

## Vocational education and training and casual workers in the home and community care sector: Support document

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RESEARCH

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# Casual employment in Australia

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## Introduction

Work arrangements in Australia have changed dramatically over the last two decades, with increasing casualisation of the workforce, predominantly at the lower skilled end of the labour market (ACIRRT 1999a). In its Year Book Australia (ABS 2006) the Australian Bureau of Statistics notes that there has been growth in ‘forms of employment other than the “traditional” arrangement of a full-time, ongoing wage or salary job, with regular hours and paid leave’.

With the growth of what is often referred to as 'non-standard' or 'precarious' employment, large numbers of people flow between different types of employment states, ranging from unemployment, through to occasional, seasonal, casual, part-time, out-sourced and short-term contract employment. This can make it difficult for individuals to engage in formal training or gain recognition for their skills and talents. In this setting labour hire firms have emerged as important intermediaries in the labour market; where engaging workers on a temporary basis from an employment agency is a common practice in most industries (ACIRRT 1999b).

This study set out to examine, through an industry case study approach, whether the model of employing casual workers is sustainable in terms of maintaining a highly skilled workforce in the future.

The review of the literature revealed four facts:

- ✧ There is an increased casualisation of the Australian workforce
- ✧ Casual workers, in general, are much less likely than permanent employees to participate in formal training activities
- ✧ Casual workers need ongoing training to maintain their employment level or improve their attachment to the labour market
- ✧ There is a tendency for casual workers to take responsibility for their own training, in their own time and at their own cost.

Initially, therefore, this study was to address four hypotheses:

- ✧ Employers perceive the employment of casual workers as cost-effective and efficient
- ✧ Employers expect casual workers to be responsible for their own skills development
- ✧ Casual workers arrange training for themselves to maintain skill levels equal to permanent
- ✧ The current level of casual employment is not sustainable in the long term, in terms of developing and maintaining a highly skilled workforce (say 5 to 10 years)

It was intended to analyse workforce data in the chosen industry sector and work with the Industry Skills Council to examine the amount of education and training for permanent employees (part-time and full-time) with that of casual workers (and voluntary workers, where appropriate).

For this study, the definition of ‘casual worker’ included part-time and full-time employees employed under ‘non-standard’ employee conditions—without paid leave entitlements. In addition it was decided to focus on employment of casual workers aged 25 years and over, as these were more likely to be long-term casual workers. High proportions of casual workers who

are in the 15-19 years age group (23.6%) and 20-24 years of age (18.2%) are also full-time and part-time students (Wooden & Warren, 2002). In addition, the Retail and Hospitality industries are known to include a high proportion of these students as casual workers and so these two industries were excluded from the study.

Therefore the Community Services and Health industry where the use of casual employment was relatively high was chosen for this study. The changing government policies over the last decade—shifting away from more intensive types of residential care towards home-based care—have meant that community care programs have become increasingly important components, particularly, of the aged care system. In particular, this study aimed to examine the home and community care (HACC) sector and whether the level of casual employment was sustainable over the longer term. The HACC sector provides a wide range of services including personal care, home care, respite care, residential care, domestic support, nursing services, allied health care, home maintenance, food service, and transport to people, especially the frail aged and people with a disability.

This report begins by painting a broad picture of casual employment in Australia based on characteristics of the casual workforce and views on casual employment garnered from the research literature. This is followed by discussion of the training of casual employees, based on findings from research and relevant statistical data<sup>1</sup>.

The final section of this report discusses the information gathered from structured telephone interviews which were conducted with representatives of seventeen HACC service providers from two states in Australia.

## What is a casual employee?

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines a ‘casual’ employee as ‘an employee who is not entitled to either paid holiday leave or paid sick leave in their main job’, as opposed to an ‘ongoing’ employee who is ‘entitled to either paid holiday leave or paid sick leave (or both) in their main job’ (ABS 2006). Based on this definition, this report will simply define a casual employee as someone who is employed without paid leave entitlements.

Figures on the extent of casual employment in Australia first became available in 1982, when the ABS estimated 688 300 persons were casually employed, as conventionally defined (Cully 2001). The definition used by ABS was that casual employees were not entitled to the benefits of permanent employment as stated in the Industrial Relations Commission Awards, in particular paid annual leave and paid sick leave, for which a loading was, in theory, intended to compensate. On this basis the numbers of casual employees had tripled to 2 097 300 in August 2000 (Cully 2001). However, the term ‘casual’ is not restricted to genuine casual work and there is little distinction made between ongoing part-time work or outsourced work if payment is at casual rates.

Murtough & Waite (2001) and Campbell & Burgess (2001) point out that using leave entitlements to identify casual employees does have problems since owner-managers of incorporated enterprises are technically employees of their own business and many do not give themselves paid holiday or sick leave. In fact DEWRSB (2000) indicated that almost a third of the ABS-

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<sup>1</sup> It was intended to analyse Community care workforce data. However, there is a paucity of reliable workforce data in this sector. Whilst a recent survey obtained reliable data for the first time on personal care workers in residential aged care facilities (Richardson and Martin, 2004), the same data is not available nationally for the non-residential care HACC workforce. Thus the study was limited to the qualitative data gathered from organisations in the Home and Community Care (HACC) sector of the Community Services and Health industry.

categorised full-time casual employees were actually owner-managers. Other problems are that not all workers paid on a casual basis are excluded from paid leave and some ongoing casual employees may cash out their leave entitlements.

The debate over definitions has continued in the industrial tribunals and the judiciary over the past decade. For example one judge invented a category of 'permanent casuals' to describe the state of being neither wholly permanent nor wholly casual. Consequently, 'non-standard employment' is now defined as 'employment that involves engaging workers on any other basis than as permanent employee, for example, casuals, fixed term, contractor and labour hire forms of employment' (Watson et al, 2003). Conversely, 'standard' work refers to the traditional 'permanent full-time' employment where 'full-time' is defined as 'usually work 35 hours or more a week'. Thus, the recent Chifley Research Centre report uses the term 'non-standard' to describe both 'casuals', those employed on a casual basis, and 'part-timers', those who regularly work less than 35-40 hours per week.

Some authors, such as Hall et al (2000), describe casual employment as 'precarious', pointing to the ease with which an employee can be dismissed as an important characteristic that distinguishes casual from permanent employees.

Casual employment is commonly perceived as being short-term or irregular, but as ABS (2006) points out, often this is not the case. Many casual employees have long-term and regular jobs—to the extent that, in August 2004, 55% of the 2.0 million casual employees in Australia had been with their employer for 12 months or more (the comparative figure for ongoing employees was 83%). Not surprisingly, a substantial majority of the casual employees (69%) worked part-time (i.e. less than 35 hours per week)—compared with just 15% of ongoing employees.

Hall et al (2000) point out that data and analysis by Curtain (1996) provides an alternative concept of casual employment that highlights some important links with VET. Rather than viewing it in terms of limited job tenure, precariousness or contingency, Curtain sees the essence of casual employment as 'absence of a career path'.

## Characteristics of the casual workforce

Based on ABS data, Kryger (2004) notes that there have been consistent trends in the changing patterns of casual employment in the Australian workforce. Over sixteen years, the proportion of full-time casual employees has more than doubled from 5.8% of all full-time employees in 1988 to 13.8% in 2003. Over the same period there has been a small but consistent decrease in the proportion of part-time casuals—from 68.3% of all part-timers in 1998 to 60.4% in 2003. This suggests a trend from part-time to full-time casual employment. The proportion of male casuals has shown a consistent increase from 11.7% of the male workforce in 1988 to just over double that (24.0%) in 2003; in the same period the proportion of female casuals has shown a more gradual increase from 29.8% over the first ten years then flattening out to around 32% in the latter five years to finish at 31.9% in 2003. Overall, the proportion of casual employees in the workforce has steadily increased from 18.9% of all employees in 1988 to 27.6% in 2003. Table 1 details these trends.

**Table 1: Trends in casual employment 1988-2003 (all industries)**

Year (Aug)	Full-time casual		Part-time casual		Male casual		Female casual		Total casual	
	Number ('000)	% all F/T employees	Number ('000)	% all P/T employees	Number ('000)	% all male employees	Number ('000)	% all female employees	Number ('000)	% all employees
1988	284.1	5.8	771.8	68.3	415.7	11.7	737.3	28.8	1153.0*	18.9*
1989	323.6	6.3	887.0	68.5	489.8	13.1	808.2	29.3	1298.0*	20.0*
1990	314.3	6.1	926.2	68.3	476.1	12.7	795.7	28.2	1271.8*	19.4*
1991	336.2	6.8	943.8	67.5	479.0	13.5	801.0	29.0	1280.0	20.3
1992	353.5	7.4	1061.5	67.7	550.4	15.6	864.6	30.9	1415.0	22.3
1993	404.7	8.4	1030.4	67.2	578.0	16.4	857.1	30.6	1435.1	22.7
1994	441.3	9.1	1107.8	67.0	655.1	18.1	894.0	30.8	1549.1	23.7
1995	482.7	9.5	1170.6	65.8	698.1	18.5	955.2	30.8	1653.3	24.0
1996	559.1	10.8	1282.2	67.5	828.9	21.2	1012.3	32.0	1841.2	26.1
1997	538.5	10.7	1257.0	65.6	801.5	20.9	994.0	31.7	1795.5	25.8
1998	617.5	11.8	1328.6	65.4	894.1	22.6	1052.0	32.0	1946.1	26.9
1999	576.6	11.1	1355.1	64.6	877.9	22.0	1053.7	31.8	1931.6	26.4
2000	647.3	11.9	1450.0	64.6	954.0	23.0	1143.3	32.3	2097.3	27.3
2001	630.8	11.6	1486.7	64.2	988.7	23.6	1128.9	31.5	2117.6	27.2
2002	734.7	13.2	1425.5	60.4	1004.3	23.5	1156.0	31.6	2160.3	27.3
2003	785.5	13.8	1454.3	60.4	1043.7	24.0	1196.2	31.9	2239.9	27.6

\* The totals for years 1988 to 1990, include persons whose full-time/part-time status could not be determined.

Source: ABS, *Employee earnings, benefits and trade union membership*, 6310.0, as published in Kryger, T, 2004 *Casual employment: trends and characteristics*, Research note No. 53 2003-04, 24 May 2004, Parliament of Australia, Canberra.

ABS data from 2004 (ABS 2005) shows that the proportion of casual employees (that is, employees without leave entitlements) in the workforce varied from a high of 31.1% in South Australia to a low 26.3% in Victoria across the states, and markedly lower proportions across the territories (23.6% in Northern Territory and 23.0% in Australian Capital Territory). Table 2 lists the state and territory proportions, by gender, as well as overall.

