



Getting the best of you for nothing
Casual voices in the Australian academy

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Executive Summary

This research was supported by the National Recruitment funding of the NTEU. Its aim was to undertake an in-depth qualitative study of the experiences of casual academic staff in an Australian University, particularly, long-serving casual staff. The study complements the sector-wide survey study conducted by Anne Junor (2004) which looked at casual and fixed term academic and general staff in Australian universities.

Casualisation of academic work in Australian universities has been steadily increasing, and in the current political and legislative environment, it is likely to see further increases. The data in this research come from interviews with 25 casual academics in two faculties at City University (a fictional name).

An earlier survey at City University showed that the University had casualised approximately 30% of its fulltime equivalent academic positions, employing over 5900 academics as casual employees. Over 50% of the casual academics at City University are casual employees who perform core teaching duties, as opposed to specialists who come in to give one-off specialised lectures or postgraduate students earning some income to support their study. 44% of the City University casuals rely on the casual teaching as their primary source of income or employment and 21% are seeking fulltime permanent academic appointments.

The 25 casual academics who were interviewed for this study were not a homogenous group, in terms of their personal situations as well as their feelings about the casual work they did at City University. Nevertheless, some key messages emerged including the inappropriate naming of these groups of staff as "casuals". For none of them was the employment truly casual; they were all employed to undertake regular work over the duration of a semester; many would be re-employed to undertake further regular work in subsequent semesters. The issues they raised that the NTEU must now listen and respond to fall into two categories: respect and recognition in an academic community of practice, and employment conditions. They are first of all seeking:

- recognition, respect and involvement with their fulltime colleagues and to be part of their community of practice;
- basic system support missing or inadequate - resources, space, facilities; and

- institutional support for their professional development.

In relation to employment conditions, they are seeking greater certainty of re-employment and security of employment through mechanisms such as conversion to fulltime or fractional positions, and greater equity in entitlements such as leave, superannuation, professional development.

The report presents overviews of Junor's survey study of university casuals, and Pocock's qualitative study of casual workers in Australia more generally both of which guided the approach that was taken in designing the interview questions. An extensive amount of the interview data is presented. The conclusions point to some urgent and significant organisational imperatives for the NTEU, signalling that failure to listen to and engage casuals in the union will have a detrimental effect on the Union's overall objectives.

Introduction

The growth in casual employment has become one of the key features of work in the flexible economy. Where once casual work might have been commonly understood as being irregular work the growing incidence of casual employment suggests that this is no longer the case, and is the result of deliberate employer planning that comes as part of re-shaping employment relations in Australia.

Australia's version of casual work is unusual. Most OECD countries regard such employment as inappropriate in a modern society and therefore proscribe it, either directly or indirectly. Something parallel may survive in small amounts as day labour or in the illegal or informal sector, but apart from the possible exception of the United States, it is hard to find anything similar at the same level of prominence in other OECD countries (Campbell 2004).

In 2003 over 27 percent of the Australian workforce was employed casually, suggesting that casual employment may no longer be 'irregular' (ACTU 2003). Casual workers are often in casual employment over a number of years, often with the same employer. What marks them out from the rest of the workforce is their employment status - that despite being employed on a regular basis, they have no rights to continuing employment. The casualisation process has been deepened and widened across all types of employment - and there is an urgent need to understand the full implications of these changes.

Casualisation has become a major issue in the Australian context, not least for the trade union movement. In 2000 the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) resolved to pursue improved entitlements for casual workers, including the right to conversion to continuing status. These claims were successful in a number of sectors, in both more unionized contexts such as in the metals industry, as well as less organized fields such as the hotel industry. In 2003 the NSW Labor Council launched its Secure Employment Test Case where it sought an entitlement for regular casuals to opt for permanent employment after six months service with the same employer.¹

¹ The Council also sought an entitlement for full consultation with employees and relevant unions prior to contracting-out, and to guarantee existing jobs, wages and conditions. The Full Bench decision of the NSW Industrial Relations Commission in 2006 rejected aspects of the unions' claim but did order that applications be lodged to vary awards to insert a new clause,

Despite these developments, casualisation continued to rise and in 2003 the ACTU launched its 'Future of Work' study, finding that half of the casual workforce had been in their job for more than twelve months without access to holidays or sick pay, or to income security. The key casualised sectors were retail, property and business, hotel and food, and health and community services. Challenging the claim that casual status is the preferred option for workers, the report found that 68 percent of casual employees wanted access to continuing employment (ACTU 2003; Watson, et al 2003). The following year, the ACTU organized a conference specifically devoted to casual and insecure employment and there the ACTU President launched a study of the social impact of casualisation - 'Only a Casual: How Casual Work Affects Employees, Households and Communities in Australia' (Pocock, et al 2004).

The phenomenon of casualisation in the academy is thus only one aspect of a multi-faceted process. Nonetheless we believe the analysis of academic casualisation is strategically significant. The sector is semi-privatised, with universities increasingly behaving as private entities, albeit formally positioned within the public sector. Academic work is generally understood to be a high-status form of employment, and the sector is well-unionized, with relatively advantageous pay and conditions for continuing staff. Academia is traditionally not heavily casualised, yet academic work is today increasingly undertaken by casuals who do not have access to the benefits of continuing academic employment. In 1990 casuals accounted for the equivalent of eight percent of full-time jobs in universities: by 2001 this had more than doubled to eighteen percent (AVCC 2004). Academic work, then, sits at the cusp of the transition from secure, high-status, unionized employment, primarily in the public sector, to insecure, low-status unorganized casual existence, at the beck and call of 'the market'. The structure of academic work today is bifurcated. There is the one group of highly qualified academics employed on continuing or fixed term contracts who are afforded professional status as researchers, teachers and administrators who have a large degree of autonomy in balancing these different aspects of work. Another group, many of whom are also highly qualified are employed as casual academics and are afforded professional status only in a limited way as skilled teachers; they are expected to bring knowledge and skills from current developments in their field, but undertake

Secure Employment, that covered conversion of regular and systematic casuals to permanent employment.

this scholarship largely in their own time, unlike their colleagues in the first group, who have access to institutional time and support to do so. If this bifurcation is to be addressed in any meaningful way we must come to a closer understanding of the experience of casual academics. This study attempts to contribute to that goal.

This paper reports on a qualitative study of the experience of casually-employed academics in the university sector. It centres on an action-research project at two Faculties in one of Australia's most casualised universities, referred to as the City University (a fictional name). The paper is organized into four sections. The first examines the process of academic casualisation in the Australian university sector, with a focus on the industrial issues that arise. The second section establishes the parameters and key concerns of the investigation. It approaches this by outlining in detail the two studies that shape the approach, the 'Only a Casual' study and the Junor sectoral study. Four main themes emerge from this analysis - job satisfaction, work intensity, life course and identity - each interpreted as key dimensions shaping the academic casual experience. The third section reports on the qualitative investigation at City University and is the main focus for the paper. The methodology is outlined and the interview data are discussed along the four lines of analysis. The account provides an in-depth understanding of how these issues are played out in the everyday experience of academic casuals at the City University. Finally the paper draws some conclusions about the experience of academic casual work and the implications for future research and more importantly for considering future strategies for unions to organize this growing and pivotal sector of the tertiary education workforce.

1. Casualisation of academic work: the industrial context

The 1990s and early 2000s have been a period of rapid change and fiscal crisis for Australian universities. The primary cause of this change has been financial: since 1995 the Federal Government has failed to adequately index the operating grants for Universities, and the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee claimed that between 1997 and 2003, the gap between the actual base grant from the Government and what would have been realistically appropriate grew to \$473 million, that is, approximately 10 percent of universities' core education funding (AVCC 2004a). At the same time the number of students at university in Australia has increased dramatically: between 1996 and 2003 the

number of students at university rose from 636,094 to 929,952 (AVCC 2005a). Not surprisingly the main response from the Australian universities has been to cut costs, and to pursue non-government sources of revenue. Their efforts to cut costs are focused across a series of measures: first, to reduce the cost of employing continuing academic and general support staff; second, to increase academic teaching loads, and as part of this, increase the student-staff ratio; and third, to, as far as is practicable, casualise the immediate delivery of courses.

Universities have not been able to substantially reduce their expenditure on salary costs; for example, between 1996 and 2003, actual expenditure on academic salaries rose from \$2,611 million to \$3,428 million which represented 34 percent and 29 percent of the total revenues of the universities (AVCC 2005b). Continuing academic and general staff are relatively well-organised through the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) and the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU). The NTEU's nationally coordinated collective bargaining has resulted in salary rates that have largely been maintained across the sector. The implicit trade-off for continued increases in academic and general staff salaries has been an intensification of university work. This is directly reflected in a rising student-staff ratio across the sector, from sixteen students for every staff member in 1996, to twenty-one students per staff member in 2003 (AVCC 2004b). As a result the question of academic workloads has become a major industrial issue: studies have been published showing a dramatic increase in stress levels for academic staff and workload policy has become a key matter for collective bargaining (NTEU 2003). Casualisation has dovetailed with this intensification of academic work. A significant proportion of the increased student teaching load in the university sector has been carried not by continuing academic staff but by casuals. Between 1995 and 2004 overall employment growth in universities, that is both academic and general staff and including all categories of employment, increased by 14 percent, rising from 80,754 to 91,905 fulltime equivalent staff. The number of full-time equivalent casual staff rose from 9,249 to 13,716, which is a 48 percent increase. As a proportion of the total university sector workforce casual employment rose from 11.5 percent to 14.9 percent over the same period (DEST 2004)².

² Official figures from both DEST and the AVCC do not disaggregate the figures concerning casual staffing levels into academic and non-academic casual workers. Hence it is difficult to present precise figures of the level of casualisation of academic work in the sector as a whole.

In response to this changed funding environment, and in keeping with a new corporate managerialist ideology that pervades the public sector, university managements have sought to reduce salary costs, diversify income sources, maximise managerial prerogative, and shift from collegial to corporate style decision making. Many, though not all, of these changes have been engineered by an interventionist government that has increased its control over university decision-making at the same time as its proportion of university funding has dramatically declined.

We may, then, interpret the casualisation of academic teaching as a symptom of a deeper problem in the university system. As suggested by the experience of academic casuals, and confirmed by the research undertaken here, casuals are in large part bearing the costs of the crisis in university finances. Their lives are dramatically affected by this crisis in a way that arguably is not shared by others - continuing staff, students nor managers.

