Working-time Transformations and Effects

Griffith Work Time Project April 2003

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PREFACE

The Griffith Work Time Project was established in 2001 to investigate the transformation of working time arrangements in Queensland. The project team comprises five researchers from Griffith University – (in reverse alphabetical order), Keith Townsend (research assistant), Bob Russell (associate professor), David Peetz (associate professor), Chris Houghton (research assistant) and Cameron Allan (senior lecturer) – plus Andréa Fox from the Queensland Department of Industrial Relations. The Griffith researchers are based in the School of Industrial Relations, aside from Bob Russell who is from the School of Management.

Fieldwork for the case studies was undertaken by Keith Townsend, Chris Houghton, Bob Russell, Cameron Allan and Andréa Fox. Design, administration and analysis of the survey were coordinated by David Peetz, Chris Houghton, and Keith Townsend with input by all members of the team. Section one of this report was initially drafted by Cameron Allan and Chris Houghton, section two by Bob Russell, Keith Townsend, Chris Houghton and Andréa Fox, section three by Bob Russell, section four by David Peetz, Keith Townsend and Chris Houghton, sections five and six by David Peetz, and section seven by Cameron Allan. The report was edited by Andréa Fox and David Peetz.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1   Introduction

Working time has become one of the important workplace issues in Australia and overseas in recent decades. The aim of this project has been to examine current trends in working time arrangements in Queensland workplaces. In particular, the *origins, implementations and effects of new working time arrangements.* A central focus has been the effects on employees and their households.

1.1   Method

The project was implemented through a combination of case study and survey research. We undertook qualitative research in seventeen organisations and in fifteen of them we completed surveys of employees with a total of 963 respondents. We also surveyed the partners of respondent employees, obtaining 489 responses.

1.2   Background to the cases

A mixture of small, medium and large organisations were studied, though with a greater representation of larger firms. The cases included a balance of strongly, weakly and non-unionised workplaces and a blend of female-dominated, male-dominated and mixed gender workplaces. Sectors covered included: a printing company; a construction company; a health product manufacturer; two mines; a government agency; an essential service; a local council; a public utility; a bank; a theme park; a retailer; a law firm; and a truck repair company; a trade union; a hospital; and an education institution.

2   Types of change and their rationale

The majority of the case studies included in this project, being drawn from the private sector, faced clear yet varying degrees of competition in both oligopolistic markets and classical markets. Competition within a product market was a decisive factor for change in some cases, while in others it was the labour market, which was critical. In others the pressures experienced by an organisation arose from government policy modifications, the regulatory environment or changing social mores. For public sector organisations, budgetary constraints, new notions of public accountability, or deregulation and the commercialisation of public goods were significant.

2.1   The motivations of management

The impetus for change could be grouped into three broad areas:

(a)   the goal of developing new relationships with an organisation's work force, including responding to trade union pressure; this included 'work-life initiatives' such as shorter hours (shorter shifts, shorter working weeks), changes to the placement of hours (eg banked hours, flexi-time, rostered days off, time off in lieu, staggered starting and finishing times, job sharing, full-time/part-time flexibility arrangements,

telecommuting) and enhanced leave provisions (eg on maternity/paternity leave, recreation leave);

(b)   the goal of introducing new work practices, calculated to enhance financial performance through registering changes to working time practices; this included the annualisation of remuneration or hours (cancellation of overtime wage rates and other premiums) and longer standard hours (eg by extension of the working day with no compensation in work cycles, extension of the number of days consecutively worked, cancellation of rostered day off entitlements, and excessive overtime work)

(c)   mixed or conflicting strategies that combine elements of the two preceding categories.

2.2   Some Findings

In just five out of the seventeen case studies working time issues focused around the attainment of work-life balance. This was most commonly prompted by the nature of the particular labour market and strong employee preferences. The programs that seemed to be the most effective were those, which involved a direct role of active self-management on the part of employees. We also encountered several cases where programs purporting to improve employees' work-life balance were 'on the books', but did not appear to be widely used or particularly effective. Where access depended upon managerial discretion or individual 'one off' negotiations between employees and supervisors, such programs were not as effective. For example, rostered days off, providing a clearly defined, regularised and precise exchange of equivalents, were a more effective means of regulating the work-life balance than 'time off in lieu' provisions.

One factor underlying the movement towards longer working hours was growth of business process outsourcing. The discourse of competitive advantage, focusing on 'service', was also increasing pressures on organisations to remain open for longer hours. However, longer operating hours were often a proactive business strategy rather than a reactive response to public 'demand'. Moving from an hourly wage system to an annual salary is conducive to the development of a culture of working long hours to 'get the job done', especially if staffing levels do not increase in proportion to demand.

When work-life initiatives were put forward as part of a 'trade-off' or as amelioration for the adverse effects of a mixed strategy, they were usually not notably successful.

3   Consultation, negotiation and implementation of working time changes

Negotiation or consultation may occur at one or more levels. We examined three in detail.

3.1 Management-client relations

In two cases direct negotiations between a producer and a clientele had a direct impact on working time practices. For example, an organisation that provided equipment repair and service work for the mining industry had to establish a twelve-hour day as standard practice in order to win service contracts from that industry, though it could not annualise salaries

because of a labour shortage. A construction firm imposed its five-day week on subcontractors. If business process outsourcing becomes a more common practice, we should expect to see greater pressure to transmit working hours arrangements across organisations.

3.2 Union-management negotiation

Union-management negotiations were associated with novel arrangements such as job sharing, banking hours, telecommuting, multi-hiring, paid maternity, paternity and adoption leave, and post-maternity return to work programs. Generally, more success seemed to occur around the negotiation of work-life initiatives such as flexi-time, job sharing and family leave than around other issues. There was limited negotiation around the issue of long or excessive working hours. Some negotiated outcomes had the effect of increasing hours worked, for example where rostered days off were, replaced by time off in lieu and the greater uncertainty of employee control. In one case, employee concerns over working time change led to unionisation of a non-union workplace.

3.3 Management-employee negotiations

There were cases where a union was present in the workplace, but not involved in processes of working time change. The shortening of the working week at a construction company through the abolition of Saturday work, and the trial of eleven instead of twelve-hour shifts at a mine, both proved popular with the workforces and were simply carried through. In other, less propitious circumstances, proceeding without union involvement could challenge the definition of managerial prerogative. In other cases there was simply no union at the workplace, in which case management-employee relations may assume two forms. Some changes proceeded by virtue of managerial prerogative alone, which led to uneven effects within two workforces, with less skilled or casual employees having minimal capacity to influence their own situation. Two other non-union employers found it necessary or desirable to establish a form of 'sponsored representation', especially in larger, more complex operations. In one case, this form of representation arose after the decline of unionism at the workplace; in the other, the inadequacies of this form of representation were leading to unionisation.

4   Extended hours

There was evidence of long, and increasing, hours in many of our organisations. We use the term 'very long hours employees' to describe employees with 'normal' working weeks of 50 hours or more, and 'long hours employees' to refer to those normally working 45 hours per week or more. 'Traditional hours employees', on the other hand, refers to employees normally working 35 to 40 hours per week.

4.1 Long hours and compensation

Very long hours were most common where employers did not have to recompense employees for working those hours, through either overtime pay or actual time off in lieu, as there was an incentive on employers to directly or indirectly make employees work longer hours, and little constraining them from doing so. Similarly, 'long hours employees' were most commonly

those who did not receive penalty rates for night or weekend work, either because they only received ordinary-time rates or (more commonly) they were not paid for night or weekend work. Likewise, 'very long hours employees' had considerably less access to rostered days off. However, long hours could also occur amongst some employees who normally received overtime pay and who probably become dependent on the extra income so obtained.

4.2 Union membership and compensation

Union members appeared more likely than non-members to be compensated for working over 38 hours per week, and were more likely than non-members to receive pay increases when their actual working hours increased.

4.3 Employee satisfaction and policy preferences

The majority of 'long hours employees' were working more hours than they would like. A majority of full-time employees whose hours had decreased were more satisfied with their hours. There was majority agreement with the policy proposition that there should be an upper limit on how many hours someone can work each week. This was so across all groups of employees, regardless of hours worked. Many employees also exhibited a desire for a range of innovative work-time initiatives, including paid maternity or paternity leave, job sharing, employer assistance with child care, working from home, 48/52 arrangements and a career break scheme. Few employees had been able to access such schemes to date.

4.4 The long hours environment and culture

Extended hours were associated with particular forms of workplace culture. 'Very long hours employees' perceived that long hours were taken for granted, that it was not easy to get their workload reduced if it got too much, that it would cause problems if they said they did not want to work overtime, that deadlines were tight and that performance targets may not have been reasonable. In theory, many 'long hours employees' had quite a bit of say over their working hours. But they did not have control over their workload, and so were often unable to effectively control the hours they worked.

4.5 Long hours and changes

'Very long hours employees' were the group most likely to report that their satisfaction with the hours they worked had gone down, that their job stress had gone up, that the amount of time it took them to recover from work had gone up and that the safety of their work area had gone down.

4.6 Long hours at a case study organisation

We examined a case study organisation, where 46 per cent of our survey respondents worked 50 hours or more per week. The union and management had agreed in the 1999 EBA to a 60 hour limit on actual hours that could be worked in any week. This was popularly endorsed by employees. Yet the limit failed, seemingly for three reasons: the willingness of a minority of employees to subvert the limit; the lack of adequate systems in place to enforce the limit; and

a willingness of managers and supervisors to circumvent the limit when there was a need to satisfy a client's request and insufficient ordinary-time labour to do so. A key lesson from this was the need for adequate enforcement mechanisms.

4.7 Long hours reversed: a compressed workweek at a construction firm

One firm, in the construction sector, reduced the working week from an industry standard of six days a week to five days and reduced the number of weekly working hours by two. Recovery time increased, productivity increased significantly, and employees enjoyed the additional family and leisure time. Employees reported improvements in satisfaction with their hours and job, stress, tiredness, absenteeism, and workplace safety.

4.8 Increasing hours

There were, in effect, two paths to increased hours – one involving tighter direct managerial control over employees' hours, and one involving a loosening of direct control and replacing it with internalisation of the need to work longer hours to 'get the job' done.

5   Pressure and fatiguing

The pressure that employees were under was highest amongst employees working long or increased hours. However, the mode of regulation also affected pressure, which was high amongst employees who never received overtime or actual time off in lieu or who did not always receive penalty rates for working unsocial hours. Pressure was highest where promoted by workplace culture, where external circumstances were seen by employees as constraints, amongst supervisors themselves, and where employee power was weak.

6   At home: the personal dimension

6.1 High pressure at work and home

High pressure was associated with a range of dissatisfactions with aspects of work. It was also associated with strikingly negative responses on satisfaction with the work-family balance, tiredness, social lives, and time spent on community, personal, recreational and domestic activities.

6.2 Work and personal lives and tensions

Increases in reported job stress, how tired respondents felt at work and how long it took them to recover from work were associated with greater dissatisfaction with the work-life balance. The adverse impact that long hours has on the work-life balance was not just a result of the extra time that it took employees away from the home environment – it was more importantly a consequence of the adverse impact that long and increasing hours had on the work pressures that employees experienced, and which they then brought home with them as baggage. Working unsocial hours or with irregular starting times also adversely affected the work-life balance, underlining the continuing relevance of penalty rates. We identified a number of disturbing relations between working patterns and deteriorating personal relationships.

Employees under high pressure at work, those reporting increases in stress, in how tired they felt, and in how long it took them to recover from work, those working long or increased hours, and those in long hours workplace cultures all disproportionately reported a deterioration in how well they got on with people at home.

6.3 The impact of work on employees' partners

We examined more closely two indicators of the impact of working time changes on partners. The first was a proxy for the impact of an employee's working arrangements on their partner's time use: partner's responses to a statement that their spouse's work responsibilities effect their own social life more than they should, an indicator of household stress. The second was a summary measure of dissatisfaction with an employee's work arrangements: partners' responses to the proposition that if it were possible, they would like their spouse to get a job elsewhere. Partners had especially negative views of the jobs of their employee spouses when those employee spouses reported high work pressure or fatiguing, worked 45 hours or more per week, had irregular starting times, worked on weekends, never received overtime or actual time off in lieu, had little say over their workload, or had children.

7   Conclusion

Our study suggests that the purpose and manner of implementation of work-life policies can have a significant effect on the outcomes. Sometimes weak organisational infrastructure meant that 'work life balance' policies were ambitious in their outline but conservative in their application, leading to erosion of goodwill and failure of 'work life balance' policies when they were used.

