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4 The changing work environment



4 The changing work environment

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 The rapidly changing world of work

In the past, when a person started a job, they would generally remain in that same job for several decades — a job was considered ‘for life’. It gave the worker a sense of security knowing that they would always have an income (money coming in) as long as they performed the tasks their **employer** asked of them.

Today the concept of **work** is shifting from ‘Where do you work?’ to ‘For whom do you work?’ and ‘What do you do?’.

Watch the following video to see how computer technology is changing the way music will be composed in the future.



Future music

Your Device does not support Video.

In many **industries**, the routine of a working day starting at 9 am and finishing at 5 pm is long gone. This routine has been replaced with almost 24/7 access to everything and everyone. Computers, the internet and smart phones have made it possible for people to stay connected with their social and work networks no matter what the time. With increased connectedness comes benefits such as greater flexibility to work the hours that suit individuals’ lifestyles and the possibility of working remotely (i.e. from home or another location away from the office). However, it is also not uncommon for employers to expect workers to be available to deal with work matters outside of their normal working hours. In some fields there appears to be an **employer expectation** that employees will work harder and longer than they have done in the past. For the Australian **labour force**, like many places throughout the world, **employment** for life is a thing of the past. Employment is becoming less secure, and work that involves low-level skills is less common. It is being replaced by work that requires a greater level of skill and knowledge, especially in light of the rapid technological advances that have taken place over the past 20 years and which continue to shape the

modern work environment. Technology is just one of the key factors that influence the world of work. Other influences include the health of the economy, employer and employee expectations, consumer demands, and **globalisation**. In this topic, we will explore these various influences on the way people work today and how they may work in the future.

Figure 1 The nature of work has significantly evolved, largely as a result of technology.



4 The changing work environment

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Weblink: Changing world of work

Weblink: Future careers

4.2 Influences on work today

4.2.1 Modern technology

The Australian **labour market** has undergone significant change in the past two decades. These changes may in part be attributed to the changing expectations of workers and employers: employers expect that employees will work harder and longer hours, while employees want a greater balance between their work and their non-working lives (**work–life balance**). Arguably, though, the greatest influence on today's world of work has been the rapid development of technology — a development that has changed the way in which not only Australians, but the people of the entire world, work. We will explore the impact of modern technological advances in **subtopic 4.3**, but it is important to note that long before the age of computers, the silicon chip and the internet, another significant technological advance began the process of change in the way people work.

4.2.2 Past influences

Prior to the late eighteenth century, the type of available work was mainly in **primary production**, in areas such as crop farming, fishing or livestock raising. Life was very different to that of today's developed societies. People produced the bulk of their own food, clothes and other needs. Manufacturing was fairly small-scale and done in people's homes using hand tools or basic machines. From the late 1700s to the mid 1800s, technological advances associated with the Industrial Revolution — in particular the development of steam power and the steam engine, the mechanised cotton mill and loom and the use of processed fuel to fire and heat the furnaces in iron ore production in England — changed the way that people lived and worked. People who previously worked in the primary industries outlined above moved to towns and cities to work in factories (**secondary industries**). The working conditions in these early factories were harsh. Men, women and children had few rights. They were forced to work long hours in noisy, dirty and dangerous workplaces. Accidents often happened around machinery, but there was no compensation or sick leave. If a person was injured, someone else took their job and there were no unemployment benefits provided to those who could not find work.

Figure 1 Children provided cheap labour in factories and mills. As this 1853 illustration shows, they were often badly treated.



Substantial workplace reforms in the many decades since this time have greatly improved on-the-job conditions for the great majority of workers in industrialised, developed countries such as Australia. But in some countries, harsh and unsafe work environments still exist, with workers paid poorly for long hours of labour in these difficult conditions. This is one of the ethical challenges of globalisation, which is discussed further in the sections that follow.

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Weblink: Industrial Revolution

4.2.3 Present influences

In looking at the historical perspective of work, it is evident that the advancement of new ideas, the need for improvements in daily living conditions, new manufacturing processes, and the development of new ways of using resources such as coal, gas and oil, have all had major effects on how people live and work. In modern times, in addition to technological advances, there are numerous other factors that may influence the ways in which people work. These include:

- the health of the local economy and the level of unemployment

- government regulations and workers' unions
- the impact of globalisation, the decreasing cost of distance, and the **outsourcing** and **offshoring** of jobs
- the decline of employment opportunities in some industries and the growth of others.

The health of the economy

When an economy is healthy, business tends to thrive, which means work is generally more readily available and unemployment levels are low. Consumers feel more able to afford the products and services they require, and their spending, in turn, feeds business growth. However, during times of economic hardship this is not the case. Businesses that are struggling to keep afloat are less likely to hire staff and, in fact, may attempt to cut business costs through making particular positions **redundant** and **retrenching** some of their workers. Thus, when the economy is in a period of decline, workers may experience difficulty finding employment.

Figure 2 The health of the economy is an important influence on the world of work – a healthy economy generally means more available jobs and lower unemployment rates.



Sometimes employers will attempt to weather a period of economic downturn by reducing employees' work hours rather than retrenching their workers. This can be an effective way of maintaining jobs while allowing a business to continue to operate at a lower cost, but any such changes can only be made in consultation with employees, if they are on permanent work contracts.