**Table 2: Proportions of casual employees in the workforce by state/territory, 2004**

State/Territory	Males without leave entitlements as a proportion of all male employees (%)	Females without leave entitlements as a proportion of all female employees (%)	All employees without leave entitlements as a proportion of all employees (%)
New South Wales	24.3	29.5	26.8
Victoria	24.3	28.6	26.3
Queensland	26.5	35.0	30.4
South Australia	24.8	38.2	31.1
Western Australia	24.3	31.7	27.8
Tasmania	23.8	33.5	28.4
Northern Territory	22.7	24.6	23.6
Australian Capital Territory	19.5	26.5	23.0
<b>Australia (all)</b>	<b>24.7</b>	<b>31.2</b>	<b>27.7</b>

Source: ABS, *Australian social trends – Work: National summary*, 4102.0, 2005, Canberra

According to the 2006 ABS Year Book, in a survey conducted in 2004, a relatively large proportion of casual employees (40%) were aged less than 25 years (compared with 21% of all employees). One of the reasons for this is likely to be that many young people combine work with programs of study and therefore do not want full-time or fixed work schedules.

Employers choose to use casual employment for a variety of reasons (ABS, 2000a; Tucker, 2002). These include:

- ✧ seasonal work demands
- ✧ large short-term variations in workload
- ✧ ability to adjust workforce size and composition at short notice to suit changing demands
- ✧ accommodating worker absences
- ✧ no obligation to employ for a minimum number of hours per day
- ✧ use of casual employment as a screening process or probationary period for new employees
- ✧ implied greater onus on employee to arrange and undertake their own training
- ✧ minimisation of employment costs
- ✧ lesser obligation to provide benefits to employees

Tucker (2002) points out that ...‘developed economies have shifted away from the production of goods, and towards services, in which part-time and casual work has always been more important’. Certainly, ABS data shows that service industries as a group tend to employ casuals more than most other industries (particularly *Accommodation Cafes and Restaurants*, 58.1% casual; *Retail Trade*, 46.1%; *Cultural and Recreational Services*, 42.2%; *Property and Business Services* 30.8%; *Personal and Other Services*, 23.7%; and *Health and Community Services*, 22.1%). The exceptions to this generalisation are *Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing* (55.9%) which is largely seasonal, and *Construction* (33.9%) which experiences marked fluctuations in demand (ABS 1999).

Kryger (2004) highlights some interesting differences between casual and ongoing employees. Some of these, which were derived from ABS data of 2000 and 2001, are shown in table 3 below. The most prominent differences are that casual workers are:

- ✧ much more likely to experience variation in weekly earnings (57.5% of casuals compared with 15.3% of ongoing employees)
- ✧ more likely to want additional hours of work (36.5% compared with 7.8%)
- ✧ less likely to be long-term employees (45.6% having been in their job less than one year compared with 18.5% of ongoing employees, and only 4.9% having been in it at least 10 years compared with 23.5% of ongoing employees)
- ✧ less likely than ongoing employees to have undertaken training (49.5% compared with 70.0%).

While these data apply to casual employees across all industries, many of the differences appear to have relevance to the Home and community care sector.

**Table 3: Comparative characteristics of casual and ongoing employees (all industries)**

Characteristic	Proportion of all casual employees (%)	Proportion of all ongoing employees (%)
Weekly earnings vary <sup>(a)</sup>	57.5	15.3
Would prefer more hours of work <sup>(a)</sup>	36.5	7.8
Duration of current job less than one year <sup>(a)</sup>	45.6	18.5
Duration of current job more than 10 years <sup>(a)</sup>	4.9	23.5
Expects to leave current job in 12 months <sup>(b)</sup>	25.9	8.7
Has say in start and finish times <sup>(b)</sup>	42.1	47.2
Covered by workers' compensation <sup>(b)</sup>	78.3	97.0
Works set number of days each week <sup>(b)</sup>	41.5	70.0
Member of trade union <sup>(b)</sup>	11.6	32.2
Worked on weekends <sup>(b)</sup>	55.7	48.8
Undertook training in last 12 months <sup>(b)</sup>	49.5	70.0
Has no superannuation coverage <sup>(b)</sup>	27.9	3.7

Notes: (a) Reference period 2001. (b) Reference period 2000.

Source: Derived from Kryger, T, 2004 *Casual employment: trends and characteristics*, Research note No. 53 2003-04, 24 May 2004, Parliament of Australia, Canberra. (Original sources: ABS, *Employment arrangements and superannuation* 6361.0, and ABS, *Forms of employment* 6359.0.)

Drawing on data from a 1995 Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey, VandenHeuvel & Wooden (1999) add to the profile differences outlined above, identifying six characteristics which can be used to distinguish casual from permanent employees. Their findings showed that casual employees:

- ✧ are relatively concentrated among the ranks of young people
- ✧ are likely to have relatively low levels of formal education
- ✧ are much more likely to be employed in part-time jobs
- ✧ have much shorter job tenure (although they note that the data for this finding is highly skewed by the high proportion of young people in casual jobs who would not have had as much opportunity for long tenure)
- ✧ are concentrated in relatively low-skilled occupations, especially sales-related occupations
- ✧ are much less likely to be members of a trade union.

In a later study (VandenHeuvel & Wooden 2000) they also note that women are over-represented among both part-time and casual employees (as confirmed by the numbers quoted in table 1). They also observe that young people, especially those still studying, have relatively strong preferences for part-time hours which explains their marked over-representation in casual jobs. Despite this and its skewing effect on job tenure data as mentioned above, they note that 48% of casual employees have been in jobs lasting more than two years, with 'a sizeable number ... having very long tenure indeed' (compared with 35% employed for less than one year and 17% for less than two years). They argue, therefore, against automatically presuming casual employment involves limited job tenure.

VandenHeuvel & Wooden (1999) also comment on some of the characteristics of workplaces that employ casuals, stating that casuals are more likely to be employed in companies facing market characteristics that involve a high degree of variability in demand over the course of a day or week, (such as retail trade or restaurants), or even a year (such as in agriculture). They also note

that there are markedly lower rates of casual employment in the public sector and that the incidence of casual employment is higher in new workplaces.

Many casual employees are said to choose to work casually. Their reasons include:

- ✧ achieving a flexible work schedule to accommodate school, family or other obligations
- ✧ as a flexible working arrangement to complement a study program
- ✧ as a means of generating additional income
- ✧ because of an inability to find ongoing employment
- ✧ as a step towards ongoing employment

In many circumstances, people prefer to work casually because it actually meets their needs better than ongoing or permanent employment. To these people, casual work is seen as the preferred choice. In other cases, people elect to work casually as an alternative to not working at all, or in the hope of finding permanent employment. However, casual employment becomes a problem if they cannot move beyond this step.

With respect to casual employment in Home and Community Care, Angley and Newman (2002), note that a study within the Victorian Community Care sector undertaken for the Victorian Association of Health and Extended Care by the HDG Consulting Group confirmed the perception that direct care workers were predominantly female, middle-aged, and employed on a part-time or casual basis. The results also showed that casual employees made up 63% of the workforce studied.

## Training

Curtain (2001) states that a national survey of casual workers showed that nearly half (49%) of casual workers surveyed agreed with the statement that 'it is my responsibility to provide my own training' (30% agreed and 19% strongly agreed). Coincidentally, the same proportion of casual workers (49%) say that they are prepared to undertake training 'at my own cost' (with 14% strongly agreeing). Two thirds (68%) are prepared to train 'in my own time' (with 20% strongly agreeing).

Curtain goes on to note that 'insecure' employment and most employers' minimal commitment to training of casual workers severely constrain the opportunities for non-standard or flexible workers to acquire recognised skills. He suggests there may be benefit in having structured entry-level training arrangements in which the training contract between the trainee and training provider is separated from the employment contract. Or as an alternative, he suggests that federal or state governments could consider establishing individual learning accounts into which funds can be invested for subsequent use in covering learning expenses (a strategy like this has been used in the UK).

Curtain also states that casual employees are much less likely than permanent employees to participate in formal training activities, and that this difference in access to training opportunities remains consistent even when factors such as hours worked, type of job held or workplace characteristics are taken into account. However, he goes on to point out that there is evidence of casual workers undertaking training in their own time in place of the low levels of employer-provided training. Further, he states that as many as 80% of casual employees say they have fewer opportunities for training than permanent employees.

A 2002 Australian Bureau of Statistics survey (ABS 2003) showed that less than half (47%) of employees who did not have leave entitlements (i.e. casuals) were likely to have undertaken study

or training with their current employer over the previous 12 months compared with more than two thirds (68.5%) of those who did have leave entitlements. When dissected to distinguish between full-time and part-time employment, the figures show that part-time casuals actually do slightly more study than full-time casuals (48.8% compared with 44.2%). Possibly, this is because some employees choose to work part-time to enable them to pursue their studies. However, other factors are likely to be involved, because an opposite trend exists for employees who do have leave entitlements (66.3% of part-time compared with 68.9% full-time). Perhaps full-time leave-entitled employees receive more employer support for study.

In a survey conducted in 2000 (ABS 2000b), employees were asked whether they had recently received training for their job. From the ABS-tabulated data for this question it has been possible to calculate some composite figures for the purpose of this report. These figures (given in table 4) show that approximately half (49.6%) of all casual employees (either self-identified casuals or employees without leave entitlements who did not self-identify as casual) undertook some form of training in the 12 months preceding the survey. This is considerably less than the corresponding proportion for the 'non-casuals', that is, people with leave entitlements (70.6%).

The table also shows that on-the-job training was by far the most common type of training undertaken by casual employees, whereas for non-casuals it was more evenly shared between seminars/workshops/conferences (43.7%), on-the job (37.3%) and structured training course (31.8%).

**Table 4: Type of employment by type of training undertaken**

Type of training	Employees with leave entitlements		Casuals/No leave entitlement	
	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Undertook one or more of the following types of training in the previous 12 months</b>	<b>3590.2</b>	<b>70.6</b>	<b>871.3</b>	<b>49.6</b>
Undertook structured training course	1618.7	31.8	203.7	11.6
Attended seminar, workshop or conference for training purposes	2223.1	43.7	263.1	15.0
Undertook on-the-job training	1897.9	37.3	613.1	34.9
Used self-learning package	599.2	11.8	67.5	3.8
<b>Did not undertake any of the above types of training in the previous 12 months</b>	<b>1497.3</b>	<b>29.4</b>	<b>885.0</b>	<b>50.4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>5087.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1756.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Derived from: Table 8, ABS *Employment arrangements and superannuation*, 6361.0, 2000, Canberra.

