increased workforce diversity and changes in workplace culture and attitudes to work, including expectations about the balancing of work with other aspects of life. In 1980 part time employment in Australia accounted for 16% of all employment but by 2011 it represented 30% of overall employment. In South Australia the trend has been more pronounced with 18% of all employment being part time in 1980, rising to 33% of overall employment in 2011 (ABS Labour Force Australia 2011).

The early strong growth of part time employment was associated with a period of high unemployment, particularly during the 1980s and early 1990s. For some ... part time employment came to be seen as

⁴ A more detailed analysis of this is provided in the AISR’s accompanying report quantifying the quality part time work experience.

⁵ At this time 2,858,000 part time workers held one job.

underemployment In more recent years some of these concerns have abated, particularly where part time work is seen to be initiated by the worker for reasons of work-life balance. The traditional view of full time employment being the only 'real' employment has ... been challenged. The last four decades have seen the entry into the workforce of groups who had a preference to combine employment with other activities (Productivity Commission 2008: xxvii).

The growth in part time employment is a response to both supply and demand factors in the labour market. From a supply perspective, the workforce has been altered by the increased entry of women, higher participation in paid work by students, and more recently, greater numbers of older workers. These three groups often express a preference for part time work, reflecting changing social attitudes to combining and balancing work and other key activities of life. These are all factors which relate to individual workers and are linked with a need for flexibility. However, it is important to analyse these demand factors in tandem with those of the employer and broader economic changes.

From a demand perspective, employers have increasingly used part time work to obtain the flexibility needed to manage fluctuations in the economic cycle, including downturns and wider patterns of skill requirements. That said, the increasing use of part time employment remains principally associated with those industries that already had made strong use of part time work, particularly the services sector, hospitality and tourism (Productivity Commission 2008). See *Section 7.4.5* for further discussion.

... growth in part time employment has come from both the demand and supply side of the labour market.... Accordingly, there are no broad generalisations that can be made about part time workers and part time jobs (Productivity Commission 2008: 203).

7.3 PART TIME WORK, CASUAL WORK AND NON STANDARD WORK

7.3.1 PART TIME WORK AND CASUAL WORK

Casual employment is not usually associated with *quality* employment, typically lacking leave entitlements, job security, and long term financial security and ability to plan. With two-thirds of all casual employees working part time hours and part time employees often employed on a casual basis, it is evident that there is a link between part time and casual work.

Casual workers offer employers significant flexibility and are most likely to be categorised as *secondary* labour market workers. However casual employment is not the reason for increased levels of part time employment -

... casualisation of employment cannot be seen as the driver of the growth of part time employment - indeed, the share of casual part time employees in part time employment has declined over the last decade and a half (Productivity Commission 2008: xxi).

It is important to differentiate between those employees who are casual and those who are on fixed term contracts, as the latter receive some of the entitlements of permanent employees, for example, paid sick leave and paid annual leave (Wooden and Warren 2003). It is also important to take into account longer term outcomes arising from casual employment.

There is a level of mobility in and out of casual employment and the destinations of those exiting casual work identified both positive and negative outcomes. Age is a major driver of casual employees' destinations – for example, young casuals move into non-casual employment. Whereas older employees

may wish to take a phased path to retirement with the expectation that this will involve a switch to casual employment. Many casuals remain with their current employer when they transition to non-casual employment (Buddelmeyer, Wooden & Ghantous 2006). However, the few longitudinal studies that have explored the role of casual work in employment destinations have not established conclusive evidence regarding its role as a pathway to non casual work (Welters & Mitchell 2009).

7.3.2 PART TIME WORK AND NONSTANDARD WORK

Nonstandard work can be defined as an employment relationship that differs from what has historically been the standard work arrangement of full time hours for an open ended duration, undertaken at the employer's working premises and under the employer's administrative control (Broschak *et al* 2008). It thus includes contracting and agency based work, temporary work and part time work, and has become a growing feature of work arrangements. Nonstandard work provides ultimate flexibility for employers and when it involves a third party employer (such as, an agency) avoids the expenses and responsibilities of direct employment.