We may then ask who or what can mitigate this trend. In large part both the Federal Government and University managers cannot be relied upon to take-up this challenge - not least as they currently have a vested interest in the increased casualisation of university academic work. One important player is the student body itself, which may increasingly 'vote with its feet' to avoid institutions with high levels of casualisation. In certain contexts in the early 2000s student organisations had already become more proactively mobilised around the quality of university education in Australia, and there were similar signals from international students, in terms of their relative flow away from Australian universities. We may also want to cite the 'court of public opinion', which is clearly important as, by the late 1990s, up to a third of the Australian population had at some stage studied in a university and even more have a connection through their child or grandchild's participation, and may be expected to have some interest in maintaining university standards. Although higher education is not traditionally the centre of attention for the media, repeated media exposes, along with federal parliamentary inquiries had helped in keeping some of the issues on the public agenda. A third source of hope lies within universities, amongst the staff. Clearly important players in mitigating academic casualisation are the academic staff union, and both continuing and casual staff, whether as part of the union or in other contexts. These sources of leverage have been brought into play, but arguably are, as yet, under-realised.

The contract status of academic casuals

Academic employment in universities can be categorized into three types: continuing, fixed-term, and casual. Appointments to continuing positions normally involve a period of probation; having successfully completed the probationary period, the employee is permanently employed by the university. Fixed-term contracts may be used for research-only positions, or for generic academic postings. Casual academics are contracted only for the semester period as tutors, lecturers, or subject coordinators, with no guarantee of further employment. A typical contract will specify the time and duration of lecturing or tutoring. Included in the pay rate for each hour of face-to-face lecturing or tutoring, are hours for "associated activities" such as preparation, marking and consultation. For one hour of lecturing, there are generally two hours of associated activities; hence the hourly rate of pay for lecturing must be understood as payment for at least 3 hours of work. If the University believes that the casual academic cannot complete the required marking for the group within the time allocated under the "associated activities" they may be offered additional marking hours in their contract.³

Unlike continuing and fixed-term staff, casual academics are not automatically entitled to paid study time or professional development, although there may be some access to career development programs. Casuals are also not paid on public holidays, nor are they entitled to paid leave, although a leave loading is included in their pay rate to compensate for lack of leave provisions. Despite strong evidence that casual academics are dissatisfied, casualised academics are not strongly unionized. In the Australian higher education sector, positions, the NTEU sought to integrate these positions casual membership represents only 5.4 percent of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) membership overall (NTEU 2004).

A long-standing objective of the NTEU has been to defend and promote the status of academics as teachers, researchers and administrators. By the early 1990s, tutors who previously could not be employed in continuing positions had been integrated into the academic career path structure through a national award restructure; the old "tutor" category of fixed-term positions were abolished and a new Level A 'entry-level' positions created. The

³ The precise allocation of the hours for "associated activities" is usually not specified; it is expected that the casual employees work that out themselves.

objective was to prevent the creation of a dual labour market, where tutors could be permanently denied the option of developing an academic career.

In response, many university administrations increased the use of fixed-term and casual positions to meet teaching needs. Again, the NTEU responded by seeking a revision of the Award that would prevent the use of fixed-term teaching positions, except to provide for the short-term absence of a continuing member of staff.⁴ The NTEU strategy was again successful, and the new Higher Education Contract of Employment (HECE) Award was implemented from 1998. Provided certain conditions were met, teaching staff employed who until that time had been employed under fixed term contracts gained the right to conversion into continuing positions. As with continuing tutors before them, fixed-term teaching staff were integrated into the academic career path provided certain conditions were met.

Again, universities responded, in this instance, by expanding the use of casualised teaching academics because there were no legal restrictions to the use of casual academic labour. As noted, by 2003, the use of this - the most insecure form of employment in the sector - was systematic and structural. The extent to which casualisation of teaching has become a fact of life in universities can be measured by the ongoing denial, amongst university managements, that it has an impact on the quality of the educational experiences of the students and the academic experiences of both the continuing and the casual academic workforce. The response is framed primarily in terms of establishing more effective management structures for a casualised workforce. The Australian Universities Teaching Committee, for instance, has published a project on 'Training, Managing and Supporting Sessional Teaching Staff', which produced guidelines and best practice for the management of casual staff.⁵

Initially the NTEU responded to academic casualisation by

⁴ Fixed term contracts could be issued for a limited number of reasons including research; replacement of staff on leave; requirement for recent professional practice; pre-retirement; and employment subsidiary to studentship.

⁵ The study was based on a survey of casual teaching staff that showed staff were most concerned about issues around teaching and learning, and in particular the need for improved professional development. They were also concerned about management and employment issues, about payment for extra work, including attendance for training, planning and preparation, and for student consultation (The University of Queensland, 2003). In response, the AUTC identified guidelines and models of good practice for supporting casual staff, and strategies for the dissemination of best practice models (AUTC, 2003).

using the enterprise bargaining process to raise the cost of casual labour, seeking to make it a less attractive option for university management. An additional approach was to limit the hours that a casual employee could teach, preventing the emergence of full-time casual teaching positions. While the former reflected the immediate concerns of casual staff, in terms of pay and conditions, the latter set limits on the extent to which casuals could take advantage of such conditions. Furthermore, the strong cost cutting incentive remained, and universities continued to increase casualisation regardless of the marginal increase in the cost of employing casuals. By the early 2000s it was becoming clear that a further mechanism was required, and, under pressure from some of the now rapidly casualising universities, in the 2003 enterprise bargaining round the NTEU sought to introduce caps, or limits, on casualisation. In large part this approach was successful, with limits on casual employment signed into the bulk of the sector's agreements by 2004.

At the same time, the union took a deliberate policy decision not to pursue a right to convert to continuing status for long-term teaching casuals. Against a background of increasing efforts amongst trade unions in Australia to prevent the emergence of long-term casuals, the NTEU successfully pursued conversion rights for general staff casuals, but not for teaching casuals. The fear was that long-term casuals would be only offered conversion into continuing teaching-only positions, taking the sector back to the two-tier model that had existed in the 1990s. The NTEU had maintained the position that the nexus between teaching and research was a necessary characteristic of academic positions; this is regulated in a number of ways including in the Minimum Standards for Academic Levels (MSALs) within the Higher Education Academic Salaries Award 2002 and directly and indirectly in the various provisions in enterprise agreements. Casual members of the NTEU have pointedly challenged this position. It was patently clear - at least by 2003 - that a two-tier system was clearly already in place. In many respects, as confirmed by many of the interviewees for this paper, teaching-only academics were considerably better-off as continuing teaching - only tutors than as irregularly-employed teaching-only casuals.

Ironically enough, the question was finally resolved for the NTEU in 2005 when the Federal Government imposed its 'Higher Education Workplace Relations Requirements' (HEWRRs). The Requirements specifically outlawed any restrictions on the use of fixed-term or casual contracts, and thus at a stroke negated the NTEU's existing strategy. At the NTEU national conference in late 2005 the union took

an important and perhaps historic step in committing to pursue conversion rights for all fixed-term and casual staff, including teaching staff. Again, it was pressure from staff in highly casualised universities that produced this change of strategy.

The NTEU effort to secure conversion rights across the sector is, in 2006, at an early stage of its development. Many universities have refused to consider conversion rights for teaching casuals while others, as expected, have offered the possibility of teaching-only sessional positions, including through the individually negotiated contracts outside the collective bargaining process. Critical in the up-coming process is the capacity to unionise and organise casual staff in the sector, to claim a stronger voice in the workplace. Moves by the NTEU to more directly address the situation and needs of casuals offer the possibility of greatly extending union density amongst casual academics. The NTEU policy shifts have the potential to 'pull' academic casuals into its orbit. There are, of course, also powerful 'push' factors as university managements gain new powers under the HEWRs and the 2006 'Workchoices' legislation⁶.

'Workchoices', moreover, poses a profound threat, not just to casual staff, but to all workers in the sector. The key threat is the loss of the right to bargain collectively at the university level. Loss of the right to bargain collectively threatens virtually all protections for pay and conditions in universities: both casual and continuing staff now have a direct shared interest in acting together to prevent this from happening. The shared interest is especially strong on the side of continuing staff - who have much to lose, and are now, for the first time, directly vulnerable to the potential manipulation of casual staff opinion by university managements. In mid 2006 two Australian universities had in place non - union agreements for senior staff, and university managers had signalled an interest in extending the remit of such agreements to

⁶ In 2006, the Australian government enacted what became known as the WorkChoices legislation. A group of one hundred and fifty of Australia's leading industrial relations academics raised their 'grave concerns about the historic and far-reaching changes now proposed for Australia's workplace relations and their potential effects upon Australian workplaces, workers, and our larger society and economy'. Others described how the legislation would undermine the right to collective bargaining, reshape the terms of employment, change the work-life balance and ultimately shift the share of the nation's income to profits and away from wages. (Senate Submission, Pocock 2005, JAPE Special Edition 2005)

include, potentially, all staff. If the experience in other parts of the corporatised public sector is in any way relevant to the university sector, then in the years to come the NTEU and CPSU can expect managements to actively try to frustrate the unions' efforts to regulate casual work, and to organise casual workers in the sector.

Clearly, then, the first imperative is that casuals be organised collectively with continuing staff to build their power in the workplace. This poses real challenges - not least because of perceived conflicts of interest. For resource-stretched continuing staff, off-loading some of the teaching to casual staff provides a small measure of relief from the increasing workloads; several of the casual staff who were interviewed in this study felt that improved job security for casuals would not be a priority for continuing staff. The tension between continuing and casual staff created by perceptions of competing interests and reinforced by financial pressures has the potential to divide the academic workforce in fact, it creates the opportunity for management to organise the casual workforce in ways that can temper the voices and actions of the continuing academic staff. This paper, in seeking to synthesise current research work on academic casualisation, and in conducting a qualitative investigation into the circumstances of academic casuals, is directly geared to developing strategies to counter this.

