# HOSPITALITY TRAINING IS NO PIECE OF CAKE!

**Hospitality Industry Trainees Wellbeing
and Alcohol and Drug Use:
First Years' Experiences and Responses**

NCETA
Australia's National Research Centre
on AOD Workforce Development

Flinders
UNIVERSITY
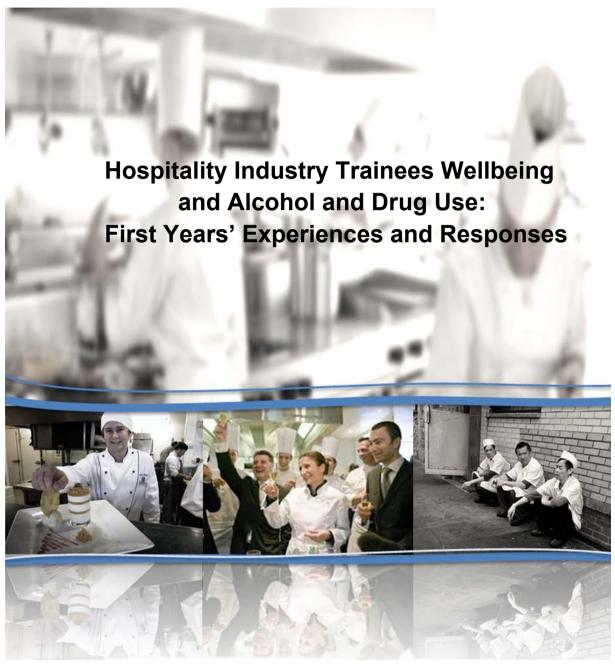
# HOSPITALITY TRAINING IS NO PIECE OF CAKE!

## HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY TRAINEES' WELLBEING AND ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE:

## FIRST YEARS' EXPERIENCES AND RESPONSES

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The National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction is an internationally recognised research centre that works as a catalyst for change in the alcohol and other drugs (AOD) field.

Our mission is to advance the capacity of organisations and workers to respond to alcohol- and drug-related problems. Our core business is the promotion of workforce development (WFD) principles, research and evaluation of effective practices; investigating the prevalence and effect of alcohol and other drug use in society; and the development and evaluation of prevention and intervention programs, policy and resources for workplaces and organisations.

NCETA is based at Flinders University and is a collaboration between the University, the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and the SA Department of Health.

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# Executive Summary

There is increasing interest in workplace and worker wellbeing. The workplace environment can be an important determinant of the physical, psychological, and social wellbeing of individual employees. However, to-date very little Australian research has been undertaken to examine the relationship between work, alcohol and drug use, and the wellbeing of young new entrants to the hospitality industry. To address this, a qualitative research study involving nine focus group discussions with 69 second year trainee chefs and seven semi-structured interviews with hospitality industry key informants from Ultimo and Ryde TAFE's in Sydney, Australia was undertaken.

The purpose of the study was to examine workplace issues facing young new entrants to the restaurant and commercial cooking sector of the hospitality industry and their experiences of work-related alcohol and drug use. The findings will inform a health and wellbeing intervention designed to enhance young workers' psychological health and wellbeing, and minimise risk of alcohol and drug related harm.

## Main findings

One important finding of the study was that workplaces and trainees could be categorised according to broad typologies (Table 1). Workplaces could be categorised according to a) those with a contemporary Human Resource focus and b) those lacking such a focus. Trainees could be categorised according to four different types – 1) Aspirational master chefs, 2) Chefs, 3) Resilient dropouts and 4) Struggling dropouts. These categories have implications for the design and implementation of intervention strategies to improve trainee wellbeing and retention rates.

## Table 1 Workplace and trainee typologies

| Workplaces | Trainees | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A.  HR focus** | *1.  Aspirational master chefs* | *2.  Chefs* | *3.  Resilient dropouts* | *4.  Struggling dropouts* |
| Clear HR, OHS & wellbeing policies & procedures. | Highly motivated, resilient, strong support networks, prior knowledge of working conditions, realistic expectations, career oriented, focused & accepting of tough conditions to achieve quality outcomes. | Moderately motivated, not driven, fewer support networks, less resilient than aspirational master chefs, rationalised abuse & bullying but coped through AOD use. | Attrite within a year of training, may be resilient & less vulnerable to stress, but unwilling to put up with working conditions, bullying & high levels of work stress. | Attrite within a year of training, fewer coping mechanism, higher stress levels & vulnerability to stressors, less 'work ready'. |
| **B.  No HR focus** | | | | |
| No clear HR, OHS & wellbeing policies & procedures. | | | | |

## Workplace characteristics

Trainees and key informants reported that working in the restaurant and commercial cooking sector of the hospitality industry involved:

- working long and irregular work hours
- physical demanding, stressful, and fast paced environments
- potentially hazardous work
- psychologically and emotionally demands on workers
- negative impacts on family and social life.

Trainees and key informants also reported a range of positive features, including:

- travel and career opportunities
- new friendships and social networks
- pride and accomplishment from working in a fast paced and challenging environment.

## Alcohol and drug use

Most key informants and trainees reported that alcohol and other drug use was relatively common among hospitality industry workers, with cannabis and amphetamines being the illicit drugs most commonly used. While some alcohol and drug use occurred during work hours, most use occurred after work had ended. In particular, having 'one or two' drinks at work after finishing a shift was reported to be a relatively common practice. The extent of alcohol and drug use at work varied between workplaces. Trainees employed in larger organisations with a human resource department were less likely than those employed in smaller organisations to report alcohol and drug use at the workplace.

Participants also identified that tobacco smoking was prevalent, with some indicating that smoking was more prevalent in the hospitality industry compared to other industries they had worked in. Key informants, however, believed that smoking rates in the industry had declined over the past decade. Nonetheless, workplace norms were considered to facilitate both the use and uptake of tobacco.

## Workplace factors associated with alcohol and drug use

While key informants were cognisant of the role workplace factors played, most trainees believed that alcohol and drug use was largely due to individual factors such as personal choice or personality. Despite this belief, trainees' statements about alcohol and drug use indicated that workplace factors played a substantial role.

Work stress and irregular work hours appeared to be important influences on alcohol and drug

use that occurred after long shifts to "*wind down*" or relax after the stress of service.

Cannabis in particular, was reported to be commonly used to cope with the fast pace of service and work stress. Drinking heavily or using drugs after finishing work late in order to *"catch up"* with friends who had already been drinking and socialising at night clubs for several hours was also reported to be a common practice.

Social practices and social networks appeared to facilitate access to and use of alcohol and drugs. Trainees talked of staff drinks after each shift being commonplace and on occasions, these would continue at other venues as a social event. Drinking with other staff was seen as method of social interaction and bonding with co-workers and supervisors, and some trainees reported they felt obliged to participate in order to 'fit in'. Some key informants believed that workplace social networks and peer pressure were particularly important influences on young workers who lived away from home and family support.

Alcohol and drugs were reported to be readily available and accessible in the hospitality industry, with key informants believing that availability was enhanced by the proximity of some workplaces to night clubs and other night time entertainment venues.

In contrast to views about other drugs, trainees believed tobacco smoking was influenced by workplace factors. The opportunity to have a smoke break was seen as a strong motivator to smoke. Many trainees reported that while having a break to simply relax was discouraged, a smoke break was generally accepted and condoned. For some, this acceptance and covert encouragement to smoke was seen as an obstacle to quitting and a motivation for new entrants to take up smoking. Some trainees also regarded smoking with co-workers and supervisors as an opportunity for valued social interaction and bonding.

These findings are consistent with previous research that has identified physically or psychologically demanding work can lead to high levels of work stress which in turn is

associated with increased alcohol and other drug use. Similarly, previous research has identified that availability and workplace social norms are associated with alcohol and drug consumption patterns. In particular, exposure to co-workers' use, socialising with co-workers after work and perceived co-worker peer pressure are important influences on the alcohol and drug consumption patterns of young workers.

## Workplace verbal abuse and bullying

Verbal abuse and bullying was reported to be relatively common and more prevalent in hospitality compared to other industries. The cause of much verbal abuse was often attributed to the stress and pressure of service. As a result, it was tolerated and regarded as acceptable by many trainees, even if it became physical.

Some trainees regarded verbal abuse as a strategy used by chefs to ensure the quality of the food served and thus the reputation of the restaurant and the head chef. Viewed in this light, most trainees were accepting of verbal abuse as they considered the end justified the means.

Others regarded verbal abuse as a legitimate learning tool used by chefs. Verbal abuse and bullying was also used by chefs and others as a method to ensure compliance and submission to the rigid kitchen hierarchy.

Despite some trainees regarding verbal abuse and bullying as an acceptable work practice, it was considered unacceptable when it "*crossed the line"* and became personal or resulted in injury. Several trainees reported extreme cases of bullying that resulted in serious physical and psychological injury, in one case with near fatal consequences. Sexual harassment and sexism were also reported by female trainees.

The behaviour of some female trainees observed during focus group discussions indicated they may internalise the dominant male culture of the kitchen and adopt behaviours to indicate that they were one of the boys.

The extent of verbal abuse and bullying varied across different workplaces. These behaviours were less likely in open kitchens and kitchens run by large organisations with human resource departments, but more likely in high end restaurants. Some were of the opinion that the extent of bulling and verbal abuse largely depended on the personality of the head chef.

A kitchen culture of compliance and acceptance of bullying and verbal abuse was underpinned by a social norm of no "*tattle tales".* Rather than complain or report incidents of verbal abuse and bullying, trainees adopted a range of coping strategies including:

- ignoring the behaviour and remaining busy
- rationalising the behaviour as an acceptable part of the learning process or as a method of quality control
- talking about workplace issues with other workers at the end of a shift (debriefing)
- using alcohol or other drugs as stress relief
- moving to another workplace (especially for those employed in group training organisations) where this was an option.

These findings are consistent with international research that has identified that high levels of verbal abuse and bullying in the restaurant sector of the hospitality industry are associated with long and irregular hours, hot and noisy working conditions and the stress of service. This research also identifies that workplace bullying can have severe negative effects on workers' health and wellbeing and can affect turnover intentions. Thus, it is likely that bullying and harassment contributes to attrition rates among first year trainees.

Consistent with the current findings, previous research also reports that young restaurant workers adopt normalisation and rationalisation processes whereby verbal abuse and bullying are accepted as a natural and inevitable part of the workplace culture.

The normalisation, by young workers, of verbal abuse and bullying appears to be a coping strategy that may moderate the impact of these behaviours on negative outcomes for the individual.

## Attrition during first year

In addition to high levels of verbal abuse and bullying, four main issues contributed to attrition rates during the first year of training:

1. the impact of long and irregular hours and the stressful working conditions on trainees' health and social life
2. unrealistic expectations of what it is like to work in the commercial cookery sector of the hospitality industry
3. a lack of necessary life and academic skills that enable young new entrants to be 'work ready'
4. low pay and excessive travelling times.

The second year trainees who participated in the focus groups saw themselves as different from trainees who dropped out in that they were:

- better able to cope with the stress and bullying
- more informed of workplace conditions and expectations prior to commencing training
- more committed and determined to become a career chef.

While higher levels of commitment and dedication appeared to make some trainees more resilient and better able to cope it also appeared to contribute to entrenched and on-going values and behaviours including workplace abuse and bullying.

Trainees offered a number of strategies to improve trainee wellbeing and retention rates including:

- build the resilience and coping skills of new entrants
- build the communication and social skills of chefs
- better prepare and equip new entrants to deal with working conditions.

Key informants identified that the first six months of training was a crucial period in which to address attrition rates and suggested several strategies for improving retention which included:

- supporting trainees and ensuring that they received proper entitlements and fair and safe working conditions
- better pre-training preparation
- mentoring and buddy programs
- improved training
- onsite support and monitoring.

## Intervention implications

The findings from this study have important implications for intervention strategies to improve the wellbeing of first year commercial cookery trainees. Such strategies may also improve first year retention rates. Any intervention needs to target both the individual trainee *and* the workplace environment. Moreover, these interventions need to be tailored to suit the different typologies of trainees and workplaces outlined in Table 1.

## Interventions targeting trainees

Trainees' acceptance of alcohol and drug use at work and risky consumption patterns after work indicates that they may not be aware of the health and safety implications of such patterns of consumption. Moreover, few trainees recognised the potential influence of workplace factors on their consumption patterns. Thus, any intervention needs to:

- include safe use and harm minimisation messages and information concerning alcohol and drug consumption
- provide strategies to raise trainees' awareness of workplace factors that can influence use
- build capacity to respond these factors
- increase trainees' awareness of strategies they could use to deal with work stress and workplace social influence processes.

Second year trainees saw themselves as more resilient and better able to cope with the stress and working conditions than first year trainees who had dropped out. Key informants reported that many young new entrants to the industry lacked essential life and social skills.

