

Submission Number: 22
Date Received: 16/01/09



NEW SOUTH WALES TEACHERS FEDERATION

SUBMISSION TO

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE
ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING INQUIRY :

*Combining school and work -
supporting successful youth transitions*

students@work
balancing school and work

A new information service from NSW public school and TAFE teachers.

New South Wales
Teachers Federation

Authorised by

**Dennis Long
Acting General Secretary
16 January 2009**

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Part One : Background

The NSW Teachers Federation is a union comprising 65,000 members in public schools and TAFE colleges in NSW.

In 2007, the Executive of the Federation (all classroom teachers) decided to commission independent research into the extent of students aged 15 years and over who combine full-time study, and part-time work of at least three hours per week, and examine the impact that work has on those students in terms of their roles as students, workers and family and community members.

The study was undertaken in the context of the then government's *Work Choices* legislation, and examined the impact of those changes on students. Older students (those in Years 11 and 12) were very able to articulate the differences between their conditions at work, being mostly employed on Awards, and those of younger students, or newer entrants to the workforce, mainly employed under the Work Choices regime, with stripped back conditions such as penalty rates and allowances. This aspect of the study strongly supports the view that young workers deserve strong legislative protection in the workplace.

The study, undertaken by research organisation Think: Insight and Advice in May 2007, is published in two parts. The first looks at high school students, the second at TAFE students. Excluded from the study were students engaged in family businesses, or undertaking apprenticeships or traineeships.

The full results, published as "*You're Gold...if you're fifteen years old*", can be found at the following web address. Copies are attached to this email submission.

<http://www.studentsatwork.org.au/Documents/You're-Gold-if-You're-15-Years-Old.pdf>

<http://www.studentsatwork.org.au/Documents/TAFE-Supplementary-Report.pdf>

Research Methodology

All details can be found in the attached report. Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected, from male and female students, in proportion to enrolments in each of Years 10, 11 and 12 in NSW public secondary schools.

Non-directive qualitative methodology

- ❖ 6 affinity groups
 - Boys Year 11 – Loftus (Sutherland Shire – Sydney)
 - Girls Year 10 – Mt. Pritchard (Liverpool Area - Sydney)
 - Boys Year 10 – Adamstown (Newcastle)
 - Girls Year 11 – Valentine (Newcastle)
 - Boys Year 12 – Wollongong
 - Girls Year 12 – Westleigh (Northwest – Sydney)
- ❖ Research conducted "in home"
 - April 3 – May 9 2007
- ❖ Respondents limited to:
 - Full-time students
 - Work a minimum of 3hrs/week throughout the year
 - Employer may not be a family member
- ❖ Discussion guide developed in conjunction with the Teachers Federation, groups conducted by independent researcher and Teachers Federation Research Officer
- ❖ Quantitative

- ❖ Methodology: survey questionnaire
- ❖ Administered via Internet
- ❖ Participants randomly drawn from Australian Youth Panel
- ❖ 300 respondents, proportionate to actual enrolment (quotas used to avoid weighting)
 - Year 10 – 52,340 students in NSW or 40.%
 - Year 11 – 41,499 students in NSW or 32%
 - Year 12 – 35,567 students in NSW or 27%
- ❖ Margin of error +/- 5.6% 19 times out of 20

The NSW context for employment: no minimum age requirement

There is no legislation on NSW covering the minimum age at which students can begin working. The only requirement is that if they wish to leave school altogether before the age of 15, permission of the Department of Education and Training must be sought. Students of any age can be employed in any capacity whatsoever, as long as they are also enrolled in school up to age 15.

It is our understanding that this varies from state to state.

The Teachers Federation Response

The Federation supports the rights of young people combining school and work, and recognises that there are many positive aspects to work, as well as challenges.

Teachers come at the issue from the point of view that successfully maximising their educational potential should be the primary concern for young people, and that structures need to be put in place by government and the community in order to support students to realise that goal, and to assist students in balancing what are a multiplicity of complex demands and roles – as students, workers, family and community members.

The Federation has committed resources to developing the Students@Work website: www.studentsatwork.org.au. This is an attempt to assist students, teachers, parents and employers to work together to meet young people's needs in this balancing act.

In 2009, the main focus of the Federation will be in utilising the expertise of its membership in developing curriculum materials, written by teachers, for teachers, suitable for use in conjunction with the Students@Work site.

Part Two: When, Where and How Much students work

When students work

| Overall Respondents | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
| 6 - 9 am | 5% | 1% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 5% | 5% |
| 9 am - Noon | 4% | 4% | 3% | 2% | 3% | 22% | 17% |
| Noon - 3 pm | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 2% | 22% | 21% |
| 3 - 5 pm | 17% | 15% | 17% | 16% | 15% | 25% | 24% |
| 5 - 7 pm | 23% | 20% | 19% | 28% | 26% | 27% | 21% |
| 7 - 9 pm | 18% | 17% | 19% | 23% | 21% | 21% | 15% |
| 9 - 11 pm | 7% | 7% | 7% | 11% | 10% | 13% | 7% |
| 11 pm - 1 am | 2% | 4% | 3% | 3% | 5% | 5% | 3% |
| 1 - 3 am | 1% | 2% | 2% | 1% | 3% | 4% | 3% |
| 3 - 6 am | 4% | 2% | 5% | 3% | 4% | 5% | 5% |

Table 1 shows that students are most likely to be working at weekends. The cells marked in red show when more than 20% of respondents reported working, the cells marked yellow show when between 10% and 19% reported working.

One remarkable feature of this table is that high school aged students reported working at all hours of the day and night, including during school hours and 5% between 3 and 6 am on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Remember, the study only included students enrolled FULL TIME in high school, and excluded part-time students.

