

THE Daily Telegraph

Finance
Working longer, harder

Jenny Dillon
429 words
3 November 2008
Daily Telegraph
1 - State
74
English
Copyright 2008 News Ltd. All Rights Reserved

AUSTRALIANS are not only working some of the longest hours in the developed world, but as economic conditions tighten, they are increasingly finding their working hours are becoming more intense.

A study by the University of Sydney's Workplace Research Centre found full-time workers put in an average of 44 hours a week while self-employed people were working about 50 hours a week.

More than half of all workers said that "more and more" was expected of them for the same amount of pay, a condition that can only get worse as businesses are forced to reduce staff levels to maintain viability.

"There's also a downside to losing good people," said Chris Jackson, an expert in organisation and management with the **Australian School of Business** at the University of NSW.

Professor Jackson said it could be a false economy to let people go and expect those remaining to shoulder the extra burden.

"You lose their knowledge which may go to a competing organisation and the remaining workforce has to work harder creating consequent problems," he said. "There will be stress and burnout more, which will have a knock-on effect into their home environment because they are not spending enough time with their partners and children.

"Then there is a lowering of morale in some circumstances. And if you're working long hours you can often make mistakes.

"At the same time it can be a positive experience, especially with people not working to their full capacity beforehand. It gives them more power. And because people want to avoid being made redundant a better camaraderie among colleagues develops."

The director of research at the business faculty of Queensland University of Technology Kerry Brown said that down time during working hours was very important.

"Our team has found that with the long hours culture, people have less time at home and less time with their family, and that time is not quality time but recovery time," Professor Brown said. "Firstly they have to do their chores, then they get family time but they lack personal time so then they go back to work tired."

Many family people or those in relationships had difficulty synchronising their time, she said.

"They're working, their partners are working, their kids are doing things, so often they have find their leisure time on their own."

Another sector that suffers was the community, she said. "One of the casualties of longer work hours is that we don't do volunteering work."

DTM-20081103-1-074-442812

Document DAITEL0020081102e4b30003i