

CHAPTER 3 Engineers and their families

We interviewed three engineers who worked long hours, as well as interviewing their three partners. All had children. Their jobs ranged from scheduling and planning, managing other engineers, and asset management. The hours that some had worked in the past, prior to having children were extraordinarily long. They worked long hours most weeks, with long shifts on many weekends during the year, and many extra hours of unpaid overtime alongside their lengthy paid overtime. For example, before his child arrived, David had only 12 days off in one year, as he worked three overtime shifts on most weekends. Ken, who works in a similar position to David, had an hours 'record' of 106 hours in one week. Each interviewee worked very long hours at the time of interview, with an element of unpredictability for many of these hours, and they generally did not take a break during the day: they ate their lunch at their desk. They also faced extended hours beyond the workplace, as the mobile phone and employer demands for their availability extended into the home and car. Clearly new communications technologies are transforming the boundary of the workplace and taking work into home – and into 'time off' for these engineers and their families.

Long hours for these workers brought many rewards: they were devoted to their jobs and felt a strong professional drive to do a good job, to supervise diligently and to do field work alongside those they managed. However, they recognised that their employers relied upon their commitment and that they worked in a 'long hours' culture that cost them as individuals, as fathers and as partners. There was a level of resignation amongst both them and their partners. But this resignation did not prevent family tension around hours, concern about health effects, and worries about the quality of household and family relationships.

In these workplaces, for engineers no real record of actual working hours is kept. Ken believes that they should be recording their actual hours, not necessarily because he expects to get paid for them but because he believes it is important for management to realise the real hours being worked. He is fairly sure that upper-management have no idea of the extent of the working hours issue.

The example of the engineers is also instructive about the nature of power relations that surround the negotiation of hours in workplaces en-culturated to a life of long and unreasonable working time. These highly skilled, experienced senior engineers laughed at the prospect of telling their employer that they were going to knock off on time and stick to reasonable hours. While they certainly felt an internalised commitment to 'getting the job done' that contributed to their long hours, they found the prospect of doing otherwise – of *negotiating* otherwise - laughable. Each felt that a professional cost would result – in terms of promotional opportunities lost, or the prospect of a bad sideways shift. Their partner's spoke of 'the powers that be' and the hours culture that they established, which sharply constrained the decisive power of these relatively powerful workers in shaping their work time regimes.

What were their motivations?

The engineers were very committed to their jobs and wanted to be seen to be doing a good job. This led them to extra unpaid overtime. As David, an asset manager, put it:

The problem is that I still care, that's the problem.

While overtime payments are important to household incomes ('we're both working so we don't have a mortgage hanging over our head when we're in our sixties', as Therese put it), they struggled with three other powerful impulses towards long hours. Firstly their workplace and organisational cultures of long hours and their fear of being sidelined if they stopped working them were strong. Secondly, their own personal impulses to 'finish the job', 'to do a good job' were powerful. Thirdly, they repetitively mention the under-staffing and lack of skill development that contributes to their workloads.

For example, Ken a scheduling and planning manager mentioned the lack of skilled labour arising from a large round of redundancies in 1996. Ross, who supervises a large group of engineers, concurs that a major problem with excessive hours in his workplace is the lack of training:

The amount of individual experts in their own disciplines is diminishing, so we are more and more reliant on the same people all the time and that's where those people get caught up working excessive hours all the time.

The long hours culture: power, powerlessness and negotiating hours

There are a few people in their workplaces who 'only' work their standard hours and don't work overtime. In Ken's view they are not considered to have a commitment to the job and Ken considers they will have no opportunity for advancement in the workplace. He believed that there is an "informal expectation" to work overtime and that his workplace was "running on the bare minimum" of staff. Ken also mentioned responsibility for projects as a factor determining working hours. When he goes home he will leave the project in someone else's hands but if something goes wrong he will have ultimate responsibility, thus leaving work behind is sometimes hard: 'you want to make sure your job doesn't fall over'.

Therese agreed that long hours are part of the work culture and that “you’ll never break it”. In this industry:

if you can't change the culture, you're not going to change anything. It comes from high up. You've only got to look at the Glenbrook disaster. Now I heard lots of talk from all different workers about Glenbrook and why it happened. It's because the powers that be are not doing maintenance on the track, they're not giving their workers breaks, they're working them 7 days a week. How can you get quality if you're not going to give time for your workers to have a break? And it's got to move from the top, you'll never change the workers from underneath unless the CEO at the top changes his attitude. That's how I see it. Ken would kill me if he heard me say that!

Therese went on to describe the culture of the workplace that caused Ken to override his judgment on how hard to work his people:

Ken will say I can't work these people they've worked too many hours... I hear him say it on the phone. Next thing there are 10 phone calls from the powers that be who are higher up, whoever they may be - I might be presuming wrong, next thing he's got to get people from everywhere. It's just not on.

This comment reflects Therese’s perception that the most senior ranks of an organisation are quite critical to the nature of hours regimes. In these workplaces there was no accurate collection of hours data, and a view that penalties flowed from working normal hours or refusing unpaid overtime – to the point that supervisors themselves called others back to work when ‘they’ve worked too many hours’ already. In speaking of Ken’s failure to take his RDOs, Therese once again refers to ‘the top’:

Again it comes from the top. Ken's got RDOs... they shouldn't be allowed to accumulate... you don't take them you lose them... He'll say he is on his RDO and he's on the phone for 4 hours, then we do our family thing and then he's on the phone for another 3 hours. The thing that annoys me is the pressure... the lack of workers that they've got for the [job]... it's changing the culture.

Families clearly also paid a cost. David also talks about the culture and that his commitment to his work, was ‘his problem’:

I guess most of my other colleagues are in the same sort of situation and do the same sort of hours... and in a lot of cases if they don't, it's because it's all got too much and they don't give a crap anymore anyway! [laughs] ...The problem is that I still care, that's the problem.

In this established hours culture, Ross's partner does not see the hours as a choice. If he said no to the hours, Joan thinks that it would affect his career in the long run:

I don't think they've got choices. If the boss says, well you've got to do it. If you don't do it you will suffer in the long run. And I mean, who do you go to? Do you go above your boss's head? Not if you're smart. [The boss could] shove you sideways into a job you'd never want in a million years and you just get stuck there. ... You've basically got to do what they say unless your relationship is that good with them that you can say 'no' and there's not necessarily that many that you can do that with. I mean he's worked there long enough to know the system as well as I do. You know how it works.

Will long hours continue?

These families hold little optimism about a reduction of hours in the future. As David put it:

I can't see anything different, the way things are. ... I think it's pretty poor that I can't see anything different. I guess that's an indicator that there's nothing being done to fix it. ... I guess the other thing that can change is that I just say all right 'I'll turn up to work at 7.30 and go home at 4 and take a half an hour for lunch'. As to whether this is a realistic proposition, I don't think so because you can't tell – you can tell the boss to go bugger off and I'm only doing my eight hours a day and that's it - but I don't think that's accepted as being a valid response to the way you work.

Interviewer: You don't think your family is a valid excuse for your boss?

I think that if you said 'Sorry I've got a life' [laughs] ...if you – I don't think it would [work]- if you do it on the odd occasion and say well I've got to go home for whatever reason and you do that, I think because I work the extra hours I think that's accepted.

He agreed that it is more acceptable to work until the job is completed rather than to work to the set hours and that he might be looked down upon if he only worked to his set hours. Few workers stuck to set hours:

Oh... there'd be the odd couple. Not a great deal. Most people tend to do a bit extra till whatever they've got to do is done, but they don't then have them made up at some other point in time...I guess I don't feel as though it's right for me to say 'Hang on, you can't make me work those extra hours'. ... [It's] more that it would be seen to be unprofessional to say something like that. ... Even though there's rules and regulations that say, you know, when there's – I mean I can effectively now say 'See ya boss it's 4 o'clock I'm going home'. I could do that now, but I don't do that because I guess I'm living in this world where it's thought to be unprofessional to do that.

He thought this was the general feeling amongst most workers: 'It's just some strange sort of culture that's developed you know'.

While Kimberly said that ideal hours for herself and her partner would be 9 to 5, Monday to Friday: 'It'll never happen! [laughs] I've been waiting 12 years for it to happen!' Kimberly thinks that the reason for this is that it is the nature of her partner's job, 'things crop up' and overtime is just a part of the job. Alternatively, Kimberly would also like more flexible hours for both herself and David.

Long unreasonable engineer's days

Most engineers did not take their rostered days off and lost them as a consequence. Ken regularly works about 20 hours unpaid overtime during the week.

On average, your day starts 6-6.30am majority of the time and it really depends what you've got on. Some days you finish on time – 4 pm, majority of days you don't finish – it fluctuates – you won't finish til 5, 6, 7pm sometimes I've worked to 9, 10pm at night. ... Majority of days in the past 6 months I've probably worked to between 5 and 7pm at night.

Normally, in our role, you don't have lunch or morning tea. I mean you sort of, sit at your computer or if you're out and about you normally get your lunch out or you grab a bite to eat and you go and just eat it while you're doing something. So you don't get that physical break that normal people are used to I suppose.

He describes his last weekend:

The last weekend...I worked Friday...I tried to finish at about 2 or 3 in the afternoon because I knew I'd have to come back and work Friday night so I tried to finish early but it didn't work out. I finished at about 3.30pm and I came back again at – I left home about 9 o'clock at night to start at 10pm and I finished at 10am the next day and went home, had 7 hours off, came back and worked Saturday night for 8 hours – and then I finished at midnight and came back again at 3pm on Sunday and worked Sunday into Monday and then went home – got home at about 3am, slept from 3 till about 8 and got up again and came back to work on Monday.

David's are even longer, when his travel is considered; he travels about 1 hour and 20 minutes, one-way. He gets up at about 5.30am, leaves home at 6.10am and leaves work at variable times 'sometimes I leave at 4, sometimes 4.30, sometimes 7 or 6 o'clock or whatever'. David leaves work around 7pm at least one day per week. He averaged his hours to about 50 hours per week: 'some weeks it's more, some weeks it's less'.

David also exemplifies dedication to getting his job done – to 'being seen' to get the job done. He has worked some 'shocking days' – which he attributes to under-staffing - where he has started at:

7.30 and go through to 9 or 10pm or something stupid like that. But I mean no one's forcibly asked me to do those hours or anything like that ... I don't want to be seen as doing a bad job. I want to be seen at least as trying to get my things done. I know it's not through my own fault that I'm not getting the things done but it still makes you feel as though you're not doing a good job by not meeting deliverables.

I think the organisation is asking us to do more work, I guess, than can be reasonably allowed for. ... Over time we've increased various types of activities and we haven't brought in additional people to do that stuff. So you end up having not enough time to do things that you need to do properly, so you've got to stretch it and even then you still need more time.

He pointed to the RDO situation where the demands of the job prevented him from taking his leave, and he lost it:

I've currently got two RDOs owing to me at the moment and the third one falls due again next week, so you don't normally get to take them. I mean, there has been occasions where – you can only accumulate 5 RDOs after that if you accumulate them you lose them anyway – but there has been occasions where we've accumulated 8 to 10 RDOs and you just don't get them...you just don't sort of turn your life upside down to take an RDO and not achieve what your supposed to.

Extended hours: working on the phone

Mobile phones are an important additional factor in the working hours of the engineers. They are still doing work in their cars and homes, on their mobiles. The engineers were often contacted at home about work and while they were on their RDOs (if they managed to take them).

Engineers and their wives clearly see the mobile phone and the ability to use the phone in the car as a significant way in which hours are extended, with important consequences for families, and for individual workers. As Therese describes it:

The phone is never switched off so even though he's home early he'll still gets hundreds of phone calls. He's laying on the lounge talking on for 2 hours so he's still at work from my point of view. So I can't see it improving.

That's the way the companies are going that's what the expectation is. If you don't do your work and don't answer the phone calls... I mean I hear Ken continually... bosses ringing up saying 'where's this? where's that?' That's at 8 o'clock at night! Just because they're in the office! He's at home, I mean stuff 'em! Hang up... Ring at 8 o'clock in the morning and work it out then.

So I don't see any change. Unless the phone is switched off, [so that] no-one rings through, not even rings our personal phone, then you'd see some change. Even though he's home early it doesn't change anything.

Ross's previous manager made his expectations clear by saying:

'At your level of manager I just expect you to have your phone on from 6am to 6pm everyday.' ... So you haven't even started work and he'll be on the phone talking to you and may well do same on the way home...Being one of the only civil engineer experts on this contract area... [an area where the manager is a signals engineer], if they have any problems they can't handle they ring me... Even on your days off you are expected to have your phone on or be contactable.

The effect on individuals of working long, unreasonable hours

In each case, partners held fears for their partner's health. For example, Therese believes that Ken's working hours will have an impact on his health, and that he is unlikely to change his behaviour.

I reckon if he kept going until in his 40s, he'll have high blood pressure, he'll be crook, just like you see all the other men. And he won't [stop], he'll just keep going. He says he will [slow down] but he won't. He lives for the [industry] and that's what'll he'll do.

