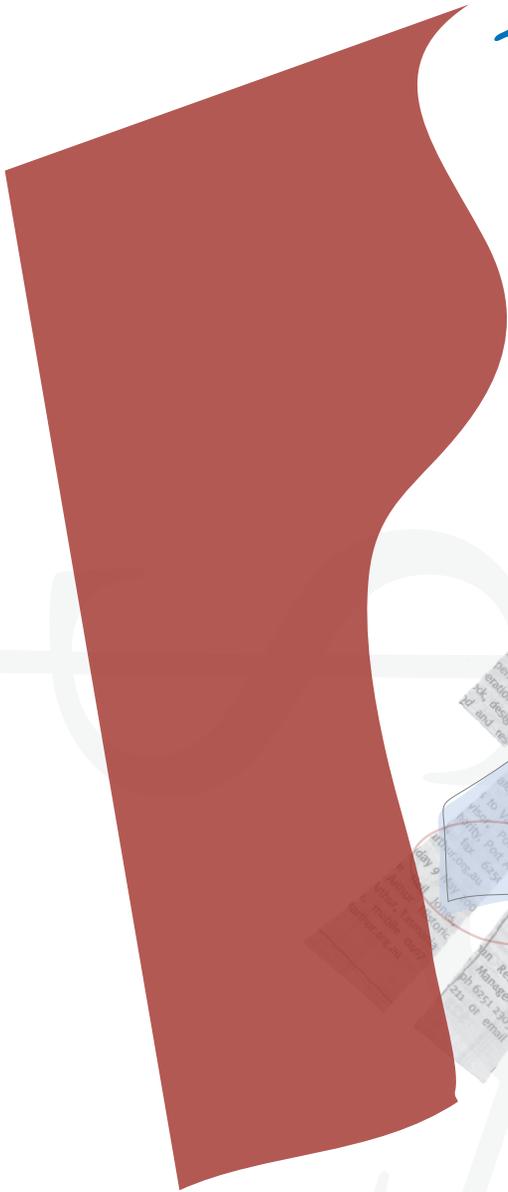


Blue collared

THE SHRINKING WORLD
OF WORK IN TASMANIA



SOCIAL ACTION &
RESEARCH CENTRE

ANGLICARE
TASMANIA

KELLY MADDEN



**Blue Collared:
The Shrinking World of Work in
Tasmania**

**Kelly Madden
Social Action and Research Centre
Anglicare Tasmania**

This research was assisted by a grant from



**Blue Collared:
The Shrinking World of Work in Tasmania**

Anglicare Tasmania Inc, May 2003

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ISBN 0-9580475-5-3

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was funded by Anglicare Tasmania and the Myer Foundation. The author would like to thank the members of the project Reference Group, Ann Herbert (Department of Health and Human Services), Lis de Vries (Tasmanian Council of Social Services), Lynne Fitzgerald (Unions Tasmania), Nick Behrens (Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry), Jo Flanagan (Anglicare) and Bruce Felmingham (University of Tasmania) for their advice during the development of this research and valuable input on drafts of this document. The research findings and recommendations of this report are those of Anglicare. The views expressed in the report should not be attributed to any members or the project reference group or their employers, nor to the Department of Family and Community Services or the Melbourne Institute which provided some quantitative data. Any errors in the report are the responsibility of the author.

The author would also like to thank the workers who helped Anglicare to get in touch with participants for this research, particularly Leanne Newman (Devonport Community House), Tracie Charlesworth (Rokeby Neighbourhood Centre), Maria Boersma and Peter Collins (Launceston City Mission), Ronda McIntyre and Beverly Bradshaw (Salvation Army) as well as John Maginnis, Tony Whitfield, Jenny McLeod and Kerry Bradley (Anglicare).

Thanks also to the staff at the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in Hobart, particularly Mary Eagle and Mathew Charlton, as well as the Department of Family and Community Services and the Melbourne Institute, particularly Nicole Watson, for the provision of Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey data and its analysis.

Finally, our very grateful thanks to the people who participated in this research by telling their stories. We share their hope that this report will help provide a basis for developing programs to assist unemployed people and create secure employment opportunities in Tasmania.

The research for this report was conducted by Kelly Madden, Prue Cameron, Sally Barker and Alice Byrne.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Tasmanian labour market has undergone fundamental changes in the past three decades. Working life in the early 1970s was dominated by men in full-time employment in primary production, manufacturing and associated industries. In 2003, the role of women in paid work has become much more prominent and there has been huge growth in part-time work and casual work for both men and women. Unemployment grew rapidly in the 1970s and has persisted at very high levels. The proportion of Tasmanian men participating in the labour market has declined sharply. Service industries have been the only sector to experience employment growth in Tasmania in the past 15 years.

In many respects these changes have reflected national trends. However, it is clear that Tasmania has borne more than its share of the negative impacts of a changing labour market and reaped far less than its share of the benefits. Very few of the newly created 'gold collar' professionals earning very high incomes in the business and technology sectors are located in Tasmania. Centralisation of head office functions in the major capitals has depleted ranks of managers and professionals which developed in Tasmania's larger towns and cities in the post-war era. The decline in the public sector in Tasmania mirrors the national trend but the importance of the public sector as an employer in this State has traditionally been greater than is the case on the mainland. The public sector decline through the 1990s, when private sector jobs growth was also weak, only exacerbated the terribly high Tasmanian unemployment rate during this period.

Less skilled workers have fared particularly badly in the labour market in the 1990s. For some, long-term unemployment has stretched on for many years and older unemployed people face the prospect of never regaining permanent employment. The shift towards part-time work has been welcomed by some wishing to combine work and family responsibilities but the vast majority of unemployed people continue to seek full-time employment. For men in Tasmania, the shift to part-time employment has essentially been a shift to casual employment.

The qualitative component of this research indicates that unemployed people had a strong preference for permanent employment, placing a very high value on the paid entitlements and sense of security. Many of the participants had extensive experience of casual work but this had not led to more permanent employment. This research indicates that the distinct categories of 'unemployed' and 'casual worker' which emerge from static accounts of the labour market would be much more accurately conceptualised as a cycle, with a sub-group of people moving between casual work and unemployment on a very regular basis.

The participants' experiences of, and relationship with the labour market were strongly influenced by two factors: their own formal labour market status (for example those on Newstart Allowance had quite different experiences to those on Parenting Payment) and the era during which they entered the labour market. The participants who entered the labour market prior to 1990 had tended to have quite successful early labour market experiences with many working full-time in permanent positions over several years. More recently this group had experienced periods of unemployment, often interspersed with casual and seasonal work. The participants who entered the labour market after 1990 tended to have much more difficult transitions from school to work with some participants unable to find paid employment at all and almost none able to find permanent employment.

Participants spoke at length about the devastating impacts of unemployment on their own lives and on the lives of their families; the emotional toll, the social isolation and the financial struggle.

Older participants felt that their age was a barrier to gaining employment and many participants cited their lack of education and formal qualifications as barriers to employment. Many participants had a clear understanding of the changes which had occurred in the labour market over time and saw themselves as blue-collar workers stranded in a market where there was no longer a demand for their skills. They understood the shift to the service economy and while some were trying to gain skills in this area, others were not suited towards work in the personal care, tourism or other service industries.

The future holds immense uncertainty for those Tasmanians who are not able to find enough employment and it is perhaps the State's greatest challenge to ensure that there is secure, paid employment for all of those who seek it.

1.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

State Government

Public and Community Sector Renewal

The State Public sector was cut severely in the 1990s in response to the difficult budget position facing the State. While some work was privatised, other positions were simply abolished leaving remaining workers with intensified workloads and a reduction in the level of services to the community. The present State Government has acknowledged the need to stop reducing the size of the public sector by committing itself to a policy of no forced public service redundancies. The State's finances are now in good shape with General Government Net Debt due to be eradicated by June 2008 and GST revenue set to provide additional revenue to the state in the 2004/05 financial year with significant increases in the 2006/07 financial year. The State Treasurer has expressed concerns about the future of Specific Purpose Payments and Anglicare calls on the Commonwealth to recommit itself to ensuring these payments to the states are not eroded. However, the present and predicted budgetary circumstances provide the State Government with significant flexibility to address unmet demand for a range of community services. The need for additional services in areas such as aged care, mental health, education, housing, early childhood intervention and community development is well established, as Tasmania rates poorly compared with the mainland states on a range of measures of health, education and socio-economic status. There is a great deal of work which is waiting to be done in the community and the improved fiscal outlook provides the opportunity to turn this work into paid jobs for Tasmanians.

Recommendation 1:

That the State Government undertake an audit of present unmet need and future likely need for community services which should form the basis of a 10 year workforce and service plan for the community, State Government and Local Government sectors. This audit should take account of Tasmanian's high rate of unemployment and increased casualisation as well as the State's expected demographic trends.

That the GST dividend to the State be used to fund this plan.

Labour Market Programs for Long-Term Unemployed

Long-term unemployment continues to be much worse in Tasmania than for the rest of Australia. Research shows that the longer a person is unemployed, the less likely they are to find paid work. Tasmania needs labour market programs to provide opportunities for people who have been unemployed for 12 months or

more to re-establish themselves in the workforce. Anglicare proposes three specific labour market programs modeled on strategies which have been implemented in other states and targeted at people who are long-term unemployed (see accompanying policy paper for more detail).

Recommendation 2:

That the State Government establish a Community Jobs Program, a Public Sector Traineeship Quota and a Building on Experience Program.

Advice on Present and Future Skill Shortages to Job Network Providers

Informed advice on present and expected areas of skill shortage in Tasmania would allow unemployed people to seek training opportunities in these sectors. The Job Network provides a convenient system for disseminating such information to unemployed people. The Office of Post Compulsory Education and Training (OPCET) and the Department of Economic Development's Skills Response Unit could provide six-monthly briefings to Job Network providers outlining present and expected areas of employment growth and skill shortages.

Recommendation 3:

That OPCET and the Department of Economic Development Skills Response Unit provide six-monthly briefings to Job Network members about present and emerging skill shortage areas.

Resourcing the Minister for Employment

The creation of the State Employment portfolio reflected the importance which Tasmanians place on this issue in regular opinion polls and through the Tasmania Together process. This Minister should be properly resourced by a small Office of Employment Policy which would provide research, analysis and evaluation of interstate and international responses to the challenges of unemployment and casualisation. This Office would also liaise with the Commonwealth Department.

Recommendation 4:

That a State Office of Employment Policy be established to support the Minister for Employment.

Policy Responses to the Changing Labour Market

Policy development has not kept pace with the changing nature of the Tasmanian labour market, particularly the growth in casual employment. The Minister for Employment should develop principles and a policy framework regarding security of work, particularly for casual workers. Issues to be considered include appropriate casual wage loadings, definitions of casual work and portability of employment entitlements such as long service leave. State

Industrial Relations Legislation should subsequently be reviewed to be brought into line with the principles and policy framework.

Recommendation 5:

That the Minister for Employment develop principles and a policy framework regarding security of work, particularly for casual workers. That State Industrial Relations Legislation be reviewed to achieve these goals.

State and Commonwealth Government

Employment Standards for Casuals

People at the bottom end of the labour market have very little bargaining power in the deregulated employment market. Evidence that some casuals are not receiving wage loadings is of particular concern. Enforcement of award provisions for casual employees is important, as is ensuring that emerging occupations are given clear award coverage (as occurred for Home and Community Care workers in recent years). For those workers on Australian Workplace Agreements and Enterprise Agreements the present legislation provides that 'no-disadvantage' and 'fair-in-all-the-circumstances' tests are applied prior to the adoption of such arrangements. However, these agreements are not reviewed during their period of operation to assess whether any workers are *actually* disadvantaged in comparison to what they would have been entitled to under the relevant award. For example an agreement may do away with penalty rates by increasing the rate of pay for all workers but if a part-time casual is consistently rostered on Sunday shifts they may be worse off than they would have been under the award. It would therefore be appropriate to review the outcomes of a sample of AWAs and Enterprise Agreements for Tasmanian workers with a particular focus on low wage and casual employees.

Recommendation 6:

That the State and Commonwealth Governments review a random sample of Tasmanian AWA and Enterprise Agreement outcomes for workers against the award conditions with a particular focus on casual and low wage employees.

That Workplace Standards monitor award compliance especially in low wage sectors.

Commonwealth Government

Income Support

Effective social protection of the most vulnerable members of the community must be based on the cornerstone of adequate income support. Presently, payments for the unemployed and students are too low to allow people to meet their basic needs and fully participate in the community. There is a significant and growing gap between the payments for pensioners and those for unemployed people and students. Raising the level of Newstart, Austudy, Youth Allowance and other benefits to the level of the pension should be the first step in assisting the poorest members of the community.

Recommendation 7:

That as a first step the Commonwealth Government increase Newstart, Austudy, Youth Allowance and other benefits to the level of the Aged Pension.

Superannuation Guarantee for Workers earning less than \$450 per month

Part-time workers make up an increasing proportion of the workforce. Presently employers are only required to provide superannuation for employees earning more than \$450 per month. While this rule is designed to make the administration of superannuation easier, it significantly disadvantages workers who are part-time on low wages and/or marginal hours. This rule means that people who are picking up bits and pieces of casual work or a small amount of part-time work are not accruing savings for their retirement in the same way as their colleagues. For young people who may have several casual jobs the present rule is particularly problematic.

Recommendation 8:

That the Commonwealth Government examine ways to ensure that all employees receive the superannuation guarantee.

Australian Bureau of Statistics Forms of Employment Survey

The current Forms of Employment Survey provides valuable data about casual employment. The survey would be even more useful if it were to include questions about respondents' preferred employment status and entitlement to casual wage loadings. The preferred employment status question could be similar to the present question which asks respondents if they would prefer to work more hours, less hours or the same number of hours. In addition, all employees could be asked if they would prefer to be employed as a casual or in a position with paid benefits. The casual wage loading question could be easily added to the section which already asks about the employee's entitlement to sick pay and holiday pay. These questions would provide quantitative data on the

preferences and experiences of employees which is increasingly important in light of the trend towards casual employment.

Recommendation 9:

That the Australian Bureau of Statistics insert new questions into the Forms of Employment Survey which examines employees' preference regarding employment status and whether they are receiving a casual wage loading.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

The Australian labour market has undergone huge changes since World War II with a long economic boom characterised by strong economic growth, low unemployment and low to moderate inflation up to the 1970s, followed by a period of economic crisis with high inflation and high unemployment (Meredith & Dyster, 1999; ACIRRT, 1999). Governments have reacted to this crisis and the changes in the global economy with a series of major policy shifts to restructure the economy in ways which have fundamentally reshaped the Australian labour market. However, the changes to the labour market have not been uniform in their impacts across the nation. This report uses Australian Bureau of Statistics data to explore the nature of changes in the Tasmanian labour market in the past three decades and considers how these changes have differed from those at the national level.

The statistical data provides a context for new qualitative research examining the impacts of the changes in the labour market on a group of working age Tasmanians who are relying on Centrelink payments. This research seeks to provide insights into the ways in which the lack of paid work impacts on individuals and their families by examining their past and present interactions with the labour market. The objectives of this research are to:

- increase understanding of the changes in the Tasmanian labour market since the end of 'full employment';
- provide information to the general community and key policy makers on the impacts of these changes for the people at the bottom end of the labour market;
- provide rich and detailed data on the labour market experiences of people in households with no work or inadequate amounts of work; and
- assess strategies for job creation and removing barriers to the labour market.

The research is not restricted to those who would be classified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as unemployed (persons who did not have more than one hour of paid work in the labour force survey reference week but were actively seeking and available for work). Instead it focuses on people living in income units relying on Centrelink payments as their main source of income, with an emphasis on people relying on Newstart Allowance. This means that individuals who are unemployed but not in receipt of Centrelink benefits (because, for example, their partner's earnings mean they are not eligible) are not included in the qualitative component of the research. The research does however include individuals in income units where there is no paid work at all or where there is some paid work but they continue to receive Centrelink payments due to their

low income. This scope reflects Anglicare's focus on issues affecting low-income Tasmanians as well as recent policy and research interest in the issue of employment polarisation.

1.3 PROJECT METHODOLOGY

This research used in-depth semi-structured individual interviews with 19 men and 13 women who met the following criteria:

- working age;
- in receipt of a Centrelink income support payment; and
- working as a casual or not employed at all.

As with all qualitative research no attempt was made to select a sample which was statistically representative of any larger population group. Instead the focus was on ensuring that the sample included members of groups whose characteristics had been identified as important in shaping the experience of unemployment and underemployment (such as older people). Participants in this research were recruited using a stratified purposive sampling strategy to include men and women from a range of age groups in the north, north-west and south of the state. (For demographic details about the participants see Appendix 1.)

Participants were invited to be involved in the research by workers in local community organisations who were briefed about the project. Interviews were conducted in private rooms at the community organisation or in the participant's home. Interviews varied in length from about 40 minutes to more than two hours with most interviews lasting about 90 minutes. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Participants were remunerated for their time and travel costs.

In-depth interviews were used in this research as these provided the opportunity to explore individuals' life histories and provided rich and nuanced information about participants' experiences, understandings and interpretations. Ezzy & Rice (1999) indicate that in-depth interviews are particularly useful for discussing sensitive issues which people may not feel comfortable talking about in front of other people.

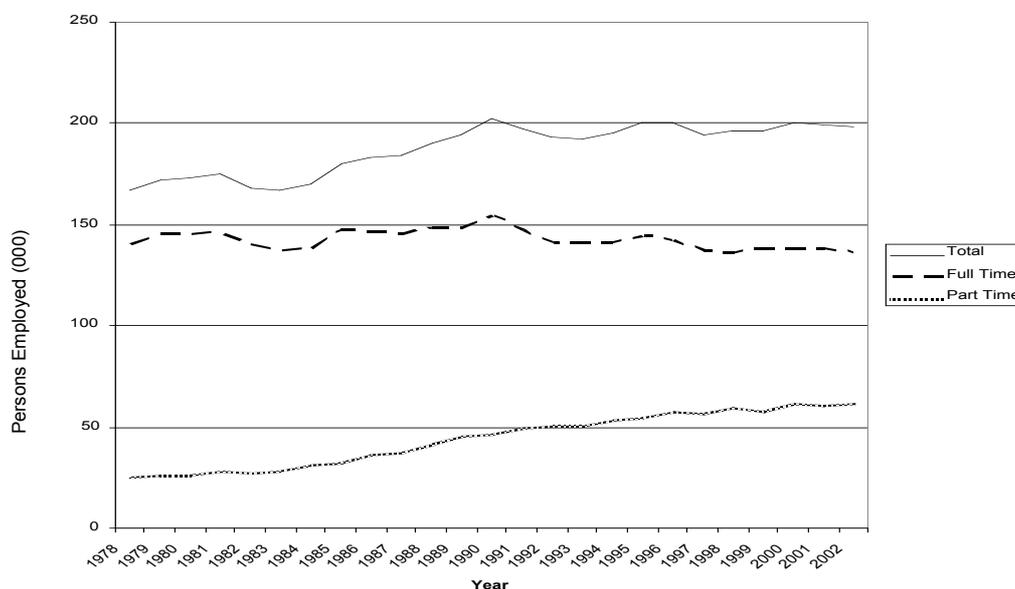
2. THE LABOUR MARKET

2.1 Employment

It is well known that employment growth in Tasmania has generally been well below the national growth rate (see Figure 1 and 2). As shown in Figure 1, employment levels in Tasmania reached more than 200,000 in 1990 and essentially stalled for the rest of the decade, oscillating between yearly averages of about 190,000 to 200,000 persons employed. The peak in 1995 and 1996 is largely attributable to the Federal Government's Working Nation labour market programs which were subsequently withdrawn after the election of the Howard Liberal Government. In this context recent performance is encouraging with trend data for the first quarter of 2003 particularly positive.

Figure 1 illustrates that there has been a gradual but overall decline in full-time employment in the Tasmanian labour market since its peak in 1990. The national trend for full-time employment has also been sluggish since this time but has trended upwards, albeit at a slower rate than for earlier periods (see Figure 2). Part-time employment has grown significantly in Tasmania as it has nationally.