The study also suggests the importance of internal and external regulation in shaping the working hours of employees. Constraints such as the payment of overtime rates, penalty rates and rostered days off help employees control their working hours. It is an indirect form of control, because these constraints are determined by some form of collective process that may be internal or external to the workplace. Yet it may be more effective in constraining hours than giving employees the individual 'capacity' to determine their own hours, because in reality those hours will be determined in the context of an environment, which is shaped by the needs of the employer and a workplace culture that reflects the environment. Our findings also suggest, then, that the battle for control over working hours, if it is to make a difference to working hours, is not a battle simply over individual 'say' but also over collective regulation. Thus, while employees like to have more say over their hours, they also like the idea of external regulation of hours, with majority support across all groups for a ceiling on weekly working hours.

The precise mix of regulation to provide an optimal outcome is beyond the scope of this study. However, it could be implied that the declining importance of overtime and penalty rates, the declining power of employees and, in that context, the absence of a ceiling on actual working hours, have contributed to the lengthening of working hours and an apparent deterioration in the capacity of employees to balance their work and family lives. This is so notwithstanding the considerable benefits flowing to employees from certain work-life initiatives in particular

organisations. For example the gains to employee and organisational welfare, in one firm, accruing with the shift from a six-day to a five-day working week are noteworthy achievements and set an example to the rest of the construction industry. Elsewhere employees and organisations benefited from moves to self-rostering and self-managed job sharing. Measures such as paid family leave are unambiguously valuable for the ability of workers to balance their work and family lives. The challenge for policy makers is to support a framework that encourages such innovative, positive policies while reversing some of the pathologies that have arisen from the less desirable directions in working time practices in recent years.

1. INTRODUCTION

Working time has become one of the important workplace issues in Australia and overseas in recent decades. Unions have traditionally sought a reduction in working hours to provide employees with greater opportunities for leisure and to allow workers to balance their working and non-working lives. Employers have also sought to reform working time to improve organisational performance. This occurs through lower labour costs, and a tighter fit between customer demand and product or service delivery through the introduction of new work-time provisions, such as reduced or revised penalty rates and overtime, a longer normal span of hours including twelve-hour shifts and the annualisation of hours (Buchanan and Bearfield 1997). Coupled with these work-time developments, there have also been a marked increase in hours worked. Australian and Queensland employees are working longer hours on average and the proportion of the workforce engaged in extended hours – and shorter hours – is increasing (Campbell 2002).

The aim of this project has been to examine current trends in work-time arrangements in Queensland workplaces. In particular, we have sought to investigate *origins, implementations and effects of new working time arrangements*. Further, we have sought to explore the main types of work-time change and why such changes have been introduced. We have also sought to examine the types of consultation and negotiation that have taken place during work-time change. A central focus has been to explore the effects that new and extended hours have had on employees and their households.

1.1 Method

The *Working-time Transformations* project commenced with an initial formulation that there would be three plausible types of work-time change: those that are predominantly beneficial to employees; those that privilege the employer; and mixed, that is, conferring benefits upon both parties to the employment relationship. We used this classification schema as a basis of selecting potential case study sites. Some of our case studies were chosen from a database of enterprise agreements involving work-time change in Queensland, commissioned from Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training (ACIRRT). We selected a list of suitable enterprises from the database and approached those organisations to participate in the study. A number of organisations agreed to participate.

To gain additional cases we directly approached organisations that were known to the researchers, or recommended to us by industry practitioners, as interesting examples of working time practice. At conferences and at business forums, we also made contact with some organisations that were prepared to participate in the study. After exhausting this means of locating case studies, we examined the composition of the participating cases and detected that some sectors of the economy were under-represented. While we did not aim to provide a statistically representative sample of Queensland workplaces, we did aim to ensure that we had cases from most of the main industry sectors in the state. Accordingly, we sought out organisations from those industry sectors where we did not have cases. We directly contacted organisations and asked them to participate in our study. In total, these procedures resulted in

the selection of seventeen cases for in-depth analysis, more than was originally set out in the project design. Overall, our cases covered a variety of sectors, including manufacturing, mining, electricity, gas and water supply, construction, wholesale and retail trade, finance and insurance, government administration, education, health and community services, cultural and recreational services and personal and other services.

Data collection occurred in several ways. First, we undertook qualitative research in the organisations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with managers and employees in each of the enterprises. The advantage of semi-structured interviews was that they allowed researchers to delve into the nature of workplace change and develop an understanding of the motivation, rationale and consequence of change. Interviews were conducted with senior managers, a cross-section of middle managers, supervisors and union delegates (where they existed). Workers were interviewed in focus groups to compare and contrast the information provided by management and to gauge employee perspectives on the efficacy of working time change and the effect it is having on employees working and family lives. Documentary sources were also examined at each case study, including enterprise bargaining agreements, company reports and staff meeting minutes.

Second, several months after the qualitative research, employees in all but two of the case study organisations were surveyed by the use of a self-completion questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed taking account of the early outcomes from the qualitative research as well as extensive pre-testing and a pilot survey. Of the remaining two research sites: one (*Remote Mine*) had closed down after the qualitative research stage was completed; and in the other organisation (*Local Council*), elected councillors were reluctant for the organisation to participate in the survey. A template questionnaire was used across the organisations, with some minor modifications made to the questionnaire for certain case studies in order to take into account specific organisational arrangements. The exception to this was *Theme Park*, where a significantly cut-down version was deployed in order to secure managerial consent and the cooperation of a predominantly casual workforce. Survey administration commenced in March 2002 and finished in May 2002. Some 963 responses were received.

Third, an innovative feature of this study was the inclusion of household members in our research, we conducted a separate partners' questionnaire to canvas the effect of work-time changes upon family members. We obtained data from 489 partners.

1.2 Background to the cases

The cases provided a reasonable cross-section of organisations in the Queensland economy with a good spread across different sectors of the economy. There was a mixture of small, medium and large organisations although there was a greater representation of larger sized firms. The cases included a balance of strongly, weakly and non-unionised workplaces. There was also a blend of female dominated, male dominated and mixed gender workplaces.

In the manufacturing, mining and construction sectors of the economy we conducted research in five organisations: a printing company (*Print Co)*; a construction company (*Construction Group)*; a health product manufacturer (*Health Products)*; and two mines (*Remote Mine* and *Small Mine)*. These organisations were all privately owned, well established, with each of

them operating for ten or more years. *Print Co* was a small operation, whereas the other organisations were much larger with 100 to 300 personnel. While there was active unionism in the construction firm and the small mine, *Print Co* had never been unionised while *Remote Mine* had recently been de-unionised. The central work-time issue in three of these cases was the introduction and operation of twelve-hour shifts. In the *Health Products* case, the key issue was increased hours and family friendly work-time arrangements. In *Construction Group*, the prime work-time initiative was a compressed working week.

We researched four public sector organisations: a government agency *(Government Department)*; an essential service *(Essential Services)*; a local council *(Local Council)*; and a public utility *(Corporate Utilities)*. These organisations were large in size and employed a largely full-time workforce. While *Essential Services* employed a predominately white-collar workforce, the other three organisations employed a mix of both white and blue-collar workers. There was a strong union presence at each of these organisations. Both *Essential Services* and the *Corporate Utilities* were experimenting with the same work-time issue of annualised salaries. *Government Department* had recently introduced a flexi-time system and *Local Council* was introducing 'work from home' arrangements.

In the for-profit, private service economy, we conducted research in five organisations. This category contains a diversity of firms including a bank *(Big Bank)*; a theme park *(Theme Park)*; a retailer *(Young Retail)*; a law firm *(Law Firm)*; and a truck repair company *(Truck Repairs)*. All of these organisations were private limited-liability companies except *Law Firm*, which was a partnership. While *Law Firm* was small, the other organisations were much larger operations. *Truck Repairs* employed a blue-collar, male workforce whereas the other organisations employed mainly white-collar workers and front-line service staff, some with a high proportion of female employment. Of these organisations, *Theme Park* and *Young Retail* were the only ones to use a significant proportion of casual employment. In terms of unionisation, *Young Retail* was the only organisation to be devoid of a trade union presence.

These organisations were dealing with a range of work-time issues. *Big Bank* and *Law Firm* were implementing family-friendly policies. *Theme Park* was using a banked hours scheme and multi-hiring. *Truck Repairs* was dealing with the problems of excessive hours and twelve-hour shifts. *Young Retail* was implementing new working hour arrangements.

In the non-profit service sector of the economy we researched three organisations: a trade union *(State Union)* offering family-friendly arrangements; a hospital *(Sympathy Hospital)*, offering flexible working hours; and an education institution *(Learning Services)*, experimenting with job sharing. *State Union* was a small organisation employing administrative and professional officers. The other two organisations, in contrast, were much larger in size. All three organisations were moderately to highly unionised and female dominated.

1.3 Structure of the report

The structure of the report is as follows; Section 2 provides a discussion of the types of change instituted in each of our case study organisations and examines the underlying motives for change in these workplaces. In Section 3 the mechanisms for introducing changes in work-

time practices are explored and the links between these processes and the types of change being implemented are also considered.

Section 4 focuses specifically on the crucial Australian labour market issue of extended working hours. The characteristics of working long hours in terms of forms of recompense, union membership, employees' attitudes and the long hours working environment and culture are all canvassed in this section. Similarly in Section 5 a significant finding from the study has been singled out for closer attention and this section delves into the nature of work intensification in our case study organisations.

Section 6 examines employees' attitudes towards balancing their work and family life responsibilities, exploring both the impact of work pressures on family life and the perceptions of employees' partners to these tensions. Section 7 concludes by drawing together the key findings of the project.

2. TYPES OF CHANGE AND THEIR RATIONALE

This section of the report considers the types of changes that have been made to working time practices in our case studies in recent years and examines the motivating rationales behind such alterations. The focus is on the *originating intentions* that lie behind the changes that we have observed. Of course, whether such aims are brought to fruition is a different, if highly related matter that is taken up elsewhere. Here we focus specifically on the relationships between changing working time practices and current business strategy. This encompasses a range of questions such as the relationships between working time practices and wider strategic decision-making. Not all change, however, is initiated by management. Workers and their organisations may play the leading role in undertaking changes to existing working time practices. The point that we wish to acknowledge here is simply that the employing organisation serves as the referent for any change and this often entails an explicit organisational strategy.

Recent changes to our notions of economies of scale, brought about through technological innovation and the widening of markets associated with globalisation, have all had impacts upon business strategy and the workings of competitive markets. This in turn has had effects in work-time trends. When examining the underlying drivers of change in working time arrangements it is useful to consider the nature and extent of competition each organisation confronts. The nature of competition can alter both the efficiency and the profitability of organisations. The majority of the case studies included in this project were drawn from the private sector and therefore faced palpable yet varying degrees of competition in both oligopolistic markets and classical markets. Moreover, while competition within a product market could be a decisive factor in some cases, in others it was the current state of the factor market and particularly the labour market, which was crucial.

In other cases the pressures experienced by an organisation arose from government policy modifications, as for instance with hospitals, which have seen a rapid increase in demand for

their services as a consequence of federal government changes to hospital insurance arrangements. In other instances, both the regulatory environment and changing social mores may have served as a catalyst for change. For example, altered mores with respect to extended shopping hours are promoted and reflected in retail trade in such cases as *Young Retail*.

Four of the cases in this study were drawn from the government sector including a federal government agency, a state level department, a local government body and a corporatised public utility. For these organisations budgetary constraints and new notions of public accountability figure in new initiatives that may have implications for working time policy (Fairbrother and O'Brien 2000; Warrian 1996). In other instances, deregulation and the commercialisation of public goods production provides the relevant background for considering working time changes (Boston 1998; Orchard 1998; Osborne and Gaebler 1992; Shields and Evans 1998; Yeatman 1996). As already alluded to, with some case studies the organisations were driven not only by changes within product markets but just as importantly by changes in relevant factor markets. For example, *Sympathy Hospital* and *Truck Repairs* both faced severe labour shortages. These constraints were reflected in changes to working time practices – but with responses that differed radically between the two organisations.

2.1 The motivations of management

The case studies undertaken for this research offered a wide range of working time arrangements, which stemmed from an equally diverse range of organisational goals. However the impetus for change could be grouped into the following broad areas: (1) the goal of developing new relationships with an organisation's work force, including responding to trade union pressure, through the use of work-life initiatives; (2) the goal of introducing new work practices that are calculated to enhance financial performance through registering changes to working time practices; (3) mixed or conflicting strategies that combine elements of the two preceding categories.

A typology of working time changes that incorporates these distinctions is provided in Table 2.1. It summarises the actual working time changes that we encountered in our case study organisations under the two principal rationales identified above, namely, workforce relational initiatives and financial performance initiatives. Mixed strategies draw upon the implementation of policies associated with both relational and financial objectives.