David describes a steady feeling of stress and tiredness:

I feel tired from time to time, get headaches – I'm pretty sure that's because I'm either not getting enough sleep or not getting enough time away from work. Because you're sort of on the go all the time, hop in the car and driving so that's concentrating, get to work and all the crap starts, um... go for a brief walk and eat lunch, come back with the crap still ticking over, drive again still concentrating and get home and ah, I guess, you'd like to unwind but you know you can't because you've got to still be civil and reasonable with the family when you get home and do those things – washing up or... whether it be making dinner or doing the washing up or bathing the little boy and feeding and all that sort of stuff.

I guess stress sort of waxes and wanes. I'd have to say, yeah, I think I'm probably under stress for a reasonable amount of time. I try not to let it get to me but you can only try as much as you can, you can't stop the effect of stress, it's there isn't it?

Hobbies and sport

All the engineers talked about the lack of time for activities outside their jobs - firstly for their families, but also for their hobbies and voluntary work. One had given up his work with the army while Ross and David were missing out on golf and sailing

I certainly don't play golf as much as I'd like to. (Ross)

*I'm starting to cut [sailing] out because I can't afford the time away from the family.
(David)*

The effect on families of engineers 'You get used to it'

The partners of engineers all spoke of becoming resigned to their partner's long hours: 'but that's his job... what's the use of worrying?'. However - beyond resignation - they reflected on how it affected their relationships and their children. When asked how her partner's hours affect her, Therese said:

Nah I'm used to it now... When we first got married I used to hate it because he would be working 7 days a week... but now, you move forward. You do what you want to do and if he goes to work, he goes to work and I still go out. I just keep doing whatever I want to do.

It does affect if you've got a family thing to go to and he's at work, then you get upset but that's his job. I do get cranky sometimes and when he says he's going to be home and he's home 7 hours later!

It's taken her a while to get to this point where it doesn't bother her anymore: 'Probably in the last 4 years I suppose. You just learn to... what's the use of worrying and arguing about it if that's his job? Move forward'.

However, like other partners, Therese believes that Ken's long working hours affect their son:

If Ken goes on the weekend to work then he doesn't want him to go, but he's only four.

As to whether she will think it be a problem in the long term, Therese says:

I'll have to wait and see. I presume that he... hopefully when he gets older he wont be working the hours that he is because it'll impact on him.

Because he is only four he is very attached to Ken and he loves Ken home 24 hours a day. Ken likes to work.... But because of the work he does he has to work the hours so in the future when he is going to school and his dad can't make it to certain school things, probably, yeah it might [impact on their son].

Therese said that she 'ends up' doing all the housework: 'He doesn't do anything. I do the lawns and the pool and the housework and the kid. So I'm probably doing the same amount of hours [as my partner] [laughs]'.

Therese notices a positive impact on their son – and their relationship - since Ken cut back his weekend overtime:

You can notice the difference: he's not as tired, he's not as grumpy and he's enjoying being at home. Where as when he was working 7 days a week it was hello, goodbye, kiss, cuddle, whatever, sex on the run [laughs].

She points out that 'with companies today I don't think you'll ever get [to work normal hours] but it'd be good if ...he'd finish at 4 - he still wouldn't get home until 6 anyway'. Ken usually gets home around 7-9pm, so they don't often get a family meal together. It is such a remote possibility, that Therese can hardly imagine what it would be like if Ken worked less hours:

He'd be less stressed and tired [if he worked less hours] and I suppose he would do more around the house and more for Billy I suppose... for me... I don't know, I'm in such a routine that... I'm a rigid person so I'd just continue anyway. I suppose it'd improve. We wouldn't go out anymore. We'd stay home, more for [their son]. He wouldn't be as grumpy I suppose.

Similar issues affected all the engineers' families. Ross, for example doesn't get to see his son some days:

He's off to bed at 7.30pm and you might not see him at all. You're gone before he gets up in the morning and see him for about 20 minutes when you get home. ... I don't like it much at all. I'd rather spend more time with him.

Ross said that when his son gets older he would like to get involved with any of his son's sporting activities, just like his Dad did for him. Would he have time for that?

Well yeah the lifestyle will certainly have to change again there. I certainly won't be... well... would attempt to not work as much... not as many weekends as I am doing now.... I would want to. Yeah! Just so that you can have more free weekends then. At the moment it's not such a big deal, but it will be in a couple of years time.

Basically, Joan finds Ross's hours annoying and sometimes frustrating, especially the times when he doesn't come home until 7-7.30pm and their son has already gone to bed. She is concerned about the affect her husband's hours are having and will have on their son and doesn't see Ross's hours situation will ever improve (she actually thinks it will get worse). She is worried about the impact on his relationship with their son.

Joan definitely thinks Louis notices his dad's long hours:

Oh yeah, he gets up in the morning and says 'Is Dad coming home today, Mum?' ... I don't think he knows any different. [Ross being away on weekends] makes him more clingy to me...he wants [to] kiss and cuddle mummy because he sees mummy all the time and I say 'What about Daddy?' and it's not until you remind him...

As to the future, Joan is also pessimistic about change: 'I don't think it'll get any easier'. Joan believes that Ross's hours will get worse:

I just think they ask more and more and more and more of them. In a way, Ross is very lucky that he's very good at time management... but I do think they will put more and more and more on them and I think that's just the way of industry at the

moment. I don't think they're going to back off, they're going to increase. So it could make things worse for him.

However, Joan expects that Louis will notice his Dad's absence a lot more in the future, 'when he starts doing stuff he'll expect his Dad to be there'.

For Joan, the hardest thing about these long hours was their unpredictability. She would be happy if she knew exactly what days on what weekend he had to work (with more than a week's notice) so they could plan around it 'and plan to do more, as well as knowing what nights he was going to be home.' This was especially the case around the care of their son; 'I mean, it's not always really annoying sometimes you just live with it, you don't worry about it. But like if he's [Louis] been really naughty, then you think AARRGH!'

Joan talks about the 'damn long days' when Ross works 12-hour weekend shifts:

I get annoyed with him and he gets annoyed with me... if he's late a lot it's annoying because he doesn't see Louis... you don't really get a chance to talk... I suppose we just get annoyed with one another.

In terms of their own relationship:

I suppose you just get so use to it... you don't think of it being anything because you're just use to it. We get on really well so it's not a big problem but sometimes you think: 'God, I wish he was home a little bit more'.

A large part of Joan's level of acceptance of Ross's work is due to her level of understanding of what he does at work and what is asked of him. Joan used to work for the railways herself, which means that she understands the demands.

Effect on relationships

While partners were resigned, negative effects on relationships were evident for engineers. For example, Therese said that she never spends quality time with her husband where it is just

the two of them. Her work colleague (sitting nearby as the interview is conducted) chips in: 'But that's not good for your marriage'. Therese – reflecting on their general level of tiredness - replied 'No, but I don't mind it, like, Billy's there [their son] and you can't just dump Billy on the babysitters. When he goes to bed, yeah we'll sit there but we're so tired. I work full-time, he works full-time, we just go to bed'. When asked whether she thought this would happen on the long-term basis and she said she supposes so:

Ken's long hours impact on Therese's life, even when he is at home, especially through his mobile phone. 'If he turns the phone off and he can't be notified, shit hits the fan basically'.

David and Kimberly have a 18 month old son and are expecting another baby in several months time and David sees his son for 'a little bit of time' each day: 'I don't get to see much of him. I get home and he's either been fed or still being fed when I get home. ... We have dinner. I give him a bath ... and pop him into bed and that's about it, so I see him for a little bit of time, but not a great deal':

I don't get to see my wife or my child a great deal or as much as I would like to... You've probably only got 3 hours in a day where you can really see them so it's not a great deal of time – one eighth of your day – that's nothing.

David thinks that not getting to see his family impacts on his relationships with them:

Oh well it does, it does. My wife feels as though we don't have enough time together. I don't feel as though I'm having enough time with my little boy. I guess that also then – because we've hardly any time together we don't do much else throughout the week but I guess that's probably pretty similar to most other people. But it has a compounding effect on I guess other social activities you have with other people as well.

David believes that his hours are affecting his relationship with his wife and that this sometimes results in arguments:

Oh yeah they are... I guess, my wife is frustrated with the fact that I get home late, you know, well later than I could have otherwise done.

And he sees longer-term impacts on his relationship with his son:

He's going to grow up with it. I don't know that he'll know anything different and he may not notice any difference but I think it will make a difference because you're just not having the time with them that you would otherwise have.

Interviewer: So will it have an affect on the quality of your relationship?

Yeah. I guess the development as well, you just don't get the same – whenever you're with them they soak up so much stuff it's not funny and if you're not there for them to soak it up, they're not soaking it up. So I guess they learn at a different pace, they learn different things at a different pace so I'm sure it does – it must have an affect on them.

'You understand – but it doesn't make it better'

Kimberly said that David's hours do affect her personally, 'in terms of not feeling supported in the home'. David's hours have meant that she has spent a lot of time by herself at home. She said she used to get really 'cranky' at David and his hours, especially when she was at home studying, it was 'really bad'. She would have liked to have had him around more often, as she was 'home by myself all the time'.

Kimberly said that even though she knows he has to work overtime and she understands, it still doesn't make it easier to deal with. Kimberly has a better understanding of his overtime and the demands placed on him, now that she works herself. 'It's still hard even though I understand, but it's not pleasant – it doesn't make it better'.

In terms of quality time just for the two of them, Kimberly said 'not anymore, but we didn't really get it before either – just because he was working so much all the time. ... It could be better'.

Kimberly doesn't think that David's long hours are affecting their son at the moment, because he is still very young, 'I don't think he knows. He doesn't get to see David that much', although Kimberly thinks he is too young to realise that this is a bad thing. Their son sometimes misses out on seeing David for a whole weekend. She does think that it could be an issue for their relationship in the future. 'I come from a family like that, where we never saw Dad'. She knows how hard it can be on kids, not having things like family holidays, especially when they see other families aren't like that. 'I think we'll both make sure it won't

be like that. ... We do try to be conscious of it'. They make concerted efforts to do things like taking holidays from work at the same time.

If they were both working more ideal hours, she thinks life would be a little more relaxed, they would be able to spend the mornings together, sleep in and have breakfast together on weekends. Also, David could be home at a reasonable time, which would mean that he could help out more and they could also spend some time together. Kimberly said that she 'gets stressed out by everything!'

Live to work: 'I have to force them to have holidays'

As in other occupations, long hours appear to create a kind of vacuum in the rest of life, so that people become very focused on their work, with limited social connections, little time at home, and even a reluctance to take holidays – especially if the work simply accumulates to greet them on their return. Ken said that if he has several days off on leave he ends up 'not knowing what to do with himself' and will end up looking forward to going back to work and being busy again. He used to do mentoring for the army (as he used to be in the military) but he no longer has time for it. He rarely plays golf now, instead using his days off to mow the lawn and do domestic jobs.

Well I certainly rather not be doing [these hours]. I'd much rather have my time off and the time off has got to be genuine time off. There is no point having time off if you've got have your phone on all the time. Is that really a day off? When you're still going to be contacted. So the [work] becomes your entire life, you'll never get away from it. Unless you physically take a holiday and hand your phone in and your car keys in and say 'I'll see you in a couple of weeks time', that's really the only time – that's your four weeks annual leave and some guys aren't even taking their four weeks annual leave.

I'm struggling to force some of my blokes to have their days off. It's simply a case of: well if I'm not here doing it, who is going to do it for me? And that's exactly what happens they go away and the stuff just accumulates until they come back. Is it really worth having the time off when you know you've got twice as much work when you get back?

As well as mobile phones, Phillips thinks that one of the contributing factors is e-mail, which creates new larger time demands.

CHAPTER 4 Strappers or Stable hands in the racing industry

Unfortunately we were able to interview only two workers in this industry and one partner. One interviewee had a number of grown children while the second had none. Both were in relationships. Employees in this industry were extremely concerned to keep their identities confidential, and many were not prepared to be interviewed. Both interviewees were very concerned about keeping their identities confidential. They both worked as stable hands which are commonly referred to as strappers (also as horse handlers). Stable hands/strappers care for, feed, and ride racehorses in the racing industry. While conditions in stables vary widely (depending, for example, on whether it is a pre-racing or full racing stable), this industry represents the low wage end of the long and unreasonable hours story.

For employees in the industry a kind of hierarchy of concerns arose: concern that they were underpaid, that their wages are low (especially with experience and training), and that they were working substantial amounts of unpaid overtime. Many have access to little time off and are not paid penalty rates. The interviewees saw a close link between their current pay levels and long hours: ‘the key issue is to get a decent wage, and get paid properly and then look at the hours’, as one put it. Their view was that the industry could afford decent pay, but ‘they were able to get away with it because they prey on young girls who just *loove* horses’.

If you think about it, the strappers are abused, insomuch as their pay and their hours in an industry that can well afford to pay them properly. And if you think about it, the owners and the trainers wouldn't be able to do without the strappers. The industry can get away with it because every year there is another group of young girls that finish school, and so it goes on. And it is not policed. The strappers are too scared to do anything because as soon as they do, they are out [of a job].