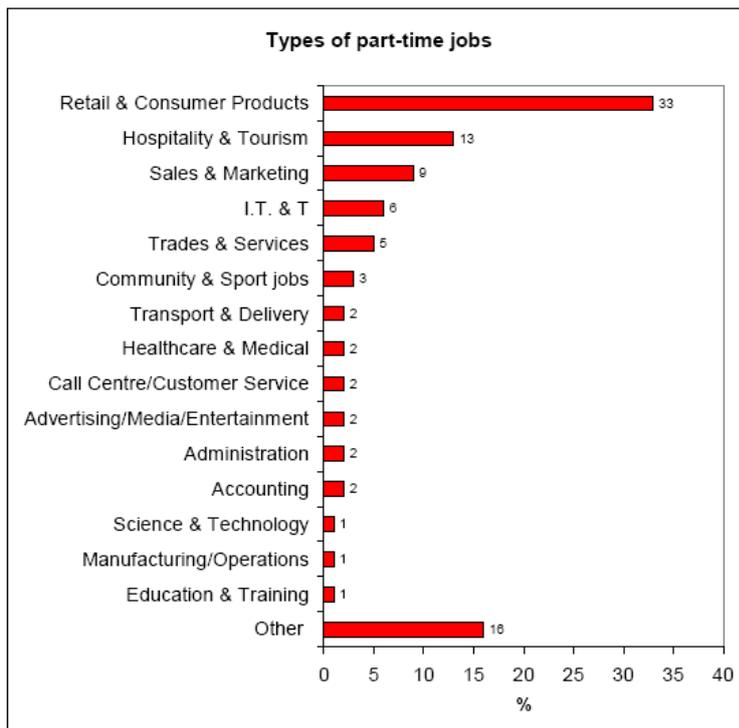
When Respondents Work

| Female Respondents | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
| 6 - 9 am | 2% | 2% | 0% | 1% | 0% | 4% | 3% |
| 9 am - Noon | 7% | 3% | 5% | 2% | 4% | 32% | 24% |
| Noon - 3 pm | 2% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 2% | 25% | 25% |
| 3 - 5 pm | 16% | 15% | 19% | 16% | 16% | 27% | 28% |
| 5 - 7 pm | 25% | 22% | 22% | 37% | 29% | 30% | 24% |
| 7 - 9 pm | 19% | 12% | 19% | 29% | 20% | 22% | 14% |
| 9 - 11 pm | 9% | 5% | 8% | 15% | 11% | 13% | 6% |
| 11 pm - 1 am | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 7% | 3% | 2% |
| 1 - 3 am | 0% | 1% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 1% | 0% |
| 3 - 6 am | 1% | 1% | 3% | 2% | 3% | 3% | 2% |

| Male Respondents | | | | | | | |
|------------------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
| 6 - 9 am | 7% | 1% | 3% | 2% | 3% | 6% | 7% |
| 9 am - Noon | 2% | 4% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 15% | 13% |
| Noon - 3 pm | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 2% | 20% | 18% |
| 3 - 5 pm | 17% | 16% | 16% | 16% | 15% | 24% | 21% |
| 5 - 7 pm | 21% | 19% | 17% | 22% | 24% | 25% | 19% |
| 7 - 9 pm | 18% | 20% | 19% | 20% | 22% | 20% | 15% |
| 9 - 11 pm | 6% | 9% | 6% | 8% | 10% | 12% | 8% |
| 11 pm - 1 am | 2% | 4% | 4% | 3% | 4% | 6% | 4% |
| 1 - 3 am | 2% | 3% | 4% | 2% | 4% | 6% | 5% |
| 3 - 6 am | 6% | 3% | 6% | 4% | 4% | 7% | 7% |

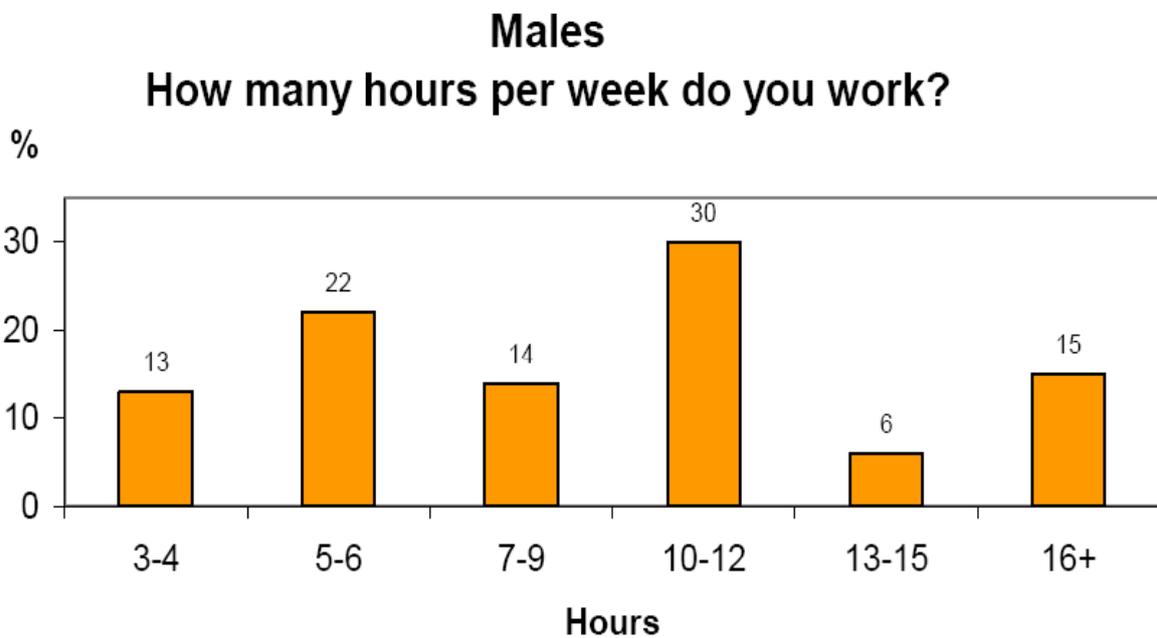
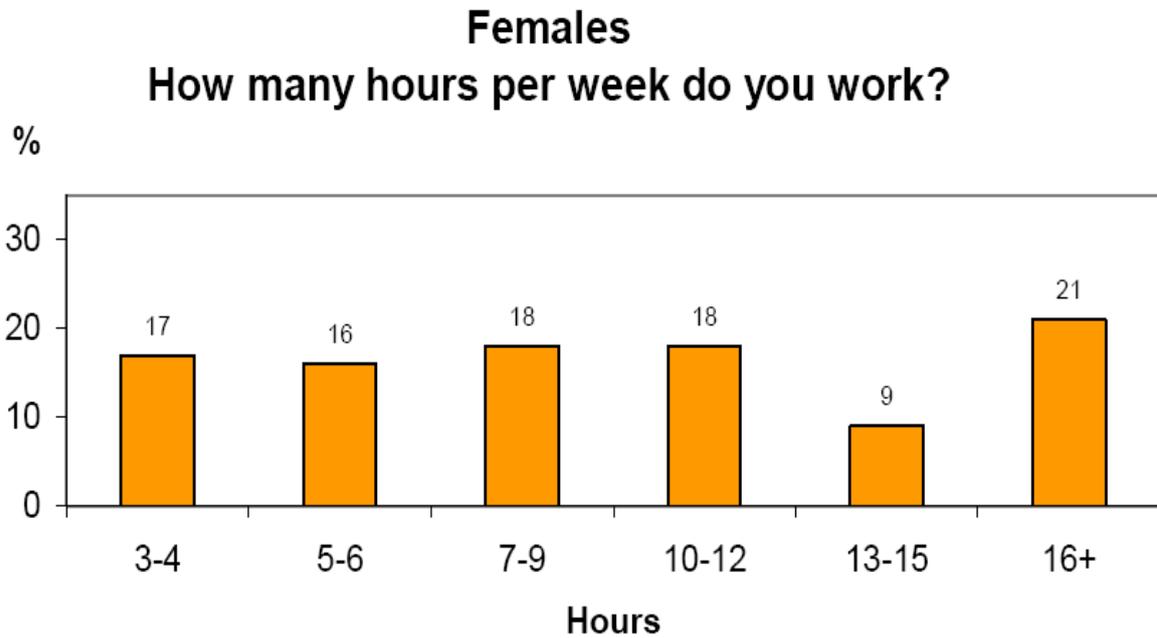
Female students were more likely to work on Sundays, and slightly more likely to work later hours during the week.