The first objective, categorised as the development of new workforce relations through work-life initiatives, is focused on the labour market. Here policies are developed and dedicated towards attracting and maintaining the type of workforce the employer considers crucial for sustaining or improving work and organisational performance. Often the goal will consist of developing employee loyalty, while in some cases this may be associated with the promotion of a specific organisational image. In other words, in some cases employment relations may spill over into other areas such as notions of product quality or service excellence, (Macdonald and Sirianni 1996; Hockschild 1983; Leidner 1993; Van Maanen and Kunda 1989; Russell 2002). This focus may be reflected in the adoption of specific work-time policies. Examples include the provision of flexible work-time arrangements around hours of work (starting and finishing times), work location, (telecommuting), voluntary job sharing, and of course, reduced working hours. Overall, the objective lies in developing *relations* that are based in

part upon work-time arrangements that accommodate the needs of the workforce. For this reason, such policies are often referred to as being "family friendly" or as providing a balance between work activity and the other components of a healthy life. We refer to such policies as work-life initiatives.

Table 2.1 Typology of Working Time Changes and their Rationales

Category	Initiative	Type of Change
Work-Life Initiatives (Workforce Relational)	Shorter Hours	Shorter working day (action on shift length)
		Shorter working week (action on shift length/rosters)
	Placement of hours	Rostered days off
		Banked hours
		Flexi-time
		Time off in lieu
		Staggered starting and finishing times
		Job sharing
		Full-time/part-time flexibility arrangements
		Telecommuting
	Enhanced leave provisions	Maternity/paternity leave
		Recreation/holiday leave
Financially Driven Initiatives	Annualisation of remuneration or hours	Cancellation of overtime wage rates and other premiums
	Longer Standard Hours	Extension of working day (with no compensation in work cycles)
		Extension of work cycle (number of days consecutively worked)
		Cancellation of rostered day off entitlements
		Excessive overtime work

The second objective that has influenced working time decisions is driven mainly by external factors and the focus is on implementing policies that are thought to enhance immediate competitiveness. Under what we have termed *financially driven* initiatives, there are two main emphases that entail changes to working time norms. First, there are policies that involve an over-riding emphasis on the cost of production, and are dedicated to lowering it vis-à-vis competitors. For example, when workforces are cut back in size, remaining employees may be called upon to work longer hours as part of the cost cutting on labour bills. Alternatively, services that are not currently offered by competitors may be devised with the thought of increasing market share through means other than out-and-out price competition. Extended hours of operation is a common case in point. These cost-cutting or market-expanding strategies may also be combined. Increased hours of operation for business, longer spans of work for employees along with the annulment of overtime and penalty rates is one example of a number of related policies that have the effect of both reducing costs and potentially increasing market share through extended service provision. Important here is the relationship between hours of work, and the roster cycle. Hours may increase, as when twelve-hour shifts displace eight-hour periods, but rosters may also change, so that the employee is working fewer, the same, or more hours overall. In short, it is crucial to consider both shift length (the working day) and roster patterns in order to come to conclusions.

The relationship between time worked and payment system may also be remodelled to deliver economies with the existing labour force. One common example is the substitution of annualised hours in place of hourly wages. Employees in non-managerial positions have customarily been paid a premium for work that exceeds normal working hours, as with time and a half or double time payments. Work during non-social hours also often carries a premium with it. The substitution of annualised salaries for hourly payment extinguishes the disincentive that was formerly attached to long hours. This represents a tacit re-definition of the work-effort bargain that may invite the expectation and normalisation of longer working hours for employees in non-managerial positions.

In addition to practices that are 'work-life' orientated and initiatives that are 'financially driven' there are also occasions when these two broad categories of goals may overlap, or come into conflict with one another, as was exemplified in several of our case studies. We consider these instances under a third category of 'mixed strategies'. This situation could arise when an employer moved to adopt a number of different policies on a piecemeal basis, without considering possible linkages between them.

2.2 Some findings

Five out of the seventeen case studies included in this study fit unambiguously into the employee relational category of work-life initiatives. That is, either recent initiatives, or the whole tenor of employee working time issues were focused around the attainment of work-life balance.

What prompted these organisations to undertake some policy initiatives? Most commonly, the nature of the particular labour market combined with strong employee preferences around

working time arrangements led to policies that addressed work-life balance. For example, a chronic shortage of nursing staff in one hospital that was studied led to a system of flexible self-rostering. New staff were able to specify the days and hours that they wished to work. Similar, if less extreme pressures in the form of a desire to retain qualified staff in a board of education led to the development of a self-managed job sharing program. Under this initiative, teachers could propose to partner with colleagues for the purpose of sharing a position. Arranging a job share and working out the details of the work logistics was left in the hands of the immediate participants.

However, labour shortage on its own was not a sufficient condition for the production of work-life balance programs. In fact, one of our case studies in the heavy equipment maintenance and repair sector experienced chronic shortages of skilled personnel. On its own, this condition gave rise to excessively long working weeks.

The programs that seemed to be the most effective were those, which involved a direct role of active self-management on the part of employees, such as in the rostering and job sharing examples noted previously. We also encountered several cases where programs purporting to improve employees' work-life balance were 'on the books', but did not appear to be widely used or particularly effective. Examples include one national company's "balanced life program", and the use of time off in lieu in a number of our cases. Where access to such policies depended upon managerial discretion or individual 'one off' negotiations between employees and supervisors, such programs were not as effective as when participants self-managed them on the basis of recognised entitlements. Rostered days off, providing a clearly defined, regularised and precise exchange of equivalents, were a more effective means of regulating the work-life balance than time off in lieu provisions.

One of the factors underlying the movement towards longer working hours that we unearthed was to be found in changing business-to-business relations. An aspect of this is the growth of business process outsourcing, whereby a dependent agent may have to conform to working time practices established by a dominant principal, and where this involves longer hours they may spread from business to business in this fashion. We specifically noted such trends in mining and ancillary industries. More generally, as service becomes a more important aspect of the discourse of competitive advantage, pressures to remain open for longer hours increase. These dynamics can be seen not only in businesses that directly serve a public, such as retail trade, but in producer services as well. It would be a mistake, however, to view these trends as being a simple response to 'public demand'. The case studies suggest that longer operating hours are a proactive business strategy rather than a reactive response.

In some organisations, work is more conveniently measured in terms of task fulfilment rather than time spent on the job. Where work may assume more of a project form, it is difficult to calibrate what needs to be done with available budgets. Increasingly, organisations facing such issues are experimenting with annualisation of remuneration, (i.e. moving from an hourly wage system to an annualised salary form of payment). Moving from an hourly wage system to a salary is conducive to the development of a culture of working long hours to 'get the job done' in place of employee cultures of paid overtime that may have arisen in the past. If annualisation of remuneration is accompanied or followed either by reductions in staffing levels or increased demand without a commensurate increase in staffing, the number of hours

necessary to 'get the job' done may increase beyond those that were previously worked under a budget-constrained overtime system.

Mixed rationales for introducing changes to working time practices were usually found when organisations were trying to accomplish more than one objective, or when compensating measures were introduced in order to ameliorate the effects of other changes. For example, schemes that sought to address the work-life balance could be combined with technological changes that dictated a continuous production process, and the shifts and hours that often accompany this. When work-life initiatives were put forward as part of a 'trade-off' or as amelioration, they were usually not notably successful in their impact on the employment relationship.

In mapping the experiences of workplaces we studied we found that the rationales for changing working time practices were found to be closely linked to the ways in which change was instituted, in that the parties involved in the consultation and negotiation process always included at least one party directing the change. The next section examines the different patterns of negotiation, which led to changes in working time in our case study organisations.

3. CONSULTATION, NEGOTIATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF WORKING TIME CHANGES

This section deals with the important question of how changes in working time have come about. What are the decision-making and implementation mechanisms that have come into play in effecting the working time changes observed in the preceding section of this report? Are there connections between these processes and the types of changes that have been registered?

The case studies that formed the basis of our investigations suggested that the determination of contemporary working time practices was a good deal more complex than a unitarist/pluralist dichotomy (Fox 1966). A full range of employer/employee/customer relations affected the determination of working time changes. The consultation, negotiation and implementation of working time changes can entail social exchanges between the following sets of social agents either singularly, or in combination with one another.

   i.   management/customer-client relations
   ii.   management/trade union relations
   iii. trade union/membership relations
   iv.   management/employee relations
   v.   supervisor/worker relations

Negotiation and/or consultation may occur at one or more of these levels. The outcomes of such negotiation or consultation exchanges may shape new work-time practices. Alternatively, there may be no consultation or negotiation in one or more of these domains and this may affect work-time outcomes. The rest of this section examines the first, second and fourth of

these dimensions in greater detail, based mainly on evidence from the focus group case studies. Data relevant to the fourth and fifth are also reported in the later sections reporting survey findings.

3.1 Management-client relations

In the preceding section we saw how changes in the patterns of business organisation through practices such as business process outsourcing, and changing client expectations have affected working time. In this part we examine two cases in which direct negotiations between a producer and a clientele with regards to hours of operation had a direct impact on working time practices. Both involved business-to-business relations based upon principal/agency agreements and both were found in blue-collar dominated industries – heavy equipment repairs and construction.

One organisation provided equipment repair and service work for the mining industry, where twelve-hour shifts and three crew rosters have become the norm. In order to win service contracts from that industry, the ancillary industry also had to establish a twelve-hour day as standard practice. However, owing to a skills shortage in heavy equipment repair, overtime wage rates could not be discontinued and annualised as they had in the mining industry proper. The longer hours had to be paid for and this in turn encouraged some employees to work them.

That is, the senior and/or dominant parties to the relationship instituted changes in internal working practices with the expectation that suppliers would alter their own practices to conform to the mines' new work time regime. Negotiations with clients' over-shadowed negotiations with workforces in determining the hours of work. Although negotiations with the union at this firm did occur and while excessive working hours were an important issue on the union's agenda, it was cast within parameters established by the business-to-business negotiations.

In construction, the principal contractor required its subcontractors to adopt its own five-day working week (instead of the industry norm of six). We discuss the implications for employees later. At a general level, however, if business process outsourcing becomes a more common practice, we should expect to see greater pressure to transmit working hours arrangements across organisations.

A number of other cases, as noted in the last section also involved 'pressures' from external sources for changes in hours of work. Such pressures may modify or even nullify negotiations over working time issues between the traditional stakeholders in employment. Given the growing emphasis on 'total service' in corporate discourse, we might expect such influences to increase in importance in the future.

3.2 Union-management negotiation

Union representation was present in thirteen of the seventeen case studies. Four cases were without a union presence, although it should be recognised that these figures represent only a 'snap shot' taken at the time of the focus group sessions. In eight of the unionised organisations there was only one union present, while the remaining five unionised cases exhibited forms of multi-unionism. The existence of a union was not coterminous with

negotiations over work-time changes. In nine case studies management/union negotiations over alterations to the working time practices` were recorded. In three other unionised cases work-time changes were instituted without union involvement. In another case, the union had become inactive. Summary information on union status at each case study location is provided below in Table 3.1.

Union-management negotiations over working time issues were associated with a host of different issues as well as different substantive outcomes. Negotiations in our case studies were associated with novel arrangements such as job sharing, the adoption of flexi-time in exchange for a longer span of working hours, and telecommuting. These developments were mainly, but not exclusively, found in the public sector. In one instance, an inventive system of multi-hiring for workers was negotiated at a private theme park. This scheme increased the number of hours available to employees, but provided cost savings for the employer through the restriction of overtime payments and the job classification grid that was used in multi-hiring. Important benefits, such as paid maternity, paternity and adoption leave, and the more flexible use of paid maternity leave and post-maternity return to work programs were also negotiated in the private sector, primarily the bank and one manufacturing industry.

Table 3.1 Employee Representation

ORGANISATION (by sector)	DESCRIPTION
MANUFACTURING, MINING, CONSTRUCTION	
HEALTH PRODUCTS	Considered non-union for the study purposes. First time union involvement with 2nd EBA, end 2001. Union density increase from 0 to 50% after commencement of study. Single union.
PRINT CO.	No union participation or involvement.
REMOTE MINE	Minimal union presence at study site. EBA overdue. High level involvement in the past now diminishing. Consultative process organised by management for recent changes to rosters and fly-in/fly-out arrangements. Two unions were present.
SMALL MINE	Union involvement not actively sought by management. Described by management as almost non-existent – estimated membership 5 – 10%. Whereas workers estimate 50%+ membership, but state no recent involvement in negotiations. Two union site.
CONSTRUCTION GROUP	Active union participation by two unions. Management support union involvement - OH&S training undertaken by paid union delegates.
PUBLIC SECTOR	
GOVERNMENT DEPTARTMENT	Study group represented by one union. Active union participation in negotiations. Active involvement in negotiations & all workplace issues.
ESSENTIAL SERVICES	One union represents all employees, estimated 85% membership.
LOCAL COUNCIL	Two unions represent workers from the area studied. Active involvement in workplace negotiations. (12 unions in total)
CORPORATE UTILITIES	Eleven unions in total, with five stated to be the principal unions. Active involvement in negotiations & all workplace issues.
PRIVATE SECTOR – PROFIT MAKING	
BIG BANK	One union represents all employees. Active involvement in workplace issues and negotiations. Estimated 60% membership.