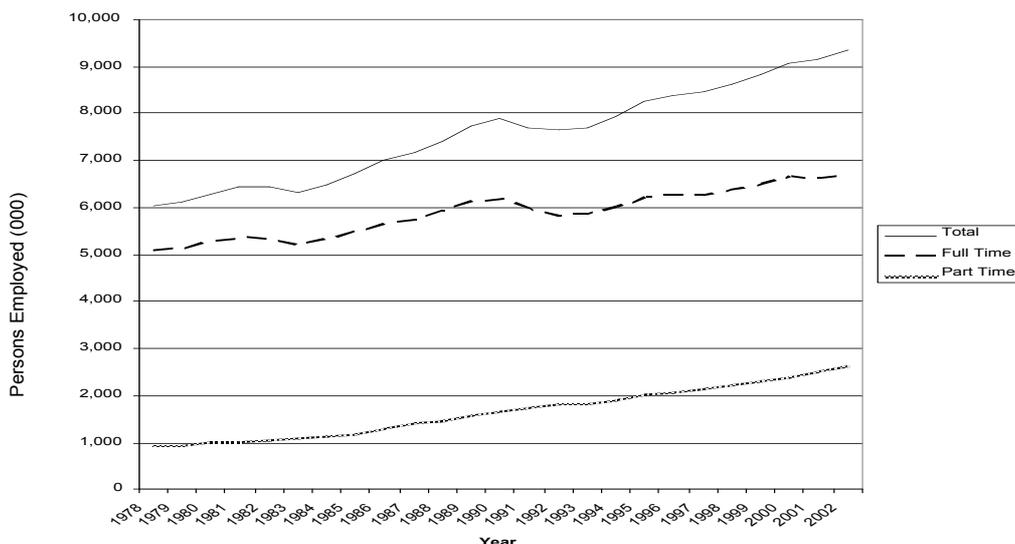
Figure 1. Number of persons employed in Tasmania 1978 to 2002¹



Source: ABS Labour Force (2003a)

¹ Unless otherwise stated all ABS data is original series calculated as calendar year averages.

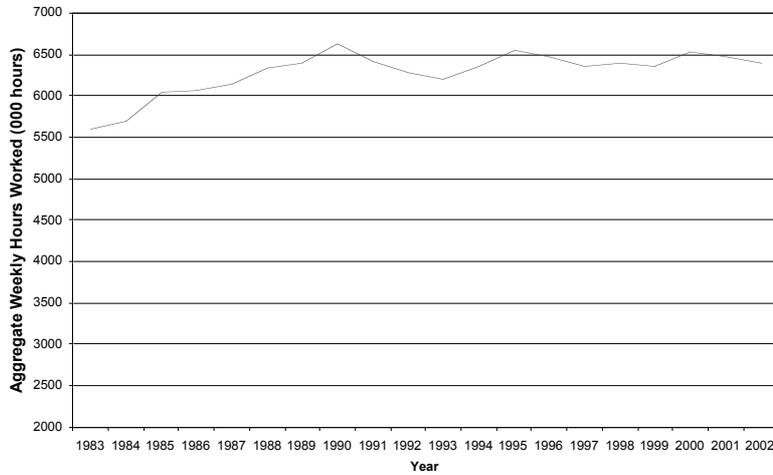
Figure 2. Number of persons employed in Australia 1978 to 2002



Source: ABS Labour Force (2003a)

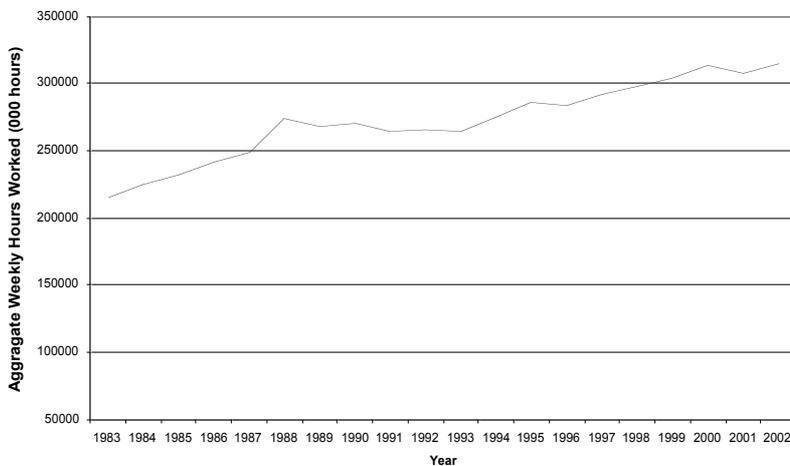
The impact of the change in the composition of the labour market away from full-time work is particularly clear in Figures 3 and 4 which show the number of hours worked by people in the Tasmanian and national labour markets respectively. Rather than looking at the number of people working part-time and full-time, this measure adds-up the number of hours worked by all workers in a one-week period. This means that we can get an idea of the actual amount of paid work being done in the economy. As shown in Figure 3 the impact of the early 1990s recession on the Tasmanian labour market was particularly severe with a significant drop in aggregate weekly hours worked. The increased employment associated with the Working Nation programs also had an impact on hours worked but the underlying weakness of the economy meant that these gains were lost as soon as the program was withdrawn. The peak in 2000 was largely driven by increases in full-time hours which declined somewhat in 2001 and 2002.

Figure 3. Yearly average of aggregate weekly hours worked in Tasmania 1978 to 2002



Source: ABS Labour Force (2003b)

Figure 4. Yearly average of aggregate weekly hours worked in Australia 1978 to 2002

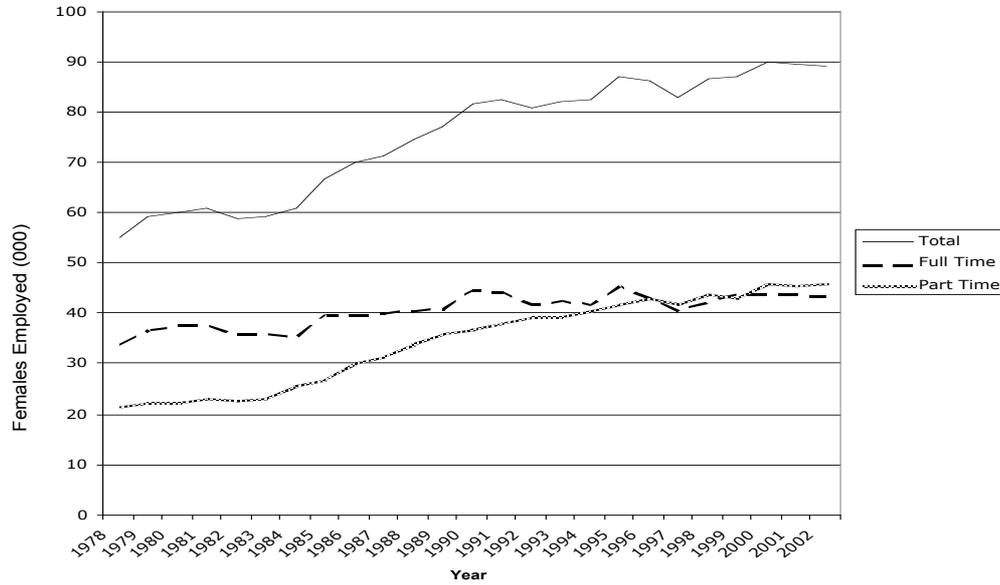


Source: ABS Labour Force (2003b)

The shift away from full-time work has also impacted differently on men and women at a national and state level. Figure 5 shows that for Tasmanian women part-time employment has grown quickly and now accounts for more than half of all female employment. The national trend (Figure 6) has also seen a significant increase in the share of part-time employment for women but full-time employment growth has continued and this remains the main form of employment for women nationally. For Tasmanian men the decline in full-time employment has not been matched by the growth of part-time employment leading to a decline in the number of males in employment since 1990 (see

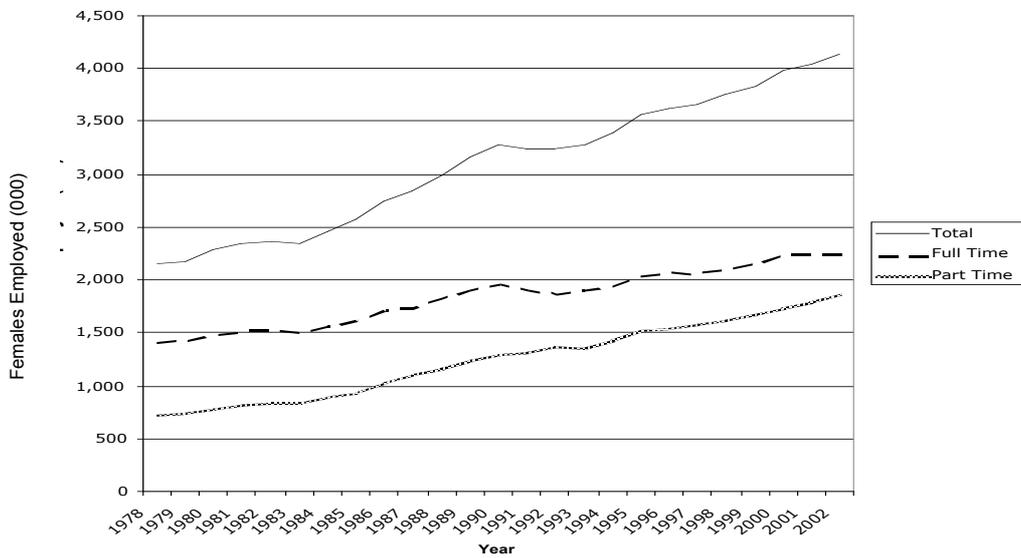
Figure 7). Nationally there has been growth in the number of males employed part-time and to a lesser extent, full-time (see Figure 8).

Figure 5. Female employment in Tasmania 1978 to 2002



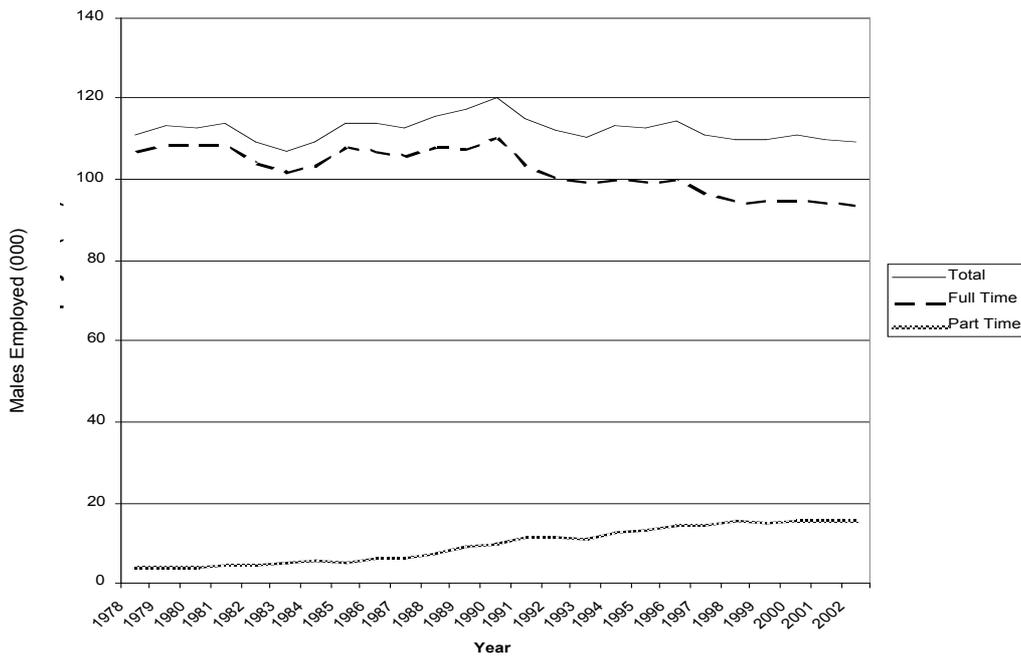
Source: ABS Labour Force (2003a)

Figure 6. Female employment in Australia 1978 to 2002



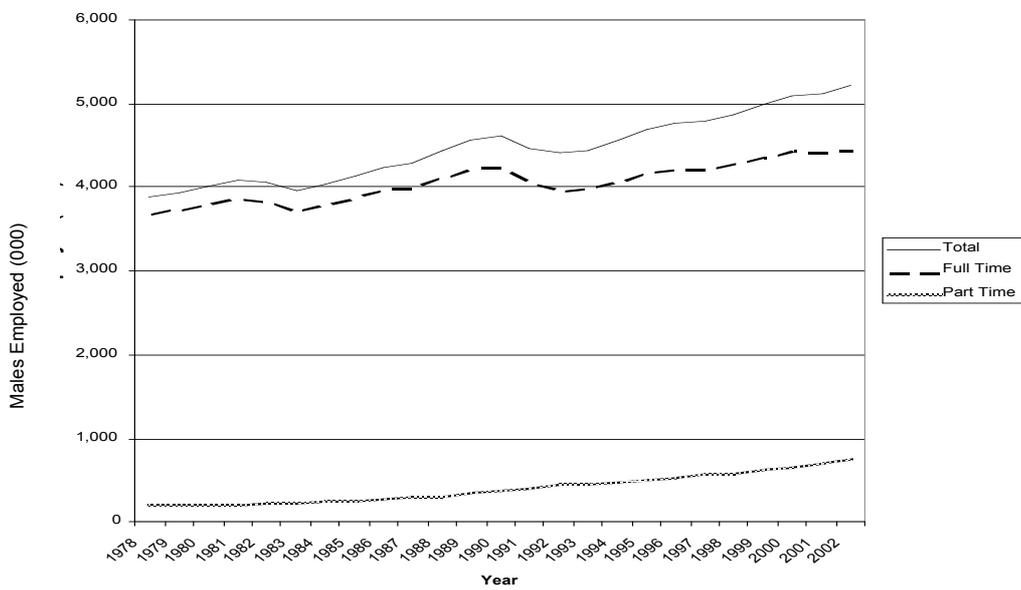
Source: ABS Labour Force (2003a)

Figure 7. Male employment in Tasmania 1978 to 2002



Source: ABS Labour Force (2003a)

Figure 8. Male employment in Australia 1978 to 2002



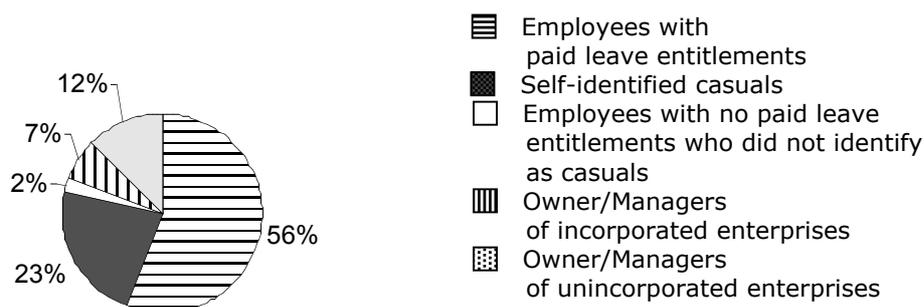
Source: ABS Labour Force (2003a)

2.1.1 Casualisation

The shift towards part-time employment has been accompanied by a strong shift towards casual work which has been more pronounced in Tasmania than nationally. Burgess and Campbell (1998) estimate that the number of employees who were casual in their main job more than doubled between 1982 and 1997. While there has been some debate about exactly which groups of employees should be classified as casual, this report will use the convention adopted by Burgess and Mitchell (2001) which includes self-identified casuals and employees without paid entitlements who did not identify as casual (see Campbell and Burgess, 2001 for further discussion). Using this definition Figure 9 shows that the proportion of casuals in the Tasmanian labour force is about 25 per cent (slightly higher than the national average of 22.5 per cent).

Traditionally casual employees did not receive paid benefits such as holiday pay, sick leave or long service leave due to the intermittent and irregular nature of their work and were compensated by a higher hourly rate of pay. However, the rapid growth of casual employment has been accompanied by an increase in the number of full-time employees classified as casuals. Burgess and Campbell (1998) also argued that many casuals did not receive casual pay loadings because employers fail to comply with award conditions or because the employee falls outside the coverage of industrial awards. State and Federal governments have a responsibility to ensure that casual workers are adequately compensated for their lack of paid leave entitlements.

Figure 9. Employment status in Tasmania 2001

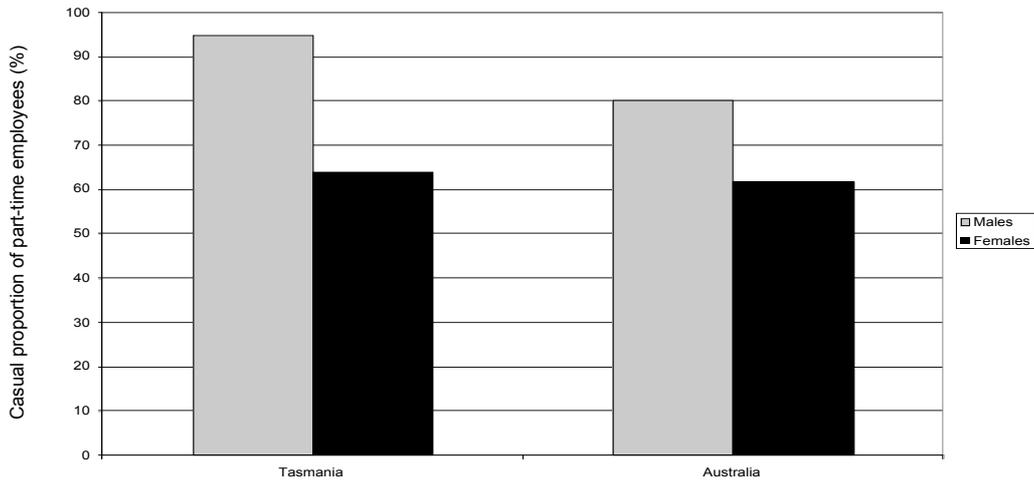


Source: ABS Forms of Employment (2001a)

Excluding the owners and managers of incorporated and unincorporated enterprises Figure 10 gives an indication of the very close link between part-time employment and casualisation, particularly in Tasmania. The figures for men in Tasmania indicate that only a tiny proportion of male part-time employees have

access to paid entitlements and secure employment. For Tasmanian men, the shift towards part-time work has essentially been a shift to casual work.

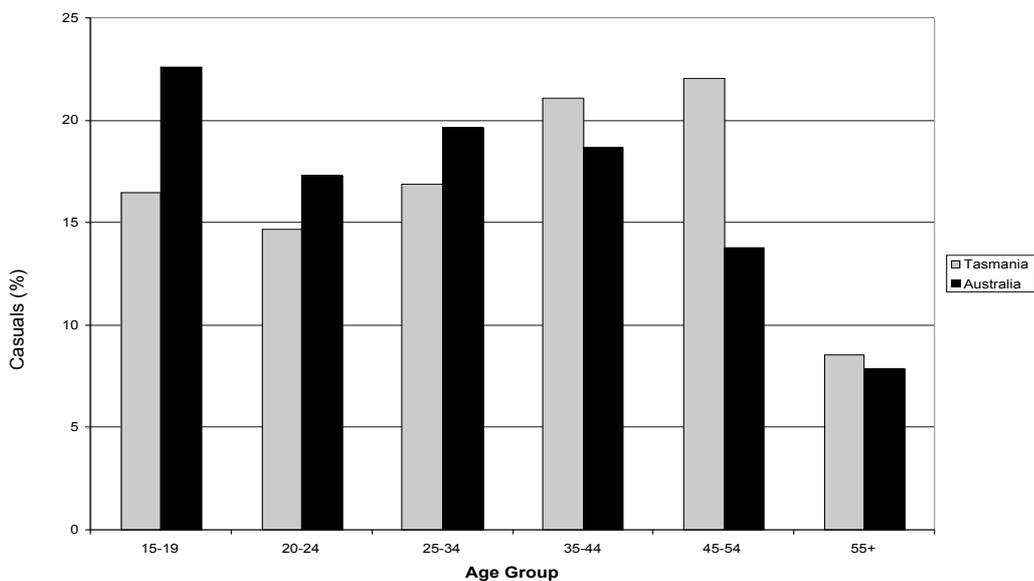
Figure 10. Proportion of part-time employees who are casual employees Tasmania and Australia 2001



Source: ABS Forms of Employment (2001a,b)

The majority of casual employees in Tasmania are aged over 35 years, in clear contrast to the national figures where most casuals are found in the younger age groups (see Figure 11).