Government and workers' union influences

Industrial relations laws govern the relationship between employers and employees and have a significant impact on the ways people work in Australia. These laws have undergone many changes since the inception of the industrial relations system in the early 1900s. Many of these changes have occurred as a result of different government policies over time, and also as a result of the work of *unions* — formal organisations that negotiate with employers and government on behalf of the workers in a particular industry to ensure that their **conditions of employment** are fair and reasonable. Conditions of employment are the arrangements made between an employer and employee; that is, what the employer agrees to give an employee in return for their work. These conditions are usually outlined in a formal agreement, which covers issues such as the number of hours an employee is expected to work, annual leave and other entitlements such as sick leave and long service or maternity leave.

Figure 3 Conditions of employment are set out in a formal agreement. In Australia, there are three different types of agreement: awards, registered collective (group) agreements and individual employment contracts.



Government also affects the world of work through decisions regarding taxation and import tariffs, which can impact the ability of certain industries to remain competitive (see [subtopic 1.5](#)), and through changes to laws in relation to issues such as retail trading hours and liquor licensing. For example, where once it was illegal for retail shops to trade on Sundays, this has now become the norm. In Victoria from the time of World War I until 1966, hotels had to close at 6 pm; in 1966 this was changed to 10 pm, and since changes to liquor licensing laws in the late 1980s, many hotels and other venues are now able to stay open until the early hours of the morning. Clearly, such changes have had a significant impact on the working hours of people employed in hospitality (hotels, clubs and restaurants) and in retail trade. Changes to work hours are discussed further in [subtopic 4.4](#).

The impact of globalisation

Advances in technology, in particular communications technology, more effective, lower cost methods of transportation, and largely unrestricted trade between countries have allowed the whole world to become a single, integrated marketplace. The term globalisation refers to this ever-increasing international cultural and economic interaction.

Figure 4 Rapid technological advances have facilitated the process of globalisation — allowing the interaction of economies throughout the world.



In Australia, globalisation has had, and continues to have, a significant effect on work opportunities and the way people work. One of the key ways in which this effect has been felt is through the increasing practice of outsourcing.

Outsourcing involves engaging individuals or businesses outside of an organisation to fulfil functions previously carried out within the organisation itself. In an attempt to improve productivity, cut costs and increase their ability to compete on a global scale, many Australian businesses now outsource some of their non-core functions. Some functions that are commonly outsourced include recruiting new staff, marketing and advertising, management of finances, and production of goods. Some businesses have taken this a step further, and outsource various functions to workers and organisations overseas — some have even moved their entire production process overseas. This practice is known as offshoring.

Offshoring provides a business with the ability to cut labour costs, which can be as much as ten times higher in a developed country such as Australia than in a developing country such as China, India or Sri Lanka. For example, a number of the telecommunication companies you may deal with have outsourced their call centres to places like India, Sri Lanka and China; similarly, an increasing number of companies are taking their legal or accounting needs offshore, having work completed in countries where labour costs are cheaper but skill levels remain high. Offshoring can also enhance the ability of a business to stay competitive and to develop an overseas presence by entering new markets.

The impact of globalisation on the Australian working environment can be examined in relation to the consumer, the worker and the business owner.

Table 1 Examining the impact of globalisation on Australian consumers, employers and employees

Impact on consumers	Impact on employers	Impact on employees
Ability to choose from a wide range of goods, some of which are imported into the country, e.g. tinned tomatoes, electrical goods, clothing, wine	Ability to reduce the costs of manufacturing or providing a service by employing cheaper overseas-based labour	Loss of jobs as some roles are moved to overseas providers
Access to goods at lower prices	Access to new markets overseas	Potential for individuals to travel, work and/or study overseas; taking skills, knowledge and capabilities with them
Ability to browse and buy online and have purchases delivered to the door, eliminating the need to travel to stores	Increased ability to access new technologies from overseas	Potential to work for international companies that bring their business to Australia
	Ability to generate greater income through selling more products to a global market,	New jobs created as a result of business growth

	allowing the potential to further build and develop the business through investment in improvements in technology, productivity and quality	through exporting products such as wine, cars, gas and minerals to other countries
	Pressure to become more competitive and produce goods and services more cheaply than overseas competitors	

Decline and growth of industries

With many companies moving part or all of their operations overseas, the employment opportunities in some industries have decreased. For example, the announcement of the closure of production plants of the three major car manufacturers in Australia (Ford, Holden and Toyota) means that workers in this industry will need to seek employment in other fields. While ongoing technological advances can lead to job losses in some cases, where tasks that were once carried out by people are now able to be done by machines, they can also present opportunities for new businesses to develop; for example, in areas such as telecommunications and digital technologies. In the 1980s, jobs such as website designers, social media managers, e-commerce consultants and app developers didn't exist. Thirty years later, they are a common part of the business world. Many of the jobs that will exist in the future may be roles that we cannot even imagine today.

Figure 5 Just as 'app development' was unheard of in the 1980s, many of the jobs of the future may be in fields that are yet to be developed.



4 The changing work environment

4.3 The significance of technology

4.3.1 Significant technological change

The Australian work environment has changed significantly in the past two decades. Much of this change can be attributed to the development of technology and rapid communications advances that have altered the way the world does business.