THEME PARK	One union represents all employees. JCC handles all workplace issues and negotiation. Estimated membership less than 15%.
YOUNG RETAIL	No union representation or involvement.
LAW FIRM	One union represents 'support' staff. Reducing involvement – last EBA prior to 1998.
TRUCK REPAIRS	Strong union representation at work site. Two unions involved with study group.
SERVICE SECTOR – NON-PROFIT	
STATE UNION	Three unions represent employees. Active consultation and negotiation although no registered agreements.
SYMPATHY HOSPITAL	One union represents the staff involved in the case study. However no union involvement with the work time issues reported in this study.
EDUCATION SERVICES	One union represents staff involved in the study. Active consultation and negotiation on work issues.

Generally, more success seemed to occur around the negotiation of work-life initiatives such as flexi-time, job sharing and family leave than around other issues. In particular, little negotiation occurred around the issue of long or excessive working hours. In the one instance where this problem was explicitly placed on the agenda, negotiations raised an awareness of the problems associated with excessive weekly working hours. A remedy to the problem, however, was still outstanding, complicated by labour shortages and opportunities to significantly enhance pay through overtime. In another instance the union involved succeeded in preventing a complete 'buy-out' of large amounts of accumulated leave by the employer, instead agreement was reached that some of the leave had to be taken by the employee before the remainder was paid out by the employer.

Some negotiated outcomes could have the effect of increasing hours worked. In some cases, rostered days off were lost, replaced by time off in lieu. While the former assured an exchange of equivalents - time off for extra time worked - the latter was subject to less certainty. Employees may accumulate large amounts of time off in lieu but have difficulty in reclaiming the time due to the way in which their work is organised or to other work related pressures. The negotiation of annualised salaries occurred at a number of sites and this can raise expectations about normal working hours. Rostered days off were abandoned in enterprise agreements at two sites. At another site rostered days off were lost by some workers who moved from the enterprise agreement to individual contracts. The union at this site had no part in negotiating this, although subsequently its intervention put a stop to the loss of rostered days off and limited the use of annualised salaries. When major concessions were made at the bargaining table by trade unions, this sometimes constituted a prelude to a decline in union presence in the workplace, or ultimately, as on one site, to complete de-unionisation. On the other hand, employee concerns over working time change led to unionisation of a workplace, which previously had been non-union, and to stimulation of greater union activity around these issues in another site.

3.3 Management-employee negotiations

What of the cases of working time change where there was no union involvement? What type of negotiation or consultation processes, if any preceded the changes? We encountered two different forms of this.

First, there were cases where a union was present in the workplace, but not involved in processes of working time change. At a construction company business-to-business relations and the demands of a client led to a shortening of the working week through the abolition of Saturday work, while at one of the mines managers decided to trial eleven hour shifts after having previously adopted the twelve-hour shift. Both of these proved to be popular measures with the workforces and were simply carried through. Self-rostering was introduced at a hospital that was included in the study as a way of attracting nursing staff to the institution. This was defined as a recruitment issue that lay beyond the bounds of collective bargaining. On the other hand, when managers at another company began to induce employees away from the enterprise agreement and onto individual contracts these practices became an object of negotiation in their own right. Subsequently, as mentioned above, they were halted. In short, when managers in unionised workplaces attempted to proceed without union involvement, unions might challenge this definition of the situation, with outcomes determined by the perceived impact of the change on the bargaining partner (i.e. union) and on the union membership.

Second, there were cases where there was simply no union representation in the employment relationship. Four of the case study sites in this study had no union presence at the time changes to working time practices were registered. Of these, two had no previous history of or experience with trade unions. A third site was encountering a trade union organisation drive just as our study was commencing, partially as a result of dissatisfaction over work-time provisions. Finally, one of the case studies had previously been organised but unions were either inactive or no longer had a presence at the workplace.

In the absence of union representation, management-employee relations may assume two forms. On the one hand, changes in conditions may proceed by virtue of managerial prerogative alone, representing a unilateralist approach to employment relations. Such relations can be, but need not be antagonistic. For instance when unilateralism assumes the form of employer paternalism, employment relations and changes in them may be quite cordial. The two cases of 'pure' non-unionism, (i.e. no previous history or current union activity), offer instructive examples of employer unilateralism and its limits. At one small manufacturing plant, significant technological changes led to one group of workers being taken off a roster of three twelve-hours shifts and put back onto five eight-hour shifts, while another group made the switch in the opposite direction. Consultation was mainly a function of the perceived skill attributes of the workgroups in question. Those who were defined as being highly skilled were left to come up with a working time change that would meet the needs of the business and be satisfactory for the workers involved. In other words, they were allowed to operate mainly as a self-managed, problem-solving work team and were given the challenge of coming up with a new roster. For those who were defined as having less skill, the new roster was put in place by managerial fiat; there were no negotiations, consultations, or calls for a self-managed work group solution.

In a large non-unionised retail firm that employed mainly part-time workers, consultation over rosters occurs at an individual, one-on-one level. Employees, mainly students, were asked to submit their personal school timetables and rostering was done around this. In many cases, this represented a satisfactory relationship based upon mutual convenience. However, some focus group members, and particularly those in casual designations (50 percent of the total workforce), reported that the assignment of hours, or lack thereof, could be used as a disciplinary tool. For instance, if a worker was unavailable for a short period of time, owing to other commitments, that person might find that their hours were cut back until amends were made. Required, non-remunerated attendance at staff meetings and for special training sessions was also a potential grievance at this workplace. Under these conditions it was up to that employee to come to a satisfactory relationship over working hours with management. The only other alternative was to leave.

On the other hand, some non-union employers found it necessary or desirable to establish a form of sponsored representation, especially in larger, more complex operations. This need could arise from a desire by management to learn what is workable and less likely to meet resentment or resistance from staff. In larger organisations, the type of informality that was referred to in the previous examples could simply be inadequate as a means of generating information about responses to proposed changes. Consultations with individual employees on a one-on-one basis were infeasible when work was organised around production teams, or a complex division of labour was exhibited in the workplace. Owing to these exigencies, managers could find themselves in the position of having to create in-house collectives, temporary or permanent, in order to obtain working consent over proposed changes. These dynamics were at work in two cases of non-unionised study sites.

In the first example, an internal Associates' Representative Team was responsible for negotiating on behalf of employees. Concerns were raised about the ability of this group to adequately represent the interests of the workforce. Dissatisfaction over a range of issues, including the replacement of the existing time off in lieu scheme with a regular rostered day off was leading towards the unionisation of this plant, which became a reality partway through our study.

At one of the mines management felt the need to establish a special representative committee to oversee the planning and implementation of a fly-in/fly-out system of long distance commuting. This was a joint committee composed of representatives of management and the non-managerial workforce. Ironically, this site had once been unionised. Previous enterprise bargaining agreements (EBAs), which included the end of penalty rates, the annualisation of remuneration and the introduction of twelve-hour shifts led to workers leaving the union as a result of a perceived absence of negotiation. When required, management filled the representational void that was left on an ad hoc basis.

Our focus to date has been on the nature of change, its rationale and issues associated with negotiation, consultation and implementation. What, though, of the effects of working time changes? We have already alluded briefly to some of these effects, based on evidence from the qualitative research. For more systematic analysis, we now turn from qualitative to principally quantitative evidence, taken from the survey undertaken in fifteen of our organisations. We

focus on three issues: the nature and impact of the most controversial aspect of recent work-time arrangements, the extension of working hours; aspects of work intensification, in particular role of work-time arrangements in increasing the pressure experience at work; and the impact of working time on personal and family lives. We will commence with a discussion of extended working hours.

4. EXTENDED HOURS

There was evidence of long hours in many of our organisations. In all but one case, some respondents in each organisation reported a working week of 45 hours or more. In all but two cases, some respondents reported working 50 hours or more. Yet our survey slightly underrepresented long-hours workers, compared to the Australian workforce: while 19 per cent of our full-time respondents normally worked 49 hours or more per week, ABS data indicate that, in November 2001, 24 per cent of full-time employees worked 49 hours or more (ABS Cat No 6359.0).

Studies based on national statistics have revealed increasing working hours over the past decade for Australian full-time workers (eg. Campbell 2002). Measured over a shorter period, working hours in our case study organisations also appeared, on average, to be increasing. Amongst twelve of our fifteen survey organisations, the number of full-time workers who reported an increase in weekly working hours outnumbered the number who reported a decrease. In most of our cases, between a fifth and a third of employees reported increased hours. By comparison around one tenth of our full-time respondents reported a drop in working hours.

We use the term 'very long hours employees' to describe employees with 'normal' working weeks of 50 hours or more, and 'long hours employees' to refer to those normally working 45 hours per week or more. 'Traditional hours employees', on the other hand, refers to employees normally working 35 to 40 hours per week. 'Very long hours' were more common amongst employees who had long tenure with their current employer. Due to a strong relationship between tenure and union membership, they were also more common amongst union members (once tenure was controlled, union membership ceased to have a significant impact on the incidence of very long hours). 'Very long hours' were also more common amongst the almost one third of respondents who supervised other employees. Blue-collar workers were nearly twice as likely as white-collar workers to work long hours, but they only accounted for one third of 'long hours employees'. This was because blue-collar employees (defined conventionally as tradespersons, intermediate production and transport workers, and labourers and related workers) represented only one fifth of the sample (and only 29 per cent of the Australian labour force in 2001).

4.1 Long hours and compensation

There appear to be two main paths towards employees working very long hours. The larger category is those workers who are not regularly remunerated (either in overtime pay or time off) for working overtime, in which case long hours may be seen as being mainly employer-

driven. The smaller category comprises those employees who normally receive overtime pay for working extra hours, and who probably become dependent on the extra income so obtained. In this latter case very long hours appear to be jointly driven by employer and employees.

The majority of blue-collar employees in our sample (but only a small proportion of white-collar employees including those in service and sales occupations) were normally paid overtime rates for working extra hours. This partly reflects the historical tendency for many white-collar employees to be paid 'salaries' rather than 'wages'. There were no differences between 'white-collar' and 'blue-collar' occupations in their receipt of time off in lieu however. At this point, it is worth emphasising that our earlier discussion of 'time off in lieu' provisions pointed out that many employees who were covered by such provisions were unable to make full use of them, rendering time off in lieu provisions less useful than rostered days off in terms of controlling the quantity of working hours. In the discussion of the survey results here and later, we now focus on whether or not employees *actually received* time off in lieu. So the distinctions made are not between those who were covered or not covered by time off in lieu provisions, but between those who received or did not receive time off in lieu when they worked extra hours.

If employees were not recompensed for extra hours, through either overtime pay or time off in lieu, then there was an incentive on employers to directly or indirectly make employees work longer hours, and little constraining them from doing so. Consequently, employees who were never paid for working extra hours or overtime were much more likely to be normally working over 40 hours. However, payment at overtime rates did not, on their own, explain very long hours. Indeed, respondents working 'very long hours' were more likely to be paid overtime than those who regularly worked 41-45 hours.

It is more useful to examine overtime pay and time off in lieu together – that is, to look at what happens when employees are not compensated, either by overtime pay or time off in lieu, for working extra hours. In this section and the next one, we should emphasise, when we discuss time off in lieu we are looking at whether employees receive it *in practice* – not whether they are merely eligible to receive it under the provision of an agreement, award or personnel policy. As discussion earlier illuminated, employees may be covered by time off in lieu policies but not actually receive their full (or any) entitlement.

Table 4.1 shows that 'very long hours' were most common where employers did not have to recompense employees for working those hours. Amongst respondents working 'very long hours', over a half never received either overtime pay or time off in lieu for working extra hours. This was the case for 28 per cent of those normally working 45-50 hours, 23 per cent of those normally working 41-45 hours, and only 16 per cent of those normally working 35-40 hours.

Table 4.1 Always or never receive overtime or time off in lieu (TOIL) for additional work

Working conditions	part time (%)	35-40 hrs (%)	41-45 hrs (%)	45-50 hrs (%)	over 50 hours (%)
Never receive overtime pay or time off in lieu for extra hours	25	16	23	28	52
Always receive overtime pay or time off in lieu for extra hours	23	37	24	30	21

Source: Main employee survey
Population: all respondents.
N = 912: 146 (col 1), 402 (col 2), 167 (col 3), 129 (col 4), 68 (col 5).
Numbers in cell indicate the proportions of respondents in the columns having the characteristics in the rows. For example, the top left hand cell indicates that 25 per cent of part-time employees never received overtime pay or time off in lieu for extra hours despite sometimes working extra hours.

A similar relationship between long hours and the mode of compensation can be seen in relation to penalty rates. In our sample only about a third of employees received penalty rates for night or weekend work; another quarter never worked on nights or weekends. Employees normally working 'traditional hours' were most likely to receive penalty rates for night or weekend work (Table 4.2). 'Long hours employees' were most commonly those who did not receive penalty rates for night or weekend work, either because they only received ordinary-time rates or (more commonly) they were not paid for night or weekend work.

