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International Perspectives on Non-Tenure Track Faculty

Australia's casual approach to University teaching

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through Collective Bargaining

Dr Bonny Cassidy, Letter to the editor, The Age, 29 July 2013,

‘Since completing my doctorate five years ago I have worked as a casual teaching academic in [two states] combining casual contracts from several institutions as I have been unable to find a permanent position anywhere. In that time I have received a maximum of two hours of pedagogical ‘training’. Most university teaching skills are learnt on the job or through fleeting incidental conversations with colleagues. Although doing the frontline work of the university, we [casual academics] move around campuses almost invisibly without offices or invitations to collegial meetings....’

Background

- **37 public universities**
 - **Government a minority source of revenue**
 - **Education as export**
-
- **Casual work**
 - **The casual academic**
 - **CB settings**



Australia's insecure academic workforce

- **Majority of university teaching staff are hourly paid (casual)**
- **Perform most of the undergraduate teaching**
- **Casual teaching has no career path – more trap than bridge**
- **Transfer of risk to employee**

Who are Australia's casual academics?

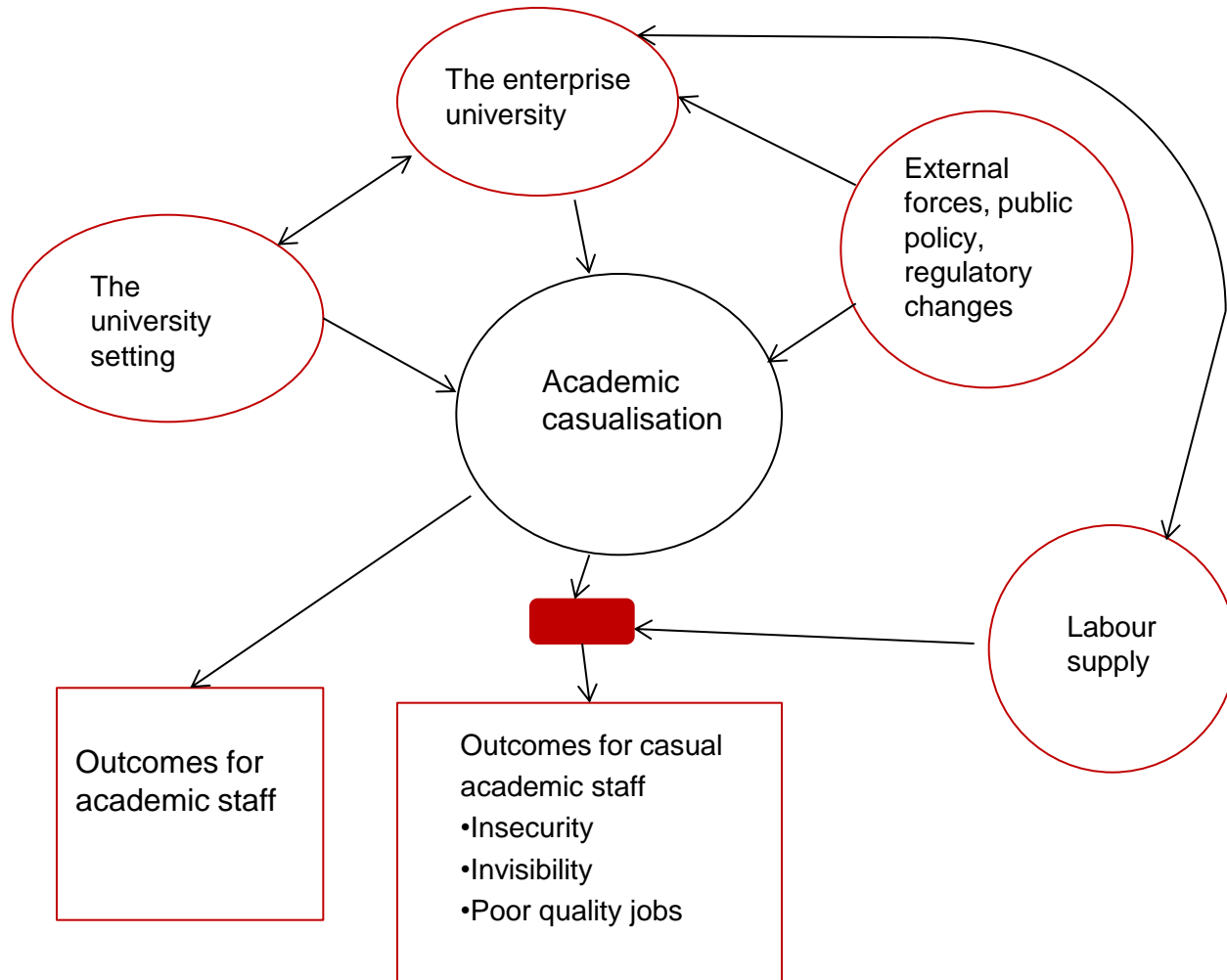
- **Majority are women – 57 per cent**
- **Average age is 36 (50 for tenured academics)**
- **Diverse motivations but most want a more secure position**

Who are casual academics?