Where students work



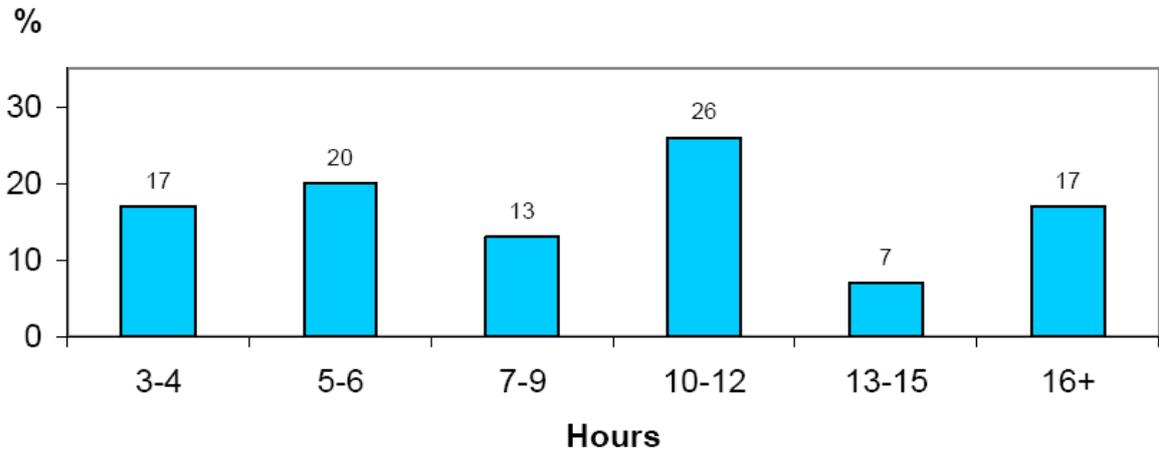
It is not surprising that the majority of students (55 % work in retail and consumer products, hospitality and tourism and sales and marketing. However, it is worth noting that students do work in a large variety of industries and jobs.

Hours worked

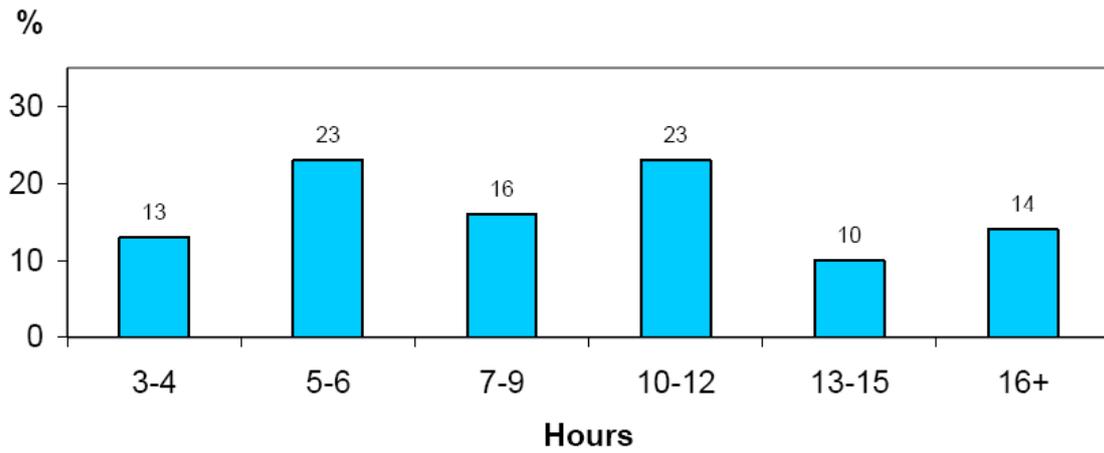


- A slightly higher percentage of males work more than ten hours (51%) per week than females (48%)
- However, more females (30% v 21%) work 13 hours or more each week.

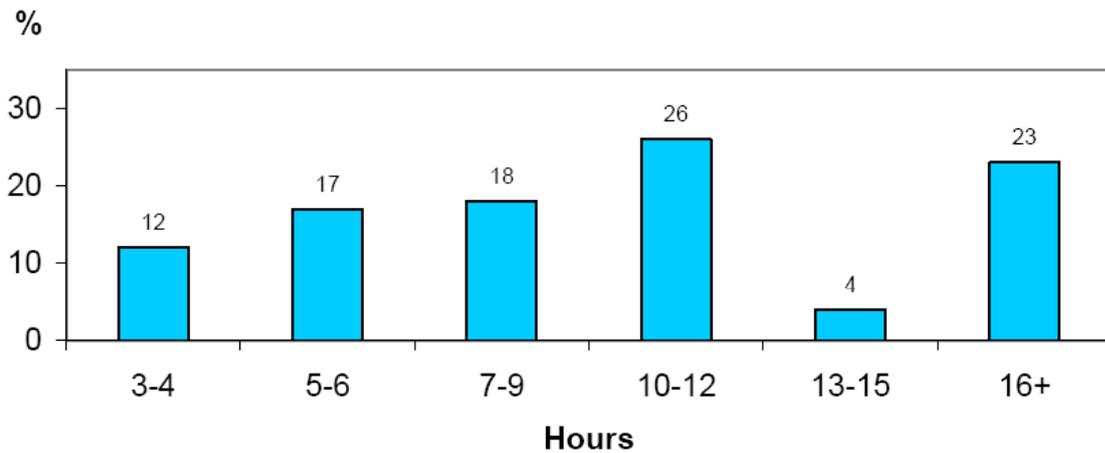
Year 10
How many hours per week do you work?



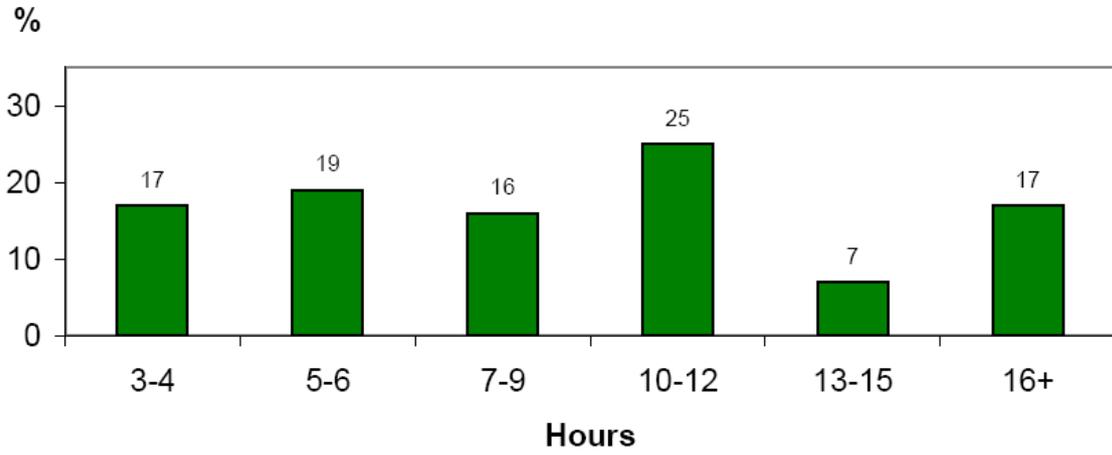
Year 11
How many hours per week do you work?



