THE FUTURE OF WORK:

NEW CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY

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Introduction

There is broad agreement both internationally and by many individual countries that increasing women's labour force participation is an important dimension of economic growth strategies (OECD 2015; IMF, 2013). The recent meeting of the G20 leaders in Australia reinforced this (G20, 2014):

> We agree to the goal of reducing the gap in participation rates between men and women in our countries by 25 % by 2025, taking into account national circumstances, to bring more than 100 million women into the labour force, significantly increase global growth and reduce poverty and inequality.

But how an increase in women's participation is to be achieved - in ten years - and how, as a goal, it relates to current transformations in labour markets have had less traction in policy deliberations. With growing concerns about the hollowing out of middle level jobs (ILO, 2014; Jaimovich and Siu, 2012; Goos et al, 2010; Autor 2010) combined with ever wider divides between SER-type jobs[1] and atypical jobs (Deakin, 2013) there are significant implications for women's advancement in employment. Apart from the potential of labour market polarisation and segmentation to cement more barriers for women to step into better paid and more secure employment, there is also the threat for 'jobless growth' or 'jobless recovery' (ILO, 2014) facilitated by labour replacing technology (Frey and Osborne, 2013), further offshoring of jobs (Goos et al, 2011**)** and the ongoing effects of public sector austerity measures

[1] Standard Employment Relationship – ongoing employment with full protections and rights set out under labour law.

(Rubery and Karamesssini, 2014) which could constrain expansion of women's participation. The issues relating to women's labour force participation and its relevance to economic growth are integral to the emerging international concerns about the effect of inequality on growth (OECD, 2015; Cingano, 2014; Stiglitz, 2013).

This paper explores current trends in employment which may constrain the advancement of women. The exploration links analysis of global employment trends and observations to a qualitative Australian study of midlife women in low paid and precarious employment. While the study focused on understanding women's pathways into and the effects of precarious employment, what emerged was a portrait of the way in which occupational structures and opportunities for advancement had been dismantled for many women. This occurred through processes whereby persistent forms of gendered occupational segregation which had shaped the women's employment experience in the past merged into those broader processes of labour market transformations outlined above. However, due to women's historic lower 'starting point' in the labour market and the 'care penalty' across the life course (Folbre, 2015), these transformations have a troubling potential to reinforce existing inequality.

While there is considerable cross national diversity in the indicators of gender inequality (Karamessini and Rubery, 2014), for OECD countries there is a gender pay gap at an average of 15.5% combined with a difference in labour force participation rates of around 15 percentage points between men and women (OECD Gender Data Portal, 2015). Across the EU, the full time gender wage gap is 20% and for monthly wages, 30%, taking account the extent of women's part time work (Eurofound, 2015, p. 51). There is also a significantly higher incidence of involuntary part time work – underemployment - of women at an average of around 5 % for women compared to 2 % for men across the OECD. In Australia with its high rates of job casualisation (OECD, 2012), around 25 % of employed women are in casual jobs and 10 % of the female labour force is underemployed (ABS, 2015).[2]

One recently published indictator of inequality across OECD Europe and the United States is that (contributory) pension payments for people over 65 are on average 28 % lower for women than men attributed to women's lower life time earnings and greater representation in part time jobs (OECD, 2015). In Australia there is a significant gender wealth gap and lower holdings in occupational superannuation schemes (Austen, 2014). These effects are of course a dimension of inequality and women's higher risk of poverty across the life course (OECD, 2015; Australian Human Rights

[2] See appendix for further details and tables on women's employment in Australia.

Commission, 2009). These outcomes go to the heart of contemporary interrogations of the high levels of wealth inequality (Stiglitz, 2013; Piketty, 2014) - notwithstanding Perrons' critique that Piketty's analysis does not sufficiently examine the gender dimensions of wealth inequalities (Perrons, 2014).

The stalling of women's employment equality goals

Progress in achieving gender equality in employment is the subject of considerable scholarly interest with extensive investigation and theorizing as to why the labour market has been so resistant to change. Gender sociologist, Paula England, describes the 'gender revolution' as 'uneven and stalled' (England, 2010). Gosta Esping-Andersen calls it the 'incomplete revolution' (2009). Old patterns of gender based segmentation are still highly visible in the the 21st century despite significant advances especially in relation to education levels, overall employment participation rates, and on certain indicators such as women's improved representation in higher status jobs (Charles, 2011; England, 2010). Charles and Grusky attribute the effect of service sector expansion in post-industrial economies to the changes in the composition of occupations 'a compositional effect' and also an 'adaptive effect' as much of the service work created has become the province of women with substantial domestic responsibilities (Charles and Grusky, 2004, p. 4 and p. 28).

