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# Quality of Working Life 2008

**A survey of organisational health and employee well-being.  
Comparisons of the perceptions of UK managers and managers in Victoria, Australia.**

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# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The Survey</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>21</b>

# Executive Summary



Today, top level managers are focusing more than ever on getting the work-life balance right in their organisations. And why wouldn't they? In the UK, there is a strategic imperative for organisations to manage their talent. Changing demographic patterns mean that more people are approaching retirement than entering the workforce. On all levels there is a move towards up-skilling and multi-skilling in

order to maintain the UK's economic competitiveness. So the ability of organisations to attract and retain key executives at all levels of their management structure has emerged as a key competitive weapon.

The Chartered Management Institute recognises the challenges facing management in this environment and we believe this survey, the Quality of Working Life, helps to provide important insights. Our series initially began in the UK in 1997 and there is now a valuable body of data that charts how the nature of managerial work, managers' health and well-being and managers' work life balance have changed from 1997 to 2008<sup>4</sup>. This has developed deep insights into how organisations can improve levels of managerial motivation and productivity that will work through to deliver improved organisational performance.

This latest project supported by the Australian Institute of Management in Melbourne, has provided us with the opportunity to put our data in an international context. We believe the strength of this report is that it compares how managers in Australia and the United Kingdom view the current realities of work-life balance. More than 2,500 executives in the private and government sectors in the two countries responded to the survey. The results have been analysed by researchers at Coventry and Lancaster Universities in the UK and at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia.

## Key Findings

The survey reveals managers in the two countries have an alarmingly high level of concern about their health being negatively affected by the long hours they work. Around half of the managers involved in the survey linked personal health problems to the long hours they worked. Of further importance was that 45 per cent of respondents believed their productivity at work was disadvantaged by the long hours spent on the job. Managers also believed the length of their working week had a detrimental impact on their social lives and on their personal relationships. The close alignment

between the response outcomes of Australian and UK managers on how the long working week was affecting their health confirms the seriousness of the work-life balance issue.

Other key findings point to some unexpected contrasts between the management styles of Australian and UK executives. The survey data shows that Australian managers are less authoritarian, less bureaucratic, more accessible and more innovative than their UK equivalents. As a result, the Australians had, on many measures, a much more positive view of their organisations as a place to work and a more positive view of their senior managers than UK managers. In Australia, job satisfaction was markedly higher, reciprocal trust was higher, and respondents felt more fairly treated and better resourced. It is therefore clear what a significant impact management styles can have on morale and business performance.

## Recommendations

The Chartered Management Institute encourages organisations in both private and government sectors to be alert to the consequences of not getting work-life balance right. Profits, performance and the reputations of organisations are at stake. Given the realities of today's ageing population, organisations need to be innovative and flexible when it comes to ensuring their managers' work-life balance needs are met.

In line with the survey outcomes, it will be important for organisations to be alert to the well being of its managers by facilitating or encouraging regular health checks.

Most importantly, the survey demonstrates the importance of management behaviours in managing change. In the UK, it appears that we are still moving from a system of management by command and control, to a more enlightened and engaging system. Managers will need to invest in new skills and styles to draw out the best performance from the most precious resource of a truly competitive business, its people.

## Ruth Spellman OBE

Chief Executive  
Chartered Management Institute, UK  
August, 2008

<sup>4</sup>The Quality of Working Life 2007 Report can be accessed at [www.managers.org.uk/workinglife](http://www.managers.org.uk/workinglife)

# Introduction

The Quality of Working Life (QOWL) project was started in the UK in 1997 by the Chartered Management Institute. Ten years on, in 2007/8, the CMI undertook the sixth iteration of the study in the UK, funded by Simplyhealth, and agreed to run a parallel study in Victoria, Australia with the support of the Australian Institute of Management and Monash University in Melbourne. This short report compares and contrasts some of the findings from the two studies.

Over the last ten years, this research has drawn attention to a number of key issues that have emerged from the analysis of the QOWL data. We have raised concerns about the scale, persistence; nature and effect of organisational change; we have explored how managers perceive the management and leadership styles in the organisations they work within; we have examined working hours and the effects that working hours have on managers' physical and psychological wellbeing; and, we have explored what managers feel about the organisational climates and cultures that they work within.

The remainder of this report explores these issues looking for differences and similarities between the UK and Australian data based on our analysis of the two parallel studies.

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# The Survey

## The characteristics of the samples

Before examining what the differences and similarities were between the responses of two sets of managers, we briefly describe the profiles of our two samples.

The UK sample consisted of 1,451 usable responses and the Australian sample consisted of 1,283 usable responses. The data were collected around June/July 2007 in the UK and in December/January 2007-8 in Australia. The structures of the samples were, in many ways, very consistent. In the UK, 95.1% of respondents worked full-time compared to 93.8% in the Australian sample and 96% were employed on permanent contracts in both samples. Women did, however, account for a higher proportion of the sample in Australia (46.4% of Australian respondents were women compared to 35.6% in the UK).

There were two areas where there were more substantial differences in the sample profiles. First, Australian respondents were, on average, younger (17.2% were under 30 compared to 8.3% in the UK and 19.0% were aged 50-59 in the Australian sample compared to 36.2% in the UK). The second main area of difference was in the sector of employment. In particular, UK respondents were more likely to work in the public sector (40.0% of the UK sample worked in the public sector compared to only 20.7% in the Australian sample).

These two latter differences need to be borne in mind when looking at the results contained in this report. In order to ensure that reasonable comparisons are being made between the two panels of respondents, given the differences in the structure of the samples by public and private sector organisations, the Australian data has been weighted to make it more consistent with the UK distribution of responses by type of organisation.

## Is your organisation growing or declining?

In previous QOWL reports, we have found that whether a respondent feels that their organisation is growing or declining has a major effect on what they feel it is like to work in that organisation. Australian respondents were far more upbeat about their organisation's performance than were UK respondents. While 48.7% of UK respondents felt that their organisation was growing, this was substantially less than the 65.5% found in the Australian sample. The percentage that felt that their organisation was stable was higher in the UK (33.5%) than in Australia (26.9%) but while 18.7% of respondents in the UK felt that their organisations were declining this stood at only 7.7% in Australia.