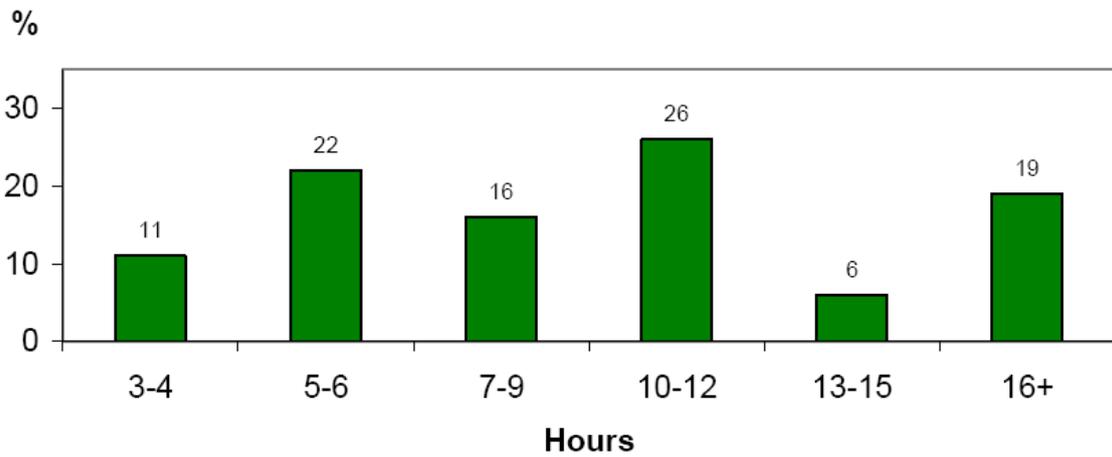
Year 12
How many hours per week do you work?



Metro Area How many hours per week do you work?



Non Metro Area How many hours per week do you work?



Part Three : The vulnerability of young workers, including comments from young workers

Students believed that Work Choices gave employers more opportunity to exploit the inexperience of young workers. It compounded their confusion about workplace rules and regulations, and few have the knowledge or confidence to negotiate pay or conditions.

In fact, many young workers reported not even asking about pay rates, and the first time they knew their hourly rate was upon receipt of their first pay packet.

When I was younger, I didn't care. I would've worked if they had paid me \$5 an hour but then I got there and it was \$6 and I thought, "This is the best job in the world."

I was too scared to ask them how much because I was concerned that they would think that I was just there for the money.

"They Make You Fire Yourself"

Students are aware that as they get older, and their pay rates increase, they are often fired to make way for younger workers. One student observed:

They can't really fire us so they just make life hard for you. So, they say, "Work these hours." But if you can't anytime you miss three shifts, they can get rid of you. So, they will give you the three worst shifts and make sure that you can't swap'em. So when you don't show, they can fire you. So, that way they can get some new people. They make you fire yourself.

Once they start work, students are keenly interested in the "rules" of the workplace, and want to know that they, and their peers, are being treated fairly. Many believe such matters should be taught in school:

You know how we get sex education and stuff? We should get educated about our rights so that we don't get exploited.

I reckon they should make it clearer; they should teach it in schools.

They taught us how to do interview but it was too late; we already had jobs. It should be done at the end of year 8.

Some are self-motivated and seek out information, and others desire employers provide readily accessible information:

I look up award rates and look up my rights. My mum looks it up for me.

There should be an award on the back of your payslip which tells you how much you should be getting paid for your age.

Parents were the most common source of information, but teachers were seen a reliable and trustworthy:

At school, our teachers want to make sure everything is alright. They're not going to be swayed like our parents are. Teachers look over us but they still keep that professionalism.

The school carers advisor gives advice and is very helpful. When you see him, he is good but he problem is getting to see him.

I got my job through school originally. My carers advisor got this fax about a job and she took it around. No one else even applied, so I got my job through her.

Few were able to state definitively what a union is, but there was a generalised sense that they work positively on behalf of workers:

They're good. They're enforcing the rights of us as employees.

Unions do try; they work against the work place laws.

If you have a problem at work, they will sort it out and make sure that it is fair and proper.

The "Rules of Engagement"

Young workers often lack even basic knowledge of what rules pertain to their employment.

Girl 1 : I get an extra dollar an hour on Sundays.

Girl 2 : We get double time-and-a-half on Sundays.

Girl 3 : We don't.

Girl 4 : We don't either.

Girl 1 : The old ladies get a tea break after 3 hours or something like that.

Girl 2 : My sister works from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm and she only gets a twenty-minute break.

Girl 3 : I think you are supposed to get a half hour break after five hours.

Whether they should be paid when training or on trial was another source of confusion:

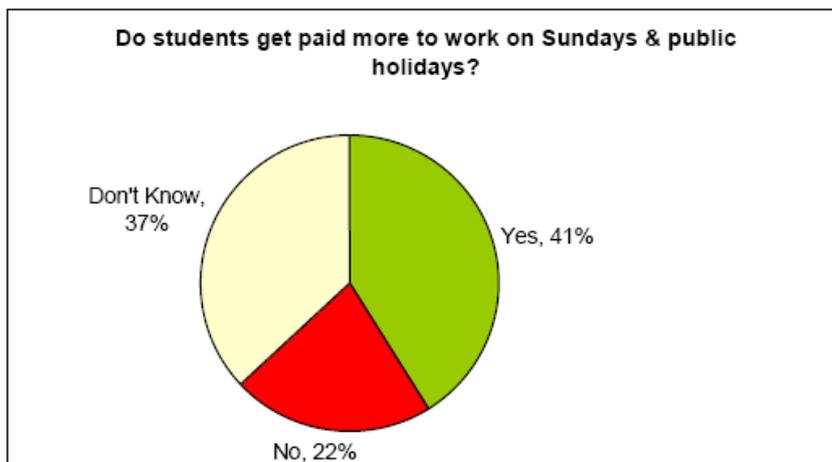
They're supposed to pay you on trial.

No one knew we had to be paid on trial.

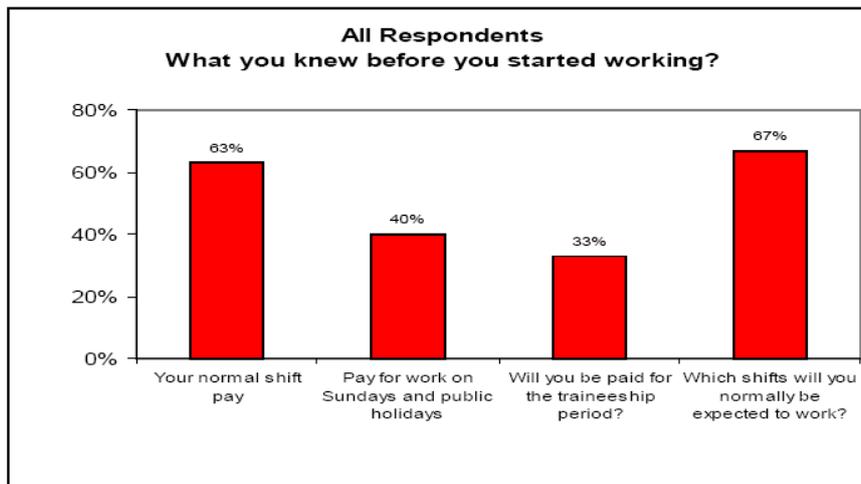
Penalty rates and payment for weekends and holidays was one of the main areas of confusion and topics of discussion amongst student workers:

I know this girl who has been working at Maccas for like four years and she is on the old laws, so she will get time-and-a-half. Whereas, people who come in on the new laws get like a flat rate, even on Sundays.