‘The industry runs on passion’

Strappers are passionate about horses; as one interviewee put it ‘the industry runs on passion’. Each year large number of young girls, just completing their compulsory schooling, enter the industry. They frequently last as strappers for short periods. They love horses, and according to our interviewees the industry is characterised by very high labour turnover, and employers/supervisors (owners and trainers) who exercise considerable power over young inexperienced workers who care about horses. In this environment employees accept, or must accept, employment conditions and treatment that is sometimes harsh and exploitative. On the other hand, as our interviewees attest, there are employers who treat their employees fairly, give them some parts of weekends off regularly, pay on time and at the right rate. However, it

seems that large number of unpaid hours are regularly worked by strappers, even those who feel that there are 'lucky' enough to have a good boss, like Sue.

While conditions might vary from region to region, in the process of interviews a number of issues around working conditions arose, including sexual harassment, general harassment, unfair dismissal without adequate notice, under-payment, split shifts, inequities in pay between individuals, an absence of holiday pay, and employer and co-worker bullying. These are beyond the scope of this report, but the low wages in the industry are a serious concern for employees, and they are closely connected to the hours worked; employees are concerned to keep their jobs and their access even to such low wages, and thus agree to work long hours. Given that extra payments are (sometimes) made to those who take 'their' horses to races, this means that many agree to work very long hours. In weeks that races occur, it is not unusual for strappers to work well over 60 hours. As one put it:

You just show up to work and you take what you're given, more or less and that's the way it is: 'If you don't like it go somewhere else'. The trainers say this is the way it has always been. But we are not in the dark ages anymore.

Strapper's hours

Sue's work pattern is typical. She recently shifted to casual weekend work to cut back her hours and recover from exhaustion. Prior to that, she regularly worked as a permanent from 4.30am to 10.00am (and frequently to 11.00am – 'you work until the job is done'), then 2-5.30pm each day. She took horses to races regularly which meant a long day – frequently starting at the normal time of 4.30am and arriving home at 9pm ('traveling in the back of the wretched horse truck'. 50-60 hour weeks were the common pattern for Sue: 'it's rarely less than 50'. She is paid the 'basic rate of about \$420 a week'. Sue is only paid for her normal hours as a permanent, so she regularly works long hours of unpaid overtime. She has been working with the horse industry for over 20 years. She receives a payment of '\$50 or \$75' on race days and she attends race days '2 or 3 times a week' regularly. She gets half of Saturday and Sundays off, but 'that doesn't apply to most city stables - in most you get to work every weekend...I'm lucky my boss is good, he employs casuals at weekends'.

Similarly Eileen regularly works long hours of between 50 and 60 a week, and longer in race weeks. Eileen has a problem of under-payment and under-recording by her employer of her hours, alongside her problem of unpaid overtime. When she has raised this issue in other stables, she has been sacked. She has every second Sunday off and two afternoons a week. She generally works from 4.30-10am and 2-5.30pm on full days, with longer days – up to 16 hours – on race days. She sometimes receives a payment of \$25 for race day attendance, or no

extra payment at all. She has worked many years without success. There are also inequities between women and men doing similar work.

Sue has worked for some good trainers, and her experience has allowed her to carefully choose her bosses:

The trainers I have worked for have been good because I'm older and I've had a lot of experience and I can be a bit choosy, but if you are a fifteen year old and you've just come out of school, life is a bit tough. There is real exploitation. One lass was doing 60 hours a week for a stud, and she was being paid \$320 a week. Another young lass I knew did excessive hours, and she was lucky if she got a day off a fortnight. He was a slave driver.

The effect on the individual

Sue has just changed from full-time permanent to casual weekend work because 'I'm just stuffed'. She now won't have to work any unpaid overtime because on casual pay she is paid for the hours that she works in her current position, and she will be working much fewer hours. She describes her old hours and their effect:

You get absolutely exhausted... You get to the point where you are really struggling to get out of bed in the morning to get there on time. And in the racing game, you are running the whole day – it's run, its not just walking at normal pace – you are in a hurry to do everything. There is nothing called slow. You get extremely tired, very ratty, very irritable, you obviously don't eat properly because of the funny hours you work.

Sometimes you come home and you are so tired you can't eat. It affects your moods, really ratty, really bad tempered and short tempered and you really run on a short wick. Fortunately my partner is very understanding – he knows what I'm like when I'm not working there and when I am working there, and he just wears it. A lot of partners can't put up with it.

The length of work in combination with its *pace*, takes a toll. Unsocial hours are the norm in the industry.

Horses don't take holidays. So you have to be prepared to work weekends in the industry...but the unpaid overtime is unfair. If you work, you should be paid for it. And the youngsters are exploited.

These hours have a widespread effect on those who work in the industry:

People get very demoralised...and they disappear. Because the staff are tired they are ratty. You need to be able to be tough to stick with it. The pace you go at, the number of hours that you do, contributes to everybody being tired, and ratty and snappy.

For Eileen, the long hours meant that she could not plan. She was concerned that pay and hours were connected:

You can't plan anything. You can't go out on weekends because you've got to work or go to the races...Like last weekend, I just slept. You don't want to go out to the movies or anything, you are too tired. But the thing is, if they cut our hours down, they will cut our pay down and that is why the kids get tired...with our hours we really can't do anything until the pay's fixed up because they are going to cut their pay down even more. And that's when you're going to get the kids sneak a lot more hours.

The effect on relationships

Eileen's long hours are the source of serious tension in her relationship with Davey. Indeed we had to terminate our interview with Davey (which occurred in the presence of Eileen) because of his high level of negative feeling about her 'acquiescence' to these hours, and the impact on their relationship. He particularly referred to – not just the hours of 55-60 – but especially to the underpayment, lack of penalties, split shifts, and poor general conditions. He used the example of the current weekend, which he had off, and couldn't do anything with Eileen because 'she only has one day off a fortnight':

I'm jack of it. My whole life is affected by her life. My whole life is affected by it!

Davey had himself worked very long hours over some years in another industry and he knew the personal costs:

The long hours I used to do, you haven't got time to go to the bank, get the jobs done, so you rely on other people. Your life gets affected, things get cut off, cos you don't have to time to do things... You make a lot of money but you don't get any time to spend it. It can affect a lot of things – like I was grumpy, tired, headaches - the fatigue, injuries. It affected my self, my social ability, being able to socialise.

But this experience did not stop him from feeling very angry – even abusive - with Eileen about 'copping' her hours and the conditions of her job.

Sue's relationship was also affected – in a different way - by her long hours:

Yeah it affects your relationship. Like your sex life doesn't exist (laughs)!

While young people in the industry 'tend to burn the candle at both ends'. The older ones 'a lot of them are single, their marriages break up... The time away just makes tension at home, so they just clear off'.

Doing things outside work

Not surprisingly, these hours mean that non-work activities are very constrained:

You don't have time. You are too tired, When you are home you sleep. I gave up all my [other horse] work, I don't judge now, I don't compete. As far as going out for dinner, even to my mother-in law's-for tea you make sure you are out of there and home by 8.30pm otherwise you don't get up the next morning. (Sue)

Eileen has give up softball and volleyball, and describes falling asleep on the couch when her partner is talking to her. Eileen also describes missing out on social and family events.

'Becoming acclimatised'

Sue describes how going to reduced hours takes a while to get used to, as you have to revitalise your life:

When you cut back your hours it takes a while to get used to. You think 'Oh. What will I do now?' And then it takes you a couple of months to get back into a normal type of life. You have to revive your life. Because you haven't had any social outlet.

Interviewer: What have the long hours done to your friendships?

What friendships?

However, Sue finds time to see her four older children and her one grandchild.

CHAPTER 5 Flight attendants: time zones, recovery time and rosters

Flight attendants worked hours that were complicated by movement across (and recovery from) different time zones. While flight attendants accepted that time away from home and that crossing many time zones was part of the job, they all felt that they needed more time off to recover from their hours, and spend time with their family. We interviewed four flight attendants and their four partners, two of whom had also worked in the industry. They worked on long haul international flights and three families had children while one did not.

A common pattern for the long haul flyers was to have 9 days away from home and then 5 nights at home. Attendants described working up to 20 hours on long flights.

For example after a 9 to 10 day trip, Carol will usually get about 4 or 5 days at home. The last trip Carol was on, commenced with signing on about 1.25 hours before the flight leaves, then a 7.5-hour flight to Singapore. They are paid for 30 minutes after the plane lands, and there is usually another half hour of unpaid work. Carol then had 24 hours off. Then she had a trip to Frankfurt, which is for about 12.5 hours (midnight to dawn). Carol then had 3 days off to recuperate and then she did the same trip back before having 5 days off at home.

In the days off in Frankfurt Carol tries to catch up on sleep as well as get into a normal sleeping pattern. By the 3rd day she starts to feel OK but then she has to force herself to nap in the afternoon to be ready to leave that night. All interviewees complained about not only the hours of sleep they managed to get, but the quality of that sleep, its interrupted nature, and the fact that normal sleeping hours were frequently spent in work time. The pattern of work/sleep was also irregular and unpredictable.

However, the nine days away from home include crossing many time zones and extended hours of night work. Most felt that the five days were 'just enough' to recover so that they would 'feel normal again' but not enough time to catch up with the family and spend time with them *while* they were feeling 'normal'. Flight attendants needed more recovery time between trips, not only to recuperate but also to catch up with the family and re-establish relationships. Most of the flight attendants said that the 75% stand down time they had previously worked under was more family friendly in that it allowed for some recovery and sufficient to lead an adequate family life. As one put it:

When I come home I still have to put them on the backburner to a certain extent because I'm so tired. Even though they are jumping all over me, you just say 'Go. Mum take control for another couple of hours. I've just gotta put my head down for a while, you know'. Then you get up and you're walking around like a zombie for the rest of that day. So I don't get – I certainly don't get the time to spend with my wife and kids that I'd like to.

Several interviewees spoke of enjoying their job, especially Carol who does not yet have children. But those with children and more years in the job longed to spend more time at home and with their families. Others criticised the impact of the roster allocation system ('the wishing well' into which you dropped your preferences) and the unpredictability of the shifts you might 'win' compared to your preferences.

In terms of work patterns, attendants worked around 190-200 hours per roster period. Attendants had to balance a range of factors in trying to minimise their discomfort:

There are a lot of variables that come into play there. Number 1: seniority. Number 2: length of trips. Number 3: the hours associated with the trip and Number 4: your guaranteed time off after the trip.

Like others in this study, flight attendants felt that their hours, and the pattern of their hours, had implications for their relationships. As Geraldine put it:

Yep I think it has definitely affected our relationship in a negative way. In the past, the stay at home was much longer, you use to get 75% of your away time free and we had a chance to rebuild. Now we don't. He's in a constant state of jet lag.

Long hours introduced non-standard patterns into family life, with partners of flight attendants talking about leading a 'double life' – living two lives, one when their partners were home and one when they were away. They also talked about being transformed into single parents. They would adjust to being single parents for more than a week and then have to readjust when partners came back wanting to fully participate in family life again.

Not all 'time' is the same

There were also specific issues about time for flight attendants, as there have been for a number of industry groups in this study. The crossing of time zones created different experiences of time for flight attendants, and affected recovery time. Interviewees felt that there needs to be recognition of this factor in terms of recuperation as well as the night work and sleep deprivation. All flight attendants agreed that time zones affected their experience of unreasonable hours. Rostering is also big issue, especially the use of the seniority system. This system means that a worker's children have frequently grown up before flight attendants have accumulated enough seniority to pick their trips and possibly spend more time at home with dependents.

The hours force a choice between work and family

Being a flight attendant means that you've got to make some clear choices between family and career. Firstly under the seniority system, a high level of seniority will mean that workers can, to some degree, structure their work around home life; however, promotion means forgoing seniority. So those with family responsibilities, will sometimes have to stay at the lower ranks to hold on to seniority and some control over the structure of working time.

Secondly, the overall nature of the work and the limited access to part-time work, mean that flight attendants (especially women) feel that they are faced with the choice between family and career. Both Cheryl and Geraldine had made the decision to quit flight attending for a family, Carol was putting off the difficult decision, and Sunny, because of her seniority, has managed to juggle both flight attending and a family.

The effects on flight attendants individually

Carol who had married an engineer in the industry recently and has no children, complained of the effects on her health, and these were echoed by most other interviewees:

You get sick constantly. Just being run down from sleep deprivation, you seem to be easily catching flus and things because your immunity is constantly strained from time zone and even the climate zone, flying out of Australia at the moment, from Winter into a tropical Summer, half way to another Summer in the Northern Hemisphere and then within 48 hours, turning around and coming back, you just – the sleep deprivation tends to really reduce all resistance to just about every little thing. And obviously injury is another thing, you tend to be a little more accident prone because you are in a state of lag and tiredness.

Each interviewee spoke of being constantly tired, of monitoring their sleep constantly. Lack of sleep affected each of them personally, including moods:

Oh yeah it definitely affects your moods. It's very hard to get interested in getting up and doing a lot of different activities and so consequently - even hearing something nice is being organised for you - it's like 'Oh I wish I didn't have to go to a party or go out for dinner. I just feel like sitting here and lying here asleep'. So you're reacting to things in a different manner because you're just not as up to it as what you would be if you're putting in a normal working day - and being in bed each night... So your mood is constantly in a state of - well it's constantly changing and it's very hard to be easy and happy and you know relaxed about things

Carol estimates that 80 per cent of those in the occupation use something to assist with their sleep though each of our interviewees attempted to avoid doing so. She said that many crew 'will take alcohol to get to sleep': her husband is 'devastated' that she takes sleeping tablets, and it is 'common for partners not to understand'.