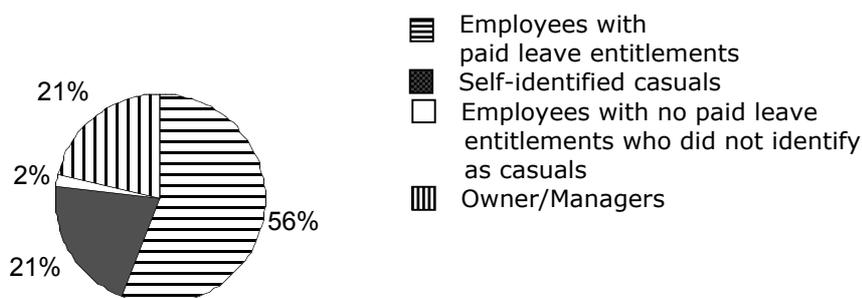
Figure 11. Age distribution of casual employees Tasmania and Australia 2001



Source: ABS Forms of Employment (2001a,b)

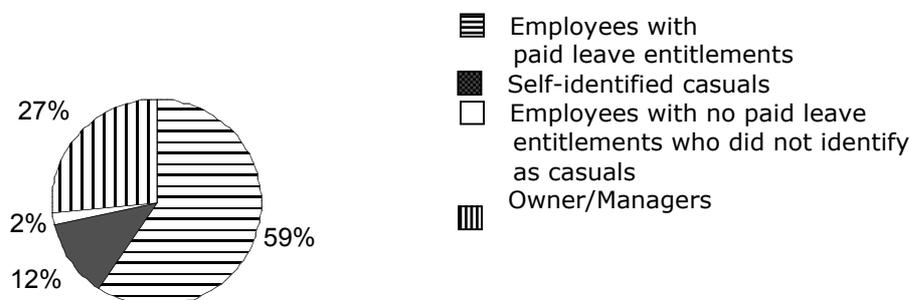
While this situation may be partly explained by the differences in the age distribution of the workforce in Tasmania compared to Australia as a whole, an analysis which controls for age shows that there are very significant differences between the state and national distribution of casuals for each age group (see for example Figures 12 and 13).

Figure 12. Employment status of Tasmanians aged 45-54 years 2001



Source: ABS Forms of Employment (2001a)

Figure 13. Employment status of Australians aged 45-55 years 2001



Source: ABS Forms of Employment (2001b)

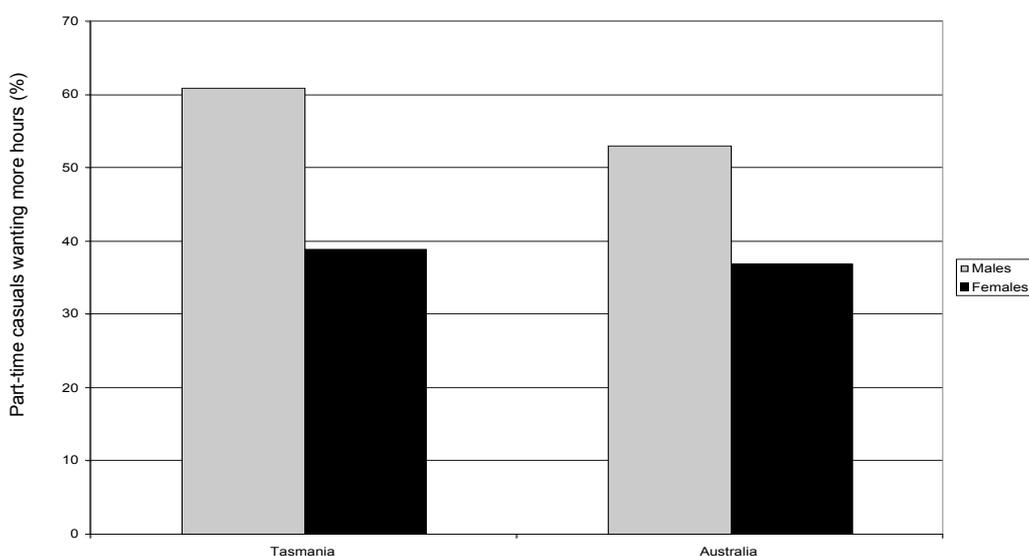
Tasmanian casual workers are less likely to be combining work and study than the national average. Just under 25 per cent of Tasmanian casuals are also students compared to the national average of 33 per cent of all casuals (ABS 2000).

Women are more likely than men to be casual employees in Tasmania (60 per cent of all casuals) and nationally (57 per cent of all casuals). In Tasmania about 80 per cent of casually employed women work part-time, and about half of

the casually employed men work part-time with the other half of male casuals being full-time workers.

A very high proportion of the male part-time casuals would prefer more hours (see Figure 14), an issue of some concern considering that (as shown in Figure 10) almost all part-time male employees in Tasmania are casuals.

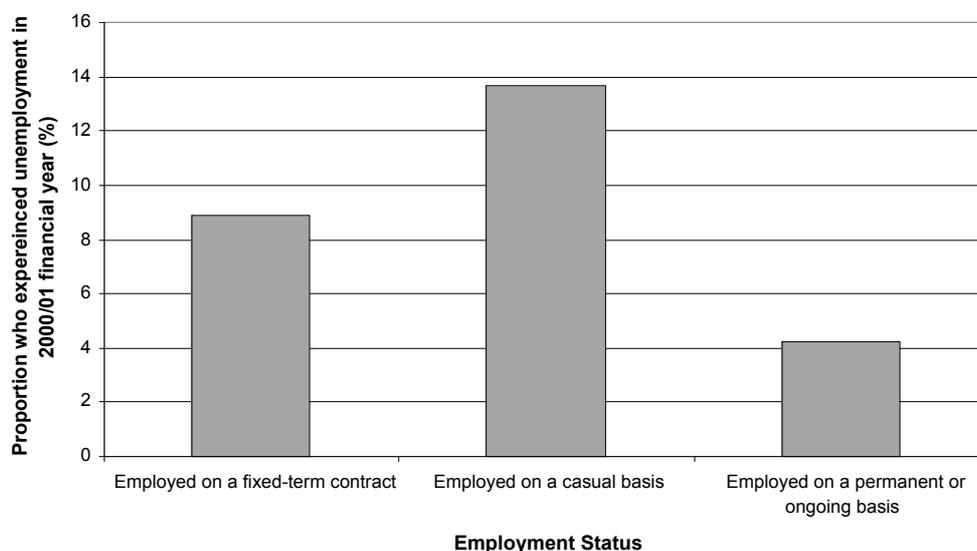
Figure 14. Part-time casual employees who would prefer more hours Tasmania and Australia 2001



Source: ABS Forms of Employment (2001a,b)

Data from the HILDA (2002) survey undertaken by the Melbourne Institute of Social and Economic Research and the Department of Family and Community Services provide additional quantitative data on the experiences of casual workers. These data cannot be analysed at a state level due to the size of the survey sample but even at a national level provide a useful indication of the experiences of casual workers. These data show that casual workers are more likely than permanent and fixed-term employees to have experienced unemployment in the financial year prior to the survey (see Figure 15).

Figure 15. Proportion of workers who have experienced unemployment in the 2000/01 financial year by employment status.



Source: HILDA (2002)

Of the casuals who had experienced unemployment in the previous financial year about 60 per cent had spent more than three months unemployed.

Casual workers are less likely than other employees to have received workplace training. Just over 75 per cent of permanent Tasmanian employees with paid entitlements had undertaken some form of training in their job in the previous year compared to 53 per cent of casual employees (ABS, 2000).

Casual workers are also significantly less likely than other employees to be building a superannuation nest-egg. ABS (2000) data shows that 18 per cent of Tasmanian casual workers report having no superannuation at all with a further 7.5 per cent having some superannuation but no contributions currently being made. By contrast only 3.7 per cent of Tasmanian employees with paid entitlements reported having no superannuation with a further 1.8 per cent having superannuation but working in a job where no contributions to superannuation were currently being made.

Data from the Department of Health and Human Services Healthy Communities Survey (Herbert and Short, 2001) also indicates that casual employees report much higher levels of financial hardship than other workers for a range of measures. For example, when asked if they worried that the amount of food they could afford would be enough for the household, 14 per cent of casually employed Tasmanians reported that they did worry compared to 5 per cent of full-time workers, and 8 per cent of part-time workers. In fact "the rates for

those in casual employment are more comparable to groups that are not in the labour force (except those who were retired), rather than to those who were in full-time or part-time work" (Herbert and Short, 2001, p 258).

None of these large scale quantitative surveys ask respondents about their preference for casual employment in comparison to employment with paid entitlements. Clearly some workers would value the wage premium associated with casual employment; however, the qualitative component of this research project indicated that there was a strong preference for permanent employment by those interviewed. They placed a high value on the paid benefits such as sick leave and holiday pay as well as the perception that permanent employment would provide much more security and the opportunity to plan for the future. It would be a useful extension of the ABS Forms of Employment survey to include a question on preferences regarding employment status for all workers.

Even without further research, the insecure nature of casual work, high rates of financial hardship, reduced access to superannuation and training as well as the strong preference for more work by a large portion of casual part-time workers should be an issue of concern in Tasmania. The highly seasonal and casualised tourism industry is seen as one of the State's key growth industries. However, the accommodation, café and restaurant sector (which is an important part of the tourism industry) has the highest casual density in ANZSIC's² 17 industry classifications. In 2001 less than 25 per cent of people working in accommodation, cafés and restaurants were employees with paid entitlements with about 15 per cent owner managers and the remaining 60 per cent of workers being casuals (ABS, 2001a).

State and Federal Governments must ensure that the rights of casual workers are protected and develop policies to promote security in employment. A forthcoming book by Barbara Pocock examines the impacts of casualisation and other employment trends on the lives of Australians and proposes policy responses at a State and Commonwealth level.

2.1.2 Industry Composition

Employment growth has been highly concentrated in particular industries at both a national and state level. For both Tasmania and Australia, the services sector (retailing, accommodation, cafes & restaurants, property and business services,

² Australia New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification is a standard classification developed for use in Australia and New Zealand for the production and analysis of industry statistics. The standard is also aligned with international standards in industry classification.

education and health & community services in the ANZSIC classification set) was responsible for almost all of the growth in the number of people employed between 1986 and 2001. During this period there was a decline in the actual number of Tasmanians employed in a range of sectors, particularly agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, electricity, gas, water supply, construction, finance and insurance.

The industry structure (in terms of the proportion of the labour force employed in each industry) has not shifted a great deal between 1986 and 2001 at a state or national level (see Table 1).

Table 1. Industry Structure Tasmania and Australia 1986, 2001 (ANZSIC)

Industry	Tasmania % share of labour force			Australia % share of labour force		
	1986	2001	Change	1986	2001	Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	6.7	6.0	-0.7	5.1	3.7	-1.4
Mining	1.7	0.8	-0.9	1.3	0.8	-0.5
Manufacturing	12.5	10.4	-2.1	13.3	11.3	-2.0
Electricity, Gas & Water Supply	2.6	0.9	-1.7	1.8	0.7	-1.1
Construction	5.8	4.6	-1.2	6.0	6.2	+0.2
Wholesale Trade	4.5	4.1	-0.4	5.2	4.9	-0.3
Retail Trade	12.0	13.5	+1.5	12.2	13.5	+1.3
Accom, Cafes & Restaurants	3.4	4.7	+1.3	3.0	4.6	+1.6
Transport and Storage	4.2	3.8	-0.4	4.8	4.0	-0.8
Communication Services	1.8	1.4	-0.4	1.9	1.7	-0.2
Finance and Insurance	3.1	2.2	-0.9	4.1	3.5	-0.6
Property and Business Services	3.8	7.0	+3.2	5.8	10.3	+4.5
Gov't Administration & Defence	4.7	4.8	+0.1	5.5	4.1	-1.4
Education	7.0	7.4	+0.4	6.1	6.6	-0.5
Health and Community Services	8.5	10.5	+2.0	7.4	9.0	+1.6
Cultural and Recreational Services	2.0	2.1	+0.1	1.6	2.3	+0.7
Personal and Other Services	2.8	3.4	+0.6	2.8	3.4	+0.6
Non-classifiable and not stated	2.9	2.3	-0.6	2.7	2.1	-0.6
Unemployed	10.0	10.1	+0.1	9.2	7.4	-1.8

Source: ABS Census (1996a,b, 2001c,d)

In 2001 Tasmania continued to have a heavier reliance on the primary production and community services sector than the national average. The state also has a lower than average reliance on the business and finance sector.

The period between 1971 and 1986 saw huge changes in the industrial structure at a state and national level. Unfortunately, the change from the ASIC³ to the ANZSIC classification means that it is not possible to access consistent industry employment data for the period from 1971 to 2001. However, the 1986 Census data was classified for both standards. Table 2 uses the ASIC classifications to provide an illustration of the major changes in industry structure which occurred at a state and national level between 1971 and 1986. Over that period there

³ Australian Standard Industrial Classification the standard industry classifications used in Australia prior to the adoption of ANZSIC.

was a massive contraction in the goods production sector, particularly manufacturing but also in primary production at a state and national level. Growth in the services sector was also clearly evident during this period.

Table 2. Industry Structure Tasmania and Australia 1971, 1986 (ASIC)

Industry	Tasmania % share of labour force			Australia % share of labour force		
	1971	1986	Change	1971	1986	Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing etc	9.0	6.7	-2.3	7.3	5.1	-2.2
Mining	3.0	1.7	-1.3	1.4	1.3	-0.1
Manufacturing	20.6	12.8	-7.8	22.8	13.6	-9.2
Electricity, Gas & Water Supply	2.4	2.6	+0.2	1.7	1.8	+0.1
Construction	8.4	5.8	-2.6	7.7	5.9	-1.8
Wholesale and Retail Trade	17.7	16.2	-1.5	18.5	17.1	-1.4
Transport and Storage	4.9	4.3	-0.6	5.1	4.8	-0.3
Communication	3.1	1.8	-1.3	1.9	1.9	0.0
Finance, Business Services etc	5.1	6.3	+1.2	6.8	9.2	+2.4
Public Administration, Defence	4.7	4.7	0.0	5.3	5.5	+0.2
Community Services	11.6	18.1	+6.5	10.6	15.8	+5.2
Recreation, Personal Services etc	4.9	8.0	+3.1	5.0	5.5	+0.5
Non-classifiable and not stated	3.5	2.9	-0.6	4.1	0.9	-3.2
Unemployed	2.0	10.0	+8.0	1.7	9.2	+7.5

Source: ABS Census (1971a,b, 1986a,b)

2.1.3 The Public Sector Decline

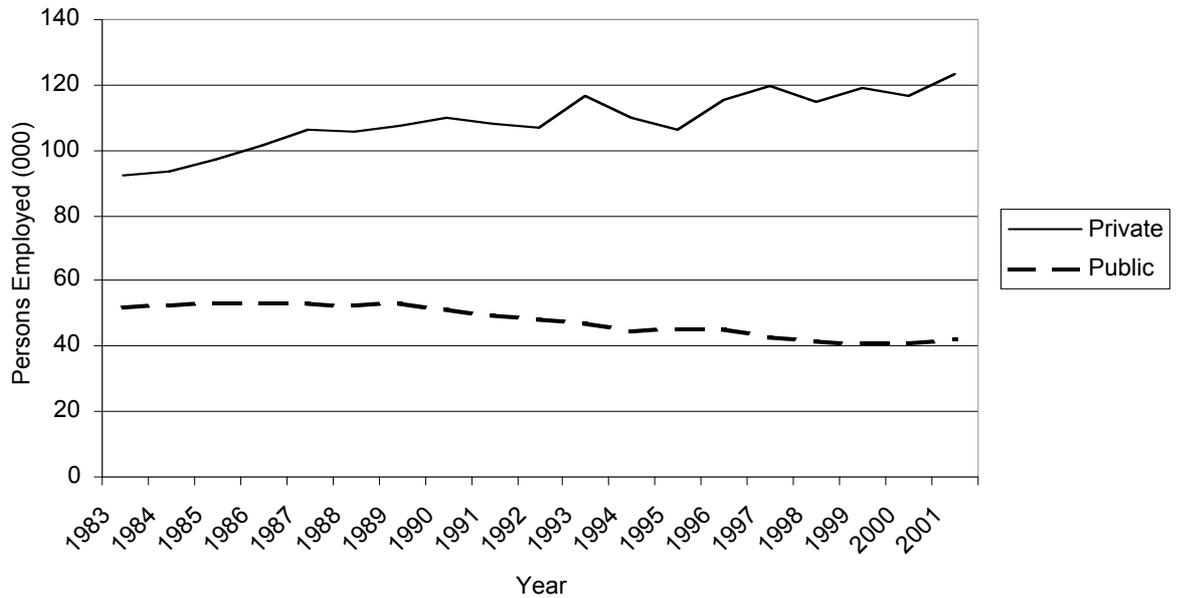
Public Sector employment has been an important component of the state and national labour markets although there has been a steady decline in employment levels since its peak in the 1980s (see Figures 16 and 17). In 1983 more than 35 per cent of Tasmania workers were employed in the public sector compared to a national average of just over 30 per cent. Since the late 1980s public sector employment has declined, both as a proportion of all workers and in real terms. In Tasmania the number of public sector employees has gone down from almost 53,000 in 1987 to about 42,000 in 2001 (about 25 per cent of the workforce). Over the same period there has been a similar decline in the public sector share of the national workforce (to about 20 per cent in 2001). However, the decline in the actual number of persons employed in the public sector nationally has been less pronounced. The loss of public sector employment is a loss of relatively stable employment. Only 10.7 per cent of Tasmanian public sector employees were casual in 2000 compared to just over one third of private sector employees (ABS, 2000)

The size of the public sector has tended to reflect the ideologies and financial positions of the Commonwealth and State Governments of the day. Since the mid 1980s privatisation and redundancy programs have played key roles in cutting the size of the public sector. Burgess and Mitchell (2001) show that the size of the Commonwealth public sector grew considerably under the Whitlam Government, remained fairly stable under the Fraser Government, grew again quite quickly in the early years of the Hawke Government but declined sharply between 1985 and 1990 and then contracted more slowly until 1996 when the election of the Howard Government resulted in another sharp decline. In Tasmania the number of Commonwealth public servants has almost halved from more than 10,000 in the mid 1980s to just over 5,000 in 2002, with a continuing downward trend.

The State Government employs the vast majority of public sector workers. At its peak in the late 1980s more than 40,000 Tasmanians were employed by the State Government. A massive redundancy program occurred in the early 1990s under the Field Government and downsizing continued under the Groom and Rundle Governments through the 1990s. At the end of the decade the State public sector employed about 31,500 people. State government employment levels have increased to almost 33,000 under the Bacon Government which has a policy of no forced public sector redundancies.

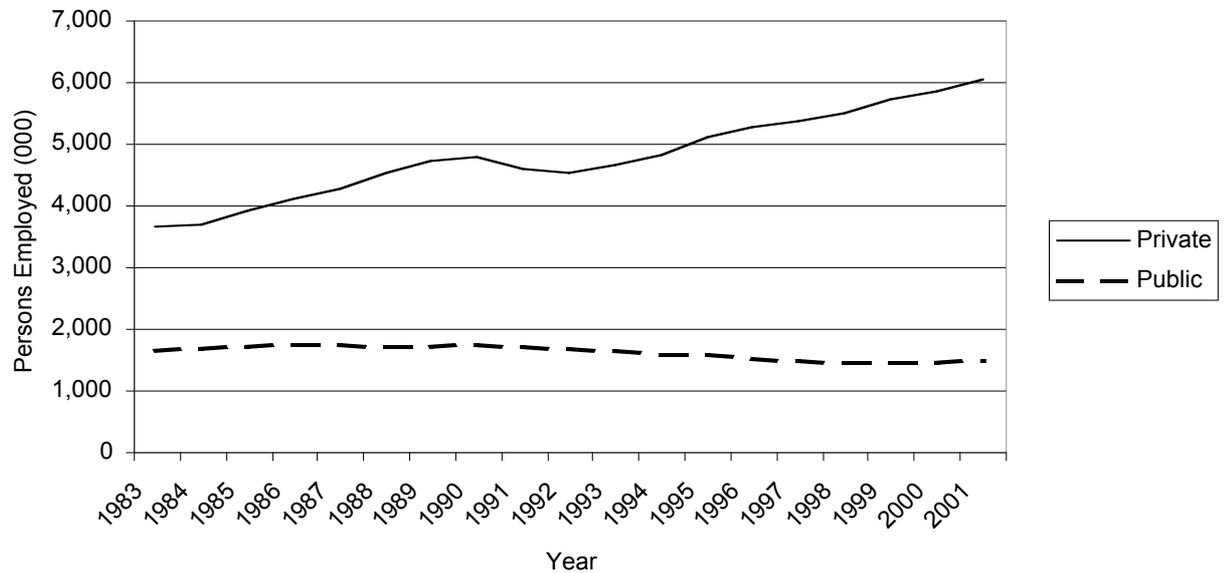
Data on Local Government employment levels is less reliable due to the smaller numbers involved. ABS data indicate that the number of persons employed by local governments in Tasmania has remained relatively stable at about 4,000 since the early 1990s.

