

## Chapter 5

# Flexible Work and Organisational Arrangements

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The past 25 years have witnessed substantial changes to work organisation in Australia and other industrialised countries. Notable changes include an expansion in part-time and fixed term or temporary employment (and a corresponding decline in permanent full-time jobs especially for males) as well as a growth in home-based work, telework and multiple jobholding. The proportion of workers employed in small business has risen and there have been changes in the industry and occupational distribution of self-employed workers. A driving force in this transformation has been organisational practices including increased use of outsourcing/elaborate supply chains, repeated rounds of downsizing/restructuring by large public and private sector employers, privatisation, and management techniques such as labour leasing, franchising, and lean production or business process re-engineering.

There is now a substantial body of international research indicating that many flexible work arrangements (such as temporary work and the use of subcontractors/outsourcing) and increased job insecurity resulting from downsizing are associated with inferior outcomes in terms of worker safety, health and well-being. These work arrangements and organisational changes pose significant problems for occupational health and safety (OHS) regulators and those administering workers' compensation/rehabilitation regimes. This chapter assesses government responses to these problems and tries to indicate where more comprehensive and strategic responses can be developed in the future.

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