Nonstandard work encompasses a diversity of work arrangements and conditions, and researchers have been criticised for failing, in the main, to capture these nuances, and for assuming that all nonstandard jobs are substandard or bad jobs. As a result, part time work has been negatively associated with nonstandard work (Broschak *et al* 2008).

7.4 WHO WORKS PART TIME IN AUSTRALIA?

The OECD's comparison of 42 OECD and European Union countries outside the OECD, shows the Netherlands had the highest incidence of part time⁶ employment in 2009 (36.7%), Switzerland was second with 26.2%, while Australia with 24.7% was third (OECD 2010b). Part time work in Australia, as with other OECD countries, is highly feminised, with women making up nearly three-quarters of the part time workforce, particularly in the child rearing age group of 25 to 54 years (Productivity Commission 2008). This is explored further in *Section 7.4.1*.

Relative to full time workers, part time workers are under-represented in positions requiring higher skills and over-represented in positions with lower skill levels – but this is not consistent across all occupational groups. For example, professionals comprise a high share of part time workers. The relationship between skill and education level is also apparent, with part time work being more common among people with high school only education than among people with post school qualifications (Productivity Commission 2008). In addition, full time students contribute around one-fifth of the part time workforce. See *Section 7.4.4* for further information.

7.4.1 GENDER BASED CHANGES IN PART TIME EMPLOYMENT OVER TIME

Viewed over thirty years (from 1980 to 2011), a number of trends are apparent in Australia that involve changes in men's and women's share of full time and part time employment, and in total employment rates for each gender. Particularly apparent is the growth in male part time employment from 6% to 17% of total employment over this period in South Australia, and from 5% to 16% in Australia. During this

⁶ Based on the OECD common definition of less than 30 hours per week.

period, part time employment increased by the same amount (around 11 percentage points) for women - 40% to 51% in South Australia, and 34% to 46% in Australia). While comparable in amount, the trend appears less dramatic as male part time employment increased three fold, whereas women's part-time employment increased by under a third. However it is notable, that by 2011 around one half of women were employed part time (ABS 2011).

7.4.2 LOCATION AND PART TIME WORK

The highest rates of part time work in Australia are in coastal urban centres, excluding capital cities, and non urban coastal areas, while the lowest rates of part time work occur in remote locations – except in the Northern Territory. In remote parts of South Australia the rate of part time work is very low (Productivity Commission 2008).

Location interacts with industry (reflecting those with high and low part time rates) and with the age profile of people in different locations. Urban and non urban coastal areas with significant tourism and hospitality industry presences have higher rates of part time employment. Regional differences in part time employment are also evident in other OECD countries (Lyonette *et al* 2010).

7.4.3 PART TIME WORK AND HEALTH AND DISABILITY

A worker's health or disability may affect whether part time work is a temporary or permanent means of labour force participation. In addition, this plays a role in productivity by enabling some groups with limited full time capacity to participate in paid work - in particular, carers of people with a disability. Data from the United Kingdom show that 26% of men with a disability work part time compared with 42% of women with a disability (Lyonette *et al* 2010).

7.4.4 PART TIME WORK AND EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Level of education also acts as a distinguishing feature in patterns of part time work participation. Data from the United Kingdom reveal little difference in the educational qualifications of men working full time or part time. However, women with a degree or equivalent are much less likely to work part time - and half as likely to do so as women with no qualifications (Lyonette *et al* 2010).

Part time employment is more common among people with high school only education than among people with post school qualifications. Part time workers are under-represented in higher skill levels and over-represented in lower skill levels relative to full time workers (Productivity Commission 2008).