Figure 16. Persons employed in public and private sector Tasmania 1983 to 2001



Source: ABS Employed Wage and Salary Earners (2003c)⁴

Figure 17. Persons employed in public and private sector Australia 1983 to 2001



Source: ABS Employed Wage and Salary Earners (2003c)

While some services previously provided by government have been outsourced or privatised, the massive decline in the size of the public sector has led to reductions in the level of services provided to the community and exacerbated the sluggishness of the Tasmanian labour market. TasCOSS (2003) data shows

⁴ note survey excludes some occupations, trend data

that the level of unmet demand for community services continues to grow and demographic trends are expected to further increase the need for aged care services including Home and Community Care services and health care services. Tasmania's recently improved fiscal outlook provides the opportunity to address these needs and create new employment opportunities.

2.1.4 The Occupational Structure

As shown in Table 3 the occupational structure of the Tasmanian workforce tends to be skewed towards the less skilled end of the labour market. The better paid occupations at the top of the table are under-represented in Tasmania compared to the national average. Between 1991 and 2001 the actual number of managers and administrators in Tasmania declined in real terms but increased at a national level. Between 1986 and 2001 the number of Tradespersons and Related Workers in Tasmania dropped by almost 5,000 to about 22,700. Other categories to experience a real decline in numbers since 1986 in Tasmania were: Advanced Clerical and Service Workers, Intermediate and Elementary Clerical, Sales and Service Workers, Intermediate Production and Transport Workers as well as Labourers and Related Workers.

Table 3. Occupational Structure Tasmania and Australia 1986, 2001

Occupation	Tasmania % share of labour force			Australia % share of labour force		
	1986	2001	Change	1986	2001	Change
Managers and Administrators	7.2	7.8	+0.6	8.0	8.5	+0.5
Professionals	12.8	15.2	+2.4	13.0	16.9	+3.9
Associate Professionals	6.9	10.4	+3.5	6.9	10.9	+4.0
Tradespersons and Related	14.3	11.2	-3.1	14.2	11.4	-2.8
Adv Clerical and Service Workers	5.1	2.6	-2.5	6.3	3.5	-2.8
Intermed Clerical, Sales & Service	10.2	15.0	+4.8	10.4	15.3	-4.9
Intermed Production & Transport	10.6	8.1	-2.5	9.2	7.5	-1.7
Elementary Clerical, Sales & Service	10.5	9.0	-1.5	10.8	8.8	-2.0
Labourers and Related Workers	10.4	8.8	-1.6	9.7	8.0	-1.7
Inadequately Described/not stated	2.0	1.8	-0.2	2.3	1.8	-0.5
Unemployed	10.0	10.1	+0.1	9.2	7.4	-1.8

Source: ABS Census (1996a,b, 2001c,d)

The structure of the Tasmanian workforce reflects the state's low educational status and low post-school qualification rate. ABS (2002a) data show that the proportion of Tasmanians aged 15-64 years who had not completed the highest level of secondary school was 45.5 per cent in 2001 compared to the national

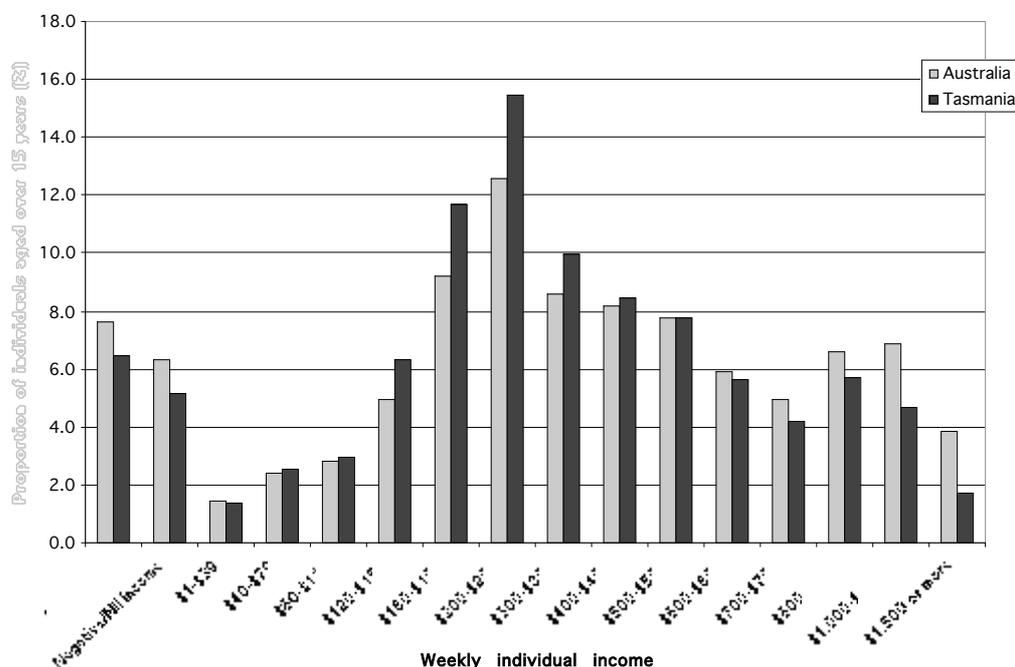
average of 36.1 per cent. For the same age group, the proportion of Tasmanians who have non-school educational qualifications (such as degrees or diplomas) was 43 per cent in Tasmania in 2001 compared to the national average of 47.2 per cent. These figures are particularly worrying in light of the clear relationship between educational attainment and employment outcomes. The recent improvements in the retention rate of students in Years 11 and 12 are promising and the State Government's proposal to raise the school leaving age to 17 will also be welcomed, provided adequate resources are allocated to ensure students are engaged in meaningful educational activities which are suited to their abilities and interests.

2.1.5 Income and Earnings

The composition of the Tasmanian labour market has had clear implications for incomes and wages in the Tasmanian community. The low rate of participation in the labour force and high level of reliance on Government pensions and benefits ensures that on average Tasmanian incomes are well below the national average.

Figure 18 shows the income distribution in Tasmania is strongly skewed towards the lower end of the income scale, with more than half of all individuals on incomes of less than \$400 per week. Another notable feature is the small number of very high income earners in the state. Tasmania has less than half the proportion of individuals in the highest income bracket compared to the national figures.

Figure 18. Proportion of individuals aged over 15 years in weekly income category Tasmania and Australia 2001



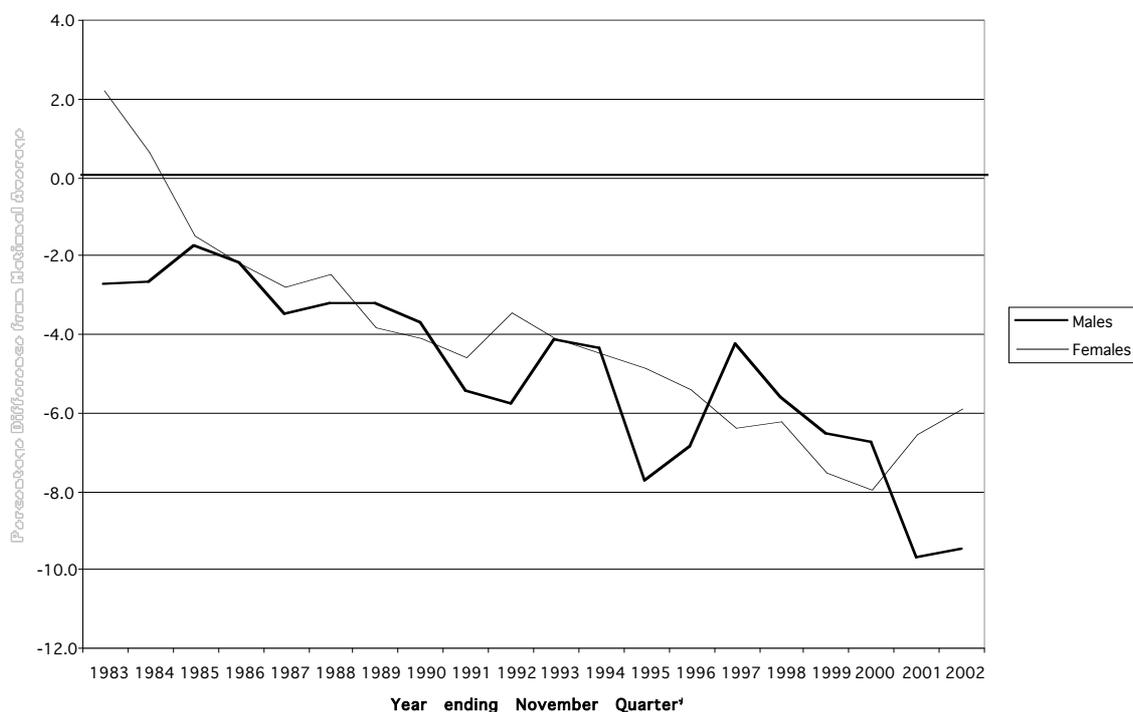
Source: ABS Census (2001e)

Incomes in Tasmania have slowly increased in real terms but the growth of incomes in the other states has been much faster. Gross household income per capita was about 20 per cent below the national average in Tasmania in 2001-02 (ABS, 2002d). Earlier Anglicare analysis of ABS data showed that in the past 50 years Tasmanian household per capita incomes have consistently been below the national average but peaked (in relative terms) in the late 1970s at about 90 per cent of national levels before a relative decline to their present levels (Madden, 2002).

Even if we exclude the effects of lower labour force participation rates and greater reliance on part-time work, analysis of wage data shows that Tasmania continues to fall behind the national average.

Figure 19 shows the average ordinary time weekly earnings of full-time Tasmanian workers as a proportion of the national average. It is clear that average ordinary time earnings have slipped from a level which was comparable to the national average in the early 1980s to well below.

Figure 19. Average weekly adult full-time ordinary time earnings Tasmania - percentage difference from the national average 1983 to 2002



Source: ABS Average Weekly Earnings (2002b)⁵

The lower cost of living in Tasmania is often cited as compensating for low income and earnings patterns. This assumption is true for people who are purchasing a home. However, earlier research by Anglicare has shown that for low income earners in public housing the average combined cost of rent, electricity, groceries and petrol is higher than for all states other than Western Australia (Madden, 2002). For low income earners in the private rental market the average cost of these essentials is slightly lower than the national average based on raw ABS data. However, when rental dwellings of the same quality are compared the combined cost of rent, electricity, groceries and petrol are again higher for low income Tasmanians than for all states other than New South Wales (Madden, 2002).

⁵ Annual average of quarterly trend data except 1983 where only November quarter data is available

2.2 Unemployment

The high rate of unemployment in Tasmania is well established. However, it is useful to provide a brief outline of the changes in the unemployment rate over time and some of the important dimensions of the issue.

2.2.1 The Unemployment Rate

In Tasmania in 1979 the unemployment rate for males was slightly lower than the national rate for males. For females the Tasmanian unemployment rate was the same as the national rate in 1978, 1979 and in 1982. However, since this time the Tasmanian rate of unemployment has tended to move with national trends but at a higher level (except in 1992 when female unemployment fell slightly below the national average). The unemployment rate in Tasmania did not experience the significant fall that occurred on a national level in the late 1980s, and the recession in the early 1990s had a particularly severe impact on the unemployment rate for Tasmanian males, with a sharp increase to 13.5 per cent.

Figure 20. Male unemployment rate in Tasmania and Australia 1978 to 2001



Source: ABS Labour Force (2003a)

Figure 21. Female unemployment rate in Tasmania and Australia 1978 to 2001

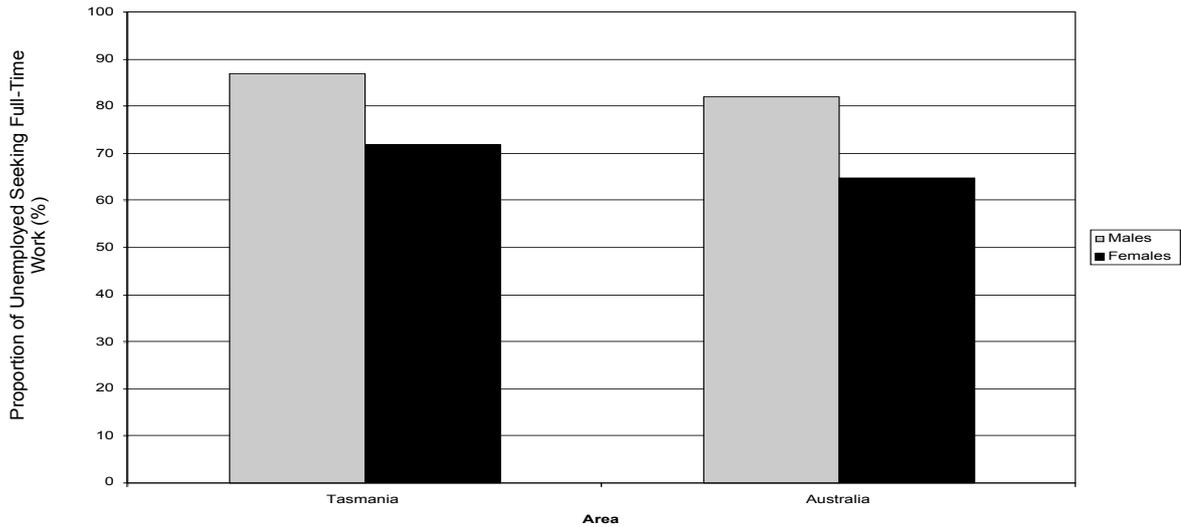


Source: ABS Labour Force (2003a)

2.2.2 Preference for Full-Time Work

Unemployed people are overwhelmingly seeking full-time work and this trend is stronger in Tasmania than the national average (see Figure 22). The decline in full-time employment in Tasmania is of particular concern in this context.

Figure 22. Proportion of unemployed people seeking full-time work Tasmania and Australia 2002



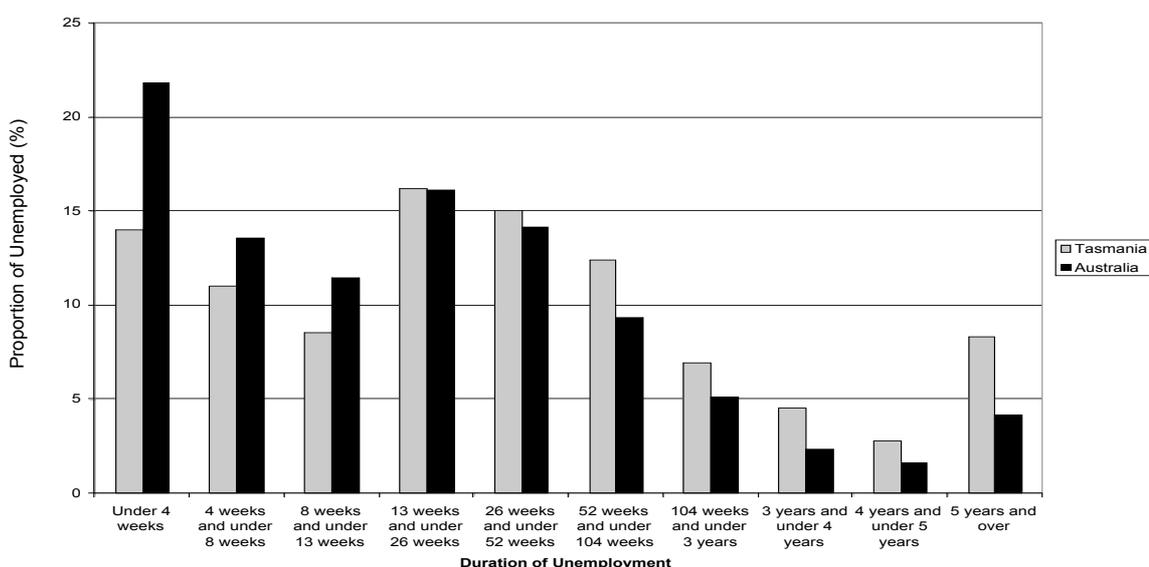
Source: ABS Labour Force (2003a)

2.2.3 Duration of Unemployment

The most recent ABS measure of duration of unemployment shows that the pattern in Tasmania is strongly skewed towards long-term unemployment (more than 12 months) and very long-term unemployment (more than 2 years) compared with the national average (see Figure 23). These figures record the length of time since a person worked in any job for two weeks or more, even if this employment was only a few hours each week. The measure may therefore disguise the true level of long-term joblessness, an issue of particular concern given that employment at such a minimal level would make little difference to the standard of living of the household.

Centrelink provides data on the length of time clients have been on unemployment benefits, a figure that is not affected by short-term spells of employment. These data show that in the month to October 7, 2002, almost 60 per cent of Tasmanians receiving Newstart Allowance had been on the payment for more than a year (Centrelink, 2002a). In fact, in the fortnight to October 18, 2002 almost 20 per cent of unemployed Tasmanians on Centrelink benefits had done some paid work (Centrelink 2002b). This figure indicates that many unemployed people are picking up bits and pieces of insecure work and that there is significant circulation between the categories of 'unemployed' and part-time or short-term 'casual worker'.

Figure 23. Duration of unemployment for Tasmania and Australia 2002

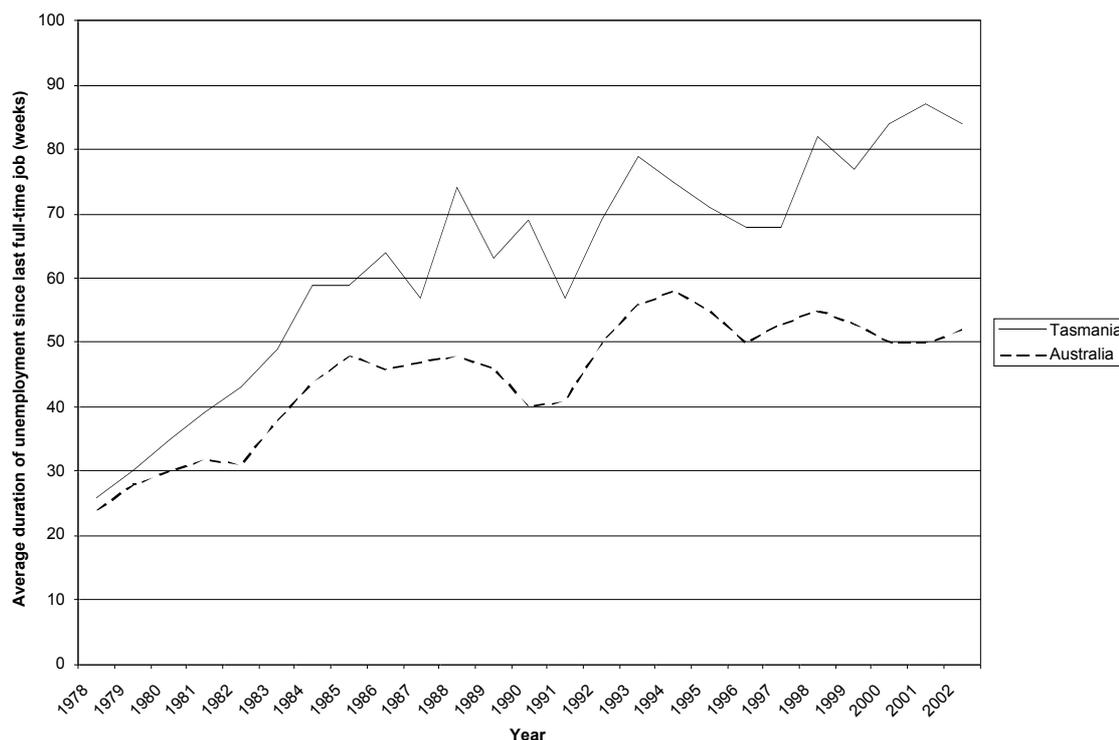


Source: ABS Labour Force (2003a)

The ABS also collects data on the average duration of unemployment since a person last worked full-time for two weeks or more. Figure 24 uses this

measure to show that in the late 1970s the average duration of unemployment in Tasmania was only slightly greater than the national average. Since then the average duration of unemployment in Tasmania has increased more rapidly and has remained much greater than the national average, particularly since the recession of the early 1990s.