This suggests better recruitment and selection processes need to be utilised to ensure only suitable applicants are employed.

Alternatively, strategies to build resilience and social skills among new entrants during their first year of training may need to be implemented. These strategies should build capacity to adapt to change and stressful events in healthy and constructive ways by enhancing their social and cognitive competency. Social competency refers to interpersonal skills relating to communication and conflict resolution, while cognitive competency refers to skills including problem-solving, decision-making, planning and goal-setting.

## Interventions targeting the workplace

The extent of verbal abuse and bullying, and work-related alcohol and drug use, varied substantially across different workplaces. These behaviours were less prevalent in larger organisations with a human resource section. Trainees who worked in such organisations were more aware of relevant alcohol and drug policies, bullying and harassment policies, and responsibilities and procedures relevant to these policies than trainees employed in smaller workplaces.

This may indicate that strategies to raise awareness of small business employers' legislative and duty of care responsibilities in relation to these issues are needed. Such strategies also need to provide assistance to those employers to develop and implement relevant policies, procedures and programs.

In addition, workplaces should offer comprehensive and effective induction programs that raise new entrants' awareness not only of the operating procedures and organisational structures of individual workplaces, but also their knowledge of workplace policies and procedures relevant to issues such as bullying, harassment, and alcohol and drug use.

The introduction of workplace mentoring or buddy programs may also have a positive impact on the wellbeing of young new entrants. Workplace mentoring programs can positively affect trainees' mental health by increasing workplace socialisation and decreasing work stress. Mentoring programs appear particularly effective for 'at risk' young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is important given that key informants indicated that many new entrants to the industry come from academically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

Poor psychological wellbeing and high attrition rates may also be due to many new entrants being unaware and unprepared for the working conditions in the commercial cookery sector of the hospitality industry. Suggested strategies to better inform and prepare new entrants include ensuring secondary school based vocational training involves work placements in commercial kitchens, ensuring career information resources forums provide accurate information concerning working conditions, and ensuring that new entrants are fully informed of their industrial relations and occupational safety rights, obligations and entitlements.

## Conclusion

The results of the study identify that employment in the hospitality industry exposes young new entrants to high levels of risky drinking, drug use, verbal abuse and bullying. Such exposure is likely to have negative consequences for the health, safety and wellbeing of young hospitality industry trainees. However, the extent to which exposure to these behaviours has negative outcomes for individual trainees appears to vary according to their level of resilience and coping skills. The study also indicates that the extent and nature of these behaviours appear to be influenced by working conditions and workplace organisational and social factors and that these factors may vary across workplaces. Together, these findings have important implications for the design and implementation of intervention strategies.

## *Structure of this report*

The remainder of this report begins by providing a brief background to the study and an overview of the research methodology utilised. The main body of the report consists of two sections, Part A and Part B.

Part A details the findings of the focus group discussions.

Part B details the findings of the key informant interviews.

The report concludes with a more detailed discussion of the main findings and implications for intervention strategies.

# 1 Introduction

The workplace environment can be an important determinant of an employee's physical, psychological, and social wellbeing. This is particularly the case for young new entrants to the workforce. Young workers are generally the least experienced and lowest paid employees and the most vulnerable to workplace bullying and exploitation.

Young workers are also at elevated risk of occupational accidents and injury and alcohol and drug related harm. The degree of risk associated with these factors is known to vary across industry and occupational groups. One industry in particular, the hospitality industry, has been identified as a high risk work environment for workplace bullying and has high levels of alcohol and drug use prevalence rates among its workforce. The hospitality industry also employs large numbers of young workers.

To-date very little Australian research has been undertaken to examine the relationship between the work environment, alcohol and drug use, and the wellbeing of young new entrants to the hospitality industry. To address this issue a qualitative research project was undertaken to examine the work experiences of new entrants to the hospitality industry. The findings of this project will be used to inform a health and wellbeing intervention designed to enhance young workers' psychological health and wellbeing and minimise alcohol and drug related harm.

# 2 Background

Young Australians aged 15-24 years are a group identified to be at risk for alcohol and other drug related harm (AIHW, 2011). This risk increases for those in the paid workforce. There is a substantial body of research indicating that paid employment is associated with adolescent alcohol and drug use (e.g., Breslin & Adlaf 2005; Johnson, 2004). Moreover, workers under the age of 25 years are more likely to drink at risky levels and use illicit drugs than older workers (Berry, Pidd, Roche, & Harrison, 2007; Pidd, Shtangey & Roche, 2008a; 2008b; Roche, Pidd, Bywood, & Freeman, 2008). Young workers are also more likely to report alcohol-related absenteeism (Roche, Pidd, Berry, & Harrison, 2008) and to use alcohol or drugs at work (Pidd, Roche, & Buisman-Pijlman, 2011).

Young workers employed in the hospitality industry may be at particular risk of alcohol and drug related harm. Compared to other industries, the hospitality industry has significantly higher prevalence rates for risky alcohol and illicit drug use (Berry, et al., 2007; Pidd, et al., 2008a; 2008b; Roche, et al., 2008) and hospitality industry workers are up to 3.5 times more likely than other workers to use alcohol or drugs at work or attend work under the influence of alcohol or drugs (Pidd et al., 2011).

The restaurant and commercial cooking sector of the hospitality industry may be a particularly high risk group for alcohol-related harm. Recent Australian research indicated nearly half (49%) the apprentice chefs surveyed drank at risky levels (Abbott & Nethery, 2010), while international research indicates that compared to other workers in the hospitality industry, restaurant workers have high prevalence rates for heavy alcohol use and alcohol-related problems (Kjaerheim, Mykletun, Aasalnd, Haldorsen, & Andersen, 1995; Moore, Cunradi, Duke, & Ames, 2009; Moore, Ames, Duke, & Cunradi, 2012).

Young workers employed in the commercial cooking and restaurant sector of the hospitality industry may also be at risk of psychological harm. While Australian research is scarce, international studies indicate that restaurants and other commercial kitchens are stressful and hectic workplaces where psychological and physical abuse in the form of workplace harassment and bullying is relatively common (Hoel, & Einarsen, 2003; Mathisen, Einarsen, & Mykletun, 2008; Notelaers, Vermunt, Baillien, Einarsen, & De Witte, 2011).

Work stress and bullying and harassment can have severe negative consequences for a young worker's physical and psychological health and wellbeing (Hoel, & Einarsen, 2003; Melchior, Caspi, Milne, Danese, & Poulton, 2007). Moreover, workplace stress and harassment have been shown to be associated with risky alcohol use (Frone, 2008; Marchand, 2008).

Despite evidence identifying that young workers employed in the hospitality industry are at risk of alcohol, drug and psychological harm, research that has examined the precise nature of this risk is scarce. Even less research has examined this issue in the context of the Australian hospitality industry.

To address this, a research project was undertaken to examine the nature of work-related alcohol and drug use and work-related stress among a sample of young workers employed in the restaurant and commercial cooking sector of the hospitality industry. The research is intended to inform the development of an intervention strategy specifically designed to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of young new workers. Such an intervention may also have a positive impact on trainee retention rates.
Compared to other occupational groups, food trades workers have one of the lowest trainee/apprenticeship completion rates (NCVER, 2011) and it has been estimated that approximately 30% of all young commercial

cookery trainees dropout of training during or just after their first year of training.  The intervention will target factors that may be associated with high attrition rates (e.g., work-related stress, anxiety and general worker health and wellbeing) and as such the intervention may improve retention rates.

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# 3 Methodology

## Focus groups

A series of focus groups was conducted to examine second year trainees' experiences of working in the hospitality industry, the nature of their working conditions, and work-related alcohol and other drug use. Trainees were asked to discuss their experiences of working in the hospitality industry during their first year of employment. Discussion centred on their perceptions of working conditions in hospitality that were stressful or difficult, how they dealt with these issues, and their experiences of alcohol and other drug use during the first year of their training. Particular emphasis was placed on attitudes toward, and experiences of, workplace factors that increase stress and their experiences of workplace practices and beliefs concerning alcohol and other drug use.

To encourage discussion about work conditions, focus group participants were shown a five minute video of excerpts from the television show 'Hell's Kitchen'. These excerpts depicted the fast pace of service[1] in a restaurant kitchen and celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay yelling at kitchen staff. To encourage discussion about work-related alcohol and drug use, participants were shown mock headlines of newspaper stories reporting the high prevalence of alcohol and drug use among hospitality industry workers.

Each focus group ran for approximately 60-90 minutes and took place during normal TAFE training class times and was facilitated by two researchers trained in the conduct of focus groups. Focus group discussions comprised 8 – 10 participants, with both males and females, and were recorded and transcribed, with data obtained grouped according to topics and themes.

[1] Service refers to the peak work load periods when a commercial kitchen or restaurant serves meals. For example, this peak period may occur between 12-3 pm for lunch or 6-9 pm for dinner.

## Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews were also undertaken to gain insight into issues faced by young hospitality industry trainees from the perspective of trainers and employers. Interviews followed a semi-structured format where key informants were asked to describe their experiences of working with young new entrants to the hospitality industry, their knowledge of workplace factors that contributed to stress, anxiety, and alcohol or drug use among young new entrants and their knowledge of strategies to deal with these issues.

Interviews were undertaken by phone. Each key informant interview took approximately 30 minutes and all interviews were recorded and transcribed, with data obtained grouped according to topics and themes.

## Literature review

A brief review of relevant literature was also undertaken to identify previous research concerning young hospitality industry workers and the relationship between work, alcohol and drug use, and workers' wellbeing. Research relevant to strategies for reducing alcohol and drug related harm and improving worker wellbeing among young workers was also reviewed.

## Ethics

Ethics approval was obtained from Flinders University Social and Behavioural research Ethics Committee and permission to conduct the research with NSW Technical and Further Education (TAFE) trainees was provided by TAFE NSW.

# 4 PART A.  Focus Group Findings

**Summary: Trainees' work experiences**

Trainees who participated in the focus group discussions reported a range of positive factors associated with working in the restaurant and commercial cooking sector of the hospitality sector including travel, career opportunities, and a sense of pride and accomplishment that comes with working in a fast paced and challenging environment.  The opportunity to develop new friendships and social networks with co-workers who had similar interest was also seen as a benefit.

Trainees also reported a range of negatives including low pay, long and irregular work hours, and inadequate work breaks.  While trainees recognised that these factors could have a negative effect on their health and existing non-work social networks, they also believed that they were a normal and accepted part of the industry.  Several trainees reported that they believed some employers regarded young trainees as cheap labour who were 'ripped off' in relation to pay and conditions.  However, as with other negative work experiences, many trainees saw this practice as an acceptable and normal part of the industry that had to be endured if the trainee wanted to learn and work their way to the 'top'.

## Participants

A total of 9 focus groups, consisting of 69 participants (43 males and 26 females), were undertaken.  Participants were second year trainee chefs enrolled in commercial cookery courses at two major NSW Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges.  Most were full time employees who attend training one day a week at TAFE premises each training semester and worked in the hospitality industry four days a week.

The overwhelming majority of these trainees worked in commercial kitchens across a range of settings including small cafes, restaurants, hotels, and commercial catering.  The majority were 18 to 24 years of age.

## Trainees' perceptions of the work environment

### The positives

Trainees reported that the industry provided many positive benefits and opportunities such as social interaction, international travel and potential for a good income.  The majority were also passionate about working in the industry and saw cooking as a career and not just a job.

For many, working in the industry was an opportunity to combine a passion (i.e., cooking) with work.  It enabled them to get paid for doing something they loved.  As one trainee put it:

> *"Cooking is my hobby.  So I can work on my hobby and get paid for it."*

Trainees also reported that their work was intrinsically rewarding as it enabled them to excel and be recognised for being '*the best'*, and in doing so contributed to their sense of accomplishment and self-esteem.  Providing a quality service to customers also contributed to levels of satisfaction and reward.  According to one participant:

> *"… (I enjoy) the giving ….not like doctors or social workers, but we give customers an experience that they may not forget… that makes you feel good."*

Many trainees also liked the team environment of hospitality work as it provided an opportunity to develop friendships and social networks with co-workers who had similar interests:

> *"All of my close mates work with me. So I really enjoy hanging out with my friends all day."*

> *"My work team is a very social group - we are similar people with similar interests."*

While trainees reported that working in kitchens was fast paced and stressful, some noted that this could also be positive. For many, the working day provided variation in job roles and the fast pace of the kitchen meant time passed quickly. Moreover, for some, the challenge of fast paced work during service made the job interesting:

> *"If you know what you are doing, working under pressure is good. It's a challenge and never boring."*

For some trainees, coping with the stress and rush of service was a source of pride and accomplishment.