The world of work changed dramatically in the late 1980s with the development of the desktop computer, but it was the invention of the internet in the 1990s that has brought arguably the greatest change to the world of work since the Industrial Revolution. The internet, computers and devices such as smart phones and tablets are now part of our everyday life and, for most workers, have been integrated significantly into the way that they undertake and complete their work. The ability to communicate virtually instantaneously with anyone almost anywhere in the world has changed the way people do business and has been a major factor in the process of globalisation.

Types of new technology

Technological advances have changed many aspects of business operation, from administration tasks to internal and external communications and service provision and manufacturing processes. The list of technological advances that have changed the way we work is enormous. It includes:

- video conferencing and webinars: using technology to meet or conduct information and training sessions, rather than needing to have face-to-face interactions
- smart technology (smart phones): enabling 24/7 communication through phone, email, SMS, MMS
- e-commerce: internet banking, online shopping, microchip credit cards, EFTPOS, PayPal, BPay, Post Billpay, PayPass
- software developments: word processing, spreadsheets, database, accounting and other software programs that streamline administrative tasks
- robotics: their use in manufacturing, especially in assembly lines
- computer-aided design (CAD): using computers to design new products, buildings etc.
- computer-aided manufacturing (CAM): using computers to assist with the manufacturing process of goods and services
- cloud computing: external data storage away from the organisation, allowing access to information from anywhere
- communication: discussion forums, blogs, social networking — creating new ways to reach potential customers.

Figure 1 Video conferencing allows workers to meet even though they may be in different countries.



How technology has changed working lives

The impact of technological advances has been felt significantly in the workplace. For example, where once it was necessary to send written materials via the post (which may take several days or even weeks to be

delivered, depending on the distances involved), email now makes it possible for correspondence to be sent and delivered within the same minute! Computer software enables once tedious administrative, accounting and other processes to be completed in a fraction of the time that they once required. And computer-operated machines now perform many manufacturing line tasks that once required meticulous human completion. Similarly, in many cases where once manual labour was the norm, computers and robots now control the lifting and movement of heavy objects. Interestingly, the law has followed this process and various requirements have been introduced that seek to protect workers and ensure that employers provide a safe environment for them. Occupational (Work) Health and Safety laws cover issues such as manual handling, machine operation, safety guards and shut-off mechanisms, acceptable noise levels, and other hazard management in relation to the use of technology in the workplace.

Manufacturing

The use of computers in production has meant that the manufacturing process has sped up significantly and, in turn, productivity levels have increased. Assembly lines, computer-aided designs, and computer-driven manufacturing processes (in which computers control and direct the machinery and equipment), have meant that less workers are needed to undertake the manual aspects of production. However the increase in production output, combined with access to new markets through globalised trade opportunities has allowed the growth of some businesses, and a need for increased numbers of workers to meet the demands of expansion. Further, the nature of many roles in computer-assisted manufacturing operations has changed, with workers gaining higher level skills as they are trained to be able to monitor equipment and carry out any adjustments or even repairs that may be required.

Figure 2 The types of machinery used in manufacturing processes are constantly changing the way workers work and the work that they do.



Rapid communication changes

Technology has changed the concept of communication. For example, the growth of the internet has meant that news events, when they occur, can be instantly disseminated and shared through instant messaging, blogs, emails and websites. This change has had a huge impact on print media such as newspapers. Many people no longer buy the printed newspaper but will instead read the news online — and it is not just local newspapers that they can access, but also newspapers from around the world.

In the workplace, these rapid changes have led to enormous shifts in the way people communicate and work. No longer is there a need to have 'face time', where people need to be in the same room to meet and discuss business. As [figure 1](#) depicts, face time has been replaced by 'virtual meeting time'. Smart devices allow for instant communication and access to workers, employers, suppliers and producers.

Where once distance may have been a prohibitive factor in applying for and obtaining a job, this is no longer the case. In many fields of work, employees increasingly have the opportunity to work remotely, based from

their own homes. The use of technology such as teleconferencing or video-conferencing, email, cloud computing and so on effectively eliminates the distance between people, and creates opportunities for more flexible work arrangements that are beneficial for both the employee and the employer.

Staying connected or switching off?

The developments that have occurred in communications technology make it difficult to 'switch off'. For example how many people in your class have a smart phone? Do you check your phone or device as soon as an instant message, email or Facebook post hits your inbox? If you do, you are not alone. Many of us are obsessed with our smart phones, tablets, laptops and other devices, along with the social media so easily accessed on them. And while such technologies allow us unprecedented opportunities for social connection and access to information, they also play a role in the gradual blurring of the boundaries between work and home life. It is now easy to stay connected with the office or work while at home, on holidays, or even while sleeping! Many people now work beyond the traditional office hours of 9 to 5, using laptops and other devices to access work networks remotely, checking work emails while they have breakfast or during their commute to work on the train, or perhaps to teleconference during their home time with other people working in a different time zone.

Figure 3 You can have access to your working life no matter where you are.