Mawer & Jackson (2004) investigated issues associated with the training of existing workers in three industries—Retail, Manufacturing, and Building and construction. They found that, apart from mandated training, it was informal and semi-structured on-the-job training of existing workers that predominated. Training was seen as primarily a 'maintenance' issue rather than as a key strategy in overall workforce and business development. Existing workers were trained on an individual basis as identified specific needs arose. In highly mobile and casualised industries such as Building and construction, employers and employees perceived mandatory training to be the most effective way of ensuring minimum standards and securing training opportunities for existing workers.

Research undertaken by Booth & Roy (2004) focusing on the skill needs of personal care workers in the related field of residential care found that training for personal care workers should be delivered on-site where possible and have theory embedded with practice. They also found that recognition of current skills was generally not used by personal care workers, even among those with substantial experience in the industry—this appearing to be due to a strong preference

among workers for more formal training in order to understand the theory behind the practical activities they performed on a daily basis. Recognition processes for personal care working, where they were used, needed to rely more on practical demonstration of skills and knowledge and less on paper-based evidence. Development of local networks and partnerships between facilities, and pooling of resources, were also identified as ways of helping overcome issues of isolation and lack of access to training information, and reducing the cost of training.

Hall et al (2000) state that relatively little research has been undertaken in Australia on the links between casual and/or part-time employment and vocational education and training. According to those authors, the research that has been undertaken serves to confirm their hypothesis that part-time and, in particular, casual employees tend to receive less structured vocational education and training than permanent employees. Further, based on research done by VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1999), and Curtain (1996), they propose the view that employers may prefer to allocate training opportunities to permanent employees rather than casual employees because casual employees are not seen to be worth the investment. The reasoning behind this is that casual employees may not work as many hours or be employed in as strategic a capacity as permanent employees, or are not expected to remain with the organisation for as long as a permanent employee.

In an early work, Curtain (1996) discussed seven barriers to training for casual workers:

- ✧ *Training costs*: costs were seen to constitute a barrier to up to 20% of casual workers.
- ✧ *Time constraints*: many casual workers working part-time on irregular shifts or at night were often excluded from workplace training due to difficulties in scheduling work and training.
- ✧ *Lack of flexibility in training provision*: employers may provide training at times that are unsuitable for casual or part-time workers. Outside of the workplace, some training is only available on a full-time basis.
- ✧ *Lack of recognition for work skills*: narrow application of RPL by training providers can prevent casual workers receiving their full entitlement to recognition.
- ✧ *Lack of information and guidance on careers and training opportunities*: the lack of accessible information on training and the complexity of training routes and qualification requirements can be a disincentive.
- ✧ *Employee attitudes*: employees may view training as irrelevant or see it as appropriate only for younger workers or people in high-status jobs. Workers in low grade jobs may see little benefit in training if they are already performing jobs without the benefit of formal training. In casual work there can be an emphasis on learning on the job and disparagement of formal qualifications.
- ✧ *Employer orientation*: industries with the highest concentrations of casual workers are the least likely to provide any form of training. Most employers of casual workers appear to hold a minimalist perception of what training their casual employees want and need.

In an unpublished report, Curtain (2000) adds to this saying the ‘negative or neutral orientation of casual workers to VET is understandable given the often-unrewarding nature of their work and lack of career prospects. As well, many [casual] workers may also be aware of their employer’s belief that they do not need training or, if they do, their reluctance to provide it’.

Referring to a ‘core/periphery’ model in which a company comprises a small core group of permanent employees joined to a shifting network of temporary employees, and relies on outsourcing and consultants, Marginson (2000) notes that Dunlop and Sheehan (1998) identify social trends that appear to be consistent with the core/periphery model, including: the rise in part-time and casual work, growth of outsourcing, increased dispersion of working hours, and an increase in ‘precarious’ employment.

Karmel (2003) notes that over the last decade there has been a 30% increase in part-time employment for males and a 15% increase for females (contrasting with full-time increases of only 4% for males and 12% for females). He also observes that a preference of employers for part-time workers is contributing to a take-up of part-time work, particularly in retail industries and other industries where activity varies across the day and week. Yet to operate efficiently part-time and casual workers need the same level of training as their full-time counterparts. Karmel goes on to point out that these trends towards part-time and casual employment introduce challenges for VET. More people have to be trained, despite the fact that employers have been reluctant to train part-time and casual workers and the likelihood of a lower return on investment in training for part-time and casual workers because of the shorter time they will spend in a particular job.

Hall et al (2000) suggest that persons in non-standard employment are not receiving training from their employer and are increasingly expected to provide their own training. They also suggest that, for low-skilled individuals working in non-standard employment, the lack of accessible or affordable training opportunities acts as a disincentive, serving to reinforce the 'dead-end' character of many of their jobs.

VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1999), on the other hand, found that while casual employees were much less likely than permanent employees to participate in formal employer-supported training activities, this did not necessarily mean that they were disadvantaged and fell behind permanent workers in terms of accessing skills. Rather, they point to a 'substitution' effect in which low levels of participation in employer-supported training by casuals are offset (in part, at least) by relatively high levels of participation in external training that was completed in the worker's own time.

Commenting on the reasons behind the lower levels of participation of casual employees in employer-supported training, VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1999) say that, because casual employees are less likely to remain with a company as long as permanent workers, employers can be expected to be less willing to provide them with training opportunities. At the same time, the authors say, casual employees themselves may be less willing to participate in training, particularly if the training is not transferable across companies and jobs. They add that, even after controlling for a wide range of factors, including characteristics of workers and their jobs, analyses of data reveal that casual workers were only one third as likely as permanents to have received employer-provided training in a surveyed year. A result which, they feel, indicates that this difference in access to training among casual and permanent workers cannot simply be explained by differences in the characteristics of the workers or their jobs.

Smith (2003) observes that casual workers appear to undertake a significant amount of external training on their own account and suggesting that workers are becoming more responsible for their own training and development and that training is becoming a more individualised process within Australian enterprises. Supporting this is the view of the Australian Council of Trade Unions that employers have reduced their focus of training effort to a core of permanent and full-time workers, increasingly placing the onus on growing numbers of casual, part-time, labour hire and contract workers to undertake training at their own expense, or risk dropping through the system and remaining in low skill, low wage, intermittent work (ACTU, 2003).

In a study of HACC organisations in Victoria, Anglely and Newman (2002) found that the organisations adopted various approaches to the employment of workers with respect to qualifications. Some required all workers to have appropriate qualifications prior to employment, while others were prepared to employ unqualified staff for all positions and then support them while they acquired appropriate qualifications. Still others adopted a mixed approach, being prepared to employ unqualified workers for home care but not for residential, personal or respite care. They found that just a small minority of organisations said they only recruited qualified staff

to provide home care, whereas almost half required qualifications when recruiting for personal care and respite care.

## Casual work—insecure work?

A frequently highlighted feature of casual employment is the greater job insecurity which arises from it (and other forms of non-standard employment) (ACIRRT 1999a). Other negative aspects of casual employment include low pay, limited opportunities for career progression, unsatisfactory working hours, low levels of access to work-related training and low levels of union representation (Wooden & Warren, 2003). Wooden & Warren used data from the first wave of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey to provide quantitative evidence for the quality of jobs by employment status. Noting that there are not simply two types of employment: casual and permanent/ongoing, they highlight a third distinctive group: employees on fixed-term contracts. They found that those on fixed-term contracts were more satisfied than other workers. The lower levels of job satisfaction being among the full-time casual workers, especially the men.

The Chifley Research Centre has recently released a report on policy options for casual and part-time workers (Pocock et al 2004) which links the increase in jobs with inferior rights and benefits in Australia with the growth of casual employment and examines strategies to counter this trend. They state that:

...the growth in [casual] employment in Australia is an unintended, unanticipated evolutionary outcome resulting from a regulatory regime that did not foresee the growth in new types of employees, in an environment of changing labour supply and demand. ...No Australian industrial relations body or government set out—at least in a publicly articulated way—to create a labour market where one in four Australians are without annual leave or sick leave, despite extended periods of employment in many cases.... Australia's regulatory regime has not kept pace with the transformations of employment and its emergent forms, some of which are constructed to evade obligations to employees. (Pocock et al 2004)

The report suggests that, historically, attempts at dealing with the problems associated with casual employment in Australia have been dealt with in three ways:

- ✧ a limitation approach—which places limits on casual employment beyond a time period, or through ratios or numerical limits
- ✧ a compensatory/cost approach—in which a casual premium (the loading) paid to those employed casually was established to create a disincentive to casual employment and to compensate casual workers for some of their lost conditions
- ✧ a conditions-attachment approach—in which conditions applying to ongoing jobs such as superannuation, access to unfair dismissal remedies and unpaid maternity leave are attached to casual work.

Their authors recommend action to 'restrict casual employment to true casual work, building on the [limitation] approach so that employees' rights are not evaded, especially those of weaker sections of the labour market including young people and those with caring responsibilities'.

The increase in casualisation of the workforce is not confined to Australia and there is literature on the topic available from Europe, South Africa, America and Asia. For example in Korea the growth in 'irregular' or 'non-standard' workers is a serious social issue (Chang, 2002; Chang & Hong, 2002). Grossman (1999) focussed on the domestic workers of South Africa and their lack of formal training or recognition of their skills and talents as they move between occasional, seasonal, and casual employment, and unemployment. Skill development in the growing informal

economy is of great concern in China as the labour force is downsized, especially in rural areas, and retrenched workers require retraining (ILO 2002).

# Home and community care services

After seeking the advice of Di Lawson, the CEO for the Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council, it was agreed that we approach the home and community care sector for participants in this study. This sector was selected as casual employment is reported in Australian Bureau of Statistics data to be relatively high in Community Services and the HACC sector is subject to less government regulation than other sectors such as Childcare. The changing government policies over the last decade—shifting away from more intensive types of residential care towards home-based care—have meant that community care programs have become increasingly important components, particularly of the aged care system.

The main community care programs—the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program which provides basic maintenance and support services for people living in the community who are at risk, without these services, of premature or inappropriate long term residential care; the Community Aged Care Packages (CACP) which substitute for a low-care residential place; Extended Aged Care At Home (EACH) Packages which substitute for high-care residential care; and Veterans Home Care programs (VHC) fund services that aim to provide practical assistance to enable frail older people, people with a disability, and veterans to continue living at home in the community. These services also provide assistance to carers. Assessment and recommendation by Aged Care Assessment Teams are mandatory for admission to residential care or receipt of CACP or an EACH package or for war veterans or war widows/widowers to receive VHC services.