The differences between the percentages that thought their organisation was growing/declining were most marked in the public sector. While 55.0% of public sector managers in Australia felt that their organisation was growing, this was much lower in the UK (31.9%). While 1 in 10 of Australian public sector managers felt their organisation was declining, this increased to 1 in 4 of UK public sector managers.

**Table 1: Growth, stability and decline by sector (percentage)**

	Declining	Stable	Growing
<b>UK – public sector</b>	25.8	42.3	31.9
<b>AUS – public sector</b>	9.2	35.9	55.0
<b>UK – private sector</b>	14.5	25.0	60.5
<b>AUS – private sector</b>	6.2	20.5	73.3

Private sector managers in the UK were much more confident about growth in their organisations (60.5% thought their organisation was growing) than their UK public sector counterparts but not as positive as Australian private sector managers where 73.3% thought that their organisation was growing.

# The Survey

## What did managers think about the prevailing management and leadership styles in their organisations?

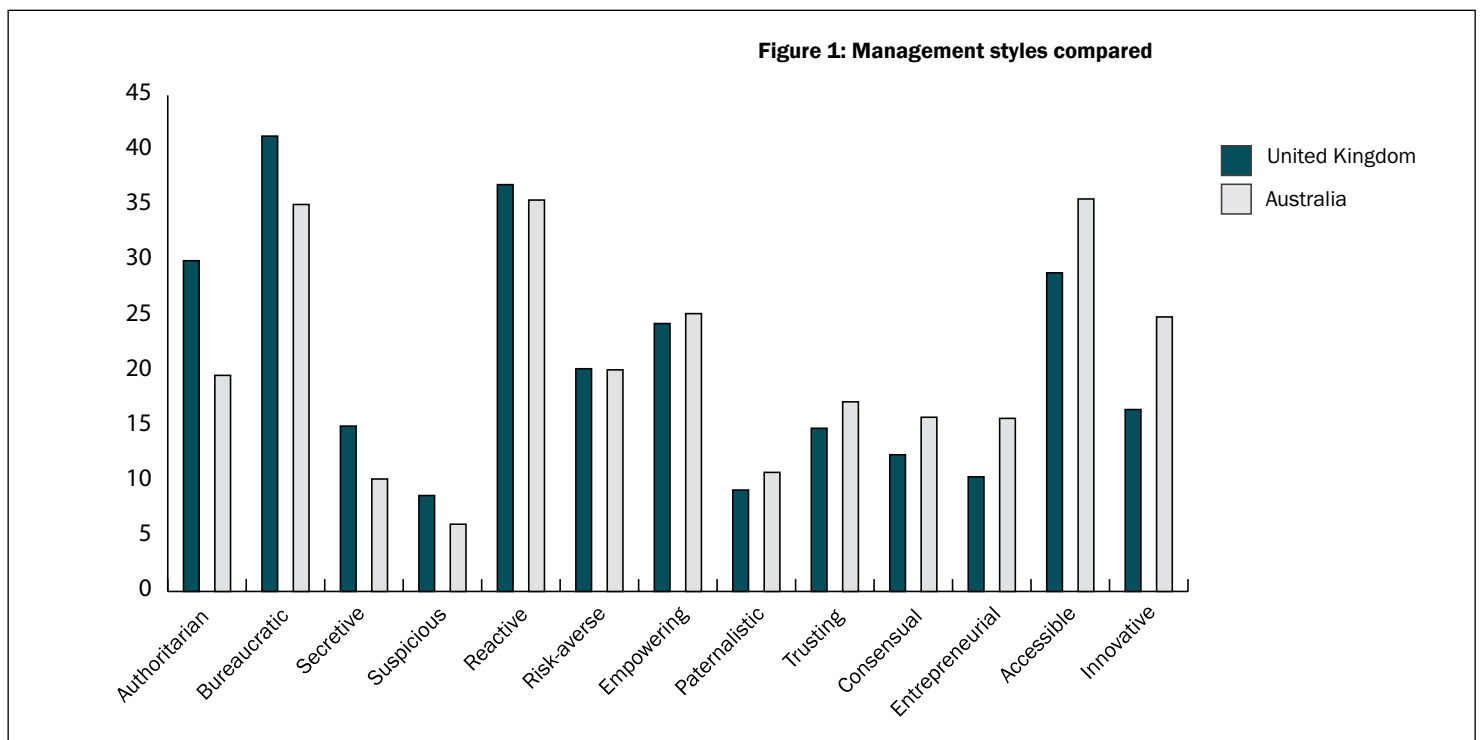
It could be argued that an organisation's culture is largely determined by the management and leadership styles of senior managers within that organisation. Consequently, respondents were asked to select from a list of thirteen attributes the management and leadership styles that they felt prevailed in their organisations.

The results of the analysis of prevailing management styles for the two samples are shown in Table 2 and Figure 1. In the UK sample, the top three prevailing styles (in descending order) were bureaucratic, reactive and authoritarian while in the Australian sample the top three prevailing styles were perceived to be accessible, reactive and bureaucratic.

While both clearly share the negative traits of being felt to be reactive and bureaucratic, the Australian profile is redeemed by the fact that intensity of opinion that prevailing management styles are reactive and bureaucratic is less pronounced than in the UK and, in Australia, accessible replaces authoritarian as a top three trait – in fact the highest rated trait.

**Table 2: Management and leadership styles compared (percentage)**

Style	UK	AUS
Authoritarian	30.0	19.6
Accessible	28.9	35.6
Bureaucratic	41.3	35.1
Consensual	12.4	15.8
Entrepreneurial	10.4	15.7
Empowering	24.3	25.2
Innovative	16.5	24.9
Paternalistic	9.2	10.8
Reactive	36.9	35.5
Risk-averse	20.2	20.1
Secretive	15.0	10.2
Suspicious	8.7	6.1
Trusting	14.8	17.2



# The Survey

## What did managers think about the prevailing management and leadership styles in their organisations? Cont.

While the two samples share two of the top three prevailing styles, there are some substantial differences in the percentage of managers choosing particular attributes – that is the intensity of opinion on particular measures. For example, UK respondents were substantially more likely to see management styles as bureaucratic, authoritarian and secretive than their Australian counterparts while Australian respondents were more likely to see management styles as innovative, accessible and entrepreneurial than managers in the UK.