Figure 24. Average duration of unemployment since last full-time work Tasmania and Australia 1978 to 2002



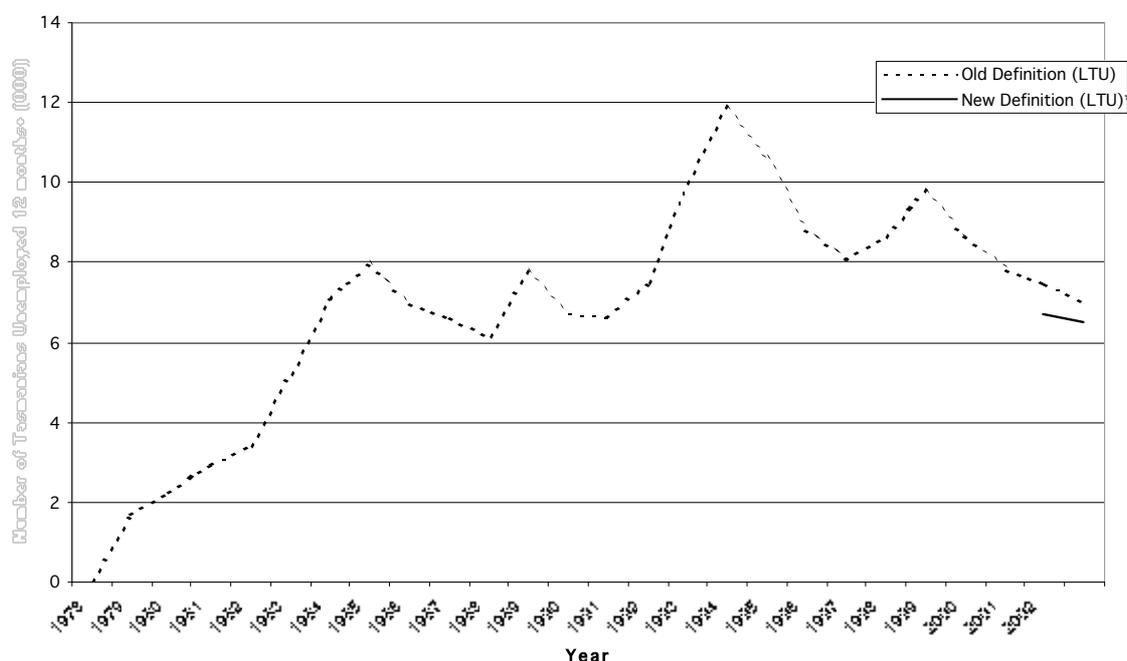
Source: ABS Labour Force (2003a)

2.2.4 Long Term Unemployment and Population Groups

Long-term unemployment tends to be concentrated in particular population groups. Findings by labour market researchers indicate that the risk of long-term unemployment is higher for people with low educational and other qualifications, people in less skilled occupations, people living in low socio-economic locations, people who live with other non-working adults and people who do not speak English well (Dockery & Webster, 2001). The decline of traditional blue-collar industries and occupations has left many Tasmanians stranded without the qualifications and skills needed to move into those sectors where employment growth has occurred. Prolonged periods of unemployment also result in 'skill atrophy' which reduces an individual's attractiveness to employers.

Men account for more than two thirds of all long-term unemployed people at a state and national level. Promisingly, there has been a recent decline in the number of Tasmanians who have been out of work for a year or more (see Figure 25). This downward trend is occurring regardless of whether we use the old measure of duration of unemployment (the time since the last two-week period of full-time work which has been measured continuously since 1978) or the more recent measure of time since the last two week period of full or part-time work. The national trend has also been a decline in the number of long-term unemployed.

Figure 25. Long-Term Unemployed Tasmanians 1978 to 2002

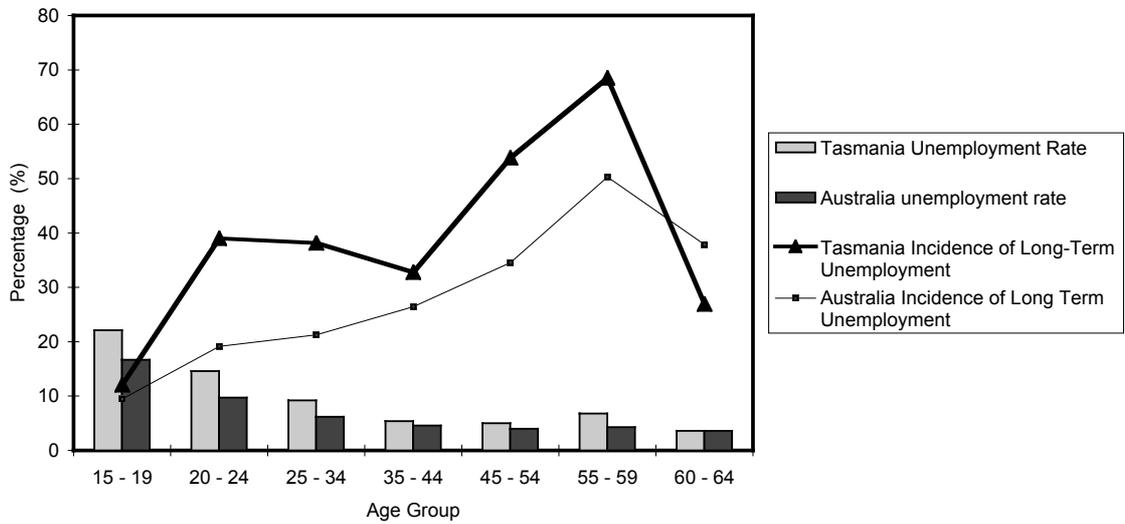


Source: ABS Labour Force (2003a)⁶

The unemployment rates for young people are much higher than for older age groups, particularly in Tasmania where more than 22 per cent of 15-19 year olds who were in the labour force in 2002 were unemployed (see bar graph section of Figure 26). However, these young people are not likely to be long-term unemployed as shown in the line graph section of Figure 26 which indicates the proportion of unemployed people in each age group who were long term unemployed.

⁶ New measure introduced in April 2001 thus 2001 figure is the average of the 8 months to Dec 2001

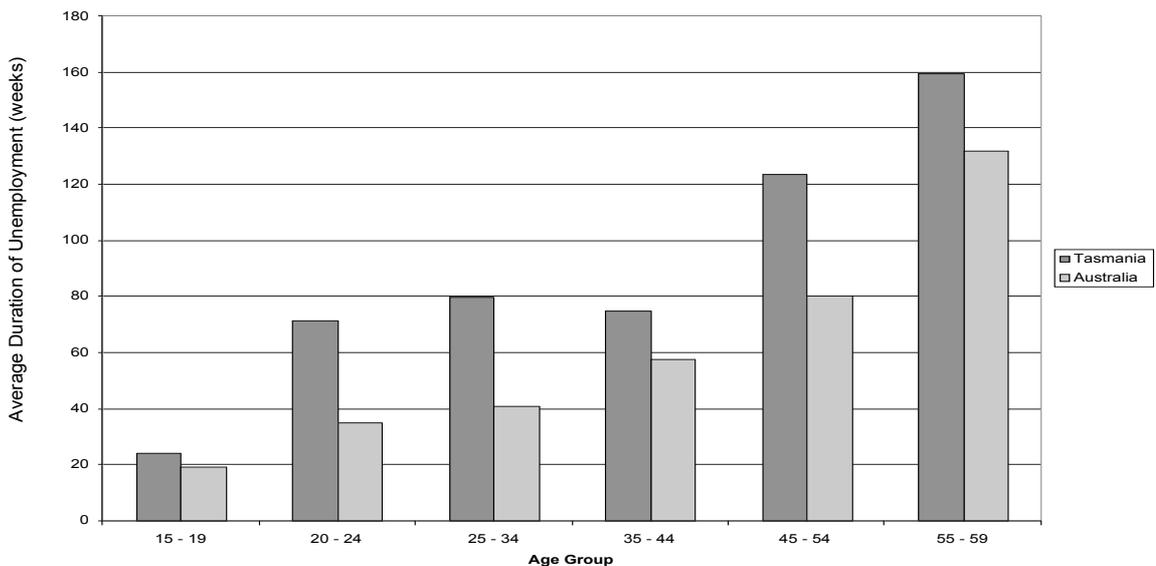
Figure 26. Unemployment rate and incidence of long-term unemployment by age group Tasmania and Australia 2002



Source: ABS Labour Force (2003a)

As noted earlier, Tasmanians experience much longer periods of time in unemployment than the national average. This is particularly pronounced for unemployed Tasmanians aged between 55 and 59, for whom the average duration of unemployment in 2002 was just over 3 years.

Figure 27. Average duration of unemployment by age group Tasmania and Australia 2002



Source: ABS Labour Force (2003a)

2.2.5 Job Poor Households

There has been significant recent interest in the issue of employment polarisation where some households have more than one wage earner while other households have no-one in the paid workforce. Research by Dawkins, Gregg & Scutella (2001) shows that the proportion of households where no person is in paid employment has been increasing steadily (from 12.7 per cent in 1982 to 16.3 per cent in 1997) on a national level. However, they describe the rise in jobless households in Tasmania as "exceptionally rapid" from 15.2 per cent of households in 1982 to 21.8 per cent of households in 1997. This jobless household rate reflects Tasmania's high rate of unemployment and low labour force participation rate.

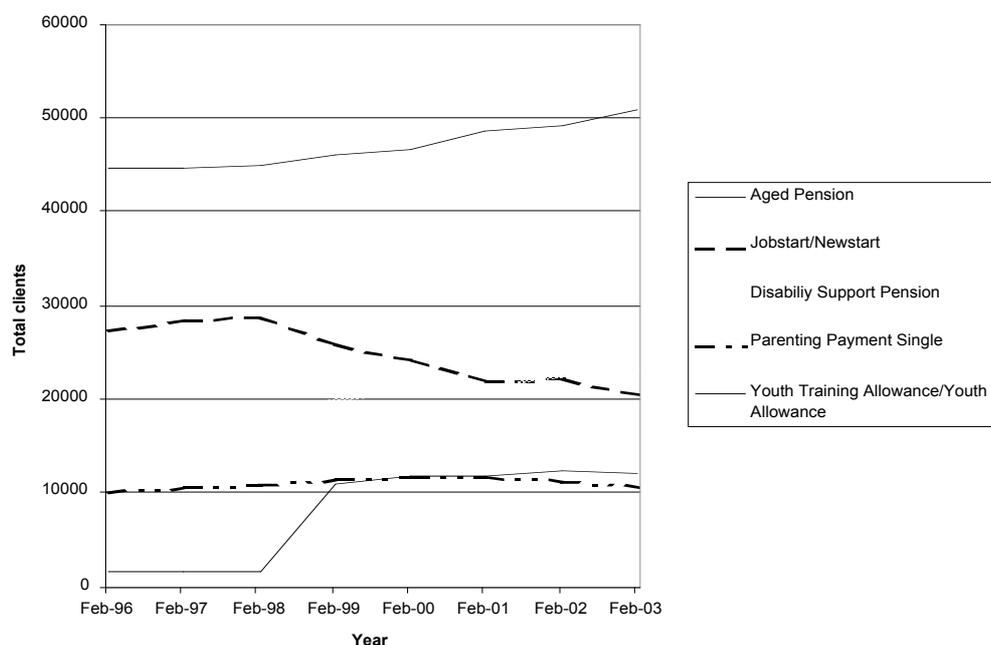
2.2.6 Labour Force Participation

Tasmania has followed national trends with an increase in the participation of women in the labour market and a decline in male participation rates. The proportion of women in the labour force in Tasmania has consistently been lower than the national average over the past 30 years (ABS, 2003a). The male participation rate began at the same level as the national rate (78 per cent) but has declined much more rapidly to 66 per cent in 2002 (national rate 72 per cent). The participation rate has been somewhat affected by the age structure of the Tasmania labour force but even using a standardised measure of participation which controls for such factors, Tasmania's participation rate was the lowest in the nation at 61.8 per cent in 2000/01 (ABS 2002a). Very recent figures suggest that there has been some improvement in the Tasmanian participation rate (ABS, 2003d).

Part of the explanation for Tasmania's low labour force participation rate is the movement of a large number of Tasmanians out of the unemployed group and onto the Disability Support Pension (DSP) and Aged Pension. The number of Aged Pensioners in Tasmania is now more than 50,000.

The number of people on the DSP in Tasmania has followed the national trend, increasing from about 16,000 in February 1996 to about 23,000 in February 2003 (see Figure 28).

Figure 28. Tasmanians on major Centrelink payments 1996 to 2003



Source: Centrelink (1996 – 2003)⁷

The Australian Council of Social Service has analysed the key causes of the increase in the number of people receiving the Disability Support Pension at a national level following recent proposals by the Federal Government to restrict access to the payment. ACOSS (2002) found that about 20 per cent of the national rise was attributable to changes in social security policy which closed off or restricted access to other payments (such as the Wife Pension and Widow Allowance). A further 40 per cent of the rise was attributable to increases in the number of people with disabilities (as a consequence of factors such as the aging population and improved identification of disabilities such as mental illness). The remaining 40 per cent of the rise is attributed to other factors “including the increased difficulty faced by many jobless people with disabilities (and related workforce barriers such as age and limited skills) in securing jobs following the recession of the early 1990s” (ACOSS, 2002, p1).

2.2.7 Underutilised Labour

In addition to measures of unemployment the ABS also provides estimates of labour underutilisation at a national and state level (ABS, 2003e). This measure provides an indication of the proportion of the productive capacity which is lost to an economy due to underutilisation of the available labour force. If all

⁷ In July 1998 Youth Allowance subsumed the Youth Training Allowance and most Newstart and Sickness Allowance recipients under 21 years and all Austudy recipients under 25 years.

members of the labour force were employed for as many hours as they would like, the labour underutilisation rate would be zero.

The groups considered by the ABS in calculating the extended labour force underutilisation rate are:

1. unemployed people;
2. underemployed people;
3. those actively looking for work but not immediately available to start;
and
4. discouraged jobseekers who were available for work within four weeks.

These groups are then measured as a proportion of the labour force augmented by 3 and 4 above.

The extended labour force underutilisation rate for Tasmania in September 2002 was 17.8 per cent, much higher than the national average of 13 per cent. This figure represents almost 40,000 Tasmanians who were willing and able to work additional hours but who are unable to find adequate employment.

3. THE EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE LABOUR MARKET

The following section explores the experiences of some of those Tasmanians who have felt the effects of labour market change on a very personal level.

There are two factors which emerged from the qualitative component of this research as playing a key role in shaping the participants' experiences of the labour market; these were the period during which they entered the labour market and their own labour force status as reflected in their category of Centrelink payment.

3.1 Labour Force Status

As expected, those research participants who were on parenting payments had a very different relationship with the labour market to those who were in receipt of unemployment benefits. While all but one of the parenting payment recipients were women, the experiences and understandings of this group were quite different to jobless women receiving Newstart or Youth Allowance. The early labour market experiences of the parenting payment group were similar to the unemployed participants but as soon as they left the labour market to care for their children this became their primary role. While several of these parents were keen to enter the labour market there was not the same sense of urgency as there was for unemployed participants, and even those parents actively seeking work did not see themselves as "unemployed". As expected, these participants were generally interested in part-time work while the unemployed individuals were overwhelmingly seeking full-time employment. Sole parents strongly identified their low income status rather than their lack of employment as their key issue of concern and spoke about the importance they placed on being at home to care for their children. For example:

Question: Do you think that not having a job now affects your children?

Jane: Well...mmm...that's an interesting question. I don't think it affects them, because I like to be there for them all the time. Although I wouldn't mind having a part-time job because then I could provide for them properly you know. ...I think, if it does affect them in a negative way, I guess it's because, maybe they get upset because they don't get the things they want. You know, the expensive things that they'd like, but you can't get them. I think that's the only thing that affects them. But I think the most important thing in bringing up children is loving them. Like I said,

I wouldn't mind a part-time job, but I enjoy being home for my girls."

Of the four parents with partners, two had partners who were unemployed. This meant that the couple had to make a decision about which person would receive Newstart Allowance and which would receive Parenting Payment Partnered. The partner on Newstart Allowance is required to meet Centrelink tests regarding their job search activity while the Parenting Payment recipient is not required to seek paid work. In both cases the couples had chosen the women to receive Parenting Payment and the men to receive Newstart. Similarly, amongst the unemployed participants in this research, the men with partners and children had chosen to be on Newstart while their female partners received parenting payments. This choice reflects the traditional gender roles of male breadwinner and female primary carer, and Centrelink data indicate that it is a very strong trend. More than 90 per cent of the 2750 Tasmanian couples who receive Newstart Allowance and Parenting Payment Partnered elect to have the man on unemployment benefits and the woman on parenting payment. Sarah explains that her choice was shaped by family expectations:

"When I fell pregnant the boss was excellent to me ... he cut my hours back to 10:00 to 4:00, but it still didn't matter. I still had problems through the pregnancy and then reluctantly I gave up. I just said 'look I can't work anymore'. I was so upset that I just gave up the job but I don't think I would have been entitled to maternity leave, because you have got to work for so long too, but he did say that if I ever wanted the job back to come back. I never went back, because I felt living with Peter's [husband] parents, they are very strict, it's like the woman belongs at home and the man works. And after I had Alex, I don't know, because I was influenced by his family I suppose, didn't go back to work."

Sarah also indicated that she felt a sense of guilt about her role when her husband was not working:

"It was good and Peter was working and I didn't have to feel guilty because I was at home with the kids. The thing was, as long as one of us was working I think that that's good."

Sarah also discussed her desire to find part-time work but said that she had reservations about having her husband in the primary care role:

"I did say to Peter if I was to get a full-time job, you would have to swap roles, and he said 'well that's fine by me.' But deep down it wouldn't be fine for me, because I have done it all the time, it would be a problem for me, because I like Melanie's [daughter] hair to be done properly. I like the kids to be, I like... oh no, it's silly little things, but I mean Peter can't plait a child's hair. I mean her hair is down here somewhere, and how could he? But anyway, if the opportunity came and I was to get a job, I would need to work part-time anyway because I am too nervous. I would be too nervous to work full-time, but that's because I have always been at home I suppose. I lack confidence from being at home all the time."

King, Bradbury and McHugh (1995) conducted a relatively small quantitative study into the low employment rates of the wives of unemployed men. This indicated that responsibility for child care was the most important factor identified by women as preventing them from seeking additional paid work. Women who were not working were more likely than those in the labour force to hold traditional attitudes about gender roles regarding paid work. The length of time a woman had spent out of the workforce since leaving school was identified by the researchers as having the strongest influence on the labour force status of the partners of unemployed men (King et.al., 1995).

3.2 Era of Entry into the Labour Market

The other clear theme that emerged from the interviews about participants' labour market histories indicated that the era during which participants entered the labour market had strongly shaped their experience of employment and unemployment.

The participants who entered the labour market prior to about 1990 tended to have quite extensive working histories, particularly in the years immediately following school. These participants, generally aged over 30, tended to have left school at or before Year 10 but moved quickly into the workforce, mostly into permanent, full-time positions. Most came from families where their mother stayed at home and their father worked full-time although some could remember their mother working either part or full-time as well. Very few could remember any periods where their father was unemployed and those who did have this experience recalled it as once-off or occasional and very short term in duration. Several of the women in this group left the work-force to have children and had not been in full-time employment since then. The men and women without children generally had longer-term jobs lasting more than 1 year immediately

following school, with several staying with their first employer for more than 10 years. Others tended to move between several employers, regularly picking up periods of casual full-time work. By the 1990s many of these participants were no longer in permanent positions due to redundancy or resignation to take up other work. During the 1990s many participants started to experience periods of unemployment between jobs and found their casual jobs were becoming much shorter in duration. Many continue to do casual or seasonal work when it is available but most have been receiving some Centrelink benefit for more than 2 years.

The 10 participants who entered the labour market after about 1990 had quite different experiences of the labour market to the older group. Very few of the younger participants had left school before completing Year 10 and most had spent one or two years at college. Unlike the older group, two of the younger group had never been in paid employment. The rest of the younger group had experienced casual employment but only one had ever had a permanent full-time position. Several had had periods of fairly consistent work with one employer, particularly when they were on junior wages but none saw this as likely to lead to permanent positions. These younger people have been unable to gain a firm foot-hold in the labour market and are missing out on the opportunity to build a career in their prime working years. The employment histories of the younger participants' parents were also more mixed. A few had fathers who had never been unemployed but most could remember at least some periods of unemployment ranging from short-term, once-off situations to more prolonged periods.

The HILDA data (2002) provide quantitative data to support some of these findings. Table 4 shows that younger people (aged under 30 years) are much more likely than older people to have been unemployed for more than 50 per cent of their working life.