2. Recent studies of casualisation in Australia

In order to investigate the immediate experience of casualisation in academic teaching we have chosen to develop a qualitative interview-based approach. Most studies of casualisation in Australia take a quantitative approach (Wooden 1999, Buchanan 2004, Campbell 2004, Productivity Commission 2006). An important recent exception is the 'Only a Casual' report, an interview-based study that investigated the experience of casuals drawn from a number of industrial sectors (Pocock, et al 2004). A key objective of our investigation was to delineate the specific experience of academic casuals, and to reflect this, we deliberately used the framework of the 'Only a Casual' study as a starting point. We also adapted the survey instrument to reflect the findings of a separate quantitative study of academic casualisation, also undertaken in 2004, by Anne Junor (2004). The objective was to gather some qualitative data of academic casualisation to complement the more generic qualitative data and the existing sector-specific quantitative data. The research thus was aimed at filling a gap in the literature, to give

us a fuller understanding of the options available for addressing the issues faced by academic casuals.

Pocock et al: the experience of casual employees

The 2004 Pocock et al study involved fifty-five in-depth interviews with casual employees drawn in the main from retail and community services. The main objective of the study was to 'reveal the lived experience of casual work' (Pocock, et al 2004, p.16). It aimed to gauge how casual workers 'think about' their situation, to investigate 'motivations, views, contexts, [and] explanations [of their engagement in casual work]' (Pocock, et al 2004, p.24). A starting point was the long-term nature of many casual jobs, of about two and a half years, and thus the longer-term impacts of being 'only a casual'. Given assertions from some researchers and politicians that casual employment was the preferred option for casual employees, the study also sought to investigate personal preferences and constraints. It investigated the personal impacts of casual employment, in terms of job satisfaction, but also income security and life chances.

The report of the study was structured around a series of concerns, beginning with the issue of preference and flexibility, moving to the immediate experience of casual work, and finally to the implications of casual work for personal capacity, self-realisation and life-chances. The first set of issues addressed whether casuals 'like being casual', whether they prefer 'flexibility' as against permanence, and whether casual work is seen as a temporary condition, a 'path to permanency'. The focus on the experience of casual work covers issues such as 'performance, surveillance, hope', pay and conditions, training and promotion, workplace power, collective organisation and unionism. The third set of concerns, relating to personal capacity, addresses issues of sickness, holidays, health, 'relationships, social life and community', and welfare, tax, and superannuation. Finally, the study reports on casuals' commitment to work, their understanding of employers' priorities and their suggestions for how the problems they face could be addressed.

The study found three categories of casual workers: 'the positive, the ambivalent and the reluctant', the bulk being 'reluctant'. The 'positive' interviewees were part-time employees, often with a 'back-up source of income', who viewed casual status as temporary, a convenience at a particular stage in their life (mainly as students or mature age carers). Two 'key conditions' were found to drive satisfaction - 'a real say over working time through

a "reciprocal negotiating" relationship with the employer, and a back-up source of income'. These two conditions may be summarized as employer flexibility and employee autonomy; being required to be 'on call' for the employer, and being dependent upon that employer as the main or only source of income are central factors for the 'reluctant' casual. The critical factor shaping work satisfaction was having a 'good relationship' with a 'good boss'; this could deliver flexibility and some degree of security, but was unreliable as it hinged on inter-personal relationships, not on enforceable employee entitlements.

Across all categories of casuals the study found a strong desire for permanency. This reflects a desire for some protection against dismissal, but more broadly, a desire for respect in the workplace. The study found that issues of 'respect and workplace citizenship - voice, communication, training, promotion, inclusion - emerge as very important aspects of casual work for workers'. Casual status is seen as silencing, with many interviewees stating that 'permanency confers voice' (Pocock, et al 2004, p.13). Insecurity directly affects personal health as employees must sacrifice pay if they take time off for sickness or injury, and also indirectly, through such factors as 'low self-esteem... worry and stress over money and predictable work'. While some casuals can take holidays when they like, many are unable to, because 'they lack funds or are fearful of not having a job when they return'. Such conditions affect the kind of relationships that casuals form with those around them; often planning becomes difficult, in terms of day-to-day availability, but also in terms of holidays and financial planning. Finally, as casuals themselves become less committed to the job, do not express their views, and are 'excluded from contributing', the workplace itself becomes less productive.

A key emphasis of Pocock's study is on the relationship between job status, personal and community life. In the short term casualisation shifts financial costs from the employer to the worker and to the wider community, but over time it becomes counterproductive for the employer, and undermines workplace productivity. The study makes the point that is it not only casual workers who are affected:

Greater insecurity at work affects many ongoing workers and their workplaces. Precariousness produces a lower training effort, divided workplaces and less individual and collective voice. It imposes costs for productivity, for the health system and across the broader community. It silences workers in workplaces

and seriously undermines practical access to collective organisation or even individual voice... These costs - not always obvious - affect households, families, children, social life and communities. (Pocock, et al 2004, p.17).

The Junor study: a survey of casual university employees

Junor's study (2003 and 2004) is based on responses to a questionnaire distributed in 2001-2002 to nine thousand casual and fixed-term staff, both general and academic, employed on contracts of less than a year in five different universities. The universities, situated in four Australian States and Territories, were selected to represent the full range of differences in the sector. 2,494 questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of twenty-nine percent.

From this data Junor paints a detailed picture of the casual academic workforce. In the first instance she finds a clear divide between casual academics seeking permanent employment in the sector, and those who prefer their casual status. 32 percent of casual academics were hoping for an academic career, while 28 percent were happy to remain as casuals, and had no aspiration to a university career. The majority of respondents (56 percent), however, preferred a permanent position, with most of them favouring fractional permanent status.

Explaining these differences, Junor finds that 'casual status was more acceptable to people whose vocational orientation lay outside the university': these are variously categorised as 'retirees', 'outside industry experts', 'industry professional apprentices', 'cross-sectoral non-casual education workers', and the 'self-employed' (2003, p.14).⁷ Not surprisingly, for 'qualified academic jobseekers - about twenty-seven percent of the sample - there was zero preference for casual employment while for 'academic apprentices' (mostly enrolled in higher degrees) only eight percent preferred casual status. In terms of working time, there is a strong preference for the same amount of hours of work; the desire for more hours of work does not fall below forty percent for all the categories of casual academic, and rises to sixty-eight percent for 'qualified academic jobseekers'. Across all types of casual employment, women, especially those with

⁷ Even amongst these groups there is a strong preference for continuing employment: the strongest preference for casual status was amongst 'retirees' (43 percent) and 'outside industry experts' (42 percent); falling to 15 percent for 'industry professional apprentices'.

family commitments, are more likely than men to be seeking permanency.

Junor goes on to investigate job satisfaction, finding very high levels of intrinsic satisfaction amongst academic casuals. 'Interesting work' was an important issue for ninety-five of casual academics and sixty-one percent were fully satisfied on this measure. A number of other measures of importance and satisfaction were investigated; interestingly, casual general staff were found to be significantly more satisfied, with fifty-five to sixty-nine percent stating they were fully satisfied on the different measures, comparing with a range of forty to forty-six percent for academic casual staff.⁸

Eighty percent of casual academics are employed by 'word of mouth', contradicting university equal opportunities policies. Ironically, however, the data strongly illustrates the relative permanency of casual academic work; seventy percent of the respondents had worked for more than a year in their current role, and the average period of employment was 3.6 years. In terms of workload pressure, Junor's data shows very clearly the impact of increased student numbers and the prevalence of additional unpaid work; the data shows high rates of unpaid work for student consultation and for responding to emails, and also for marking, administration and supervision.

Finally, also of relevance are the findings in Junor's study about 'experiences of integration and marginalisation'. What shows up again is a sharp difference between the experience of casual academic and casual general staff, with general staff much more likely to be included in social activities, to be made aware of entitlements, to be advised on career options, and to be included in meetings and the decision-making process. On this last issue, only fifteen percent of casual academic staff agreed 'moderately' or 'strongly' that they had been

⁸ For academic casuals there was less satisfaction with issues that were considered less important, such as 'clearly defined responsibilities' (seventy-seven percent considered this important and forty percent were fully satisfied), and 'variety in the work' (sixty-nine percent considered this important and twenty-nine percent were fully satisfied). Interestingly, there is no strong dissatisfaction with work flexibility, with over seventy percent of casual academics moderately or fully satisfied with issues such as 'ability to negotiate number of hours worked', 'control over the time of day worked', control over the days of the week worked', and 'flexibility to deal with emergencies' (Junor 2003)

included in decision-making, while for general casual staff the figure was thirty-four percent.⁹

Junor investigates aspects of job insecurity experienced by casu- als. These are broken down, into several categories: labour market, employment, task, work, income, skill, representation and career insecurity (Standing, in Junor 2004). Labour market and employment insecurity is reflected in the strong desire for continuing employment. Skill insecurity and representational insecurity is reflected in minimal access to decision-making structures, even to social activities. In open-ended questions the issue of representational insecurity was nominated by twenty-eight percent of casual academics as the main concern, with issues of 'marginalisation from communication, coordination and support, lack of induction, exclusion from representation or consultation processes, and lack of peer contact or inclusion in the social life of their workplace', cited as key issues (Junor 2003, pp. 21-22). Finally, Junor adds 'career insecurity' to Standing's typology, arguing this is especially salient for casual academic staff.

3. Academic casuals at City University - a qualitative study

The survey

City University is one of the most casualised universities in Australia. AVCC figures show that in 1998 at City University twenty-two percent of full-time equivalent positions were casualised, and that by 2001 the proportion had reached thirty percent. In 2001, responding to union concerns, the University conducted a survey of all academic casuals. The University distributed the survey to the 5,944 casual academic staff who had been employed in Spring semester 2001, and 3,596 casuals responded, a response rate of fifty-eight percent.

The survey responses showed that 1,795 casuals, approximately fifty percent, were performing 'core teaching duties'.¹⁰ Of the remainder, twenty-eight percent were

⁹ On other measures of inclusion - such as having contact with other staff, getting useful performance feedback, getting advice on job requirements - about forty-five percent of academic casual respondents moderately or strongly agreed they had adequate access.

¹⁰ Casuals who ticked the box for this option were agreeing to the description of the reason for casual employment: 'The casual academic will perform core teaching duties which are in excess of the workload that can be handled by the permanent staff within the school. Further

performing professional or specialist functions, sixteen percent were post-graduate students and six percent were temporarily replacing permanent staff. The survey also asked casuals whether their casual work was the 'primary source of employment or income', finding forty-four percent fitted this category. In terms of career aspiration, twenty-one percent of respondents were seeking full-time permanent academic employment; seventeen percent were not (respondents were not offered the option of part-time permanent work as a preference).