Generally, more managers in Australia than in the UK seemed to be favourably disposed to the leadership styles of senior management in their organisation. In summary, Australian respondents were much less likely to feel that management styles were autocratic, bureaucratic and secretive and more likely to think that more senior managers in their organisations were accessible, innovative, entrepreneurial and consensual.

Earlier in this report, we mentioned that the UK sample had a higher proportion of public sector managers than the Australian sample. Consequently, we have examined in more depth the views of public and private sector managers in the two countries: this analysis is contained in Tables 3 and 4. Perhaps not surprisingly, management styles in both public sectors were considered to be bureaucratic (59.3% in the UK and 58.0% in Australia) and reactive (41.7% in the UK, 39.0% in Australia).

While scores on many measures are very similar across both public sector groups, three main areas of difference stand out: in the Australian public sector, management styles were considered to be much less authoritarian than in the UK public sector and they were also felt to be markedly more accessible and innovative. Paradoxically, given that the Australian public sector outscored the UK public sector in innovation, it is surprising that the Australian public sector returned a higher score on the “risk-averse” measure than the UK public sector.

**Table 3: Public sector management and leadership styles compared**

Style	UK – public sector	AUS – public sector
Authoritarian	37.2	22.0
Accessible	22.0	29.2
Bureaucratic	59.3	58.0
Consensual	7.3	12.1
Entrepreneurial	3.5	7.6
Empowering	18.7	20.8
Innovative	11.9	21.2
Paternalistic	9.0	11.4
Reactive	41.7	39.0
Risk-averse	21.3	28.4
Secretive	14.0	9.5
Suspicious	8.1	7.6
Trusting	10.2	11.4

# The Survey

**Table 4: Private sector management and leadership styles compared**

Style	UK – private sector	AUS – private sector
Authoritarian	27.1	18.2
Accessible	33.8	39.6
Bureaucratic	29.7	20.4
Consensual	14.4	15.8
Entrepreneurial	16.8	21.6
Empowering	26.5	29.0
Innovative	19.4	28.0
Paternalistic	8.2	10.3
Reactive	34.5	32.9
Risk-averse	19.8	14.4
Secretive	16.6	11.1
Suspicious	9.3	5.6
Trusting	16.0	21.2

## What did managers think about the prevailing management and leadership styles in their organisations? Cont.

When we compare the responses of the two private sector panels of respondents, it is evident that the prevailing management styles in Australian organisations were perceived to be more entrepreneurial, trusting, accessible and innovative and less bureaucratic, authoritarian, secretive, risk-averse and suspicious than in the UK.

Clearly, respondents from the Australian private sector had a far more positive view of the prevailing management styles in the organisations they work within than did those who work in the UK private sector.

# The Survey

## What did managers think about what is it like to work in their organisations?

The questionnaire contained a series of questions that asked respondents to indicate what they thought it was like to work in their organisations. Australian managers had more positive views on all the measures we included. Australian managers were substantially more likely to have trust and confidence in more senior managers in their organisation; to think that senior managers were running the organisation well; to think they were fairly treated; to think that their morale was good; and, to think that they had enough resources to do their job well.

There was only one indicator where Australian managers achieved a lower score than managers in the UK: this was on the “My performance at work is closely monitored” measure where Australian managers were less likely to feel that their performance was being closely monitored than their UK counterparts. However, in both the UK and Australia, around one third of managers felt that their performance was being closely monitored.

The percentage of respondents who felt that their performance was closely monitored at work increased considerably in the UK as respondents' level in the organisation became more junior. For example, in the UK, while 26.6% of directors agreed that their performance at work was closely monitored this increased to 43.0% for junior managers. In Australia, while 43.5% of directors felt that their performance at work was closely monitored, this declined to 33.4% for junior managers. We find this inversion intriguing: while in the UK, it is the most junior who were most likely to feel that their performance was being closely monitored, in Australia it was directors who were most likely to feel under close performance scrutiny. Perhaps the UK might have something to gain by moving away from the micro-management of junior managers and moving towards a system where directors are made to feel more accountable from having their performance made the subject of more robust scrutiny.

# The Survey

**Table 5: What managers think about working in their organisations**

Statement	UK% agreeing	AUS% agreeing	Difference
I have trust and confidence in senior managers	46.0	62.3	16.3
Overall, I think senior management are managing this organisation well	45.0	59.4	14.4
I feel fairly treated by my organisation	59.6	73.4	13.8
My morale is good	55.6	67.8	12.2
I have enough resources to do my job well	39.4	51.5	12.0
The objectives/targets I am set are realistic	57.5	69.1	11.6
My organisation is committed to promoting employee well-being	53.9	65.2	11.3
This organisation has a clear sense of direction	55.1	65.8	10.7
My organisation is a good employer	69.2	78.8	9.6
I feel well informed about what is going on in my organisation	56.3	65.8	9.5
I feel proud to work for my current organisation	67.4	76.5	9.1
Overall, I am satisfied with my job	62.2	71.2	9.0
Overall, I feel fairly paid for the job I am asked to do	51.7	60.7	9.0
I believe that senior managers have trust and confidence in me	68.2	77.0	8.8
I feel empowered to make decisions within my organisation	59.2	65.0	5.8
My organisation is committed to the career development of its employees	52.7	58.2	5.5
I enjoy my job	74.7	79.7	5.0
I get a sense of achievement from my job	75.7	80.3	4.5
I have received sufficient training to enable me to do my job effectively	63.2	67.6	4.4
I am very clear about my role in this organisation	70.9	73.9	3.0
I can decide how to get jobs done	80.8	82.5	1.7
My performance at work is closely monitored	35.9	33.4	-2.5

# The Survey

## What did managers think about what is it like to work in their organisations? Cont.

Job satisfaction is a key measure in many cross-national studies of employment conditions and it is interesting to note that overall job satisfaction was 9 percentage points higher in Australia (where 71.2% were satisfied with their job) than it was in the UK (where 62.2% were satisfied with their job).

When analysed by type of organisation, respondents from all types of organisations scored higher in Australia; especially those in private limited companies. In both countries, managers in public limited companies and the public sector achieved relatively low scores though this may be related to the fact that organisations in these two categories tended to be much larger than in other categories.