Table 4. Proportion of time in the labour force spent unemployed by age group Australia 2002

Age Group	Proportion of Time Spent Unemployed of Time in the Labour Force				
	Never Unemployed	Up to 25 %	25%-49%	50-74%	75%+
15-19 years	61.2	11.4	7.4	7.9	11.7
20-29 years	67.5	18.4	6.4	4.4	3.2
30-39 years	66.9	26.6	4.1	1.5	0.9
40-49 years	74.0	22.5	2.2	0.8	*
50-64 years	83.7	14.9	1.1	*	*
65+ years	92.3	6.7	*	*	*

Source: HILDA 2002

*denotes estimates which are too small to be reliable

The HILDA data are less helpful in establishing patterns of parental unemployment across age groups due to a high proportion of missing data for the youngest age groups. However, if we exclude the missing data for all age groups there is evidence that those aged under 30 years are more likely to have had their father unemployed for six months or more while they were growing up (14 per cent) than those aged 30 to 64 years (9.7 per cent). Interestingly, people aged over 65 years were the most likely of any age group to report that their father was unemployed for more than six months while they were growing up (16.2 per cent), perhaps reflecting the impact of the depression of the 1920s and 1930s.

3.3 Early Working Life

As noted above, the participants' early working lives were hugely influenced by the period during which they entered the workforce. Younger participants generally found it difficult to secure anything more than casual work as school-leavers, while participants aged over 30 years recalled a situation where it was easy for a young school leaver to find work. Participants over 40 years of age entered the labour market during a period of 'full-employment' and found themselves in immediate demand with a range of permanent, full-time jobs on offer.

Question: What was the labour market like when you left school?

"Oh, very good, you could go from one job to another job, you had no worries about not getting a job. It was really good, I mean you were never out of work. If you didn't like one job you could change your job, not like now. You can't afford to do that now, but back in those days you could, you could just swap from one job to another job. It was fairly easy to find a job and I didn't have any qualifications and I didn't do very well at school, so I didn't have any skills at all... I loved sewing, I was always taught sewing at school, we were taught to sew, and in high school that's one thing I really liked and enjoyed, and was good at. And so I went to work at [clothes store] and started training and did sewing." Ruby, 54, South, Casual Worker

"Oh, look, you wanted a job you went out and got one. If you didn't want one you didn't bother. That was basically how it was, and if you wanted to change jobs you were constantly looking for, you know, something else that might interest you and might pay you better. Oh, yeah, this is '78 to '80. You know there was heaps of jobs." Lorraine, 40, North, Partnered Parent

"I pretty much had a choice of a couple of jobs. Maybe because dad was in the industry you know his mates and stuff, that was probably the only reason for it. My first 2 jobs were from dad's mates..." Russell, 35, South, Unemployed

"I just said I don't like school any more, so me and my mates went around door knocking for jobs and just got it [an apprenticeship]. I just went in there one day and they said come back and I just started from there. That was my second day out, so yeah, it was pretty quick." Jon, 32, South, Unemployed

"I went and applied for it [my first job] and the day afterwards I got a phone call back saying I got the job. That was when I was 17 and same old story, when you turned 18 I got the sack, because they always wanted the younger blokes, because it is cheaper I suppose, but that was back a while ago." Richard, 30, South, Unemployed

3.4 Losing Work

The experience of losing work was a common one for many participants, particularly those who had held a range of casual positions. The end of casual work, particularly short-term positions, was not seen as a major event by most participants as they expected it when they commenced in the position. By contrast, those participants who had been made redundant from a permanent or long-term casual position generally felt that the job loss was a major event in their lives. Often the loss of the job was also the loss of a career path and their plans for the future at work and in other parts of their life were severely disrupted.

"I used to think when I worked at [vegetable processor] that I was part of the furniture, that I was there for ever and a day. I wasn't vulnerable, I was sort of a god, they needed me. Once you get out in the world, and you hit a few hurdles, you're made redundant a couple of times, you just go to work and do your work and that's it – because tomorrow your job may not be there. The company may be sold and go belly up. You can't rely on it." Roger, 48, North-West, Unemployed

"I got put off. It was about, ah, I think it was about 60 people got put off and I was one of them, and I didn't want to go, but I had

to... Yeah, the outdoor [staff], ... it had run out of money they reckon and they couldn't keep the parks up and they couldn't do all this and that and they'd get the full timers to do it and the casuals had to go. It was pretty bad." Tony, 38, South, Unemployed (Council worker 11 years)

"... I had to leave, because they got rid of all the untrained staff, I was devastated, because I was so happy there, and it was a big decision. I mean I didn't, I never had no choice they just said you are leaving, that's it. I don't know why, it's silly really. I guess from then on it was a bit harder to get jobs then, I don't know."
Ruby, 54, South, Casual Worker

These experiences closely reflect the findings of a large study of retrenched Textile, Clothing and Footwear (TCF) workers by Webber and Weller (2002) which found that retrenchment from a traditional manufacturing industry led to a significant decline in workers' labour market position even when they found new jobs. "In general, retrenched TCF workers exchanged secure full-time semi-skilled factory employment for a multitude of insecure, low-paid jobs in a range of occupations... Retrenchment acted as a sharp shock in people's ongoing employment histories, producing a shift in their long-term career trajectories." (Webber & Weller, 2002, p 151).

Tony's Story

Tony grew up in Sorell, the youngest of eight children. He had trouble with school after a head injury in early high school. Both of his parents were working when he was young, his mother as a shop assistant and his father at the local council. His father worked all of his life at the council and got Tony a job there with the outdoors workforce, which he loved.

Tony spent 11 years at the council but was retrenched along with 20 colleagues and was out of work for 6 months. A mate suggested him for a labouring job on a large building site which lasted 7 months. He enjoyed the work, particularly the social interaction.

After this Tony had a series of short-term casual labouring jobs and completed welding and house-painting courses at the Wilson Training Centre. He then spent six months on a labour market program at another local council and later did some casual work with a friend who had a landscape gardening business.

This work finished up in 1998 and while he has had stints of a few days labouring, he has not had a longer term job since then.

Tony finds unemployment extremely frustrating and has trouble making ends meet. He pays almost 50 per cent of his income on rent, and after paying for essentials, including food, reports that he has \$10 or \$20 for the fortnight.

"...and that's when I get pretty wild, and sometimes I can't even talk to my friends..., I can't even put petrol in my tank to go to the beach with, or I can't do this, I can't do that, you know. And not only that, I run out of food too early in the fortnight."

Tony worries his lack of formal education and age will make it difficult to get stable work in the future.

3.5 Recent Job Search Experience

Research participants were asked a range of questions about each of their jobs from the time they left school until the present. One of these questions asked about how they secured the position. Some participants had picked up work through formal organizations such as Job Network providers and the former CES and a small number had secured work through applying for jobs advertised in the newspaper. Direct approaches to employers had been a successful strategy for many participants but the overwhelming pattern was for participants to find work through the informal network of their family and friends.

"Well, one of my brothers, well actually Jim [a business owner] is a friend of my mother and father. They have been for a long time and because growing up in the Margate area and so we've known him for a long time. ...and plus one of my older brothers, he was working with Jim for probably about 2 years before I started and yeah, that's how I managed to get work. And my older brother was working with him as well. Yeah, a real family affair, well the four of us was working for him at one stage." Stuart, 35, South, Unemployed

"I went straight to the [local] council. My father used to work on the council and he got me a job and I stayed there for, oh, a fair while [11 years]." Tony, 38, South, Unemployed

"Oh well, someone, one of the old man's cobblers was an assistant, one of the managers at the [hotel] put in a word I suppose and that was the way it went." Bill, 38, South, Unemployed

"I was in Grade 10 and it was about a week before we finished school and I knew a lady who had worked at [supermarket]. She was a friend of my grandmother's and she got me the job straight away. So I actually left school a week before Grade 10 had finished. So I went straight into the workforce and have been doing it ever since, which is a bonus." Sharon, 41, North-West, Unemployed

"With Tassie, I find you really have to know someone, you really have to know someone who knows someone, who knows someone. It's all about that in Tassie and otherwise it is just really hard to get a job or even get looked at because you are just words on a page, you know..." Anna, 22, South, Unemployed

"When we left school I just basically, yeah I could walk into any job that I was qualified to do. You know, I could walk into a pub and pick up a few days work or a few months work, but nowadays it's all sort of in-house, it's all closed shop, unless you know the person really well..." Bob, 40, South, Unemployed

Data from the ABS (2001f) confirms the importance of friends and family as an important source of information and contacts in securing work. In the 12 months to July 2000 more than 75 per cent of successful jobseekers secured their current position by directly contacting an employer. Of these 60 per cent were aware of the vacancy, with family and friends being the most common source of this knowledge (42 per cent of those with prior knowledge). Heath (1999) also indicates that contacting friends and relatives and direct contact with employers were very successful methods of securing work with more than 60 per cent of young Australian jobseekers securing employment using these methods. Heath (1999) finds that young jobseekers in areas of high unemployment are more likely to have mainly used indirect search methods such as registration with the (then) CES, than direct methods such as contacting friends, family or employers for work. It is important that social networks include employed people and that the local labour market is relatively healthy for direct search methods to be most effective.

The widespread reliance on Government pensions and benefits in Tasmania (almost 40 per cent of all income units) and the socially isolating impact of

unemployment (see Section 3.11.2) are particularly problematic in the context of this important informal job network. If unemployed people become isolated from their family and friends their access to employment opportunities may also be significantly curtailed. In this way a cycle of unemployment leading to social isolation and reduced job opportunities may become self-perpetuating. This issue is of particular concern in light of the demoralising experience that many participants face in the formal employment market.

"Every fortnight, I am writing in. I have tried to get into hotels and things you know, and old people's homes, anything, just trying to think what else. ... usually the jobs in the paper, you know I have to ring or write in. Actually I did one a couple of weeks ago, but I never heard anything. They should let you know, you know, you like to know what is going on, but people don't do things like that. Hopefully one day I'll get a job." Jenny, 38, South, Unemployed

"Oh yeah, it's hard, very hard work. Went for an interview for basically a labouring job and I found out that something like about 75 people were going for an interview. That's basic labouring, shit job. Of course they're going to go right through and only pick the best person they think taking on the job, and then all the people who are tertiary educated, university educated people. I know draftsmen, architects, lots of people like that, and all they're doing is grabbing a shovel, just so that they can put food on the table. They're not sort of working out there no more, so they're sort of lowering the jobs, lower end, going for unqualified jobs..." Bob, 40, South, Unemployed

"I've applied for so many jobs in between seasonal work and it's just rejection after rejection. I think it's the age. I mean because I've got a pretty good resume ... But I haven't had anything between seasons for years now." Sharon, 41, North-West, Unemployed

"I've got probably a folder that big saying 'unfortunately you have not made the selection', because I do probably 8 or 10 [applications] a week on the internet as well, for the agencies. I've got the ability to email out different places as well as going to the city, going to Centrelink, seeing them as well. Do a few door knocks every now and then, like [labour hire firm], I go down the wharves and see the fishing boats in, if they need any crew for a couple of trips. So I'm always out looking. There's not a lot of work

in Tassie at the moment, so, yes, I'll get there though." Carl, 36, South, Unemployed

"I reckon [I've applied for] probably between 15-20 jobs in the last 3 months. I've had one interview in all that time. You know, a lot of disappointments I suppose. When you think that you've got a chance of getting a job, you've got very good qualifications... I think it's a very biased thing to age, within the workforce, especially trades-wise. They tend to look at the younger people so then they can guide them how they want to guide them, instead of being set in their ways. I feel that Centrelink and the job system is totally wrong." Roger, 48, North-West, Unemployed

3.6 Barriers to Employment

Participants were asked to identify the main barriers which made it difficult for them to find work. As the quotes above illustrate, older workers tended to identify their age as counting against them in the eyes of employers. Participants also commonly identified their lack of education and formal qualifications as a barrier to gaining employment.

"Yeah, I think age is one of the biggest problems, they have a stigma about people's problems once they get to 40 or 45 or something like that, that they tend to think that you're over the hill, they forget about your experience..." Roger, 48, North-West, Unemployed

"It's awful, because one bloke rang up, because I applied for a job, and he said he could tell by my voice I was pretty old. He did! He never rang back and I didn't get the job because of my voice. I don't know how people tell." Jenny, 38, South, Unemployed

"It's harder now because I'm older. And that's a big thing, it's going to be harder probably in a month or so, because you've got all the school leavers coming fresh out of school, and all the employers want the young: low pay, low wages and cheap labour. And because a lot of work in Tassie is paid as it is, part-time, they tend to go for the younger ones so that they can train them up and eventually when they get to 18 they're on the dump heap too." Carl, 36, South, Unemployed

"Well, I don't know, but I really think because when you have to fill in these applications and you fill in applications for jobs. They're going to see a 41 year-old and these days I have to put about my heart condition, because if things go wrong at work and you haven't told them, well then you're not covered. So I've got '41, heart condition and mild epilepsy'. They're going to pick up that piece of paper and (click of fingers), that's what I figure. They'll sort of just throw me out, sort of thing. I might get a little photo and stick it on my resume, just a little one to say 'I'm okay, I'm not crippled and in a wheelchair or anything and I can work'."
Sharon, 41, North-West, Unemployed

"Yeah, [I'm] a basic person that's got basic skills, I know what I can do and that's it. And sometimes it's not good enough, because they want a labourer, but they want a qualified labourer, someone who can do a bit of brickwork or something on the side, you know what I mean? And, the definition of a labourer has changed. They want a tradesman/labourer more or less nowadays."
Bob, 40, South, Unemployed

"Good clothes, good literacy and numeracy which I haven't got, yeah just basic stuff that don't make people think of bad things about you sort of thing. It's hard."
Patrick, 18, North-West, Unemployed

The barriers identified by the participants are also reflected in ABS (2002c) data which show that the most commonly reported main difficulty in finding work for unemployed people were:

- being considered too young or too old by employers (12 per cent);
- insufficient work experience (12 per cent);
- too many applicants for available jobs (12 per cent);
- no vacancies at all (11 per cent); and
- lacked necessary skills/education (10 per cent).

The most commonly cited problems for the long-term unemployed were being too young or too old (20 per cent), lack of skills and education (14 per cent) and insufficient work experience (10 per cent).

Sharon's Story

"I grew up in Burnie. I had a very happy childhood – two brothers, good schooling, good education. Didn't go without anything – we weren't spoiled or anything. We had a really good upbringing. What our parents told us, we did. I mean it wasn't scary or anything, but you know, manners and all that sort of thing. We had a good childhood."

Sharon's parents both worked, her mother part-time as a waitress and her father full-time in a local factory. Sharon left school the week before the end of Year 10 to take up a position at a shop. *"I was on \$28 a week for 40 hours. I think... I think my first pay cheque was \$29 for the week and I was rich! I was rich!"* She enjoyed working there for three years but was retrenched when the shop was taken over by a national chain. She moved through a series of casual waitressing and shop assistant jobs, working for several years in each of her positions. Sharon always managed to secure these positions through informal social networks.

In the mid 1980s Sharon started working at a motel during the tourist season for four or five months each year. In the early 1990s Sharon completed a literacy support officer's course and found work at a local primary school as a teacher's aide.

"I really liked helping the slower kids. Yeah, it was great. To try and give them a bit of encouragement, whereas the other kids would walk around and call them... just to make them feel a bit better and say 'you can do this' and just give them a bit of self confidence. The poor little buggers, I felt sorry for them. I think I made them feel a bit better."

Sharon's work at the school lasted about six months as the school did not keep its teacher's aides on for the following year.

"It was a government-funded job and the government actually ran out of funding so I lost that and haven't done anything from there since."

Since then Sharon has continued to do seasonal work but has not had any other work for more than five years. She continues to apply for a range of jobs *"Heaps! Everything that comes up, I'm there applying for: the cinema, the new ships, pubs, clubs, doing bar work, anything."*

Sharon's seasonal work allows her to plan her finances fairly well, dealing with any big expenses during her working period. However, the end of each season is a return to the unemployment cycle. *"It's back to the doldrums again. It's, like when you're working, you don't have to go down to the dole office and put in all your forms and it just seems demeaning to me. Because I know I can get out there and work, but there's no work and I've still got to go down to that God-forsaken place, every fortnight after I've worked and there's nothing."*

Finding full time employment remains a key focus for Sharon although she now doubts that this will happen. *"I really think what needs to be looked at is jobs for older people. I'm not saying eighty or ninety year olds, but people that have still got their faculties about them that are in my age bracket. Over thirty-fives, we're not old."*

3.7 Casual Work

Almost all participants had experienced casual work, for some this was in areas such as hospitality or retail while others had worked as casuals in the building

industry or food processing. The hospitality and retail work tended to be ongoing but for less than full-day shifts and on irregular days, while the building work was more likely to be full-time for a short spell when a labour-intensive section of a project was being completed. The food processing also tended to be full-time but seasonal with additional workers being taken on for busy times. Participants strongly indicated that they did not expect their casual work to lead to permanent employment.

"It's like you could be working for 2 months and then all of a sudden there's no work. It's like what do you do? Every bit of money you saved all of a sudden goes. So it was just a very frustrating, 'cause I wanted to be on the job from start to finish, and continue a future, but it just wasn't happening. Like small companies, the builders are putting on one carpenter, and then once they get up to the roof, they'll get someone to come in and help put the trusses up, put the batons up, and then maybe, two days work, and then they don't need anyone else. So, its only the large companies that need apprenticeships. Small builders, they'll just use a relative or something for a very short time, you know, uncle, cousin, something like that, so I found that sort of like a dead end." Malcolm, 33, South, Unemployed

"I've worked on oyster farms, I installed wood heaters, I've done wood heaters for about 3 years, worked on the oyster farm for a couple of years off and on. I've been labouring and brick laying, all sorts of labouring sort of work I have done..." Richard, 30, South, Unemployed

"No, I don't feel confident about working full-time ever again. Fair dinkum. I know I can get casual positions and that, but it's something that, I'm not going to walk into a job and have 30 years or whatever, because I think them days have gone, I really do. Like I said, when I first left high school, when I first left college, I could walk into a pub and pick up any work I wanted, but nowadays it's all different, it really is. I don't know how to explain a situation like that, but it is different." Bob, 40, South, Unemployed

Participants' pessimism about casual jobs leading on to permanent work appears to be well founded. Burgess & Campbell (1998) report that there is a low rate of movement from casual to permanent work, particularly for people who were unemployed before gaining the casual work. Chalmers & Kalb (2001) are

slightly more optimistic suggesting that during periods of strong economic growth some disadvantaged job seekers are assisted in finding permanent work by taking up casual work. However they point out that "disadvantaged people are still less likely to obtain permanent work compared to other jobseekers. They are also more likely to be unemployed for longer periods and stay in casual work longer ... and a large proportion of the group will remain unemployed or at best in a casual job." (Chalmers & Kalb, 2001, p 429).

Research participants were keen to secure casual or permanent work but most expressed a very strong preference for permanent work if they could get it. They felt that permanent work would provide them with a sense of security both emotionally and financially, and rated this far more highly than the higher hourly pay rate and 'flexibility' provided by casual work. Participants also valued the standard benefits which come with permanent work such as holiday and sick pay.

"It's a bit more secure and that and I've got a couple of kids you know so that's it, yeah." Jon, 32, South, Unemployed

"...because I want to get into whatever I am doing. To work and get more experience that's how I look at it... No, casual can pay higher, but I prefer the permanent anyway, because you just don't know with casual. Because you can't have holidays and things on casual." Jenny, 38, South, Unemployed

"Permanent for sure. For credit ratings mostly so you can get a loan, you know, get established in life, basically that sort of thing." Richard, 30, South, Unemployed

"Cause you know that you've got continuous work, you don't have to go from casual job to casual job, and you know you've got the surety that there's work there all the time. Yeah, that's it - the security." Bob, 40, South, Unemployed

"Well I think you get super and you get your holidays and that, so you've got to go for that, for sure. Having four weeks off a year would be great. Yes, financial security I guess, you know, having your sick leave, having your holidays there for when you need them. Otherwise ...casual rates, you know if you get sick you feel under pressure to get back to work as quick as you can because you haven't got those sick days." Malcolm, 33, South, Unemployed

"Oh it is just that you are guaranteed a position, but compared to casual you know you might only get a phone call like for one day per week or something you know. But definitely permanent, because then you know you've got a steady income coming in and you can rely on it." Liam, 21, South, Unemployed

"Well, because then you'd know. You'd feel secure in your job, like because if you're casual, you might not have your job tomorrow. I mean it's probably the same as when you're permanent. But if you're permanent and you're doing your job well, your bosses aren't going to say well see you later. Unless, if something major happens, if you're classified as permanent as least you know you've got a job every day. You're going in every day." Sharon, 41, North-West, Unemployed

A small number of participants who had experienced redundancy from permanent work indicated that their faith in the security of permanent work had been undermined.