These results, viewed in the light of both the 'Only a Casual' and Junor studies, highlight several key issues and questions for research.

First is the issue of income security and job satisfaction. Academic casuals are especially unhappy both with their hours of work and with the lack of job security: As Pocock et al reveal for casuals in general, income insecurity is a major issue for casuals who are relatively long-term and are dependent on their casual income. A sizeable proportion of academic casuals conform to both these conditions: Junor's data confirms the long-term nature of casual academic work, and the City University survey, as noted, found that nearly half of the respondents depended on casual income. Furthermore, the work process and payment regime for academic casuals imposes its specific conditions and pressures; employment security is never for more than a semester (fourteen weeks) and, as Junor's study reveals, often does not reflect the hours that are worked.

Job satisfaction directly relates to the issue of income security and Junor's work demonstrates that this is especially important for academic casuals; ninety-five percent of respondents cited 'interesting work' as important to them. This may be predictable as teaching allows a degree of autonomy and is associated with a semi-professional status, offering the possibility of satisfaction intrinsic to the work process. The fact that sixty-five percent of Junor's respondents were 'fully satisfied' that their work was interesting certainly suggests that casual teaching fulfils its promise but the fact that another thirty-percent remained less than fully satisfied suggests that the conditions surrounding this work may be a significant source of dissatisfaction.

the employment of casual academic staff represents a more cost effective and efficient way of fulfilling the duties than appointing additional permanent full-time or part-time staff'.

The second is the issue of life course. Pocock et al deliberately explore the implications of casualisation for quality of life issues, such as personal capacity, self-realisation and life-chances. These factors highlight the extent to which casual workers are unable to plan ahead, and as a result, over the long term, are unable to take holidays, to plan for a family, to raise a loan or a mortgage. Junor's findings that academic casuals are on average likely to be in the job for close to four years, and that a third of casuals aspire to academic employment, while another quarter want greater job security, suggest the likelihood of considerable personal frustration. Using Pocock et al's terminology, we should categorise the bulk of academic casual staff as 'reluctant' casuals, with the vast majority seeking paths to permanency.

The third is the issue of voice and identity in the workplace. Again, these issues are a general concern for all casuals, but are particularly sharply posed for academic casuals. Pocock et al particularly stress the impact of casual status on workplace 'voice', finding a strong tendency for casuals to be excluded and silenced. The results in terms of worker low self-esteem are seen as particularly important for both workplace productivity and for 'relationships, social life and community'. Junor finds this to be a particular issue for casual academics as against casual general staff. The finding that casual general staff respondents were twice as likely to agree they had been included in University decision-making suggests that academic casuals are in a category of their own. Pocock et al emphasise that workplace voice - what they call 'workplace citizenship' - is a key determinant of job satisfaction. According to Junor's data, such 'workplace citizenship' is only available to fifteen percent of academic casuals (as against thirty-five percent of casual general staff). In this context it may be predicted that, as Pocock et al outline, the casual experience becomes entirely contingent upon having a 'good relationship' with a 'good boss', and indeed, it may be speculated this dependence is especially deepened where the casual academic depends on informal networks to be re-employed each semester, and has career aspirations in the sector.

The research interviews discussed here were organised around these three broad themes and the questions that they raise.

The first theme, job satisfaction and income insecurity, explores the sources of satisfaction for casual academics. Given the importance of 'interesting work' for the job

satisfaction of casual academics, we wanted to explore the balance between expectations and frustrations, and possibilities for improving satisfaction. Income insecurity was in some respects, the logical corollary of job satisfaction, insofar as it was seen as a limiting factor in literally limiting the amount of time casual academics were paid to attend to teaching and teaching-related activities. The second theme, life course, again flowed from discussion of income insecurity insofar as it has an impact on conditions of life outside the workplace. The discussion here centred on career aspirations and frustrations, and on the long-term context of dependence on casual income. The third theme, workplace voice, attracted considerable comment from respondents; the capacity to have a role in workplace decision-making would seem to be both particularly important and particularly lacking for casual academics. Finally, the interviews explored the priorities for casuals, in terms of their perspective on the role of the staff union, and what changes they would like to see, within the faculty, in higher education or more generally in society.

The overall objective of the research was to elaborate on the quantitative data gathered by the University in 2001, and to compare the experience of university casuals with the findings of Pocock et al's study on casual workers (2004). To achieve this, the research was centred around qualitative interviews, using an adapted version of the interview schedule used in the Pocock study (2004, pp. 196-199). A key objective was to gather personal narratives, highlighting the immediate life experiences and aspirations of casual worker, drawing on the three themes outlined above.

Interviewees were drawn from two faculties, both with a high level of academic casualisation. Interviewees were self-selecting; after responding to a general email sent to all casual staff in the two Faculties they arranged to meet with the interviewer, who was a researcher unconnected to the university. The anonymous interview tapes were then transcribed by an off-campus transcriber, and then analysed by the authors of this paper. In total, twenty-five of these interviews were conducted, each lasting for approximately one hour.

Interview participants provided some personal details that were helpful in giving a sense of the general demographic. Of the twenty-five interviewees, eighteen were women, and seventeen were in the thirty-to-fifty age-bracket. Thirteen of the interviewees had children or other dependents and twelve of these were living in dual-income households. Of

the remainder without dependents, there were eight interviewees in dual-income households and four in single-income households. Five interviewees had a household income below twenty thousand dollars, seven had an income between twenty and thirty thousand dollars, and five had an income between thirty and forty thousand dollars. In terms of educational qualifications, all had undergraduate degrees, thirteen had Masters degrees and five had doctoral degrees. Significantly, fifteen of the interviewees were enrolled in post-graduate degrees, including twelve in doctoral studies.

The experiences of casual academic employees at City University

The following discussion of the interview data is organised into the three strands of analysis, and is designed to draw out some broader perspectives on the experiences of casual academic teachers. These perspectives are summarised in the conclusion to the paper.

(i) Work intensity and job satisfaction

The interviews began with questions about the contract of employment and the kind of work casuals were expected to undertake. The tension between what casuals had signed up for and what they were expected to do was a key initial concern. Interviewees were asked how far their contract of employment reflected their actual activities as a casual academic. Those participants who were aware of the details of their contract described it as only stipulating their basic duties. No interviewee understood the formula for calculating their hourly rate of pay, whether for teaching or marking. Those who were aware of the expectation that casual tutors undertake two hours of associated duties including preparation, student consultation and marking for every hour of tutoring were unclear as to how this could be achieved. In all cases the process of allocating hours of pay was a mystery, and occurred without consultation.

Some, like Kate¹¹, are frustrated they cannot distinguish between what is explicit in their contract and what is implicit:

No, I'm not happy because I don't understand what it is that I'm getting paid for and I've never been given clarification even though I've sought clarification and I've sought clarification under what I thought are very, you know, I felt a lot

¹¹ The names of the interviewees have been changed.

of reluctance and I felt that I can't pursue the issue. (Kate)

Others are fully aware of the discrepancy between the hours they work and what they are contracted for, but believe there is nothing to be gained by questioning how the time commitment is calculated. Lola puts it simply - 'I find I'm often doing more than specified in the contract' and Fred states '...to be honest, I sign that blue form that says hours and I disagree with it but it's the way it is, I guess'.

Some interviewees very specifically mentioned additional costs incurred from casual teaching - such as transport costs, the cost of buying books, the cost of having a home computer, printer and email and the cost of providing for child care - that were directly incurred as a result of teaching. Charlotte for instance describes this as a 'negative earning issue', of having to 'pay \$80 to come to a meeting for which I'm paid \$25'. Scott also commented specifically on the costs of teaching, in this case for a Masters program:

You have to be an idiot as a casual person to teach in the Masters degree because the amount of work that you've got for two hours pay it's just not worth it... by the time you pay a toll or parking, you've got to buy books yourself, you don't get any support like that. The library often doesn't have the latest books so if you want to teach your subject up to the present, you have to use the money you're getting from your teaching to go into the bookshop and buy books. And if it's a Masters level you have to be really up to date.... (Scott)

In terms of working time, the overwhelming majority of interviewees felt that the hours allocated in their contract in no way reflected the amount of work they did. Time needed for student consultation, emailing students, online teaching, preparation for classes and marking were felt to be inadequately reflected in their contract. Time allocated for marking was felt to be systematically inadequate.

Many spend more time than is allocated, out of a concern to give students adequate feedback. Alice spends about double the allocated time:

I suppose it takes 15, 20 minutes for each one. So quite frequently with my partner standing over saying you don't have to do this, but I can't. I just can't

see the point in teaching if I don't respond to them. And I get good feedback from them generally... But I'm shitty about it and I'm starting to wonder whether it's worth it. (Alice)

This issue of the payment for marking was a recurring issue in many of the interviews. Like Alice, Barry spends more time than is allocated:

I'm probably quite slow. But the other thing is, it's about honouring the effort that the person made who did the thing. And sometime they might not have made any effort so in fact that makes it a lot harder because you can't work out what the hell they're talking about. (Barry)

Isabella confirms the problem:

I do have some money for marking... I don't know how they calculate it, but it's really nothing that would be what I'm actually doing in reality. (Isabella)

A number of interviewees were concerned about over-crowded classrooms, increased difficulty in class allocations and problems with classroom facilities, equipment and support. Several interviewees stated that workloads for casuals are increasing, primarily due to larger class sizes, more demanding students, and increased use of online learning platforms. A long-term casual, Scott stated:

it's my impression that the workload is increasing... Saturday classes, Sunday classes... classes are getting larger... as the class gets bigger you just simply get more work... there's a sense of the workload has just got bigger and bigger and bigger but the amount of money you get isn't... (Scott)

The rising expectations of students - especially fee-paying students - can also be a factor, along with the necessity to engage on email and online. Students often assume casual staff have the time to engage with them - as Scott puts it - 'they assume you've got plenty of time available to talk to them'. These expectations are extended with the advent of email and online teaching. Large classes of students in which there are many students needing English language and/or academic literacy support may also force casuals to work beyond their contracted hours. Juliet summarised concerns that were voiced by many interviewees:

there's more and more expected of us in terms of virtual contact with the students... there's a lot of expectation that you'll be in email contact with your students and I find that really time consuming because to word something carefully, by email you don't have those non-verbal cues... a lot of our students are non-English speaking background international students, so I find it a bit of a problem that there's an expectation to meet with them, to consult with them by email... if I want to meet with people I'm doing it in my own time... I have been feeling more and more like there's more being asked (Juliet).