**Table 6: Job satisfaction by type of organisation**

Type of organisation	UK	AUS	Difference
Charity/not for profit	68.6	75.0	6.4
Private limited company	62.8	74.0	11.2
Public limited company	59.8	68.5	8.6
Public sector	61.0	68.8	7.8
Total	62.2	71.2	9.0

Job satisfaction in the UK varied consistently with level in the organisation: the level of job satisfaction for directors was, for example, 27.2 percentage points higher than that of junior managers. The gap between directors and junior managers, while it did exist in Australia, was less pronounced (18.6 percentage points). For all categories, job satisfaction was higher in Australia but the largest disparities existed for senior and junior managers: junior managers in the UK were substantially less satisfied with their jobs than their Australian counterparts. Interestingly, the width of the gap between directors and senior managers was more pronounced in the UK (12.6 percentage points) than it was in Australia (7.5 percentage points).

**Table 7: Job satisfaction by role in the organisation**

Level in the organisation	UK	AUS	Difference
Director	79.7	86.0	6.3
Senior manager	67.1	78.5	11.4
Middle manager	57.9	63.9	6.0
Junior manager	52.5	67.4	14.9
Total	62.2	71.5	9.3

In order to try and establish a link between what respondents felt about working in their organisation and their sense of their own productivity and thus performance, we asked managers to give a subjective indication of what they felt their level of productivity had been over the last three months. Managers in the UK had a lower sense of their own productivity than those in Australia: while 35.6% of managers in the UK thought that they had been over 90% productive, this stood at 40.7% in Australia. Managers in the UK public sector scored lowest on this measure with only 33.2% rating themselves at over 90% productive: this compared to 39.7% in the Australian public sector; 37.8% in the UK private sector; and, 41.2% in the Australian private sector.

Not only were Australian managers more likely to have these views about their organisation and senior management, they were also more likely than UK managers to think that their line manager actively cared about their well-being (57.2% in Australia compared to 46.5% in the UK) and that they had trust and confidence in their line manager (66.8% in Australia compared to 57.2% in the UK).

In summary, Australian respondents had, on many measures, a much more positive view of their organisations as a place to work and a more positive view of senior managers than UK-based respondents. Australian managers were also more positive about their own productivity. In Australia, job satisfaction was markedly higher; reciprocal trust was higher; respondents felt more fairly treated, morale was higher; targets and objectives were more likely to be considered realistic; respondents felt better resourced and more likely to feel that their organisation was committed to promoting their well-being; and that their organisation had a clear sense of direction.

# The Survey

## How much organisational change had there been?

A persistent theme of the QOWL reports since 1997 has been a concern about the scale, persistence, nature and effect of organisational change. Interestingly, managers in Australian organisations were less likely to have experienced organisational change than managers in the UK. In the year prior to the 2007 surveys, 66.5% of UK respondents had experienced a major form of organisational change compared to 58.0% of Australian managers.

The pattern of change by type of organisation revealed that while those working in PLCs in both samples had experienced the same level of change, public sector managers in the UK had been much more likely to have experienced change than Australian public sector managers. While 58.7% of public sector managers in Australia had been affected by major organisational change, this increased to 74.7% in the UK.

**Table 8: Percentage of managers affected by change by type of organisations**

Type of organisation	UK	AUS	Difference
Charity/not for profit	61.6	53.9	7.7
Private limited company	55.3	52.6	2.6
Public limited company	69.1	69.1	0.0
Public sector	74.7	58.7	16.0

A persistent driver of organisational change in the UK, as revealed by prior Quality of Working Life surveys, has been cost reduction: in fact, cost reduction has been the prime driver of change in the UK since our surveys began in 1997. While cost reduction is clearly an important driver of change in Australia, it is not the prime driver and it was cited substantially fewer times in Australia than in the UK. While 59.5% of UK respondents cited cost reduction as the prime driver of change, this was substantially less (19.4 percentage points less) in Australia (40.1%).

Additionally, Australian respondents were much less likely to cite redundancy, delayering and outsourcing than UK respondents. While cost reduction was the prime means of bringing about change in the UK, change in Australian businesses seemed to be more strongly characterised by culture change and less by the more aggressive forms of change such as redundancy, delayering and outsourcing.

**Table 9: The nature of organisational change**

Form change took	UK	AUS
Cost reduction	59.5	40.1
Culture change	59.3	63.1
Redundancy	40.5	25.1
Merger/acquisition	30.2	31.1
Delayering	28.7	17.8
Outsourcing	22.2	14.6
Increased use of temporary or agency staff	19.3	19.3
Offshoring	6.3	8.6

Our analysis of the amount of organisational change and the forms it took in the two different settings reveals two key points: first, the scale of change in Australian organisations was lower than in the UK as a lower percentage of Australian managers reported having been affected by major organisational change; and, second, organisational change in Australia seemed to have been implemented in a “softer” way than in the UK with a lower emphasis on cost reduction implemented through redundancy, delayering and outsourcing.

In Australia, change seemed to have been more benign with a stronger emphasis on changing organisational cultures rather than stripping out costs. Of particular note was the much less pronounced scale of change in the Australian public sector compared to the UK public sector. Change in the UK public sector was far more strongly driven by cost reduction (72.7%) than it was in Australia (41.3%).

# The Survey

## What effect had organisational change had on managers?

Given that the scale of change and the form change took differed in the UK and Australia, we might also expect that the perceived effect of change was less severe in Australia than in the UK. This expectation is borne out by the analysis in Table 10.

**Table 10: The perceived effects of organisational change**

Aspect of change	UK % Agree	AUS % Agree	Difference
Motivation has increased	14.5	26.3	11.8
Productivity has increased	27.6	39.1	11.5
Employee participation has increased	24.6	35.8	11.2
Well-being has improved	8.9	19.7	10.8
Morale has increased	11.3	21.8	10.6
Sense of job security has increased	8.1	17.6	9.5
Decision-making is faster	18.6	27.7	9.2
Profitability has increased	31.4	40.4	9.0
Loyalty has increased	8.3	17.0	8.7
Accountability has increased	45.9	52.2	6.3
Flexibility has increased	26.1	31.0	4.9
Hours worked has increased	43.9	42.8	-1.1
Key skills and experience have been lost	59.0	47.3	-11.7

While it is true to say that neither samples are massively positive about the effects of major organisational change on our set of measures, it is clear that Australian managers appear not to have been as injuriously affected by organisational change as managers in the UK. In both surveys, it is clear that change is not felt to increase managers' sense of job security or to improve their motivation or their morale BUT change in Australia seems not to have had as negative effect on managers' perceptions of their organisation as a place to work as it has in the UK.