Having 24/7 access to work emails and being able to work in any location has led to many people feeling that they need to work more than the 38 hours each week (for a full-time job) that the federal government recommends. Should more be done to ensure that this 38-hour limit is adhered to? [Ethical capability]

4 The changing work environment

4.4 Changes to the workforce

4.4.1 The changing roles of women and men

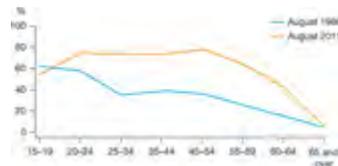
Fifty years ago, the majority of the Australian workforce was male. Most of these men were the family breadwinners — supporting their wives and families until retiring in their sixties. Women often 'retired' from the workforce when they married, and it was relatively uncommon for a woman to work if she had young children. Today, the two-income family is more common, with women continuing to work throughout the period of having dependent children. Employment is more likely to be part-time or casual and there have been significant changes in the types of jobs in which people are employed. People are less likely to do the one job for their entire working lives, instead moving not just from one role to another in the same field, but also undertaking complete career changes, possibly several times, in a bid to find work that continues to provide a sense of purpose and satisfaction in this major area of people's lives. With this shift in the way

people approach their careers, human resources management has become increasingly important within the business world — emphasising the value placed on finding the right person for a particular role. In this section, we will explore these and other changes to the Australian workforce.

4.4.2 Participation rates

One of the most significant changes seen in the Australian workforce in the past 50 years has been the increased participation of women. As mentioned above, in the past it was common for women to leave the workforce when they had children, and often they never returned to paid work. This is no longer the case. [Figure 1](#) shows the change in female workforce participation rates from 1966 to 2011.

Figure 1 Age-specific labour force participation rates for females, 1966 and 2011



Source: Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force Historical Timeseries, Australia* (cat. no. 6204.0.55.001)

The graph clearly depicts the overall increase in participation, and, in particular, the virtual absence in 2011 of the 'dip' in participation seen in the 1966 data during the traditional child-rearing ages of 20 to 35. This indicates that a much higher proportion of women today are continuing to work throughout this period.

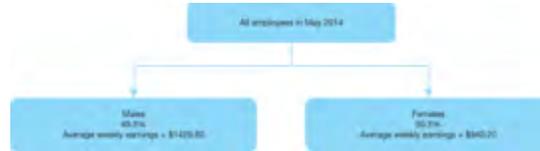
As women have entered the workforce in greater numbers and continued to work after having children, the need for formal childcare has increased. This has led to the growth of the childcare industry and has created significant new job opportunities in early childhood development and childcare. Another significant change has been an increase in flexible work options, offering benefits such as parental leave (for both females and males) and part-time work, that allows greater flexibility to juggle the demands of work and parenthood.

Figure 2 The increased participation of women in the workforce has created the need for formal childcare.



[Figure 3](#) shows the proportion of males and females in the employed Australian labour force in May 2014, and their average weekly earnings.

Figure 3 Proportion of males and females in the paid workforce in 2014, and their average weekly earnings



Source: Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia, May 2014* (cat. no. 6306.0).

Female employees actually slightly outnumber males, but as can clearly be seen, the average weekly earnings of females is significantly lower than that of men. This can be explained to some extent by looking at the differences in full-time and part-time participation rates.

Full-time and part-time participation rates

An employee is considered to work full-time if their hours of work equate to 35 hours or more per week, or they work the agreed upon or Award hours for a person in their occupation or industry, and the work is ongoing. An employee is considered to work part-time if they work less than 35 hours a week in ongoing employment, where the number of hours they work is either fixed or variable.

Figure 4 The proportion of full-time and part-time employees in May 2014, and their average weekly earnings

Interactivity: [Figure 4 The proportion of full-time and part-time employees in May 2014, and their average weekly earnings](#)

Source: Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia, May 2014* (cat.no 6306.0).

Figure 4 shows that in May 2014 there were more full-time employees (60.0%) than part-time employees (40.0%), and that, as would be expected, average full-time earnings (\$1568.80/week) were significantly higher than average part-time earnings (\$602.80/week). However, 56.3% of females were employed on a part-time basis, compared with only 23.4% of males; that is, the vast majority of male workers (76.6%) were employed full-time, which accounts for much of the disparity in average weekly earnings between men and women.

4.4.3 Hours of work

In today's work environment, there is a perception that people are expected to be available outside of traditional work hours due to technology-enabled connectivity, and that they are generally working longer hours than ever before. While in some industries this may indeed be the case, Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that since the 1980s there has actually been a decline in the average hours worked by Australians — from 35 hours average in the 1980s, to 32.9 hours average in 2011. Figure 5 depicts this change.

Figure 5 The average number of hours worked by employed Australians shows an overall decrease from 1980 through to 2011.



Source: Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, *As a Matter of Fact*, 2012 (cat. no. 1393.0).

The change in average work hours can at least in part be attributed to the significant increase in part-time employment during this period. Part-time roles now exist in almost all industries, and are particularly prevalent in areas such as retail trade and hospitality.