Alternative explanations for occupational segregation (Estevez-Abe et al. 2001, Estevez-Abe, 2005) focus on the intersection between the skills composition of the workforce, the preferred production strategies of countries to promote international competitiveness, and the nature of complementary welfare state provisions which converge under a theory termed the Varieties of Capitalism (Hall and Soskice, 2001). Mandel and Shalev (2009) argue that theory about the effects of skill composition as it impacts on occupational segregation means that women with lower level skills are more at risk of sequestration in low end 'feminised' occupations particularly in liberal market economies characterised by 'unregulated labor markets and porous social safety-nets' and which offer 'flexibility at the cost of employment insecurity' (Mandel and Shalev, 2009, p. 172). McCall and Orloff usefully summarise this perspective on occupational segregation in the following way:

> Strong gender segregating effects are embedded in durable cultural norms of gender-appropriate behaviour that shape choices within a structure of constraint; yet at the same time, both gender and nongender specific political and economic institutions and policies can reinforce or mitigate these tendencies (McCall and Orloff, 2005, p. 168).

As long ago as the late 1980s, Walby cited the historical antecedents of contemporary segregation including the outright exclusion of women from many occupations, differential pay rates for the same jobs, and the exclusion of women from paid employment after the major world wars (Walby, 1989, p. 216). Walby's explanations for occupational segregation have continuing resonance for some scholars in the context of the post-industrial 'new economy' with its persistent gender pay gap, occupational segregation, and continuing male dominance in occupations with the highest status, salaries and levers of power (Perrons et al., 2006, p. 18).

A core aim of my doctoral research was to understand the social risk potential of precarious employment for midlife women. But the study raised unexpected questions as to the changing nature of employment especially for women. As a doctoral research project with constraints on sample size (38 participants), it may best be viewed as a prelude to a larger study. The strength of the study however relates to what it uncovered through broad-based and in-depth interrogations of women's working lives and how their experiences related to the emerging picture of the changes in the contemporary labour market.

Loss of middle level employment

The most compelling finding of the research was the number of women who had lost middle level SER employment and had been unable, in midlife (mid 40s-mid 50s for this study) to regain a job at similar level. Most had subsequently become entrapped in precarious jobs consistent with findings from longitudinal studies in Australia. Analysis of the Household Income and Labour Dynamics Australia (HILDA) study involving 17,000 participants surveyed annually since 2001 finds that there is a significant entrapment effect within casual employment, especially for women and for workers over 45 (Watson, 2013). While casual jobs can lead to permanent jobs, depending on various factors, there is also a high rate of transition to joblessness and a high rate of long term continuity in the casual job. These findings are consistent with those of the longitudinal study undertaken by the University of Sydney's Workplace Research Centre between 2006 and 2009 involving around 7000 participants (Workplace Research Centre, 2009).

Most of the women had a post school qualification and around half the group of thirty-eight, had a university degree. Again, drawing from the HILDA data, Watson demonstrates in his analysis that advanced educational qualifications such as a degree have a weak effect in helping women to make a transition from casual to permanent employment (Watson, 2013, p. 9). There were also a number of

women who, following years of child raising, most working part time, were attempting in midlife to forge a new working life in full time work sometimes in conjunction with retraining. For all the women in the study, there was an imperative to work in good jobs to sustain a decent standard of living in the present and to make savings for retirement through Australia's compulsory superannuation system. As per the trend around the world (OECD, 2013), pension eligibility ages are increasing in Australia over coming decades (possibly to 70 by 2035) so there is a heightened necessity to ensure capacity for continuing employment to later ages. In Australia, unemployment benefit payments are well below poverty- line levels (ACOSS, 2014) and there is a very strict welfare- to- work regime (OECD. 2012). These social welfare settings also drive a strong imperative for workforce participation including in part time and casual employment as mandated under social security law[3] and have an effect in enabling jobs growth in these areas (the subject of my 2013 RDW presentation based on OECD analysis of the Australian labour market (Sheen, 2013; OECD, 2012)).