7.4.5 PART TIME WORK BY INDUSTRY AND OCCUPATION

There are distinct patterns of part time work that vary by industry and occupation. In South Australia the industries with the highest concentrations of part time work in 2011 are retail trade (18.8%) and health care and social assistance (18.8%). The proportion of part time work in these industries has increased only slightly in twenty-five years.

Over the same period (1985 to 2011), there has been:

- A growth in part time work in the administrative and support services industry (from 2.0% to 6.4%):

- A decline in part time in the agriculture forestry and fishing industry (from 7.7% to 4.0%); and
- A decline in the wholesale trade industry – from 3.5% to 1.9%. (ABS 2011).

The occupations with the highest proportions of part time workers in South Australia are sales workers, community and personal service workers, and labourers. In each of these occupations, women are more highly represented than are men (ABS 2011).

7.5 MODELLING PART TIME EMPLOYMENT

The Productivity Commission (2008) recently used an econometric model to identify the roles of age, year and cohort effects on part time employment in Australia from 1966 to 2006. Changing patterns of part time employment were not found to be the result of the transformation in the demographic profile of workers, but rather to **increased participation in part time work within all age groups**. They conclude that Australia's ageing population was not expected to impact part time employment – as the fewer members of the younger part time working cohort will be offset by increases in the number of older part time workers (Productivity Commission 2008).

In contrast, research in the UK projects part time employment will increase overall in the short to medium term (Lyonette *et al* 2010). Large increases in part time work among women in personal services are expected together with a substantial decrease in part time 'elementary' jobs. For men, increases are projected in part time and self-employed 'elementary' occupations as well as a rise in part time work in most occupations, including professional occupations. For both women and men, increased part time work in professional and managerial jobs is also projected (UK Commission for Employment and Skills 2006).

8 APPENDIX II: PART TIME WORK IN THE RETAIL SECTOR

This section summarises the findings from the small amount of research literature focused on part time work in the retail sector.

8.1 SUMMARY OF THE RETAIL INDUSTRY PROFILE

The Australian Fair Pay Commission provides detail about the key characteristics of the retail industry. These show that the industry classification has these five subdivisions:

- ⇒ Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts retailing
- ⇒ Fuel retailing
- ⇒ Food retailing
- ⇒ Other store-based retailing
- ⇒ Non store retailing and commission based buying and selling.

Retail is the largest employing industry in Australia, with 15% of the Australian workforce employed in this industry, which is comprised mainly of small and medium sized businesses. It is also the largest occupational group in Australia, with sales assistants, checkout operators, cashiers and shop managers representing more than half of the retail industry workforce (RAPS 2010).

In 2007-08, the industry accounted for 12.5% of all hours worked in Australia and 7.5% of total wages and salaries, having one of the lowest average earnings of any industry. Large firms accounted for some 46% of industry wages and salaries (Pech *et al* 2009: 5).

The workforce has high proportions of women (58%), young people (33%) and part time workers (48%). Retail workers tend to have lower educational qualifications compared with the workforce as a whole in Australia, reflecting the large proportion of young people employed and a predominance of low skilled occupations.

Some 73 per cent of part time employees in retail have no entitlement to paid leave (compared with 59% across all industries), and they are less likely to have access to work-related training than those in other industries. On average, retail employees earn less than other workers, with average weekly earnings being only about 75% of the average across industries (Pech *et al* 2009: 5-7).

More than half of retail employees work part time, this proportion varying with different retail sub sectors – for example, motor vehicle retailing is less reliant on part time workers while food retailing has a high proportion of part time staff (Campbell & Chalmers 2008). Retail managers represent a high proportion of full time jobs in the industry (88%) with weekly working averaging at a very high 47.7 (compared to nearly 42% for all occupations) while earnings are below average (RAPS 2010).