In particular, Australian managers were noticeably more likely to think that change improved their motivation, productivity, employee participation, well-being and morale than their UK counterparts. Additionally, perhaps because of the less intense use of redundancy, delayering and outsourcing, Australian managers were less inclined to the view that change had resulted in the loss of key skills and experience to their organisations.

Clearly, the key points to emerge here are that while neither set of respondents were overwhelmingly positive about the effects of change, Australian managers appeared to be substantially less negative about the effect of change than managers in the UK.

# The Survey

## How long was the working week and what effect did it have?

Assessing the changing length of the working week and exploring the effect of long working hours on managers' sense of their own physical and psychological wellbeing has been a persistent theme of the Quality of Working Life survey. In this section of the report we have used a subset of the full survey in that we think it more appropriate to focus exclusively on full-time workers and their experiences.

Based on Table 11, we estimate that the average Australian manager works 46.4 hours per week while the average UK manager works 45.6 hours per week. In Australia, a slightly higher percentage of managers work over 48 hours per week (31.7% compared to 28.5% in the UK). Our analysis reveals that working hours seem slightly longer in Australia than in the UK.

**Table 11: Hours worked per week**

Sector	Country	35-40 hours	41-48 hours	49-60 hours	Over 60 hours	% Over 48 hours
Charity/not for profit	UK	36.4	44.4	14.2	4.9	19.1
	AUS	22.2	42.6	28.4	6.8	35.2
Partnership	UK	39.5	34.2	21.1	5.3	26.3
	AUS	22.5	50.0	25.0	2.5	27.5
Private limited company	UK	25.8	37.4	29.5	7.4	36.8
	AUS	22.3	42.1	29.8	5.7	35.5
Public limited company	UK	21.3	39.0	30.9	8.8	39.8
	AUS	14.9	42.3	35.9	6.9	42.7
Public sector	UK	43.6	35.8	17.7	2.9	20.6
	AUS	35.1	41.8	18.9	4.2	23.1
All full time workers	UK	33.7	37.8	23.0	5.5	28.5
	AUS	25.9	42.3	26.3	5.4	31.7

# The Survey

## How long was the working week and what effect did it have? Cont.

Working hours tend to be longer in public limited companies in both countries with 39.8% and 42.7% of managers in the UK and Australia respectively working over 48 hours per week. Managers in the public sector in both countries were substantially less likely to work over 48 hours per week than managers in PLCs: in the UK public sector, 20.6% of managers worked over 48 hours per week and, in Australia, 23.1% worked over 48 hours per week.

In addition, we asked managers how many hours per week they worked over their contract hours. Again, there were not massive differences between the working patterns of UK and Australian managers: in the UK, 53.3% claimed to work at least one hour per day over contract compared to 50.4% in Australia. In both countries, over 91% of managers who worked full time regularly worked in excess of their contract hours.

While there was considerable similarity in the working hours of both sets of managers, there were some differences in the reasons managers gave for working over their contract hours. In the UK, respondents were substantially more likely to feel that they had too much work to do and were overloaded (31.2%) than in Australia (22.7%). Australian managers were more likely to feel that they had the right amount of work to do or had the capacity to do more work. In both countries a very similar proportion of managers felt that they had a lot to do but did not feel overloaded (around 43%).

**Table 12: Attitudes to workload**

Country	UK	AUS
I have about the right amount of work to do	10.7	15.9
I have the capacity to do more work	15.6	18.0
I have a lot to do, but do not feel overloaded	42.5	43.4
I have too much work to do and feel overloaded	31.2	22.7

A more detailed analysis of managers' attitudes to their workload revealed some interesting differences by sector. While managers in the UK public sector were much less likely to work very long hours over contract than their UK private sector counterparts, they were much more likely to feel that they had too much work to do and were overloaded. They were also more likely to feel over burdened than their Australian public sector counterparts. There were only minor differences between the views of private sector managers in both countries.

**Table 13: Attitudes to workload by sector**

Country	UK public	AUS public	UK private	AUS private
I have about the right amount of work to do	10.2	17.4	10.2	15.4
I have the capacity to do more work	14.9	19.6	17.6	16.5
I have a lot to do, but do not feel overloaded	41.6	43.0	44.4	27.8
I have too much work to do and feel overloaded	33.3	20.0	27.8	24.7

Respondents who worked over their contract hours (that is 91% of managers who worked full time) were asked to indicate what effect working long hours had on various aspects of their working and non-working lives. Table 14 reveals that the responses of both sets of managers were remarkably consistent. In both countries over half of managers felt that the hours they work negatively affected their health (53.4% in the UK, 55.6% in Australia); around 45% thought that the hours they worked had a negative impact on their productivity and over half thought that the hours they worked had a negative impact on their social lives and their relationships with their spouse or partner. Yet, despite this awareness, over 90% of managers in both countries persist in working over their contract hours.

# The Survey

**Table 14: The negative effects of working long hours**

Working long hours has a negative effect on....	UK % Agreeing	AUS % Agreeing	Difference
Your time for exercising	67.8	70.9	3.1
Involvement in community/voluntary activity	47.5	50.4	3.0
Your health	53.4	55.6	2.2
Opportunity for professional development	47.2	49.3	2.1
Participation in leisure activities	67.2	67.9	0.6
Your relationship with your colleagues	29.7	30.1	0.5
Your productivity	45.5	44.6	-0.9
Your relationship with your spouse/partner	54.9	51.5	-3.5
Your morale	39.9	36.0	-3.9
Your relationship with your children	42.8	38.5	-4.3
Your social life	58.2	53.8	-4.4

The analysis presented here reveals a number of interesting points. First, while there are some differences in working patterns, working hours and the effects of working hours, there is a general consistency between the two sets of results. Second, even though Australian managers worked longer hours than managers in the UK, they were less likely to feel that they have too much work to do and feel overloaded. Third, the UK public sector stands out, even compared to the Australian public sector, as a sector where the relationship between hours worked over contract and the perceived effects of the hours worked is less clear – essentially, the reported effects of the hours worked do not seem commensurate with the actual hours worked over contract when compared against the other groups of workers. While workers in the UK public sector were least likely to work excessive hours (measured by the percentage working more than 48 hours per week), they were far more likely to feel overloaded and to have too much work to do. Clearly, the relationship between hours worked and their perceived effects is not straightforward, with other variables reflecting other aspects of the organisational or sectoral climate appearing to have a confounding effect.