The difficulties the women faced in midlife in finding a SER type job might in part be attributed to age and gender discrimination and skills erosion. Such factors are ostensibly open to interventions including retraining and anti-discrimination policies and legislation. These might be particularly effective in a full employment situation with plentiful SER type jobs. However, the reasons for the women's experience has arguably as much to do with those fundamental changes alluded to earlier – growing labour market segmentation and polarization combining both the hollowing out of middle level jobs and constrained opportunity for advancement from the atypical and casual job into a SER job. It was evident that these factors were an overlay on the old patterns gender segmentation of the workforce.

Most women in the study worked in traditional sectors of female employment: administration/clerical work, teaching, community service work including care work, retail trade, call centre work, and cleaning. Many – but not all - had also held jobs in these areas in the 1980s and 1990s with the core difference in a SER-type employment relationship. But well into the new century, these jobs had significantly changed in character and it is these changes which I wish to focus on in considering the 'future of work' implications of the research. The core change of course was that many of the jobs had been converted from SER jobs into casual and contract jobs. But it is important to understand what factors lay behind this change. I identify three quite different but intersecting forces.

[3] Guide to Social Security Law- http://guides.dss.gov.au/guide-social-security-law/3/2/8/10

Public sector contraction and the outcome of austerity

The pressures on public funding both for jobs specifically in the public service and also for jobs in agencies and institutions funded by governments have been a major cause of the contraction in the number of ongoing SER jobs for women in Australia. Jobs in these sectors cover core areas of women's employment with 22% of employed females in the occupational category 'clerical and administrative workers' and a further 15% in the category 'community and personal service workers'. The latter occupation covers the heavily feminized industry sector 'health care and social assistance' which accounts also for 22% of female employment (ABS, 2015). While the 'clerical and administrative' occupation is distributed across a wide range of industry sectors, 6.5% of employed females are in the industry sector 'public administration and safety'. Further, 12% of employed females work in the sector 'education and training', mostly in the occupational category covered by 'professionals'. Altogether, up to 40% of employed females in Australia work in an industry sector heavily reliant on government funding either directly or indirectly, assuming that the bulk of funding in education, social services, and public administration ultimately comes from government sources. [4]

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) inquiry into insecure employment in 2012 tracked the growth of casual and contract work across publicly funded sectors (ACTU, 2012, p.52), showing for the previous decade a high degree of conversion of ongoing employment arrangements to casual and contract arrangements in the Australian public service. Other researchers note that part time jobs, also those most likely to be contract and casual, in the public service are predominantly held by women (Whelan, 2011, p.26)

The ACTU inquiry also interrogated the way that short term government funding of community sector and not- for-profit services has greatly increased job insecurity as workers can only be employed on short term contracts. In addition to the losses in secure public service employment, it has also meant an ongoing loss in many traditional areas of 'good' jobs in education such as those covering university, secondary and primary teaching. In Australia, for example, around 50% of tertiary teaching is undertaken by casual staff with few openings for tenured employment (May et al, 2011). Unions covering primary and secondary schooling express similar concerns about the high level of job insecurity in their sectors (Australian Education Union, 2014; Queensland Teachers Union, 2014).

[4] See appendix for further details and tables on women's employment in Australia.

Given the pressures on public funding in core sectors of feminized employment it is hardly surprising that the women that I interviewed for the research faced such large challenges in regaining secure employment once this had been lost. Two women, both with university degrees, who had left such jobs, reflected on the challenges they subsequently faced on leaving public service jobs:

> I actually thought I had some transferable skills that would be useful in a whole lot of areas, but it was really hard trying to find some work (Stephanie, 49[5])

> I left a secure, permanent job in the public service (after 13 years). It was a big mistake….I regret leaving that job. I left the job as there was no progress, [it] seemed the last chance to do something else. But I didn't understand about the job market. The job market is merciless in its treatment of new staff. You need to be an instant expert (Laura, 55).