Community care services are usually provided by state, territory and local government organisations, charitable bodies, community organisations and commercial providers. An ABS survey of the community services industry in 2000 identified 9287 organisations providing community services of which only 6% were government classified: 2800 ‘for profit’ organisations, 5,938 ‘not for profit’ organisations and 548 government organisations (cited in CSHISC Strategic Plan 2004-2008 p.5)

Contact details for the state-based HACC program managers were obtained and their cooperation sought to find participants for this study. This resulted in different approaches to contacting providers of services to HACC-funded clients in four states as shown in table 5.

**Table 5: Methodology used to contact HACC-funded providers**

	Queensland	Victoria	South Australia	New South Wales
Step 1	Contact state-based HACC manager	Contact state-based HACC manager	Contact state-based HACC manager	Contact state-based HACC manager
Step 2	All HACC-funded providers were sent an email by HACC manager requesting feedback to the researcher on use of casual workers	HACC manager provided list of 496 HACC-funded providers from which a sample was selected by researcher to telephone	The researcher met with HACC manager and attended HACC provider network meetings in the northern and southern metropolitan regions	The HACC manager referred to network coordinator who distributed email request for providers to respond to the researcher
Step 2	Data from the 142 respondents were entered into a database. 114 used casual workers and of these a sample was selected for interview	Information on the study and a questionnaire were sent to organisations willing to participate in the study. Telephone interviews were conducted.		
Step 3	Analysis of 10 interviews	Analysis of 7 responses		

## Industry Workforce Planning

In March 2003, the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council (formerly Community Services & Health Training Australia, the national ITAB) received an Industry Training Support Project (ITSP) grant from the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) to conduct research into the take up of training by three groups of disadvantaged potential workers/learners in the community services and health industries:

- ✧ People with disabilities
- ✧ Over 45s age group
- ✧ People from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background

This scoping project and its report is called *Engaging the Untapped Workforce - Training Solutions for the Community Services and Health Industry* (CSH ISC, 2003) The CS&H Industry Skills Council selected three strategy areas that most directly related to Workforce development and training opportunities through the VET system Referred to as 'dimensions of good practice' they include:

- ✧ Changing Attitudes within Organisations
- ✧ Training Development and Promotion
- ✧ Recruitment Practice

The national Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council has undertaken a number of initiatives to promote workforce development. We note that all states and territories are involved with Workforce Development Strategies although there is generally insufficient data available on the HACC workforce (paid and unpaid). One recent initiative by the Skills Council and funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training is the Mature Aged Workers Workers Giving In Care or MAGIC program (Lawson, 2006). This program is changing attitudes by identifying older workers and workers in non-traditional professions as groups with really valuable skills to offer, particularly in the caring professions. The MAGIC program shows employers how to recruit, train and retain mature aged and non-traditional workers whose life skills make them ideal candidates for on-the-job training in caring professions. Using a screening process, group interviews sessions, and a work trial period of two to four weeks, candidates and employers work together to decide 'if they are a good match for the job at hand'.

## HACC services

HACC services are basic maintenance and support services. These include allied health care, assessment, case management and planning, centre-based day care, counselling, support, information and advocacy, domestic assistance, home maintenance, nursing, personal and respite care, social support, delivered meals, home modification, linen service, goods and equipment, and transportation.

The target population is defined as people living in the community who are at risk, without these services, of premature or inappropriate long term residential care. Approximately 68 per cent of the HACC program recipients are 70 years or over, but the program is also an important source of community care for younger people with a disability and their carers (Productivity Commission, 2006).

The national government expenditure on HACC was \$1.3 billion in 2004-05 consisting of \$791.9 million (60.8%) from the Australian Government and \$5909.2 million from the State and Territory governments (Productivity Commission, 2006).

## Profile of casual workers in the home and community care – non-residential sector

Findings from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Community Services survey 1999-2000 indicated that there were:

- ✧ 2 452 non-residential care organisations in Australia, with a vast majority of these ‘not for profit’ organisations (97.8%).
- ✧ 78 834 persons employed in the sector, over half employed in Direct community services provision (34.5% employed as ‘Other’).
- ✧ 211 741 volunteers in the sector, over half volunteering in Direct community services provision (37.8% in ‘Other’).
- ✧ Volunteers reported an average of 18 hrs work
- ✧ Close to half of income for the sector was Government funded, followed by ‘Other income’ (41.9%) and Income from direct community services provision (10.7%). (ABS, 1999-2000)

Richardson & Martin for their report *The Care of Older Australians – A picture of the Residential Aged Care Workforce* (2004) use sources from the ABS, AIHW, and NCVET to compile a profile of the residential aged care sector. As noted by these authors, the ABS data on the community services workforce is not suitable for analysis at the level of personal care workers. Richardson & Martin (2004) conducted a survey of personal care workers in residential care which indicated a high level of non-standard employment. It can only be surmised that the use of casual workers is even more prevalent in home and community care but national workforce data is not available.

Although this information does not concern community care, Richardson & Martin (2004) provide the only relevant national workforce data available for comparison with the non-residential or home and community care personal care workers. These authors note that:

- ✧ In 2003, of the total direct care workers employed in aged residential care in Australia, over half were employed as personal carers<sup>2</sup> (67,000).
- ✧ This group of personal care workers had the lowest proportion of permanent full-time staff (8%), compared to Registered Nurses (18%) and the total direct care sector (11%).
- ✧ The most likely qualification attained is a Certificate III in Aged Care
- ✧ The direct care sector has a high turnover, particularly with personal carers. The authors suggest that a quarter of personal carers in residential care, if not the whole industry, have to be replaced each year by their employer.

The Queensland Community Services & Health Industry Training Council conducted an Aged Care Workforce Survey in 2004 as part of the Aged Care Skills Formation Strategy funded by the Queensland Department of Employment and Training. The Survey summary report of the 220 respondents (response rate 28% as distributed to 800 service providers) noted that, although they undertake essentially similar work roles in different settings, 40% of Direct Care workers in community settings are employed on a casual basis compared to only 17.8% of the Assistants in Nursing and Personal Care Assistants employed in hospital/residential settings (QCSH ITC, 2005 p.10).

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<sup>2</sup> Total was 116 000 employees, of whom 25 000 were Registered Nurses, 15 000 were Enrolled Nurses, and 9000 were Allied health workers (mainly diversional and recreational officers). Respondents were given the following definition of personal carers: personal care attendant, assistant or aide, personal care worker, Assistant-in-nursing, and others. They are workers, other than licensed nurses, who provide personal care to residents as a core part of their job. Allied health workers were other direct care workers including diversional and recreational officers and allied health professionals. (p. 2 Richardson & Martin 2004)

The Queensland report also notes that the majority of respondents in each region reported that they had difficulties recruiting appropriately trained and skill staff (the most difficult to recruit were Registered Nurses (27.% of respondents) followed by Direct Care workers (18.1% and Assistant Nurses (18.1% of respondents). In addition, seven per cent of respondents reported having no systems in place for staff development and training. The most common systems among respondents were orientation/induction programs (86%), structured on the job training (59%), and mandatory programs (49%) (QCSH ITC, 2005 p.4).

Preliminary interviews which were conducted by the NCVET researcher with HACC managers in Victoria and South Australia and service providers in South Australia indicated that the Queensland survey results were widely applicable. HACC service providers include the full range of organisations, employing almost all voluntary workers (such as Meals on Wheels and Telephone Social support services), all casual workers (including 'For profit' businesses), or all permanent part-time or fulltime workers except for initial recruitment of new staff or for temporary replacement staff. South Australian interviews also indicated most HACC service providers were experiencing some difficulty recruiting suitably trained and qualified staff. Some service providers also stated that, wanting clients to have continuity of service with the same care worker, they had recently advertised permanent part-time positions which had greatly increased the number of applicants. Similarly to Queensland, the training of casual workers was supported by HACC service providers to the same level as permanent workers in some cases, especially the mandatory training, while others provided no training or used agency staff.

## Accredited VET training—enrolments and completions

Certificate III in Home and Community Care was introduced in 2003 with only 24 course enrolments nationally, with enrolments from NSW and Vic. In 2004, course enrolments in this Training Package increased to 2,040, with the majority of enrolments from Victoria (58%), followed by Western Australia (15.2%) and New South Wales (10%).

Prior to the Home and Community Care, and the Aged Care Work Training Packages in 2003, the majority of enrolments in the aged care industry were in Certificate III in Community Services (Aged Care). The number of course enrolments in this training package peaked in 2003 but dropped by 67% in 2004. Coinciding with this drop was a huge increase in the number of course enrolments for Certificate III in Aged Care, from 1,000 enrolments in 2003 to 13,900 in 2004 as shown in table 7.

**Table 7: Course Enrolments in Community Services Training Packages, 2001-2004**

	2001	2002	2003	2004
CHC30202 - Certificate III in Home and Community Care	0	0	24	2,048
CHC30102 - Certificate III in Aged Care Work	0	0	1,015	13,988
CHC40102 - Certificate IV in Aged Care Work	0	0	0	1,138
<b>Total Aged Care Work</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,015</b>	<b>15126</b>
CHC30302 - Certificate III in Disability Work	0	0	0	1,869
CHC40302 - Certificate IV in Disability Work	0	0	0	2,605
CHC50102 - Diploma of Disability Work	0	0	0	51
CHC60102 - Advanced Diploma of Disability Work	0	0	0	452
<b>Total Disability Work</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4977</b>
CHC20199 - Certificate II in Community Services (Aged Care Work)	1,050	893	361	52
CHC30199 - Certificate III in Community Services (Aged Care Work)	16,900	19,612	20,303	6,639
CHC40199 - Certificate IV in Community Services (Aged Care Work)	2,274	2,177	1,799	587
CHC50199 - Diploma of Community Services (Aged Care Work)	131	144	147	53
CHC60199 - Advanced Diploma of Community Services (Aged Care Work)	4	0	6	1

Total Community Services (Aged Care Work)	20359	22826	22616	7332
CHC20599 - Certificate II in Community Services (Disability Work)	40	179	95	4
CHC30799 - Certificate III in Community Services (Disability Work)	3,126	3,307	3,880	1,277
CHC40799 - Certificate IV in Community Services (Disability Work)	2,759	3,650	4,678	2,350
CHC50799 - Diploma of Community Services (Disability Work)	179	188	210	54
CHC60799 - Advanced Diploma of Community Services (Disability Work)	0	3	36	5
Total Community Services (Disability Work)	6,104	7327	8899	3690

Source: NCVET, National Provider Collection, 2004

## Completions

Most of these Training Packages are relatively new and introduced after 2001. Of the relevant Training Packages most completions have been in Certificate III in Community Services (Aged Care), with the highest number of course completions in NSW.