Now that it has become the norm for things to be open on Sunday, they don't have to pay higher rates. It's just like any other day.



What students knew before beginning employment



Larger employers, e.g. large grocery and retail chains, were most likely to have formal induction and communication programs for young workers.

She showed me this sheet and it showed different ages and the different rates of pay. She said, "We want to tell people what to expect before they start. That's what we're about."

Maccas is good because they give you all the details. I get \$9.60 now because I am 16 and I just got a pay rise.

Student employees were also most likely to have signed an agreement of some kind before commencing work. In NSW people under 18 years are supposed to have their parent or legal guardian sign any contract, but this was very rarely reported. Some students showed it to the responsible adult in their lives, but that was by no means universal.

No, I really don't know what the agreement was all about. My Dad read it. He didn't sign it, I did, but he explained it to me.

I'm not sure what I signed but I knew them so I trusted them. I know that's bad but my parents know them too.

Part Four: The positive aspects of work for young people

Some students were able to recall childhood experiences of work which made their current circumstances seem luxurious in comparison!

My Dad drives taxi. So, my first job was washing cars on the front lawn - \$3 each. All the taxis would drive up and I'd make \$9 a weekend. I worked so hard for that money.

I had this job delivering prescriptions for the chemist. I was getting \$4 an hour. It was 38°C. And once we were done, we had to go back to the pharmacy and sweep up the dust. Sometimes, we only got \$8 for two hours. It just wasn't worth it.

The **social aspects** of work can be one of the biggest attractions for young people. Work can open up new social networks outside of school and home.

I think [work] is good for making friends.

I just like getting out of the house, away from Mum.

If you go there and you like the people you work with, it is okay. You go out and do stuff. Not just as work colleagues but as friends.

Another benefit of the **development of social and communication skills**. Several respondents felt that work prepared them for a variety of interactions in the adult world, including the ability to deal with difficult people and colleagues.

It is really good to interact with different sorts of people than if you were just at school. At work, there is that one girl who no one likes at school but at work you have got to interact with her. It is good life skills to learn to work with people you wouldn't talk to otherwise.

There was this old man who kept coming round. I was so scared. He kept stroking my hand and saying "Nice girl." You need to learn how to handle things like that.

I get scared when all the boys come in from surfing. Sometimes, they are nice, but sometimes they are boneheads. It's good to have the self-confidence to deal with them.

Work can provide an opportunity for young people to develop independently of parents and siblings: work adds another layer to their maturity. Some students reported a high level of satisfaction with accomplishments outside of home and school; some attach a sense of pride to new skills acquired at work.

Personal satisfaction. You get a buzz out of doing something; you can make a good coffee!

Others say that part-time work can help develop a strong curriculum vitae for pursuing other opportunities later in life.

I love my job because I want to work with kids. So, this gives me the chance to do it without having a degree. So, it's really not like work.

I am doing a traineeship in hospitality which will help me get a job in future.

If you work, it looks good later on. You've got something to put on your CV. It shows you understand teamwork, it builds character, you get a bigger idea of who you are and what you are.

Students often report finding themselves in leadership positions in their workplaces. This particularly applies to the older cohort, who are often in managerial and supervisory positions, especially in retail and food outlets, by the time they are also finishing school. These leadership qualities and experiences are very rarely

recognised within the school system, and students are often left balancing their roles inside and outside school.

I like my job because everybody listens to me at work. You can earn respect. You feel like you are part of something.

It makes you look responsible to your manager. If staff listen to you, then you are using your leadership skills. Your manager might think that you can do more.

Of course, as for all workers paid work also enables students to spend or save money, and often to help meet family obligations and contribute to family income.

You start working and you gave up. I saved and bought my first Gameboy and I thought I was the coolest kid in the world. My parents never bought me anything extra.

It's just the feeling of having it there. Knowing that you have that money in your bank account and you know if you want to buy something or go somewhere, you can.

I spend most of my money on credit for my phone.

Everyone's on pre-paid now.

If you don't have a job, you can't go out.

I live at MacDonald's.

Every weekend we say, "Let's go to Subway."

Then, it comes to friends and you don't want to let them down, so you go.

Having your own money, you can go out and do what you like. Whereas, if you are sponging off your parents, you get all the questions : "Where are you going? What are you doing?"

Movies and dinner; there's \$50 gone.

With a car, the cost never ends. I spend at least a hundred dollars a week on my car.

Cars are killing my money these days : insurance, petrol, the regos.

It's hard to try to save while going out and paying for petrol.

Some young workers report becoming more conscious of the value of things and more responsible as a result of working:

When it's my own money, I tend not to spend it so freely. Now that it's my money, I value it a lot more.

You have a different attitude to what you buy. I have a wealthy friend and she doesn't work. Sometimes she asks us for money but she doesn't really realise what it means.

When you have a job, it changes everything because you have a bigger responsibility.

Parents give me the money for the things that I need; not the things I want.

I don't think our parents make us; we just kind of feel like we should.

I feel bad these days, taking money off my parents. I mean, you have a job so you feel responsible.

Part Five: Balancing work and study

About an equal number of working students believed that school was more important than work, or that work takes priority because you are being paid to be at work.

Good employers generally accommodate students' requests around shifts and rosters when given adequate notice, but student workers find it hard to say "no" to bosses, even when it is in their own best interests to do so.

I don't want to cause conflict. Sometimes my boss will ask me to work and I will, even when I should be doing schoolwork.

It's a hard thing because you need the money but you have to study.

We have a pretty understanding boss. So, if you tell him you can't work a certain day before he puts out the schedule, then you won't have to work.

If you tell them in advance, they generally won't roster you on that day. Otherwise, you have to find someone else on your own.

Some employers take an active interest in their employee's education and will place their own restrictions on the number of hours or shifts worked

She won't give me any more shifts; she wants me to do well in school.

He understands that we've got the HSC.

Many student workers have very tightly planned schedules, which disorganised employers can wreak havoc on when they have students "on call".

Many students reported having to keep mobile phones on at school in case their boss called them in to a shift, or needing to take their work uniform with them to school, in order to be prepared to fill a shift at late notice straight from school.

Other, rigidly inflexible employers meant students were unable to take part in curriculum activities like excursions which finished outside the normal school day. In consultation with students, teachers and parents at a town meeting in Armidale subsequent to release of the report, teachers reported difficulties with organising extended and overnight excursions away from the city due to work demands on students. This included activities which are mandated as part of the curriculum.

It's really kind of disorganised about when I will work. He only messages me a few hours in advance. It stresses me out because I like to plan when I do my assignments.

If I have an assignment that is given to me on a Tuesday that the due Thursday, I might not be able to do it because I have to work on Tuesday and Wednesday nights.