Another participant reflected on the implications for her of short term government funding:

> My current position is in the community health sector. Two days a week is ongoing and that is an administrative function and two days is a contract (in health promotions) which is renewed each year hopefully…So there is an element of my job that has insecurity tied to it. It would be very difficult to have half my wage cut back to two days per week as it provides a necessary cash flow for us. Finding any other employment, surviving in this smallish town, finding employment that is regular and ongoing, is very difficult. The shaky basis of employment does weigh on you. There is only three full time staff and the rest on contract part time, around 35 in all. You're well aware if you don't get on with your employer you might find that when your contract is for renewal you might not be in the running for it.

In most OECD countries women are over represented in public sector employment (Anghel et al., 2011. 3). Moreover, where in some countries particularly Scandinavian countries, there are higher levels of female employment participation, this is achieved through the higher levels of public sector employment but this also comes with high levels of occupational segregation, notwithstanding these countries' supportive family and tax policies (Charles, 2011, p. 359).

The erosion of SER employment in publicly funded industry sectors in Australia is an outcome of the long term ascendancy in Australia of neoliberal policy regimes, with a high focus on public debt retrenchment, and indeed this has been a core objective of the conservative government elected in 2013. It parallels the austerity measures throughout many other developed countries following the global financial crisis. And indeed, the implications of austerity for women's equality are the subject of the recently published by book by Maria Karamessini and Jill Rubery (2014). As Karamessini (p. 4) notes in her chapter in the book, of equal application to Australia:

> Given that the public sector and social transfers and services have been key for women's economic integration and access to protected employment and good quality jobs from the Second World War onwards, austerity represents a major challenge for gender equality.

[5] All names and identifying details of research participants have been changed.

Demand-driven employment arrangements

While there has been an effect of increased casual and contract employment in feminized industry and occupational sectors from constrained government funding, the effect is also felt in the private sector from demand driven employment arrangements and again in heavily feminized sectors. The industry sectors, 'retail trade' and 'accommodation and food services', together account for another 20% of employed females (15 % males) in Australia. These are both heavily casualised sectors, with over 20% of its female workforces reporting insufficient hours of work (ABS, 2015). In both industries, there is a simple, and perfectly reasonable, objective of matching staffing levels to peak business periods both on a weekly basis such as weekends, and a seasonal basis such as pre-Christmas. To this end, they are large employers of young people and students, 15-24. But they are also large employers of women over 24, who may be dependent for the longer term on work in these sectors especially through child raising years and beyond. One study participant, Kayla, 43, was in transition from being a sole parent mostly reliant on a government pension working some hours per week, into returning to full time employment. She describes the change in retail employment starting in the early 1990s and her new challenge to support herself in that industry:

> (Major Australian retail chain store) do not employ full time staff. When I started with (same retail outlet) I was fifteen, I was employed full time, 40 hours a week. There is no such thing as that any more in retail. It is on call casual and if you're lucky, permanent part time with a max of 30 hours. So the best I can hope for is to get that 30 hours per week. Can I survive on 30 hours per week without assistance from the government? I don't know. It remains to be seen…

It may have been true that there was a very strong interface between casual work and other status such as 'in education', in the past. But the business model in certain industries, is that casual (and fixed-term contract) workers are an integral part of ongoing workforce arrangements and not just a supplement to a permanent workforce in busy periods. In these situations, the casual job cannot be a stepping stone into an ongoing SER type job. They are not base level jobs in an occupational hierarchy and as such as are not designed to offer pathways to permanency (Watson, 2013, p. 14). This explains why so many women in the study had been in a casual job for long periods spanning years rather than months. Indeed, there is a high degree of stability in casualised workforces with about 60% of casuals in 2013 with the same employer for more than 12 months (ABS, Job Mobility, 2013). Casualisation in demand-driven employment sectors like retail trade, would be of little account where there are platforms for occupational mobility either within that sector or into other sectors. However, in terms of the potential for women's advancement in employment and equal opportunity objectives, it is the intersection of this

factor in relation to what is happening in other employment sectors such as those affected by public sector austerity measures, which makes it so significant.

As such, it is important to note that demand-driven employment arrangements are not only practiced in the private sector. It is, for example, very common in education across primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, where staffing levels are calibrated to meet variable student numbers and uncertain year to year funding. Again, it is not a matter of such employment being the anomaly, it is increasingly the norm with many teachers being held in such employment arrangements for years on end (ACTU, 2012, p. 33; May, 2011). In my own study, one university employee in administration had been held on a year to year contract for seven years and at the time of interview, had been converted to hourly casual status.