Apart from the change in the number of hours worked, there has also been a significant shift in the times that people work. Where once the world of work was largely framed around the 9 to 5 workday, this is no longer the case. For example, changes to regulations in retail trade have created a demand for employees to work vastly different hours to those of the past, with weekend and late-night trading now allowing businesses to operate well outside the traditional 9 to 5 trading hours. Similarly, venues such as bars, restaurants and nightclubs are now able to stay open much later, creating a need for staff who are willing and able to work shifts into the early hours of the morning. Consumer demand has also created a need to provide call centre sales and helpline staff in certain industries from early in the morning until late in the evening. Thus, employees working in such fields may work a range of hours that are significantly different to what was once the case.

Figure 6 Changes to trading hours have had a significant impact on the hours of work for many Australians.



4.4.4 Availability of jobs

In the late 1960s almost half of Australia's labour force was employed in production industries like mining, manufacturing, construction, electricity, gas and water, agriculture, forestry and fishing. In 1997, some thirty years later, that proportion had decreased to 28%. During the same period, service industries grew substantially. These include: property and business services, accommodation, cafés and restaurants, culture and recreational services, personal and other services, health and community services, retail, education, transport and communication, trade and finance, and insurance. This trend continues today, and is a major factor in shaping the ongoing changes seen in the Australian workforce. We will look at the changes in Australian work industries in more detail in [subtopic 4.5](#).

4.4.5 Career lengths

Recent studies in the United States of America, based on US labour statistics, indicate that the average US worker stays in a job for a period of 4.6 years. In Australia, the average is thought to be even less than this — as little as two years — largely as a result of younger workers being prepared to change jobs on a much more frequent basis than their older colleagues.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that members of **Generation X** are likely to change jobs about 11 times during their working life. It is anticipated that this figure may double for **Generation Y** or **Generation Z** and increase even further for **Generation Alpha**.

Research has found that the reason for changing jobs varies from person to person, but may include:

- social reasons: response to life events, such as having children
- economic reasons: wanting to obtain better working arrangements
- career-related reasons: wanting to gain further career experience
- other personal reasons, such as a desire to gain new experiences.

Figure 7 Today's workers change jobs far more often than they did in the past. This trend is expected to continue into the future.



It is interesting to note that for many workers, there is a reluctance to change. Possible reasons why some workers choose to stay in the same job may include:

- a lack of opportunity to change jobs
- security
- convenience
- feeling valued in a role
- they like the people they work with
- a fast commute (quick to get to and from work)
- the need to build/consolidate retirement (superannuation) funds.

Even for people who do not change jobs, the workplace continues to change and evolve. In the Career Experience Survey conducted in November 2002 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, a number of

significant issues regarding the changing nature of work were noted. Approximately 77% of all employees surveyed had been with the same employer for a year or more. Of these, almost 57% reported significant changes to their working life over the past year. The types of change reported are summarised in [table 1](#).

Table 1 Types of workplace change experienced

Type of change	Percentage of employees who experienced the change	Experienced by whom
Promotion: receiving an increase in wages or salary due to an increase in responsibility or the complexity of the work that is undertaken	8.7%	Permanent and full-time workers
Transfer: where a person is moved from their current position into another one without a change in wage, salary, level of responsibility or complexity of task	6.8%	Permanent and full-time workers
Change in hours: this can be either a reduction or an increase in the amount of hours to be worked in a week	31.7%	Part-time workers and casual workers
Changed location: movement involving a change in terms of either work building, or geographical location such as a suburb, state or even country	8.5%	Permanent and full-time workers
New, different or extra duties: where there has been a change in the scope (the range) of activities that need to be completed	40.2%	Permanent and full-time workers
More responsibility: an increase in the level of responsibility you have in terms of your experience and what is expected of you	42.7%	Permanent and full-time workers

Source: Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Career experience, Australia, November 2002* (cat. no. 6254.0).

[Table 1](#) shows that in the majority of cases, the changes did not mean that employees were actually changing their positions. More often, the change involved taking on additional tasks or more responsibility, perhaps as experience is gained in a role.

4.4.6 Human resource management

The term **human resources** refers to the people who work within an organisation. In any business, the human resources are one of the most vital elements. With the world of work undergoing such rapid and ongoing changes, the effective management of a business's employees — **human resource management** — has become increasingly important. Human resource management involves many aspects, such as staff recruitment, negotiation of employment conditions, training, professional development, and carrying out staff performance reviews. The goal of successful human resource management is to ensure an organisation has the right people with the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the needs of the business.

Figure 8 A business's human resources are among its most important features.



Finding the best employees with the most appropriate skills and other attributes that will suit the organisation and its culture is an important part of the human resource manager's role. This recruitment process has changed significantly over the past 20 years as a result of technological advances including software development and, of course, the internet.

Online sites that act as repositories of potential workers' resumes, such as SEEK.com.au, allow people in search of work to place their details online, enabling employers to find them more quickly and easily. Job ads are posted in these online forums and many employers require prospective employees to complete the application process online, which can significantly streamline the whole recruitment process compared to traditional paper-based job applications.

Figure 9 Hiring is a lot easier thanks to online sites where employers can choose their employees.



Perhaps on the downside for potential employees however, is the way in which the online environment has also made it easier for employers to 'background check' job applicants. It has become increasingly common for an employer to look on social media sites to find information about the employee they are considering hiring. Applicants need therefore to be mindful of their 'online presence' in order that it does not potentially limit their employment opportunities.

