

LABOUR LAW SEMINAR

“Time on your back”: Billable Hours and the Work of Solicitors in Private Practice

This seminar presents preliminary results from a research project that examines working-time arrangements amongst solicitors in private practice in Melbourne. As in several other countries, the working-time schedules of lawyers in law firms are characterised by very long daily hours and few opportunities for employee-oriented flexibility. These schedules are both demanding and rigid, and they fit poorly with the needs of a modern, diverse workforce. They impede a good work/ life balance and help to push many young solicitors, in particular many young women, out of law firms. The focus of this presentation is on the challenge of explaining the dominant working-time pattern. Particular attention is given to the billable hours’ system, which has been adapted from a technique for billing clients to a tool for managing and controlling the work of employee solicitors, in particular through the imposition of high targets, close time recording and careful monitoring of the performance of work.

Dr. Iain Campbell is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Applied Social Research (CASR), RMIT University. The research on solicitors, conducted with Sara Charlesworth, Jenny Malone and Estelle Tang, is part of a broader ARC-funded project that examines the prospects for good quality part-time work in Australia. He is co-author of the book, *Fragmented Futures: New Challenges in Working Life* (2003), and has written extensively on changing patterns of work.

DATE: Friday, 6 June 2008
TIME: 1:00 pm
PLACE: Room 920 (Level 9)
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RSVP: Charlotte Morgans
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A light lunch will be served