"Well it wouldn't really matter to tell you the truth, I don't think. There's a very fine line there between a casual and permanent: it's only about three days notice. That's what we used to say, three day's notice. If you're permanent you get 5 days notice and casual, you only have to give them two." Roger, 48, North-West

"I did part-time casual work, I used to do a lot of lawn mowing, and all that, go around knocking on doors, doing odd jobs, I never really had a permanent full-time job. Well, I have, but usually whenever I get it the place closes down." Carl, 36, South, Unemployed

Roger's Story

Roger, aged 48, described his upbringing as 'typical 1950s'. His mother kept house, while his father worked as a baker. After leaving high school, football club friends helped him to secure an apprenticeship as a fitter and turner at a local plant. Roger enjoyed the work and liked the 'family' atmosphere at the factory. He met Mary, his wife of 25 years on the factory floor.

During the 20 years he worked at the factory, Roger's life moved through the usual milestones: purchase of first home, upgrading to 'family home' and the birth of children. He described factory as a good place to work with better than average wages and plenty of overtime. Although it was difficult for Mary, who was caring for their young children, Roger was earning \$1000 a week.

However, Roger started looking for other work which had more regular hours. He got a job with an interstate company which soon after closed its Tasmanian branch. In hindsight he regrets this decision as 'one of the worst moves' he made, in terms of the loss of entitlements such as superannuation and long service leave.

A former colleague offered Roger a job at a building material supplier. He worked with this employer for 10 years, happy with the pay and the hours. However, the firm started doing badly and in 1996, after the third round of redundancies he decided to take a 'package'.

Roger hoped that the redundancy would enable him to buy a small business. He enrolled in a furniture design course at TAFE. During these 2 years the family lived on Roger's Austudy and his wife's part-time wages. On completing, Roger was generating enough income to supplement his Austudy but not enough to support his family. He faced a difficult choice – should he take the risk to pursue further study in the hope of securing a professional position or look for work? Ultimately he felt that both the cost and his age were barriers to doing a university degree.

Roger picked up a season's casual work. When he applied for Centrelink benefits he was told that he was ineligible for Newstart Allowance for 3 months. When interviewed, his family had survived this period by living on his wife's part-time earnings and depleting their savings. For the 2 months prior to interview Roger had been applying for mainly casual or seasonal jobs ranging from support worker, cleaner, school maintenance man, fitter, fitter/welder. He was concerned about his future.

Roger identifies many positives in his life, centering on his family and home. However, he is aware that his working life has moved well away from the secure world he imagined as a school-leaver.

"Years ago, since you started when you were 16 you knew you'd work until you're 65, but they reckon the average now is 5 or 6 jobs in your lifetime... A lot of people can work casual at one place, they can have 3 or 4 jobs going in the one year, and then they can do another 3 or 4 the next year. I think casual work is becoming more than permanent, it's cheaper; they employ you when they want to, tell you to stay home when they don't want you."

3.8 Preference for Full-time or Part-time work

Participants generally expressed a strong preference for full-time work. Again this reflected a desire for financial security and a 'normal' life. The exceptions were women with children who generally preferred part-time work.

"I'd do my 8 hours, I like Monday to Friday, every day. Like I said I get bored too quick and I get very pissed off to not doing anything. Like I said to you I like doing, if I can't find nothing to do over my flat at West Moonah, I'll go and see Mum and do her gardening."

Tony, 37, South, Unemployed

"Yeah, full-time. Yeah and probably overtime sometimes a week as well." Joseph, 20, South, Unemployed

"Full-time, so I know I have got a proper job that would keep me secure if I ever had kids or anything like that." Clare, 20, South, Unemployed

"If I had a choice I'd like to work 40 hours a week, but I don't think that's possible. I think the future is in job sharing, like in finding a company and then job sharing so two people, everybody's getting a bite of the pie and I think that's the best way to go, so you might be working 20-25 hours a week. If I could I would be wanting to work 40 hours a week, the traditional 40 hours a week or 38 or whatever it is now." Bob, 40, South, Unemployed

Participants were also asked how many hours they would need to work a week (at their usual wage level) to get ahead financially. Most participants felt that they would need to be working at least four days per week and many said they would need to be full-time before they would get ahead. Several participants also indicated that they would need to have consistent work for several months before they could get ahead as they had run-down their resources to a point where significant funds would be needed to complete tasks such as re-registering and repairing a car or paying off large bills.

"Oh definitely, you would have to be doing at least 38 (hours per week). Yeah, full-time employment before you could get ahead." Jon, 32, South, Unemployed

"I'd have to be working full time for at least a year to start to get in front. I haven't got many high overhead bills like running a car and that, but it's other bills that I should have paid, this and that. It takes 9 months, 12 months for me to get to a reasonable cash flow." Bob, 40, South, Unemployed

"Well I'd have to work basically 5 days a week. Yes, because once you've been on a low income, you slowly build up and then you pay one [bill], you slowly build up and then by the time you pay one you've got another one coming straight at you." David, 32, South, Unemployed

3.9 Amount of Work Needed to be Employed not Unemployed

Participants were asked how much they would need to be working before they would consider themselves (in their own minds) employed rather than unemployed. This can be conceptualised as an 'employment point', the point at which a person no longer considers themselves to be unemployed. Participants' responses varied but many participants felt that they would reach their employment point when they were no longer receiving any Newstart Allowance. Some participants immediately nominated Newstart payments cutting-off as their 'employment point' while others suggested they would need several days of work on a consistent basis. This second group was asked if they would consider themselves employed if their part-time work meant that they got some money from their employer and some from Centrelink. Most indicated they would need to be off Centrelink benefits while others would consider themselves employed whilst on a combination of benefits and wages. Only a couple of participants indicated that any work would be enough to make them consider themselves employed.

Question: *How much work would you have to be doing before you see yourself as employed rather than unemployed?*

Answer: *Yeah, I'd ah, yeah, that's about more than 3 days or average 3 days per week, the minimum.*

Q: *Would you be able to still be getting your Newstart Allowance?*

A: *No, not in my head.*

Q: *Why's that?*

A: *Because you are still getting a handout I suppose and, yeah, you're still getting money off the Government, and you would have to rely on that all the time I suppose wouldn't you? I*

mean if you are full-time you rely on yourself and do what you want. Richard, 30, South, Unemployed

"I'd have to be off Newstart. I wouldn't be able to... if I was on government benefits and I had casual work, then I wouldn't classify myself as an employed person. That's in my own head. I'd have to be off Newstart and earning my own money and not relying on them, before I'd classify myself as an employed person." Bob, 40, South, Unemployed

"If I wasn't on a Newstart benefit, I'd be employed, that would be it. Well I used to work like 2 or 3 hours a week doing odd-jobs, but I wouldn't consider that as working. That was income supplement." Carl, 36, South, Unemployed

"One thing is being independent of the government. If I didn't have to go and drop a form in... I wouldn't be classed as unemployed." Roger, 48, North-West, Unemployed

"You would have to be on the full-time paid work before you can class yourself as employed. You have got to be working I would say more than 20 hours per week to actually say, yeah, I'm employed now." Clare, 20, South, Unemployed

This finding may have implications for policy measures to address the high effective marginal tax rate faced by unemployed people who gain part-time work. At present Newstart is reduced at a very steep rate when other income is earned, sometimes leaving recipients little better off financially than when they were unemployed. The Commonwealth Government's Working Credits Scheme will be introduced in September 2003 and should assist in reducing the high effective marginal tax rates when people take up employment. It will improve the financial position of unemployed people taking up work but will also mean that they continue to receive some unemployment benefit until their wage income is higher than at present. Improving the financial position of unemployed people is rightly the primary concern but such changes may need to be followed with efforts that deal with the activity requirements, surveillance and stigma associated with the present Newstart payment. Benefits such as the Family Tax payments and the Aged Pension provide examples of Government benefits which do not carry a significant social stigma or activity testing regime.

Another notable issue is that the participants' perceptions of how much they would need to be working to be employed is very different to that used by the

Australian Bureau of Statistics. The ABS defines individuals as employed if they have had paid employment for one hour or more during a one-week reference period. The definition of employment is based on the conventions of the International Labour Organisation. It has the advantage of being unambiguous and allowing Australian labour statistics to be compared to other conforming countries. However, for most participants in this research, the information that the official figures do not consider them unemployed if they have done one hour of paid work in a week was a cause of disbelief and for some, a sense that such a definition was 'cooking the books'.

"One hour a week, that'd be ridiculous." Malcolm, 33, South, Unemployed

Bob: *"No, no, that's ridiculous - one hour a week! No I find that very funny. Because they can count someone who's done a little bit of worked as employed, not unemployed. Fair dinkum, that's the way they juggle the figures. I'd like to know how they juggle the figures sometimes. So, they say if you're doing one hour of work a week, you're no longer unemployed?"*

Interviewer: *"That's right. That's the way for the unemployment statistics. When they say there's 10 per cent of Tasmanians are unemployed, that's what they're counting it as. All those that had absolutely no work in the week that they took the survey."*

Bob: *"That's mind boggling, it really is, isn't that criminal, isn't that distorting ... putting something down that they not supposed to be putting down? If you was doing that in a banking account or something like that, you wouldn't be able to get away with it. That's insane, I've never heard something so ridiculous in all of my life. One hour a week..."*

"Oh, well they are just a pack of wankers anyway. They are just crunching numbers to make the Government happy. The Government uses those numbers to make themselves happy. It's just a load of crap... That's just absolutely ludicrous isn't it? You know if they have got those sort of guidelines in place, you've got to wonder what the purpose is of the census anyway. You know, if they are coming to those sorts of funny conclusions. How weak."
Bill, 38, South, Unemployed

3.10 The Impact of Unemployment

The devastating impacts of unemployment on individuals and their families have been explored in depth in the Tasmanian context in the TasCOSS report *Dead Man's Shoes* (McCormack, 2001) and for other communities on the mainland and overseas (for example Brewer, 1980, 1984; Bryson & Winter, 2002; Fagin & Little, 1984). This research also included questions about the impacts of unemployment as these issues are of such enormous concern to the research participants.

3.10.1 Financial Impacts

Unemployed people reliant on Centrelink payments are at the very bottom of the Australian income scale. The payments of \$190.05 per week for a single adult over 21 and \$155.05 per week for a young unemployed person are well below the rate of the single aged pension and are also below the Henderson Poverty Line. This low level of income means that unemployed people quickly fall into a cycle of poverty.

King (1998) indicated that the poverty rate among the unemployed was almost 75 per cent in 1996. McColl, Piesch and Gatenby (2002) use ABS data to show that the unemployed and those people on sickness and education allowances experience the highest rates of financial stress of any group in the community with more than 75 per cent of this group indicating moderate to high levels of financial stress compared to the national average of less than 35 per cent. The Tasmanian Healthy Communities Survey also shows that unemployed people face huge economic disadvantage with more than 25 per cent reporting that they worried about being able to afford enough food for the household and more than 75 per cent saying they could not raise \$2000 for an emergency (Herbert & Short, 2001). Gregory and Sheehan (1998) found that the rate of poverty amongst the unemployed tends to increase with the duration of unemployment.

All participants interviewed in Anglicare's research were in receipt of a Centrelink payment indicating limited financial resources within their household. For many participants the practical implications of their low income status included trying to stretch their money to cover the essentials of rent, food and electricity but having nothing left over. Many were facing a financial crisis if they received a bill which was bigger than expected or if a major appliance broke down and needed to be replaced.

"Yeah, sure, you know, it just takes a few things going wrong, or a bill. I just got a power bill which is \$250 and that's just going to stop me for the rest of the next few months, like the last one did,

you know. Because you pay as much as you can out of your pay for each fortnight and then you just live on as little as you can so you can pay it off. Once you get a bill, living on the Dole, you get more in debt and once a bill comes along you just get further behind in things. You get poorer and poorer, so you just get yourself into a hole where you can't afford to get yourself out of it. You can't afford to get new clothes or do a course or better yourself in any way to further yourself in a career or in anything. How can you have any self worth in yourself? What are you doing with your life? Where are you going? You know, you can't do anything, you can't go forward, everything seems to be stopping you or getting in your way. It just all seems too hard, you know, everything just seems way too hard." Anna, 22, South, Unemployed

"It's a bit tight. Christmas is coming up and you can't really afford to buy your whole family presents and stuff, and sometimes you look in the cupboard and you think 'oh geez, that's pretty bare, can't wait to pay day'. You try and make things stretch as much as you can. Or you might run out of milk or something and you go without milk for a couple of days and that's a bit of a traumatising thing." Liam, 21, South, Unemployed

"So it's just, you know, it's set up to keep poor people poor I reckon. Unemployment is set up to keep poor people poor, just on sustenance level and sustenance living and that's it." Bill, 38, South, Unemployed

"Oh, gets too tight, yeah very tight. I know I've got about 4 days to go and I am out of food and it's like, I can't keep going to Mum all the time, you know, because I got my sister sometimes, she's having the same problem like what I'm having in money, you know. Yeah, it gets to you. Sometimes I even get migraines, because I'm thinking so hard and you get like this. I started chewing my gums and going like that. Yeah, it's not good. It's not good." Tony, 37, South, Unemployed

"I'm living off half, possibly even a third of the finances that people who are in full time work have at their disposal. The opportunity to gain possessions like a motor vehicle, or to think about buying your own house, or even, going away on holidays, they're just

options that are impossible to me, I'm not able to even consider those things..." Jeff, 30, North, Unemployed

Those participants who had built up assets during earlier periods of work talked about the slow dwindling of their resources as they dipped into savings or accessed their superannuation to deal with major expenses. This strategy allowed participants to pay for costs associated with home ownership such as rates and maintenance but has clear consequences for the future as their retirement savings are drawn down.

"...I can go outside and grab my chainsaw and go down the back and spend hours down there you know, you know there is heaps of work for me to do. The only thing that worries me is that I've got to be so careful that what I do, financially. If its going to cost us money I won't do it. Because our assets are going, imagine since [becoming unemployed in] May they have gone down, we've been eating away at it, eating away." Roger, 48, North-West, Unemployed

"I'm happy if at the end of the fortnight I've got in the bank what I started there with the fortnight before. I tend to run on x amount and then if in the first week I've spent all that, well I try to spend absolutely nothing in the second one. That means doing rabbit food, not using the car, getting on the push bike, you know...Course I have [dipped into my super], but I only tap into it for things like when the hot water cylinder went, when the wood heater got a big crack in it and that had to be replaced, and I did a plaster job too. So I try to only just use it for house and land, rather than party and happiness..." Bill, 38, South, Unemployed

3.10.2 Emotional Impacts

As with previous studies participants indicated that they experienced a range of negative emotional impacts flowing from their unemployment including anxiety, stress and depression. International evidence summarised by Headey (2002) indicates that unemployment does cause increased anxiety and lowered levels of life satisfaction and that those who have experienced multiple bouts of unemployment continue to experience these effects even when they do find work, due to their expectation that the work may not last. Headey (2002) also indicated that depression and divorce are also fairly common products of longer-term unemployment.

"Yeah, it does because you get down and it's like 'oh, what do I do now?' And you just get really stressed out and it's like ...oh, you just start, all the emotions just come rolling and rolling along..."
Clare, 20, South, Unemployed

"[I'm] emotionally, a bit unstable because I'm sort of an active person. I like to do things, I like to keep active, and it does affect me. You're not motivated, you're lazy, you get slack. Things that you should be doing around the house, even basic jobs, sometimes you can't even be bothered doing that. You think 'what the hell'. You think 'well society is against me, so I'm against society'. Yeah, it's really depressing. It's not a very comfortable feeling at all from my perspective if you're not working." Bob, 40, South, Unemployed

"Mate, I'm stuck out in the flat a lot of times and it gets to me. It's just like, oh geez, the walls are getting close to me, and that's when I start to snap and I have got to go outside have a big walk, come back and take it out with the boxing bag, you know." Tony, 37, South, Unemployed

"Lack of income ... not being able get food and things like that. You do get sort of depressed when you're not at work and you tend to take that out on people around you. Who are the people around you - your family. Probably that was one of the biggest things in my divorce, I didn't feel good about myself so I took it out on the others, didn't pay them the attention they needed. It affects your family and your patience, but I don't get down in the dumps like other people do..." Carl, 36, South, Unemployed

"Well, it put a strain...because my ex-husband was also unemployed, when he got out of the Army, it put a lot of strain on our marriage. Well as you can see, we're not together anymore. It sort of put a strain on our marriage plus there were other contributing factors to that as well. But we were struggling to survive and sometimes marriages just don't work out the way you want them to, especially when you're stuck around each other all the time." Jane, 34, North-West, Single Parent

Demographic research indicates that personal relationships are another area where unemployment can have a major impact, with unemployed men aged between 25-44 much less likely to be in partner relationships than those in work

(Birrell & Rapson, 1998). "Holding a job seems to be an important if not sufficient condition for men to find and hold a female partner. The reason is almost certainly related to the higher income associated with this situation, thus confirming the importance of income in the prospects for men being able to form and sustain couple relationships" (Birrell & Rapson, 1998 p 19). Several of the male participants were single and mentioned that they would like to have a partner but found this particularly difficult when they were unemployed.

"Because I'm single, when I'm out, and I'm looking around and I see all these people - they want someone who's financially secure with their own home they're not going to be happy. I'm just out there looking for someone to be happy with. I'm not able to have a house, I haven't got a job you see." Carl, 36, South, Unemployed

"I think we all need some sort of shoulder to cry on, someone supportive, through the hard times and things like that. Yeah, of course we do." Bob, 40, South, Unemployed

"Yeah, I reckon a lot of people, like if you haven't got a job and you are going out and that, people probably don't really think much of you. I don't know. That's what I just feel anyway. I don't know, I just reckon when you are not working, I don't know, I just feel like a loser. Yeah, I reckon, like girls and stuff like that, I reckon, they are all working. Some people have got jobs and that, and you are just about the only one without a job." Joseph, 20, South, Unemployed

Some participants with families noted that not having paid work had other impacts on their childrens' lives including concerns about parental employment status and on their ability to afford some social opportunities and material possessions.

"The children were growing up, so still going to school, it affected them a little bit that I was unemployed. That upset them a little bit, 'cause they couldn't understand that dad didn't have a job. It was a bit of a stigma there, probably not so much now that dad has no job, they don't care so much, its part of life." Roger, 48, North-West, Unemployed

"Well, it has affected us because, especially my children, they miss out on so much. Most people who work, they can go and buy their kids toys, you know brand new toys, bikes, and stuff like that, we

couldn't even do that. Come a birthday or Christmas, they probably wouldn't get presents, some years they wouldn't get presents and stuff like that, because there was no money to buy presents. And taking them places, it just couldn't be done. So they miss out on things, clothing and stuff like that, everything hand me downs, clothes handed down. I used to hate that as a kid growing up. That's the sort of thing my mum did, with the second hand shops, and buying hand me downs, I got sick of it. Now, I'll still go second hand shopping for some things and that, but now I love it because I can actually go and get them something really good. Christmas time's coming up, so you know bikes and stuff like that. Your self esteem, everything just goes out the window, you lose confidence in yourself and the kids can sense that sort of stuff. So it does effect everybody." Mandy, 29, North, Single Parent

Several participants also mentioned the impact that unemployment had on their capacity to maintain friendships and social networks, particularly with people who were employed. This finding is of particular concern considering that many participants indicated that their social networks were a key avenue for finding casual work.

"...sometimes I can't even talk to my friends. You know I'll get 'what's wrong with you', 'oh mumble, mumble, mumble, you know', I say 'Social Security got to me and I got no money today, I can't even put petrol in my tank to go to the beach with, or I can't do this, I can't do this', you know..." Tony, 37, South, Unemployed

"Yeah, social activities are virtually non-existent unless you pool your money together. Unless you've got a group of you that pool your money together, then go and have a meal or something, a few beers or whatever. But apart from that, I've got a very limited social life at the moment..." Bob, 40, South, Unemployed

"My friends, we are a pretty close knit sort of bunch of blokes, we hang around together most of the time. Most of us can't afford to go to pubs, so we just get together and have a good time by ourselves, you know." Richard, 30, South, Unemployed

Anna's Story

Anna was raised in a small town on the North-West coast. Anna and her older brother attended the local state primary and high school. Her parents separated when she was twelve and her mother worked as an administrative assistant before going to University to complete a nursing qualification. Anna's father also worked throughout her childhood although he had one period of unemployment after a hotel he owned closed down during the 1990s recession.

Anna didn't enjoy High School but did fairly well and studied several pre-tertiary subjects at college although a bout of glandular fever in Year 12 meant she needed to go back for another year. She left Year 13 without completing to look for work.

