

# **Work: yesterday, today and tomorrow**

The impact of work in our lives

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‘24/7: Work-related alcohol and drug use’

Hilton Hotel Adelaide 29th June 2006

Currently, Australian workers are living in a  
work/life collision

**It is made up of:**

- Changes at Work
- Changes at home
- Not enough change in institutions
- Not enough change in in dominant cultures

# Changes at work

- Increasing appetite for work?
- Shift to services sector
- Increasing hours for full-timers.
  - Average hours of full-timers increasing - by 3.1 hours 1982-2001
  - A quarter of Australians now work more than 45 hours a week.
- Traveling time is increasing.
- The intensity of work is increasing.
- Common family time is being squeezed or lost.
- Most new jobs have been part-time: the work/family mechanism of choice in Australia.
- But it has unique characteristics:
  - two-thirds is casual with restricted rights, tenure, respect, predictability of earnings and hours, retirement savings, and limited job security.

# Inequality through work

- Widening inequality between the top and the bottom of the labour market
  - UK: in 1979 executives earned 10 times the pay of typical British workers. By 2002, 54 times
  - US: in 1980 executives earned 50 times and by 2002, 281 times
  - Australia, 1989-90 executives earned 18 times of average workers, and by 2005, 63 times.
- The social costs of inequality are not visited only on the bottom...
- A rising plane of prosperity built upon a growing body of low paid services sector work...?

# Consider Rosa and Mr Moss

- Mr Moss, head of Macquarie Bank is being paid \$21.2 million for this years work
- Rosa is a sole parent living in Sydney with 5 kids She works 2 days a week for \$14 an hour as a room attendant and another 16 hours a week in a shop for \$10/hour. Her annual wage is \$20,000 and she gets another \$10,000 from government. A 90 minute daily commute.

# Changes in households

## ■ Contraction in those at home caring.

In Australia in 1966, two-thirds of women were at home. Now 45%.

## ■ Contraction in traditional 'male breadwinner/female carer' families

- over half of couples with kids in 1984; less than a third now.
- 62 per cent of couple households with kids now have two earners.
- Future plans suggest 75% dual earner.

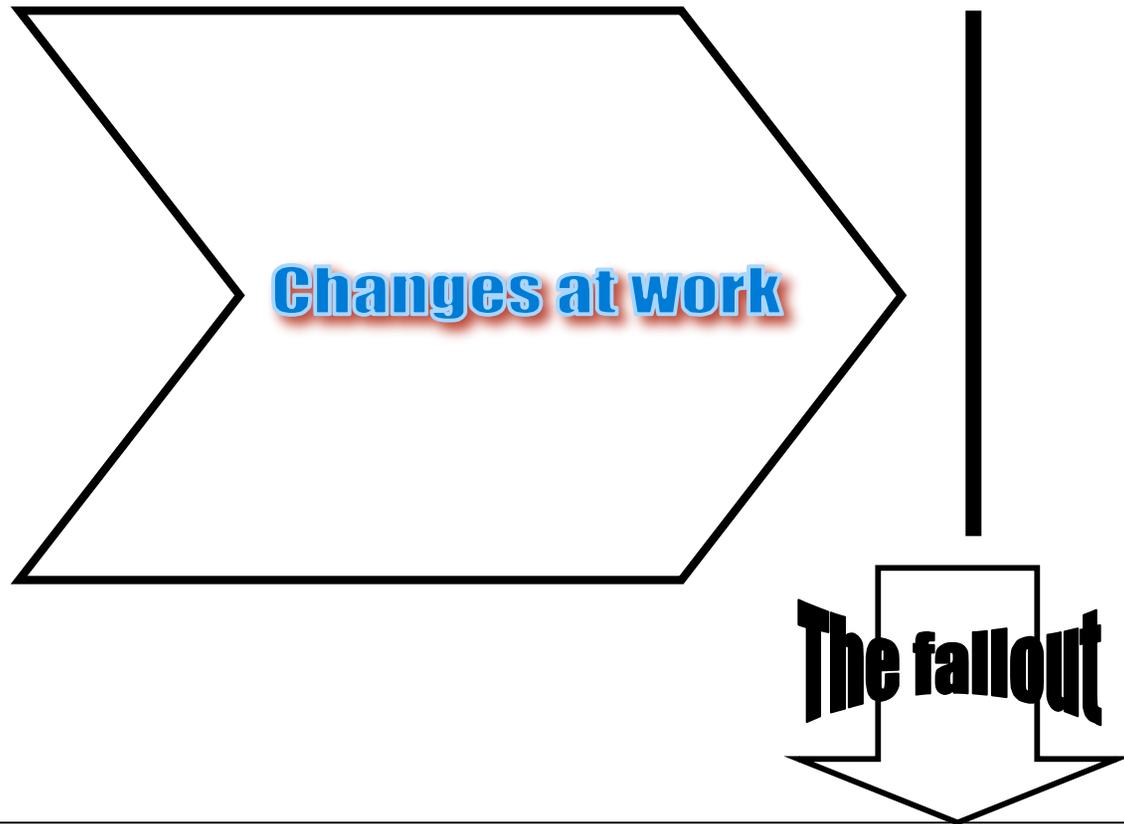
## ■ Falling birthrate - 25% of young Australians now unlikely to have kids.