> *"… (service) is an adrenalin rush – (you) get hyped up when everything comes at once and everyone works together…. (it's) hard core, but we like the job being a rush, not everyone can do this job. So it's pride."*

> *"Yeah for sure, it's (the rush of service) rewarding, it gives you a feeling of accomplishment. I like it, it's one of the reasons I work in the industry."*

A few regarded learning to cope with the rush and stress of service as character building and a skill development opportunity:

> *"It makes you a stronger person. Coping under pressure is a good skill to have."*

Others enjoyed the fast pace of service, but also saw it as demanding:

> *"… (there's) lots of adrenalin when rush hours (service) are on. You enjoy it, but you get worn out and want it to end too."*

## The negatives

Trainees were also encouraged to discuss any negative aspects of working in the industry. In general, they reported that working in commercial kitchens involved hot, hard work that was fast paced, often stressful and involved working long hours. Overall, they accepted these conditions as being part of the job. However, conditions that were regarded more negatively by trainees included:

- having to work long hours for low levels of pay
- lack of adequate work breaks
- the negative impact of working hours on non-work social networks.

### Long hours, low pay and underpayment

Among the most frequently cited dislikes were the low pay and the irregular and long hours of work. Trainees reported that weekend shifts, double shifts, and working long hours were commonplace. For some young workers, this was a heavy and difficult burden to carry and adjust to.

> *"I usually do 9 (am) to 9 (pm), but I do get a 2 hour break between."*

> *"I've worked a 22 hour double shift before. 12 hours is pretty regular. 10 hours is a short shift."*

However, some trainees did not necessarily see working long hours as entirely negative.

> *"Sometimes this can be good because when you eventually get that break you look back and say yeah I worked hard and now I feel good. It does annoy me and get me down sometimes, but then when you get that break you think about it and you feel good about what you did. I feel good that I did that many hours and I'm still sane."*

More frequently however, trainees complained that they were often not paid for the extra hours they worked.

> "Yeah like it depends where you work. My last job I would do 60 to 80 hours (a week), *but only get paid for 40. We do get paid for some overtime, but not all."*

> "Double shifts are pretty common, but often I don't get paid for the double shift."

Trainees also reported that they were often denied adequate mandatory breaks.

> "Yeah, often they say you have a break, but when it comes to it things are busy and you don't have one. I often do double shifts where I start at 11 in the morning and finish at 12.30 that night with no real break."

> "(It's) *very common.* (It's) *rare to get your allocated break."*

However, some trainees did not regard not having a break as entirely negative.

> "I prefer not to have the break because it just stretches the day out longer it drags out the day and on the break you get relaxed and lazy and then you have to go back to the kitchen."

Other trainees viewed working long hours without adequate pay or breaks as exploitation. Some felt they were used by their employer as a source of cheap labour and felt that they were being deliberately exploited and *'ripped off'.*

> "… it is really just a long shift and they put 'split' on your roster for pay and tax"

> "…(we are) *ripped off for pay. We get paid for normal 9 to 5 hours every day"*

Several older trainees reported that being exploited in this way was more commonly experienced by younger workers.

> "… us older workers tend not to get ripped of as much. I generally get paid for the hours I work, but I hear a lot of horror stories from younger workers."

The extent of underpayment and long work hours without breaks varied between workplaces. Trainees reported these practices to be less likely to occur in large hotels or corporate environments with a human resource department. However, most trainees accepted such practices as a 'normal' part of the industry.

> "It's sorta like an entry thing that is known about from the bottom to the top. You want to work there (i.e., a restaurant with a high end reputation) *because you want to learn and work your way to the top. Regardless of the pay, you just want to be able to say you worked there."*

> "People are very expendable (at these high end restaurants) *because when you leave there is a line to take your place and yes the restaurants take advantage of it, especially (in the case of) the young workers."*

Some trainees reported that the long hours they worked negatively affected their health and existing social networks.

> "I used to do a night and double morning shifts early in the week and I would always be late for TAFE on Wednesday mornings because I was so over worked and tired."

> "It's very bad for your health and social life outside of the industry. The hours make you lose all your existing friendships."

Many trainees also reported that due to the long and irregular work hours, existing social

networks were replaced with workplace social networks.

*"You feel so guilty because you're always late or absent. So sometimes it is easier to just forget those friendships."*

*"Like most of the time our friends outside of work are out and about when we're working and when we have our free time, they're working. It's pretty much no social life outside of work. So you end up socialising with the people you work with."*

## Alcohol and drug use

**Summary: Alcohol and drug use**

The majority of trainees reported that alcohol and other drug use was relatively common among hospitality industry workers, with stimulants and cannabis being the most common illicit drugs used. Some also reported that they had observed or suspected, use during work hours, but the majority reported that most use occurred after work ceased. However, they were also of the opinion that alcohol or other drug use was no more prevalent in hospitality than in other industries. The prevalence of use during work hours varied between workplaces. Trainees employed in larger organisations with a human resource department were less likely to report use than those employed in smaller organisations.

Most trainees believed that use was largely due to individual factors such as personal choice or personality, rather being influenced by factors in the workplace. Despite this belief, discussions about alcohol and drug use revealed that workplace factors played a major role in determining consumption patterns. Work stress and irregular work hours appeared to be particularly important influences that both facilitated and fostered the use of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs.

Trainees talked of alcohol and drug use that occurred after long shifts to 'wind down' or relax after the stress of service. Cannabis use in particular, appeared to be a common strategy for coping with the fast pace of service and work stress. Others talked of drinking heavily or using drugs after finishing work late to 'catch up' with friends who had already been drinking and socialising at night clubs for several hours.

Focus group discussions also revealed that alcohol and drugs were readily available and accessible in the hospitality industry and indicated that workplace social practices and social networks played an important role in determining consumption patterns. Trainees reported that staff drinks after each shift were common and on occasion these would continue at other venues as a social event. Drinking with other staff was seen as method of social interaction and bonding with co-workers and supervisors, and some trainees reported they felt obliged to participate in order to 'fit in'.

Tobacco smoking was also reported by trainees as being prevalent among hospitality industry workers with some believing that smoking was more prevalent in the hospitality industry compared to other industries they had worked in. In contrast to their beliefs about other drugs, tobacco smoking was regarded by trainees as being strongly associated with workplace factors. The opportunity to have a 'smoke break' was seen as a strong motivator to either continue to smoke or to take up smoking. Many reported that having a break to simply relax was discouraged, while having a 'smoke break' was generally accepted and condoned. For some, this acceptance and covert encouragement to smoke was seen as an obstacle to quitting and a motivation among new entrants to take up smoking. Other workplace social influences were also evident with some trainees regarding having a smoke break with co-workers and supervisors as an opportunity for further social interaction and bonding.

Alcohol and other drug use were reported by trainees to be relatively common among hospitality industry workers, with cannabis and amphetamines being the most common illicit drugs used. Some trainees believed that cannabis use was particularly common.

*"Everyone in my kitchen does weed. Yeah marijuana - every one smokes mainly after work. You wouldn't believe. It's* (cannabis use) *very common."*

However, most trainees were also of the opinion that use was no more prevalent in hospitality than in other industries.

> "There's a lot of drinking and a fair bit of speed and cannabis, but it's the same everywhere – not just in hospitality."

> "I don't think we drink any more (than others)."

Regardless of trainees' perceptions about the extent of alcohol or drug use among hospitality industry workers, the majority believed that use was largely due to individual factors and had little to do with workplace factors or other influences.

> "It's a party thing, it's a personal choice – it has nothing to do with work."

> "It's the person themselves if they become addicted or have a problem, some do and some don't."

Others believed that if use was more prevalent in the hospitality industry, it was largely due to the type of person the industry attracted.

> "It's the type of people chefs are and how many of them (of this type) are doing the job. As Anthony Bourdain in his book says – we're the outcasts – we're the people who couldn't do any other jobs. We can't do any other job – other than this we would be in jail."

> "It's an adrenalin-fuelled lifestyle that attracts people with an addictive personality."

While most trainees maintained that alcohol or drug use was largely influenced by individual factors, they also acknowledged other factors such as stress or peer group influences could play a role in determining consumption patterns.

> "It depends on the person, some just drink to cope with the stress."

> "There's a bit of cannabis use, but it depends on if you're older or if your friends do it sort of thing."

## Alcohol and drug use at work

Some trainees indicated that they had not heard of or seen any alcohol or drug use during work hours. However, others reported that drinking during work hours did occur.

> "The last place I worked, we used to fill the big milkshake containers up and drink while we worked. If it wasn't a busy night we would, but if it was a very busy night we would only have one like toward the end of service."

> "Yeah, I know people who have a drink while on their break. When I first started work at this place where I worked the chefs would always go and have a few beers on their break."

Others noted that while drinking during work hours was not common, they regularly had one or two drinks after work.

> "We never drink at work during work hours – only very rarely when there are no customers, but we nearly always have one at the bar after work."

The practice of having one or two drinks after worked had ended was often referred to as 'staffies'.

> "Drinking at work is not allowed at my workplace, but we get staffies afterwards."

Stimulant use during work hours was also reported by trainees.

> "In my last kitchen I saw the head chef and another chef racking up[2] coke or speed in the office."

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[2] 'Racking up' refers to the practice of forming stimulants such as amphetamine or cocaine (that have been crushed into a powder) into thin lines in preparation to be inhaled ('snorted') via the nasal passage.

*"I've worked with chefs that have gone into the bathroom just before service and snorted lines of cocaine – and you could tell if you knew, but it was sort of undercover enough for them to get away with it."*

While trainees reported that they had seen or heard of drug use during work hours, they also believed most drug use occurred after work had finished.

*"Where I first worked I walked in on two chefs doing it* (snorting speed) *on their break. It's probably not that common while they're working, but it is pretty common after work."*

*"Yeah, some take it* (amphetamine) *during the day because they think it gets them through the day. But a lot more take it after work."*

Cannabis use after work was reported to be particularly common. Some believed that this was because cannabis was a depressant and, in contrast to amphetamines, not conducive to working in a fast paced environment.

*"Cannabis slows you down, so there's not much use at work, but after work yeah. Service is such a rush, so if they are doing drugs at work it would be ones that speed you up."*

Trainees also reported that the extent of alcohol or drug use at work varied across different types of workplaces.

*"I've worked in two kitchens, one where if it occurs it is not known about, the other which was just full of drug taking. It's probably a lot more common in the larger busier kitchens."*

*"Well with me I don't see any of it, because like I work with* (a large hotel chain) *and I work breakfast and lunch so I don't really see any of it, they monitor it pretty well. Where I used to work, I would see a bit of it but they were pretty lenient on the rules about what you could do at work."*

## Workplace factors influencing alcohol and other drug use

As with alcohol and drug use in general, most trainees were of the opinion that use at work was largely due to individual factors such as personal or lifestyle choice, with little influence from workplace factors.

*"A lot of the chefs I know who use at work, it has nothing to do with stress at work, it's just a habit."*

*"I know some who use at work. But it's because people who go out and party will use drugs to sleep and then use drugs to wake them up and get going for the shift."*

Even when there was some acknowledgement that workplace factors may play a role in influencing consumption patterns, trainees still believed use was largely determined by individual factors such as personal choice.

*"The stress and rush definitely affects your decision. But it's still your decision."*

Despite the belief that alcohol and drug use was largely influenced by individual factors, focus group discussions clearly indicated that workplace factors played a role in determining consumption patterns. For example, the fast pace of the work and related work stress appeared to play a role, with drinking reported as a strategy to *'unwind'*.

*"Sometimes we drink at work, but mostly after work. You do it to try and unwind after the stress and adrenalin rush of service."*

Cannabis use in particular, appeared to be a common strategy for coping with work stress and the rush of service.

*"Some people do use to be high at work, but dope* (cannabis) *use mainly happens after work, mainly to chill out after the stress."*

*"After you finish work you can still be feeling rushed, but want to sleep, dope (cannabis) helps you wind down."*

The impact of long and irregular hours on trainees' consumption patterns was also evident in focus group discussions.

*"Sometimes it's because of the hours we work. A friend of mine worked for about a week only getting 3-4 hours' sleep between shifts and the only way he got through it was with speed."*

*"Others work in an office from 9 to 5 and go home. We finish around midnight all pumped up and work in the city, so what do we do? We go out for a drink."*

*"In hospitality, you work a lot on the weekend and when you do go out its late and you're tired, so you take something to stay awake and catch up with everyone else."*

The practice of *'catch up'* was frequently referred to by trainees in discussions concerning alcohol and drug use.

*"Catch up is pretty much finishing a double shift and meeting up with your friends at a night club or pub and they are already off their face – you catch up."*

*"It happens a lot – playing catch up – drinking a lot quickly or taking something so you can be like your friends and have a good time."*

The phenomenon of catch up was largely the result of irregular working hours and a desire to maintain existing non-work social relationships.

*"Sometimes it's because when you want to wind down when you get off work, and you go out to meet your* (non-work) *friends at this club or that or the Cross* (Kings Cross)*. When you get there they're 10 times more wasted than you could possible get at this point in time and someone says 'well here have one of these'."*

Alcohol and drug availability and the general widespread acceptance of alcohol and drug use by co-workers also played a role in hospitality industry workers' consumption patterns.