The internet has provided a new way for people to advertise and search for work roles. Employers are now able to reach a whole world of potential employees easily and in a cost-effective manner; and job hunters are able to browse the thousands of jobs advertised around the world in their search for a role that fulfils their needs and ambitions.

Figure 10 Human resource managers have become very important to the success of a business. The tasks that they perform can be grouped into the four categories below.



Figure 11 Through advances in technology employers can now easily access potential employees from around the world.



4.4.7 The value of work

The value one places on work can be linked to one of the four reasons why people work:

1. To obtain self-satisfaction

It is never easy to separate the work you do from who you are. For many workers the tasks they perform are done to a very high quality and reflect the attitude that they have towards their work and their employers. They take pride in the work they do and this in turn raises their level of work satisfaction. When workers have ownership of their work and are proud of their achievements, they are more likely to work harder and longer to achieve the objectives of the organisation. For example, two hundred employees of a factory were asked to write down the most important aspect of their work. Their responses revealed that it was not money that motivated them. Sixty-seven per cent of the employees said that knowing they had done the job well and received some praise from the supervisor were the most rewarding aspects. Thus recognition of a job well done increases the value of the work itself.

2. To gain status and prestige

The type of work a person does is often used to measure that person's status and prestige within our society. In other words, their status comes from their occupation. The value we place on a person's job determines his or her income. For example, a heart surgeon's highly skilled work is valued more than a labourer's, so the surgeon receives a higher income. This is partly due to the education and training needed to become a surgeon as well as their high skill level and specialisation. Historically, society has tended to place a lower value on work in what are referred to as the 'caring professions', such as childcare, nursing and aged care. For this reason, salaries for people who work in these areas have generally been lower than in many other fields. These roles have traditionally been filled by women, and this provides another reason for the disparity that is often seen between the relative wages of men and women in Australia. This attitude is slowly changing, with wage rises being fought for and won in many of these areas. Interestingly, in a 2013 survey that asked Australians to rate professions in terms of their perceived ethics and honesty, nursing emerged as the number one ranked profession. Doctors were ranked second in the survey.

3. To enjoy social interactions with others

The social aspects of work increase its value. On average, employees spend more time at work with their co-workers than they do at home with their families (not including sleep time). Work provides the opportunity to meet other people and make friends. Some workplaces have social clubs that employees can join, to participate in organised activities aimed at increasing the sense of staff connectedness and satisfaction.

4. To help others

For many people the need to make a difference and contribute to society is an important part of why they work. This may be particularly so in the case of those who work in the 'caring professions', or who choose to work for not-for-profit organisations. Some people place such a high value on the desire to help others that they are prepared to offer their time and skills through volunteer work, seeking no payment for the work they do.

Figure 12 Social interaction is one of the key reasons that people work.



4.5 Work in the future

4.5.1 Predicting future changes to work and possible outcomes

Can you imagine what work will be like in the year 2050? Will new jobs exist that are like the ones we see in sci-fi movies, or will they continue to be much the same as they are now? Although it is very difficult to predict how work will change, what form it will take, what activities will need to be performed and what skills, knowledge and abilities workers will need to have, it is worth noting that one of the challenges of government is to do just that — to attempt to predict some of these changes and to make policies and economic plans that will support the future world of work in Australia.

Figure 1 Is this the future of work?



Work as we know it will slowly change. Exactly how it will change is unknown, but it is likely to be dependent on a range of factors, which in turn could have particular outcomes. [Table 1](#) summarises some of these potential factors and outcomes.

Table 1 Potential changes and outcomes in the future world of work

Factor	Outcome
Skills required in the future workplace	Future employees will require more education and higher skills development to participate in the workforce.
Changes in the gender segregation of the workforce	More equal representation of men and women in all types of work across all industries; the gender gap in average wages will continue to decrease
More employment in certain sectors of industry (service) and decreased employment opportunities in other sectors of industry (manufacturing)	More service-oriented roles; more focus on case work that follows a customer from start to finish, multi-skilling of the workforce, to enable the same employee to assist a customer throughout their entire customer experience

Factor	Outcome
Further advances and increased use of technology in the workplace	<p>Employees will need to continue to learn how to operate new equipment and software in order to perform their jobs.</p> <p>Some roles may become obsolete as new technology provides more efficient ways of completing particular tasks.</p>
Changing worker attitudes and the desire for work–life balance	The provision of more flexible work arrangements to accommodate employees' needs, increase satisfaction and productivity, and retain staff
Changing workplace environments	<p>Creation of more creative, ideas-driven environments that encourage workers to think independently and be creative in their problem-solving</p> <p>Greater focus on having healthy and happy employees who will work longer and stay with an organisation, rather than frequently changing jobs; employees supported through the provision of benefits such as an onsite gym, canteen or café, childcare facilities etc.</p>

Increased education and skill levels

Two interrelated service areas that are experiencing distinct growth and an increase in employment opportunities are professional, scientific and technical services; and education and training. In the future, these areas will continue to grow as the need for higher skilled workers increases. Lower skilled jobs are decreasing and being replaced by roles that require a higher level of education and which are more skills-focused. Thus the need for workers to be multi-skilled, educated and more technically oriented to enable them to work with the newest technological advances is becoming increasingly evident.