Table 4.2 Penalty rates, rostered days off and hours per week

Working conditions	part time (%)	35-40 hrs (%)	41-45 hrs (%)	45-50 hrs (%)	over 50 hours (%)
Receive penalty rates for night or weekend work	38	42	19	25	32
Paid at ordinary time rates, or not paid, for working night or weekends	25	30	49	61	50
Access to a rostered day off	7	40	27	32	19

Source: Main employee survey
Population: all employee respondents.
For N see Table 1.
Numbers in cell indicate the proportions of respondents in the columns having the characteristics in the rows. For example, the top left hand cell indicates that 38 per cent of part-time employees received penalty rates for night or weekend work.

Finally, rostered days off, as a means of regularising working time, also had a link to normal working hours. While 40 per cent of 'traditional hours employees' had access to a 'rostered day off' this was so for only 19 per cent of 'very long hours employees'. They were also important in their own right. At a site where some employees lost their rostered day off as part of a shift to annualised salaries and individual contracts, many employees voiced the opinion that they didn't realise how important the rostered day off was until it was lost. Some employees who maintained the EBA conditions and still had the rostered day off suggested that, given the experience of their co-workers, they 'couldn't get paid enough to give up the rostered day off'.

4.2 Union membership and compensation

Union members were more likely than non-members (by 31 per cent to 18 per cent) to report that they were always paid overtime rates for extra work. This was mainly because non-members were twice as likely as members to say that they only were paid ordinary-time rates

for overtime work (10 per cent compared to 5 per cent) and, by a similar margin, more likely to say that they never worked extra hours. Standard hours (as set out in their contract of employment, award or agreement) were shorter for members: 41 per cent of non-members had standard hours of 39 hours or more, compared to 29 percent of union members. In short, union members appeared more likely than non-members to be compensated for working over 38 hours per week. Union members were also more likely than non-members to receive pay increases when their actual working hours increased.

4.3 Employee satisfaction and policy preferences

The majority of employees working less than 45 hours were satisfied with the hours they were working. However, two thirds of 'very long hours', and over half of respondents working 45-50 hours, agreed that they were working more hours than they would like (Table 4.3). Furthermore, a majority of 'very long hours' respondents said that their current hours of work did not suit them. Similarly, amongst full-time employees whose hours had increased, only 19 per cent were more satisfied with their hours, while 31 per cent were less satisfied. In contrast, 51 per cent of full-time employees whose hours had decreased were more satisfied with their hours, and just 15 per cent were less satisfied.

We also asked employees a question directly about policy: whether 'There should be an upper limit on how many hours someone can work each week'. Majority agreement with this proposition was found across all groups of employees, regardless of hours worked. Between 63 and 67 per cent of employees in each group of full-timers, and even a majority of part-timers, agreed with this proposition.

Table 4.3 Working time preferences

Statement	part time (%)	35-40 hrs (%)	41-45 hrs (%)	45-50 hrs (%)	over 50 hours (%)
"My current hours do not suit."	14	12	11	27	54
"I work more hours each week than I would like."	13	25	35	54	68
"There should be an upper limit on how many hours someone can work each week."	59	63	67	66	63

Source: Main employee survey
Population: all employee respondents.
For N see Table 1.
Numbers in cell indicate the proportions of respondents in the columns having the characteristics in the rows. For example, the top left hand cell indicates that 14 per cent of part-time employees said their current working hours did not suit them.

Many employees also exhibited a desire for a range of innovative work-time initiatives. We asked respondents if they had ever used one of six specified policies, and whether they would like to use them at some point in their working lives. Some 22 per cent of all respondents said they 'would like to use paid maternity or paternity leave at some time', 22 per cent said they 'would like to use job sharing', and 19 per cent said they 'would like employer assistance with childcare'. Moreover, 31 percent said they 'would like to work from home' at some stage, and 17 per cent said they 'would like pay averaging to take extra leave each year' (we explained that this meant getting slightly less pay but slightly longer holidays - eg "48/52" or purchase leave schemes). Most popular of all, 40 per cent said they 'would like a career break scheme' (explained as 'leaving your current job for up to a year and then coming back to that job'). By

comparison, much smaller proportions of employees reported having ever been able to access these schemes to date: 1-2 per cent for child care assistance and pay averaging, 5-6 per cent for career break scheme or job sharing, and 10-11 per cent for paid maternity/paternity leave and working from home. In the one organisation that had a 'work from home' policy, *Local Council*, most employees were unaware the policy even existed.

4.4 The long hours environment and culture

Extended hours were associated with particular forms of workplace culture perceived by employees (Table 4.4). Those working extended hours were likely to perceive that this was the custom in their organisation, that tight deadlines were the norm and that supervisors reinforced those conventions. While 69 per cent of 'very long hours employees' agreed that 'Working long hours is taken for granted in this organisation', this was the case for only 37 per cent of 'traditional hours employees'. 'Very long hours employees' were less likely to say that, 'When my workload gets too much for me, it is easy enough to get it reduced by talking to their supervisor'. Similarly, they were less likely to agree that 'You can say that you don't want to work overtime here and it won't cause you any problems'.

'Very long hours workers' were more likely to agree that 'We work to tight deadlines here' (86 per cent of 'very long hours employees' agreed, compared to 66 per cent of 'traditional hours employees'). While 58 per cent of 'traditional hours employees' agreed that 'The performance targets that management sets are mostly very reasonable', this was the case for only 41 per cent of 'very long hours employees'.

Table 4.4 The long hours environment

Statement	part time (%)	35-40 hrs (%)	41-45 hrs (%)	45-50 hrs (%)	over 50 hours (%)
"Working long hours is taken for granted in this organisation."	37	43	56	76	69
"You can say that you don't want to work overtime here and it won't cause you any problems."	57	49	30	27	32
"When my workload gets too much for me, it is easy enough to get it reduced by talking to my supervisor."	47	42	38	34	25
"We work to tight deadlines here."	60	66	76	81	86
"The performance targets management sets are mostly very reasonable."	56	58	60	55	41

Source: Main employee survey
Population: all employee respondents.
For N see Table 1.
Numbers in cell indicate the proportions of respondents in the columns having the characteristics in the rows. For example, the top left hand cell indicates that 37 per cent of part-time employees agreed that working long hours is taken for granted in this organisation.

But were employees working long hours predominantly people who had little control over their working hours? On the surface, the answer would appear to be 'no'. 'Very long hours employees' had, if anything, the highest likelihood of responding that they had a 'great deal of say' over how many hours they worked (Table 4.5) and also over their start and finishing times. Yet, as discussed already, we know that many would prefer to be working fewer hours. Why then do they work such long hours? Importantly, 'long hours employees' had much lower control over their *workload* than they had over working time issues, and they had no more perceived say over their workload than did most other employees. Presumably, as they were working longer hours than other employees, their workload was higher. So the greater control they had over working hours under the guise of flexibility was in part a mirage, as their working hours were principally determined by their workload, over which they had very limited control. Some employees in focus groups indicated that the sheer volume of work they were expected to do mitigated their ability to take advantage of banked hours they were entitled to take. For example, in *Law Firm* professional employees said they were continually under pressure to work long hours due to their workload - when they took time off work they simply had more to do the next day. Hence, employees would only take time away from work in extreme situations.

Without effective control over workload, the best that might be achieved by giving 'long hours employees' some greater control over their working hours is the possibility of making it a little easier for them to negotiate the scheduling of their work and home lives. At worst, if it is the trade-off for reduced external regulation of working hours, it may be a means of inducing them to work longer hours.

Table 4.5 Control

	part time (%)	35-40 hrs (%)	41-45 hrs (%)	45-50 hrs (%)	over 50 hours (%)
I have a great deal or quite a lot of say over *how many hours work each week.*	40	28	37	37	46
I have a great deal or quite a lot of say over *workload.*	26	24	25	17	24

Source: Main employee survey
Population: all employee respondents.
For N see Table 1.
Numbers in cell indicate the proportions of respondents in the columns having the characteristics in the rows. For example, the top left hand cell indicates that 24 per cent of part-time employees believed they had a great deal of say over how many hours they worked.

4.5 Long hours and changes

Respondents working long hours experienced workplace change in a different way to other employees. Employees working long hours were more likely to report that the number of hours they worked in a week had gone up – indeed, nearly half of 'long hours employees' said this. One seeming paradox was this: 'long hours employees' were more likely than other employees to say that their ability to limit the number of hours they worked had gone down; but they were also more likely than other employees to say that their ability to limit their hours had gone up. (Therefore, 'long hours employees' were less likely than other employees to say

that their control had not changed). We can make sense of this pattern in the context of what we found about employee say over hours in the previous paragraph. Employers might increase the working hours of employees either by increasing their direct control over employees working hours (ie reducing employee control) or by giving employees more apparent 'say' over their working time within the context of a long hours culture and predetermined workloads.

Overall, 'very long hours employees' were the group most likely to report that their satisfaction with the hours they worked had gone down. They were more likely to report that their job stress had gone up and were more likely to report that the amount of time it took them to recover from work had gone up. They were least likely to report that they were now under less pressure from their fellow workers to work hard or that they were less closely watched by their supervisors. However, to place this in perspective, the majority of 'long hours employees' were not reporting tighter supervision or greater pressure from employees. 'Long hours employees' were also more likely to report a decline in the safety of their work area and workplace.

4.6 Long hours at a case study organisation

Having examined some of the survey data, we turn to consider a pertinent case study. Perhaps the most significant instance of long hours amongst our case study organisations was at *Truck Repairs,* where 46 per cent of our survey respondents worked 50 hours or more per week. While *Truck Repairs* employees had a standard seven-and-a-half-hour working day, employees were expected to work twelve-hour shifts as part of the client-focussed service the organisation provides. Much of the long working hours within this organisation was directly related to the twelve-hour shifts within the major client's production. Several employees indicated that they had arrived on the work-site of the major client where twelve-hours shifts were in place and had been asked by a security guard at the front gate "Are you here for twelve hours?" If they were not, the *Truck Repairs* employee would be sent back to the depot.

The union and management had agreed in the 1999 EBA to a 60 hour limit on actual hours that could be worked in any week. Moreover, the employees at truck repairs strongly endorsed a limit: 71 per cent of our respondents there agreed that 'There should be an upper limit on how many hours someone can work each week'. Indeed, 38 per cent of *Truck Repairs* employees *strongly* agreed with this proposition, double the rate in other organisations. In the focus groups, many employees indicated that working their number of working hours generated a range of negative effects including making errors in their work, dissatisfaction with relationships with co-workers and deterioration in family and social relations. Some 38 per cent of *Truck Repairs* survey respondents said that their current hours of work did not suit them, more than double the rate elsewhere. Only 43 per cent were satisfied with their start and finishing times, compared to 77 per cent of other employees. They were significantly less likely to feel they were treated fairly at work. And 49 per cent were dissatisfied with the balance between their personal and family lives, double the rate of dissatisfaction elsewhere. In short, there was strong support for a limit on working hours and good reason for it to be supported.

Problems with long hours were manifested in other, serious ways. In the survey the work-related injury and illness rate, at 30 per cent, was triple the rate in other organisations, and

only about one quarter of this difference was due to the occupational mix at *Truck Repairs*. Some employees referred to safety problems in the focus groups, for example a recent vehicle accident on a return trip from a mine after a period of long working hours:

> *We just don't get days off to recover…if they (the organisation) don't do something it won't be long before we'll all be taking a day off for someone's funeral…*

Truck Repairs employees were slightly more likely (at the 10 per cent level of significance) to want a job elsewhere, 43 per cent saying they'd prefer a job with another organisation, compared to 27 per cent of other employees.

With such strong support for a limit on working hours, and such good reasons for there being one, why did it fail? It seemed to boil down to three related factors: the willingness of a minority of employees to subvert the limit; the lack of adequate systems in place to enforce the limit; and a willingness of managers and supervisors to circumvent the limit when there was a need to satisfy a client's request and insufficient ordinary-time labour to do so.

A majority of employees said in the focus groups that a 60 hour limit was their preference. However some employees indicated that 60 hours was not enough to make the money that they would like to make. A handful of other employees explicitly argued that there should be no cap on hours and that each individual should determine how many hours they want to work. For long-tenured employees, the circumvention of the limit was seen as a problem caused particularly by short-term employees:

> *There will always be someone from down south to come and work the long hours for a couple of years and so it doesn't give us a chance to really say to the bosses… "no, we won't work more hours"…it's expected that we will because of these guys coming up and doing it'*

Hence in the survey, support for a limit on hours strongly increased with job tenure.

The field service staff reported in focus groups that it was not uncommon for them to work in excess of 70 hours per week. Several began to treat their long hours as a competition, with some explaining quite happily that they had been involved in races to see who would average the most hours in a year with an average of 100 hours per week being a target. While qualified fitters earned a base salary of around $40,000 per year, some employees spoke of the aim to "crack a hundred grand a year".