Myth of flexibility

“casualisation suits a lot of people who take a portfolio approach to their career; they mix and match academic work with work in industry, consulting...”

(Universities Australia, Chief Executive)



Explaining casualisation

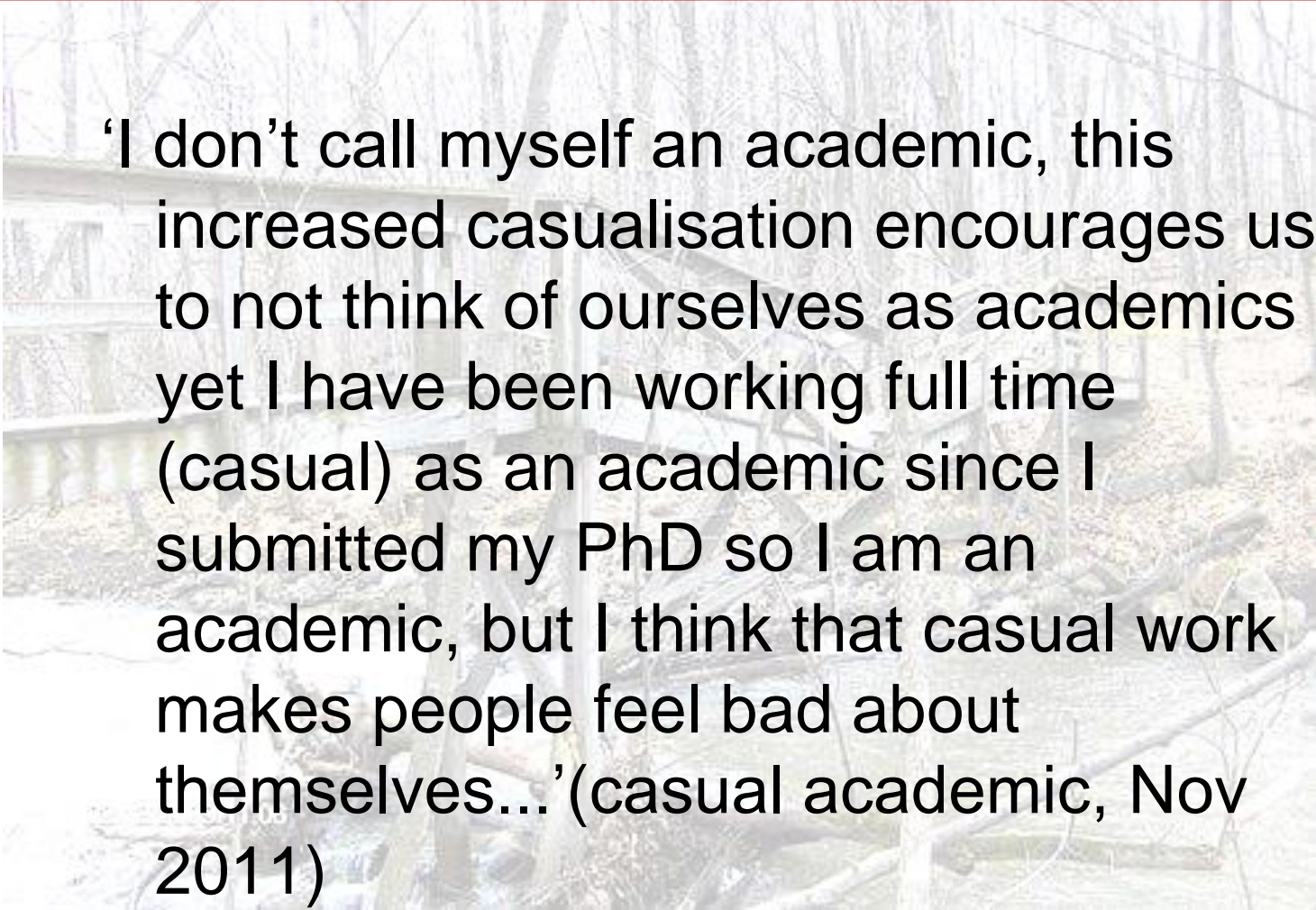
- **Academic discipline has an impact**
- **A new typology**
 - **Aspiring academics**
 - **Externally focused**
 - **Casual by choice**
 - **Retiring**
- **Key features are insecurity, lack of career and invisibility**

Future challenges

- **Pressures to save costs remain – outsourcing and online**
- **Regulation through collective bargaining difficult**
- **Representation is challenging – casuals scared to be active**
- **Highly educated but uncertain future**

How far can casual staff bend for flexibility?



A faded background image of a library interior, showing bookshelves filled with books and a person standing in the distance.

‘I don’t call myself an academic, this increased casualisation encourages us to not think of ourselves as academics yet I have been working full time (casual) as an academic since I submitted my PhD so I am an academic, but I think that casual work makes people feel bad about themselves...’(casual academic, Nov 2011)