## What effect did working hours have on managers' health?

In the 2005 Quality of Working Life Study we began to focus our attention on working hours and their effect on managers' physical health and psychological well-being. Here we contrast the relative incidence of a series of symptoms and aspects of ill-health between our two samples of managers. While there are some minor differences between the two profiles, there is generally a high level of similarity between the two groups.

On four measures (indigestion/heartburn; constant irritability; lack of appetite or over-eating; and, insomnia - sleep loss) reported levels in the UK were relatively high while managers in Australia were slightly more likely to cite avoiding contact with other people; feeling nauseous or being sick and muscular tension/aches and pains than UK-based managers.

**Table 15: Experience of symptoms**

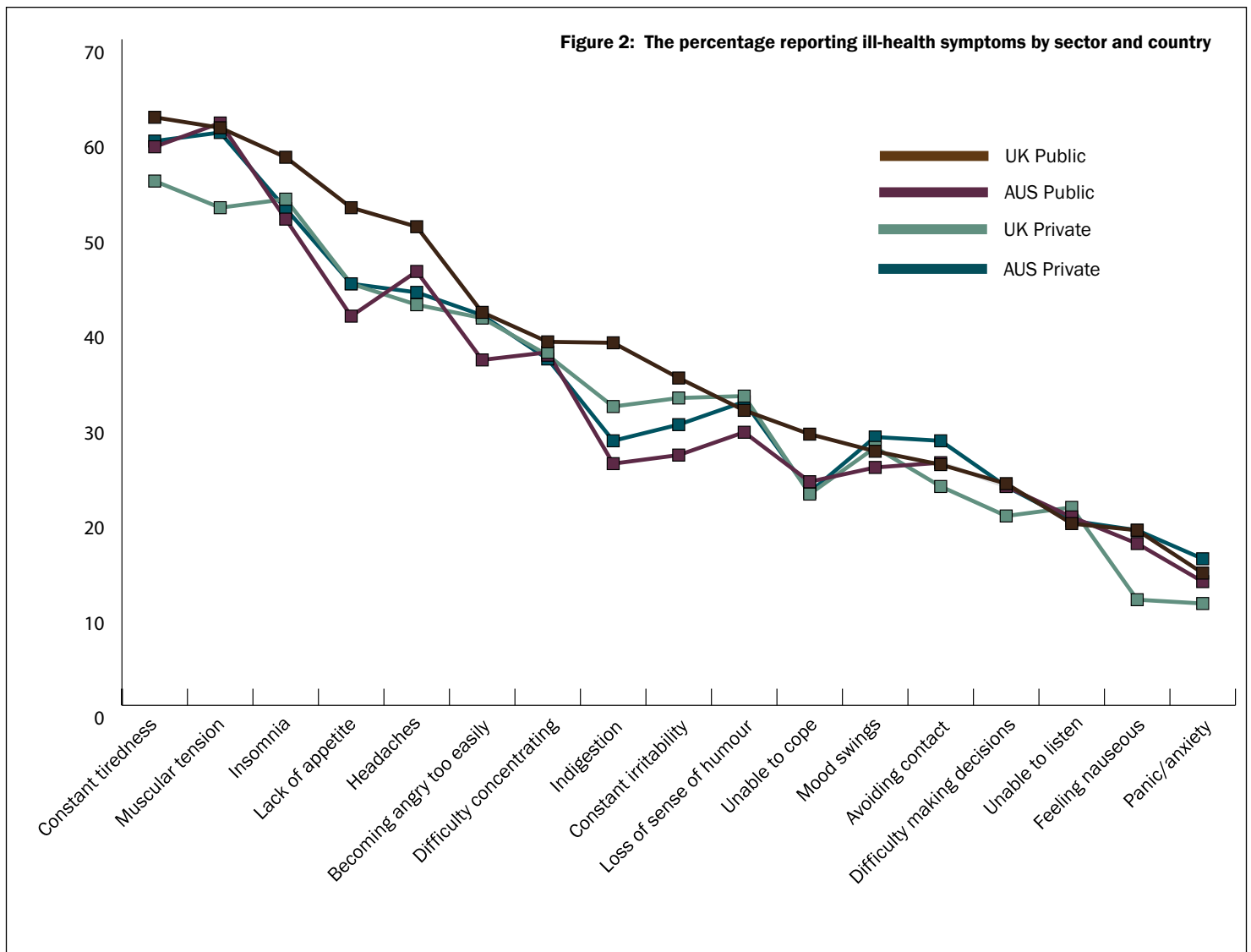
Effect of working hours	UK % sometimes or often	AUS % sometimes or often	Difference
Indigestion or heartburn	33.7	26.7	-7.0
Constant irritability	33.1	27.8	-5.3
Lack of appetite or over-eating	48.0	43.4	-4.6
Insomnia - sleep loss	55.5	51.3	-4.2
Feeling or becoming angry with others too easily	41.1	38.6	-2.5
Feeling unable to cope	25.5	23.0	-2.5
Headaches	46.1	43.7	-2.4
Having difficulty concentrating	37.5	36.5	-1.0
Unable to listen to other people	20.6	19.6	-0.9
Loss of sense of humour	31.6	30.7	-0.9
Mood swings	26.9	26.4	-0.5
Difficulty in making decisions	22.6	23.1	0.5
Constant tiredness	58.5	59.2	0.7
Panic or anxiety attacks	12.9	14.5	1.6
Avoiding contact with other people	25.0	27.1	2.1
Feeling nauseous or being sick	15.4	17.7	2.3
Muscular tension / aches and pains	56.4	60.9	4.5

# The Survey

## What effect did working hours have on managers' health? Cont.

An analysis of the experience of symptoms of ill-health by sector and country (Figure 2) revealed that there was a strong degree of similarity between the Australian public and private sectors and the UK private sector. The UK public sector scored highest on seven of our measures: constant tiredness; insomnia; lack of appetite; headaches; indigestion; constant irritability; and feeling unable to cope. This reinforces our concern, raised earlier, that there may be situational factors at work in the UK public sector that might explain these differences.