Winnie stressed the additional factor of special needs students, who often require additional attention:

It's over and beyond what's specified in the contract and it can be time consuming. These are students with special needs that you have to make all kinds of allowances for and certainly there's a lot of communication, a lot of encouragement and all that sort of thing. (Winnie)

Others also expressed the view that the more you are re-engaged to teach in the same area, the more expectations are implicitly placed on doing "extra" work such as updating course material and doing work that is part of the fulltime subject coordinator's work. In these circumstances casual staff can feel they carry the whole burden of teaching. Charlotte experiences the process in this way:

... the whole onus of the course falls on the casual, in terms of even supplying the material, in doing all the photocopying, what are you going to give the students to read, you know, photocopy it all yourself, you're going to bring it all to class, you're going to teach for three hours and then you're going to mark for free. And then you're going to do student consultation for free and answer all their emails for free. (Charlotte)

Remarkably, despite these experiences of under-payment and work-intensification, casual teachers, on the whole, remain deeply committed to the craft of teaching. Across all the respondents there is great enthusiasm for the learning process, and commitment to students. Scott expresses a love for teaching shared by many:

..., I genuinely love it. And I enjoy the intellectual growth which has to occur as part of it... my students are very good, you get some very fine people, ..., who

are really interested in issues so I'm sure at the end of the class I've learnt as much as they have so I enjoy that immensely. (Scott)

There is often a pride in the craft of teaching - as an end in itself. Kate's position is shared by others: 'I do it because I see it as a vocation. ... so the fact that it's done well is something I take seriously'.

In a context where casual staff are only paid for tightly-defined activities, commitment to the students and to their learning is in direct conflict with casuals capacity to deliver within the scope of their paid hours. Casual academics are generally told not to work beyond the hours they are paid for, but often this is impossible.

Many casuals expressed frustration about not being able to conduct their work at the quality they wanted. Many are caught in a cleft stick - between disappointing students and working for free. Most undertake unpaid activities: Jenny puts it simply - 'I think casual workers are always putting in more than they get paid for'.

For many casual academics it is a matter of professional pride - above all of respecting the learning process - that drives them to undertake the extra unpaid activities. In large part the interviewees see this as a necessary evil - if they want to be able to teach at an acceptable standard they will have to work for free. Scott put it thus: 'what's increasingly happened really I think is that to do your job well you have to give the extra time for nothing, I feel that very strongly'.

The key issue for marking is the question of adequate feedback. Alice expressed very clearly the intellectual process this involves:

I took all the exercises home and I've read every single exercise and I wrote on every single exercise. And I know that that's not an actual requirement, there's nowhere in the contract that said I had to do that and I know other teachers don't do that and I don't at all think less of them for not doing it because it's a huge amount of work. But I don't get any satisfaction out of teaching if I don't actually respond to the students... What's the point of teaching if you don't? (Alice)

Crystal sees it as a simple issue of respecting the students and the effort they have put into their assignments:

I think as far as a learning experience, if they don't actually get really considered feedback to the work that they've put considerable amount of time into that it's not really paying them respect and I think that actually reflects in the sort of work that they produce as well. (Crystal)

Several interviewees resented having to choose between sacrificing themselves or their students. Lola expressed the dilemma very clearly: 'it's a hard balance to do what you think is right for the students and also not feel like you're...that you're being unnecessarily exploited'. Alice, again, expresses something of the personal dilemmas that result:

I just find it really irritating that I have to sort of have this kind of personal crusade in order to feel satisfied with my teaching and to feel that the students are satisfied with teaching. Because obviously it's important to me to be liked and respected and all that kind of thing as well as professional stuff so that's partly why I do it. (Alice)

Many interviewees stated that the primary reason the university had employed them was to save money on teaching, and understood this as reflecting the financial difficulties of the higher education sector. Many felt that they were simply the "cheaper option". Asked why she thought the university employed casuals Kate replies:

... I assume it's because it makes financial sense. Because if I was to sit down and look at the hours that I put into a course, to administer and teach and prepare to run these tutorials - ..., they're not just tutorials where students come in and discuss, we're actually involved in a teaching process. And if I had to break that down, ..., financially it's not really rewarding. I might be lucky to make \$25 an hour if I was to consider all the hours that I put in. So, in terms of going outside the university the pay here is not at all competitive. I assume that they've got the same logic...it's a bit cynical but I think there must be something in that.. (Kate)

A number of interviewees felt that the university was exploiting their goodwill and enthusiasm to maintain teaching standards. There is a cynicism about the university's intentions, and bitterness about the impact on their ability to meet student needs. Lola puts it thus: 'I

think it's a very convenient way of them getting energetic and enthusiastic staff for not a lot of money, not a lot of outlay'. Kaz agrees, outlining three imperatives driving University casualisation:

'I think we are less expensive. I think we give a lot more than we're paid to give. And I think we have a certain industry interaction that's valuable to the university'. (Kaz)

In a conversation with the interviewer, Winnie expressed a widespread resentment:

*Winnie: I'm involved with the students, I really appreciate the students, I love teaching, I love watching their learning process. I get inspired by that. But that's the only thing that keeps me going.
Interviewer: I think it's very reliant on that though.
Winnie: Absolutely. They get the best of us for bugger all. (laughs)... (Winnie)*

(ii) Life course and casual teaching work

As with all casual workers, academic casuals live with a permanent sense of insecurity. However, casual academic teaching work is especially unstable in being centred on semester contracts, which even if they are renewed, only provide an income for twenty-six weeks of the year. Added to this is the likelihood that such contracts are limited to perhaps six hours work per week. The result is that the casual academic workforce is a highly marginalized, albeit professional, segment of the workforce.

These insecurities directly affect the life course and personal circumstances of casuals. Amy for instance described the insecurity as 'really stressful', in terms of undermining the 'ability to plan your life'. Rick agreed, arguing 'there's a real need to recognise that level of stress involved in being a casual, how it impacts all different aspects of your life'.

Half the respondents said they had children to care for, and were living on relatively low incomes, of between \$20,000 and \$40,000. Most stated that planning for their lives was difficult, particularly for women with children; for Lola 'it's really a big juggle exercise... you just juggle as you can'. The lack of paid leave, such as sick leave or maternity leave, exacerbates the problems. The mere mention of holidays raises eyebrows. Fred, a long-term

casual, comments: 'I can't remember the last time I had a holiday'.

A key concern for casuals is whether they will be re-employed in the next semester. Every semester there is a struggle to find enough work; not surprisingly work is usually found by personal recommendation and word-of-mouth. Juliet clearly illustrates the process:

I sent out about 25 expression-of-interest letters trying to get teaching work. And the only one, the only thing that paid off really was the fact that I had some contact with the person who employed me. (Juliet)

Rick is especially angered by the common practice of calling in casuals at the last minute:

I think it's unfortunate when academics ring up three days before semesters start and say "just confirming the work" - I think that's disgusting ... (Rick)

Scott recounted the confusion and disappointment that can result:

I don't know if I have any more teaching next year or not. No idea... In the first term this year, two people turned up for classes, part timers, and [then] the classes were cancelled. They assumed they had a class, they came on the night to run the class and the class was cancelled. So there's no predictability or anything like that. (Scott)

For some, the uncertainty is demeaning. Due to a delay in the processing of her contract Juliet was not paid until six weeks into the semester, and she felt it was 'just really disrespectful, and humiliating to have to then go and say I need to be paid because I need to pay my rent'. The permanent uncertainties about re-engagement breed a sense of personal vulnerability. Barry illustrates how this works:

I think that I'm safe to assume now that I will be offered work next semester, unless I've pissed somebody off by ranting and raving too much. But it's not confirmed officially, generally, until a few weeks out. (Barry)

Vulnerability can have the effect of silencing critical voices. Anna notes the universal assumption - 'any casual

lecturer is always conscious of the fact that you don't want to perhaps draw attention to yourself too much in case you're perceived as a nuisance or somebody who's requiring too much attention and so forth'.

As Rick states, casual academics may not feel confident to voice their concerns in the workplace, particularly when they are seen to be promoting political views:

*I also think that as a casual you tend to feel precarious in your political position as well because you're in a precarious position for five or six months, if you have a concern or if you want to take part in a strike or whatever. But there are rumblings amongst casuals, they do feel that basically their industrial freedoms are a lot more precarious than say fulltime staff.
(Rick)*

Importantly, many interviewees stressed that casual academic work was not flexible; casuals cannot stipulate or in most cases negotiate when they want to work and the amount of hours they require. They are offered work on a take-it or leave-it basis. Only those on research degree scholarships tended to feel a little more secure. Many interviewees would prefer a more predictable arrangement that allowed more flexibility for them rather than for the University. Winnie, for instance, is adamant:

*Interviewer: Some people say that being casual gives you flexibility...
Winnie: Crap.
Interviewer: What do you think about that?
Winnie: It doesn't suit me at all. I'd much rather work fulltime.*

The mention of flexibility elicits more laughter from Kaz:

*Interviewer: Some people say that being a casual gives you flexibility, what do you think of that statement?
Kaz: (laughs). I think I have no money for Christmas presents for my children. (laughs). I think that's a bit bogus. I don't feel it's given me flexibility. I'd have a lot more flexibility if I knew my timetable from year to year, I'd be much more able to manage everything else that I want to do. As it is, I teach casually at three or four institutions, they're all on different timetables, it's a nightmare.*

For many casuals the sessional nature of casual academic work, that is, the lack of work other than

during the semester weeks, directly poses financial difficulties. In Kaz's case the 'nightmare' is having no money for Christmas presents for her children; for James the problem is not being able to take regular work;

The big difficulty about working casually, especially teaching, is that when the semester's not on you're not getting paid ... (James)

For Alice and her partner, who is also a casual academic, the time between semesters is a time of financial difficulty:

We need the money so much that we're not in a position to save during the semester so we often find that we have very lean times in the holidays, so that's difficult. (Alice)

Without a regular income, casual academics are often unable to access credit, or even to commit to an on-going tenancy. Kate would like to be able to make plans about her housing, but can't due to the irregular nature of casual academic work:

It's very difficult as somebody who's employed in casual work to commit to anything in the long term, whether it's committing to a lease on a place or get a loan..., there's just no long term planning so you just don't know where you are. You only (plan) in six month increments, you know...(Kate)

Inability to plan financially also means inability to plan for future caring responsibilities or relationships. For Juliet the uncertainty prevents the possibility of planning to have children:

my partner and I have been considering having... a baby but she works as a casual academic as well... and it's really hard to contemplate taking on that kind of a responsibility with not knowing if I'll be employed again next year and also not being able to get the amount of work I want. (Juliet)

This exchange with Kaz illustrates the frustrations:

Interviewer: On a more personal level, you mentioned before about not knowing when your next job's going to be, how does that affect your ability to plan as far

as housing, holidays, children.