Several interviewees felt that their sleep loss was aging them, and several partners also mentioned this issue. They each felt vulnerable to colds and flu, and one described how his immune system was compromised: 'I don't get a chance to recuperate: My Doctor said to me - "If you ever want time off work don't have any qualms about coming in and seeing me because this job is designed to make you sick"'. Another felt that he would die younger because of it:

I'm sure I'll die earlier than I'm supposed to. I'm serious when I say that. It's definitely affected my health, it's affected my moods, it's affected my relationships.

As Jason put it 'there's the fatigue aspect of it. In order to get a life you're got to subject yourself to these constant time zone changes and fighting the body clock to achieve a life'. He felt that better rosters would affect productivity. He describes sleep as a kind of 'occupational quest':

Sleep is the quest. You'll go downstairs and you'll meet the crew for a drink or something and you'll say 'Did you sleep?' It's just a quest. You just live with jet lag.

Jason's partner describes the effects she observes on him:

I think Jason has aged, in persona and physically, although he still looks quite good for his age. I think he has aged, I think he has a much older mentality because he's tired. If you feel tired, you feel old and I'm concerned further down the track how this will impact. ... Jason's smoking a bit now, he didn't use to. He doesn't smoke a lot, but he is.

The effects on families of flight attendants

Steven believes that his absences 'put a big strain on Cheryl. She has to run the household a week at a time if I'm away, a week at a time. I long for my family dearly. I miss them terribly when I'm away and when I come home I still have to put them on the backburner to certain extent because I'm so tired'. Like other attendants, their hours placed a great strain on the parent left at home, who moved between being a single parent, and a member of a couple.

Other point to wide mood swings:

Oh [he's] Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde! There are times – God if you could map the stress in his life - as he's getting closer to work, he's unbearable. He's so strung out. He hates the thought of leaving the family. He hates having to go and then the worst time in the world is when he's on standby because he's got no idea and every time that phone rings he jumps because he might have to leave us. He hates leaving us, I know that. He really hates leaving us. (Geraldine)

The effects on children

Steven also observed effects of his absences and exhaustion on his children:

Oh yeah, definitely [it affects them]. Even at this young age (4 and 2). They get disappointed a hell of a lot because they want to bounce all over you, and I'm usually – my fuses are a lot shorter in those circumstances because I'm that tired and I just physically can't do what they want me to do so they notice it directly.

They're extremely disappointed and they tend to shy away from me to a certain extent and I notice when I come back from trips as well, there's the initial 'hello daddy, how are you' you know, kiss and a cuddle and what not, but then they alienate me to a certain extent, everything goes towards mum. Then, especially my daughter, she's the oldest, I have to win her confidence back and I notice a huge difference, for instance when I'm on annual leave.

After I've been home for about a week...she drops her guard again. She lets me back into the fold. Yeah it's a strange situation because I tend to come home and try and help out Cheryl as much as I can with my own way of doing things but it completely disrupts the system that she's developed while I've been away. So...I tend to get in everyone's way more than anything else.

Steven and Cheryl notice that their young children miss Steven when he is away on his long flights:

I think [the 4 year old] definitely, she notices it more. Some - often they wake up at night - she does anyway, and says 'I want my Daddy' and things like this, you know. 'Where's my Daddy? Why does he have to go away?' things like that. They know that he goes and they count the sleeps - the number of sleeps that he'll be away for. So that gives them something to work on. But yeah she does, [the 2 year old is] still, you know, he's still a little bit young yet to understand but he definitely knows when his father's gone and he definitely knows when he come home because of the joy - 'Dad's home!'

Cheryl goes on to describe how his absences mean that:

It's like he has visiting rights! [laughs] That's what it's like! That he can come and he can have dinner here for 3 or 4 nights [laughs] - visiting rights, play with the children, see them and then he's gone again, you know. ... I think it is a big impact because of the fact of just doing what you have to do when they're away and not having support. I mean in my case we don't have that much support outside of us. So we work it - we've got to be flexible but we try and keep the family together.

There is definitely a strain in regards to the one at home and definitely to the one who comes home, you know, because the flyer misses out a lot on what goes on at home as well.

Cheryl believes this has a big impact on Steven:

because I know he'd prefer to be with us, probably every night as well, you know, because he misses the children as well... Thank heavens for video cameras that's all I can say because most of the time that's the only way he gets to see things like that. So he sort of comes in second hand which he doesn't particularly like, and neither do I for that matter. But that's the nature of the job isn't it?

Cheryl believed that the best way to cope with Steven's job would for him to have bigger breaks between trips, 'Oh if he could. It would be wonderful. I think it would be wonderful if he had bigger blocks at home, definitely'. Like other interviewees Cheryl said the problem with the current breaks is that they were only long enough to catch up on sleep and recuperate, and not catch up with the family as well. 'That's all you do. You rest, you recuperate and then by the time that happens, you're packing your bags and then he's gone again'.

Jason and Geraldine are coping with adolescent children. While Jason thinks they are accustomed, he also sees some costs – or his partner tells him about them:

They've grown up with it. My daughter says, you know gives me, very sad looks when I'm leaving and very happy when I'm home. My second son misses me a lot apparently but these are questions that are better asked by my wife because I'm not here and he says 'Oh Dad you're going away again', it's a real 'Ohhhh' you know because I go to the soccer with him and all that sort of caper. And number one son is very independent because of it. ... But sometimes I wish because of the load, once again, on my wife that I was home to pull his ears for him, you know, because he's at that age.

Jason's absences have resulted in some distance between him and his children that Geraldine is quite concerned about. She is also concerned about the impact that Jason's tiredness and absences have had on the three children – despite her best efforts:

Oh it's hard. Oh gee this is sad. I think it's had a really negative effect on his relationship with his children, particularly our eldest son, who doesn't expect to have his father around, doesn't expect to talk to dad about his problems and I think their relationship broke down quite strongly for a while, it's rebuilding now but during those very difficult puberty years um... very difficult. They did not like each other at all and I felt that was really sad, so it was as a mother watching somebody not like my son and not like my husband, that was really hard. My daughter misses him a lot. My middle

child used to panic a lot, thinking that he was going to crash, really be frightened 'Mum, is Dad all right? How do you know he's alright?' and I used to have to ask Jason to ring him from wherever he was but that died out because he'd be too tired to remember sometimes, you know. So the children have missed out...he hasn't been there for [things] and they see other kids' dads are there for theirs. They see other kids' dads have more time to play in the pool for example or to do stuff and while Jason really tries to do this, so frequently it's Mum and the kids. They miss out on their Dad a lot. They miss out on a lot of time with their Dad.

I think that my eldest son has a negative perception of his father in many ways. In that he just doesn't see him as a father figure I think, in lots of ways. I don't think he'd go to Jason easily if he had a problem - his other friends have a more personal relationship with their father. The other two - because I guess we witnessed what happened with [the oldest boy] I put a lot of effort into making sure that they spend a bit more time with him. But I mean I'd like to see Jason put in more time too, to build that relationship with the kids, but because he's so tired, he just can't. I think he would love it and I think he would like to think that the relationships are much more positive than they are but my perceptions aren't the same as his. I think he really is missing out on an awful lot and so are they.

Relationships

While they varied from household to household, each couple mentioned that the industry's hours resulted in tensions in their relationships, as couples had to cope with tiredness, patterns that were out of kilter with each other, and with long periods apart and then back together again. Steven pointed to the high rate of divorces in the occupation 'same as with pilots'. Even newly married couples had concerns:

We had to get it straight right from the beginning that it wasn't going to be a normal relationship. For a start, I'd be home, probably, 3 or 4 days and then I'd be gone up to 9 or 10, possibly more and therefore the few days that I am home, he has to go to work, so we're not getting very much quality time and then I'm packing, preoccupied with getting everything ready to go again. So he definitely takes a back seat to my life, but for now it's just the way it has to be, so that we can have an income.

Carol said that her job greatly impacts on her husband.

Very definitely. Well I come home and just need to unwind for a couple of hours and then I just find that he is either needing to sort of go to bed and I'm not ready you know within five hours of that and he is obviously wanting to go and do things and I'm wanting to stay in bed the next morning and just try and sleep til midday to try and catch up on the rest. So he can't really plan too many things around me until I sort of almost said to the hour whether or not I feel up to it or can make something. Appointments are constantly crossed out and cancelled and remade further down the track, just to try and fit things in with a state of catch-up. So he doesn't really get a chance at just booking us socially like normal couples would, he always got to say 'Oh I'll have to let you know' and it's always very last moment as to whether we go or don't go.

Carol believes that her husband does not have a good understanding of her work. She thinks that he as a glorified idea of what it involves and doesn't realise it is hard work, especially staying awake at odd times, keeping track on many issues at one time and on your feet for the whole time. 'He thinks he knows about it but he doesn't know what it's like trying to get to sleep in a different city'. This lack of understanding causes tensions in their relationship, and Donald reinforces this in his comments

When Donald and Carol are invited somewhere Donald is usually faced with the option of 'going along as the single guy. ... He hates it'. Like other partners of long hours workers, Donald tends to organise his life around Carol's. He feels that her body is rarely well adjusted to the home time zone, and that she needs more rest:

The first thing I'd like to see for her is that she just gets more rest. I mean, that is the most important thing because I don't want to see her worn down all the time, you know, always with the flu.

He sees the stress on their relationship. If Carol, worked more reasonable hours, that is, had more time at home Donald says:

I think it'd be less stress on our relationship. Yeah there are times when she's a bit irritable from it - from the job and - like with me, and I know I haven't done anything wrong, it's just that she's tired and run down and people just are like that when they get run down.

Donald is holding out for the day when Carol will quit her job to raise a family, and Carol agrees that this will be her decision as she sees it as undesirable to have children and keep up

this job, as do her immediate larger family, who have said that they won't look after her children, as many in the industry expect. Although, if there were some way Carol could maintain her job, either with a few part-time hours or an extended period of leave without pay until the kids were older, she would take it in a second.

Carol summarises the main effects of the hours on her:

The illnesses, the tiredness, the guilt that you feel that you're leaving your family and your husband and basically any argument you have before you leave you know holds in the air until you can get back home and right any wrongs.

Steven and Cheryl also face pressure in their relationship:

It definitely puts a strain on it. Definitely puts a strain on it, in that I've just got to drop everything to go to work at times and just lumber it all onto Cheryl, which is unfair on her. As I said before, I'm lucky that I've got a strong girl there that can do all that sort of stuff. It certainly stifles the things that you would like to do with your family. It certainly doesn't give you the opportunity to do as much as you would because of family.

Jason and Geraldine are frank about the costs for them:

It's very hard on the relationship, it really is because she has to run the house completely. (Jason)

He mentions that the fact that he has been fatigued for the last 15 years is bound to have had an effect. He thinks that his wife probably doesn't have a really good social life, 'because when I come home I'm knackered and she would love to go out to dinner'. Jason believes that for most flight attendants 'The constant quest is a home, life because it's a very lonely job'.

Geraldine goes further: 'I just think it's been so unhappy for us, as a married couple' given his absences and her need to just get on with things and raise the 3 children. Geraldine herself works long hours as a teacher ('about 55 a week on average') though she fits them around her children's school hours. She also uses the language of single parenthood:

I have no social life, virtually none. I can't make plans for the future. It's very difficult...I do get very stressed because I have to deal with so much on my own. I'm raising 3 children as a single parent who gets support occasionally – that's how I see my role. Jason doesn't see that at all. He sees himself as an equal member of the partnership and that in itself is a source of conflict, but earlier days it wasn't as difficult. Our children were younger, the problems were smaller, I now have an adolescent son...

There are so many instances of stress. Sport Saturdays - we have 3 kids to get to 4 games. I'm always calling on people, that I don't really like to do, but I have to.

Geraldine misses her partner a lot, and sees also that his job has changed and that has affected him:

I miss him. I miss him very much and I get very angry about that. To the point that I don't want him home anymore because it's – sometimes I don't know what's worse: to have him leave or having him come back. Yep I think it has definitely affected our relationship in a negative way. In the past, the stay at home was much longer, you use to get 75% of your away time free and we had a chance to rebuild. Now we don't. He's in a constant state of jet lag. He's intolerance is very high because he is. He has a vision of coming home to a Brady Bunch family because he misses us so much and we can never match that. And because he's tired, he's intolerant and that leads to a lot of conflict and resentment on my part, I think 'I waited all effing week for you to get back and this is what you....' you know and he thinks 'Why am I here? I'm just a visitor in my own home'. So – because there's not enough time for us to rebuild the relationship that breaks down every time he goes away, really. It has had a lot of negative impacts and I think it's more the hours he works, than anything else. I don't believe you can fix this with money. Money's not going to make any difference. It's the time. He needs more time. If Jason was home more often, I think we would be a stronger family unit. We would do more things as a family. We would go out to dinner as a family, we never do that.