Without appropriate, accessible training and education opportunities, it will be difficult to meet Australia's future workplace requirements. Thus, the need to provide such opportunities is an issue of constant focus for government.

Many of the jobs that you may hold in your career do not currently exist. How can you prepare for a job that doesn't exist? Are there transferable skills that are applicable to all jobs, regardless of how the future develops? Should we focus more on developing these skills than traditional skills? [Personal and social capability]

Changing attitudes to gender segregation

Another possible change is in the area of gender segregation. This is where one gender, male or female, is more likely to be employed in a particular area than the other gender. Gender segregation is common in some industries. This is particularly evident in construction and mining. For example, in the New South Wales construction industry, women account for only 10% of workers. In mining, they account for only 11% of workers. However, in the more traditionally female-dominated occupations such as healthcare, social

assistance, education and training, women continue to occupy the vast majority of roles. What might be the outcome if more men started to work in these typically female-dominated occupations and more women started working in typically male-dominated professions?

Certainly, it would have an impact on the gender gap that still exists in average wages of men and women. It might also lead to an increase in the perceived value (and the higher wages that go with it) of the traditionally lower paid female-dominated industries. Would it also change the way that we view the genders, or perhaps the industries? Or might it simply be a natural progression that comes as part of an ever-changing work environment?

Declining industries and growth industries

Over the past hundred years, the work people do has changed significantly. This is clearly demonstrated by looking at the industries in which they work. The three main employment industries are the **primary**, **secondary** and **tertiary** industries. In the past, much of the workforce was involved in the primary and secondary industries. In recent years, however, there has been a shift towards greater participation in the tertiary industry, and in what have now been termed the **quaternary** and **quinary** industries also. [Figure 2](#) outlines the various features of each of these industry types.

 **Figure 2** The five key industries of the Australian work environment
 Interactivity: [Figure 2 The five key industries of the Australian work environment](#)

In Australia, there are numerous sub-industries into which people's work can be classified. These include agriculture, mining, manufacturing, retail, construction, accommodation and food services, transport, education, health and others. [Table 2](#) examines the four main employing industries and compares the proportion of people employed in 2000–2001 with the proportion employed in those same industries for the period 2015–2016.

Table 2 The proportion of people employed in 2000–2001 compared to 2015–16, by industry, in Australia

Industry	Proportion of all employed, 2000–01	Proportion of all employed, 2015–16
Health care and social assistance	10%	13%
Retail trade	11%	11%
Construction	7%	9%
Manufacturing	12%	7%

Source: Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year Book Australia*, 2012 (cat. no. 1301.0) and Department of Employment, *Australian Jobs 2016*.

As [table 2](#) details, during this 15-year period, while retail trade remained steady as the second-highest employing industry, the health care and social assistance industry and the construction industry saw strong increases in the percentage of people employed in those fields, while the manufacturing industry saw a decrease of 5%. This is representative of the growth and decline of these particular fields of employment.

The [figure 3](#) gallery provides another view of the employment figures in certain industries from 2007 to 2013.

Figure 3 A series of graphs showing changes in various industry sectors

Gallery: [Figure 3 A series of graphs showing changes in various industry sectors](#)

These graphs clearly show the significant growth in a number of industries, such as retail trade, construction and mining, and the distinct decline of the manufacturing industry in Australia during this period.

Further advances in technology

With ongoing technological developments comes the need for workers to continue to up-skill in order to be able to use new equipment or software to its potential. But in some instances, we may see a decrease in the number of jobs available in particular fields due to the automation of tasks. Many laborious tasks have been made simpler and quicker through the use of technology. Such increased efficiencies mean less people are required to complete the same amount of work, and hence, fewer work positions are available in that field.

It is difficult to know how far the impact of technology will reach in the workplace — which jobs of today may become obsolete in the future as a result of new technological developments. But equally, the new areas of work that will emerge through technological development are largely unknown. It is hoped that these new fields will open up increasing opportunities that will be more than adequate to replace the roles that are lost.

Changing attitudes, the desire for work–life balance and changing workplace environments

As Generations Y, Z and Alpha fill the workforce, we may see a shift in the style of environments within which people work. Employers may need to create a new style of workplace, one that encourages workers to stay, rather than changing jobs on a regular basis, as is the tendency of these younger generations. More flexible working arrangements and benefits that promote staff satisfaction and increase productivity may become an increasingly common feature of the future world of work. An example of this kind of workplace is provided by American company Google, and is described in the case study below.

Case study

Google work environment inspires creativity

Google is leading the way in terms of balancing life and work. They offer their employees a wide range of extra activities such as volleyball, roller hockey, bicycles, yoga classes, sharing spaces (couches and comfy chairs where workers can discuss whatever topic they want), weights rooms, workout rooms, washers and dryers for workers to wash their clothes, massage rooms, ping pong and pool tables, outdoor seating for

sunny days, and a wide variety of lunch and dinner places — all free or for only a small charge to its workers.

Google provides its employees with a work environment that has an interesting décor, which promotes their ability to be more creative. Even sleeping pods are provided, so employees can catch up on sleep and feel refreshed to continue working. For one day a week employees are encouraged to work on whatever they want. This promotes creativity and encourages new ideas to be developed, which lead to new products, better solutions and a happier workplace.