Had effective management systems been in place, the minority who wanted to work above the cap would have been constrained from doing so. But it appeared that nobody took responsibility for tracking the hours worked by employees. Tradespeople viewed the managing of hours as the duty of management. Some leading hands felt that it was not their role to be responsible for monitoring employees' hours and others were actively undermined when they did so by management's acceding to clients' demands. The union actively campaigned in support of the cap but felt it could not be seen to be disciplining members. A key lesson to be drawn from the *Truck Repairs* experience is that, for an agreed ceiling on working hours to be effective, there must be adequate enforcement mechanisms in place under

collective regulation, otherwise management and a minority of employees can subvert the operation of a ceiling.

4.7 Long hours reversed: a compressed work week at a construction firm

One organisation swam against the trend towards increased hours, and sought to compress the working week over both a lesser number of hours and, more significantly, a lesser number of days. *Construction Group* reduced the working week from an industry standard of six days a week to five days. The average number of hours worked per day increased but not proportionately, so that employees worked two hours a week fewer than they had been working. Notably, they enjoyed an extra day away from work. The benefits of this were numerable. The employer and, in focus groups, employees indicated that productivity had increased significantly with the introduction of the compressed working week. Employees were delighted at having additional leisure time and the time with their families. Importantly for these employees, as all hours worked are paid for in this sector, the compression of hours has been associated with only a small decrease in hours worked and hence income. However, for employees the small loss of income is of less consequence than the numerous benefits gained from the new policy. Among other things, employees, managers and employers continually pointed to the higher productivity gained with the increased recovery time for employees. Employees in Construction Group were more likely than other employees to report that:

- they were satisfied with their job (by 86 per cent to 76 per cent);
- they were more satisfied with their hours than a year ago (33 per cent v 16 per cent);
- their job satisfaction had increased over the past year (39 per cent v 24 per cent);
- their job stress had gone down (24 per cent v 12 per cent);
- they now felt less tired at work (26 per cent v 9 per cent);
- workplace safety had increased (by a remarkable 57 per cent v 17 per cent);
- their satisfaction with their work-family balance had increased (32 per cent v 14 per cent);
- they had more opportunities to have a social life (32 per cent v 15 per cent);
- they spent more time with people at home (35 per cent v 14 per cent);
- they got on better with people at home (25 per cent v 12 per cent);
- they felt less likely than previously to take a day off work (26 per cent v 9 per cent);
- they got sick less often (30 per cent v 15 per cent).

What is clear from this case study is that it is not just the number of hours that matter, it is also the number of days worked and therefore the amount of recovery time that people have. The latter will be considered further in later sections. The Construction Group case also provides a concrete example, so to speak, of positive reforms that can take place in the industry for the benefit of workers and employers alike.

4.8 Increasing hours

We also, separately, analysed the situation of full-time employees whose hours had increased. For space reasons we cannot report the findings in detail here. There was a great deal of overlap between the patterns associated with long hours and the patterns associated with

increasing hours. One finding, though, is worth explicit mention. The internalisation of pressure for increased hours is also reflected in the data on the link between changing 'say' in hours and changing hours. Amongst employees who reported no change in their say over how many hours they worked, only 23 per cent reported increased hours. But increased hours were reported by 51 per cent of those who said that their say in how many hours they worked had gone down – and by 58 per cent of those who reported that their say over how many hours they worked had gone up! Thus there were, in effect, two paths to increased hours – one involving tighter direct control over employees' hours, and one involving a loosening of direct control and replacing it with internalisation of the need to work longer hours to 'get the job' done. This is consistent with evidence from an earlier survey (Peetz, Allan & O'Donnell 2002) which showed that work intensification could be achieved both by tightening managerial prerogative and by increasing employee control. Indeed, it is to this particular dimension of work that we now turn.

5. PRESSURE AND FATIGUING

The concept of work intensification refers to the sense that work has become more intense; that the pace of work and the efforts required by employees to complete their work has increased. The re-emergence of work intensification as an issue over the last couple of decades has been linked to factors such as perceived job insecurity, lean staffing arrangements, the introduction of performance appraisal style systems, labour market deregulation, the 24 hour commercial environment and increased global competition.

Due to limitations in what we could ask in a survey instrument, we did not directly seek to measure work intensity or intensification. Instead, we focused on two indicators of the pressure that employees felt at work, which is a consequence of work intensity. First, we used a six-item index (a = .73) that measures the pressures that arise from high intensity of work. These items comprised responses (on a five point scale) to the statements:
- 'If you take time off or get sick, your work just builds up while you're away';
- 'I have enough time to rest during meal breaks' (inverted);
- 'There should be more employees here to do the work that we do';
- 'I leave on time most days' (inverted);
- 'I often take work home'; and
- 'I get told at home that I am working too much'.

We refer to this item as our index of *work pressure* and we split employees into three broadly similarly sized groups on the basis of this index.[1]

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[1] The index is a continuous scale with values over a 30 point range; for the purposes of describing some results, those with a score equivalent to 'agree' on three of the six items and 'neutral' on the other three is considered 'high pressure', those with a score equivalent to 'disagree' on three of the six items and 'neutral' on the other three is considered 'low pressure', and those with a score in between is considered 'medium pressure'. Our full-time sample had 32 per cent in the high-pressure category and 29 per cent categorised as relatively 'low pressure'.

Second, we used a 'change' variable consisting of a three-item index (a = .83) comprising perceptions of changes in the stress employees feel in their job, how tired they feel at work and how long it takes them to recover from work. Possible answers to each question are 'gone up', 'gone down' or 'stayed the same'. The index thus measured employees' pressure-related responses to increases in work duration and/or intensity. We refer to this item as our index of *fatiguing*. Some 49 per cent of our full-time sample showed an increase in fatiguing, with 24 per cent showing what we called a 'high increase', indicated by a 'gone up' response to all three items. We tested both indexes against a number of explanatory variables relating to working hours, working time regulation, management monitoring and workplace culture, employee power and perceptions of product market relation. For this section we focus on the work pressure index, but discuss the fatiguing index as an element in the following section.

5.1 Work pressure

Amongst employees working 45 hours or more per week, 55 per cent experienced high pressure. This was the case for only 24 per cent of full-time employees working less than 45 hours. High pressure was recorded by 52 per cent of full-time employees whose working hours had increased, compared to 25 per cent of those whose hours had remained constant and 12 per cent of those whose hours had declined.

However, working hours alone were not the sole determinant of high work pressure. The mode of regulation also made a difference, even when hours, as discussed above, were controlled. Some 62 per cent of employees who never received overtime or time off in lieu experienced high pressure, compared to 28 per cent of other employees. While much of this is due to the impact the non-payment of overtime or time off in lieu has on working hours (the majority of employees working over 45 hours did not receive time of in lieu or overtime), this still has a weakly significant effect after hours are controlled. Similarly, employees who never received overtime or actual time off in lieu if they worked extra hours were more likely than other employees to report that 'I get told at home that I am working too much', and that 'I am often too tired to properly enjoy my time away from work'. Another regulatory variable which influences working hours, the payment of penalty rates, had an even stronger effect after hours were controlled. Only 20 per cent of employees who always received penalty rates if they worked at night or on weekends experienced high pressure, compared to 39 per cent of other employees. The non-payment of penalty rates affects not only the hours people work but also the likelihood that they will be working at times that are unsociable or biologically dysfunctional. In addition, only 28 per cent of people who started work at the same time each day experienced high pressure, compared to 40 per cent of those who didn't start work at the same time every day.

The impact of culture, as expressed through perceived peer attitudes, was quite striking. While only a minority of respondents reported a change in peer attitudes, 57 per cent of those who did report that they felt under more pressure from co-workers to work hard scored highly on our work pressure index. This was the case for only 29 percent of those who detected no change in peer attitudes and 13 per cent of those who felt the pressure from co-workers had gone down. The impact of changing supervision was lesser. Some 46 per cent of those who believed they were now watched more closely by their supervisors scored higher on our work pressure index, compared to 30 per cent of those who saw no change and 28 per cent of those

who felt supervision was less tight. The impact of tighter supervision on work pressure was primarily through its impact on workplace culture as experienced through peer pressure.

Other aspects of the management culture regarding working hours were important. So high pressure was more likely amongst employees who disagreed that 'You can say that you don't want to work overtime here and it won't cause you any problems' (50 per cent) than amongst those who agreed (15 per cent). It was more likely amongst employees who disagreed that 'When my workload gets too much for me, it is easy enough to get it reduced by talking to my supervisor' (58 per cent) than amongst those who agreed (12 per cent). And it was more likely amongst those who agreed that 'Working long hours is taken for granted in this organisation' (47 per cent) than those who disagreed (8 per cent).

Work pressure was higher where external circumstances were seen by employees as constraints: in particular, amongst those who thought that the needs of customers and clients make it difficult to take time off when wanted and those who agreed that 'We work to tight deadlines here'. Supervisors were under more pressure than non-supervisors. Union members, once other factors were controlled, were not under more pressure than non-members – this was partly because one of the control factors was perceived employee power.

Employee power reduced work pressure. High pressure was recorded amongst 22 per cent of employees who agreed that 'Employees here have made a lot of concessions in recent years' but amongst 44 per cent of those who disagreed.

6. AT HOME: THE PERSONAL DIMENSION

Much of the debate about working time reform has centred around the idea that new work arrangements have been necessary in order to overcome the rigidities of the past that made it difficult to balance work and family responsibilities. But how much is this new flexible world helping people balance their work and personal lives? What factors influence people's satisfaction with the balance in their work and personal lives? How are interpersonal relationships affected? How does work affect home life, in particular how does it affect partners? It is to these issues that we now turn.

6.1 High pressure at work and home

We start with an extension of our analysis of high work pressure from the previous section. Instead of focusing on its determinants, however, we now look at its effects, both at work and at home. High pressure was associated with a range of dissatisfactions. Full-time employees who scored high on our work pressure index were more likely to be dissatisfied with how hard they had to work than those with medium scores on the index (Table 6.1). They were less likely to be satisfied with how fairly they were treated at work and more likely to disagree that all employees are treated with fairness. They were more likely to say they were dissatisfied with their job, more likely to say that they got sick more often than a year ago and more likely

to report that they felt like taking a day off more often. Adverse effects on personal productivity were also implied in the data.

Table 6.1 Work pressure and correlates

	Relatively high pressure (%)	Medium pressure (%)	Relatively low pressure (%)
Dissatisfied with how hard you have to work	33	9	5
Dissatisfied with how fairly treated at work	24	11	5
Disagree that all groups of employees are treated with equal fairness	54	38	28
Dissatisfied with job	16	7	7
Get sick more often than a year ago	18	14	8
Feel like taking a day off more often than a year ago	57	44	34
Less able to perform well in job than a year ago	17	6	6

Source: Main employee survey
Population: all respondents
N = 726: 219 (col 1), 282 (col 2), 225 (col 3).
Numbers in cell indicate the proportions of respondents in the columns having the characteristics in the rows. For example, the top left hand cell indicates that 33 per cent of 'high pressure' employees were dissatisfied with how hard they had to work.

What about life at home? We used an abridged version[2] of this index to see how work pressure affects personal lives. The effects were striking. While 20 per cent of those with medium scores on the work pressure index were dissatisfied with the balance between their work and family lives, dissatisfaction was 47 per cent (and satisfaction only 27 per cent) amongst those with high scores. By comparison with those with medium scores, those with high scores were:

- much more likely to agree that 'My work responsibilities interfere with my social life more than they should';
- twice as likely to agree that 'I am often too tired to properly enjoy my time away from work';
- more dissatisfied with 'how easy it is to take time off for other personal matters such as sporting events and school concerts, on work days';
- twice as likely to say that their satisfaction with their work and family balance had gone down in the past year;
- over three times as likely to say that their 'ability to keep work and home life separate' had gone down;
- over twice as likely to say that their 'opportunities to have a social life' had done down;
- twice as likely to say that the 'time spent with people at home' had gone down;
- three times as likely to say that 'how well they got on with people at home' had gone down; and,
- more likely to say that their time spent on community activities, hobbies, gardening or sports and domestic activities had gone down (Table 6.2).

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[2] The 5-item index excluded the item 'I get told at home that I am working too much' to avoid the possibility of reverse causality.

