Privilege and marginalisation in Australia's national imaginary: constructions of mining and sex worker identities through technologies of power


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PRIVILEGE AND MARGINALISATION IN AUSTRALIA’S NATIONAL IMAGINARY:
CONSTRUCTIONS OF MINING AND SEX WORKER IDENTITIES THROUGH TECHNOLOGIES OF POWER

Nicholas Skilton

This thesis is presented as part of the requirements for the award of the Doctor of Philosophy

March 2017
ABSTRACT

The national imaginary is the lens through which we interpret our experience as citizens of a nation state. It is the vehicle for expressions of belonging, identity and community. Yet, and because of this, the national imaginary also embodies and perpetuates axes of social marginalisation. The national imaginary is shaped by perceptions of economy – iconic industries and accompanying forms of labour – but also by normative moral positionings attached to the economic. In certain ways, morality and economy intertwine in the national imaginary; for instance, in how certain industries and forms of labour are imbued with special status as morally ‘good’, while other industries and forms of labour are problematised, with exclusionary effects. From this moral economic basis, processes of social marginalisation ensue.

Adopting a governmentality framework, this research interrogates the Australian national imaginary. It does so via the experience of two iconic forms of labour inextricably linked throughout history, and yet with contrasting visibilities and anxieties: sex work and mining. Through technologies of power – the “authoritative and managerial structures … [with] the common objective of directing the actions of the governed in a particular way” (Dufty 2007: 28) – two iconic forms of labour constitute a distinctive axis of social marginalisation. In the national imaginary, mining has been elevated to heroic proportions, while sex work has been marginalised and stigmatised, or simply forgotten. The way these forms of labour are framed in the national imaginary affects the experiences of citizenship of those undertaking such work, and of how these two industries have come to impact our conception of ‘Australianness’. This thesis traces the contrasting visibilities and anxieties of sex work and mining, and the way their representations in the national imaginary have become deeply embedded within institutions, and are operationalized via technologies of power, intersecting with moral norms.

The thesis ensues in three substantive parts, each with its corresponding theoretical influence and data sources. First, historical legislation was analysed to locate the two industries within a moral economy of the Australian national imaginary. Evolving conceptions of national industry and morality ultimately favoured mining and rejected sex work, even though both were co-present geographically, creating an enduring schism within the public consciousness. Second, adopting conceptual tools from critical media
studies, news media from 2010 to 2015 was examined to glean the effects of this schism on contemporary representations of these industries and forms of labour. Significantly, public anxiety has begun to emerge around both industries. Sex work continued to suffer from the moral economic position cemented in the historical legislation that rendered it transgressive, morally repugnant, and marginal. In contrast, mining – having evolved through its initial anxious reception in Australia to become a historically heroic industry – began to accumulate new anxieties around family cohesion and economic impacts on rural communities. Third, adopting conceptual tools from critical demography and governmentality theory, the 2011 Census was investigated to determine the effects of this schism on the governmental visibility and legitimacy of these forms of labour. The discursive dominance of mining in the national imaginary was shown as misrepresentative, its endurance eclipsing and masking other forms of distance labour such as manufacturing and construction that Census data showed collectively embodied a much larger share of the distance labour market. Meanwhile, the discursive marginalisation of sex workers was reproduced in Census categories and results, with a large undercount unacknowledged. Architecture of state measurement and surveillance such as the census thus reproduce and mutate historical renderings of social marginalisation in the national imaginary.

From these data sources and results, social marginalisation along moral economic lines is unobtrusively written into the national imaginary. An understanding of the national imaginary through these points of intersection shows that the narratives of our ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1991) are not haphazard remembrances, but very specific mechanisms of identity production. This thesis contends that too little attention is paid to how industries and identities intersect, and how social marginalisation’s persist via moral economic mechanisms. The national imaginary is ultimately performed and remembered now in ways that reproduce and legitimate historical conceptualisations formed across successive generations. Thus, while in contemporary Australian society there has been growing equality for women, increasing visibility of queers and non-normative sexualities, and a trend toward social justice, the national imaginary remains rooted in increasingly outdated, but still ‘alive’, masculine and heteronormative labour identities. These continue to elevate industries and associated labour identities such as mining, at the expense of those such as sex work. Australia needs to be alert to the way that the
narratives of economy immortalised within the national imaginary contextualise our relationship with the State, and collide with the realities of social marginalisation.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which this thesis was written, the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation. I would also like to pay my respects to Elders past and present.

Thank you to my supervisor Chris Gibson and co-supervisor Leah Gibbs for enduring support; my family; Scarlet Alliance for crucial guidance in research design and execution; Michael Adams and Ellen van Holstein for providing comments on chapters; Chris Brennan-Horley for mapping consultation; Alex Tindale for assistance with the Census; a sex-worker friend (who remains anonymous here) who as a research assistant helped with initial recruiting efforts; my friends and lovers; the Australian Centre for Cultural and Environmental Research (AUSCCER) and my officemates (especially Chantel Carr); all the amazing and inspiring geographers I met during my candidacy; and my Goosedog (RIP), who sadly didn’t make it to the finish line with me but without whom I could never have survived the process.

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS INCLUDED AS PART OF THIS THESIS

Skilton, N. (2015). ‘Reimagining Geographic Labour Mobility through Distance Labour.’ 