Kaz: (laughs). That's a very stressful question.

Interviewer: Sorry.

*Kaz: No, no, it's alright, it's just that it's impossible, it's completely impossible. I can't plan - financially speaking - it's very difficult to have your wages drop out at the middle of November and not pick up again until the beginning of March. ... the best I can succinctly say, is that that's very harrowing.
(Kaz)*

Given the uncertainties and insecurities, one may reasonably ask why casual academics remain in the higher education sector; it is surprising how many casuals remain in the sector on a relatively long-term basis. As noted, a major reason is a sheer love of the job; another is the expectation or hope of some kind of more secure employment in the future.

While recognizing the problems of casual work, some continue to work in universities in the hope that this will eventually lead to an academic job with greater security. Damian is a good example of a long-term casual who is seeking more secure employment in the sector:

I've worked part time for 15 years. I've worked as a casual at TAFE before university, for six or seven years ... the biggest effect for me is that I can't see a lot of long term future, the only reason I'm still doing it is because I hope to get a permanent job (Damien)

Nell, who was working as a casual academic while studying for a PhD on a scholarship is more optimistic:

I'm in a unique position. I was awarded an Australian post-graduate award for my PhD and I applied to the university for their academic internship scheme. They guarantee me work, from two to six hours every semester of my PhD candidature to get your foot in the door... And I think that it will work that way for me. (Nell)

James, another postgraduate student also expresses confidence in casual employment as a stepping stone:

*I would hope that it would definitely help if I chose to continue an academic career. Whether or not I actually do that depends on a number of variables. But I expect that it would help.
(James)*

Others are less optimistic, although they continue to seek opportunities for a more secure position in the university sector. Molly is adamant that casual status is not a stepping-stone:

No. It's almost the opposite. It's really obvious that the opportunities aren't here for that and...in a way I think there's a sense that they know that if you've come in on a casual basis for five years you'll probably come in on a casual basis for another five years. (Molly)

Charlotte, while also seeking security, sees a decreasing number of continuing positions available, especially at the lowest 'Lecturer A' level. The result is frustration and disappointment. A few who were interviewed have all but given up waiting for suitable vacancies to emerge. Marie has 'hit the dust':

I thought that if you were a good casual and reliable and did more, did good work, that would give you some added value in the workplace and would help, ... - I think in a normal workplace it would ensure that you got some sort of permanent position but in my experience it doesn't. I've seen many - not just me - but many of my colleagues have hit the dust...' (Marie)

This is despite demonstrating a deep commitment to the job:

I think I've done all the right things, really. I've been really compliant, responded, got ..., successful projects funding, I'm in the final days of my PhD, I've...gone overseas at the drop of a hat, literally, to the detriment of my family. I've worked to the detriment of myself and the family in terms of hours and coming back from holidays early to enrol students and...(Marie)

Several interviewees were finding the situation impossible, and after some years as a casual academic, were looking elsewhere. Many, like Juliet, were reconsidering their options:

I'm really at this crossroads ..., maybe I'll just have to figure out another career option..., I've actually planned to get a Masters, start applying for teaching work, casually, do a couple of years of that for

experience and then be applying for - but it's like the pathways to go any further don't seem to be there at the moment... Yeah, I'm just like really disillusioned, actually. (Juliet)

Winnie, also, is looking elsewhere:

Yes, it has affected my family. I have four adult children (who) study fulltime so we still support them. It's hard, it's hard. I have to be earning an income. I can't sit around for much longer pretending that there's some possibility of finding employment in the thing I want to do so I'm going to have to apply for other work, other options. (Winnie)

(iii) Casual identity in the workplace

Casuals academics feel isolated from the university community. The interviewees confirmed Junor's finding that a key aspect of isolation is inadequate access to facilities. The majority of interviewees found that the facilities provided for casual staff were inadequate, with some casuals sharing an office with up to 14 others, often with no provision for storing material. Most understood what should be provided to them, but felt this was compromised. Nell comments:

... old computers were being dumped in the part time room, they didn't work properly...there was not enough space for the number of people who were sharing it and the room was used by visiting people, it just seemed to be a room where people were sent or told that that was available to them if they needed to use computers... (Nell)

These kinds of comments are common. Fred realised the necessity simply to claim his entitlements:

I just squatted where I was... I just sat at a desk, just took a desk... I had to fight to get a pigeon hole (Fred)

The sense of alienation from the workplace is greatly exacerbated by the failure to provide simple facilities, such as a space to store teaching materials. The symbolic importance of a place to put things, if not a place to sit, or a phone or computer to use, is greatly magnified. Scott conveys something of this in his comments:

I share a room with I don't know how many other

people... you don't necessarily have a desk... I don't have a dedicated phone number, I don't have a dedicated computer... I've (at least) got my little cupboard, that's my office... (Scott)

Anna had her own solution to the absence of facilities - by adopting a marginal identity she could dismiss any illusions she may have:

I put myself into a carton and I thought, well, in a way, that's quite good because it accentuates the temporary nature of this employment and it makes me not have any illusions that I'm anything except a very temporary employee. (Anna)

Others avoid the experience entirely. Kaz, for instance, avoids the casuals' room:

The casuals' office, last time I put my head in the door there were nine people in there or something, in a little cupboard sized space. (Kaz)

As a result, many casuals do as much work as they can from home. Winnie's comments are typical:

Interviewer: What about facilities here as a casual teacher, how do you find facilities?

Winnie: Ghastly. There are none. In both semesters I've shared an office with fourteen other casual staff, two computers... when I first came here, I really needed an office, ... I learnt, second time round, use it as little as possible, just come in to do photocopying and any official documentation. (Winnie)

Molly confirms the tendency:

Well, it's pretty much do it yourself ... You learn to be completely independent and I do think you find you're using a lot of your own resources at home, your computer at home, your printer at home, email, all that sort of stuff ...(Molly)

In the process, casuals are physically isolated from the university community; often the only contact is with subject supervisors, and then, only in a very limited sense. They are also isolated in terms of the intellectual community.

Many respondents were unaware that professional development was available to casuals. Juliet was disappointed not to be able to gain access to teacher training or staff

development, and was especially concerned that there was no opportunity for critical reflection on her own teaching practice and performance:

There are feedback sheets at the end of semester, we just collect in our classrooms and we get no information from that... in other jobs where you're a permanent you get a, what do you call it, an appraisal, a yearly appraisal. That would be worthwhile. If you worked with them for a year, say, and they were obliged to give you a performance review... (Juliet)

The sense of intellectual isolation extends to relations in the workplace with continuing staff members. Most of the interviewees feel that they are treated differently by fulltime staff members. In some cases, casual academics expressed a general sense of invisibility, and lack of voice and recognition as part of the workforce:

Well you're not a real staff member, you're not at staff meetings, you're not aware of what is happening in the university in a broader sense, you have no idea what direction things are going. You're just picked up the week before the semester starts and dropped when the semester ends. (Molly)

Lucy reinforces Molly's view:

I don't think what the casuals say, unless they became a collective voice, would carry any particular weight, unless it was a major drama that had occurred that required attention of senior faculty members. (Lucy)

Interviewees expressed considerable frustration about lack of access to the professional work of their respective faculties. Their intellectual marginality is expressed in their exclusion from discussions about the subjects and courses they teach. Despite having a working identity as a teaching professional, casual academics are not generally consulted about the content, delivery of, or student feedback on, the subjects on which they are working. For Amy:

That's the worst bit about it, really, that you're not included in any way. You're not included in any sort of course planning. (Amy)

For Crystal, there is sharp bifurcation between casual and

permanent staff:

there's a little bit of a class system I think at the moment, that the people that have a say in and know the background to why decisions are made are permanent staff...it's almost that we're incidental to those sort of processes. (Crystal)

She calls for 'a more inclusive approach', specifically for greater paid involvement of casual staff in the planning and preparation of subjects so that they are aware of and have an input into the pedagogical regime within which they are teaching:

I'd like for there to be some preparation time built in to be actually part of the faculty process of preparing the subject at the beginning of the semester. I don't like being out of the loop, not knowing what's actually going into decisions that the faculty makes about approaches to subjects... Being out of that loop is quite hard. (Crystal)

Lola also sees this as an important issue, arguing that exclusion of casual academics from these preparatory processes undermines the teaching and learning experience:

I think casuals have a lot to offer in terms of inputting about the way courses are run or issues of the process of teaching... they're used to the structure of the course, they understand the educational principles - so they have a lot to offer. There's a real kind of exclusion from that, which is a pity I think... You just come in, do your job... do it as best you can and then you go. (laughs) (Lola)

Several interviewees feel they are being wasted. Juliet put it simply: 'I feel completely left out and I feel really cranky about it... I just feel like I'm being kind of wasted, do you know what I mean?' Anna was very specific, citing the need to be involved in discussions of how components of subjects fit into broader programs of study, stating 'I'd like to sit around with the people who are doing my subject and work out what we put in to each one'.

