



Media release

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NEW REPORT:

LONG WORKING HOURS LINKED TO FAMILY BREAKDOWN IN AUSTRALIA

Australia's dominant work culture is placing enormous strain on relationships, particularly in families, according to the results of a new report, *An Unexpected Tragedy: Evidence for the connection between working hours and family breakdown in Australia*, released today.

"Our report reveals that the past three decades of prosperity experienced by Australia have come at an unexpected price," Paul Shepanski, co-author of the report, said today.

"The cost of this material success for Australians has not just been a more onerous burden of work but the effect of this work on relationships, especially in families," he said.

Thirty years ago, average Australian workers spent less than forty hours a week at work, and this was predictably between the hours of 8am and 6pm. This gave them time for leisure activities away from work, and regular time with family and friends. Over the last three decades, working patterns in Australia have altered so dramatically that Australia is now the only high-income country in the world that combines very long average working hours with a high level of work at unsocial times – during weeknights and weekends – and a significant proportion of casual employment.

"The study shows that the balance between work and family life in Australia is severely out of kilter today, a deterioration that has occurred over many years, beyond the term of any particular government. Research has helped us to draw the link between working patterns and the quality of relationships. The cold statistics provide vital clues to the thousands of relationships in crisis across our country. Long and atypical working patterns are associated with dysfunctional family environments," Mr Shepanski said.

"The findings are a loud wake-up call for Federal and State governments, business and families. A significant majority of Australians see this as a problem. Until now, policymakers have lacked the coherent arguments and the right tools, to take action to support strong relationships in families and in the wider community.

"The disturbing results of this report compel governments to sit up and take stock. Strong family and community relationships need to be at the top of our national agenda," Mr Shepanski said.

#Ends ... The report is available for free download from www.relationshipsforum.org.au

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