*"The hours and the stress are probably a part of it, but it's easy to get in the industry, everyone drinks and smokes, it's more accepted."*

*"Once you're in the industry access is so much easier. Everybody does it, if you were to ask where I work, probably five people could get what you want. We know who has the drugs and how to get them."*

Not only was alcohol and drug use commonplace in most workplaces, in some cases it was a prerequisite for employment selection.

*"I once did an interview and the chef asked do you smoke? Do you drink? Do you drink coffee? And because I answered yes to all three he hired me."*

Workplace social relationships also played an important role in determining consumption patterns. Often having a few drinks at work was the precursor to going out drinking with co-workers.

*"We usually have free drinks at work when we finish. It's the time of day you look forward to especially when you like the people you work with. It's more common on Saturdays and we often go out together afterwards."*

*"Having a staffies after work is common and often we kick on to other places."*

Drinking with co-workers was seen as an important and relatively common form of social interaction with workplace social networks.

*"It's* (drinking) *a lot to do with socialising. I don't go out much but when I do often the kitchen goes out together - you know what I mean?"*

*"Yeah we do a lot of socialising with work mates and it usually involves going out drinking. My group of friends has changed a lot since I started, because you lose touch with your old friends."*

Work-related social interactions involving drinking were also seen as a method of forming and maintaining relationships with both co-workers and supervisors.

*"A lot of use has to do with interaction outside of the kitchen. Like the other night my head chef took me out, not to get pissed – although we did - but just to talk crap with him. It's just another form of social interaction outside of the kitchen, getting to know your peers or subordinates or boss more personally."*

For some trainees the need to *'fit in'* with workplace social networks was an important influence on consumption patterns.

*"With staffies, I only stay and have them to fit in. I know they would not like it and talk about me if I didn't stay because they have done it with others."*

## Tobacco smoking

In contrast to alcohol and other drugs, trainees reported tobacco smoking to be more prevalent in the hospitality industry and believed workplace factors and working conditions were important influences on use.

*"I don't know about other drugs, but a lot of people smoke cigarettes. I am sure the number of people who smoke in hospitality is higher than in other jobs I've had."*

The structure of work and the fast pace of kitchen work appeared to be associated with patterns of tobacco smoking. In particular, having a cigarette was seen as a legitimate way to get a break from work.

*"It's just a way to get 5 minutes out of kitchen."*

*"It's (smoking) also used as an excuse to take a break just like going to the toilet. Often you take a toilet break not because you need to go but because you want to sit down and check your phone or go on Facebook ha-ha."*

The practice of having a smoke break appeared to be condoned and even encouraged. For example, many trainees reported that while taking a break just to have a rest was discouraged, having a smoke break was considered more acceptable.

*"If you are outside taking a break and chef asks 'what are you doing here?' And you say – 'just having a smoke', he'll say – 'oh ok that's fine'. But if you say – 'having a break' – you'll cop it."*

The approval of smokers taking smoke breaks was generally disliked by non-smokers because they saw it as unfair and inequitable.

*"A smoke break is easy to get but it's not easy just get a break. It's real bullshit giving someone a break just to have smoke, but not giving other non-smokers a break is just rewarding them for smoking. I don't smoke, but other apprentices and the boss do, so I never get a 5 min break outside the kitchen like they do."*

Condoning smoking appeared to contribute to trainees' smoking status and acted as a substantial disincentive to quitting.

*"If you smoke you're more likely to get a break. I would give up if I could still take the breaks."*

*"It's a really hard industry to work in while trying to give up. I took it up because of stress in this industry, but now I can't quit. It's really hard to quit because everyone else smokes– you get to work half an hour early and smoke as many as you can before starting. It's also an excuse you can use to get out of the kitchen to take a break."*

Workplace social networks interaction also played a role in smoking patterns. In particular, some trainees reported that smoking provided an opportunity to interact on a social level with supervisors.

> "Sometimes I go out to have a cigarette with him (the chef). Why? - mainly to talk shit with him. It's a way to get to know your boss better."

Not only did the structure of the work environment and the pace of work reinforce smoking, it also acted as an incentive for non-smokers to actually take up smoking to 'fit in' with workplace social networks.

> "Yeah nearly everyone smokes. I don't smoke but I have thought about taking it up because everyone around me at work smokes and I sort of want to fit in, yeah I have thought about it, just to fit in and go outside with them and have a smoke."

## Verbal abuse, bullying and harassment

**Summary: Verbal abuse and bullying**

Verbal abuse was reported by trainees as being relatively common in commercial kitchens. However, most trainees also reported that verbal abuse was largely associated with the stress and rush of service and was therefore considered acceptable in most cases, even if it escalated to physical abuse.

Some trainees viewed verbal abuse as a justifiable strategy used by chefs to ensure quality and thereby maintain the reputation of the restaurant and the head chef. Others viewed verbal abuse during service as a legitimate 'learning tool' used by chefs to correct trainees. Verbal abuse was also seen to be a method to ensure compliance and submission to the rigid kitchen hierarchy.

Despite their general acceptance of verbal abuse, especially during service, trainees believed it could contribute to stress and it was considered unacceptable bullying when it 'crossed the line' and became too physical or personal. Several trainees reported extreme cases of bullying that resulted in serious physical and psychological injury with, in one case, near fatal consequences. Sexual harassment and sexism were also reported and the behaviour of some female trainees indicated that they assimilate into the dominant male culture of the kitchen by adopting behaviours that indicate they are 'one of the boys'.

The extent of verbal abuse and bullying varied across different workplaces with these behaviours being less likely in open kitchens and those run by large organisations with human resource departments, and more likely in high end restaurants. Other trainees were of the opinion that the extent of bullying and verbal abuse largely depended on the personality of the head chef.

Rather than complain or report incidents of verbal abuse and bullying, trainees adopted a range of coping strategies that included:
- ignoring the behaviour
- remaining focussed and busy
- rationalising the behaviour as a legitimate part of the learning process
- seeing it as a justifiable method of quality control
- talking about workplace issues with other workers at the end of a shift
- using alcohol or other drugs as stress relief
- leaving for another workplace.

Trainees employed through group training organisations reported that they also had access to mediation processes and were able to move to less stressful workplaces with lower levels of abuse and bullying.

### Verbal abuse

To facilitate discussion about workplace verbal abuse, trainees were shown a five minute video of excerpts from the television show 'Hell's Kitchen', This video depicted celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay yelling at and verbally abusing kitchen staff. Trainees were asked to comment on the degree to which they thought this television show reflected the reality of their workplace or the industry in general.

Trainees reported that yelling and verbal abuse was a common occurrence. However, some trainees recognised that much of what was depicted in the video was an act, staged

specifically for the television show, and thought it was generally unrepresentative of their workplace.

> "It's an act. It's an open kitchen and everyone can see what's going on. If you did that at my work you'd be sacked. I've never come across a chef like that. He's just being a jerk off for the camera."

Others recognised that it was acting, but also indicated that similar behaviour occurred at their workplace, but usually during busy times when staff were under pressure.

> "That's him playing up for TV, but that type of yelling does happen, but usually just for service".

> "It's somewhat representative of what we experience but it's (the TV show) a massive exaggeration."

Some reported that such behaviour regularly occurred in their workplace but it was not as bad as that portrayed by Gordon Ramsay.

> "My head chef is pretty much like that. Not as bad as that, but it can be bad."

> "My boss is not that bad, but he uses a lot of language and yells but I don't see much physical stuff."

However, others disagreed and reported that such behaviour was commonplace and in their experience was just as bad, if not worse than that depicted in the video.

> "That's like my service yesterday, seriously it does happen. It happens all the time at my work on a regular basis."

For some, the experience and expectation of workplace verbal abuse was ubiquitous and depicted as the norm, not the exception.

> "It's not always exaggerated. There's one (a bully) in every kitchen."

Some trainees reported that on occasion, verbal abuse during service extended to physical abuse.

> "…. it does happen. Once I was nearly pushed through the wall."

## Yelling and verbal abuse as acceptable behaviour

Many trainees viewed yelling and verbal abuse at work as a normal and acceptable part of the stress and rush of service, with some seeing it as an adaptive stress release mechanism.

> "People just get really pushy during service and they can't handle the stress so they start trying to push you harder to do their work. They yell and swear at you, but it's just a part of service."

Some trainees exhibited high levels of resilience in the face of verbal abuse and were comfortable and adept at dismissing such behaviour by seeing it in the context within which it occurred.

> "Everything said in service doesn't mean anything. If the chef insults you, you don't worry. It's a just a stress release thing during service."

Others justified the yelling and verbal abuse during service, and saw it as necessary to ensure the reputation of the chef and the quality of the food served. Such justification may also act to quell any resulting distress.

> "You have to remember that it's his (the head chef's) restaurant and his reputation on the line, so of course he goes off when people stuff up."

> "Under pressure that's how it is in a good kitchen because if the food doesn't go out to the standard the chef wants, it's his name on the line, not anyone else's. He is just protecting himself rather than anyone else."

Some trainees reported that commercial kitchens operated within a rigid hierarchy with the head chef at the top and first year trainees at the bottom. Within this hierarchy, each worker new their designated place.

> *"Kitchens work in a strict hierarchy, the head chef sets the tone. It can be very military which is good because everyone knows their place."*

These trainees also believed that verbal abuse and bullying was used as a method to *"weed out"* trainees who could not handle the stress and pressure of commercial cooking and those who could. There was both recognition of this culling process and a tacit acknowledgement of the value it played as a quality control mechanism.

> *"(At my workplace) it was the sous chef's job to scream and yell to weed people out who can't hack the pace."*

For some trainees, there was a clear understanding that this form of abuse was not necessarily personal. It was understood to be part of a legitimate assessment process. The more resilient trainees applauded such a strategy as it ensured high quality performance and output.

> *"It wasn't just me. He (the chef) did it to all the apprentices. The reason he did it was to sort through all the apprentices to see who would or wouldn't make it, which was a good tactic."*

However, trainees' justification of yelling and verbal abuse depended on the circumstances. For example, some were more accepting of yelling and verbal abuse when it occurred during service.

> *"You also need to put it into context. During service it's a whole different thing you know what I mean, like I could muck up the whole day, but if I screw up in service he would bollock me like that - even worse and I would deserve it."*

Others saw yelling and verbal abuse as warranted if they considered it part of the learning process. While such behaviour was regarded as tough, it was also seen as educational and had to be accepted if you wanted to stay in the industry.

> *"It's the only way you learn. You don't have to stay and put up with it if you don't want to, you can always go somewhere else to an easier job."*

> *"It doesn't matter how much you get reamed by the chef, you know he is not doing it to yell at you or put you down he's doing it to show you there is only one way – the right way – to do it during service."*

Sometimes even more extreme forms of abuse were seen as reasonable, including physical abuse, if they were considered to be a normal part of workplace horseplay.

> *"My old boss pushed me a couple of times. He threw a pan at me once, but it was just a joke, but still it was a pan that could have done some damage. It's O.K. but, we often joke like that."*

However, some trainees believed that even the more legitimate and acceptable forms of verbal abuse could have a negative effect.

> *"During the rush we scream at each other but we don't take it seriously and after we get on alright. But a lot leave though because they can't cope with it."*

> *"It can be very stressful. You are put under a lot of pressure and it is very difficult to deal with."*

While it was conceded that the abuse was sometimes justifiable, it was recognised that it could have a negative effect if the target of the abuse felt intimidated or threatened.

> *"No (it's not O.K.), but it works. People get that scared that they do start*

*performing well, but sometimes it can be counterproductive.”*

## Bullying and harassment

There was a clear demarcation between forms of abuse, that were considered justified or tolerable and those that what were not. Verbal abuse became unacceptable bullying if it was regarded by trainees as *'crossing the line'*. For some trainees verbal abuse or harassment could be part of normal workplace joking and horseplay, but it crossed the line if they (or other workers) were humiliated. Such humiliation could take the form of demeaning or embarrassing tasks that had little to do with skill development and focused on displays of power and intimidation.

*"Sometimes the harassment is a joke, but other times it crosses the line. One of the places I worked at he made me clean his shoes because I made a mess. He called all the other staff over and made me get down and clean them.”*

For others, verbal abuse and harassment could be seen as serving a purpose, but it became unacceptable if it was personal and extended beyond the performance of work tasks and into the realm of family or factors external to the workplace. Any sense of legitimacy was displaced when the abuse extended beyond the domain of work and associated tasks and roles.

*"I used to get mentally bullied at a workplace by a really awful chef. It wasn't just me, he did it to all the apprentices. The reason he did it was to sort through all the apprentices to see who would or wouldn't make it, which was a good tactic while it worked, but for me it crossed the line when he started insulting the way my mother raised me.”*

In some cases, trainees provided extreme examples of bullying. The experience of two trainees in particular stood out. In one case, the bullying was so severe it had serious

psychological and potentially fatal consequences.