Over time, passive institutional ostracism can feel like a personal insult. Marie makes a plea for a process of simply engaging with casuals, in the first instance to acknowledge and thank them for their work:

Our meetings with casuals have turned into these perfunctory meetings where we just talk about

absolute core business around the running of the course and subject. Initially we had much broader discussions with people about working, more professional discussions, whereas now they're just like admin and I think that's a shame. But I think it would be good... to have some communication with faculty management... validate your work. Even a thank you, in some ways, would be - I mean, it sounds silly to say that but it's just so invalidated, casual work ...those interpersonal things, I think, are important at that management level. (Marie)

For many, it is the lack of recognition, of what casuals do for the university that is most painful. Several felt that they were putting a lot of work into an unresponsive system that took them for granted, and where they had no voice in the decision-making process. Marie believes her commitment is not respected:

It sounds mingy to say but I've put a lot of extra time in. Even as a casual I've gone overseas to work (through) the faculty. And that's never been acknowledged. I mean, I loved it but after a while, I'm not going to do that any more, it's too expensive for me. (Marie)

Disrespect is conveyed in the dismissive attitude and assumptions that circulate amongst the permanent staff. Winnie cites assumptions such as 'aren't they lucky, they can just pop in and out, they don't have to be here all the time, they don't have to make that commitment to the institution... they're well paid'. She argues the university does not know how to relate to casuals as co-professionals. She is particularly dismissive of an introductory meeting for casuals, held in a Faculty at the start of each semester:

... where you're talked at like a mob of children about how wonderful you are and how you're the backbone of the place, blah di blah, and this is what you have to do and these are all the rules and regulations. That's the only time I've seen everybody get together. (Winnie)

Such comments suggest frustration and anger about the lack of recognition of the casuals' professional status and their willingness and ability to make further input. Jenny echoes these themes:

Something that formalises where you are and where you

fit and what your place is in the bigger picture. Certainly some sort of formal recognition of you as a member of a team or of a faculty even. And then, I guess, some recognition of the amount of work that is put into it... I just feel like we're a bit disposable to them and that they just, often it's at the very last minute, they'll just scramble around for who to get and they'll just pull you on board and there's no sense of perhaps building for something more permanent. (Juliet)

The sense of being both isolated and expendable is corrosive. Scott highlights the direct impacts that this kind of disenchantment can have on the learning process:

one of the things which happens as a casual is that you can be very much on your own. You can come in and do your class and then you can leave and you don't feel contact with people... a lot of people teach for a while as part timers and say why bother, that's it. Or people become very cynical. Or people don't put the effort into things. (Scott)

Winnie also highlights some of these broader consequences of not feeling part of a broader intellectual community:

If you're not part of an intellectual community, I don't believe you can operate indefinitely in a vacuum. And I'm certainly finding that an issue... gradually your confidence is eroded and your work dissipates... It doesn't encourage you to invest yourself in the place... I'm actually a really collegially-oriented person so coming in and teaching is important to me. (Winnie)

Other interviewees contrasted the broadly negative institutional setting with the more positive relationship they have with their immediate academic supervisor - usually the coordinator of the subject in which they are teaching. Some interviewees are regularly and directly engaged in the review of subjects, and are paid for the time they put in. Alice's experience is instructive, in terms of the benefits of such involvement:

She meets with me regularly, she asks me to come in, she keeps in touch with me, makes sure things are going well... She is respectful of the fact that we have different methods of teaching - not vastly differently methods but that we have slightly different things that we actually do in a class. She always invites me

to participate when we're redeveloping a reader or redeveloping the course itself, and I get paid for that... Most of us are casuals and the people who are permanent were casuals before that so they know what it's like so there's no sense of being treated differently at all, they're really respectful. And the students sense that. (Alice)

Not all interviewees had a positive experience with their subject coordinator. Molly for instance commented that she only met her supervisor "for ten seconds in the hallway". For Barry the lack of involvement undermines the quality of teaching:

... certain problems with just basic stuff - the reader, topics, whatever, have been identified by me and other people but they don't get rectified. Next year comes, we've got exactly the same problems... The subject that I am teaching needs to be drastically re-jigged. So aside from the fact that I sort of feel that at an institutional level I'm being ripped off, I feel that that's compounded by the lack of coordination. Or inadequate sort of structure and resources for that subject. (Barry)

Rick, on the other hand, commented that in his area, the fulltime staff are very accessible, and he could sit with them and talk through the issues that he had in his work. Much of the relationship with the supervisor and access to facilities appear to rely on "chance" or "being around for a long enough time to know who and how to access things", rather than a coordinated approach to supporting all casual staff. Lucy is a good example of this; she has been teaching casually in her faculty for four years, but also has a fractional position in the same faculty.

I don't have any problems. Probably because I've been doing this sort of thing for a while. I would just ask, actually. So I think I have pretty good access to what I need when I need it, within budgetary constraints, of course. (Lucy)

Jenny is in a similar situation, in terms of having an influence on the teaching process, again, 'because I had an existing relationship with the academics that I've been teaching for and they know my background and my expertise'.

Clearly the relationships established between casual and continuing staff are contingent upon their interpersonal relationships; the university provides little structural

support for productive working relationships to be established. However, a broader tendency is identified by a number of interviewees, of a sharp hierarchical divide. Scott, for instance, is closely involved in subject development, but draws a clear line between engagement with a subject supervisor and with the wider university. He says he has never been consulted on any matter by the university, and adds:

I don't see myself as working for the university, I think that's important. I work for [the subject coordinators], I don't work for the university. And I have as little as possible to do with it, I don't have any contact with the university at all because I've learnt from experience that it's just not valuable.
(Scott)

Barry and James explain this in terms of the structures of the academic workplace.

As far as the fulltime academics, you're most definitely, a second class citizen on the whole. Not all of them, but you know... there is most definitely a hierarchy and some people, as in any environment, their position in that hierarchy is extremely important to them and they enforce it.
(Barry)

For James these divisions reflect the pragmatic context, where casuals are simply not available:

Being casual greatly limits what you can do in the workplace in terms of having an input into your professional role... You're likely to have been here for a shorter time, you're in and out of the place for a couple of days a week or something and if you can't do your job then someone else just does it. (laughs). If you leave the place, it's not like it matters. So it's difficult to have that kind of impact. (James)

For others, such as Anna, there is an important social divide between the two categories of workers. She especially emphasises the extent to which casuals develop their own milieu, separate from that of the continuing staff:

there's a bit of a sense of difference between - the permanent lecturers seem to have a kind of life of their own. I'm friendly with a few of the part timers and we have a sort of esprit de corps but there's not a lot of interaction with the permanent people... [But]

I don't think that we really should (feel separate) because we're all involved in the same enterprise. (Anna)

Very interestingly, Kaz notes that this may be reinforced by students, who 'do sometimes perceive that the casuals are sort of on their side while the permanents are, ah, they're the administration kind of thing'. The cleavage then may be between casuals and students on the one hand, and continuing staff and the university administration on the other. Fred states, in no uncertain terms, that he is 'really aware of my pleb status', and in this he expresses perhaps a class consciousness that may assist in the process of challenging the entrenched hierarchy.

(iv) The future - how to improve the situation for casuals

The forgoing discussion of the experiences of casuals in the workplace implies, in large part, the need for substantial change. For casuals themselves, when asked what would improve their circumstances, the main response is to call for greater security and permanency. Clearly there are demands for improvements in the everyday circumstances of casual employment, but overriding these is a desire to escape the casual status. Whilst many interviewees called for special improvements in the status of casuals, many more argued as well that it is the casual status itself that has to change.

Many expressed a desire for casual positions in areas of continuing need to be converted into fractional or full-time permanent positions. Winnie was explicit on this point:

I'd like to see it wiped out altogether and have people employed on a permanent basis again. If you need to pull in the odd expert who's out in the workplace and it's industry related, that's fine. But to make it pretty well your entire workforce and have a handful of permanent part timers, permanent fulltime people and forty plus casuals...(Winnie)

Many interviewees hoped that current casual employees could gain continuing status. Alice argued:

I would like to see people, particularly like me obviously, who've worked here for a long time and who've demonstrated that they are committed to the place, they understand the place and they work well

with the staff here, I'd like to see their jobs being converted into permanent part time jobs. (Alice)

For Damien the principle is simple: 'if you are an on-going employee you should not be employed casually'. Given the lack of a conversion process, based on length of service or on merit, any casual academic who is seeking either a fixed term contract position or a continuing position must apply and compete for it, if and when it is externally advertised.

In contrast, for casual general staff, there is a right to apply for conversion. Several of the interviewees argued that something similar was needed for casual academics:

I'd like to see a conversion process, because the whole term[of] casual is a misnomer, it's a euphemism. You're not a casual if you're an ongoing employee. What they're doing here is using [the] casual tag as a way of saving money. (Damien)

One response from university management has been to offer security over multiple semesters as teaching-only academics. This however, was rejected by several interviewees, for instance by Charlotte, who said she was looking for '...proper security of some sort and career path and not for less pay and all that sort of garbage'. Security was valued, but only if it did not come with a lower salary and at the price of meaningful involvement in the university. Amy argued:

I wouldn't mind if I was... given some kind of ongoing permanent part-time position to teach the exact same courses just for the fact that you could be involved in the university - I'm not suggesting that the pay rates be lower but the principle is that you can plan your life and be involved in the university in an ongoing way. (Amy)

For others, the issue of security is uppermost: some like Damien argued that on-going employment is the key issue facing casuals. Commenting on NTEU efforts to prevent the emergence of a class of teaching-only academics, he argues:

I think that we already have a second class level of academic, which is the casuals, who are basically really badly paid for what we do and I just think that we should take on the fight to get more, to get better paid and to get the opportunity to convert, if not to permanent employment, to contract employment where we're

contracted for three years and paid for 52 weeks of those three years, not for 15 weeks of the semester. (Damian)

More generally, the respondents were ambivalent about the role of the unions on campus. About half of the participants were members of the union or were members of another union that represented their profession. There was not a strong sense that the on-campus unions made much of a difference for casuals, except to prevent further abuses: Scott argues: 'I think if it were not for the NTEU I think the university would just do what it wanted'. Generally the respondents lacked confidence that they themselves could do much about the situation they faced, except through the union. Charlotte, for instance, argues 'I think the union is the only voice the casuals could possibly have'.