Table 6.2 Work pressure and effects on family life: employee perspectives

	Relatively high pressure (%)	Medium pressure (%)	Relatively low pressure (%)
Dissatisfied with balance between work and personal life	44	21	11
My work responsibilities interfere more with my social life than they should	60	25	13
I am often too tired to properly enjoy my time away from work	63	34	22
Dissatisfied with how easy it is to take time off for other personal matters (eg sporting events, school concerts) on work days	27	15	9
Dissatisfied with how easy it is to care for sick children or relatives on work days	22	14	9
Less satisfied with balance between work and personal life than a year ago	45	22	11
Less able to keep work and home life separate than a year ago	43	13	4
Fewer opportunities to have a social life than a year ago	43	20	12
Spend less time with people at home than a year ago	47	25	16
Get on less well with people at home than a year ago	20	6	4
Spend less time on community activities than a year ago	36	22	12
Less involvement in hobbies, gardening or sports than a year ago	48	27	17
Less involvement in domestic activities (eg. washing, grocery shopping, house cleaning) than a year ago	28	17	11

Source: Main employee survey
Population: all respondents
N = 726: 219 (col 1), 282 (col 2), 225 (col 3).
Note: the work pressure index used in this table excludes the variable "I get told at home that I am working too much".
Numbers in cell indicate the proportions of respondents in the columns having the characteristics in the rows. For example, the top left hand cell indicates that 47 per cent of 'high pressure' employees were dissatisfied with the balance between their work and personal lives.

6.2 Work and personal lives and tensions

As mentioned above, high work pressure adversely affected employee satisfaction with the balance between their work and personal lives. How else did working time arrangements affect the work-life balance? As shown in Table 6.3, increases over the past twelve months in reported job stress, how tired respondents felt at work and how long it took them to recover from work were also associated with greater dissatisfaction with the work-life balance. As mentioned in the previous section, we combined these three items into an index of 'fatiguing'.

Women were less dissatisfied than men but only amongst part-time employees – there were no gender differences in satisfaction amongst full-time employees. Satisfaction with the balance was significantly lower amongst 'long hours employees' and amongst those who reported increased hours compared to twelve months ago.

We compared the relative importance of long and increasing working hours with that of high pressure and 'fatiguing' in explaining satisfaction with the work and family balance. We did this by predicting the last variable using ordinary least squares regression with these four

variables, and a number of other controls,[3] as explanatory variables. We found that the predictive power of our two work intensity variables was much greater than the predictive power of the two hours variables. Removing the level and change variables on hours reduced the explained variance by six per cent, whereas removing the level and change variables on work intensity reduced the explained variance by 42 per cent. To look at it another way, the adverse impact that long hours has on the balance between work and personal lives is not just a result of the extra time that it takes employees away from the home environment – it is more importantly a consequence of the adverse impact that long and increasing hours have on the work pressures that employees experience, and which they then bring home with them as baggage.

The times when people worked and the irregularity of their starting times were two other elements that mattered. Employees who worked on weekends and at night were less satisfied with the balance, underlining the continuing relevance of penalty rates as compensation for unsocial hours. Employees who started work at the same time each day were more satisfied than those who did not, with the greatest dissatisfaction felt by those who said that their starting or finishing times were often changed at short notice, making it difficult for them to arrange things in their personal lives.

Dissatisfaction with the balance between work and personal lives is not just an abstract concept about how employees feel. It is closely related to how families and household members interact, and how well they get on. If the tensions arising from working time restructuring are translated into increased difficulties in interpersonal relationships at home, and possibly increased divorce and violence, then part of the costs of workplace reform are being transferred to the domestic sector and possibly the public sector. We do not have data on divorce and violence, but we do have data on the reported impact of change on how well people are getting on at home. The results, shown also in Table 6.3, are disturbing and broadly follow the pattern set by the data on satisfaction with the work-personal life balance. This is not surprising, as 27 per cent of employees who are dissatisfied with their work-personal life balance also report deterioration in how well they get on with people at home – compared to 4 per cent of those who are satisfied with their work-personal life balance.

Employees experiencing high pressure at work were three times as likely to report a deterioration in their relationships at home than were those under medium pressure, and five times as likely as those under relatively low pressure. Those reporting increases in stress, in how tired they felt, and in how long it took them to recover from work were around three times as likely to report deteriorating home relationships as were those who did not report increases in these indicators of fatiguing. 'Long hours employees' were nearly twice as likely as other employees to report deteriorating relationships. Full-time employees who reported increased hours were nearly three times as likely as full-timers with no change in hours to report a deterioration in their home relationships. Weekend work for full-timers, and irregular starting times, also appeared to be linked to deteriorating home relationships. Long hours cultures also mattered. Deteriorating home relationships were more common amongst

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[3] The control variables were: whether the respondent had another job; gender; how often start and finishing times were changed on short notice; starting work between 5pm and 4.59am; use of 'flexi-time'; travelling time to work; and having children. For the full equation adjusted r^2=.30.

employees who reported that long hours were taken for granted, or who disagreed that you could say you didn't want to work overtime and it wouldn't cause any problems, or that if your workload got too heavy it was easy to get it reduced by talking to your supervisor. Increased pressure from fellow employees and tighter monitoring by supervisors were both associated with deteriorating relationships.

Table 6.3 Influences on dissatisfaction with work and family balance and deteriorating home relationships

	Proportion of employees dissatisfied with balance between work and personal lives (%)	Proportion of employees reporting deterioration in how well they get on with people at home (%)
Work pressure index		
- relatively high	44**	20**
- medium	21	6
- relatively low	11	4
Change in job stress over last 12 months		
- gone up	36**	16**
- same	16	6
- gone down	11	3
Change in how tired you feel at work over last 12 months		
- gone up	40*	18**
- same	13	6
- gone down	15	3
Change in how long you take to recover from work over last 12 months		
- gone up	45**	21**
- same	13	6
- gone down	19	3
Normal working hours		
- 45 or more per week	43**	17*
- under 45 per week	18	9
Gender and hours		
- male full-time	27	12
- female full-time	24	10
- male part-time	28	7
- female part-time	13	10
Change in weekly working hours (full-time employees)		
- gone up	40**	20**
- same	19	7
- gone down	22	8
Start work at same time each day (full-time employees)		
- yes	23*	14
- no	30	9
Starting or finishing times often changed on short notice, making it difficult to arrange things in personal life		
- yes	40**	18#
- no	22	10
Works on weekends (full-time employees)		
- yes	37**	16*
- no	22	9
Works at night (starts work between 5pm and 4.59am)		
- yes	38**	13
- no	22	10

Long hours are taken for granted in this organisation		
- agree	34**	15**
- disagree	13	6
Change in how much pressure from co-workers to work hard		
- gone up	40**	22**
- same	22	9
- gone down	20	5
Change in how closely watched by supervisor		
- gone up	38**	22**
- same	21	9
- gone down	22	7

Source: Main employee survey
Population: All respondents in partners survey (excpet rows 1 & 2: full-time and part-time employees in the partners survey respectively).
N = 840 (column 1), 953 (column 2)
** = difference significant at 1 per cent level
* = difference significant at 5 per cent level
# = difference weakly significant at 10 per cent level
Numbers in cell indicate the proportions of respondents in the rows having the characteristics in the columns. For example, the top left hand cell indicates that 50 per cent of partners whose own hours had increased reported an increase in the stress they feel at home compared to 12 months earlier.

6.3 The impact of work on employees' partners

As mentioned, we distributed a short survey to partners of employees who participated in the main survey. The distribution of employed participants in the partners' survey tended to more closely approximate the labour force than did the distribution of partners in the main employee survey in terms of occupation and employment status. This is not surprising, as all participants in the main employee survey came from one of fifteen workplaces, whereas the number of workplaces represented by respondents to the partners' survey could have been nearly 381 (the number of employed participants in that survey). We matched those partners to their spouses[4] in the employee survey. While the employees in the main survey who were 'matched' to participants in the partners survey may have had slightly different characteristics to those who were not matched, generally speaking this had no significant impact on the results.[5] The partners' survey contained questions that to varying degrees pursued selected concepts that were examined in the main employee survey.

In many respects, the data from the partners' survey tended to follow quite closely the data in the employee survey. For example, 25 per cent of employees in the employee survey agreed that 'If it were possible I would like to get a job with another organisation'; 25 per cent of partners also agreed that 'If it were possible, I would like my partner to get a job elsewhere'. Just as 22 per cent of respondents in the main employee survey reported a decline in their involvement in community activities over the previous year, so too 23 per cent of partners reported a decline in their own involvement in community activities. As we might expect, while 31 per cent of respondents in the main sample agreed that 'My work responsibilities interfere with my social life more than they should', a lesser (though still large) proportion of respondents in the partners' survey, 26 per cent, agreed that 'My partner's work responsibilities effect my own social life more than they should'. However, there were some

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[4] Technically, these people may not be 'spouses', but we use this term to describe people in the main employee survey, to avoid the confusion associated with talking about partners of partners.
[5] For example, while 24 per cent of all employees in the main survey were dissatisfied with the balance between their work and family lives, the analogous figure for employees who were matched to participants in the partners' survey was 26 per cent.

differences. While 17 per cent of respondents in the employee survey were less satisfied than twelve months ago with their own working hours, 26 per cent of respondents in the partners survey were less satisfied with the working hours of their partners (ie of the people in our main employee survey). While 30 per cent of respondents in the main employee survey said they were spending less time with people at home than twelve months ago, 41 per cent of respondents in the partners survey said that they were spending less time with their spouses than a year earlier. Partners, in fact, were also experiencing increasing hours: amongst respondents in the partners survey who were full-time employees, some 44 per cent reported an increase in hours (with 8 per cent reporting a decrease). The incidence of increased full-time hours was higher in the partners survey than in the main employee survey (suggesting that, if anything, the case studies might have slightly under-represented, rather than over-represented, the incidence of increasing working hours).

We examined more closely two indicators of the impact of working time changes on partners. The first was a proxy for the impact of an employee's working arrangements on their partner's time use: partner's responses to a statement that 'their spouse's work responsibilities effect their own social life more than they should. As we shall see shortly, this is an important indicator of household stress. The second was a summary measure of dissatisfaction with an employee's work arrangements: partners' responses to the proposition that if it were possible, they would like their spouse to get a job elsewhere.[6] As shown in table 6.4, respondents in the partners' survey had negative views of the jobs of their spouses in the main employee survey when those employees:

- scored high on the work pressure index;
- scored highly on our previously mentioned 'fatiguing' index;
- worked 45 hours or more per week;
- did not start work at the same time every day (especially if start or finish times were changed on short notice);
- worked on weekends;
- had little say over their workload or when they could take time off (though, consistent with earlier data, say over start and finish times or number of working hours as such, did not influence partners' views);
- never received overtime or time off in lieu; or
- had children.

Table 6.4 Employee characteristics and relationship with partner dissatisfactions

Employee characteristics:	Proportion of partners agreeing that their spouse's work responsibilities effect their own social life more than they should (%)	Proportion of partners agreeing that if it were possible, they would like their spouse to get a job elsewhere (%)
Work pressure index - relatively high - medium - relatively low	49** 21 14	39* 25 17

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[6] The questionnaire actually used the term 'partner' rather than 'spouse' whenever this concept was being applied.

Change in 'fatiguing' index		
- high increase	43**	37*
- other	23	23
Normal working hours		
- 45 or more per week	45**	37#
- under 45 per week	21	22
Start work at same time each day		
- yes	23#	21**
- no	36	36
Starting or finishing times often changed on short notice, making it difficult to arrange things in personal life		
- yes	64**	45**
- no	23	24
Works on weekends		
- yes	42**	34*
- no	23	24
Receipt of overtime or time off in lieu		
- never	39*	ns
- other	24	
How much say over when you take time off (for example, holidays, dentist appointments)		
- none or some	38*	ns
- quite a lot or a great deal.	21	
How much say over your workload		
- none or some	ns	29*
- quite a lot or a great deal.		16
Has children		
- yes	32*	ns
- no	24	

Source: Matched partners survey and main employee survey
Population: Partners of matched full-time employees in the main employee survey
N = 470 (column 1), 467 (column 2)
** = difference significant at 1 per cent level
* = difference significant at 5 per cent level
# = difference weakly significant at 10 per cent level
ns = difference not significant
Numbers in cell indicate the proportions of respondents in the rows having the characteristics in the columns. For example, the top left hand cell indicates that 49 per cent of partners of 'high pressure' employees agreed that their partner's work affects their own social life more than it should.

Partners were also asked a number of questions assessing change over the preceding twelve months. Where full-time respondents in our employee survey had indicated their working hours had gone up over the past year, 44 per cent of partners were less satisfied than previously with their spouses' working hours, and just 14 per cent were more satisfied. When employees working hours had decreased, only 20 per cent of partners were less satisfied with their spouses' hours, and 40 per cent were more satisfied.