*"I was bullied emotionally and physically. I was pushed, shoved, treated like a piece of dirt. I put up with it because I needed the money, so I just kept going, but it was very stressful. I got very depressed and considered suicide, but eventually I left and worked elsewhere. It took me a long time to come back to the kitchen.”*

In this instance, the trainee survived by moving to another workplace where they were treated less severely. In the process, the trainee also became more assertive and self-confident.

*"Now I work in a different kitchen and I am happy and get treated well, but I have learnt I don't have to put up with it. If it happens again I will just walk out. No-one has to put up with it.”*

In another case, bullying and physical abuse was so extreme that it resulted in serious physical injury.

*"One chef just to teach me a lesson, because I would not use a tea towel to pick up hot pans, heated up a pan handle and left it in my section and I went and grabbed it and my hand literally got stuck to the handle, I couldn't open it up and it (the skin) bubbled straight away. I had to leave which was stupid on his part because he was on his own for the rest of the night, so I didn't care. But I stayed in the job.”*

Here the bullying and physical abuse was used as an inappropriate 'learning' strategy that could have had even more serious consequences for both the trainee and the chef.

## Factors that influence bullying and harassment

Some trainees reported that the extent of bullying and harassment varied widely between workplaces.  For example, trainees reported that yelling and verbal abuse was less likely in restaurants with open kitchens.

> "It's worse in closed off kitchens, because when you stuff up in a closed kitchen you're going to get someone screaming at you to make you feel bad, but in an open kitchen you can't just have screaming chefs and people going off, so they just say I'll talk to you about it later."

The functional role played by the physical design of the kitchen was highlighted in relation to 'open kitchens'. The nature of open kitchens meant that customers and others could observe interactions among the staff.  This operated as a modifying mechanism on potentially abrasive interactions and acted to curb verbal abuse by chefs and other staff towards trainees in particular.

> "The place I'm working in at the moment the kitchen is entirely open plan.  So if they start throwing shit around the customers can see so it doesn't look very good, so it's all pretty calm during service."

Others noted that verbal abuse, harassment and bullying were more prevalent in high end compared to low end restaurants.  This largely reflected the pressure involved in ensuring consistently high quality service.  In high end restaurants there was greater pressure on all staff to work to a consistently high standard. Where there were lower standards of food quality, there was less pressure.

> "Like if you went to an RSL kitchen it probably wouldn't happen because they don't give shit about their food. But in say a three hat restaurant you have to produce the same dish over and over again to the same high standard and chefs don't like it when

you make mistakes.  So it's a lot to do with the pressure of service."

Trainees who had experience of working in large organisations with a human resource department also noted that yelling, harassment, or bullying was less likely in these organisations compared to smaller restaurants without a human resource department.

> "I've worked in small restaurants but now the only person now who yells or tells me what to do is the head chef. Everyone else like the chef de partie or sous chef will be very quiet and polite, only the executive chef will like come on a rampage. Yeah it's really different from a small restaurant where everybody swears and yells at you. HR (Human Resources) is above the head chef in many ways.  In my work if I tell the head chef things he will always report it to HR."

Others argued that the extent of bullying or harassment largely depended on the personality or personal qualities of the head chef, rather than the type of kitchen.

> "The place I worked before, there wasn't a great deal of bullying, but the head chef there was just a prick and he was a dick to work for.  When it got busy he'd get shitty at you and call you names.  But after that he just said - that's how I am when it's busy, I can't help it.  But he was a nice guy outside of work."

> "It's also due to the type of person the chef is.  Some care and want to teach you, others just want hours out of you. They are usually just arseholes who yell and scream a lot.  They don't care about our feelings they just want to make us work.  It depends on the type of chef and how busy the place gets."

However, some trainees justified the chef's use of bullying and harassment even when it was seen to be due to the chef's personality. They had an appreciation of what was at stake

if they, individually or collectively, failed to perform at a satisfactorily high standard.

> "For a lot of chefs it's just like a Jekyll and Hyde personality. Outside the kitchen they are O.K., but inside the kitchen they're totally different. But I can understand because it's his reputation and name on the line."

## Sexism and sexual harassment

Female trainees reported that the industry was very male dominated and that this often resulted in workplace sexism.

> "At my workplace I get to talk about anal sex, blow jobs and food. I don't mean to be crude but that's generally the conversation – alcohol, drugs, and sex, or football - it's a very male dominated industry."

Some reported that workplace sexism could be quite blatant and overt in some cases. The harsh environment and processes described above involved an additional element for young female trainees.

> "Being a girl they can pick on you and try and make you break. Again it depends. Some chefs are ok, but others just don't like girls in the kitchen."

While not common, several female trainees reported incidents of sexual harassment. For example:

> "Sexual harassment is an issue (it can be) pretty serious. My sous chef once shoved me under his apron and asked for oral."

> "(A chef) even tried to harass me into sleeping with him. But that sort of behaviour is not that common. It has never happened to me before or since."

Others reported that workplace sexism was commonplace, but often more subtle.

> "The boys don't accept the girls as much. There's a bit of sexism in the kitchen a lot of chefs see it as a boy's domain."

Workplace sexism may explain the behaviour of female trainees in the focus groups where some pairs of females were found to be the most dominant and boisterous trainees and seemed to try and 'outdo' their male counterparts. For example, a female in one group grabbed the audio recorder and recorded a string of swear words, followed by the statement 'there you have all the worst swearing on tape now'. This was then repeated by another girl in the same group. Such behaviour may reflect a strategy adopted by some female workers to deal with workplace sexism. Female workers may attempt to 'fit in' with the male culture of the workplace by adopting exaggerated male behaviours and becoming 'one of the boys'.

The work environment of commercial kitchens may blur traditional social boundaries. For example, one female trainee reported sexual harassment to be a positive aspect to working in the industry and maintained that it provided an opportunity to act in non-traditional female ways.

> "(I like the) sexual harassment. It's fun, you get to be weird and inappropriate."

In this instance, the young female responded to statements about sexual harassment by countering with her own boundary breaking behaviours.

## Coping with verbal abuse, bullying and harassment

There was a general reluctance among trainees to report or complain about any verbal abuse, harassment or bulling. Some trainees reported that a culture of no *'tattle tales'* existed no matter how personal or extreme the abuse.

> *"But sometimes the chefs go off at people who deserve it. But even then they can get personal and dig deep and keep digging 'til they get one personal thing and keep attacking that one thing and try to break you. But the rule of the kitchen is you don't tattle tale."*

Bullying also appeared to be used to achieve compliance and submission to the kitchen hierarchy. Some trainees recognised this and did not complain about bullying as they were of the opinion that it would only lead to an escalation of the behaviour or result in being fired.

> *"You don't have any choice but to be completely submissive to it. You just shut up because you'll never be right. There is no point arguing. If you try to argue you'll be fired or they just do it to you more. So you just fix whatever it is, don't ask any questions and get it done as fast as you possibly can."*

Others believed that complaining about the abuse would indicate to the abuser that they had been effective and that this would only serve to reinforce further, and perhaps more extreme, abuse.

> *"I had a chef who heated up tongs in the deep fryer and then gave them to me to use and I've had a full jam jar thrown at my head. But I didn't want to complain because I didn't want him to think he was getting to me."*

Again, there was a belief among trainees that abuse and bullying were a natural and inevitable stage that all new entrants had to go through and things would eventually get better

for them as they advanced through the hierarchy of the kitchen.

> *"We work towards more reward in the future. Like if you don't go through that shit phase first then you won't progress to higher and better things."*

For those trainees who had a firmer grasp of delayed gratification, and who could focus on the potentially positive and rewarding aspects of cooking into the future, appeared to incur less stress and distress from the negative challenges and experiences of their training.

Trainees' discussions revealed a range of strategies used to cope with abuse and bullying. Some trainees coped with abuse, bullying and harassment by rationalising it as being part of the learning process or a method of providing 'advice'.

> *"I like to think they're not yelling at me for the sake of yelling at me but the doing it so I learn, so I get better."*

> *"We put up with it and keep going. We see it as advice and don't take it personal."*

Others reported that yelling and verbal abuse was accepted in their workplace as a normal part of the stress of service, but they were encouraged to debrief and talk issues over at the end of each shift.

> *"We are told to wait 'til after service when things calm down and then talk about it."*

> *"At our workplace if it happens it generally gets talked about at the end of the shift… so that helps."*

Some had developed strategies to help ignore the abuse and bullying and just get on with their job. For some, this involved exerting greater concentration and focus, while for others it involved resignation and determination to get through their shift.

*"When it's heaps busy at work and everyone's stress level goes up I just put my head down and get on with it, concentrating on what I have to do."*

*"You just have to roll your eyes and take the shit, thinking* (to yourself) *like you're just being a child and it doesn't affect me".*

Some trainees reported that they used alcohol and other drugs to cope with the stress of service and levels of abuse, bullying and harassment. However, such comments were usually framed as a joke.

*"When it's too much I go out for a big drink."*

*"I handle it with alcohol and good drugs….ha-ha."*

Another option for some trainees was to leave and take a position in another kitchen if the abuse, bullying, or harassment got too much. The option to move to another workplace where better treatment was anticipated appeared to act as a safety valve.

*"I'd quit if my chef went over the line often. Not the industry, just that kitchen."*

*"I have left kitchens not because of the stress, but just because I was treated wrong."*

Trainees who worked for a group training scheme indicated that leaving to work in another kitchen was an easy option for them.

*"Group training is good because they move you around regularly. But they also let you stay if you like where you are."*

Trainees employed in group training schemes indicated that they also had other support mechanisms to help them deal with stress and verbal abuse.

*"When something happens we can just call* (the group training employer)*. They have a mediation process."*

## Attrition during first year

**Summary: attrition during first year**

Second year trainees cited a range of reasons for dropout during first year training, including:
- high levels of stress and bullying
- trainees' unrealistic expectations of work conditions and job roles
- lack of commitment to becoming a chef.

Many second year trainees therefore saw themselves as quite different to trainees who had dropped out in that they were:
- better able to cope with the stress and bullying
- more informed about workplace conditions and expectations prior to commencing training
- more committed and determined to become a career chef.

While higher levels of commitment and dedication did appear to make some trainees more resilient and better able to cope, it also appeared to contribute to and perpetuate entrenched negative values and behaviours concerning workplace abuse and bullying.

Trainees offered a number of strategies to improve their wellbeing and improve first year trainee retention rates. This included strategies to:
- build the resilience and coping skills of new entrants
- build the communication and social skills of chefs
- better prepare and equip new entrants to deal with working conditions in the first year of training.

Motivations for staying the full duration of the training and reasons why so many trainees left the industry in the first year of training were explored. Trainees suggested that high levels of stress, verbal abuse, and bullying may explain why large numbers of trainees leave in the first year of training. But, again these behaviours were seen as a normal part of the training process and not being able to cope was seen as a character flaw of the trainee.

*"A lot dropout because of the stress and bullying, you are put under a lot of stress and yelled at to try and see if you are going to stay or not, because there are so many bad apprentices you're all put under the same label until you've proven you're good."*

*"They quit because they can't take it, they can't handle it."*

In some instances, dropout was attributed to being less able to cope with the stress and bullying.

*"It* (whether you dropout or not) *depends on how well you cope with stress. Those that stay end up in the kitchen with the stress level they can handle."*

*"They* (those that dropout) *probably also don't have the skills to handle what they will face. It takes a special type of person to want to stay in this industry."*

Others believed many first year trainees dropout because they had no prior understanding of working conditions in commercial kitchens. They had unrealistic expectations and naive understandings of the work role and were not adequately prepared for working in the industry.

*"They don't understand what is expected of them and what it will be like."*

*"They may have got the impression that every kitchen is like that. A lot*

*come in without knowing anything about the industry so the first kitchen they come to they think all kitchens are like that."*

*"So many people fall into the industry because they feel there is nothing else to do and they're not prepared so they fail."*

Correspondingly, some trainees believed that they were able to cope better with stress and bullying because they knew what to expect before they entered the industry. Those with first-hand experience or who had received clear and accurate descriptions of some of the rigours and challenges involved seemed to fare better.

*"I knew how it worked, my mum used to work as a waitress and a good mate is a chef. He tried to talk me out of it, but it is something I wanted to do."*

*"My close friend's family advised me against it because of the stress and bullying, but I just wanted to do it."*

## Commitment, passion, determination and resilience

Second year trainees also saw themselves as quite different to trainees who had dropped out in first year. In particular, they identified themselves as being more passionate about cooking and believed they were more committed and determined to become chefs. They were tough survivors and well equipped to endure the rigours of the training experience.