4. Conclusions:

Large-scale casualisation in the Australian higher education sector is relatively new. As universities become semi-privatised, displaying aspects of both the private and public sector, they offer a strategic perspective on the causes and effects of casualisation, and on how to address it. The research project focused on the experience of casually-employed academics in two Faculties, within the wider context of the growth in casual employment and the particular financial pressures and management strategies within Australia's higher education sector. The research, above all, highlights the experience of academics in 'permanent casual' employment, a situation faced by an increasing proportion of the workforce in Australia and elsewhere. Research into casual employment should, we argue, be focused on this, an anomaly that is in danger of becoming the norm, to unravel its causes and impacts. As Smith argues, this form of employment 'is not casual in the common law sense because of its regular and ongoing nature. Nor is it permanent because the employees concerned do not receive the employment security or benefits that flow only to permanent employees. (Smith n.d.)

The conclusions to be drawn from the research pose a number of questions and challenges for employers and unions within the sector. We can look at these conclusions from the perspective of casuals, management and the union.

The messages from the academic casuals interviewed for this project should inform future policy work. Casual academics do not form a homogenous group; they have a diversity of circumstances, experience, and aspirations. Some work in

the industry without any aspiration to full time or permanent employment in the industry. However a significant proportion are looking for ongoing secure employment as part of their intellectual community of practice. The issues this group highlights can be divided into two areas: membership of the academic community and employment conditions.

Casuals are concerned at their invisibility within their faculty and their lack of voice. Their experience is that they struggle for basic system support in terms of adequate resources, space and facilities, and in the main have to fund their own professional development. Their contribution to and expertise in course planning and program development is too often unrecognised. Essentially they want recognition, respect and involvement with their full-time academic colleagues in their 'community of practice'. In terms of working conditions, casual staff are looking for University management to provide pathways to secure employment so that their ongoing 'irregular' work can be regularised, and for the equalisation of conditions of employment such as promotion, access to professional development, superannuation and leave entitlements.

There are a number of important lessons here for university managements. The findings present university managements with the challenge of responding to the casuals' experiences, of better utilising their skills and experience, of genuinely bringing these workers into their academic community of practice, and of removing the exploitative arrangements that currently exist.

The messages given to casual workers are often contradictory. There are high expectations for casuals as seen by the range of duties they are expected to fulfil, yet their inclusion in faculty life and their remuneration belie these expectations. Even though casuals are qualified and employed because of their subject knowledge or professional experience and expertise, universities squander this resource by excluding them from the academic community. This presents obvious problems for the quality of programs especially in teaching development but also in research, not to mention "wastage".

Allied to this is the current under-investment in the professional development of casual staff. It is singularly short-sighted for the sector most associated with the production of knowledge and knowledge workers, to rely on a supply of skilled workers developed elsewhere, instead of making the investment needed to develop such a significant cohort of its own workforce.

A series of human resource policies could be adopted that would at least ameliorate the situation for casual staff. These could include induction programs; sufficient dedicated facilities such as office space, computer and support materials; access to professional development programs; reducing the recurring administrative problems surrounding pay systems, pin access to buildings, library access and so on that are time consuming and wasteful. In addition, casuals also point to the need for a more secure employment relationship. Such conditions include recognition of service and a pathway for employment security such as a conversion process, access to long service leave and other leave entitlements, and equal access to superannuation benefits.

Many of the casuals interviewed here have been employed in the sector for a number of years. Facing poor prospects and poor treatment in the sector, several are actively looking to leave the profession. The University sector risks losing an entire generation of experienced casual staff in the belief that they can be easily replaced. Unless the concerns of casuals, as discussed here, are addressed, their skills and valuable contribution will be lost to Australian higher education. What then, of the next generation of university teachers and researchers; where will they come from?

Finally, perhaps the biggest challenge is that posed for the academics union, and for the continuing and fixed-term staff who make up its membership. For unions in higher education the report raises a fundamental question of how can this growing number of higher education workers be organised? What do unions need to know about casual workers that will help them recruit and represent these workers and help them become self-organising? What barriers exist to organising? What issues do the experiences outlined here pose for the Union? How can casuals address their concerns through the union?

These are vital questions in a context where university administrations, supported and encouraged by the conservative Federal government, are seeking to undermine unions and the right to organise. The objectives for the union in organizing casuals is three-fold: to improve their working conditions, income, security, work satisfaction and career paths; to protect general employment standards within the industry by ensuring that an academic under-class is not allowed to flourish; and to preserve quality teaching and research in higher education as a public good.

This report has demonstrated the need for a better understanding of casuals' experience and highlighted the strategic importance of organizing this growing category of workers. Currently a very low proportion of casual academics are union members; yet casuals as a group have a latent power that can equally be organized by management as by unions, especially given the current industrial and legislative framework. Over time, growing casualisation will start to affect conditions for all. Failing to organise this group into the union will eventually undermine conditions for all. There is therefore, a direct self-interest for continuing and fixed-term staff to act for workplace justice.

Clearly an organisational response is needed. Unions have to redefine the collective 'we' that they stand for and mobilise. The NTEU needs to accept that on some issues the interests of casuals and continuing staff will be at odds. There are at least five ways in which the NTEU can begin to address the challenges of new and different interests that casuals bring. Firstly, the NTEU needs to create means of raising and addressing those differences, so they are expressed, and brought into articulation and dialogue. The inclusion of casual members in the NTEU and the different sets of concerns they bring must not be seen as a "problem" for the Union. It is important that the Union views the diversity of its membership as a resource and sees itself being strengthened by the different perspectives and experiences that its membership brings. To achieve this the Union needs to develop mechanisms that facilitate casual representation within the Union. Ultimately casuals have to be self-organising; yet, just as structures have been created for other groups within the union, such as women members, indigenous members, and general staff members to allow them to develop their own agendas and strategies within the union, so too must the union create the structures for casuals.

Secondly, as with the recent successful effort to organise general staff, the Union needs to allocate staff and funds to help casual members organise this growing category of academic workers. Given the age profile of the sector, staff turnover is accelerating, and the union is losing a large number of members as older staff retire. As with unions more generally, the NTEU is faced with the challenge of recruiting new and younger staff, many of whom are employed on a casual basis. Currently the responsibility to recruit new members rests with the branches, which have limited resources and competing priorities. Might, then, a concentrated team of organisers working to an organising

and recruitment plan be a more efficient and productive way of increasing the power of casuals?

Thirdly, the casual academics will want to feel confident that the Union listens and takes their concerns seriously, and will act on the issues they raise. There are suggestions and desires that were expressed by the casual academics in this research that must be listened to and responded to more effectively and visibly. For example, the Union could more actively gear itself to campaigning for the effective abolition of the anomalous category of hourly-paid casuals who are engaged for an entire semester of teaching. The Union needs to openly debate a position that either casuals should be literally that - casual - or they should have employment status that reflects the nature of the job that is required, that is that the teaching of a subject is a semester long responsibility that requires planning and preparation of both administrative and scholarly nature prior to and during the semester, and evaluation and reflection of the teaching and learning process during and after the end of semester. The casuals have highlighted the amount of unpaid work, both in administration, assessment and scholarship that many casuals undertake in order to ensure quality and professional satisfaction for the work they do. Responses to this could range from campaigning for the replacement of casual positions with more ongoing parttime and fulltime academic positions so that all academics who teach are employed and paid to inform their teaching with scholarship and research, and are paid for the administrative work they do. In the short term when the HEWRRs and the WorkChoices legislation make it impossible to eliminate or even limit casual employment, the Union could run a campaign to improve the casuals' pay schedule by, for example, claiming for a certain number of research hours for each class that the casuals teach, and for time before and after the teaching period where they could be part of the academic community that plans and evaluates their academic programs. Whether or not these positions are seen as likely to get up, a union-run campaign of this kind would have important benefits as it would signal to casual staff the Union's commitment to their interests.

Fourthly, casuals need to know that the Union is able to make a realistic and informed assessment of the short and longer term prospects of winning, both legally and politically, positions that could be pursued, and be able to respond to the casuals' concerns strategically. The Union needs to undertake sector-wide research into a range of issues. It could commission legal advice of the extent to which casual teaching contracts can be challenged under

employment law, as self-contradictory. It needs to develop ways of consistently capturing data on the extent of in-practice casualisation of the teaching coal-face. We should know, for instance, what proportion of on-going teaching needs at universities is undertaken by casuals. From this data we can calculate the subsidy of casual workers to the university system. Given that casual academics are not employed on an hourly basis, but have on-going responsibility for the entire program for the duration of the semester, what is the pro-rata saving on each semester-long casual contract? What is the financial contribution of casual workers to the university system, the sector's hidden unemployed, in terms of income denied by virtue of their casual status? More broadly the union needs to investigate the approaches that other university unions internationally have taken to address issues of casualisation. It needs to examine the current legislative framework to look for opportunities in representation of casuals. It needs to investigate opportunities for community unionism - to draw on broader constituencies that can be mobilized to prevent further casualisation: alumni, students, parents, employer bodies, high schools and their students.

Finally, the Union needs to be prepared to challenge the academics in positions of greater security, fixed term contract staff and continuing staff, to engage with the experiences and aspirations of their casual colleagues. More importantly, the Union needs to demonstrate that the NTEU's objectives of improving working conditions for all its members, protecting general employment standards, and to preserve quality teaching and research in higher education cannot be achieved if casualisation is allowed to flourish. Although many fulltime academics have learned to view casual academics as critical in controlling their own workloads, they have to be reminded that this is only so because they have capitulated to the view that many faculties will not be filling vacancies or will be unable to obtain new continuing positions. As a result, the fulltime staff themselves, while having their teaching load contained to some extent by off-loading their teaching to casual staff, are given new and often unrecognised workload of supervising casual academics. Thus not only are the Universities being subsidised by much unpaid labour of the casual academics, but they are also subsidised by the unpaid supervisory labour of their fulltime staff. Exposing the real cost of academic casualisation is one way of engaging the fulltime academics and the casual academics in a joint campaign of resisting casualisation, and fighting for the establishment of more secure positions. Another way may be to describe the life course of university workers;

many if not most academics have been employed casually in universities, often for more than five years. In this respect they are all disadvantaged (for instance in terms of superannuation) by a system that has an informal casual apprenticeship in place.

For the unions, as the collective voice of higher education workers, and as the key advocate for equitable high-quality public education, the issue of organising all workers in the sector is fundamental. Increasingly, the union cannot realise its aspirations without more effectively organising the casual academic workforce. In the long run, the union, university managements, and indeed the casual workers themselves, cannot sustain a system that expects the best but gives little or nothing in return.

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