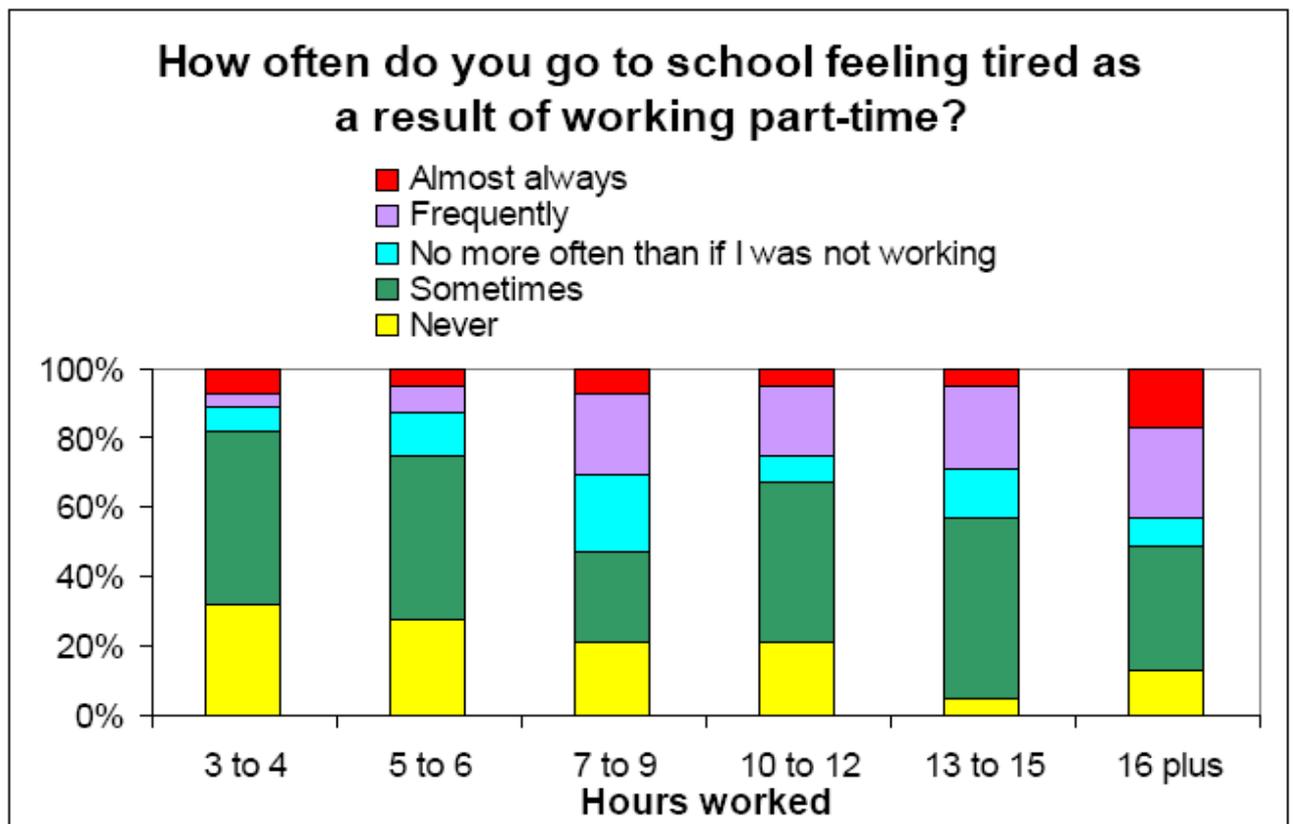
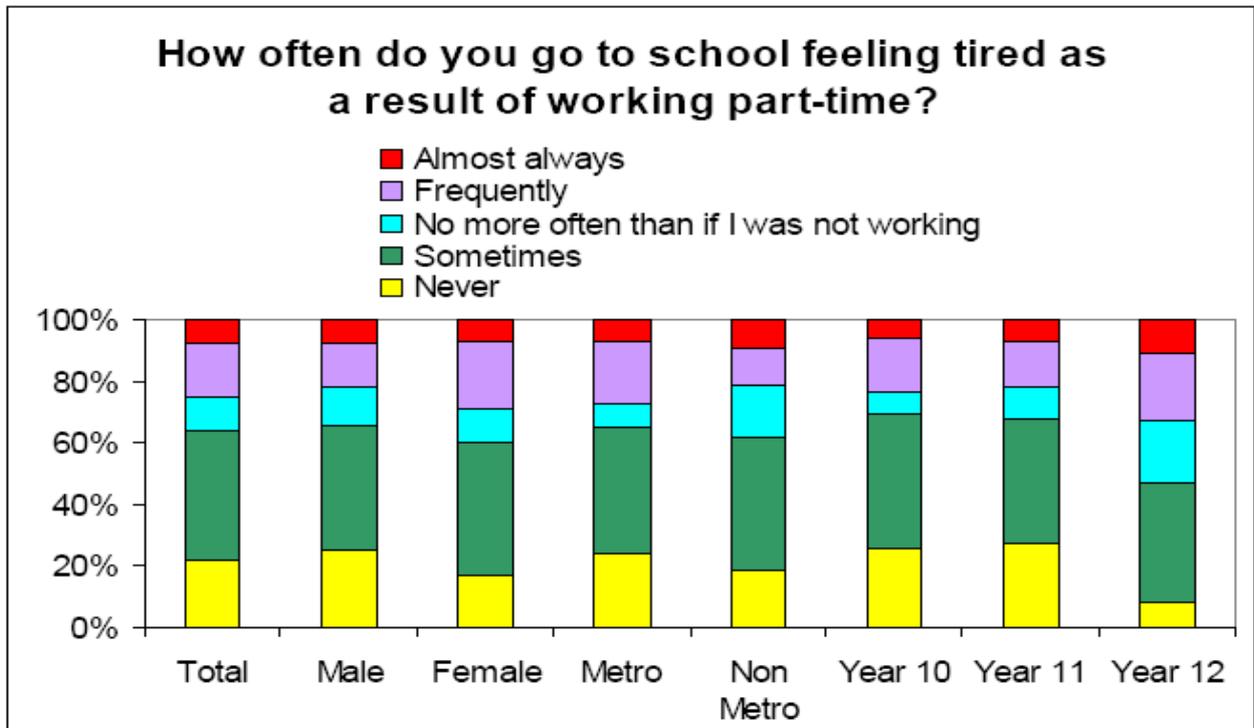
Homework is the worst. They say, "Do this tonight." But I can't because I have to work. So, you leave it to the next day. But then, you end up not doing it and it all just builds up and you fall behind.