*"I like how hard it is because then only people who are really serious make it to the end and you end up working with other committed people who are like you."*

*"(They have a) lack of commitment. It's too hard for them."*

*"We have passion for the job so we put up with it, others that dropout don't."*

For trainees that appeared resilient in the face of verbal abuse, bullying and stressful working conditions, an important differentiating factor was recognition that they had selected this role of their own volition. This appeared to increase their determination to *'stick it out'*.

*"You don't have to stay and put up with it if you don't want to, you can always go somewhere else to an easier job. But we choose to be in this kitchen, to work hard and learn."*

*"We just stick it out. Quitting when it gets hard is never going to get you anywhere in life."*

It may be that this passion, commitment, and determination contributed to trainees' levels of resilience that in turn mediated the negative effects of work stress and bullying. However, it was also apparent from some discussions that commitment to the industry may contribute to the entrenched values and behaviours that perpetuated abuse and bullying. As one participant commented:

*"I would encourage young chefs in this career choice, but would resort to raised voices as the fastest method of getting them to do something. However, I would let them know it was not personal. Treat them like I've been treated, be stern to maintain high standards and not lose reputation – fear is the key."*

## Strategies and advice to improve trainees' wellbeing

Trainees offered a number of strategies that they believed would contribute to the physical and psychological wellbeing of trainees and in doing so help improve first year trainee retention rates.

1. One strategy was to better inform and prepare trainees for what was expected of them in commercial kitchens. This could be achieved by providing more information about the hours and working conditions of commercial cooking work before potential trainees started work or training.

2. A trial employment system could was also suggested so that trainees could gain first-hand experience of working conditions.

3. Trainees suggested provision of training in social skills and workplace communication skills for chefs to reduce levels of yelling and verbal abuse. This would help create a more positive work environment through more effective communication styles.

4. Debriefing after each shift was also seen to be an effective strategy. Trainees suggested that while many chefs were aware that yelling when things went wrong could be effective, few chefs realised that providing compliments or encouragement could work equally as well, if not better. It was believed that a debriefing session after each shift that not only discussed work issues and problems that arose, but also provided recognition for good work could help alleviate any distress that resulted from yelling and abuse during service.

5. Other strategies included the introduction of partner/buddy/mentor programs for first year trainees and more effective and comprehensive induction processes when trainees started to work in a kitchen for the first time. These induction processes should involve an introduction by the head chef to other staff, the job roles of each staff member clearly explained, and an explanation of relevant workplace policies and procedures.

6. The provision of excursions to providores, food manufacturers, and food markets for trainees and more one-on-one training was also suggested.

7. Trainees also suggested that working hours should be reduced, especially in the first year.

8. Trainees further suggested that new trainees should be encouraged to talk to supervisors and managers about issues in the workplace. In particular, they believed new trainees should be encouraged to report any discrimination or sexual or personal harassment to their workplace supervisor or someone in a more senior management position.

9. They also recommended that new trainees should be encouraged to maintain a support group of family or friends that they could talk to about stress or other issues at work.

10. Many said that they would advise new trainees to have some other activities outside of work.

11. Trainees reported that the best advice they could give new trainees was to work hard and pay attention to detail at work. They also said they would advise new trainees to not take the negative feedback and yelling that occurs during service personally and to recognise that while things seemed hard at first, it would get easier.

# 5 PART B.  Key Informant Interviews

## Participants

To examine the views of employers and trainers, semi structured telephone interviews were undertaken with seven key informants (five males and two females) identified as having experience working with young hospitality industry workers and knowledge of the issues they faced.

Key informants were trainers, managers and trainee support officers employed in training organisations and food service companies. Informants had worked in these roles from 10 to 25 years.  The majority had a background in commercial cookery, either as a chef or food services manager.  All informants had regular contact with hospitality trainees as part of their current, or recent, work roles.

## Key informants' perceptions of the work environment

Key informants identified that the commercial cooking sector of the hospitality industry was traditionally male dominated, with the growth in female chefs and cooks occurring mainly over the past two decades.

Informants also reported that commercial kitchens were physically demanding and potentially hazardous work environments.  The work hours were long and required workers to be on their feet all day.  Service could be fast paced, high pressured and stressful.  In addition, the work involved lifting heavy objects, undertaking multiple tasks and dealing with hot liquids and surfaces, sharp knives, machinery and slippery floors.  Several informants reported that the rate of injuries such as lacerations and burns was relatively high.

Despite this most informants also believed that commercial cookery was no more hazardous, in terms of workplace safety, than other industries that involved working with machinery

and hand tools.  However, some informants believed that this industry was more physically demanding than other industries.  Working long hours while standing and working under the pressure of service could affect sleeping patterns, diet, and fitness levels.

> *"In terms of the physical dangers you have issues of knife injuries and burns, which is not so different from other trades where they are working with hand tools and machinery.  But then there are physical dangers like heat, slipping and trips.  But in hospitality what sets it apart is, I think, is that it is physically draining."*

The majority of informants also believed that the hospitality industry was more psychologically and emotionally demanding than many other industries.  The pressure of service, where speed, efficiency and consistent quality were required, combined with the high expectations of employers and customers were seen as particularly stressful.

The long and irregular hours also impacted on family and social life.

> *"It is extremely long hours and young people entering the industry are basically giving away their social life. Most other industries will be more family friendly."*

## Alcohol and drug use

The majority of informants believed that the hospitality workforce had high prevalence rates for alcohol and drug use.  In particular, alcohol use was identified as a concern with several informants reporting frequent incidents of hangovers among young trainees.  One informant estimated that the majority of young trainees used illicit drugs with cannabis the drug most commonly used.  Amphetamines and party drugs (e.g., ecstasy) were also reported to be commonly used.  However,

other informants were less aware of illicit drug use. While informants were of the opinion that tobacco smoking rates among hospitality workers had declined over the past decade, they also reported it to be still relatively prevalent.

## Workplace factors associated with alcohol and drug use

In comparison with trainees, key informants were more aware of the relationship between workplace factors and alcohol and drug use. Informants were of the opinion that the long and irregular hours associated with hospitality work were important influences on the alcohol and drug consumption patterns of young workers. Informants also aware of the influence of irregular work hours on the practice of *"catch up"* whereby workers who finished work late at night drank heavily or used drugs to catch up with friends whose night out had started earlier.

> *"Hospitality has its problems because of the long hours, late nights. When people go out after work they want to get into the party mood, so may use 'party' drugs to catch up. Hospitality has a high percentage of people prone to using drugs."*

> *"When they finish work, young people want to go out and socialise which puts pressure on them to catch up … there is always a temptation to drink more or take something to catch up."*

Informants also reported the use of alcohol or drugs to wind down or relax after working long or irregular hours.

> *"If you have long hours, irregular hours, with irregular sleep patterns throughout the week. Working really late it is very difficult to switch off. If you have worked all day under a large amount of stress, it can be very hard, very difficult to switch off, so a lot will turn to maybe having some cannabis, maybe having a few beers, more beers, excessive beers to make them*

> *switch off and relax, to make them eventually sleep."*

The use of alcohol or drugs to cope with work stress was reported to be relatively common.

> *"They will pick it up* (cannabis use) *as a way to relax, to release stress. It is used as a coping mechanism in a lot of cases."*

The ready availability of alcohol, in particular, was seen to contribute to this practice.

> *"They use alcohol and drugs to manage the stress. Unfortunately there is very high alcohol use, it's there every day, it is easy to access and it is used as a coping mechanism."*

The ready availability of and easy access to alcohol and drugs was reported as an issue, not only because alcohol and drugs were often accessible in their workplaces, but also because of the location of their workplaces.

> *"Look at when work finishes, who they are working with, they are often in venues where there is a proximity to a bar. They are working in suburbs or locations where you have nightlife close to their backdoor so to speak. Most of the jobs are in the CBD so they are close to nightclub locations, in the inner city."*

Workplace social networks and peer pressure were also identified as playing a role in consumption patterns, especially for those living away from home and family support.

> *"Generally as there is alcohol available at the place where they are working, there is a tendency to celebrate a good service with a few drinks or go out after work."*

> *"It is very hard for kids who come to Sydney to work in the industry, they are leaving family … they also meet a new crowd and there are lots of new*

*temptations including alcohol and drugs. There is a lot of peer group pressure."*

Informants recognised that these factors combined to contribute to a culture of alcohol and drug use in the industry.

*"A lot of the chefs celebrate when they have had a good night and its congratulations and then people go out for a drink. And then they download. There is a sort of camaraderie."*

*"It's just the natural thing to do, you finish late at night and then you go out with your mates and spend that time drinking. It is instilled in the culture, the drink after work, winding down after being wired by the work, then it just becomes a habit."*

Tobacco smoking was also seen to be influenced by workplace factors including breaks and social networks.

*"Smoking also facilitates getting a break. If you want to go out for a break you need an excuse or reason."*

*"Often smoking is just a way to be able to get away from what you are doing, have some downtime, and get some sunshine. People who don't smoke don't get the breaks."*

*"I would probably say they drink and smoke more because that is part of the industry, at the end of the day you go for a drink with your mates, which is probably not as prevalent in other industries because it's there in front of you. It is just there at the end of your shift, you get a drink from the boss and the smokes just come out with it."*

## *Bullying and harassment*

Informants reported that bullying and harassment occurred within the industry. Some believed that it was more prevalent in the hospitality industry compared to other

industries. One informant suggested that the extent of bullying and harassment was underreported as it was often attributed to the stress and pressure of service and thereby dismissed.

*"Harassment can be made to look as if it is just the pressure of service that people are responding to, when it is really bullying. We can tend to make excuses for it."*

Some informants had also observed trainees bullying and harassing other trainees when back in their TAFE setting and attributed this to behaviours learnt from their workplace experiences.

*"There is some bullying and harassment goes on in training, I think it flows on from what happens in industry. Most commonly it is about students working in 'better' hatted restaurants who are picking on students working in less prestigious establishments."*

A few key informants recalled personal incidents of workplace bullying and physical abuse that occurred when they were young workers. However, there was a common belief among informants that bullying and harassment were not as prevalent as it had been in the past. As one informant put it:

*"My own experience as a young hospitality worker was pretty scary. It was not unusual to get a boot in the arse to get you going or for doing something wrong. But that sort of behaviour seems to have declined. Work health and safety regulations and awareness has had a significant impact on the level of harassment and bullying. Everyone now knows their responsibilities and rights."*

However, there was also a belief that the prevalence of bullying and harassment was still relatively high due to a lack of relevant training for chefs and that better skills in this

area would lead to less bullying and harassment and lower levels of work stress.

> "A lot of the head chefs may be good cooks but the majority are not very well trained in managing people …. (if they) were possibly better trained (in this area) it would make a big difference …"

Moreover, one informant noted that the reduction in the apprenticeship training period from four to three years meant that chefs emerged from training less mature and with a less comprehensive skill set.

> "They come out after three years with the words qualified after their name … there is an expectation that they can do more but they are not ready for it. They are expected to be able to do what someone with four years training could do after three years."

## The impact of working conditions on young workers' wellbeing

In general, informants believed that the long hours, stress of service and bullying and harassment had the potential to negatively impact on the physical and psychological wellbeing of young workers. Long working hours and pressure of service were seen to result in fatigue and negatively affect performance, which in turn could also increase safety risks and stress levels.

> "The long hours, 16 hour days, six days a week with no breaks, doubles after doubles (shifts). When that happens, people's fatigue and performance suffers. They are more susceptible to get burnt, cut themselves, be injured."

> "The hours they work, the irregular hours, the late nights, split shifts. Switching off can be very difficult for people. So that can definitely build up

stress and is a big challenge for a lot of people."

The impact of long and irregular hours on social and family life was also seen to have important negative consequences for young workers' wellbeing.

> "They are going to work when everyone else is not and that can add to a lot of stress and pressure on them because they are missing out on quite a bit with family and friends."

Verbal abuse, harassment and bullying were also noted as experiences that could negatively affect young workers' wellbeing.

> "Having people yelling and screaming at you, some of the young people can take that home. It can do more damage than good."

> "Working in the hospitality industry can have a significant impact on self-esteem, where they are picked on, particularly those who can't stand on their own feet."

However, there was also a view among some informants that the degree to which industry working conditions negatively affected young workers was due to many young new entrants being unprepared for what was expected of them. That is, the source of poor outcomes was located within the new trainee, not with the workplace or training environment.

> "…they are unprepared for it when they come in. It's not necessarily the hours though there are some long hours and the industry certainly does need those hours to be done. They are unprepared for the stresses and pressure of day to day service, sometimes working long hours, working weekends."

Others further believed that the degree to which industry working conditions had a negative impact on young workers was due to

a lack of social and communication skills among many young workers themselves.

> *"(It) can be about young people who do not know how to conduct themselves and communicate with others. It's up to them to make the choice to say whether it's right or wrong, if they want to let themselves be treated like that."*

## Working conditions that contributed to high attrition rates

Key informants identified four main issues that contributed to high attrition rates during the first year of training.