Figure 4 Google is often identified in surveys as the business that people would most like to work for.



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Figure 5 Another reason the work environment is important!



4.6 SkillBuilder: Analysis and interpretation of data

4.6.1 Tell me

Tables and graphs can provide a wealth of information in a clear and concise way; to get the most from them, it is important to analyse them closely.

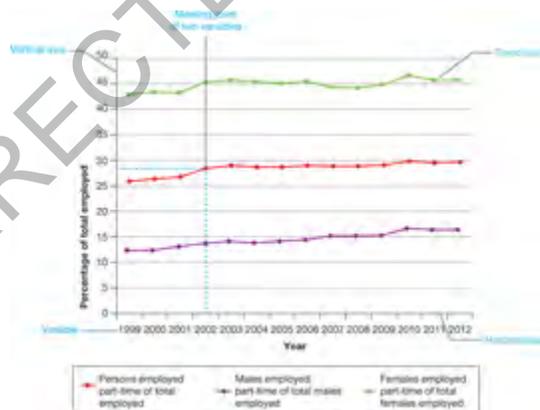
Line graphs are very useful for showing trends (patterns of change over time) and comparing data. When analysing a line graph, first examine the heading — what does it tell you about the data contained in the graph? Examine the key, which identifies what each of the lines on the graph represents. Then look closely at the vertical and horizontal axes, they show you the variables as numbers, percentages, years etc. When reading line graphs, find points on the graph where two variables meet to obtain specific information. For example, in [figure 1](#) below, we can see that 28% of all people employed in 2002 worked in part-time roles.

The trend lines on a line graph show an overall picture of what is happening; that is, whether a particular variable has increased, declined or remained steady over time. Examine these closely — what changes do you see? If there has been change over time, has it been steady and gradual, or perhaps sudden and erratic? When examining a line graph, note down any patterns that you identify. You will then be ready to complete your interpretation, which involves writing a paragraph or two to summarise the information you have found in your analysis of the data.

4.6.2 Show me

Examine [figure 1](#).

Figure 1 People employed part-time, as a percentage of total employed, 1999–2012



Source: Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian social trends data cube, February, 2013, Work, National summary 1999–2012* (cat. no. 4102.0).

The graph's title tells us that the data we are looking at relates to the proportion of all employed people who were employed on a part-time basis during the period 1999–2012. Looking at the key, we can see that there is information provided about males, females and the total employed population. The red line on the graph shows the percentage of all employed people who were employed part-time; the purple line shows the percentage of all employed males who were employed part-time; and the green line shows the percentage

of all employed females who were employed part-time. Looking at these lines on the graph, we can clearly see that the percentage of women employed part-time is significantly higher than that of men.

Looking at specific points on the graph, we can see that there has been a gradual increase in the percentage of all people employed part-time from around 26% in 1999 to 30% in 2012. The percentage of females employed part-time was steady at around 43% from 1999–2001, then increased slightly to around 45%, where it remained through to 2012. The percentage of males employed part-time increased from around 12.5% in 1999–2000 to around 15% by 2003. It remained at this level until 2009 and then rose again slightly to around 16% for the 2010–2012 period.

The trend lines show an overall gradual increase (around 3.5%) in the percentage of people who were employed part-time over the period 1999–2012. The increase for females was around 2%; and for males around 3.5%. To summarise what we have learned from this graph, we could write a brief paragraph such as:

‘The percentage of Australians employed on a part-time basis has gradually increased in recent years. Overall, this figure grew from approximately 26% of the total employed workforce in 1999 to around 30% in 2012. The proportion of females employed on a part-time basis is significantly higher than that of men, and this remained constant throughout the 1999–2012 period. The increase in female part-time employment over this period was around 2%, while a slightly more pronounced change — an increase of around 3.5% — was observed in male part-time participation rates’.

4.6.3 Let me do it

Practise your skills by analysing and interpreting the line graph below. Write a paragraph describing the trends shown.

Figure 2 Number of people employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing, mining, manufacturing and retail trade, 1986–2016



Source: Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly, May 2016* (cat. no. 6291.0.55.003).

4.7 Review

4.7.1 Summary

How exactly work will change in the future is unknown; however, a number of assumptions can be made.

- There will be further advances in technology and this will affect the type of work people do, when they do it and where they do it.
- Globalisation, offshoring and outsourcing will continue to have an impact on the Australian labour market.
- Changing work environments and the need for work–life balance will be a key feature of the future world of work.
- Employee relations and agreements will need to change even further to enable greater flexibility.
- The next generation of workers will need to be more highly skilled and educated, and more focused on technology.
- Technology will significantly impact organisations' future human resources needs, and the way in which they find and retain employees.
- The need for training and development will only increase with time.
- Distance will not be a barrier to obtaining a job in the future.

4.7.2 Your turn

1. Which industries are likely to see growth in the next 10 years?
2. Which industries are likely to see a decline in the next 10 years?
3. How do you anticipate work will change in the future?
4. Propose reasons why lower-skilled jobs are disappearing.
5. Discuss how the next generation of workers might view work.
6. With a partner, conduct your own research into the hours people work by carrying out a survey using an online survey program. Summarise and present your findings to your class.

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