## ■ No great compensating rush of men out of jobs to home while partner works (less than 3 per cent)

## ■ Or into housework:

- in 1997 Australian women did twice as much housework as men (33 hours, compared to 17)
- And very little change between 1992 and 1997 except that women did a bit less and bought more help.

# THE COLLISION



## **UNCHANGING:**

- 'Ideal worker' norms (full-time, 'care-less')
- Gendered distribution of domestic work and care, women doing most
- Cultural constructions of motherhood, fatherhood and carers
- Leave regimes
- The precarious nature of part-time work
- Legal framework of work

**Declining quality of life**  
**Loss of community. Shift of community from street to workplace**  
**Rising levels of guilt**  
**Erosion of relationships and intimacy**  
**Pressure on carers at home, and on grandparents.**  
**Marketisation of care and love?**

## **Changes in households, work**

- The 1950s family of four children gives way to the 1990s family of one or two children...
- With both parents holding jobs...
- Or a sole-parent households (mostly headed by a woman)...
- Or a blended households...
- And parents making transitions into and out of the paid labour market...

- Our institutions lag behind changes in our patterns of work and our households
- We rank 17<sup>th</sup> out of 20 OECD countries in terms of the generosity of public support for childcare, paid leave for parents and child benefits, with only New Zealand, Mexico and Turkey worse off.
- and our communities and families bear the cost of dissonance between institutions, cultures and preferences.
- Women and mothers especially affected
- Women without children are also contaminated.
- Men are also affected
- And children are not immune...

# There is no going back to male breadwinner...

- Young women are not going back home to replenish care and ‘restore’ an ideal
- Women’s participation rates will continue to increase
- And men’s to fall
- So, will we adapt as a society, or leave the individual to privately juggle?
- Demographics, the quest for a decent life and ideals of fairness demand that we do better.

# What do young people think?

- Kids are pragmatic - they know why parents work
- But if there is enough ‘basic money’, they prefer more time over more money from parental earnings
- Long or unsocial parental hours drive a strong preference for more time
- Parent-specific ‘time hunger’: one parent at home, *doesn't make up* for the one who is absent a lot
- Kids notice and are affected
- They say they will won't work like that...

# Young People's Plans...

- They expect to have paid jobs
- Many want to have fun doing them...
- Most expect to have kids
- Dual-earner couple households will increase
- Most expect to share care of kids
- But men will fit kids around work...
- While women more likely to fit work around kids

# Plans for work and care

- Most want to share care - four out of ten young men and young women
- However, similar proportion of young men want their partners to care for their kids
- Not matched by young women's preferences - two in ten expect maternal care
- But more expect to fit it intermittently around their jobs and share it with others
- Familial care is most favoured, over external care
- A lot of reliance upon their own mothers

## Future household types?

- Continuing growth in dual earner households  
(75%? 61% at present)
- Continuing decline in male breadwinner  
(25%? around a third at present)
- Dual earner households feel the work/life/care pressures most intensely - so likely to be more widespread in the next generation
- A gendered mismatch on male breadwinner household types?
- How will this be settled? Whose preferences will prevail?

# Housework

- Over half of all want to see it shared
- More women than men - And not always 50/50
- Nearly half young men want to share but many don't
- Gender mismatch on 'my wife will do it'
- Many young men are open 'minimisers':
  - *Either I suggest my wife is a good cleaner and does all that, or she hires a cleaner, because I'm not doing anything. (Smithy, 17, Leafy High)*
- Male resistance to sharing obvious to young women
- Young women's brothers and peers already actively minimise, and they see their mothers struggling with it

- These young women will continue their mothers' 'turn to the market': women in lower and higher income areas planning to use cleaners and help
- They have plans to deal with this:
  - Anger, persuasion, education, bribing, blackmail
- A gender struggle over housework far from over
- Both sexes have considered tactics -
  - minimise after you have been married a while (male)
  - threaten to divorce them if they don't help (female)
- How to stimulate male interest in housework?

# Industrial Relations Reforms

- ...to accommodate the new worker and family are long overdue
- But 'Workchoices' does not deliver them
  - Minimal conditions underpinning agreements, AWAs
  - More scope for 'take it or leave it' individual agreements
  - Stripped back awards
  - Weaker worker say over working time
  - Slower, smaller minimum wage increases?
  - Weak unfair dismissal procedures
  - Fewer work/family supports (eg lost right to request to work part-time, or to request longer unpaid maternity leave)

# ‘WorkChoices’

- Whatever else it might do...
- Is lowering standards
  - 16% of survey of 250/6263 individual contracts since March 2006 had removed penalty rates, overtime rates, holiday loading, shift loadings
  - Two-thirds had lost leave loadings, penalty rates and over half shift loadings
  - Important implications for low paid workers who depend on these payments to make a living wage

## So what needs to be done?

1. An improved leave regime
2. De-casualisation of 'permanent casual' jobs
3. Improved quality, accessible, affordable childcare
4. Better 'transition points' between care/work/types of jobs
5. Reduced hours of work and overtime
6. More flexibility in work regimes
7. New cultures for 'proper mothers', 'proper fathers', 'proper workers'
8. Shared domestic work and unpaid care
9. Improved family payments system
10. Decent minimum standards for work, to give all Australian worker/carers fair leave, employment security and quality part-time work.

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