Student fatigue

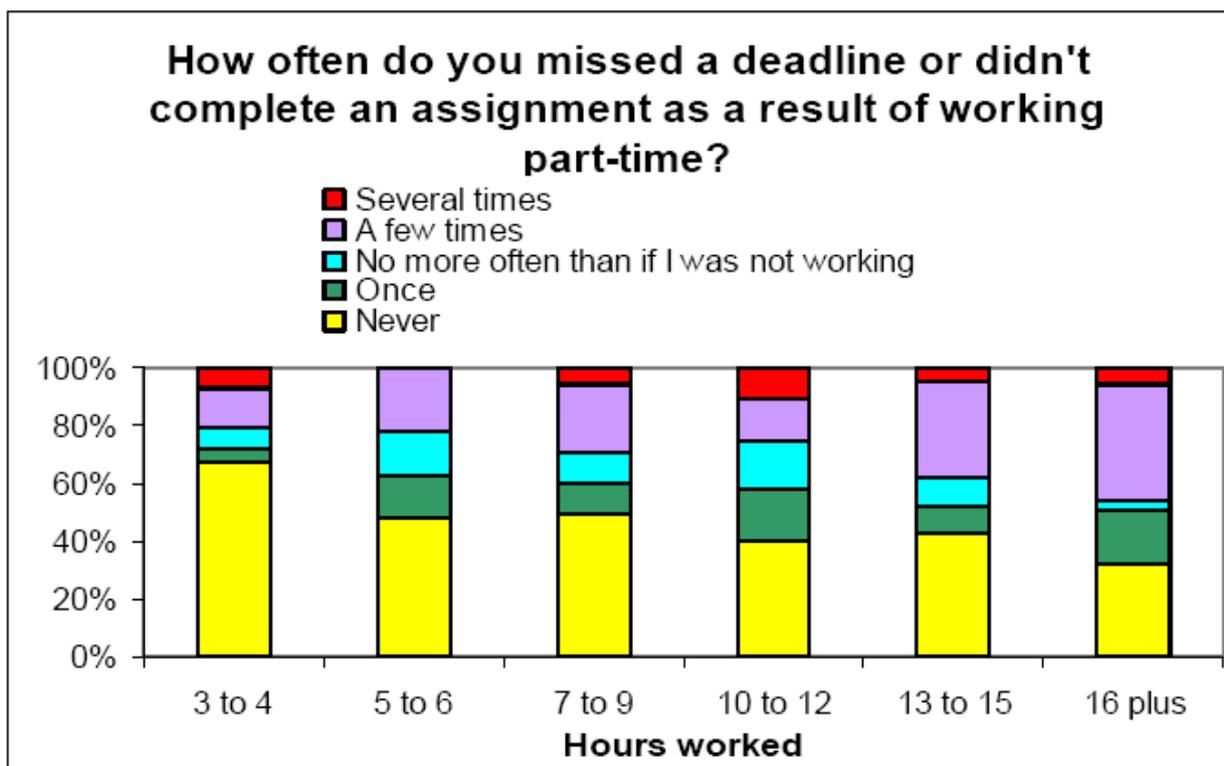
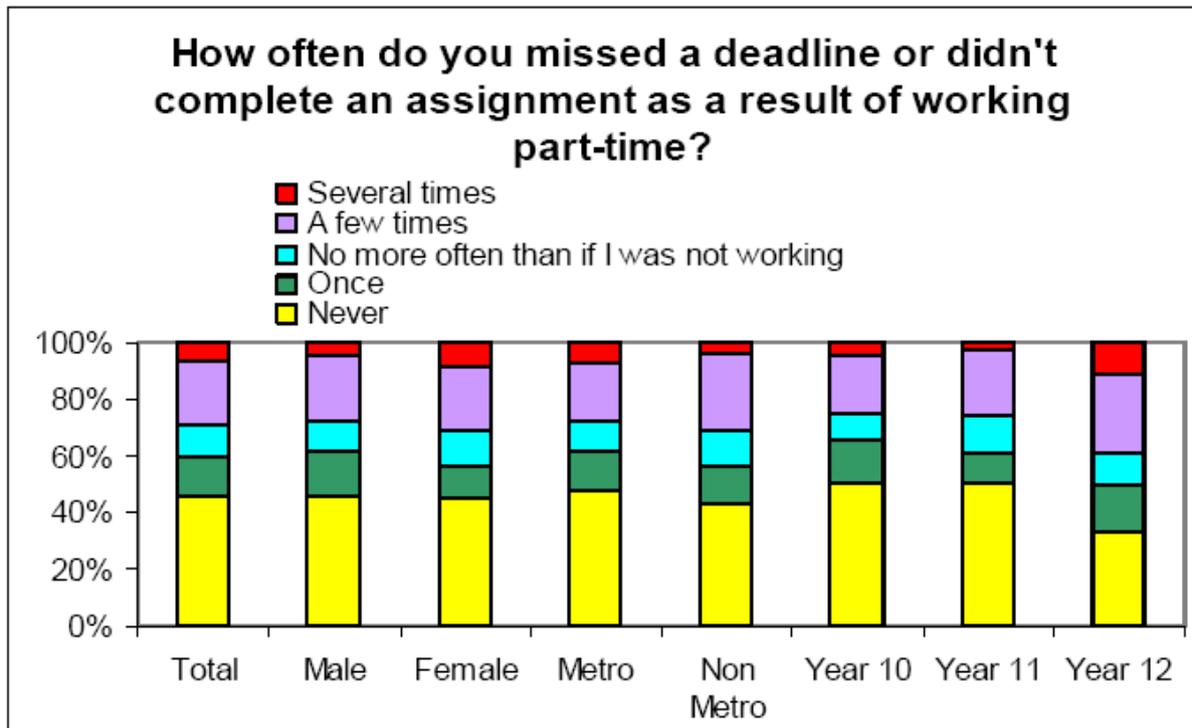
Fatigue is the first sign that school and work are out of balance; schoolwork is the first to suffer.

The only way work would interfere with school would be if you don't get the right amount of sleep and you go to school tired.

The following charts demonstrate a clear relationship between the number of hours worked and fatigue. Year 12 students are most likely to work more than 10 hours per week (53%) and are also the ones most likely to work more than 16 hours per week (23%). They are also the ones who report that they go to school feeling tired as a result of working part time.



The charts below show a similar pattern. Older students who work more hours are the most likely to fail to complete an assignment or to miss a deadline at school. It would seem that after one deadline is missed, several others also pass without an assignment being completed.



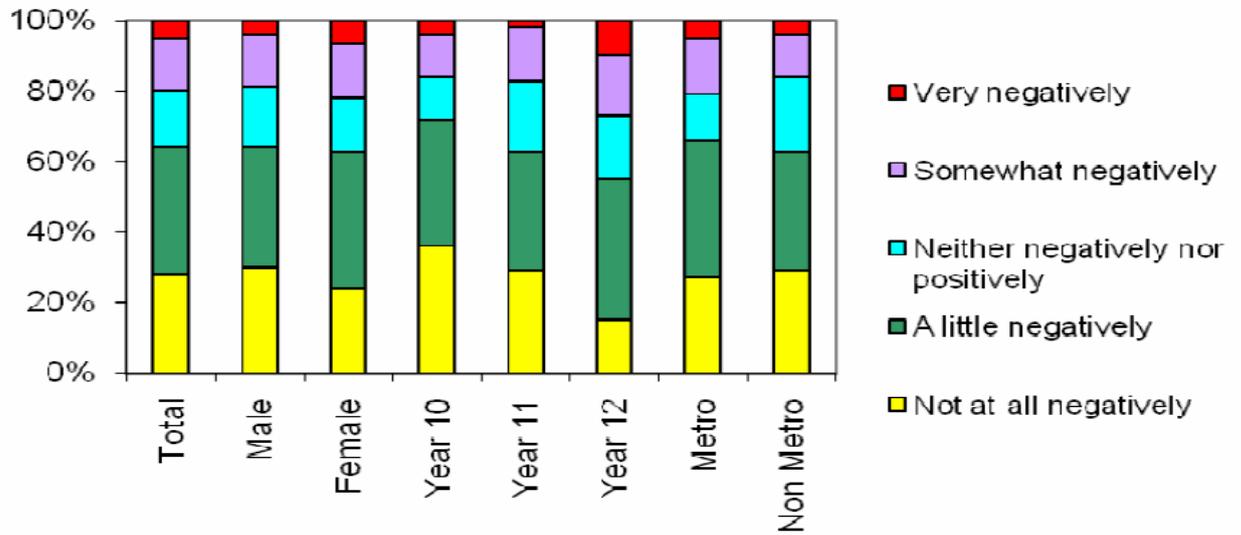
Not surprisingly, attending school when tired and failing to complete work on time leads to overall academic performance suffering. Students who are usually strong academic performers blame work for mediocre results. They say they could be better students if they had time to plan and complete school work to the best of their ability, rather than according to the time available.