1.  The first of these concerned unrealistic expectations of what it is like to work in the commercial cookery sector of the hospitality industry. Informants reported that many young workers were unprepared for the long and irregular hours and the stress and physical demands of working in a commercial kitchen. This was especially the case for those with no previous work experience. As one informant put it:

> *"We find a lot of the attrition in the first year is purely about them finding that it's not what they expected, that it is much harder than they expected or they thought they would cope better with the hours."*

Moreover, some informants thought that these unrealistic expectations were reinforced by television shows such 'MasterChef' which, while successful in promoting the industry as a career choice, attracted new entrants that had a romanticised view of commercial cookery that did not match reality.

> *"Many students come in with unrealistic expectations of what they can achieve, driven in part by MasterChef. They think they can just walk into that, which creates very unrealistic expectations."*

2.  A second issue that contributed to high attrition rates was a lack of necessary skills that ensured that young new entrants were 'work ready'. In particular, some informants believed that many young new entrants to the industry lacked the necessary life skills to succeed in an environment as demanding as commercial cookery. As one informant stated:

> *"If you have passion* (for cooking) *that is great, but you've got be effective as a team player, you have got to have the energy and the ability to take criticism, the ability to communicate confidently in the workplace, to ask questions, follow instructions."*

Informants believed that young new entrants lacked basic life skills and these skills needed to be taught in the secondary school environment in preparation for working life.

> *"You need to have a fairly good background in customer service, communication and conflict resolution. The younger people struggle with that because these are not skills that are taught in schools."*

> *"I don't think the high schools or education system prepares kids for work. Kids don't seem to have any repercussions for poor behaviour at school. When they get to work there are immediate repercussions and they aren't able to understand why."*

Informants also highlighted that many young new entrants entered the industry because they had not been academically successful in secondary school and thought that they were not capable of working anywhere else.

> *"A lot of the young entrants that come into the industry just because they may not be able to do anything else, they think not good or capable of getting another job* (but) *a lot of them are just*

*not setup, they do not have the necessary skills."*

These informants suggested that many parents, teachers and career advisors were also of the view that academically challenged students could not work anywhere else.

*"A lot of people are often pushed into hospitality because careers advisors, teachers and parents don't know what to do with them. So hospitality is an easy option. They shove them into a TAFE, put them into to do a Cert II or III or a commercial cookery course because they have very low entry requirements."*

Entering the industry simply on the basis of low academic achievement not only contributed to high attrition rates, but also could jeopardise the psychological wellbeing of those who dropped out.

*"(Many) see hospitability as a good or in some cases, last resort for kids who haven't done well academically at school. But a lot of the kids who dropout are those who can't cope academically with the requirements of the training component and the lack of success feeds into their poor self-esteem."*

Some informants also reported the existence of secondary school based prevocational training and apprenticeships in commercial cookery. However, while informants thought these programs improved the work readiness of young new entrants to a degree, they also indicated that these programs did not sufficiently prepare new entrants for the reality of working in a large, fast paced commercial kitchen.

*"Some get the Cert III in school, but they don't get it in a realistic work environment. Only those who have done work experience in a real*

*workplace have a real idea of what it is like to work in the industry."*

3. The third issue concerned the consequences of long and irregular hours and stressful working conditions on their health and social life. Informants reported that the hours worked resulted in mental and physical fatigue among some new entrants and disrupted their existing social life. Existing social networks were replaced with workplace social networks. According to one informant:

*"I think probably the hours and getting used to the hours, and getting used to the stressful environment (is a factor). Once you move into hospitality you have to live hospitality. Because all their friends have the weekends off and the nights off and that's why we lose a lot of them, because of the hours and because of the flexibility (demanded of them)."*

4. The fourth issue identified by informants was the relatively low rate of pay for first year trainees. According to several informants, the low rate of pay (less than $10/hr in some cases) meant that most trainees could not afford to live in areas close to their work as most commercial kitchens were located in the inner city, whereas most inexpensive accommodation was in the outer suburbs. This resulted in extra travel time which placed additional strain on top of other pressures.

*"Some of them travel up to three hours a day to get to work. There are a fair proportion of students who would be travelling very long distances."*

## Strategies to protect and improve young workers' wellbeing

In general, informants were of the view that both employers and trainers had a role to play in helping young workers deal with the challenges of hospitality work and help address any subsequent impacts on their health and wellbeing. They believed this role involved supporting and mentoring trainees and ensuring that they received proper entitlements and fair and safe working conditions. However, they also thought that lack of staff, time, and resources limited how much could be done in this regard.

Despite this limitation, informants noted that strategies involving pre-training preparation, mentoring and buddy programs, improved training, and onsite support and monitoring could improve retention rates. Informants also identified that the first six months of training was a crucial period for these strategies to be implemented. Several strategies were proposed.

1. *Pre-training preparation:*
   Better linkages between the secondary school system and industry would help prepare new entrants and raise awareness of working conditions. This would allow for more school based training to build students' workplace skills and could involve work placements so trainees could experience the reality of working in a commercial kitchen.

   Other strategies included career open days where successful past trainees or other industry professionals shared their experiences, or the development and dissemination of a 'cooking careers' resource and information kit. Some informants believed that it was also important for secondary schools to focus on the development of life skills, such as communication and conflict resolution that were essential for a successful career in any industry.

2. *Mentoring and buddy programs:*
   Some informants spoke of targeted mentoring programs that had been successful in the past and were of the view that similar projects should be implemented for all trainees. Such programs were seen to not only build trainees' skills and knowledge, but to also assist them set and achieve goals. Other informants spoke of 'buddy systems' that their organisation had in place. These involved pairing up new trainees with a more experienced workplace 'buddy' who could provide advice and guidance.

3. *Improved training programs:*
   There was a view held by some informants that retention rates may be improved with changes to existing training programs. In particular, workplace based training or training that took into account the workplace context was seen as a potential strategy. Such training would highlight differences among workplace settings such as fine dining, pubs, hotels, and cafes and tailors the training to meet differences in working conditions and menus. Informants reported that some training of this type had been successfully implemented. Other informants suggested that training should also involve developing skills in communication, conflict resolution, and customer relations. One informant also believed that the provision of work visits to different types of kitchens, food markets and suppliers would build skills and knowledge and serve as a training incentive/reward.

4. *Onsite support and monitoring:*
   Informants with trainee support roles noted that onsite support and monitoring was an essential strategy for improving retention rates. Examples included regular worksite visits and 'toolbox' meetings where a range of topics could be discussed including workplace safety, work stress, bullying and harassment, and employer/employee rights and responsibilities. Moreover, such strategies also allowed for the monitoring of trainees to ensure that they received adequate on-the-job training and were not

being used as cheap labour. Formal and comprehensive induction processes were seen as being necessary for new entrants so workplace policies and procedures could be adequately explained.

Several informants also noted that new entrants to the hospitality industry typically had lower academic achievement rankings and that such trainees were usually from lower socio-economic and sometimes disadvantaged backgrounds. These informants believed that such a background may be associated with lower resilience and coping skills necessary to deal with the stress of working in the industry.

As a result, these informants also stressed that strategies to address work stress, self-esteem and other mental health issues such as depression and anxiety were important. Moreover, they also thought that kitchen managers need training in these issues and dealing with young people.

# 6 Discussion

Both trainees and key informants believed that commercial cookery could be a rewarding career with many benefits. However, they also identified that commercial kitchens were physical demanding, stressful, and potentially hazardous work environments where trainees worked very long and irregular hours for relatively low pay. It was generally agreed that working conditions were psychologically and emotionally demanding and could negatively influence worker wellbeing as well as family relationships and social networks.

Focus group discussions and key informant interviews also revealed high levels of risky alcohol use, drug use, workplace bullying and harassment, and that these behaviours were often associated with workplace factors and working conditions.

These findings are discussed below together with the implications for alcohol and drug harm reduction strategies and together with other strategies to improve the wellbeing of young new entrants to the hospitality industry.

## *Alcohol and drug use*

The perception of key informants and trainees was that alcohol, tobacco, and drug use is prevalent among hospitality industry workers, with cannabis and amphetamines the most commonly used illicit drugs. Such a perception is consistent with national prevalence data (e.g., Pidd et al., 2008a; 2008b).

Alcohol and drug use occurred during work hours, although use was considered to more prevalent and frequent outside work hours. In general, trainees believed that alcohol and drug consumption patterns were largely influenced by individual factors such as personal choice or personality. However, as recognised by key informants, workplace factors clearly played a substantial role in workers' consumption patterns. These factors included work stress, long and irregular hours,

alcohol and drug availability and workplace social norms.

### Work stress

Alcohol and cannabis were used to relax after the stress of service or after working long shifts and irregular hours. This is consistent with research indicating that physically or psychologically demanding work can lead to high levels of work stress, that is in turn associated with increased alcohol and other drug use (e.g., Frone, 1999; Grunberg, Moore, & Greenberg, 1998; Grunberg, Moore, Anderson-Connolly, & Greenberg (1999). Psychological distress associated with workplace bullying and harassment has also been shown to be an important influence on alcohol and drug consumption patterns (Marchand, 2008).

### Long and irregular work hours

The very long and often irregular hours of work also contributed to the practice of *'catch up'* where trainees drank heavily in a short period of time or used drugs after finishing work late to catch up with friends who had already been drinking and socialising at night clubs or parties for several hours. The practice of catch up is consistent with recent research that found working long and irregular work hours was associated with more frequent alcohol use and higher rates of alcohol abuse and/or dependence among young workers (Gibb, Fergusson, & Horwood, 2012).

### Availability and workplace social norms for use

Alcohol and drugs were reported to be readily available in the hospitality industry. Some key informants believed that the physical location of many commercial kitchens (e.g., inner city night time entertainment precincts) meant alcohol and drugs were more accessible. Moreover, trainees indicated that drinking with

co-workers after work was a relatively common practice.

Such findings are consistent with the established evidence regarding physical and social availability as important influences on work-related use (e.g., Ames & Grube, 1999). Physical availability refers to access to alcohol or drugs in a given environment and can be objective (e.g. organisational and geographical factors affecting accessibility) or subjective (e.g., perceptions of availability, including beliefs about the ease or difficulty in obtaining alcohol or drugs). Social availability refers to the degree of normative support for alcohol or drug use (e.g., co-worker use, workplace social norms for use). Exposure to co-worker use (social availability) is a particularly important risk factor for alcohol and cannabis use among young workers (Frone, 2003).

Staff drinks after finishing a work shift were reported to be a common practice that was regarded by some trainees as a form of social interaction and bonding with co-workers and supervisors. Some trainees reported they felt obliged to participate in order to 'fit in'. These findings are consistent with existing research concerning the restaurant and food services sector of the hospitality industry that identified drinking and socialising with co-workers after work and perceived pressure to drink with co-workers were significantly associated with high levels of alcohol consumption (Kjaerheim et al., 1995; Moore et al., 2009).

Social availability also influenced tobacco use. Many trainees reported that having a break to simply relax was discouraged, while having a 'smoke break' was generally accepted as the 'norm'. Smoking was also seen as an opportunity for social interaction and bonding with co-workers and supervisors, with some trainees reporting that this presented an obstacle to quitting among smokers and a motivation for non-smokers to take up smoking.

Workplace social influence processes may be particularly salient for young workers in the hospitality industry. Many trainees reported that the long and irregular work hours

negatively affected pre-existing social networks, resulting in them forming new social networks among other trainees and coworkers. Trainees who reported a passion for cooking and commitment to becoming a chef may be even more susceptible to workplace social influence processes. Individuals who strongly identify with a particular group (including workplace and occupational groups) are more likely to adopt the perceived behavioural norms of the group in order to validate their status as a group member (Hogg & Abrams, 2003). Research has indicated that among adolescents and young adults this extends to perceived behavioural norms for alcohol and other drug use (Neighbors, Foster, Walker, Kilmer & Lee, 2013; Neighbors, et al. 2010).

## *Verbal abuse and bullying*

The finding that workplace verbal abuse and bullying was relatively common in commercial kitchens is consistent with previous studies that have found adverse working conditions in commercial kitchens appear to contribute to high levels of verbal abuse and bullying (e.g., Hoel, & Einarsen, 2003; Mathisen, et al., 2008; Notelaers, et al., 2011). Working long hours in cramped, hot, noisy conditions while being required to produce a consistent quality product at a very fast pace may lead to high levels of stress, hostility and aggression among employees which in turn may contribute to verbal abuse and bullying (Mathisen, et al., 2008).

Research has found that factors such as long and irregular hours and income insecurity can contribute to workplace verbal abuse and bullying (Hoel & Einarson, 2003). Moreover, many food service and restaurant workers belong to demographic groups that are especially vulnerable to workplace bullying and harassment such as part-time and young workers, women, and immigrant or ethnic minorities (Hoel & Einarson, 2003).