In addition to the symptoms listed in Table 15 above, we asked respondents to indicate if they felt that they had suffered from a range of forms of ill-health in the last year. Table 16 reveals that, despite being somewhat younger on average than UK managers, Australian managers were, on most forms of ill-health, more likely to report having suffered from ill-health than their UK counterparts. In particular, Australian managers were more likely to report suffering from back pain, stomach bugs, influenza and viral infections than UK managers.



# The Survey

What effect did working hours have on managers' health? Cont.

**Table 16: Incidence of forms of ill-health**

Form of ill-health	UK % experienced	AUS % experienced
Common cold	55.1	58.2
Headache	45.6	41.2
Back pain	33.7	38.5
Stress	29.2	32.9
Stomach bug/sickness	24.8	31.7
Viral infection	15.8	22.3
Influenza	10.1	19.9
Migraine	16.0	17.4
Digestive problems	18.7	16.2
Respiratory problems	13.1	15.7
Depression	12.8	14.6
Audio/visual problems	7.4	6.8

Table 16 also contains data on the incidence of stress and depression (these were self-definitions of these two conditions). In the UK, 29.2% of respondents felt that they had suffered from stress compared to 32.9% in Australia. In the UK, 12.8% said they had suffered from depression compared to 14.6% in Australia. The incidence levels of depression and stress were around 5 percentage points higher in the Australian public sector than in the UK public sector. Given the points we have made earlier about the UK public sector compared to the Australian public sector, these findings seem somewhat counter-intuitive.

Interestingly, when Australian managers did experience some form of ill-health, they were substantially more likely to take time of work than UK managers. Table 17 shows the percentage of managers in both countries who reported that they had been affected by different forms of ill-health AND had taken time off as a result. While there were small numbers involved in some cases, the analysis does reveal that Australian managers were, for all forms of ill-health, more likely to take time off work than UK managers.

**Table 17: The percentage that took time off work on experiencing ill-health**

Form of ill-health	UK % taking sick leave	AUS % taking sick leave
Influenza	64.0	76.9
Viral infection	49.7	67.3
Stomach bug/sickness	42.6	55.9
Migraine	21.9	53.5
Common cold	16.1	38.9
Respiratory problems	24.5	37.2
Other musculoskeletal disorders	19.8	27.6
Depression	10.2	24.2
Digestive problems	5.8	19.5
Back pain	11.2	18.5
Audio/visual problems	10.1	17.0
Stress	8.4	12.0
Headache	2.8	9.9

# The Survey

## What support mechanisms were in place to prevent and respond to ill-health in the workplace?

In both countries, organisations were almost equally likely to have policies in place covering accident prevention and drugs and alcohol. However, in the UK managers were more likely to report that their organisations had specific policies covering stress management (56.7% in the UK; 36.8% in Australia) and smoking cessation (UK 53.5%; Australia 25.8%).

The existence of absence management policies was also significantly more pronounced in the UK where 76.1% of managers reported that policies covering absence were in place compared to only 40.8% in Australia. Managers in the UK were more likely to report that their organisation had a range of policies in place.

**Table 18: Percentage of managers reporting that their organisations had various policies in place**

Policies in place	UK %	AUS %
General health & safety	92.1	80.8
Accident prevention	76.1	74.5
Managing absence	76.1	40.8
Occupational illness	64.1	46.3
Stress management	56.7	36.8
Smoking cessation	53.5	25.8
Drugs and alcohol	97.4	95.7
Bullying	68.3	66.1
Obesity	16.2	11.6
Lifting procedures	75.9	65.2

While it is one thing having policies in place, it is also important to have specific programmes and initiatives in place that will deliver the aims of these policies. UK managers were more likely than Australian managers to report that their organisations had specific programmes in place focused on smoking cessation and stress management. UK managers (41.1%) were

also far more likely to be offered private healthcare insurance than their Australian counterparts (17.2%) and more likely to be offered sabbaticals, subsidised gym/sport facilities and health screenings/personal evaluation of health risks. On the other hand, Australian managers were more likely to get the option of extra leave/holiday than UK managers and to report that their organisations had work/life balance programmes in place.

**Table 19: The percentage of managers offered various work place health programmes**

Programmes in place	UK %	AUS %	Difference (UK > AUS)
Private healthcare insurance	41.1	17.2	24.0
Smoking cessation schemes	33.5	15.5	17.9
Stress management advice/courses	42.5	28.9	13.6
Sabbaticals	29.2	15.7	13.5
Subsidised gym/sports facilities	35.1	24.6	10.5
Progressive return to work after absence	56.9	46.9	9.9
Health screenings	36.1	27.5	8.5
Personal evaluation of health risks	18.2	11.1	7.1
Healthy eating facilities	21.7	17.6	4.1
Flexible work options	60.5	58.8	1.7
Health/fitness coaching	12.0	11.6	0.4
Counselling	55.8	58.1	-2.4
Nutritional advice	11.6	14.5	-2.9
Leaves of absence to help work/life issues	49.6	54.3	-4.7
On-site wellness programmes	14.9	20.2	-5.2
Work/life balance programmes	30.1	35.3	-5.3
Ergonomic advice	42.6	49.2	-6.6
Option to get extra holiday time/leave	57.4	64.7	-7.3

# The Survey

## How much absence from work was there and what were the attitudes to absence?

Absence is a politically contentious issue in many organisations and an organisational measure that attracts significant attention from human resource managers given its perceived effects on productivity and organisational performance. Our data suggest that the average manager in the UK had taken 3.35 days absence in the year prior to the survey; this is not massively dissimilar from the 3.47 days recorded in Australia. Interestingly, despite the fact that public sector managers in both countries were more likely to work to their contract hours, absence was higher in the public sector in both countries than in any other type of organisation.

**Table 20: Absence by sector (average days/year)**

Type of organisation	UK Absence	AUS Absence
Charity/not for profit	3.91	3.07
Partnership	1.88	2.97
Private limited company	2.72	2.87
Public limited company	3.07	2.96
Public sector	3.82	4.26
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.35</b>	<b>3.47</b>

Despite the fact that PLCs and public sector organisations both tended to be larger than other types of organisation but of a similar size distribution profile to each other, absence was substantially lower in PLCs than the public sector. Whether this is affected by different attitudes to absence and its management in different types of organisation or to the existence of more robust forms of absence management in PLCs than in public sector organisations, cannot be fully determined from our study.