In table 8, there is a change in the trend that reflects the shift from students enrolling in Certificate III in Community Services (Aged Care) to Certificate III in Aged Care. Similarly the number of course completions for Home and Community Care increased from 10 (all in NSW) in 2003 to 314 in 2004 (majority in Vic, NSW and WA).

**Table 8: Course Completions in Home and Community Care, Aged Care and Disability Care, 2004**

Training package qualification	NSW	VIC	Qld	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Australia
CHC30202 - Certificate III in Home and Community Care	101	104	1	0	98	7	2	1	314
CHC30102 - Certificate III in Aged Care Work	2066	1109	183	153	415	178	2	74	4180
CHC40102 - Certificate IV in Aged Care Work	30	48	23	2	21	7	0	0	131
CHC30302 - Certificate III in Disability Work	267	0	40	8	69	59	3	1	447
CHC40302 - Certificate IV in Disability Work	62	172	23	6	23	14	0	17	317
CHC50102 - Diploma of Disability Work	8	0	0	0	9	6	0	0	23
CHC60102 - Advanced Diploma of Disability Work	0	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	23
CHC20199 - Certificate II in Community Services (Aged Care Work)	0	6	0	0	0	5	3	0	14
CHC30199 - Certificate III in Community Services (Aged Care Work)	722	505	542	274	211	59	15	7	2,335
CHC40199 - Certificate IV in Community Services (Aged Care Work)	11	76	88	3	15	31	2	1	227
CHC50199 - Diploma of Community Services (Aged Care Work)	0	0	15	0	4	1	1	1	22
CHC60199 - Advanced Diploma of Community Services (Aged Care Work)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CHC20599 - Certificate II in Community Services (Disability Work)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
CHC30799 - Certificate III in Community Services (Disability Work)	174	78	194	21	36	4	14	10	531
CHC40799 - Certificate IV in Community Services (Disability Work)	24	652	111	5	21	21	7	3	844

CHC50799 - Diploma of Community Services (Disability Work)	4	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	9
CHC60799 - Advanced Diploma of Community Services (Disability Work)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

## VET Student Outcomes Survey

The NCVER National VET Student Outcomes Survey provides some information about the employment outcomes and course satisfaction of graduates and module completers 6 months after training. Due to the sample size, information at course level can not be provided. However, we can have a general look at the non-residential care industry.

Of those employed 6 months after training, the majority are employed part-time (table 10) and also permanently (table 6). There was actually a decrease in the proportion of graduates employed part-time in 2005 while the proportion of graduates employed full-time increased to 30% in 2005. Only a third of graduates were employed as casual staff (table 9).

**Table 9: Student Outcomes Survey (%)**

		2003	2005
Labour force status after training	Total employed (full-time)	20 <sup>#</sup>	30
	Total employed (part-time)	80	57
	Total employed (hours not stated)	0 <sup>#</sup>	13
	Total	100	100
Employment status after training	Permanent	69	64
	Casual	30	33
	Employee (Other)	0 <sup>#</sup>	*
	Employer	0 <sup>#</sup>	*
	Self employed	*	2 <sup>#</sup>
Total		100	100

Source: NCVER Survey collection

Note: Student Outcomes Survey data for 2003 and 2005 were used to analyse the non-residential care industry, as the sample sizes were larger for these respective years.

Note: <sup>#</sup> indicates high standard error

\* indicates population less than 5

# Interviews with HACC employers

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To provide a more specific picture of casual employment in Australia a series of case-study interviews with employers being funded under the Home and Community Care (HACC) program were conducted in Queensland and Victoria—fifteen by telephone interview and two by email.

HACC provides a wide range of services including personal care, home care, respite care, residential care, domestic support, nursing services, allied health care, home maintenance, food service, and transport to frail aged people and people with disabilities in Australia.

## The interview sample

As far as was practicable, the sample was chosen to include large and small organisations in three categories: public, private for-profit and private not-for-profit. In answering the survey questions the majority of organisations responded in the context of their whole organisation if they were a small organisation, or their branch if they were part of a large organisation. Most were providing a wide range of HACC services (such as domestic support, personal care and social support) either to a local community (often to frail and aged persons), or in some cases, to a specifically targeted group such as persons with intellectual disability. Because of the small sample interviewed, and their disparity, it was not possible to get any statistical comparisons between them in regard to the numbers and proportions of casual, permanent and volunteer workers they employed.

During initial screening of organisations in order to select for interview those who employed casual workers, it was noted that a substantial proportion relied on volunteers as well as casuals. As voluntary workers appeared to form an significant part of the workforce in HACC, information about these organisations was also gathered in the interviews.

Table 10 provides summary details of the organisations responding to the survey.

In the summary of responses received to the survey questions, which follows after table 10, the responses have been broadly grouped according to the questions asked in the interviews. Organisation codes (from the first column of table 10) have been attached as subscripts to many of the responses to enable the reader to determine the nature of the organisation(s) providing the response.

**Table 10: Types of organisation represented by respondents**

Organisation code number and state	Type of organisation	Nature of services provided (as described by respondent)	Total number and entity to which it applies.	Employees				
				Casual		Permanent (ongoing)		Volunteers (all P/T)
				Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Part-time
1 Queensland	State government service provider.	Domestic support, personal care and social support to frail aged people.	49 Branch		16 (all on contract)	1	32 (all on contract)	
2 Queensland	Charitable not-for-profit organisation.	A wide range of community support services 'consistent with Christian values', including: nursing; disability and drug/alcohol fields.	2000 Whole organisation	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated
3 Queensland	Not-for-profit organisation, auspiced by local council.	Community care services including: domestic assistance; social support; centre-based day care; provision and delivery of meals.	5 Local council area		4	1		
4 Queensland	Charitable not-for-profit organisation (branch of organisation #2, above).	A wide range of support services to the community.	38 Branch		2	3	6	27
5 Queensland	Community based not-for-profit organisation.	Almost all home and community care services including home support, community support, disability support and respite care.	46 Regional branch		34	1		10
6 Queensland	Church-based charitable not-for-profit organisation	Services include: transport, respite care, dementia support, home respite, disability support.	72 Regional branch		7	10	49	6
7 Queensland	Church-based local not-for-profit organisation	Support to people with intellectual disability providing leisure and living skills, also limited mental health support services.	23 Branch		1	3	8	11
8 Queensland	Charitable not-for-profit organisation.	A phone-based support service for the frail-aged, people with disabilities, their carers, and socially and geographically vulnerable people	254 State branch			2 (plus 1 on contract)	2	250
9 Queensland	Charitable not-for-profit organisation.	Preparation and distribution of meals to home-bound frail, aged, younger people with disabilities.	76 Local branch	5			1 (on contract)	70

10 Queensland	Charitable not-for-profit organisation.	Providing a wide range of HACC services across a large part of the state to frail/aged persons and persons with disabilities and their carers.	Approximately 200 Mostly casual part-time				Specific detail not obtained
11 Victoria	Private organisation operating for profit.	Large private hospital operator, including operation of ten residential facilities and also offering in-home care.	200 Ten residential facilities	60			140
12 Victoria	Church sponsored not-for-profit organisation.	Providing home and community care services to a capital city community.	608 Whole organisation	138	177		299
13 Victoria	Private organisation operating for profit.	Providing home care and personal care services to a local community.	58 Whole organisation	55 (some occasionally work up to 38 hours in a week)	1		1 (plus 1 on contract)
14 Victoria	Not-for-profit organisation. Subsidiary of a major specialised charitable institution.	Providing a full range of HACC services through several states and territories	1500 Victorian branch	1320	80		100
15 Victoria	Charitable not-for-profit organisation.	Social support programs and activities, home visiting, and home library service to frail/aged persons.	296 Whole organisation		1		5 290
16 Victoria	Charitable not-for-profit organisation.	Range of HACC services for persons with a specific disability and their carers. Includes residential services.	Approximately 110 (includes 10 permanent contract.	20	40		30
17 Victoria	Christian-based charitable not-for-profit community service organisation.	Provides home and community care services for people in the community. Also plans, builds and manages a network of lifestyle villages for aged people.	350 Home care division	273			77

Note: The organisation code numbers in the left hand column are used as subscripts in the text on the following pages to enable readers to determine the nature of organisations providing particular responses.

## Jobs in which casual workers are employed

Table 11 is a summary of the work roles that respondents said casual employees were performing in their Home and Community Care organisations. Note that this is not an all-inclusive list—many respondents were only quoting representative examples.

**Table 11: Jobs performed by casual (and volunteer) employees in HACC**

Home care <sup>1,2,3,13,14,17</sup>	After-hospital care <sup>14</sup>	Meal delivery <sup>3,9</sup>
Personal care <sup>1,2,3,11,13,14,17</sup>	Childcare (disability) <sup>14</sup>	Transport <sup>1,2,3,5,13,14,17</sup>
Showering <sup>1</sup>	Domestic work <sup>4</sup>	Bus driving <sup>4</sup>
Social support <sup>1,17,15</sup>	Domestic cleaning <sup>1</sup>	Activities support (v) <sup>4</sup>
Disability support <sup>11,16</sup>	Food preparation <sup>2,3,9,13,14,17</sup>	Gardening (v) <sup>4</sup>
Community support <sup>5</sup>	Home maintenance <sup>2,13,14,17</sup>	Home visiting (v) <sup>15</sup>
Client support <sup>7</sup>	Day service provision <sup>16</sup>	Social outings (v) <sup>15</sup>
Respite care <sup>2,5,7,13,14,16,17</sup>	Shopping <sup>2,3,13,14,17</sup>	Library program (v) <sup>15</sup>
In-home support <sup>5,16</sup>		

Notes: Subscript numbers = organisation identity codes  
(v) = volunteer

Many respondents said that casuals were employed in the same work as permanent employees.

All casuals are engaged in personal care (such as disability support)—no different to permanent part timers.<sup>11</sup>

Another referred to graded levels of responsibility across the various types of employee:

Casuals do client support and respite care. Volunteers also do these things but are not required to take full responsibility. Permanent part-timers take responsibility to ensure nothing goes wrong.<sup>7</sup>

Many of them [casuals] are almost permanents, they work the same shifts and visit the same clients each time. They are doing Home care, Respite care and Personal care. They also do Food preparation, Home maintenance, Transport and Shopping.<sup>13</sup>

## Main reasons for employing casual workers

The following are the most common reasons given for employing casual workers.

