

# **The gendering of part-time work in Victoria Police**

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THIS THESIS WAS SUBMITTED AS PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BACHELOR OF BUSINESS HONOURS COURSE  
2007

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this dissertation contains no material accepted toward any other degree, diploma or similar award, in the university or institution and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

Further, any opinions of individual employees of Victoria Police quoted in this dissertation are personal views, and are not necessarily representative of Victoria Police in general, unless specifically stated.

Researcher: Annigje van Den Ham

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Acknowledgements**

To my Mum and Dad, Marcus, Samantha and Tershia - without you this thesis wouldn't exist, and relatedly, neither would I. I care about you very much, and am very grateful to have your unwavering support.

Thank you to Lisa, my constant friend.

Thank you to the many people from whom I have collected anecdotes, quotes and ideas during the course of my research. Your contribution was a critical one. Also, thank you to the people of the Human Resource Department at Victoria Police. It was a workplace generous in spirit, and I am indebted.

Thanks to John Annakis for seeing the potential in all his students and bringing out the best in them. I am grateful, like so many others, for your commitment to my work.

Thanks to Liz Levin, for her tireless efforts to help Honours students make it through. Your understanding and support was greatly appreciated. I wish to also extend my thanks to Professor David Hayward, Dean of the Faculty of Business and Enterprise, for endorsing inter-faculty supervision without precedent. I trust the final result meets your expectations.

I wish to extend my thanks to the Victoria Police Research and Project Governance Division and the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, Christine Nixon. Together, your approach to research has resulted in a more transparent and robust organisation which works to base decisions upon evidence – the essence of good policing.

I extend my most sincere gratitude and thanks to my supervisor, Dr Sue Lewis. Your intelligence, understanding, insight and critical eye served to continually encourage me and gave me the resolve to press on when I needed it most. You valued my work in all forms, grittily working through the first draft with me to the last. Thank you.

To Andrew, my best friend.

For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.

— Audre Lorde (1984)

It is the nature of privilege to find ever deeper places to hide.

— Elizabeth Spelman (1988)

## **Abstract**

In police services, both in Australia and internationally, attention has been focused on increasing the representation of women. The diversity approach favored by Human Resource Management and organisational theorists has contended that flexible working practices, specifically part-time employment, are a crucial mechanism to achieving this. However, as this study highlights, part-time work has become increasingly sex-segregated and associated with lower status and lower paid work, resulting in poor career prospects relative to full-time employment.

The current study draws upon quantitative research collected in Victoria Police in 2004 exploring the experiences of, and attitudes toward part-time work (Victoria Police 2004). Utilising Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organisation as a theoretical framework for investigation, a feminist comparative research methodology was applied to secondary data, using gender as an explanatory construct.

This research suggests that part-time employment is a 'double jeopardy' for women, as gender inequalities inherent to policing are further exacerbated. Part-time women have lower organisational status, compared to men. Women chose part-time work to care for young children, whereas men do so for personal and career interests. Relatedly, police women and men work part-time differently; men work part-time for less time and enjoy more flexible shift arrangements, compared to women. Finally, full-time women and men deem part-time work to be of less value than full-time.

The application of a feminist comparative research methodology to gender-neutral research which emphasised diversity, offers a unique insight into a deeply gendered organisation, with mutually reinforcing structures and processes that serve to persistently uphold and repeatedly reproduce women's marginalised place in the organisation, albeit in a new form. The growth of part-time work in Victoria Police, taken up predominately by women, if not closely monitored and adjusted accordingly, may be reinforcing the low value of part-time work and thereby exacerbating the gender inequality that already exists.