Anna joined the Green Corps program and completed the six month training course. After a short period of travel within Australia, Anna secured a casual position at a local café where she worked as a waitress a few hours a day and although she still qualified for some Youth Allowance she chose to go off benefits. This work was very casual – 2 or 3 hours a day over a 6 day week. Anna reported that this meant that she prepared for work every day and her one day off was spent thinking about the next day's work. She continued to work there, preferring this very low income to being in receipt of benefits. After the café changed ownership Anna found that she stopped getting called in. *"They didn't fire anyone, they just stopped calling them in."*

Anna has not had any paid work since June 2000 which has had a huge impact on her life. She reports she has lost a lot of weight, experienced depression and ill health.

The Centrelink system has been a cause of significant frustration for Anna. In July last year she had an opportunity to get some work with an employer who wanted to take her on but was seeking a wage subsidy to help cover the costs of her wages. Intensive Assistance (IA) is a Commonwealth Government program which can provide wage subsidies to employers but Anna was not eligible for IA for another three months. The employer could not offer the position.

"I have just had real hassles with trying to get off the Dole. I feel like I am trapped, like, the help that's there isn't there for me when I actually need it."

3.11 Other People's Perceptions of Unemployment and the Unemployed

Australian research on community attitudes towards unemployment and the unemployed shows that there has been significant variation over time in the factors blamed for causing unemployment, particularly the extent to which people blame unemployed people themselves for their predicament. Eardley and Matheson (1999, p30) suggest that overall:

"Australians do seem to have had a noticeable propensity to attribute at least part of the responsibility for joblessness to people's own unwillingness to work. A number of commentators have argued that the media and politicians have a major responsibility for encouraging these attitudes through publicity campaigns against so-called 'dole bludgers'."

Their analysis of community opinion polls between 1975 and 1993 shows that up to 1991 people were more likely to identify unwillingness to work as a key cause of joblessness during periods when employment was strong. However, from 1991 to 1993 there was a rise in the proportion of people identifying this issue despite the severe economic recession.

"This leads us to speculate that the 'active society' discourse promoted by government during this period may have encouraged people to again see unemployment as a matter of personal responsibility." (Eardley & Matheson, 1999 p30)

The Howard Government has been vigorous in pursuing policies of mutual obligation by placing much more stringent activity requirements on unemployed people while simultaneously winding back labour market programs. More recent work by Eardley et al. (2000) considers whether such policies might further encourage people to see unemployment as an issue of personal responsibility. The research finds some support for this assertion with a relatively large proportion of people (44 per cent) who agreed that the lack of desire to work was a reason for high levels of unemployment in Australia. However, as with the earlier Morgan Gallop Polls, other factors such as greater workplace mechanisation and cheap imports were the most commonly cited causes of joblessness.

When asked about who was responsible for solving the unemployment problem, 48 percent agreed that the government was responsible although 76 per cent agreed that some people would always be unemployed and that Australia will

never return to full employment. Few people (14 per cent) agreed that unemployed people had only themselves to blame when considering who was responsible for solving unemployment.

This research sought to understand how unemployed people themselves felt that they were treated and perceived by others during periods of unemployment, both in the broader community and within their own friendship and family networks.

Some participants felt that there was no difference in the way they were treated but many felt that when they were unemployed they were accorded less respect by people in the broader community who may see them as 'dole bludgers' or lazy.

"Well, when you are working, people have got more time for you, and they'll take you anywhere, but when you're on the dole they don't trust you, some of them. They think you are a freak, they think you're up to something. 'Oh this bloke's going to want some money eh'. I don't like that, but yeah, but it makes you wild. I mean there are a lot of hard blokes, people out there are really very, very snobby, and reckon well you're a dole bludger, you don't need help. When you are full-time it's different, they treat you with a bit more respect." Tony, 37, South, Unemployed

"Oh there were times it was very depressing and Ray would try so hard to get work and he couldn't get it and you felt like you were a second class citizen. People just treated you like that, and if you went to Centrelink back then, you felt like you weren't important, you weren't anybody and it's a horrible feeling. I hated it. I really hated being on unemployment and the children, when the children went to school they had to get assistance, and luckily it's done differently now, but back then people knew what you were getting, they knew that your kids were getting books for nothing and things for nothing, and it wasn't very good for them. I guess I don't know how they felt themselves but I know I felt that stigma attached to it." Ruby, 54, South, Casual Worker

"Oh, yeah, you do [get treated differently], there's people out there, of course you do, you know, I don't take any notice of them sorts of people really much, because one day they will be probably unemployed themselves, you know, most likely, you know,

especially if you live in Tassie. Yeah, I'm not very worried, I just shake it off." Richard, 30, South, Unemployed

"People have got different attitudes towards people when they're not working. People do treat you differently. You notice your friends start to drop off, maybe it's the social aspects of it, when you can't do a lot anymore, when you're unemployed, there's not the financial resources there, I do think people treat you differently, yeah, for sure." Bob, 40, South, Unemployed

"Just a bit more respect, yeah for sure. People are always asking what are you doing now? I say, 'oh, not much', they just say 'are you working? Oh alright', its always a different story. They probably think you like being unemployed or something." Malcolm, 33, South, Unemployed

"Oh you sort of get a little bit more respect, but you also get pride in yourself if you are working, than being unemployed. Some people think 'oh the Dole you know you only sit on your arse and you don't do nothing'...Yeah, being employed gives you a bit more respect with other people to show that you are actually having a go at it you know, getting out there." Liam, 21, South, Unemployed

"Well, some people think 'oh well he's not working, he's lazy, leave him on the dole, he should be on the dole,' which I don't agree with that, just because somebody's on the dole doesn't mean that they're a bludger. I mean you try and find a job these days, you can't just trip over a job." David, 32, South, Unemployed

3.12 'What do you do?'

The perceived social stigma attached to unemployment was also reflected in participants' responses when asked how they answered that perennial icebreaker 'What do you do?' Many participants said that this question made them uncomfortable but they told people they were unemployed.

"I normally just say anything I can I suppose. Normally you've got to say 'well I'm not working at the moment' sort of thing, which does make it hard. You don't really like to do it, but a lot of people are not working, a lot of people who aren't working get labelled as

a dole bludger. I know myself I'm not a dole bludger." David, 32, South, Unemployed

"Oh I just say 'I'm not doing nothing really,' because I'm on the dole. And I really hate using the dole and I hate people calling me a dole bludger, because I'm not. It's not my fault, it's the Government's fault." Tony, 37, South, Unemployed

"I stopped going out for a long time because of that question I guess. I just didn't want to go out because I felt like I had nothing to talk about and nothing to say," Anna, 22, South, Unemployed

Others defined themselves by their parenting role or talked about their usual occupation or most recent causal work.

"I just say I work in [tourism]. ... Most of the time I just say I'm on the off-season at the moment. So it covers me. At least you're not saying, 'I'm on the dole!'" Sharon, 41, North-West, Unemployed

Some participants were more comfortable telling people about their employment situation.

"At the moment I say 'I'm on a Work For the Dole project to advance my work capacity.' I'm not ashamed about unemployment, especially down in Tassie, with the unemployment rate. I have done a bit in my life, worked in places, worked hard for my kids, looked after my kids." Carl, 36, South, Unemployed

Most participants felt that their family and friends were concerned for and supportive of them in their employment situation and drew strength from this support. Many participants had other family or friends who were presently experiencing or previously had experienced a period of unemployment at some time in their lives. Even participants' whose family members had not had this personal experience felt that there was a recognition of the difficulty of finding work in Tasmania. Many participants indicated that family and friends were encouraging of their efforts to find work and that they were often a source of job contacts (see section 3.6). These findings are consistent with the Eardley et al. (2000, p13) attitudinal research which indicated that people who had been unemployed themselves or had a family member unemployed in the last three years were "significantly less likely to attribute high unemployment to ease of

getting social security or to fewer people wanting work. They were more likely to blame the lack of demand for labour and government mismanagement.”

“Yeah, my brother and sister know what it’s like, they’ve been unemployed and things like that. They’re just back in work. My mum knows what its like, she was unemployed and that, she knows I don’t have much money, she helps me out so it’s good. Yeah, my family’s pretty good. It’s not like having brothers and sisters who have got a university degree and that, and putting me down because I’m on the dole.” Malcolm, 33, South, Unemployed

“Well a lot of my friends were on low incomes, so the family, none of my family are on, none of them are on unemployment. Oh one sister was, but she’s not any more. No, they are very understanding, they understand actually, they help me out as much as they can. My brother was wonderful, he gave me a hamper sometimes at the end of the year. He worked for a company and he would be able to give me bits and pieces and you know my family helped me out and they really did understand, they were wonderful. Because I have got a close family, so I am lucky like that.” Ruby, 54, South, Casual Worker

Some participants indicated that they had family members who were critical of them for not having paid employment, a situation which could cause some frustration and distress.

“Yeah, I have got a couple of friends who are unemployed, you know, they have been long-term unemployed so yep, they understand for sure. Yeah, my mum’s good, my dad’s a little sceptical of it, he thinks that I should be doing more, but I have done thousands of courses, I can’t believe, I couldn’t tell you how many courses I have done, but he’s my father I suppose, you know. He’s just a working man, he has worked all his life, he has been unemployed once in his life I think for a couple of months, but he has always been a hard man, he works full time non-stop, you know, weekends he can’t even sit down, you know.” Richard, 30, South, Unemployed

“Yeah my family, they have a lot of respect for me when I’m working but when I’m not working it’s like ‘oh look what he’s doing with his life? he doesn’t really care rah, rah, rah’ it’s like you can’t really do nothing about it because you are looking for work its just

a matter of time before you get any and it's hard as well because everyone just looks at you like you're nothing... Yeah it's hard, my family they just don't realise..." Patrick, 18, North-West, Unemployed

3.13 The Future

3.13.1 Confidence about finding paid work

All of the participants interviewed hoped to find some sort of paid work in the future. As noted in Section 3.9, the ideal was generally a full-time, permanent position. Participants were asked about their confidence that they would find more work and several talked about the need to try to stay confident to enhance their chances for securing work.

"Oh I am confident all the time you know, because if you are not confident and outgoing you know, well it's less of a chance of getting a job you know, in the eye of the employer. So no basically I try to think confidently and just go for it." Liam, 21, South, Unemployed

As with other studies of this type, most participants felt that their confidence had been eroded by the experiences of job loss and unemployment and they were concerned about their chances of finding more work, particularly anything secure.

"Hopefully there is something there for me. You tend to sort of, the longer it is, the longer it happens you think there might not be a job. What am I going to do? What am I going to do?" Roger, 48, North-West, Unemployed

"When I first went to each job, I was confident that I could get one straight away, in a few days, somewhere, and after a certain amount of time you do start to wonder if you'll get a job." Carl, 36, South, Unemployed

These fears are supported by the empirical evidence which shows that in general the longer a person has been unemployed the less likely it is that they will find employment in a given period. For example, ABS (2001f) shows that more than 35 per cent of people who had been unemployed less than 4 weeks in March 2001 were employed by April 2001. By contrast only 5.4 per cent of people who had been unemployed for more than 2 years in March 2001 had a job a month later.

3.13.2 Long-term aspirations

In the context of significant uncertainty about future job prospects, participants talked about the difficulties of planning for the future although many had longer term aspirations for 'the normal things in life' such as a family and home ownership.

"Oh definitely, I'd love to [have kids]. You have to have the financial security to be able to do that. I don't want to be bringing kids into the world unless I can give them what I wasn't able to have as a kid. You definitely need to be able to be in a stable financial situation, working." Jeff, 30, North, Unemployed

"Well I'd just like to get a loan out if I get a good full time job to start a job and like buy a cheap house and pay that off. Yeah, that's like the main thing, buy my own house and pay it off. Just keep working, and I don't know once I pay my house off, sell that and buy a real nice house I suppose." Joseph, 20, South, Unemployed

"Yeah, I was thinking about a house and that before, but now I realise, its going to be a few years off, maybe 10 years before I can afford a crummy little bit of land somewhere. But now I can build my own house, you know, looking at something like that, possibly using recycled materials, mud bricks, or something like that. I'd love to. But right now I think I don't dream about something like that, mainly I'm just focused on career and work..." Malcolm, 33, South, Unemployed

"A house for sure, that would be number one, I suppose it's number one for everyone, yeah, you know, and a decent bank balance, that would be the two I suppose." Richard, 30, South, Unemployed

3.13.3 Immediate plans

Several participants had shorter-term plans around training and education with the aim of improving their chances of securing paid work. This was particularly the case for participants completing the Work For the Dole program who were aware that they would be entitled to \$800 of training credits at the end of the scheme.

"Oh, that's what I am planning on after I finish this is to go to TAFE and I was planning on doing an Aged Care Course, because I

have got a couple of friends who just completed them and they got work more or less straight away. Eighty per cent of the people who do this get work straight away, so that's what I am planning on doing. So it is full-time work, and that's as far as I can look into the future anyway, about work anyway." Richard, 30, South, Unemployed

"Yeah, there is an outdoors course that Clarence Campus runs, where people who want to get onto council or parks workers and that's about the only thing I could think of. I did look into it, and I was going to do it last year, but unfortunately I think it was way out my price range, not having a price range, but I would have found it hard to manage the money if I'd wanted to do it. I think it was something like \$750 at the time. I sort of didn't have the money at the time, but now there's training credits coming in that's something I could look into." Bob, 40, South, Unemployed

"... this is what I want to actually do, the literacy program, because I mucked around a lot at school and College, my maths and English isn't up to scratch, and I feel that because I did muck around a lot when I was younger, I am paying for it now. So I advise children to do, well I tell my kids to do well at school and don't muck around." Sarah, 32, South, Partnered Parent

Informed advice about industries presently experiencing and expected to experience skill shortages in Tasmania would be particularly useful in informing the training plans of unemployed people. Such advice could be provided by the State Department of Economic Development and OPCET to Job Network providers on a regular basis.

3.13.4 Hopes for the kids

Those participants with children had very high hopes for their kids' futures, with all parents wanting to see them in paid work. Many indicated that they did not want their children to have to go through the same hardships and difficulties that they themselves had experienced.

"I would like to have enough money to support him. I'd like to own my own business so that he wouldn't have to worry about getting work. If I had my own business I could just set him up with work there and then..." Patrick, 19, North-West, Unemployed

"Well I'd love for them to go on and keep furthering their education and get really good jobs, you know, just to be able to survive, because I think it's only going to get tougher for children of today's generation. It's just not going to get easier, it's going to get tougher. So I'd like to be able to see them, you know, do their schooling, do really well, get a decent job, and yeah just make it in the world." Mandy, 29, North, Single Parent

"I'd like to see them grow up and have good jobs, and be secure, I mean it's a bit shaky for me I suppose, but I'd rather see them, like, be comfortable, than see them struggle like we have..." David, 32, South, Unemployed

3.13.5 The Tasmanian Labour Market

Many participants were well aware of the changes in the labour market in Tasmania during their working lives and there were mixed views on the future of the local labour market. Participants had heard news reports on how well the Tasmanian tourism industry was doing but their own experience of job insecurity and unemployment meant that they were still unsure about whether the benefits of such industries would ever have a positive impact on their own lives.

"Apparently it's getting better, well that's what they say on the news, so it's right and everything, but I suppose I can see it getting better in the tourism. You know, that's the number one shining light for Tasmania and probably, it's probably the best way to go too, you know, tourism. So I can see it probably getting a little bit better, couldn't see it getting any more worse." Richard, 30, South, Unemployed

"There's been a big change from full time employment to part-time casual work, and there may be more jobs around now, but there's more people so that cancels that out. There's been a shift in what sort of exports, when I was young it was known as the 'Apple Isle' and now it's the Tourism Isle, tourism is probably the biggest major employer in Tasmania, that and call centres. There's a call centre coming up everywhere these days." Carl, 36, South, Unemployed

"For me it will be the same. It will probably be a bit worse. Today if you're unskilled without an education - I've got a little bit of an education - if you're unemployed, close to 40, you're probably close to retirement. Unless you go back, retrain, get re-educated,

you may as well say you retired at 40. You've got to basically, get more skills, probably university is a good way to go, it's a good ticket." Malcolm, 33, South, Unemployed

"Like, you know, I should go back and do more training, but yeah, what do you train for? Society is changing all the time and you need different roles for different people. Basically it comes down to personal service work, and that's where the job future is, but I don't want to go down and look after old people, wash them. I'm not that sort of person, but that's what its down to, personalized service." Bob, 40, South, Unemployed

"I'm disgusted about the current employment situation and I'm frightened. The system says once you are not earning a buck, you are not worth a buck. They don't care if my teeth fall out and they don't care if I don't have enough food to eat." Maggie, 44, North, Unemployed

"I can see that Tasmania is losing more and more industries and it has just gone, compared to when a few years back there was everything here, there's nothing now. I mean apart from tourism and restaurants and shops, there's not a lot. My son-in-law works out at Derwent Park he works for [factory], but there's not a lot of factory work. There used to be a lot of factory work and there doesn't seem to be as much now." Ruby, 54, South, Casual Worker

"Like I said we are going backwards, and I hope we can go forward. People like me, and them blokes out there hitting the 40 mark, we need a job and we don't have jobs. Where are we going to be in a couple more years time?" Tony, 37, South, Unemployed

4. CONCLUSION

The loss of employment security for people at the bottom of the labour market has arguably been the most fundamental change in the Tasmanian labour market in the past three decades. In the early 1970s those people in the labour market were very unlikely to be unemployed and paid work was generally permanent and full-time. Now, for many Tasmanians a cycle of short stints of

casual work interspersed with periods of unemployment has become a key feature of their working lives. Many unemployed, under-employed and casually employed people are unable to make firm plans for the future due to the uncertainty about their work situation and income levels. They are often excluded from access to resources such as bank finance which allow individuals to achieve the ordinary milestones of life in Australia.

These changes in the labour market have been driven by Federal Government policy responses to changes in the national and global economy. However, the impacts of these policy changes have had significant negative impacts on many people in the Tasmanian labour force. The casual and unemployed workers interviewed in this research spoke of a grinding financial and emotion struggle with little hope of a more secure future for themselves and their families.

There have been some 'winners' to emerge from the upheaval of labour market restructuring but for the most part they do not live in Tasmania. They are located in the large mainland capitals which have experienced quite different outcomes compared to a small regional economy such as Tasmania.

The challenge now for Federal and State governments is to develop policies which respond to the different labour market circumstances that have emerged within Australia. Tasmania has the opportunity to take a lead in implementing policy changes to address the needs of people living in smaller, regional economies. It is a challenge which can and must be met.

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APPENDIX 1

Profile of the Participants

Interviews were conducted with 32 participants, 19 men and 13 women in Devonport, Launceston and Hobart.

Centrelink Payment Type:

Newstart Allowance	20
Youth Allowance	4
Parenting Payment Partnered	4
Parenting Payment Single	4

Participants were aged from 18 to 48 years.

Age Group:

18 – 24	8
25 – 34	11
35 – 44	11
45+	2

The participants' highest grade completed at school ranged from Year 8 to Year 12. No participants had completed university degrees although several had completed trade apprenticeships or studied at TAFE.

Highest Grade Completed:

Year 8	2
Year 9	6
Year 10	15
Year 11	2
Year 12	7

The participants included people who had some paid employment during the week they were interviewed to some who had never had paid work.

Time since last paid work:

Worked this week	2
3 months or less	6
4 - 6 months	5
7 - 12 months	3
13 months but less than 2 years	4
2 years but less than 5 years	5
5 years +	4
Never worked	3

Participants duration on Centrelink benefits tended to be much longer than the time since their last paid work reflecting the casual and/or part-time nature of their work stints.

Length of most recent spell on Centrelink benefit:

3 months or less	1
4 - 6 months	1
7 - 12 months	2
13 months but less than 2 years	5
2 years but less than 5 years	8
5 years but less than 10 years	6
More than 10 years	9

Most participants came from families where their father had never or rarely experienced spells of unemployment.

Father's experience of unemployment:

Never unemployed	16
Unemployed once off short term	4
Occasionally unemployed short term	4
Occasionally unemployed long term	1
Regularly unemployed long term	4
Not in labour force	2
Not answered	1

The participants were responsible for the care of 36 children under the age of 18.

Household type:

Single no children	10
Single with children	5
Partnered no children	2
Partnered with children	7
Live with parents	6
Share-house	2

Most participants were renting or boarding although some were purchasing a home.

Housing tenure type:

Public Rental	11
Private Rental	10
Purchasing/Own	5
Board with parents	6