### *Casual employment as a means trialling workers for permanency*

Casual employment was frequently used by organisations as a means of vetting or trialling workers for more permanent or substantive positions.<sup>1, 6, 11, 16, 17</sup>

We prefer to recruit people as casuals because of the legislation. Its easier to get rid of unsatisfactory people if they are on a probation period as casual employees. If you hire them [permanently] straight off and they are not satisfactory, you've got to go through all of that stress of three letters, informing them, counselling, training, and all that stuff before you can get rid of them. If you can work things out in that three months [before making them permanent], its great.<sup>6</sup>

One respondent pointed out that because many of the jobs in the industry were relatively low paid, it could be hard to get people of established high calibre. Casual work allowed those whose

skills and knowledge were questionable to be trialled before offering them permanent employment.<sup>11</sup>

It was noted that some organisations using volunteers also tended to use their volunteer pool as a resource for recruitment to casual or permanent positions.

#### *Casual employment facilitates laying off unsatisfactory employees*

From a slightly different perspective, several respondents cited ease of dispensing with the services of unsatisfactory employees as a reason for employing casually.<sup>5, 11, 12</sup>

#### *Casual employment as an induction process*

Casual employment was used as a means of easing people into the work—allowing them to build up experience with lower level and less demanding clients before they moved into higher level work. Casual employment allowed the working hours to be tailored to match the limited number of low level clients available.<sup>11</sup> Casual employment also allowed employers to gradually build an employee's workload up to regular hours and shifts as new clients were taken on,<sup>17</sup> and to build up and develop staff rosters.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Casual employment does not require guaranteed hours and employment*

If people are employed part-time, they have to be guaranteed employment, whereas there is no obligation to guarantee casuals employment.<sup>1</sup> Some organisations cite lack of guaranteed ongoing work and work shifts as the reason they use casuals or volunteers.<sup>7, 13</sup> For instance, one private service provider stated:

Yes I do see some workers moving from casual to permanent employment one day in the future. It depends on how quick my company grows. I have only been into my second year since November 2005. To have employees on a permanent basis the company will have to grow some more so that I can provide employees with the necessary number of compulsory hours.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Casual employment allows flexibility in hours and rostering of employees*

Casual employment allows organisations to employ workers for shifts which vary from week to week or one day to another, or for short shifts of work which may be below the prescribed minimum number of hours for permanently employed workers.<sup>13</sup> An employer who was generally opposed to casual employment said that, despite this, it was still necessary to employ some casuals when permanent part-timers could not be given their minimum number of hours for a shift.<sup>4</sup> Some employers also see casual employment as the best means of filling unpopular and awkward shifts that permanent employees dislike.<sup>16</sup> Casuals were said by one employer to often be more agreeable to working on holidays<sup>1</sup> (however, other employers have pointed out that casuals are also in a better position to exercise their prerogative to pick and choose the tasks and shifts they are willing to work).

#### *Casual employment as a means of coping with contingencies*

Casual employment gives an organisation a great deal of flexibility to employ people, ad hoc, for dealing with the numerous contingencies that arise in HACC work, such as client deaths and short term clients,<sup>1, 3</sup> as well as for relieving regular employees who go on leave, etc.<sup>4, 12</sup>

### *Some workers prefer casual employment*

In the opinion of employers, many workers actually prefer to work casually.<sup>1, 10, 11</sup> Some were said to see it as a better paying proposition ('more money up front').<sup>5, 17, 1</sup> Others were said to like the flexibility that allows them to combine work with other activities such as family commitments and lifestyle choices.<sup>3, 5</sup> Some employers said their casuals often had other jobs outside of their organisation.<sup>16</sup> Many employees were said to be long-term casual workers.<sup>1, 10</sup>, 'We have had some [casuals] who have been here 12 years. The average worker has been with us for 3 or 4 years.'<sup>5</sup>

### *Some general comments relating to reasons for casual employment*

One respondent said they very rarely employed 'temporary casuals' (as opposed to long term casuals), because it was 'not worth all the paperwork' to do so.<sup>1</sup>

Organisations that use **volunteers** as a major part of their workforce generally say they could not maintain a financially viable organisation or provide all their services without them.<sup>8, 9, 15</sup>

In a 'meals on wheels' service, employment of paid part-time casual workers in the kitchen on a long term basis (as allowed for in their award) was used in preference to volunteers (who are used extensively in other roles such as meal delivery) because they gave necessary continuity in the kitchen.<sup>9</sup>

One respondent saw 'reinforcement of a casual workforce culture' in the industry as an undesirable outcome from the use of casual employment.<sup>17</sup>

Another provided the following observation about the reasons people chose to work casually:

[It's a life-style issue. ...] Across the board, work-life balance is definitely coming into the HR area more than it ever has before. And also, as the baby boomers leave and new generations come on board they are just not interested in working full-time and that is why the casual status suits a lot of them—but they don't want to earn a pittance either. They'll work casual but they won't work permanent because the salaries are so low. I think, a lot of the time, they like to work but they don't necessarily want to work 38 hours a week. But when you are paying out on training you want a bit of a commitment because you don't want to train them and then find them going straight off to work for someone else because you have trained them well. How you get around that I don't really know, because when they are casuals they don't have to give you any notice— but you don't have to give them any either. [16]

## Minimum training and qualifications required of casual workers

Mandated training (such as first aid and manual handling) for all jobs that required them was conducted. Organisations which employed both permanent and casual employees generally stated that the qualifications required of casuals were the same as for permanent employees. However several went on to infer that, whilst their organisations required the same qualifications, the breadth and depth of skills expected of casuals were not always as extensive as those of permanent employees.

Table 12 details what respondents said were the minimum qualifications expected of casual employees in their organisations.

**Table 12: Minimum qualifications required of casual workers by organisation details**

Organisation Organisation code number and state	Type of organisation	Nature of services provided (as described by respondent)	Number of employees			Qualifications requirements (as described by respondent)
			Casual	Permanent	Volunteer	
1 Queensland	State government service provider.	Domestic support, personal care and social support to frail aged people.	16	33		Same as for permanent workers doing the same work. To carry out personal care duties they must have Certificate III in Community services – aged care. It is now a requirement of home care services.
2 Queensland	Charitable not-for-profit organisation.	A wide range of community support services 'consistent with Christian values', including: nursing; disability and drug/alcohol fields.	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	
3 Queensland	Not-for-profit organisation, auspiced by local council.	Community care services including: domestic assistance; social support; centre-based day care; provision and delivery of meals.	4	1		Same as for permanent workers doing the same work. All workers have to have a first aid certificate. They also have to do a Certificate III in Aged care (which they can do while working in the job).
4 Queensland	Charitable not-for-profit organisation (branch of organisation #2, above).	A wide range of support services to the community.	2	9	27	Same as for permanent workers doing the same work. Qualifications required depend on the role of the person – ranging from First aid certificate or a Certificate III in Aged care, a Rigid vehicle bus licence, Diversional therapy, or a Certificate IV.
5 Queensland	Community based not-for-profit organisation.	Almost all home and community care services including home support, community support, disability support and respite care.	34	1	10	Casuals must have a 'Blue card' (satisfactory police check), plus First aid, Manual handling and other OH&S training. Volunteers would not generally be allowed to do the direct care work that the casuals do, but if they did, would need the same qualifications.
6 Queensland	Church-based charitable not-for-profit organisation	Services include: transport, respite care, dementia support, home respite, disability support.	7	59	6	Same as for permanent workers doing the same work. All have to have First Aid Cert. They should also have all relevant mandatory training – such as Fire awareness, WPH&S, Manual handling, Infection control, Food safety, Handwashing competence, Building evacuation, Back hoists and Wheel chair competence. Also Medication management for unregulated workers, Documentation, and Risk management. They should also have a Cert III in either Aged care or Disability studies or be well on their

						way towards one of those qualifications. Volunteers don't have to have any min quals, but have to participate in all relevant mandatory training – such as Fire awareness, Workplace health and safety, Manual handling, Infection control, Food safety, Handwashing competence, Building evacuation, Back hoists and Wheel chair competence.
7 Queensland	Church-based local not-for-profit organisation	Support to people with intellectual disability providing leisure and living skills, also limited mental health support services.	1	11	11	Casuals have to have First aid and all workers (including casuals, volunteers) have to have two days induction training (covering epilepsy, manual handling, policy and procedure, medication, etc). Sometimes the volunteers opt out but we try to make them all do it.
8 Queensland	Charitable not-for-profit organisation.	A phone-based support service for the frail-aged, people with disabilities, their carers, and socially and geographically vulnerable people		4	250	At present, no minimum qualifications needed for telephone support services.
9 Queensland	Charitable not-for-profit organisation.	Preparation and distribution of meals to home-bound frail, aged, younger people with disabilities.	5	1	70	Varies according to their role. For casual employees: senior kitchen hand needs to be able to look after one or two employees and must have a high level knowledge of food handling and equipment. General kitchen hands (dish hands) and assistant kitchen hands require basic food and hygiene knowledge for a work environment. Operations manager requires computer knowledge, accounting knowledge, administration skills, and the ability to manage staff. For <b>volunteers</b> main qualification is good character and no police history.
10 Queensland	Charitable not-for-profit organisation.	Providing a wide range of HACC services across a large part of the state to frail/aged persons and persons with disabilities and their carers.	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	
11 Victoria	Private organisation operating for profit.	Large private hospital operator, including operation of ten residential facilities and also offering in-home care.	60	140		No minimum qualifications stipulated, but the aim is for most of the staff to eventually have Certs III in Community services (either in Disability work, or Aged care).
12 Victoria	Church sponsored not-for-profit organisation	Providing home and community care services to a capital city community.	138	476		Casual nurses need the relevant nursing qualifications. For most of the direct care roles no minimum qualifications are required. In some roles First aid is essential. All mandatory qualifications are required.