While conventional wisdom asserts that workers such as Kayla in retail trade would benefit from retraining for a new, more secure occupation, the research showed that this was not always an option for women based on costs and the need to work, especially the need to be 'on call' for whatever casual work is available. This comes to a core need for better options for reskilling and retraining workers especially in the welfare to work transition process. But there was also a third important factor that impacted on the women in the study and which is also of major significance in relation to objectives of women's advancement: the labour process.

Changes to the labour process: surveillance, performance monitoring and work intensification

The research showed how women's employment participation was compromised by technologies specifically designed to monitor performance and increase outputs. The link between greater job insecurity and work intensification was explored in a Rowntree Foundation Study undertaken in the UK in the 1990s, revealing impacts on the health and well-being of workers (Burchell et al., 2002). The cases described here cross three sectors: administration/clerical, call centre/market research, and production line factory work.

Work intensification in a document processing administrative role in the public service had forced out permanent employee, Laura, 55:

> We were monitored on an hourly basis against performance benchmarks and if we did not reach them you would receive an email so there was a lot of pressure.

Losing her permanent job, she became long term unemployed with more vulnerability to such practices in a probationary position in a clerical job she was compelled to accept under welfare-to-work requirements:

> They graphed my performance which was 5% below the average at the beginning. By the end of the probationary period, I had achieved the average but I had already been sacked on the basis of the earlier performance.

For call centre and market research work, Eliza, 55 reports:

> What they do is take an average, worked out mathematically and the average is what they expect, that and above but not below. If it's below, every hour or two they will be coming to you to tell you that they have just had a printed list of the lapse time between calls you've made, how long you were on each interview and how many interviews you've got this far.

Working on a production line in a factory, Margot, 55, reports:

> Because it is a casual workforce, they can monitor how quick you are. All those people in the office, white collars, they're working out who's fast and who's not. And if you are not up to it – because they have you through a (labour hire) agency, you're not back there.

For the workers in these situations, there was a constant threat of job loss through continuous performance measurement which dictated the required outputs from their jobs on a shifting scale. It was not only applied in casual employment arrangements, but also in the public service in a SER employment relationship. As public sector employment, traditionally a haven of 'good' jobs, has increasingly come under pressure with funding constraints, its labour processes start to resemble those in more highly casualised sectors especially at the lower skills levels. Whelan (2011, p. 24) notes that in the Australian public service the lower level employment ranks are dominated by women and the higher levels by men, so potentially more susceptible to speeding up and continuous performance monitoring.

Work intensification, on-the-job surveillance and performance monitoring – and the negation of any potential for the worker's control over the work process itself caused stress and alienation for the women in the study reducing potential for continuity for the long term. It is plausible that these conditions will result in the longer term in ill health and disability compromising the potential for ongoing employment into later ages especially important with the increase in pension eligibility ages. (Sheen, 2015). Indeed other analysis of the longitudinal Household, Income and Labour Dynamics Australia survey shows disturbing evidence of the negative mental health consequences of poor quality employment, with worse outcomes than unemployment (Butterworth et al, 2011).

Intensification strategies in workplaces facilitate easy disposal of labour by simply speeding up performance requirements and indeed had helped to push one study participant, Laura, out of her permanent job. Of course by definition, casual employment arrangements facilitate labour disposal. This could be an outcome of reduced demand for a particular product but it also could be an outcome of an employer's desire for labour replacement. One way this could be achieved is through the offshoring of jobs as illustrated by the experience of one study participant, Terri, 43, who lost her job in a call centre after almost three years, when her job was outsourced to the Philippines and India:

> After being told on 1st July when I turned up for work, I was told that I had no job – I felt very depressed that day. I thought they would at least even give us time to look for another job but that was it. I turned up for my normal hours but they told me, 'Sorry but we meant to tell you the day before that you have no job', so that was it, after close to three years.

In addition, there is considerable capacity for complete labour replacement with a significant literature showing the extent to which advanced computer technologies now have capacity across a range of routine and non routine jobs and tasks (Frey and Osborne, 2013; Brynjolfsson and McAfee, 2014, 2011). While there was no particular example of this in the study, it is feasible in the type of administrative and production line work described by some participants.