Geraldine describes how she remembers how she loves Jason when he is on holidays: 'When he's on holidays, after 2 weeks, then I remember how much I love him'.

Sunny describes how important it is to have a husband who copes well at home with their two school aged children:

I'm lucky I have a husband who does things like that. We still have arguments because when I come home tired and then the house is not up to my standard of cleanliness and tidiness and I've heard this from a lot of the girls at work. Like for some of them, there's washing in the middle of the floor apparently for when they walk in the door. They literally save up all the washing and all the household cleaning for their wives! And you walk in tired ... well, my husband doesn't do that anymore. ... I just find that when I'm home I rarely have a day where I can sit back and relax.

She describes being 'frequently out of sync' in her partnership with Thomas, and how she works hard at the relationship:

I think going away affects the relationship quite a lot. I think you have to work very hard to make up for the fact that you are going away every week. My husband wanted me to give up after we had the second child but I didn't want to because ...well I didn't want to.

Her partner finds the discontinuity in their lives hardest, though he thinks that the kids are 'quite well adapted to the idea of mum coming and going'. His flexible hours working in a university have meant that the children usually have access to one parent.

'I call myself a flight attendant widow... I'm a single parent when he's away'

Steven thinks that he doesn't get enough quality time with Cheryl. Cheryl concurs, saying that she has to be 'extremely independent and flexible':

They're the two major words I would say because when he's away I have to take the whole responsibility of the family for however long he's gone for – up to nearly 14 days, you know, and run the household without him being there. When he comes home with his hours, it doesn't matter really whether it's a 5 day trip or a 14, he needs to have a sleep when he gets home because most of the flying is through the night and he will sleep that day. He basically isn't normal probably until the next trip - he's ready to go on the next trip. So he gets tired, I suppose at the same time I get tired because I've been with the kids for however long and I need a break. And it's very hard, that's what I mean, you've got to be so flexible.

I call myself flight attendant widow [laughs] when he's away! But you know, yeah you do, you do feel like a single mum at times but you know I suppose, you always know at the end of however many days they're away for that you've got the company when they come home, you know, you've got the adult to talk to at night, you've got somebody to sit down and have a glass of wine with – the social interaction, you've got that.

Cheryl has to make a conscious effort to 're-integrate' Steven back into the family when he has been away 'and make him feel, you know, as if he's still part of the family':

when he's been away for a while, you know, he has to introduce himself, really, back into the family because the children see him go and it's just us, and the children see him come, he's like a floater.

Social life

For attendants with families, social life was in short supply. Most concentrated on physical and mental recovery and on their families when they were home. However, several mentioned that it was difficult to maintain social contacts with non-flyers (who could not understand their circumstances) or with anyone but very old understanding friends who could plan weeks and months ahead. Each mentioned missing important family events – weddings, birthdays, and one had been home for only 4 out of 22 Christmases in his working life. One managed to maintain participation in his touch football group of very old friends who knew that he would only turn up occasionally.

What would help?

The dominant need amongst interviewees was for more rest time after flights. And many wanted that recuperative time at home:

That is the most important thing, the most. And a lot of people would prefer that recuperative period to be at home.

It's just the way the nature of the job's gone. Well I think I'm speaking for the majority of the people. I know that all my friends of my seniority, that's the way that they feel. I remember back to when I first started flying and I was young and footloose and fancy

*free and I enjoyed going away and I didn't care too much about the time at home, you know. But also I did have that time at home as well too. ... But that time has now been compacted right down where [we don't get] that much time in the majority of our ports...I know the majority of people I speak for are people who have been there like 5, 6 years and upwards and certainly have got a family or a relationship back at home. People that want their recuperative time at home rather than while they're away.
(Steven)*

CHAPTER 6 The Postal Industry

Our interviews of postal workers included four employees who manage post offices, one who delivers and sorts mail and one partner of a post office manager. Each of the employees was working more than 48 hours per week on average, and in some cases many more. Most of these employees felt that they worked under constant pressure, did not take a lunch break on a regular basis, and did not always take their rostered days off. For most, the main issue was unpaid overtime. Each was motivated to do a good job, to get the job done. But the costs of doing so in an environment of inadequate staffing as all but one identified, was measured in personal, and family impacts.

It appears that the major issue that is influencing working time issues in the retail sector of the post industry is under-staffing which arise from the staffing formula that is used. The staffing formula – which takes into account factors such as number of customers, type of business and profitability – allocates paid staff hours to post offices. Interviews suggest that this process does not allocate enough staff to enable employees to complete their management duties within their rostered hours. The managers spent lot of their time during opening hours on direct customer service duties that meant they had to complete their management tasks outside their rostered hours.

The other main issue is one that pervades most white collar occupations in this study: employee's commitment to the job and their practice of working until the job is done rather than their nominated and formally remunerated hours of work. A lot of emphasis at the postal manager level is placed upon performance, meeting key performance indicators and “being a good manager”. It appears that some of the workers were afraid of being seen as a “bad manager” – that is, not getting the job done - and put in extra hours to achieve a good performance.

For example, a major issue for Suzanne, a post office manager, is how upper management allocate staff. The system allocates staff based on set average times for certain tasks. Her problem is that these allocated times do not take account for unforeseen tasks (such as locating lost parcels) and do not suit the slower staff in her office. The system determines how many staff a store should have based on how much and what types of business they do. Apparently the staff numbers that are determined by the process are negotiable with the upper management but negotiation does not occur in practice. Suzanne wants to be allocated an extra 25 hours of staff time: she says this will help a lot with her and her staff's extra time at work.

According to Suzanne, not many women with young kids make it to manager in the postal industry: the demands are just too high.

A strategy that management in the postal industry has adopted to deal with a constantly varying workload is greater use of part-time workers. Their patterns of hours are closely matched to work peaks and troughs, and some are called in, then go home and are called back later to minimise their presence at work in off-peak times. According to interviewees, this has intensified the nature of work in post offices, and has led to the substitution of intensified part-time jobs for full-time jobs, which – while they might suit those who want to work part-time – is a concern to employees. What is more, the hours of these part-time workers can be extended from their agreed levels without triggering overtime rates. What is essentially overtime for part-time workers (ie beyond their normal hours of work) does not result in overtime pay, although it may trigger new costs for employees – whether in terms of child-care or other economic and social losses.

For the postal managers, who are in white-collar managerial positions, their main concern is unpaid overtime. All the postal managers said they are doing extra hours to complete their job and reported not taking many of their RDOs in fear of not completing all their work. Dana's experience is illustrative. She is rostered on for a 19 day month. Her hours are 8.30am to 5.14pm Monday to Friday. Roughly, she takes about 3 of her 12 RDOs every year. Dana works from about 8-8.30am and never leaves before 6pm - usually she leaves about 7-7.30pm. Occasionally she will work till 10pm. It takes Dana 1 hour to travel to work. She sometimes works weekends and although it will vary, on average she works 1 or 2 weekends a month. Dana is in a relatively new position and believes that most of her long hours are attributed her to reorganising the shop and setting up more efficient arrangements. Taking into account her previous acting position in another shop that was well organised she expects to get her unpaid overtime down to about 5-10 hours a week (not including the 1 hour lunch break that she hardly ever takes).

Dana said that she is sometimes expected to meet 'unbelievable' deadlines and that her hours increase when she has to complete particular tasks, for example when there is a new promotion (these occur about once a month). The main reasons Dana gives for working long hours are that she wants to 'do well' and that she has no choice sometimes when she has deadlines to meet. Dana was concerned that the long hours were her own fault because she hadn't found the most efficient way of working.

In the area of mail delivery and sorting, the issue is one of unreasonable overtime: Max is regularly working 2 hours overtime on top of normal shifts. He works Monday to Fridays sorting and delivering mail. He starts at 5am or 5.45am every day and because of the overtime ends up working till 3.30 or 4.30pm. This affects his family life.

Why work long hours? It's the unpaid labour that gets the job done

For these workers, working the extra hours is a matter of keeping up with the work each day: 'It is the unpaid labour that gets the job done' (Keith).

Keith said that the only way to meet the management targets is to lessen the labour costs. He feels that the message he gets from management is: 'These are our expectations of you, you manage it and just give us the results'. Keith says that he accepts his long hours as generally, they have become culturally acceptable, but he does believe that he should get paid for all the hours that he works. Keith has watched his real wages decrease, due to the extra unpaid hours he is working.

Max who delivers mail also believes that the extra working hours have resulted from the push to get the workload completed. Each postie is responsible for completing the mail round they are assigned to. If they want to finish on time it is up to the worker to find a way to do this. The person who was on Max's round before him, started work earlier than the rostered time and worked through his breaks just so he could finish on time to pick his children up from school. Max believes that management indirectly encourages this method of coping with the workload, as they offer no other solutions for the extra overtime required to complete the workload. Max feels that it is assumed that he will do the overtime: management don't always ask him to do it, they just assume he will. Max understands that management will not get extra staff to help because the mail load varies so frequently and the way they deal with this is to increase overtime.

Suzanne works the long hours because 'I can't get the work that needs to be done, in the hours that I've got. I simply just can't do it.' She attributes this to lack of staff. Dana is aware of the costs of extra overtime and the impact it will have on meeting performance indicators so she prefers not to ask her staff to do extra overtime and does not request payment for the overtime she puts in herself. Dana is at a level which means that she can be paid overtime; however, it is only approved 'if you have what is considered to be "reasonable" grounds for the request'. Suzanne feels that it is implied that you are not a good manager if you are requesting overtime to get the job done.

If my manager paid me for the hours I worked he wouldn't let me work the hours because they'd cost too much. Then he might give me another part-timer which costs a lot less!

The effects of unreasonable hours on the individual postal worker

A number of those working more than 48 hours a week identified costs for their health. As Keith said 'if you work the hours long term, you'll get sick'. He believes that the hours he is working are eventually going to start impacting on his health ('if they haven't already'). At the present time he believes that his long hours have led to high levels of stress: 'Every postal manager I know suffers from it [stress], but it's not recognised'. He may be right: when asked about the effects on her, Suzanne says 'I don't know! I've done it for so long!' She recognises that she is 'very tired and stresses about not completing everything she has to'. The combination of intensive work, under pressure, and long hours, is a repetitive theme for these postal managers.

Keith expects that in the future his long hours at work will start having a greater and more obvious impact on his health. He would like to continue to work towards his retirement but he expects that his retirement will be determined by his health and the intensity of his work, rather than when he feels financially secure to retire:

As a self-funded superannuant you sort of have ideals as to when you think you'll work to, but I'm a realist enough to understand and believe that that will be guided and gauged only and totally by my physical ability to maintain [these hours] to a certain age.

Suzanne who works long hours as a manager identified other health and safety risks including 'driving home nearly asleep'.

Aiden also identified health effects for his partner. He thinks Dana's long hours will impact on her health even though 'she mightn't think so'. Aiden said that Dana is always tired and that if she ever gets a sleep-in, she will sleep a lot. He also believes the long amounts of traveling to work takes a toll on her too.

Wanda is one of the few post office managers with young children. Her hours – which combine her paid work and parenting – are extremely long:

I've had fairly heavy health problems in the last 2 years and I think it is because of... because if you take a typical day for me...I'm getting up at 5.30-6am, getting lunches ready, getting the kids ready, I've got a bed wetter at home... I do that all before I get here...I've got 20 staff here, I'm looking after them all day...I pick the kids up say

around 6-6.30pm and then it starts again, got to get the tea ready, empty the lunch boxes, sit down with them with their homework...The first time I sit down at night at dinner at 7pm which is quick...I don't actually sit down to relax until 9pm.

Wanda believes that her children accept her demanding job because they don't know any different, but it is far from easy – and that acceptance is not without complaint:

They don't know anything different... it's only now that the kids really... my youngest son he says 'I just wish you could come to school and be in the canteen'. ... I explained to them that if I didn't work we couldn't have nice things and we couldn't go on nice holidays. So they accept it but I think they get jealous of other kids who get picked up from school by their mums and stuff like that. But it's only just now but I'm sure the benefits will outweigh it.

Wanda doesn't believe that 'balance' is possible in the real world in her kind of job. She is trying to learn to live with it – though she sees that being 'acclimatised' to it is a problem in itself:

If you can get a happy balance between work and personal life you're pretty lucky I think - it doesn't happen in the real world...I suppose if you had a supporting partner and someone who would take the pressure off at home it would be so different. That's probably the worst thing you can do – is learn to live with it. Mine's just a chaotic life.

Wanda finds greatest relief through an extended break from her work. She works 48/52 arrangement that increases her block holidays. Short breaks are of limited use to her, as the work just mounts up and adds pressure.

The effects on postal workers and their families

Each of the interviewees described negative effects of unpaid long hours on their families. Some time ago, Suzanne took time out from managing her post office to manage another outlet. After this experience she made the conscious decision to cut her hours. There were positive and negative effects:

I worked 14 hours a day, 7 days a week for 8 weeks! Nearly killed me! ... I loved it.

She said that while she was working she enjoyed it but the effects would hit her when she left the workplace. She nearly fell asleep a couple of times while driving home. While she thoroughly enjoyed the experience she would never put in those hours again, as it was very exhausting. Suzanne said that she came to the realisation that she didn't have to work as hard as she was. After she came back from the temporary posting she said to herself:

'No, I'm not going to kill myself anymore', because I wasn't achieving anything. But I still put in a bit more hours than I should probably, but no, not as much as I did. ... I'm probably just more confident that they're not going to shoot me (laughs).