13 Victoria	Private organisation operating for profit.	Providing home care and personal care services to a local community.	55	2		<i>For Home care you don't need a lot of training so all you need is OH&amp;S, which is very important. For Personal care ... I sometimes employ someone with experience. However, its going to be compulsory to have the Cert III. If they [just have] some experience in the work such as aged care, I employ them and I train them in the client's home – so I'm doing shadow shifts and I assess what they do and how they do it, I train them on how to use a hoist and how to follow a care plan. After I have trained them and can see they are working very well, I can put them on 15 hours a week and they can do ongoing training with a training provider. So if they don't have any initial qualifications I train them first and then they can follow on with the Cert III.</i>
14 Victoria	Not-for-profit organisation. Subsidiary of a major specialised charitable institution.	Providing a full range of HACC services through several states and territories	1320	180		<i>For our home carers there is no minimum qualification. For our personal carers we prefer a Cert III, which can be either in Aged care, Disability care or Home and community care, plus First aid. These qualification requirements don't differ from the permanent workers.</i>
15 Victoria	Charitable not-for-profit organisation.	Social support programs and activities, home visiting, and home library service to frail/aged persons.		6	290	<i>Only having <b>volunteers</b>, we don't have any qualification programs, but there is a mandatory orientation session that people have to go through before they are able to become volunteers – they include things like OH&amp;S, confidentiality, privacy, communication and insurance coverage – so that they are aware of the compliance issues that we as an organisation have to conform to.</i>
16 Victoria	Charitable not-for-profit organisation.	Range of HACC services for persons with a specific disability and their carers. Includes residential services.	20	70		<i>Qualifications of casual workers are no different from permanent workers. We insist on First aid, which is mandatory and we prefer them to be qualified in Disability – Cert III or IV, but that is not compulsory.</i>
17 Victoria	Christian-based charitable not-for-profit community service organisation.	Provides home and community care services for people in the community. Also plans, builds and manages a network of lifestyle villages for aged people.	273	77		<i>All Home care staff are required to hold a current first aid certificate or be able to successfully complete it within three months of commencement. Minimum qualifications for both ongoing and temporary casual staff providing direct care services to HACC funded clients are HACC qualifications or Certificate III in Aged care either prior to employment or within three months of commencement.</i>

Note: For procedural reasons, qualifications details were not obtained for organisations #2 and #10.

## Is casual employment advantageous? Is it cost effective?

Employers were divided in their opinions about the advantages and cost effectiveness of casual employment.

### *Arguments stating that casual employment is efficient and cost effective:*

Some of those speaking of the advantages of casual employment said it was more cost effective because they only had to pay for actual hours worked whereas for permanent they had to pay for the full rostered hours of a shift regardless of how many hours were actually worked.<sup>1,5</sup> One stated that, for relief work, casual employment was more cost effective, but that employment of casuals on a general basis was too expensive.<sup>7</sup> Another suggested that casual employment was a cheaper alternative to hiring agency workers, and two pointed to the ease with which unsatisfactory casual employees could be put off as an administrative cost benefit.<sup>11, 12</sup>

One employer offering a 24 hour phone support service using volunteers rather than casuals said that because the service operated 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, it could not afford to provide the range of services it did without extensive employment of volunteers.<sup>8</sup>

### *Arguments stating that casual employment is not efficient and cost effective:*

Reasons employers did not see casual employment in an advantageous light were that casual employment was said to lead to poorer workforce stability and less stable lifestyles for employees,<sup>6</sup> and that it did not have as great a capacity to engender good relationships with clients and foster commitment of employees.<sup>2,14</sup> Others stated that casual employment was not cost effective because the 'penalty rates were too high',<sup>4</sup> or because the 'pay rates were too high'.<sup>12</sup>

Related to the workforce stability factor mentioned above, was the observation that the ease with which casual employees could resign without notice could detract from efficiency<sup>14</sup> and that such resignations could lead to loss of time and money invested in training them.<sup>5</sup>

Casual employees were also said to be more selective about when they worked and what work they did, in comparison with permanent employees who could be more easily directed in their activities.<sup>6</sup>

## Recruitment, retention and mobility of casual employees

As a preliminary step in the selection process of Queensland HACC organisations for interviews, potential candidates were sent a very brief questionnaire seeking details of their organisation. In addition to the organisational details, they were also asked to indicate whether or not they were experiencing difficulty in recruiting or retaining casual employees. Responses to this question were fairly evenly divided. Of the 108 organisations that were able to give a definite response, 55 said they experienced difficulty in recruiting and/or retaining employees and 53 said they did not.

However in the more detailed interviews that were subsequently conducted, most (but not all<sup>14</sup>) of the seventeen organisations responding regarding retention of casual employees stated it was not an issue of concern for them, some going on to say that they had many long-term casual employees. It was not uncommon to hear of casual employees who had been with their employers for a number of years, some from five to fifteen years or more.

Retention is not a problem. The longest employed worker has just left after working as a [casual] for three years. Of the other four, one has worked there for 2 months, another for 6 months and the remaining two have been there for a couple of years.<sup>3</sup>

Retention of casual employees is not really a problem... We get people who just want to be casuals and if we don't give them casual status then they won't work.<sup>16</sup>

A number of organisations reported that many casual employees preferred to remain casual rather than switch to part-time or full-time permanent status—often because they could exercise more control over their working hours and holidays and because their casually loaded pay rates, offering more cash in hand, were perceived to be higher. Apparently it did not concern these employees that they were not getting the entitlements enjoyed by permanent employees.

If they wanted the permanent part time hours, they could apply to transfer from casual to permanent work—the option is there. But at the moment they are all happy with their employment and hours as they are.<sup>3</sup>

However, this is not to say that there was not a high turnover in casual employees. One respondent who was able to supply statistics reported:

The turnover of casuals is a lot higher than for permanent staff. Permanent employee turnover is 14.9%, casual turnover is 43.8% ...on average, casuals are staying with us for just over two years. When you consider the nature of casual employment, this is probably not too bad.<sup>12</sup>

Some of these casuals, the respondent reported, moved to permanent status as a result of the organisation's policy of encouraging suitable casuals to apply for permanent positions.

A representative of one organisation that employed casuals as a resource from which to recruit permanent employees reported a variety of reasons for casual staff turnover:

I think a lot of people do that sort of work as an interim and then move on to something else. For example, we had a large number of students who were doing health related study, nursing, occupational therapy and physiotherapy. They weren't going to be staying around forever, once they qualified, they'd be out. Other people sometimes needed change because it was pretty intensive work. Others found they were not really suited to the role. Also, business growth increased the demand for staff. If someone worked out well as a casual, they'd get changed to permanent—that was the intention.<sup>11</sup>

Several respondents referred to the effect changes in regulations and work conditions were having on the utilisation of casual employment. For example, one organisation that, in the past, strongly encouraged casual employees to switch to permanent part-time, highlighted the difficulties this will pose with the adoption of a workplace agreement specifying minimum hours of employment and job security for permanent employees.

Prior to the change being proposed, when staff had a reasonable workload, we offered them the opportunity to go part time. In fact, management insisted that we made them part time, they did not have a choice. And as I said, a lot of them went into part time begrudgingly, they wanted to stay casual. A lot of them are single mums and they would rather have the money than worry about holiday pay. Because of enterprise bargaining, we [now] have to offer them job security. Basically, any new employee will [now] be told at interview and at the point of employment that because of the change, we can only offer them casual work—because we already have 33 existing permanent staff that the district will have to find employment for, come June. If we employ any more part timers, where are we going to find jobs for them? [The district] is not big enough.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, another organisation, less concerned about the need to guarantee employment, saw switching casuals to permanent part-time status as a cost-saving measure.

At an organisation level, if the staff member is consistently getting more than twelve hours of work per week, they are encouraged to move to permanent part time—very strongly encouraged. Although the worker does have the choice the organisation does not want them having 36 or 38 hours a week as a casual employee. It costs the organisation more money for casuals, and there is better security all round for the individuals if they become permanent part time. The package offered by [our organisation] under the agreement is quite generous.<sup>4</sup>

A respondent from an organisation stated that, whilst the option for casuals to switch to permanent status was offered, few employees took it up, and because of difficulty in retaining casual employees, it was likely that in future the organisation would move towards direct recruitment of more permanent part-time staff. Incidentally, this organisation predominantly employed volunteers (1320 volunteers compared with 100 part-time and 80 full-time employees).<sup>14</sup>

## Mobility from voluntary to casual and permanent status

Volunteers are an important part, and in many cases a major component, of the workforces of a number of organisations supporting HACC funded clients. The survey asked those organisations that used volunteers whether there was much mobility from volunteer to casual or permanent status. Some organisations reported that the main reason their volunteers did not seek casual or permanent status was that most of them were older people (60 years and over) and therefore not looking for paid employment.

We do not get many people moving from a voluntary capacity to a casual capacity. Most of our volunteers are here because they want to do something that is a rewarding role rather than as a means to getting employment.<sup>4</sup>

However, there were other organisations that looked on their pool of volunteers as source from which to recruit known and proven workers to become paid employees.

There is mobility from volunteer to permanent. I held a training day yesterday for about 13 of the staff and out of that 13 there were only 2 who didn't start off as volunteers. ... Some become volunteers with the intention of one day switching to employment, some don't. Some come in as volunteers to make Centrelink happy [if they are over 50 years of age, they can do voluntary work to avoid being required to look for a job]. Once they start doing voluntary work some absolutely love it, and if they are any good I hire them.<sup>6</sup>

There has been no mobility [from voluntary to casual] in the past, but next year I think there will be. The main reason being to improve retention.<sup>5</sup>

There is a good deal of movement from volunteer to permanent part-time. This is where we get our best workers from, because we see how they interact with the client. When a permanent part-time position becomes available we offer it to the most suitable volunteers .... However, not all volunteers want to transfer [from voluntary] into permanent part-time work. We have got some volunteers who have been working for us in a voluntary capacity for six or seven years. They are just happy doing what they do and being able to come and go to whenever it suits them, for holiday and other reasons. A few of them are retired people.<sup>7</sup>

## Training policy

Not surprisingly, virtually all respondents reported that their organisations arranged for induction training including orientation to the organisation and relevant mandatory training to be provided

for their casual employees and volunteers. Most stated that the training opportunities and the manner in which this training was delivered were essentially the same for all categories of employee—permanent, casual or volunteer. Almost without exception, this training was free, the course costs being paid for by the organisation. However there were some differences between organisations regarding payment of the individual's time while attending the training. In some cases, casuals were paid for their time in training, but generally, it was expected that they would attend in their own time. By comparison, part-time and full-time permanent employees were more often (but not always) paid for their time in training. Types of training covered in this context included: orientation or induction, manual handling, fire safety, food safety, infection control and incident reporting.