While there were only minor differences in the overall level of absence, there were some differences in attitudes and perceptions surrounding absence. For example, in Australia there seemed to be a more sympathetic attitude to absence with 66.5% of respondents feeling that employees are treated sympathetically by their work colleagues if they take off sick (53.1% in the UK) and with 61.0% feeling that employees are treated sympathetically by managers if they take sick leave (52.6% in the UK).

Australian respondents were less likely to agree that there was a culture within their organisations of not taking time off when sick and they were also much less likely to feel that a small number of employees in their organisation seemed to take a disproportionate amount of sickness absence. Attitudes to absence in the UK were substantially less positive in the UK than in Australia.

**Table 21: Attitudes to absence**

Measure	UK % agreeing	AUS % agreeing	Difference
Employees are treated sympathetically by their work colleagues if they take off sick	53.1	66.5	13.3
Employees are treated sympathetically by managers if they take sick leave	52.6	61.0	8.4
There is a culture in this organisation of not taking sickness absence	30.5	25.7	-4.8
A small number of employees seem to take a disproportionate amount of sickness absence	64.6	53.2	-11.4

# Conclusions: similarities and differences

The Quality of Working Life project has a long pedigree in the UK and running the survey in Australia has provided a great opportunity to put the UK data into an international context. While there are many similarities between the two profiles of managers, the analysis has exposed a number of differences that will form the focus of future research.

Australian managers were clearly more positive than UK managers not only about how well their organisations were performing but also about their organisations as a place to work. By contrasting the views of UK and Australian managers we have exposed a number of concerns.

First, UK respondents' attitudes to the prevailing management and leadership styles in their organisation are less favourable than in Australia where management styles are seen as more accessible, innovative, entrepreneurial and much less autocratic. The two main differences between the two sets of managers were on the accessibility and authoritarian measures to the disadvantage of the UK.

Second, Australian managers were more positive about their organisations as a place to work on all of the dimensions we explored and they were more likely to have trust and confidence in their senior managers; to think that their senior managers were running their organisation well; to think that they were fairly treated by their organisations; to feel that their morale was good; and, to think that they had enough resources to do their job well. Job satisfaction was markedly higher in Australia than in the UK.

Interestingly, we found that while junior managers in the UK were most likely to feel that their performance was being closely monitored, it was the directors of Australian organisations that were most likely to feel that their performance was being closely monitored. Perhaps in the UK, organisations should lose their apparent fixation with micro-management and focus more on senior management accountability.

Not only was the percentage of managers affected by organisational change lower in Australia, it was also less likely to be driven by a cost reduction imperative and less likely to have been implemented through redundancy, delayering and outsourcing. In Australian organisations, culture change prevailed over cost reduction.

While neither set of managers was particularly positive about the effects of major organisational change, Australian managers seemed to be less negative about the effects of change compared to UK managers. Australian managers were more likely to think that change improved their motivation, productivity, employee participation, well-being and morale than their UK counterparts. They were also less likely to feel that change had resulted in the loss of key skills and experience to their organisations, perhaps because of the less intensive use of redundancy, delayering and outsourcing in Australian business organisations.

A consistent issue to emerge throughout the report was the poor scores on many of our measures from workers in the UK public sector – a sector that was characterised by high levels of change and a considerable focus on cost reduction.

The pattern of working hours in the UK and Australia was generally similar, although it appears that Australian managers tend to work slightly longer hours than UK managers. While there was similarity in the working hours profiles of both sets of managers, there were some differences in the reasons managers gave for working over their contract hours.

Respondents from the UK were more likely than those in Australia to feel that they had too much work to do and were overloaded, despite the fact that, on average, they were slightly less likely to work over their contracted hours. Australian managers were more likely to feel that they had the right amount of work to do or had the capacity to do more work.

The non-work, social and personal effects of managers working over their contract hours were very similar for both sets of managers: over half of managers felt that the hours they work negatively affected their health; around 45% thought that the hours they worked had a negative impact on their productivity and over half thought that the hours they worked had a negative impact on their social lives and their relationships with their spouse or partner.

The effects of long working hours on managers' health were similar for both sets of managers. In the UK, 29.2% of respondents felt that they had suffered from stress compared to 32.9% in Australia. In the UK, 12.8% said they had suffered from depression compared to 14.6% in Australia.

Managers in Australia took slightly more time off work from absence, were more likely to report having suffered various forms of ill-health and, having been affected by them, were more likely to have taken time off work than their UK counterparts despite being somewhat younger on average.

Interestingly, managers in the UK were more likely to report that their organisations had policies in place covering a range of workplace health issues and they were more likely to report that their organisation was offering workplace health programmes and initiatives designed to deliver these workplace health policies. Our research has exposed some interesting differences between workplace health policies, the pervasiveness of programmes and initiatives designed to deliver these policies, the propensity of managers to take time off work when ill and general levels of absence in the UK and Australia. These issues, we would argue, clearly merit further research particularly when viewed in the context of the effects of organisational change, management and leadership styles and other salient aspects of organisational culture.

# Conclusions: similarities and differences

While reported absence levels were generally similar between the two groups of managers (Australian managers had slightly higher levels of absence despite being younger), Australian managers' attitudes to absence were found to be more benign and positive than in the UK: respondents in the Australian panel were more likely to feel that those who had been absent from work were more likely to be treated sympathetically by their work colleagues and by their managers and less likely to agree that there was a culture within their organisations of not taking time off when sick.

This report has been largely exploratory and it has identified areas of similarity and difference between managers in the UK and Australia. The fact that Australian managers generally have more positive views about the organisations they work within raises some fundamental questions about how and how well UK organisations are being managed. The clear differences between the prevailing management styles in organisations, we believe, pose some major challenges for the UK where managerial styles are felt to be more authoritarian than accessible. So, too, do the differing approaches to organisational change which, in the UK, seem to be far more focused on reducing costs and more likely to rely on blunt instruments such as redundancy and delayering. We hope that our research begins a debate about developing more progressive and enlightened approaches to managing organisations.

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