8.2 CRITICAL FACTORS SHAPING THE RETAIL INDUSTRY

Business sales in retail are cyclic in nature, reacting to economic trends and changes in consumer spending patterns. The GFC has therefore been a significant influence, with many businesses cutting costs wherever possible, including on training for existing workers and not employing new trainees. Retail

managers have been increasingly pressured to increase skills in business planning and maintain outputs with reduced resources (RAPS 2010). Concentration of ownership, particularly in food retailing, and working low profit margins are a further two trends designed to enhance competitiveness in the face of economic challenges (Campbell & Chalmers 2008).

Technological change has also been a critical issue, and being able to take advantage of new technologies is critical to success in retail. For example, the development of radio frequency identification (RFID) technology is likely to replace barcodes, and because RFID removes the need for barcode scanning may see cashier staff replaced with automated systems. RFID tags goods and is a protection against shoplifting. Growth in online retailing is another example of technology-driven change which is having a profound influence on the nature of retail operations and associated workforce needs (RAPS 2010).

Other key trends in the industry include intensified competition, increased centralisation, the rise of larger outlets and changes in regulation (for example, extended opening hours) all of which exert intense pressure on labour costs. Retailers have responded by adjusting staffing levels as closely as possible to fluctuating customer demand and sales, resulting in part time jobs in the sector taking on a diversity of forms as they are reconfigured according to employer need (Campbell & Chalmers 2008: 487-488; Allan *et al* 2002: 3; Lynch 2005: 44).

The retail workforce is highly feminised and has a significant component of young workers aged 15-24, many of whom are combining work and study. Three quarters of part time jobs in retail are casual (that is, lacking standard rights and entitlements), and labour turnover is higher in retail than in the Australian economy as a whole. For employers, casual appointments provide cheaper labour costs, increased capacity to match fluctuations in demand, greater ease of dismissal and increased administrative efficiencies. Hours can be decreased or even abolished, and hours can be varied and schedules arranged at very short notice (Campbell & Chalmers 2008: 490-491; Lynch 2005: 44). All of this significantly impairs the quality of the work experience for employees.

Findings from research undertaken with Victorian retail employees underscore this loss of quality. Under employment was a significant for both permanent and casual part time retail workers, with some 40% wanting more weekly hours, but being unable to achieve this through additional work with other employers due to the variability in their work schedule. Permanent status did not alleviate this problem. There were also few differences between permanent and casual part time workers in the amount of control over work hours and schedules, although casual workers were subject to more employer-directed variations in their hours and work schedules (Campbell & Chalmers 2008: 491-497). The authors concluded that the quality of part time work in the retail industry was compromised, but that this was not necessarily attributable to casual working conditions. Rather the issue was one combining under-employment, variation in hours and work schedules and a lack of employee control over these.

The division between casual and permanent status is important, but it does not trace the complex lines of fragmentation and fissure among part-time retail jobs (Campbell & Chalmers 2008: 487).

Australian research with young workers in the retail industry has identified that many entered the sector seeing a pathway into full time employment and a career in management that would compensate them for their low wages. Many were confident their retail work would enable them to fit family, study and other responsibilities with their work. However, after being employed the long hours which their managers worked and their observable stress levels were found to act as a deterrent to remaining in the industry long term (Roan & Diamond 2003).

Despite these negative features of part time work in retail, young workers in Australia have also identified a number of positive characteristics of their work experience. These include interaction with customers, being trained to their job, learning valuable skills through their work, having a lot of responsibility, working with other employees, being treated fairly by their managers and perceiving that occupational health and safety was a management priority (Allan *et al* 2002).

A useful resource for retail industry employers has been produced by Industrial Relations Victoria (2005d) in partnership with several peak industry bodies. This takes the form of a guideline providing information on how to place quality part time work arrangements, particularly for employees with family responsibilities. It addresses a number of myths about part time work (for example, 'Store managers can't be part time'; 'staff who work part time aren't interested in getting ahead'), and provides a checklist of quality part time work features (as have been identified earlier in *Section I* of this report). It also lists a number of advantages for employers in presenting the business case for quality part time work, and in managing risks.