Labour commodification emerges in demand driven employment arrangements, as in retail sales work, and subsets such as call centre work. It also emerges where there is a discounting of the value of work which has a high social value – in 'education and training', 'health care and social assistance', 'public administration and safety' which are all highly feminized industry sectors accounting for 40% of employment for women in Australia (15.5% for men) (ABS, 2015). Commodification is also evident by the high levels of underemployment for women across core feminized industry sectors: 10% in 'education and training', 10% in 'health care and social assistance', 19% in 'retail trade' and 17% in 'administrative and support services' (ABS, 2015). Australia's underemployment rate for women stands at 11% and 7% for men and is a significant dimension of precarious workforce arrangements.

Public policy implications for gender equality

The discussion to this point raises many questions about the project of increasing women's labour force participation and achieving greater economic and employment equality, with its spin offs into economic growth (IMF, 2013). High levels of gender segmentation in the labour force, continuing historic patterns well into the 21st century, have proved a vulnerability for women with trends in public sector austerity, demand driven employment arrangements, and degraded work quality through changes in the labour

process. These factors have in combination significantly reduced opportunities for women for SER employment. They have served instead to foster greater female sequestration in lower paid and insecure employment with poor working conditions as the hallmarks of labour market segmentation and polarization.

In Australia, as in many other countries, this outcome is further consolidated by women's caring responsibilities for which there is no recognition in national accounting systems (Folbre, 2015). A paucity of 'family friendly' working opportunities most often found in permanent SER employment (Carney and Junor, 2014, p. 484), pushes women into 'flexible' – casual - employment arrangements and by default, through lack of alternative options, strengthens the demand for such employment.

This analysis highlights the extent to which gender inequality across life time earnings, wealth holdings, and retirement incomes is constructed by the characteristics of women's employment. If as key international agencies agree, that inequality is a constraint on growth (OECD, 2015), and further that women's employment participation would contribute significantly to growth (IMF, 2013) there are major challenges for public policy in improving women's employment opportunities. These challenges cut across diverse sectors of the economy including education and training; social policy; child care; labour law; fiscal policy; and instruments including anti-discrimination legislation. However, the most critical task is to rebuild the hollowed out middle-level SER jobs and to facilitate mobility from casual and atypical jobs into those middle level -and higher- jobs – no easy task by any measure but surely one that needs to be at the heart of any social contract for growth and equality.

In terms of the research and analysis reported in this paper, there are three imperatives for governments to achieve this. The first relates to accountability, and action to ameliorate, the far reaching effects of austerity measures across core sectors of women's employment - not only in the public and government funded sectors, but also in feminized private industry sectors which can take advantage of women's weakened bargaining position in employment in relation to casualisation and degraded labour processes.

The second imperative is in the area of social policies which need to be 'activated' on the SER jobs front for unemployed people along the lines of Employment Retention and Advancement programs[6], and desist in taking the low road of enforcing placement in low quality, precarious jobs as the case in current

[6] See for example, the UK Policy Studies Institute: http://www.psi.org.uk/site/project_detail/384

welfare to work regimes. The best of the ERA programs focused on the quality, pay and prospects of jobs, individual's long term goals, and sustainability within a job, in the unemployment/welfare-to-work transition process. ERA may also include provision of financial incentives through the tax or social security systems to ensure that work pays. In contrast, the current vigorous welfare-to-work regimes such as practiced in Australia has the unfortunate effect of forcing too many women into precarious employment under requirements attached to income support payments (below poverty line unemployment payments) due to lack of alternatives for SER type work. For many women this means long term entrapment in such jobs, with troubling outcomes across variables including injury, cyclical unemployment and underemployment. It is also means that they receive no support for finding better quality employment, or assistance for the reskilling and retraining that they might need for ensuring they are able to keep working until the later pension eligibility ages.

The third imperative is in the area of labour law. There are significant weaknesses in Australia in this area which other countries would do well to avoid. The most significant is that there are no protections against long term entrapment in casual employment. This means casual work and dependent contract and subcontracting arrangements have become mainstream employment arrangements embedded in many business models in both public and private sectors rather than used for intermittent and short term work. These arrangements need to be curtailed through strict conversion requirements after a period of time, and the application to casual and dependent contract workers of the full suite of labour standards including leave entitlements and protections against dismissal. This was a core recommendation of the Australian Council of Trade Union inquiry into insecure employment (ACTU< 2012).

