A STUDY OF THE LIVES OF CASUAL TAFE LECTURERS
IN METROPOLITAN PERTH

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE LIVES OF CASUAL TAFE LECTURERS IN METROPOLITAN PERTH.

Towards the end of the last century in Australia one aspect of the restructuring of work has been a major increase in the number of people who are employed on a casual basis. The ‘traditional’ full time permanent job is no longer available to many people.

This project examines aspects of the personal and work lives of casual TAFE lecturers in the Perth metropolitan area. It provides a specific case study of workers who have been affected by the changes in the workforce which have developed over the past 25 years. In particular, these are workers who, given their tertiary education and work experience, would not necessarily have expected to be employed on a casual basis but who are now part of the roughly 27% of the workforce employed in this mode.

Supporters of the restructured workforce claim that work flexibility has advantages for the economy and for both the employer and the employee and argue that many are happy to work in this mode. This project seeks to test this assertion, to examine briefly the economic and political features that led to casual work being adopted as the preferred employment model at TAFE in Western Australia, and to consider in detail its consequences for some of those employed in this manner.
Through a series of interviews of 40 casual TAFE lecturers it investigates some of the particular features of such employment; such as how people obtain and maintain work, and whether they regard themselves as having a career, as well as looking at broader aspects such as stigma, insecurity and the place of risk in the workplace. The research reveals that while this mode of employment suits a subset of casual employees, others pine for greater security and certainty in their working lives.
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