

2. Part-Time & Casual (Precarious) Employment

Implications and impact on conditions and pay

Part-time teachers may be permanent, contract or casual. Many of the issues affecting casual teachers also affect part-time teachers.

Casual teachers are usually paid for each hour of work, often only for each hour of actual teaching. Pay structures differ from state to state but in general pay rates do not adequately compensate casual teachers for the work they undertake in terms of teaching, preparation and marking and associated duties.

Usually casual teachers are not entitled to a range of allowances, leave and other entitlements afforded to permanent or contract teachers. Sometimes a loading is built into the pay rates for casual teachers in lieu of these entitlements, but Unions question whether the loading is adequate.

Usually, though not always, casual teachers in schools are used in a relief capacity. In TAFE however, many have work that is ongoing in nature and programmed for more hours over a longer period of time.

Lack of career structure

There is no real career structure for casual teachers unless they are able to gain a contract or permanent position and move through the grades or levels for a teacher and on to promotional positions. Often the work that casual and part time teachers put into the TAFE system is not acknowledged. Casual and part time teachers often have trouble accessing workplace facilities, resources and professional development.

Permanency conversion

Some states have made gains in this area but on the whole, across Australia, there is little ability for casual teachers to gain permanency, despite many having considerable service with their employer.

Activism and involvement

Encouraging casual and part time teachers to become involved in Union activities is often difficult due to the nature of their work and the importance of balancing work and family responsibilities. It is harder to contact casual and part time teachers because they are not always in the work place and they have limited time to become involved. As casual and part time teachers are some of our most vulnerable members it is important to encourage them to join the Union and become involved. Unions need to find innovative ways to keep these members involved in Union activities.

Work family

Part-time and casual teachers are usually women with family responsibilities. Insecure and irregular work makes financial planning difficult. Irregular and inflexible timetables make balancing work and family responsibilities difficult.



What Can I Do?

Activism around issues of Precarious Employment

Action component:

The AEU and its Branches and Associated Bodies, particularly in the TAFE sector, are targeting precarious employment for 2005 campaigning.

Both in terms of organising and recruiting part-time employees and casuals in the education sector, and in placing bargaining priorities around promoting permanent/stable employment, the union needs the voice of its members to strengthen its activism in these areas.

The union encourages **current members** to engage others in similar employment circumstances and to explain the role of the union and its benefits.

The BEST way the union can fight for better conditions for workers in precarious employment is to have a membership base large enough to take bold and uncompromising action around permanent employment. But ALSO to build a larger base of members with such a background to maximise the priority the union gives to campaigning for their casual/part-time members.

The TAFE sector will run a federal campaign around casualisation in 2005 and encourage members to contact their local union and union sub-branch or workplace rep, to find out ways to get involved.

Similarly, the TAFE Women's Committee has prioritised organising and recruiting women in precarious employment, via campaign material and extending the boundaries of union activities in workplaces, to reach out to potential members however sporadic their connection to the workplace may be.

Women's officers often organise dinners or morning/afternoon teas, professional information seminars, or training on a whole range of issues at times more convenient to women with unpredictable hours. That is weekends, evenings, and term breaks might be times to push for greater promotion of union activities to enable more women to participate; in particular those who might have not had a lot to do with unions can have a less confronting introduction to 'union business'.

- Promote the union
- Build the voice of casuals
- Ensure access to union information
- Enable involvement at whatever level possible

The strength and sustainability of union membership can empower those who need it most.