*If I didn't work maybe my schoolwork would be up to standard...especially now in year 10.
You do it but you think if you just had those two extra days you could do so much better.*

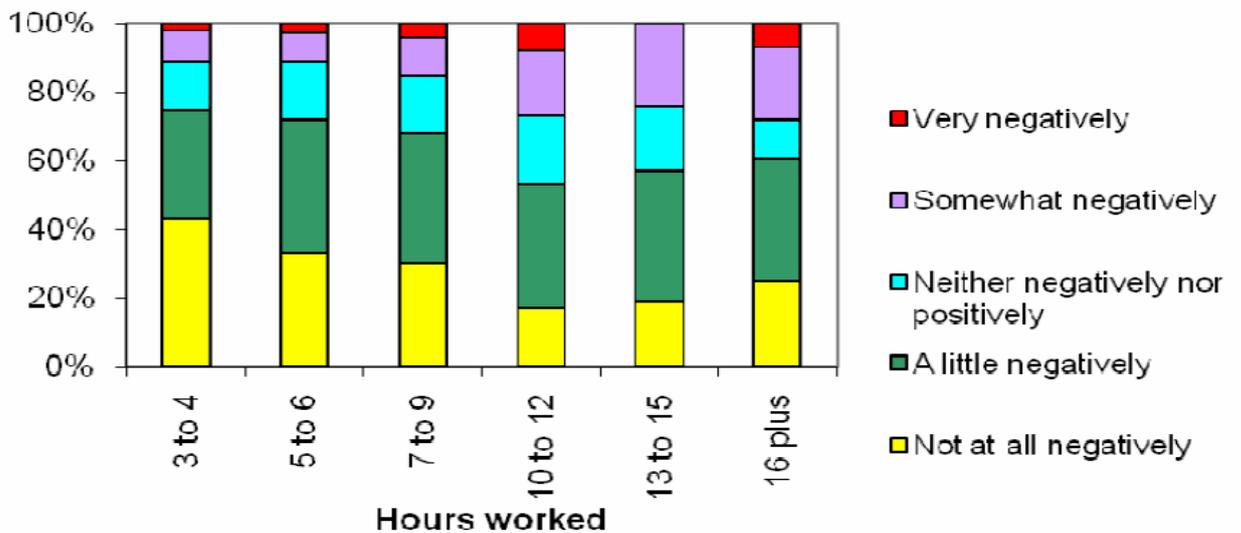
If you didn't work, you'd really know what you are doing rather than rushing everything.

A similar relationship between the number of hours worked and the perceived impact on school performance is evident in the two charts below. 27% of Year 12 students report that part-time work has a negative impact on their performance at school. 28% of students who work more than 16 hours per week report that work has the same negative effect on their performance.

Extent to which part-time job affects performance at school.



Extent to which part-time job affects performance at school.



However, it would appear that late night shifts, combined with long hours spent at work are the most corrosive to school performance. The most at-risk students according to the table below are the 23% of Year 12, 14% of Year 11 and 17% of Year 10 students who work more than 16 hours per week because they are also the ones most likely to work late night shifts.

| Respondents who worked 16+ hours | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
| 6 - 9 am | 8% | 2% | 6% | 6% | 8% | 9% | 8% |
| 9 am - Noon | 13% | 8% | 8% | 8% | 6% | 25% | 23% |
| Noon - 3 pm | 6% | 9% | 8% | 8% | 6% | 23% | 28% |
| 3 - 5 pm | 30% | 28% | 28% | 26% | 26% | 40% | 32% |
| 5 - 7 pm | 43% | 38% | 38% | 42% | 43% | 40% | 36% |
| 7 - 9 pm | 36% | 42% | 40% | 43% | 43% | 32% | 28% |
| 9 - 11 pm | 21% | 23% | 23% | 32% | 28% | 25% | 21% |
| 11 pm - 1 am | 8% | 8% | 9% | 6% | 19% | 13% | 9% |
| 1 - 3 am | 2% | 4% | 4% | 2% | 6% | 6% | 6% |
| 3 - 6 am | 6% | 2% | 6% | 4% | 4% | 8% | 6% |

Part Six: Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Students need to be able to undertake part time work with the confidence that they will not be open to exploitation, and in full knowledge of the conditions under which they will work. This will relieve them of some of the pressures they now face. The Teachers Federation, through its [Students@Work](#) website, seeks to provide information, and is well aware that various other organisations, for example, the ACTU and NSW Office of Industrial Relations also provide resources. (Links to other sites exist on the Students@Work website).

To this end, the Federal government is called on to work with state governments to ensure that appropriate information is embedded in their respective curricula.

2. There needs to be expanded opportunities for students to combine school and work, through flexible arrangements for patterns of study. Models such as the NSW Pathways model for the HSC and the Queensland model for completion should be fully supported and not adversely affected by loss of staff for a school. It often requires MORE teachers in a school to accommodate flexible study arrangements through timetabling and course offerings to fewer students, and to break through timetabling barriers, yet, at least in NSW, public schools are penalised through the staffing formula with loss of staff when students are enrolled on a less than full-time curriculum pattern.

Governments must support schools to facilitate part-time study patterns, not penalise them through loss of staff, which has a consequent effect on the breadth of curriculum offerings available.

3. In the same way, where schools are involved with joint programs with TAFE, and students are enrolled in TAFE as well as school, schools must not be penalised through loss of staff.
4. Critical to 2 & 3 above is the recognition that to facilitate flexibility, schools require MORE resources, not fewer. It takes time and administrative resources to ensure that students can move flexibly between their lives as students and workers through part-time school enrolment.
5. Employers need to recognise that students' academic life by necessity should take precedence over shifts at work, and that a major cause of stress for students, and a major contributor to fatigue and missed school work, is working excessive hours (beyond 15 per week) and late-night shifts.
6. Built in to the Students@Work website is a tool called the Time Tamer, a highly sophisticated time management tool ("like Microsoft Outlook on steroids!"), which enables students to plan their time, and which also has embedded in it a pro-school work bias, whilst at the same time facilitating communication between all parties with an interest in students' working lives – peers, parents, teachers and potentially employers.

The Federation would welcome an invitation to demonstrate the use of the Time Tamer, with a view to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations assisting with funding of appropriate curriculum development and support for its integration with present curricula.

It is the view of the Federation that potentially this tool could be an enormous asset in supporting and assisting young people to combine work and study and to stay engaged in their learning.