Clearly there is a level of fear for Suzanne about her performance and her willingness to put in long hours to get the job done.

The effect on couple relationships

The interviewees felt that their relationships frequently suffered from their long hours. While other factors also shaped these relationships, the traditional expectations of male partners for domestic support, meant that working extra unpaid long hours for women created specific hazards for their relationships and increased their total (paid and domestic) loads: 'I'm the sole supporter of my children'.

Aiden, Dana's partner would like her hours to match his better. He felt that Dana's long hours mean that 'she's not at home and if it wasn't for [his older son] being there I would suffer from complete boredom'. He is not happy with Dana's hours and he is unhappy that their hours are very different. He leaves for work before 7 every morning and she usually leaves after him. He would like it so their hours matched up, that is, that they would get home together at the same time. Ideally, Aiden would like his partner to work her rostered hours only. He is aware that Dana wants to do a good job at work, 'she is more career-minded than she was before'. Aiden said that Dana never wants to be seen as 'slack on the job' so she will put in extra hours or go to work on the weekends. Aiden does admit that it would be worse if they had a young family and realises that they don't have to worry about family so Dana can concentrate more on her career.

Aiden believes that Dana's long hours at work do affect him as he has no one to talk to when he gets home and her hours 'stress him out'. Even when Dana does eventually get home, Aiden said that sometimes she will stay up to 1am in the morning to finish paper work. Aiden

thinks that the long hours are impacting on their relationship and it is causing tension. By the time Dana gets home Aiden feels tired and is almost ready to go to bed himself and sometimes she is gone before he is. While Aiden is becoming accustomed to Dana's hours, he still finds them difficult and he thinks the situation is wrong: 'I suppose I'm getting used to them – but it shouldn't happen'.

In his job, he does his standard hours and goes home, he doesn't work unpaid overtime and is not very understanding of her hours. Dana agrees that her partner gets frustrated with her hours and refused to talk to her after she had come home late for several nights and wasn't there to prepare his dinner. He doesn't help with the housework. Dana considers her hours to be putting a strain on her relationship. Dana finds that she no longer has time to complete household chores when she comes home at night so she finds now that her weekends are taken up with the work she would normally have completed during the week. She hasn't visited her daughter and grandchildren (who live 2 hours away) as often as she would like, due to the lack of spare time.

Wanda said her relationship with her partner is not very good and she said she was the sole carer of her children 'because their father doesn't help at all. I do everything for them'. Her mum looks after her kids after school. Wanda leaves for work as soon as her kids are on the school bus:

My kids were in daycare from the time they were 3 months old...I think my partner wants a person tied up to the kitchen all day and there at his beck and call... which you won't find this day and age... but I don't live in a happy relationship at all so I don't think work hurts it anyway. I'm the sole supporter of my children. I'm their future.

As in other industries, where the long hours worker is in a partnership with other long hours workers, the strain can sometimes be less because 'they understand':

I have a very understanding spouse, so that's helpful. I do understand that there could be some partnerships where it could place an incredible strain. Then again, my wife is in a fairly high-powered position ... she has a mutual understanding... it's happening to her as well. (Keith)

The effects on children-parent relationships, and on children

The interviewees felt that it would be very hard to have caring responsibilities and be a post office manager. As Suzanne put it:

I've got a friend who is a manager with young children and that's pretty hard on her, very hard on her actually. ... She's the only manager I know at my level with young children and I know it's hard on her. I didn't manage [a post office] when my kids were young, I couldn't have coped.

Suzanne also said that if she did have young children at school:

Oh I wouldn't manage! No, if I had kids at school I would find it very difficult to do what I do.

Max's extra unpaid overtime of 2 hours on most shifts, creates problems for his child – and costs him money. The later ending time prevents him from picking up his child from school; he now goes to after school care. Max is very upset about this. He said that his son always looked forward to be picked up from school and that this was also placing strain on his relationship with his partner as well as imposing an extra cost for the childcare. Max believes that picking his son up from school is a very important part of his growing up and his relationship with his son.

Max's partner drops their son off at school and as a result starts work later so she also finishes later. They would like the work hours arranged in their household so that one of them can drop their son off at school and the other can pick him up. If Max worked his normal hours, this would be possible.

The effect on communities and on social life

These long hours create serious social disabilities for employees. Their social worlds have shrunk, their physical activities are reduced, and basic activities – like keeping a dog – are restricted. For example, Keith described his social life as being on a 'downward spiral'. He found that he was often breaking social engagements because of his work which eventually led him to no longer attempting to make social engagements. Keith used to play squash once a week and used to be a member of a golf club; he attributes the loss of these activities directly to his extensive working hours. He would like a dog, but his hours prohibit it: 'If I had time to walk the dog, I'd buy one'.

They also used to have friends over to dinner during the week but they found this impossible to keep up. Keith really misses the social interaction, which he is forgoing for the sake of his working hours:

That social interaction is the greatest [loss] ... for me, and from what I see from my peers, is the thing that suffers the most. (Keith)

Keith has 3 days off a fortnight. He uses his one day off each week to do household work which leaves him one day a fortnight for 'me time'. Keith has no doubts that he is suffering because he is missing out on his social time.

Voluntary Work

Keith and his wife used to do volunteer work each week of about 4-8 hours each, but that too is affected by his hours:

We find now we are doing things for ourselves, when before we were doing things for other people. ... There's a real debate, a real conscious issue within yourself over that. It becomes a bit of a struggle and you do get yourself worked up in that sense ... as a consequence of working these unpaid hours. (Keith)

CHAPTER 7 Teaching

We interviewed six teachers. These included two teaching couples. We also interviewed two other non-teaching partners, giving 8 interviews in total. Teachers and their partners identified several main problems with their hours:

- Consistently working long hours, particularly in parts of the year (e.g. exam time, report time, special events)
- Increased class sizes
- Increased face-to-face teaching
- As a result, increased preparation, marking, correction, etc and less free periods to accomplish it
- Extra duties outside actual teaching
- Balancing the dual responsibility of teacher/librarian with other specialisations or management duties.

Essentially it appears there has been an overall intensification of teacher's workload in relation to three aspects of teachers' work. Firstly, there has been an increase in terms of core teaching activities (class teaching and associated tasks of preparation, marking, correction, photocopying etc) via larger class numbers and increased face-to-face teaching. Secondly, necessary and often compulsory management and communication tasks associated with teaching (e.g. parent/teacher nights, on-going training, various staff meetings, meetings with individual staff and students) which may vary from school to school, have remained at least constant. Thirdly, the quality of tasks of education in the wider sense (including for example, linking schools with the wider community, fostering a school community outside the classroom environment, providing extra activities for students, improving quality of teaching programs, and extending assistance to students with further needs) that fall outside the classroom teachers' usual job description, are becoming increasingly expected.

Despite the overall increase in workload there is little acknowledgement of these issues, either through remuneration or time allowance provided by reducing teachers' face-to-face teaching load. Teachers discussed how their workload seemed 'endless'. A number of these teachers had moved 'sideways', or even 'downwards' in career terms, or had put off promotion, in an attempt to reduce their hours; this worked in some but not all cases. Part-time work also served as a means to try to reduce the working day, but – as in the public service example –

this strategy might liberate the employee from very long hours, but it frequently meant working much more than the contracted part-time hours.

Those who recognised serious problems for themselves and their families through long hours, appeared to be engaged in a constant process of self-surveillance and ongoing struggle to contain their hours, and to wrestle 'big jobs' and more demanding students into acceptable working days.

This industry highlights the kind of time squeeze that occurs when extra hours are worked on an unpaid basis, and when professional workers are highly committed to the recipients of their work – their students and communities. Society reaps a substantial benefit from the effort that these teachers make – but these efforts in turn exact their own – frequently hidden or privatised - external costs in terms of injury to teacher's health, their relationships, their children and their community involvement.

A 'professional' culture that is greedy for unpaid hours

The pressure to work long hours not only develops from an institutional increase in face-to-face teaching, but also appears at a cultural level. Ron raised the issue of a 'work culture' in schools, and an internalisation of that culture, where teachers are committed to quality education. This was illustrated in all the interviews. It was acknowledged that there was a certain level of personal control over the responsibilities and the time they spent on work to achieve a standard of teaching and wider education they felt increased the value of their work.

Burn-out

While the interviews with teachers suggested that they considered their workload had to be maintained to continue quality teaching, the demands eventually took their toll and forced them to reassess their responsibilities, or alter how they managed their lives.

For example "burn-out", complete exhaustion, simply not being able to face school, and depression were some of the extremes all the interviewees mentioned in this sector as symptoms they, and their colleagues, suffered from. For example:

- Not able to face work. Jodie discussed how she and other teachers would use up their sick leave not necessarily because they were sick as such, but just couldn't face school.
- Recoup. Holiday periods were valued as a time to catch up on work and preparation, to recoup from complete exhaustion and fatigue. Jodie said that it is obvious when people have had a holiday: they look different. Bonnie said that it had reached a point for Phillip that he needed to get away from it all so badly that he is planning to get away from everything (including family) and climb a mountain during the next Christmas holidays. Phillip, Chris and Lorraine also discussed how holidays would involve catching up on sleep or work rather than a quality personal or family time.
- Burn-out. Burn-out or a crisis point was when school and the workload had become unbearable. Depression and the effect on the family were issues for all couples. Chris described how he had decided not to seek promotion because of its cost on his family. Tony discussed how he chose to demote to classroom teacher although he had been in a higher position since 1981:

The workload was too much and I couldn't cope.... I suppose it got to the stage last year where I said, 'Right, that's it' ... Last year I decided enough was enough. It wasn't like it was a sudden decision; it was something I had been thinking about for quite some time. And last year I thought, 'right, I'm not going to continue like this. It's not worth it. The little bit of extra money for the extra work you have to do is not worth it.' And I just decided to demote down to classroom teacher.

- Constant low-grade infections. Jodie and Jenny discussed how people often suffer from lingering colds and flu. Chris and Lorraine described how they frequently fell ill as soon as the holidays arrived, and they spent them recovering, as did many of their colleagues. Jenny also discussed how she had a number of physical problems last year which she could not be sure, but feels were related to work
- Fatigue. The interviewees all discussed fatigue and associated feelings of 'grumpiness', or bad moods, and lack of energy. Phillip discussed how he didn't look forward to socialising and lack of emotional energy. Tony talked about slumping in front of the television and cutting down on community activities. Jodie discussed the 'emotional strain'. Chris described how Lorraine's decision to reduce her hours and responsibilities at work had reduced her 'grumpiness'.
- Stress. This was associated with feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work needing completion, not being able to have a sick day without having to organise materials for the class, not being able to leave work behind at school, and particular times in the school year (sometimes associated with exams and marking or school performances or rehearsals, etc).
- Emotional labour. Associated with fatigue and stress is the emotional labour of teaching. Bonnie, Phillip, Jodie and Ron in particular discussed the intensity of working with

children and adolescents, while Chris described the effect of working intensively with kids 'at risk'.

The education industry also provides examples of employees who are part-time but work long hours – well in excess of their paid hours. Take the case of Jodie, who teaches two subject areas now on a .8 basis but who frequently works 12 hours extra in event preparation and regular camp organisation. 'Unreasonable hours' regulation needs to deal with the situation affecting part-time workers who regularly work extended unpaid hours of work, and/or who face unpredictable 'extra' hours demands.

The pleasures of working long hours....

For Jodie, teaching is not just about standing at the front of a class for 40 minutes and marking assignments and tests:

The best satisfaction you get from the job is from doing the extra things... I suppose that it's not the friendships you build up as much, but the satisfaction you see of the kids doing something like exams and going well through it... or the musical thing where after months and months and months of work they finally put on these extravaganzas and they are kings for the day, and they love that. I suppose I do it because I like to see that satisfaction for the kids. Same with the camps. I organise these band tours each year and that means being away from home for the best part of a week I suppose. But again the kids get such enormous fun out of it too. And when I'm on these things it's great fun. Like I can't say I dislike it. I wouldn't do it. [laugh] So there is that satisfaction of doing them I suppose.

Ron enjoys his work. He works long hours and travels frequently, and his partner also works long hours, though she is in theory part-time. He says that expectations to work long hours emerge both from outside and within him:

I've got a good job that suits me in terms of personality. It's an enormous amount of variety and my technical conditions of employment are good, but the downside is I have to do a lot of contact at the hours when people are actually available...I get a certain amount of satisfaction being perceived as capable of my job, and I wouldn't want it to be said negatively, to have it said he doesn't come to these things or doesn't produce these outlooks so in a sense while we talk about it, neither of us is likely to do anything much about it because it's tied up fairly much with how we see ourselves and what we do.