Some 36 per cent of respondents to the partners' survey indicated that the stress they felt at home had gone up over the previous twelve months, with 13 per cent reporting a reduction in stress. Home-related stress as perceived by partners is influenced by many factors, only some of which are related to their own or their spouses' working arrangements. Nonetheless we examined factors identified in the partners' survey which were correlated with stress at home (Table 6.5). Highlighting the relevance of the 'social life' indicator used in Table 6.4, we can see a very strong relationship between home stress and partners' opportunities to have a social life. Indeed, in a regression equation, the two most significant predictors of home stress

amongst partners were changes in time spent with their spouse and changes in their opportunities for a social life.[7]

Table 6.5 Home stress: partner perspectives

Respondent characteristics:	Proportion of partner respondents reporting an increase in stress they feel at home over previous 12 months (%)
Hours worked by respondent (full-time employees)	
- gone up	50**
- same	25
- gone down	20
Any children §	
- age 5-12	47*
- age under 5	39
- no children	29*
Your opportunities to have a social life	
- gone up	11**
- same	30
- gone down	59
How much time you spend with your partner	
- gone up	22**
- same	24
- gone down	57
Satisfaction with own hours	
- gone up	26**
- same	27
- gone down	55
Satisfaction with partner's hours	
- gone up	28**
- same	31
- gone down	54
Time spent on community activities	
- gone up	26**
- same	32
- gone down	59
Involvement in hobbies, gardening or sports	
- gone up	31**
- same	30
- gone down	51
Own involvement in domestic activities (eg washing, cooking)	
- gone up	50**
- same	26
- gone down	57

Source: Partners survey
Population: All respondents in partners survey (except row 1 which is full-time employees in the partners survey).
N = 264 (row 1), 489 (rows 2 onwards)
ns not significant
§ The first two categories in this row overlap. The significance tests reported relate to the first and third categories versus their respective counterfactuals (ie having versus not having 5-12 year old children; having versus not having any children).
Numbers in cell indicate the proportions of respondents in the rows having the characteristics in the columns. For example, the top left hand cell indicates that 50 per cent of partners whose own hours had increased reported an increase in the stress they feel at home compared to 12 months earlier.

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[7] Other variables included in the equation predicting home stress were changes in: weekly pay (positive at 10 per cent level of significance); time spent on community activities (negative at 5 percent level) and involvement in domestic activities (positive at 10 per cent level).

Respondents in the partners survey also reported increases in stress when they were full-time employees working longer hours. They were more likely to report increased stress when:

- they had children aged five to twelve;
- their satisfaction with their own hours had gone down;
- their satisfaction with their partners' hours had gone down; and
- their time spent on community activities or hobbies, gardening or sports had gone down.

In cross-tabulations changes in involvement in domestic activities had ambiguous effects: increases in stress were reported both when such involvement had increased and had decreased. Like time spent on community activities or hobbies, time spent on domestic activities by partners fell when their own working hours increased. However, domestic activities do not regenerate the soul in the same way as these other activities.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Work time has traditionally been a major issue for governments, unions and employers in terms of ensuring employees' needs for adequate leisure and a work-life balance is compatible with employers' needs for effective organisational performance. A feature of contemporary Queensland workplaces has been work-time experimentation and extended hours. Our study has examined these issues and drawn the following conclusions.

Our research indicates that there were a number of different *rationales for work-time change*. In some cases, product market pressures such as heightened competition, technical change, and globalisation were the main stimuli for change. In other cases, labour market issues underpinned changes to work-hour arrangements. A number of organisations introduced changes to attract new labour and to retain their skilled workforce. Working hours were also affected by changes in the regulatory environment, such as extended trading hours in the private sector and changes to government policy in terms of the operation of public service organisations. As such, we found that working time change arose for a diversity of reasons.

In this study, we identified three main *types of working time change*. First, there were changes aimed at improving the work-life balance of employees. About a third of our cases were in this category. Examples of this type of initiative included shorter hours, banked hour arrangements, improved leave entitlements and part-time working. The most effective policies were those where employees had an active role in self-management, particularly on issues like rostering and job sharing. The research indicates that the work-life initiatives were commonly introduced due to labour market factors. Such policies were developed and aimed at attracting and maintaining the type of workforce the employer considered crucial for sustaining or improving work and organisational performance.

The second type of changes were those introduced primarily to enhance financial performance. In this category were arrangements such as the annualisation of salaries, longer working hours and excessive overtime. These changes were driven primarily by external factors and the focus of implementation was to improve immediate competitiveness.

Organisations sought to improve competitiveness either by directly cutting costs or by extending service provision to improve market share. Use of extended working hours was a common response of organisations in this category.

Third, some changes were mixed and comprised elements of the preceding two strategies. These work-time initiatives were aimed, in part, at developing employee relations but also with a cost reduction element as well. In some cases these strategies arose where organisations adopted a piecemeal approach to employment relations without considering the linkages between them. In other cases, employee-friendly policies were provided to employees as compensation for the introduction of less palatable measures.

The study found there were a range of different approaches to the process of *consultation and negotiation of work-time change*. A majority of our case studies were currently or recently unionised. Unions were commonly involved with negotiating work-time changes as part of formal enterprise agreements. Unions tended to have more success in negotiating work-life initiatives than they did in restricting long or excessive hours. In most cases unions were able to achieve acceptable outcomes for employees although this was not always the case.

In a number of our case studies, working time changes took place without union involvement. In small non-unionised workplaces, working time arrangements were individually negotiated or changed at the discretion of managers. In the larger non-unionised workplaces, some type of consultation and negotiation process was employed to gauge employees' views and to reduce resistance to change. Even in unionised workplaces, some working time changes were introduced without negotiation where it was deemed managerial prerogative.

In terms of *extended working hours*, our study found that working hours were increasing. Very long hours were common among blue-collar workers, employees with long tenure and persons who supervised others. Our results show that long hours were most common where employers did not compensate employees for working long hours in the form of overtime pay, time off in lieu, or penalty rates – a point we will return to shortly. Our research indicates that the more hours people work, they less satisfied they are with their hours. The hours worked in our survey organisations (and in Australia as a whole) are, on average, higher than what full-time employees want – while paradoxically many part-time employees seek longer hours and many potential employees without any working hours seek at least some.

Those people working 'very long hours' (50 or more hours per week) were most likely to report that their satisfaction with hours had declined. There were also more likely to say that their job stress and the time it took to recover from work had gone up. 'Long hours employees' were also more likely to report a decline in safety in their work area and at work. These people were more likely to report that they felt under pressure from their fellow workers, but not their supervisors, to work harder.

Extended hours were clearly linked to the culture of the workplace. People working extended hours felt that it was customary and taken for granted in their workplace. These people felt that they were less able to talk to their supervisors about high workloads and less likely to feel that management performance targets were very reasonable. These people were also more likely to say they had to work to tight deadlines. Interestingly people who worked extended

hours tended to have considerable control over how many hours they worked each week, but less control over their workload.

To explore the effects of extended hours on employees more closely, we examined the relationship of hours at work and work pressure. Our research indicated that employees most likely to experience high work pressure were those working long hours, those under pressure from their workmates and those without overtime, time off in lieu or penalty rates. Workplace culture was also a key factor contributing to work pressure. Employees experienced high work pressure in workplaces where client needs made it difficult to take time off, and where deadlines were tight. High work pressure also occurred where staff reductions occurred or where the workplace culture made it difficult to refuse overtime or to have workloads reduced, and where long hours were taken for granted. High pressure in turn was associated with a range of dissatisfactions with aspects of work, and with some strikingly negative responses on satisfaction with the work-family balance, tiredness, social lives, and time spent on community, personal, recreational and domestic activities.

Indeed, we identified some important links between work and home life that have become almost common wisdom in recent times but not assessed quantitatively till now. Increases in reported job stress, how tired respondents felt at work and how long it took them to recover from work were linked to greater dissatisfaction with the work-life balance. The adverse impact that long hours has on the work-life balance was not just a result of the extra time that it took employees away from the home environment – it was more importantly a consequence of the adverse impact that long and increasing hours had on the work pressures that employees experienced, and which they then brought home with them as baggage. Working unsocial hours or with irregular starting times also adversely affected the work-life balance, the former underlining the continuing relevance of penalty rates. We identified a number of disturbing relations between working patterns and deteriorating personal relationships. Employees under high pressure at work, those reporting increases in stress, in how tired they felt, in how long it took them to recover from work, those working long or increased hours, and those in long hours workplace cultures all disproportionately reported a deterioration in how well they got on with people at home.

We also examined two indicators of the impact of working time changes on partners. The first was a proxy for the impact of an employee's working arrangements on their partner's time use: partner's responses to a statement that their spouse's work responsibilities effect their own social life more than they should, an indicator of household stress. The second was a summary measure of dissatisfaction with an employee's work arrangements: partners' responses to the proposition that if it were possible, they would like their spouse to get a job elsewhere. Partners had especially negative views of the jobs of their employee spouses when those employee spouses reported high work pressure or fatiguing, worked 45 hours or more per week, had irregular starting times, worked on weekends, never received overtime or actual time off in lieu, had little say over their workload, or had children.

The research also showed that the implementation of those workplace policies aimed at promoting the balance of 'work and life' responsibilities were often done so in an intentionally indistinct manner allowing considerable scope for the role of managerial discretion. This afforded organisations an opportunity to vet the use of these policies; however, in some

experiences the variance arising from managerial discretion meant that the policies were seen by employees as inconsistently applied or lacking managerial discretion. A lack of organisational infrastructure, particularly including human resources, meant that in some cases 'work life balance' policies were ambitious in their outline but relatively conservative in their application. The result of this was both an erosion of the goodwill built between management and employees and the almost unavoidable failure of 'work life balance' policies when they were used.

The study also suggests the importance of the regulatory framework in shaping the working hours of employees. Long hours is in many cases employer driven. However, we also identified the existence of a minority group of long hours employees who worked these hours at full overtime rates. Here we could say that long hours were being driven by both employees and employer. However, there was still a constraint on the employer in offering or requiring employees to work such long hours – the financial constraint arising from the high costs of overtime pay. If employees are not fully compensated for working long hours, then there is an unconstrained incentive on employers to take advantage of this and require or persuade employees to work long hours. Constraints such as the payment of overtime rates, penalty rates and rostered days off help employees control their working hours. It is an indirect form of control, because employees are not individually choosing the constraints within which management operates – rather, these constraints are determined (or not determined) by some form of collective process that may be internal or external to the workplace. Yet it may be more effective in constraining hours than giving employees the individual 'capacity' to determine their own hours, because in reality those hours will be determined in the context of an environment which is shaped by the needs of the employer and a workplace culture that reflects the environment. Accordingly, employees who never received overtime or actual time off in lieu if they worked extra hours were more likely than other employees to report that they are told at home that they are working too much, and that they were often too tired to properly enjoy their time away from work.

Our findings also suggest that the battle for control over working hours, if it is to make a difference to working hours, is not a battle simply over individual 'say' but also over collective regulation. While self-management works well in relation to such issues as job sharing and rostering, self-management of the number of hours worked is not effective where the employee is constrained to manage a given workload, but the employer is not constrained by having to budget for overtime hours worked. Effective employee influence over working hours requires both individual capacity and collective capacity. If 'flexibility' strengthens the former but weakens the latter then the effects on the lives of workers and their partners may well be negative. For example, time off in lieu arrangements may appear to give employees greater say over their working hours than rostered days off, but the greater flexibility (uncertainty) associated with them meant that employees were less likely to use them and so may well have been worse off.

Thus, while employees like to have more say over their hours, they also like the idea of external regulation of hours. Accordingly, we found majority support across all groups for a ceiling on weekly working hours. Approximately two third of employees – by a margin of over four to one - agreed that 'There should be an upper limit on how many hours someone can work in a week'. We conducted a study in an organisation that imposed a limit on hours to

be worked each week. This initiative was not successful for three reasons: the willingness of a minority of employees to subvert the limit; the lack of adequate systems in place to enforce the limit; and a willingness of managers and supervisors to circumvent the limit to satisfy clients' requests. Our study indicates that there is strong employee support for a limit on maximum hours but there needs to be considerable thought given to ensuring such a system can be properly collectively regulated and enforced when there are strong forces working to increase working hours.

Overall, our research indicates that working time change is a dynamic and important feature of the contemporary workplace. We have highlighted some of the benefits but also some of the adverse effects that working hours arrangements can have on employee well being. These results – while drawn from a limited number of workplaces – indicate a need for more detailed and directed research to examine ways of mitigating these adverse effects. Indeed, we will be continuing to analyse and publish the data from this project over coming months. The findings also indicate the continuing importance of regulation of working hours – both internally and externally – to the welfare of workers and their families. The precise mix of regulation to provide an optimal outcome is beyond the scope of this study. However, it could be implied that the declining importance of overtime and penalty rates, the declining power of employees (as indicated by declining union density) and in that context the absence of a ceiling on actual working hours, have contributed to the lengthening of working hours and an apparent deterioration in the capacity of employees to balance their work and family lives. This is so notwithstanding the considerable benefits flowing to employees from particular work-life initiatives in particular organisations. The gains to employee and organisational welfare in one firm accruing from the shift from a six day to a five day working week, for example, are noteworthy achievements and set an example to the rest of the construction industry. Employees and organisations benefited from moves to self-rostering and self-managed job sharing. Measures such as paid family leave are unambiguously valuable for the ability of workers to balance their work and family lives. The challenge for policy makers is to support a framework that encourages such innovative, positive policies while reversing some of the pathologies that have arisen from some of the less desirable directions in working time practices in recent years.

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