



# FACT SHEET

## Casual employment in TAFE

### **TAFE and VET have the highest levels of casual employment of any education sector**

A 2002 NCVER study estimated that more than 50% of TAFE teachers in Australia were casually-employed, with the figure as high as 70% in some states.

### **Casual employment in TAFE is cheap for the employer**

Casually-employed TAFE teachers cost about half as much as a securely-employed TAFE teacher delivering the same number of hours.

### **Casual employment in TAFE is inefficient**

In some States and Territories, permanently-employed TAFE teachers time handling issues around organization and employment of casual teachers, including induction, administration and curriculum development generated by the high turnover of casual teachers. Casually-employed teachers are often only paid for the hours that they teach, and so are not able to cover a great deal of the other work their teaching generates. This includes administration, managing student issues, student counseling, and so on.

### **Casual employment undermines quality**

Casually-employed teachers often work large amounts of unpaid time to manage the workload generated by their teaching. They are neither funded nor encouraged to participate in the professional life of their TAFE, and they are most often not encouraged or funded to participate in their own professional development. Many casually employed teachers report unmanageable levels of travel, as they attempt to cobble together enough work to survive.

### **Casual employment has a high personal cost**

Casually-employed teachers are kept in a constant state of uncertainty about their professional future, prevented from establishing productive relationships with other TAFE teachers and their students, and excluded from the social and professional life of their institute. Casually-employed teachers are often fearful of speaking out about a range of issues, including teaching and assessment practices in the system, and their own working situation for fear of losing their already tenuous employment. Many long term casuals who have worked ten years or more in the system report being unable to establish a secure financial future, being denied entitlements such as long service and sick leave, and if they are successful in achieving secure employment, are often not able to count the years of service they have already completed.

### **Casual employment does not deliver flexibility**

It forces compliance. TAFE industrial awards and agreements in Australia offer flexibility in their employment arrangements, and securely-employed TAFE teachers working under these awards and agreements currently work in a large range of settings, including in the workplace, at night, and internationally. They also teach using a range of different modes and techniques including on-line, face to face and using mixed-mode.

### **Under-funding forces TAFE employers to use casual employment**

Many TAFE employers acknowledge the unacceptably high levels of casual employment, and point to government under-funding as the cause. This effectively means that TAFE teachers, whether casually- or securely-employed, carrying the burden of under-funding. Casually-employed teachers suffer because of the uncertainty and the exploitation, securely-employed teachers suffer because their workloads increase in all areas as a result of the high levels of casual employment.

### **Casual employment acts as a disincentive for experienced industry teachers coming into TAFE**

Most industries report that poor working conditions and low salaries are a disincentive for those working in industry to take up TAFE teaching. Indeed, in trades areas particularly, people nominate the inability to get secure employment as the major reason for not pursuing teaching in TAFE as a profession.