Unpaid Overtime: 'It's just assumed you'll do it'

Phillip talked about the professionalism of teachers with the constant struggle to provide quality teaching within the framework of increased face-to-face teaching which usually ignores the other responsibilities teachers have outside of class preparation, teaching, marking and correction. For example, numerous staff meetings (for each year, subject, overall school staff meetings), yard duty, school camps (and the extra preparation required for remaining classes), informal/impromptu meetings with staff and students, extra responsibilities such as year coordination, subject coordination, student report coordination, sports coaching, and school production organising. While other activities are optional, there is also an expectation to be involved in other school activities, and he says, teachers, as idealistic professionals, want to improve the quality of education.

The sports work is optional. But on the other hand what are you teaching for? You're trying to give some extras, for the kids. Some quality of life... There's always been, I think, an unwritten or unspoken pressure, if you like, in education. People put themselves out and do the extras otherwise no one would go on the camps, no one would do the school musical, no one would do sports coaching at lunchtime, no one would go away with sport, do any of those things. There's always been that. And that's fine and people I think have always done that. What has happened over the past couple of years, our actual face-to-face teaching load has gone up.

He has taken on various responsibilities, including sports coaching, report coordination, and an advisory group to principal. While the report coordination provides limited remuneration and time allowance, the other duties are not acknowledged in workload timetables or by remuneration. To complete all these activities requires many hours, often over 50; for a school camp lasting 3 days, it takes in excess of 100 hours.

Despite reviewing his workload, to maintain quality of teaching and a level of professional job satisfaction there seems little he can do to limit his hours.

You almost make mental lists of things you absolutely have to do at work, other things you'd like to do, to improve student learning and unfortunately you wind up throwing the entire second list away of stuff you'd like to do and you just don't get to it and you look at the stuff you absolutely have to do and see how much of that you can actually get through.

These hours are expected. As Jody describes her musical contribution:

... I think this is the eleventh or twelfth consecutive musical. And there's absolutely this expectation that I'll just do it. If I said suddenly next year I'm not going to play, I don't know what the school would do, to be honest. After so long it's just assumed that I'll do it. And there's two of us who do the musical each year and he's had a couple of years off, but I've done it throughout... Although it's not part of our job description... we're not employed to do this, there is this absolute expectation that we will and it will happen and we will organise term concerts, and that we will organise high school band trips... And we've created our own monster in a sense... We've more or less created it together, and we've created this bigger and better program... by developing these tours, and these trips and these concerts and the rest of it, the kids want them, the parents expect them and then we provide them, and it's got bigger and better and everyone loves it and they all think we're marvelous, but in order to keep it going... we've got to keep on doing. There is an absolute expectation that it will happen. 'An hour's lunch-break isn't something I see'

Jenny – Tony's partner - is also a teacher, with primary responsibilities as a librarian. Her hours, like her husband's, are long and variable. She has recently changed workplace. For 15 years she worked at the same school as her husband, which was useful for travel to and from work together. Now she is the only teacher-librarian for 250 students. Her responsibilities include:

- Manage library and library staff
- Managing collection (including buying, organising its use for curriculum purposes)
- Overview curriculum to make sure resources suitable and ready for staff to use and to help with teaching and using of resources
- Also provide assistance to students
- Teaching some classes
- Meetings.

Jenny's hours are variable. She usually is at work from 8.20am – 4.30pm (often over this), and brings anything from 5 to 20 hours of work home a week. The hours can also be intense, especially since the workplace environment often means there are meetings and work responsibilities during recess and lunch breaks:

The intensity of what you're doing all day – it's very full on. And when you're working to the clock and if you're working a six period day, which most schools are, you're working to six deadlines. So you have to monitor everything you do and finish within that time, and then get to the next one. And even meetings have to be finished up within the time limit because there's something else which has to be done when the bell goes. And then fitting the extra things in, in between it, in our lunch break, in your periods where you're supposed to be doing your preparation and correction. You just come home mentally drained, and physically and quite often you'll be asleep on the couch by five o'clock [laughs].

For Jenny particular difficulties arise in balancing her teaching and library responsibilities. There are too many interruptions during the school day to do marking, preparation or other work for her classes, so she tends to only concentrate on the library while at work.

The effect on the individual

Jodie mentioned toward the end of the interview that her partner, who worked long hours as a teacher in the 1980s, had suffered depression due to unrealistic workload expectations. The impact of long hours had a big impact on his leisure time:

[The long hours] make you tired. Physically one-off tired, like you're tired at the end of the day. Two, you're just mentally knackered when each weekend comes around and you compare notes with other teachers and you find week eight, nine or ten of a term, more people seem to be cruising along, getting everything done almost fed on adrenaline and after that the percentage of teachers, just chatting to people, who spend the first week of their holidays sick, just viral things, coldy things... sick, or sleeping in everyday. My last set of holidays, gone to bed early and slept in most days, five or six days. Instead of your normal seven hours at night you're getting ten or more. And that indicates to me that people are just knackered. (Ron, teacher)

Phillip observes burnout and dissatisfaction among many of his colleagues:

The fifty year olds count down the time until they pull the pin at fifty-three. The young folk sit there thinking, 'hmm, I'll head off to Europe next year'. And people like me are in the position where you just say 'right, I'll do this but I'll be buggered if I'm going to do this to myself in five years time'.

Phillip is also committed to teaching and wants to provide good quality teaching: Bonnie, his partner, comments:

He has ideals, which I suppose is a bit old-fashioned, but I think that keeps him going. And he's often said when it all gets too much he'll just leave. And he would. And I think over the years just seeing his friends in the profession, a lot of good teachers have left... They have gone into industry.

One teacher describes the picture in her school:

We all go along quite evenly and then crack up. We all have a couple of days off here and there to recuperate. Most of us are aware we push ourselves too much. Whenever we take long service leave, or you go away and come back, everyone will go 'Wow! Don't you look good!' and so there's obviously this constant pressure that we obviously work ourselves too hard.

As a result of overwork, people in Jody's school often suffer from mild but regular infections such as colds, take a day off here and there to recover, maybe deal with stress by drinking or smoking. Phillip reports the same in his school.

Lorraine had changed jobs recently in an attempt to reduce her hours of work and spend more time with the family. She observed that the effects of long hours had made her grumpy and she took a significant real pay cut in order to work more reasonable times:

I have in this last week changed from one school to another. And basically it came down to workload and not enough family time. I was a head of faculty and I was involved in a complete curriculum rewrite, I was teaching 2 year 12 subjects and so...in the time before I left, I had been committed – not in a 'you must attend, this is part of your job' kind of way – but more 'if you don't attend we'll probably make your life a misery because we can't officially ask you to do this'.

A culture of long hours expectation

Lorraine described the school culture that drew her into long hours. She described her long hours before spending a year in overseas as a teacher on exchange and then returning to her most recent position as a faculty leader in her school:

I had 17 nights at work – 2 are compulsory, the other 15 were ‘gentle requests’ – you weren’t pulling for the team [if you weren’t there]. It was more a guilt type situation. Most staff would attend almost all of the evenings. Many days I would not get a lunch hour, and generally I worked from 8.50-5.30 with at least three nights at school week. Plus the night work.

Now, in my new school, I’m actually working from 8.50am through to 4.00pm, with some extra meetings. Meeting times are far less in this school than the one I used to be at.

I was finding [before my latest move] that although I had fairly generous time allowance, my time in the school day that was unscheduled was being used pretty much in maintaining equipment, doing cross curriculum stuff, maintaining the faculty so I had to do my own preparation in the school hours. So I was coming home after meetings 2 nights a week to 5.30pm and having our faculty meeting at 7.30am one day a week. And because of that, all my prep was at home. Having two VCE units that were new to me, I was spending minimum 4 hours per night on prep. And I have to say I think that’s fairly standard.

Lorraine’s partner described his view of her hours:

In the last week, with Lorraine having swapped schools...she is a much happier vegemite...Every night it was you get home, chuck down some food, and I’d sit there with the kids and she’d disappear into the study, and eventually she got tireder and grumpier and I think - even the kids would say - she is a much happier vegemite – a bit more energy and bit more time to do things. We cooked sausage rolls the other night together!

Lorraine’s view of how long hours in school come about – and how schools systematically rely upon them - was common to several teachers:

School’s work on the theory that until you say no or you fall apart they just pile extra responsibilities onto you and its only if you are incompetent of having a mental

breakdown that they actually say, well stop that...I got out before I had the mental breakdown.

Similar patterns of ‘managing’ to the point of severe stress are evident in public service work more generally as that section in this report shows. Lorraine’s solution of moving to a normal hours job resulted in new financial costs, but a much improved family life with her children:

By moving [schools] my kids have had to go into after school care. Before I could take them back to work with me. But I felt that I will be able to give my children more time, and that I’m not going to be saying to them all the time – which is a terrible thing that we teachers do – ‘I’m sorry kids, you have to go away I have to do this or that – go away’. And you are telling your own kids all the time, that the kids that you teach are far more important than they are.

Lorraine and her partner, both of whom had worked long hours in schools contrasted their experience overseas with Australia. After their time overseas, they decided to cut back on their hours and Chris in particular came back resolved ‘not to spend more than 2 hours a night on preparation and three hours on weekends’ so he could spend more time with the two kids.

The [overseas] system is really quite different. If you are a classroom teacher that is all you do. There are no middle management type jobs. You are either a teacher or an administrator...And that has certainly got a few advantages...For a year all I worried about was my teaching. And I thought I am actually not bad at this, I came up with a whole pile of things to do. (Chris)

Having had a year [overseas] last year, it was really nice to have that time with the kids. I had preparation time every day so that I could complete all my preparation at work, and then when I got home, 90% of my time was available for my children. It had never happened for me in Australia. So to make the financial sacrifice and the workplace sacrifice [by changing schools recently] - it was worth it. My highest motivation was for the kids...

Lorraine was very aware of the individual and family effects of her decision to work less hours:

I am sure that my children would tell you that even within a week that I am a much nicer person to live with. I'm not brushing them off, I'm not as stressed as I used to be. This week is the first week that I've slept through without waking up and thinking 'Oh I've got to do this or that and where I am I going to find that piece of information for my year 12 classes?'. You get exhausted but your mind's still functioning.

Both Chris and Lorraine described real advantages they observed for their kids when they worked fewer hours. Like a number of parents, they felt that their kids, once accustomed to their parents working long hours, did not complain much about it directly. However, when kids knew how things could be different, their views changed somewhat:

In the process [of working less hours overseas] I managed to see a bit more of the kids. And the kids had got used to having us available at night. Up until then they hadn't complained too much about it, but then having had parents around that would read to them, that would play something at night, that would do something, then they got shitty when we took it away from them.

It brought it home to me that this is not fair and my kids are going to become teenagers shortly and they won't want to know me and I'm wasting this, and I should spend some more time with them. And that's why...I want to set aside some time each night to be with the kids...I remember a couple of years ago [a study]...that said that good schools are schools that have a lot of parental involvement – I draw from that, that having parents involved in education is a good thing. And so I try...and do homework with the kids. The other thing is I'm making myself get my son to read to me... and his reading has improved dramatically and now he wants to read. My daughter gets quite grumpy about us not being around in the school. She wants to show us off – 'my mum showed up too'. She wants me to go running with her.

Lorraine describes the health effects of long hours for teachers:

We NEED those holidays...Most of us in those two-week vacations are ill. The adrenaline keeps you going for the term and then that cold that every kid seems to bring into the school everyday hits you during the holidays and you end up physically drained because of that.

Effects on productivity of individuals

Tony describes the effects he observes on productivity of working long hours:

You certainly don't feel you're performing to an optimum level. There are times when you feel you are not doing the right thing by the students and you know you are not performing particularly well in the classroom. I find now that tiredness, and fed-up and sick of the whole thing, to the stage that you know you're looking – well I mean the example is now people – not just me – come back and within two weeks you feel you just haven't been on a holiday.

Fatigue also has an effect on Tony's life outside work:

I mean you're just listless basically. I mean you come home from work now and you really don't feel like going out and doing things in the community you've done in the past... You just feel completely lethargic and just want to sit down and try and relax and once you've sat down you don't move... It gets to the stage you really feel like pulling back... You just don't do as much. You don't have the energy.

While Tony is still involved in football club committee and bowls with his wife, he has withdrawn from other community activities including: network learning for gifted students, and turning down community activities he is invited to participate in. He has decided to take a demotion rather than continue with an unworkable load.

Lorraine describes the effect on her classroom teaching of being tired:

I realised [overseas] that I'm a bloody good teacher and when I'm given the opportunity to prepare my classes properly and develop engaging material...that I do a really job and I feel proud of the quality of the performance that I am presenting but when I become stressed with report writing or curriculum development...and that starts to be the dominant feature of my day – then I'm not doing the teaching job that I'm actually employed to do.

Chris describes how being tired depletes his creativity as a teacher, and means that poor handling of difficult situations creates further, time consuming problems:

Yesterday the year nines went feral. And I really had to do some serious things. And so last night I was worn out, it was really hard to go in and read with [my son], I just wanted to collapse. It took me a couple of hours to do some marking that should have taken only an hour. If you put long hours on top of that, it's very hard... We have had a few people leave – one of the science teachers just said 'I'm not coming in ...that's it, I've had enough'. It certainly drags people down. At the end of the term people are tired and grumpy – you have to watch out. Your first reaction to [difficult] things with kids isn't always the best and it can take more time to fix it up. [Being tired] makes people grumpy, it makes teaching worse. Teaching is about people management. When you are tired and grumpy you react badly to things, and you make bad decisions about people management. And then you have to go out and clean up the mess that you've made and that creates extra work.