While the focus in this paper has been on women's employment equality, many of the issues raised and the proposed solutions are highly relevant to the current crisis in youth unemployment in many countries including Australia (OECD/ILO, 2014; ILO 2013). In addition to high unemployment rates, young people's disadvantage is also encumbered by a lack of SER employment opportunities especially for entry level positions. Many are entrapped for long periods in casual, substandard employment and are prone to underemployment all of which has been the subject of much international analysis. [7]

[7] Statistics for Australia and OECD in my presentation at Future of Welfare Conference, October, 2014, http://www.slideshare.net/informaoz/tag/futureofwelfare14

By addressing the issues for women's employment equality, the G20 Leaders might also be on the right track for achieving their ambitious plans for youth which they articulated in their Brisbane communiqué:

> We are strongly committed to reducing youth unemployment, which is unacceptably high, by acting to ensure young people are in education, training or employment. Our Employment Plans include investments in apprenticeships, education and training, and incentives for hiring young people and encouraging entrepreneurship. We remain focussed on addressing informality, as well as structural and long-term unemployment, by strengthening labour markets and having appropriate social protection systems. Improving workplace safety and health is a priority. We ask our labour and employment ministers, supported by an Employment Working Group, to report to us in 2015 (G20, 2014).

Conclusions - the future of work

This paper has focused on three dimensions of changing labour market conditions which are impacting on women's employment advancement goals – ongoing public sector financing retrenchment (austerity), demand driven employment arrangements, and labour process modifications relating to surveillance, monitoring and work intensification. These factors set the ground for wide ranging changes in the nature of employment which are already in train in many areas. While much is made of the effect of digital technology on employment and the possibility of labour replacement, the wider effects might be that many jobs are increasingly fragmented into tasks as, for example, online labour markets facilitate.[8] While a considerable body of this type of work can be undertaken online, much of it also takes place in real time and space. Essentially the work remains the same but the way that it is organized and allocated is changed by the new online platforms where workers compete with each other to undertake particular tasks.

A further example of how the fragmentation of occupations and jobs might occur is in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) which will have profound effects on the traditional occupation of teaching. The work – teaching - essentially remains the same but the way it is undertaken and the employment relationship it embodies, is fundamentally altered. Such developments take forward and mutate the related trends towards casual, contract and sub-contracting employment arrangements. It is the potential in new technologies for occupational dismemberment as much as labour replacement. This is an important point given that much of women's employment is in human services, in jobs which cannot be readily turned over to a robot. But the profile of such jobs can nevertheless be thoroughly be thoroughly mutated – and not to women's advantage.

[8] See my article in The Conversation: https://theconversation.com/online-labour-marketplaces-job-insecurity-gone-viral-20020

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This conference paper will be further developed for publication in an academic journal. I provide commentary in Australia on employment and social policy issues across a range of media and have contributed over 30 articles to the academic news platform *The Conversation*, widely republished and quoted - https://theconversation.com/profiles/veronica-sheen-7750/articles. Further information and access to my various research reports, paper and articles: www.veronicasheen.net

Appendix – Australian women's employment

Core industry sectors of female employment 6/17	Female employment %	Male employment %	Gender pay gap*
Health Care and Social Assistance	21%	5%	30.7%
Retail Trade	12%	9%	10%
Education and Training	11.6%	4.4%	12%
Accommodation and Food Services	8.6%	6%	8%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	8%	9%	25.3%
Public Administration and Safety	6.5%	6%	7.3%
Total	67.5%	39.4%	18.2%

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) Underemployed, Industry and Occupation, Original - February 2015, 6291.0.55.003 Labour Force, Workplace Gender Equality Agency - https://www.wgea.gov.au/media-releases/national-gender-pay-gap-rises-182
*Average full time weekly ordinary time earnings

Core industry sectors of female employment	Informalisation – employees %without paid leave entitlem'ts	Female under-employment%	Male under-Employment%
Accommodation and Food Services	65.4%	23.6%	19.5%
Retail Trade	39.3%	18.8%	13.8%
HealthCare and Social Assistance	19.9%	10%	8.6%
Education and Training	17.7%	10%	8.7%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	13.7%	5.6%	5.7%
Public Administration and Safety	9.7%	4.3%	3.7%
Average	24%	11.3% (av)	6.9% (av)

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