Because the work that volunteers usually did was less complex, requiring lower levels of responsibility, their training was often more basic. Whilst they were encouraged to attend courses free of charge, it was only rarely that the organisation paid them anything for their time spent in the course. One respondent noted that, as desirable as it was for volunteers to do training, it was a delicate issue to persuade them to do so without making them feel pressured, possibly leading to them withdrawing their services. 'We must persuade them in a sensitive way because we recognise that some of our volunteers have been with us for a long time and we don't want to lose them.'<sup>15</sup>

In regard to higher level training, such as Certificate III, casuals were generally expected by the organisations interviewed to undertake it in their own time and at their own cost. Permanent staff, on the other hand, because they could qualify for a government subsidised traineeship could often count on the employer covering the cost of the course and in some instances, some of the cost of the time spent attending the training. This benefit was sometimes used as a means of encouraging casual employees to switch to permanent part-time status. One respondent stated: 'The most successful strategies for retention have centred on training and support offered to staff.'<sup>17</sup>

The following is a sample of remarks made by respondents concerning training:

The organisation pays for training for its ongoing casual workers and expects them to maintain [their skills] to the same level as permanent workers.<sup>2</sup>

Training is provided for all employees—permanent part-time, full-time, casuals and volunteers. For all mandatory training [including Occupational health and safety, Food safety, Infection control, Manual handling, Fire training], whether external or internal, the workers are paid for their time spent in training as well as having the cost of their course being covered by the organisation. Although volunteers do not get paid, the organisation pays them for time they spend in training. ... The training is mostly done in company time, but if employees are required to work during the day and come to training outside of scheduled work hours they can be paid overtime for it. Incentives for other higher level training are also offered. ... Casual workers are expected to have and maintain the same skill levels as permanent employees.<sup>4</sup> [paraphrased remarks]

Everyone receives some training. We don't differentiate between casuals and part timers. When we are offering training for staff everybody attends, it's compulsory. ... They are paid to attend. Two or three times a year we might have a training day when we bring everybody off the job, they come in, they get paid to attend and we would bring the training to them. ... The only difference would be if we were sending them to do a certificate III at TAFE, then, because of the amount of money involved it would normally be offered to part-timers wanting to do higher level work.<sup>1</sup>

The organisation pays for some compulsory training such as Fire safety and Manual handling. Employees were expected to obtain their First aid [certificate] and pay for it themselves, but the organisation paid for refresher courses with employees being paid for their time in the training. Traineeships at Cert III, and especially Cert IV, were encouraged,

however casual workers could not access the traineeship system unless they became permanent part time employees. Accessing training was sometimes an incentive that encouraged casuals to switch from casual to permanent part time. Casuals were expected to maintain their skills for themselves—they were kept informed of training being offered.<sup>11</sup> [paraphrased remarks]

## Skills shortages

Most of the respondents spoke of difficulties they had in recruiting and retaining suitable staff, particularly for personal and support care of a direct hands-on nature. In fact the nature of the work and the shifts entailed appeared to be the major obstacles. Two respondents highlighted these elements saying:

The main reason we are not having trouble is because we are a day respite care centre which operates slightly different shifts from the mainstream aged care facilities and is not directly hands-on caring for people and their problems, it provides respite for them so they come to the centre and we provide a meal for them. It's a much more fun environment. It's not so much taking people to the toilet and making beds and things. Our workers get into this and they never want to leave, so we don't have a retention problem.<sup>4</sup>

We have experienced difficulty in recruiting people for Personal care work, and Support work. More people were willing to do the recreational stuff with clients— taking them to their exercise class, movies, things like that—less wanted to do, or learn, the personal care. A lot of clients of the organisation have challenging behaviours too, so that could have contributed to the difficulty.<sup>11</sup>

Several respondents alluded to the importance of being able to provide ongoing, stable care for clients. An ideal that could not be readily achieved when staff providing the services were constantly changing.

It's difficult to keep staff on permanently, because they may only be able to be offered a few hours per week in a locality and time that is suitable to them and they therefore are always looking for work from other employers and areas. ... This constant change is no good for the client because they want to always have the same carer coming in [to visit them].<sup>13</sup>

We are currently looking for some people to work permanent part-time in one-on-one client support and there's just nobody available. We haven't advertised at colleges and universities because we wanted people who would be ongoing, not just doing it while they are doing a course.<sup>7</sup>

One respondent spoke of the difficulties casual employees can create by 'picking and choosing' the work they do. A problem that was expected to be alleviated to some extent by the planned shift to a greater proportion of permanent part-time staff.

The difficulty we have is that [while] we have got casuals who are happy to clean the house and we have got others who are happy to do personal or respite care, they pick and choose. I think bringing in the part-time agreement for permanent employment we'll say to them, 'No you need to be prepared to do the personal care, do the transport, do the home help, do the respite—all of it, not just pick and choose.' So I believe the permanent part time agreement will help solve this problem.<sup>5</sup>

# Casual employment in the future

## Future difficulties in recruiting and using casual employees

Responses were varied when respondents were asked in interview if they foresaw any difficulties in recruiting and using casual or volunteer workers in the future. Most were somewhat pessimistic, usually basing their answer on a perception that it was going to become harder to find suitable employees.

Several respondents referred to the impact of the ageing Australian population—leading to increased demand for HACC services and hence workforce personnel, and possibly a need to structure the workforce differently and work differently.

Yes [we are going to have difficulties]. We are going to have a massive aged care population that we're not going to be able to keep up with. We are going to have to look at some way of making it far more attractive to people who are coming out into the work force. Strategies include, looking at the casual workers and offering them permanent positions. Our volunteers are mainly older, retired persons so they are not looking for full-time work. Some volunteers come here as a start—as a means of getting into the workforce—but they never stay here very long because they find work very quickly.<sup>4</sup>

One highlighted the difficulties created by the nature of the work—often requiring short shifts and provision of services to numerous clients within the same narrow time periods, all of which pointed towards the use of casual employees, and possibly some means of persuading and helping clients to be a little more flexible in their service demands.

It can't get any worse, I hope it gets better. The problem is, an agency may have, say five clients in one area, each requiring a visit of, say one hour. But it can't manage this with one carer because the clients can all want their service at the same time of the day, (such as 8:30 to 9:30 in the morning). So I have to have three or four carers for four people, because I can't do it with one carer. We should look at what can be done to spread the services across a greater period of time. We can give good quality carers but they will need more hours in one area. We need the clients to be a bit more flexible in their hours. I see there is going to be a problem if this is not looked into. ... The problem is going to grow because of the ageing population and because it is going to be compulsory for the trained employee in HACC to have the Certificate. But who is going to stay in HACC to work short hours? They will go to other jobs that can give them longer hours.<sup>13</sup>

On a slightly positive note, one respondent suggested that, with the trend towards gradual rather than abrupt withdrawal from the workforce by workers around traditional retirement age, there could be greater numbers of people considering working in a part-time or casual capacity in their later years. Although the respondent did not mention it, this possibility might also be magnified by the fact that a large pool of baby boomers will swell the numbers of retirees over the next decade.

It's difficult to say which way will go. With an ageing workforce, there may be more people nearing retirement who will seek to go into casual work as they seek to ease down their employment level. So that would help the situation. On the other hand with an ageing population there are going to be more and more people needing support in the community.<sup>11</sup>

This same respondent also highlighted the importance of offering training as a means of encouraging people to take up occupations in the community services sector. It might also help make jobs more attractive if the training could be made more readily accessible to people who wish to work in a casual or part-time capacity.

## Future sustainability of casual mode of employment

As was done regarding the issues of recruitment and retention of employees, when Home and Community Care organisations in Queensland initially were contacted for organisational details as a screening process preparatory to selection for interview they were also asked to indicate whether they saw casual employment as a sustainable mode of employment in the next five or more years. Opinion was fairly evenly divided. Of the 102 organisations able to give a definite response, 54 believed casual employment was a sustainable option in the future and 48 thought not.

In contrast, most respondents in the seventeen extended interviews believed casual employment would continue to be a significant feature of the Home and Community Care workforce over the next five to ten years. Some saw it as the reflection of an Australia-wide trend towards casualisation of the workforce, others as the answer to a specific need faced by the sector.

Yes, [casual employment will be sustained in the future]. In fact it will be getting bigger. And once all the hoo-hah is sorted out, there will obviously be more opportunities which, instead of being casual, will be part-time. ... However for the time being the system of recruiting people as casuals is going to have to stay, there is no option.<sup>1</sup>

I think there will always be casual employees employed in the industry. I mean, there has been a move, as we are aware, in the last five or ten years towards the casualisation of the Australian workforce. I don't expect that to reverse markedly. But possibly the employment of casuals could increase, one can only assume that it will continue for a little while, I don't think it's over yet.<sup>11</sup>

However, as one respondent pointed out, long term employment of people in casual positions may not be in accord with existing legislation. This respondent went on to suggest it would be beneficial to the industry and the employee if the legislation were altered to more readily permit this.

What really would be helpful would be for the government to change the legislation so that people could be casually employed and work consistent, regular shifts—because the casual leave loading does give them more income. I know there is long service leave and some of those sorts of things coming in for casual people who work constantly for an organisation, that would be a way of paying them just a little bit more maybe. As it is, if you go strictly by the award, then you shouldn't really have casuals in the sort of work [they are doing]. If people could be employed casually and work consistent, regular shifts it could be a win-win situation. Otherwise, we will just have to get agency staff which costs more.<sup>16</sup>

Another stated that they did not employ casuals beyond three months—after which time they were required to switch to permanent part-time status.<sup>6</sup>

Several respondents saw the possibility of an increasing industry shift from casual to permanent part-time employment, a change that some but certainly not all employers would welcome.

I guess it is because we see [casual employment] as not sustainable that we are moving towards permanent part-time. I would hope that we would have everyone over into permanent part-time within eighteen months to two years. It may be a slow process getting our long-term casual people across. [After that] there would have to be a sign-off by a senior manager if we want to employ someone as a casual.<sup>14</sup>

Referring to the effect labour supply has on casual employment—an over-supply of labour being conducive to increased casual employment and vice versa—one respondent suggested that, in a climate of skilled labour shortage in the future, it is likely to become more difficult to find good quality casual employees.

There is a difficulty generally in finding skilled staff. This makes it even harder to find casuals—for example: in an area where you have got an over-supply then people are more willing to take up casual work, even though it is erratic, because it is better than nothing. But when you've got an area of under-supply, then the workers have got more of a chance of getting the work they want when they want and they will be less likely to want to take up casual employment. In terms of the future, because of the skill shortage in the area, it is going to be difficult to get good casuals. Also, the ageing population is going to increase the demand for workers in the field as well.<sup>11</sup>

Here again, several respondents highlighted the fact that many workers preferred to remain casually employed even when offered the opportunity to become permanent. It would seem therefore, that unless there are changes to reduce the attractiveness of some of the features of casual employment in comparison with permanent, there will continue to be a substantial section of the workforce opting for casual employment where the choice exists.

As an organisation, at last count, about 30% of staff were casuals. So we are certainly looking at encouraging a lot of those individuals to move into part-time if they can. The high proportion of casuals hasn't been because the organisation did not want them to be employed part-time it has been because the casuals wanted to stay in a casual role.<sup>4</sup>

[The sustainability of casuals] is difficult to predict. There is certainly an attraction for staff to be employed as casuals within this industry and this is likely to continue to be the case in the future. Our organisation actively promotes the transfer [from casual] to permanent part-time employment for Home care staff and will continue to do so. Permanent part-time status provides Home care staff with some security, including agreed minimum hours and the ability to take leave and not be out of pocket.<sup>17</sup>

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