People learn in all kinds of ways... When you are tired your brain doesn't work as well. When you've had a decent nights sleep and you have things under control and your brain is firing up and you think of all kinds of good things to do. When you have a mountain of work to do, and you are tired, then you end up slipping back to 'OK I guess I'm just going to write this up on the board and do a few examples and hope that somebody in there might have a clue about what they are doing'. I've worked up a system of chemistry bingo to teach kids the elements – that takes hours to work up, to find ways to teach better.

'The workload was too much and I couldn't cope'

From 1981 Tony had been in a senior teacher position. This meant he had additional responsibilities for professional development and staff review. He was given five periods off for each 10 days which was not enough for the position. In 1992 he effectively accepted a demotion back to classroom teacher.

In a subsequent interview, Tony's wife raised how her husband suffered depression in the mid-late 80s to the point he had time off work because of the "ridiculous" workload. While Tony had not raised this in his interview, clearly the issue had had a significant family impact and was related to Tony's long hours and workload. Tony's wife was resistant to discussing this episode in greater detail, suggesting that "failure to cope" with expended long hour over time is a source of embarrassment for some family members.

The committed professional: embedded expectations

Jenny acknowledges that it is often her decision to work the long hours:

I could probably walk out earlier than I do but then it'd be there and it would be working properly. It's not something I'm being ordered to do, but the expectation is that things will run properly.

At the same time however, there is an expectation that teachers will accomplish not only the tasks associated with teaching classes (e.g. preparation, presentation, marking, corrections, report writing, communication with teachers and students) but also taking on other responsibilities. Even those teachers who try to avoid taking on the extra tasks usually get “barreled in somehow”. “They’re not seen very well by their colleagues. They’re often frowned upon”, even though Jenny feels that different stages in life affect what individual teachers are able to take on. At small schools it is also more difficult to “disappear into the woodwork”.

Teachers often are more than willing to take on the extra tasks to improve the facilities and services of the school:

I've seen a lot of people just drive themselves because they cared and wanted to get things done and do things and end up unwell, very unwell and no one monitors it or even cares. And people come into work sick because it's easier that way because it's easier than having to come back to it, or to organise things for when you're not there... I've been awake half the night worrying about my class for the next day and all I should be worrying about is getting well.

'It's not just the hours you work, it's also the condition you're in when you come home'

Jenny has noticed both physical and mental effects of long hours and believes she has suffered from undiagnosed depression:

I don't feel I'm functioning as well mentally as I have. And I know physically, well, last year was a very bad year last year and it's hard to know the causes. Whether it's being run down from fatigue, because you come home exhausted some days. You just collapse... The pressure to be at work even when you're not well. Like if you're sick you wake at 2 o'clock in the morning thinking I have to send work in for my classes and then you get up and do it and send work in and then when you go back to work you

have to correct it. And sometimes you go in anyway because it's easier to do it yourself than spend time organising for somebody else.

The effect on couple relationships

After a long week at school Phillip feels he has little energy left over. He prioritises his relationship with his family and deliberately makes the effort, but socialising is seen as a burden. They don't organise activities on Fridays or after school camps. He doesn't even look forward to going to the zoo with the family to visit friends because it means that he will have to do extra work beforehand which makes him too tired for the outing.

Constant tiredness affects his emotional energy:

Tiredness goes hand in hand with grumpiness... So when you wind up going home, you've got less time for the family because you've got to do more correction and stuff at home... and even once that's all done, the amount of energy you've got to invest in you're family and stuff like that, isn't there.

His family is important and so despite fatigue he deliberately sets time aside to spend with family.

You almost have to schedule in 'oh yes, take children swimming for two hours there, walk the dog there', [laugh] 'exchange greetings with wife prior to bedtime' sort of thing...

Later he returned to this issue:

It's not like I'm having an affair or something like that. It's not that extreme, but in terms of time commitments and stuff it doesn't help.

Even if he allows himself a relaxing weekend with the family it means that 'you have to pay for it' with the pile of marking, correcting and preparation that has been left.

He talked about his need to make a “definite commitment” to “force himself” to keep one evening a week free for his martial arts.

One mother of two, whose partner also works long hours, describes the poor quality of attention and care in the house at the end of the day – as one or the other parent frequently is going back out the door to do more work.

[When we are both working the long hours] the children may get an hour of attention at night. Somewhere between ‘Yeah, I’m cooking dinner, what do you want for dinner, yeah look I’d love the hug but at the moment I have a pan of boiling peas in my hands’ ...and then not being as sympathetic to their requests for homework help as I should.

She goes on to point to the impact on their relationship:

We are affected by each other’s long hours. I used to resent that Chris would come home late...not til 6 or 6.30 and you start to get snakey and it happens too often. I know that Chris would resent the number of hours that I would have to work: ‘Yes, look Chris, you’re home now, but I have to go to work’. Or I’d be ringing him saying ‘Look I have to be out of the door in 10 minutes, where are you?’ That’s hard. And when we are under stress, like at report writing time, we do fire off each other... I wouldn’t say that one of us is are going to storm out the door, but certainly we are not the nice people we used to be! I’m hoping by changing jobs that I’ll get that back. But it has cost me \$2500 [in foregone pay] and it is now going to cost me childcare. So my net cost is probably about \$4500 to get some kind of quality back into my family life. (Lorraine)

Effect on family life

Work can’t be contained within the boundaries of the workplace but spills into family life:

He’s actually quite burnt-out. He went back this year and I said ‘what’s wrong with you?’ and this summer he’s going to take off and leave us and climb [a mountain] as a way of refueling and basically getting your batteries recharged.

I asked her how she had noticed he was burnt-out:

You're disinterested in things... not depressed, just flat. We actually went away for a weekend and had a friend look after the children and basically sat down and said 'OK, this is life, where are you, what do you think', and basically nattered it all out and that's what you don't have time to do if you're both working really hard, you've just gone into survival mode.

In order to organise their family life they discussed at the beginning of the year what her working hours should be given the availability of both and what they can financially live on where their choices are based on living more simply so that they don't have to work as hard.

Many families talked of 'timetabling' their leisure time:

We try to make sure on the weekend that we sort of use the time as wisely as we can and I wouldn't say that we're desperately oppressed by that but it does tend to mean that instead of leisurely days which are more relaxing, that you tend to compartmentalise or timetable activities between things and that probably diminishes the relaxing quality of a weekend. (Ron, teacher)

The 'professionalism' of teaching takes its toll on families, as Ron points out of his partner's commitment:

She's always taken the view, since I've known her, that a teacher in a school has a broad-based commitment to the kids they teach and that's not just appearing in a classroom and delivering lessons. Education is a much more whole of life activity and clearly for Jodie there's a sense of self-worth [that] grows out of being able to participate in a kind of rapport and feedback that develops with the kids. It has its own rewards, but is time-consuming and has its negative family effects.

He feels that the long hours affect his partner more than he, partly because of the intensive nature of working with young people. She has had pneumonia a couple of times and also has a lung complaint which can affect her if she is under pressure for too long. He realises she has a double commitment with work and home life:

Given that Jodie has the major part of the management of the household and the effort she puts into school, I think her hours are constantly excessive in a way... that at the very least she should be compensated in a way that doesn't take place now at all. (Ron)

The effects on children-parent relationships, and on children

Phillip has long hours, and often has to bring work home. During exam or marking time, the family doesn't get to see much of Phillip, but teaching is generally flexible and is able to allow time for his family:

He will stay up late, so he'll make an hour or two in the evening that is the children's time and stay up to midnight to do whatever else he has to do. I 'spose it is a lifestyle choice, isn't it? You've decided yes, you want to put you're children to bed, yes, you want to help read them a bedtime story and things like that.

'Do we have a parent this week? ... Or do we have to go out and rent one?'

Hours are a very big issue in many families. A parent working long hours in a household where the other parent also works consistently long hours describes the tensions, particularly between her and her adolescent children. She wants them to help out at home. Her husband seems to largely be unavailable for most household chores because of his work commitments. The tension is constant, exacerbated by her long hours, her teenage children, the absence of her long hours partner, and the fact she alone has to manage it all:

His hours are even longer than mine. So I do talk to him about it. But he frequently works Saturdays and frequently is away at night or late at night and stuff. So he is conscious how much I work and the strain it puts us all under.

Interviewer: So how do you negotiate this together?

He does what he can but the...I suppose that in the end.... (she cries)

...I guess I spend all day being tolerant of other people's teenagers and understanding and giving out great advice. And then you come home and [despite] your best intentions, when they are your own kids, I do all sorts of things I recommend never to do at school. When you come home you instantly yell, you instantly accuse and pick on. All the things you shouldn't do at school, you should listen, be tolerant, and understanding. And I come in and lose it and go off the planet... You forget the rules when you come home.

Interviewer: Do you talk about it with them?

Yeah I do. Yeah, they can do some wonderful things. Like sometimes it's all my fault and I understand that. Like I'll come home from work all tense and cross and just take it out on them. But other times it's them too. But yeah we do talk about it a lot and kids will cook meals. And sometimes they'll do really great things like I'll come home and they'll have the fire going and they'll say 'Mum, we've made you gin and tonic', and it will be sitting on the table. Really sweet things, knowing that I've obviously had a bad day...

The kids are thoroughly aware of the hours I work. They'll actually make a point of it and ask 'Do we have a parent this week?' Or which parent have we got? Or do we have to go out and rent one for a while?' But they sort of accept that this is normal. I don't think they've got any idea that other people mightn't live that way. Because most of their friends seem to have parents in similar sort of, working similar sort of hours, even if not in the same industry. (Jodie)

Some parents described how their children's extra-curricula activities sometimes fall off the agenda:

So juggling their commitments around what I need to do for school such as corrections, and fitting in walks and such, it gets a bit hard... I really try to make time to make sure I do these things but they have a habit of being put further and further down the track while you fit in the more essential things like washing and feeding people. (Jodie)

Ron, a teacher, notices that women in particular are affected by the changes within schools:

The thing that would seem to be the biggest indicator is the number of people, particularly women who have come back and who in the past generally have been most

satisfied with their life as a teacher who are running out of commitment and energy earlier than they used to.

Lorraine describes what she has missed, and her children have missed while she has been working long hours. She feels that the kids she teaches sometimes come before her own:

They get really clingy and nearly knock you over. But there are other times, when you have to go back to work and then they say 'Oh why do you have to go back tonight?' And then there are things like the swimming sports: 'Can you come and watch the swimming sports? You've never ever come. Can you come to assembly?' So you get the guilt trip...I feel like I've missed a bit. I feel terrible as a mother. You want to be out there and support your kids. And it comes back to that, 'Oh no the kids I teach are more important than the kids I am rearing....'

She goes on to discuss how her kids will benefit from having her take a different job so her hours are less demanding. She wants to take to the home front some of the energy she has previously been putting into the kids at school:

The kids are going to have a much nicer mother. I'm not going to be as tense with them. I'll have more time and do things that are fun things. They are really good kids. They help around the place, but its no good to say to them look go and sit in front of the telly and amuse yourself that way. You want to get out and engage with them, and find out about things that have been bothering them during the day and do the mum things, that you really don't feel you have had the time to do – to sit down and do with them what I do with my [school student] kids in the day. [With your students] you pick things up really quickly and talk them through. You come home and you don't want to do it with your own kids. So I think they will benefit from having someone who has the time.

Chris describes the thinking around his decision to not pursue promotion – which in his view would mean even longer hours and he was very clear about the impact on the children:

My decision not to chase being a principal is a big part about the kids and about how I wasn't happy. I could see I was a miserable old sod when I got home as my kids would happily tell you. And so I wasn't happy, the kids weren't happy, and it probably wasn't getting me a long way anyway...so I had to do something different. There was a real loss there. I just do the stuff now that I'm interested in and the hours are creeping up again. Because you do a job and you have things you want to get out of it, and principals want things out of it, so there is pressure on to get certain things done and

then things come out of the blue. For example, the middle years project – Anzac day holiday the kids had a miserable time because I spent the whole of the time writing an action plan which will probably sit in a few filing cabinets before being thrown out...And so you can't presume that you can control [all your work]. You have to have it in your head to try and have some fun, to work less, then it is more likely that you'll get it.

The effect on physical activity, sport and hobbies

Jenny described putting hobbies on hold in the years when her long hours overlapped with young children. While she umpires netball one night a week, on a Saturday she finds little time for other interests, for example her interest in genealogy.

You limit however many things you're going to do each week. So basically you don't feel that the time outside work is all your own.

The effect on extended families

Overworked couples frequently call upon extended family to pick up some of the work – whether picking up children, cooking or washing. As Lorraine describes how she relies on her aged mother – and feels uncomfortable about it:

Interviewer: How does having two of you working pretty long hours affect your household?

Well if you were to walk in here right now, you'd think a bomb had gone off...My mother looks after the children and she does the washing for me. I feel really guilty about it. If she didn't do those things for me, I'm not sure how we would survive. I mean we would, but she certainly has reduced the burden but she is a 74-year-old woman and shouldn't have to do those things.