Regardless of underlying causes, verbal abuse and bullying can have severe negative effects on workers' health and wellbeing (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011) and is associated with low job satisfaction, higher levels of cynicism and

lower commitment, which in can turn affect turnover intentions (Mathisen et al., 2008). Thus, it is likely that verbal abuse and bullying may contribute to high attrition rates among first year trainees.

Despite an acknowledgement that verbal abuse and bullying had negative consequences, there was a tendency to rationalise verbal abuse and bullying as an acceptable and legitimate part of working in the industry. This normalisation and rationalisation process was also found in earlier studies where restaurant workers accepted bullying and harassment as a natural and inevitable part of the workplace culture (e.g., Crawford, 1997; Johns & Menzel, 1999). Such a process may be a coping strategy that moderates the impact of these behaviours on any negative outcomes for the individual. In particular, this normalisation and acceptance of verbal abuse and bullying may allow trainees to rationalise their decision to stay in the industry.

Other factors that moderate the outcome of bullying include financial incentives (e.g., earnings potential, or the need for money) and the need to maintain workplace social relations (Starratt & Grandy, 2010). These factors were evident in the focus group discussions. Many trainees emphasised their potential future earnings and workplace social networks as important positive benefits associated with working in the industry.

Victims of workplace bullying and harassment may also engage in a 'sense making' process associated with these behaviours in order to minimise any negative impact (Starratt & Grandy, 2010). This includes characterising the behaviour as bipolar, constructing the perpetrator as a child, and scrutinising or criticising the skills of the perpetrator (Starratt & Grandy, 2010). Some trainees attributed levels of verbal abuse and bullying to the personality of the chef (e.g., having a Jekyll & Hyde personality), regarded the bullying chef as behaving like a child, or attributed verbal abuse, bullying and harassment to a lack of social and communication skills among chefs.

The normalisation of workplace bullying may have particular implications for trainees who reported a passion for cooking and commitment to becoming a chef. Key informants believed that some trainees learnt bullying behaviours from their workplace experiences and then exhibited similar behaviour in the training environment. Such behaviour is also consistent with social identity theory in that individuals who strongly identify with a particular group (including workplace and occupational groups) are more likely to adopt the perceived behavioural norms of the group in order to validate their status as a group member (Hogg & Abrams, 2003). This also extends to perceived behavioural norms for workplace bullying (Ramsay, Troth, & Branch, 2011).

Incidents of sexual harassment, while not common, were also reported by some trainees. Female trainees reported commercial kitchens to be male dominated with a resultant culture of sexism in some kitchens. Research that has examined male dominated industries and occupations has found female workers will often assimilate into the dominant male culture, either consciously or unconsciously, and adopt masculine beliefs and behaviours to be considered one of the boys (Kristovics, Vermeulen, Wilson, & Martinussen, 2005).

This may involve laughing at sexist jokes, drinking heavily to keep pace with male coworkers, and feeling as if they have to perform far beyond that of males (Davey and Davidson, 2000). Such behaviour was observed in the focus group discussions, with some female trainees dominating the discussion, and joking about sexist behaviour and sexual harassment.

## Trainee and workplace 'typologies'

The findings of the focus group discussions identified different trainee and workplace typologies. Trainees could be categorised according to four different types – 1) Aspirational master chefs, 2) Chefs, 3) Resilient dropouts and 4) Struggling dropouts. Workplaces could be categorised according to two types, those with a contemporary Human Resource focus and those lacking such a focus (Table 6.1).

### Table 6.1 Workplace and trainee typologies

| Workplaces | Trainees | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **C.  HR focus** | **5.  Aspirational master chefs** | **6.  Chefs** | **7.  Resilient dropouts** | **8.  Struggling dropouts** |
| Clear HR, OHS & wellbeing policies & procedures.<br><br>**D.  No HR focus**<br><br>No clear HR, OHS & wellbeing policies & procedures. | Highly motivated, resilient, strong support networks, prior knowledge of working conditions, realistic expectations, career oriented, focused & accepting of tough conditions to achieve quality outcomes. | Moderately motivated, not driven, fewer support networks, less resilient than aspirational master chefs, rationalised abuse & bullying but coped through AOD use. | Attrite within a year of training, may be resilient & less vulnerable to stress, but unwilling to put up with working conditions, bullying & high levels of work stress. | Attrite within a year of training, fewer coping mechanism, higher stress levels & vulnerability to stressors, less 'work ready'. |

*Human Resource Focused Workplaces* are typified by larger organisations that have a human resource department and/or a strong focus on providing and disseminating workplace policies and procedures concerning work practices, workplace safety, and worker wellbeing. Trainees employed in such workplaces tended to report much lower levels of workplace verbal abuse and bullying and less alcohol and drug use during work hours. These trainees also appeared to be aware of relevant policies and procedures for dealing with incidents of abuse, bullying and harassment. Human Resource Focused Workplaces may also be smaller workplaces without a human resource department but a strong focus on worker wellbeing. Examples included small family restaurants where workers were regarded as 'part of the family'.

*No Human Resource Focus Workplaces* are typified by smaller workplaces where there was a lack of emphasis on human resource and worker wellbeing policies and procedures. These workplaces were generally small to medium size café or pub style restaurants and higher end restaurants not attached to a restaurant chain or high end hotel. Trainees employed at these types of workplaces were more likely to report workplace verbal abuse and bullying and alcohol or drug use during work hours and were less aware of procedures for dealing with these issues. Some Non-Human Resource Focused Workplaces may have relevant policies and procedures, but application and implementation may be lenient or lax.

*Aspirational Master Chefs* are typified by trainees who appeared to be most resilient and to have strong support networks in the form of family and friends. These trainees had a good knowledge of the adverse working conditions and a clear understanding of challenges they would face as trainee chefs prior to entering the industry. They were passionate about cooking and determined to be career chefs. They also recognised that they chose to become a chef of their own volition and were determined to see their training through, believing that their working conditions and job related rewards would improve after they had gained their qualifications. Master Chefs typically saw exposure to stressful working

conditions as character building and were the most accepting of workplace verbal abuse as a justifiable and legitimate means to ensure service and training quality.

***Chefs*** are similar to Master Chefs in that they were also passionate about cooking and had a strong desire to become a chef. However, they have less knowledge of the adverse working conditions and challenges of becoming a chef prior to entering the industry. They may have also entered the industry believing that it best suited their level of academic achievement, rather than any strong determination and dedication to become a chef. These trainees appeared to be less resilient than 'Master Chefs' had fewer support networks in the form of family and non-work friends, were more susceptible to the negative effects of abuse and bullying and more prone to adopt unhealthy coping strategies such as alcohol and drug use.

***Struggling Dropouts*** are the trainees that 'dropped out' during, or just after the first year of training. These trainees were typified by focus group participants and key informants as being less able to cope with the adverse working conditions and the high levels of verbal abuse and bullying, and were less prepared for the rigours and challenges of working in hospitality. Key informants also believed that dropouts may lack the necessary life and academic skills necessary for young new entrants to be 'work ready' for the hospitality industry. However, some of the dropouts could also be classified as ***Resilient Dropouts*** as they may be quite resilient, have the necessary life and academic skills for hospitality work, but dropout because they were less prepared to tolerate workplace verbal abuse and bulling.

## *Implications for alcohol and drug harm reduction and wellbeing enhancement strategies*

The findings of the focus group discussions and the key informant interviews have important implications for the development of strategies to reduce alcohol and drug related harm and improve the wellbeing of first year commercial cookery trainees. In doing so, it is anticipated that such strategies may also improve retention rates. Perhaps one of the most important implications the findings is that any intervention needs to target both the individual trainee and the workplace environment. However, identified trainee and workplace typologies also indicate that interventions also need to be tailored to suit the different workplace and trainee typologies outlined in Table 6.1.

### Interventions targeting trainees

Trainees' acceptance of alcohol and drug use at work and risky consumption patterns after work suggests that they may not be aware of the health and safety implications of such patterns of consumption. Thus, any intervention needs to include safe use and harm minimisation messages and information concerning alcohol and drug consumption. Moreover, strategies are required to raise trainees' awareness of workplace factors associated with use and build capacity to respond. In particular any intervention needs to focus on the potential influence of workplace social networks and social norms, and work stress on consumption patterns. For example, reviews of relevant research indicate that high levels of work stress are not always associated with heavy alcohol consumption (Frone, 1999). The relationship between work stress and alcohol can be mediated by individual beliefs about the use of alcohol as a coping strategy (Grunberg et al., 1998; 1999), or the use of effective alternative coping strategies and resources (e.g., talking to friends and relatives, exercise, leisure activities, and addressing work problems at their source) (Frone, 1999). Thus, increasing trainees' awareness of strategies to deal with work stress (and workplace social influence processes) may reduce risky alcohol and drug use and related harm.

Many trainees had adopted a range of coping strategies to deal with levels of verbal abuse, harassment and bullying in the workplace. These included:

- rationalising these behaviours as a part of the learning experience and not taking it personally,
- talking about workplace issues with other workers or family members and friends,
- leaving for another workplace.

Disseminating these strategies to trainees early in the first year of training is likely to have a positive impact on their health and wellbeing and overall attrition rates. Trainees should be encouraged to retain family support networks and maintain social networks outside of work and to talk to family and friends about workplace issues. Trainees should also be encouraged to talk to their supervisors and managers about workplace issues.
Second year trainees saw themselves as more resilient and better able to cope with the stress and working conditions, than trainees who dropped out. Key informants believed that a lack of essential life and social skills played a role in attrition rates. Thus, an effective intervention may need to include strategies to build resilience and social skills among new entrants in the first year training. One such approach is to enhance social and cognitive competency (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan et al., 2004). Social competency refers to interpersonal skills relating to communication and conflict resolution, including recognising and accurately interpreting social cues and then developing and actioning appropriate responses (Oliver, Collin, Burns, & Nicholas, 2006). Cognitive competency refers to skills including problem-solving, decision-making, planning and goal-setting which have been identified as protective factors that contribute to positive adaptation associated with resilience (Spence, Burns, Boucher et al., 2005).

## Interventions targeting the workplace

The extent of workplace bullying and work-related alcohol and drug use varied substantially across different workplaces, with these behaviours generally less prevalent in larger work organisations with a formal human resource section. Trainees working in such

organisations were also more aware of relevant alcohol and drug policies, bullying and harassment policies, and responsibilities and procedures relevant to these policies than trainees employed in smaller workplaces. This may indicate that strategies to raise awareness of small business employers' legislative and duty of care responsibilities are needed Such strategies need to also provide assistance to these employers in developing and implementing relevant policies, procedures and programs. Moreover, trainees and key informants believed that workplaces should offer comprehensive and effective induction programs that raise new entrants' awareness of not only the operating procedures and organisational structures of individual workplaces, but also their knowledge of workplace policies and procedures relevant to issues such as bullying, harassment, and alcohol and drug use.

Both trainees and key informants also believed that the introduction of workplace mentoring or buddy programs would improve retention rates among first year trainees. Workplace mentoring programs have been shown to positively affect mental health by increasing workplace socialisation and decreasing work stress (Thomas & Lankau, 2009) and are associated with a range of other positive behavioural, attitudinal, motivational and career outcomes (Eby et al., 2008). Moreover, mentoring programs have been demonstrated to be particularly effective for 'at risk' young people with disadvantaged backgrounds (Dubois et al., 2002). This is a particularly important point given that key informants indicated that many new entrants to the industry come from academically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

Key informants and trainees also believed that high attrition rates were also due to many new entrants being unaware and unprepared for working conditions in the commercial cookery sector of the hospitality industry. Suggested strategies to better inform and prepare new entrants included ensuring secondary school based vocational training involves work placements in commercial kitchens, ensuring career information resources forums provide

accurate information concerning working conditions, and ensuring that new entrants are fully informed of their industrial relations and occupational safety rights, obligations and entitlements.

## *Conclusion*

The results of the study indicate that employment in the hospitality industry exposes young new entrants to high levels of risky drinking, drug use, verbal abuse and bullying. Such exposure is likely to have negative consequences for the health, safety and wellbeing of young hospitality industry trainees. The study also indicated that the extent and nature of these behaviours appeared to be influenced by working conditions and workplace organisational and social factors. Working conditions, work stress, and workplace social norms appeared to play particularly important roles. The relationship between these factors and worker alcohol and drug consumption patterns and the relationship between these factors and workplace bullying is supported by previous research.

The current study also indicated that the prevalence of these behaviours varied between different types of workplaces with lower levels of occurrence in workplaces with clear human resource, worker safety, and worker wellbeing policies and procedures. Moreover, the extent to which exposure to these behaviours has negative outcomes for individual trainees appears to vary according to their level of resilience and coping skills. Together, these findings have important implications for the design and implementation

of intervention strategies. The development and implementation of strategies that incorporate these findings is not only likely to improve the health and wellbeing of young trainees, but is also likely to improve training retention rates.

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