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................... i

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................. iv

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS INCLUDED AS PART OF THIS THESIS ...................... v

TABLE OF CONTENTS ................................................................................................. vi

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................ xi

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................... xiii

LIST OF BOXES ............................................................................................................ xiii

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ............................................................................................. xiv

PREFACE ......................................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 1  INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................. 9

1.1 Introducing the Research ....................................................................................... 9

1.2 Conceptual Inventory .......................................................................................... 15

1.3 The ‘Nation’ ........................................................................................................ 18

1.4 Iconic Labour in the National Imaginary ........................................................... 23

1.4.1 Defining Iconic ‘Mining’ .................................................................................. 26

1.4.2 Defining Iconic ‘Sex Work’ ............................................................................ 33

1.4.3 Why the National Imaginary Matters: Towards a critical political geography of miners and sex workers ................................................................. 41

1.5 Methods: Activist Praxis? .................................................................................... 43

1.6 Thesis Structure .................................................................................................. 50

Chapter 2  MINING AND SEX WORK IN THE NATIONAL IMAGINARY: PRE-FEDERATION LEGISLATION ................................................................. 54

2.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................... 54

2.2 The Middle-Class, Federation, and Nation Building .......................................... 58

2.3 The Long Interplay Between Sex Work and Mining ........................................... 60

2.4 Sex Work Legislation and the Middle-Class ....................................................... 64

2.5 Mining and the Middle-Class ............................................................................. 68

2.6 Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 72

Chapter 3  MINING (IN) THE MEDIA: PRIVILEGE AND ANXIETY ..................... 77

3.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................... 77

3.2 Mining, Rurality, Anxiety .................................................................................... 79

3.3 National Imaginaries and the Media ................................................................... 86
### Chapter 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Foucault’s Census</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1</td>
<td>Governmentality</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2</td>
<td>Identity and visibility</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Invisible Labour in the Australian Census</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Results and Discussion: Distance labour is more than mining</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5.1</td>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5.2</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5.3</td>
<td>Brisbane’s Distance Labourers</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.1</td>
<td>The Legacy of the Heroic Miner in the Contemporary News Media</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2</td>
<td>The Antisocial Miner</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.3</td>
<td>The Exploitative Miner</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.4</td>
<td>The Unstable Miner</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.5</td>
<td>The Broken Family Miner</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.6</td>
<td>The Criminal Miner</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1</td>
<td>The Sex(ual) Worker</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2</td>
<td>The Criminal Sex Worker</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3</td>
<td>The Trafficked Sex Worker</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.4</td>
<td>The Prosaic Sex Worker</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.5</td>
<td>The Unclean Sex Worker</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Sex Work Meets Mining in Moranbah</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1</td>
<td>Background</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2</td>
<td>The Drovers Rest Incident</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.1</td>
<td>The Legacy of the Heroic Miner in the Contemporary News Media</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2</td>
<td>The Antisocial Miner</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.3</td>
<td>The Exploitative Miner</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.4</td>
<td>The Unstable Miner</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.5</td>
<td>The Broken Family Miner</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.6</td>
<td>The Criminal Miner</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

**Figure 1.1**: Billboard for MMG, a mining company, at Perth Airport, 2013. Central is the heroic masculine figure of the miner, clad in fluoro ‘high-vis’ workwear. (See Chapter 3). (Photo: Chris Gibson). ...............................................................25

**Figure 1.2**: An iconic image of the Eureka Rebellion (Smith 2012): ‘Swearing Allegiance to the Southern Cross’ (1854) by Charles Doudiet. ...............................................................28

**Figure 1.3**: The closing image from a Mineral Council of Australia TV advertisement (Minerals Council of Australia 2015) <http://littleblackrock.com.au/>. ...............31

**Figure 1.4**: Front page image from the New South Wales Minerals Council website (NSW Minerals Council n.d.) ..................................................................................31

**Figure 1.5**: A sex worker rights rally on Sydney Harbour, arguing that ‘sex work is work’ (Clement-Couzner 2012). ..................................................................................34

**Figure 1.6**: Advertisement for a 2015 performance and visual art show by the sex worker art collective Debby Doesn't Do It For Free, containing the names of the artists as used in the show (DebbyDoesntDoIt4Free 2015). ..........................................................41

**Figure 3.1**: ‘White Mines’ - a collage of miners cut from *Australian Mining*, an industry magazine for readers interested in mining technology and innovation, March 2015 - March 2016. This collage depicts archetypal mining workers. The prevalence of hi-vis workwear was an unintended by-product of an art project by Nick Skilton intended to depict ethnic homogeneity in the mining industry (Credit: Nick Skilton). ...........................................................................................................81

**Figure 3.2**: ‘Dongas’: typical remote mine accommodation generally consisting of a portable aluminium shed (Photo: Strueman 2015). .................................................................83

**Figure 3.3**: Distribution of news articles concerning FIFO with respect to impacts, benefits or problems, 2010 to 2015 ..................................................................................93

**Figure 3.4**: Total number of instances of beneficial and problematic coded representations of mining, from a total of 450 articles. ...............................................................96

**Figure 3.5**: Total beneficial and problematic representations as a percentage of each code. .......................................................................................................................96

**Figure 4.1**: All the coded themes and instances resulting from the methods described in Section 4.2 ...........................................................................................................139

**Figure 4.2**: Coal mines of the Moranbah region (©Esri, ©OpenStreetMap contributors). ...............................................................................................................................183
Figure 5.1: Image from the 2016 Australian Census paper form depicting Question 45 regarding method of travel to work.

Figure 5.2: Distance labourer travel distances in relation to the capital cities in which they reside (except Canberra, which lies almost equidistant between Sydney and Melbourne). The circles represent the 400km exclusion boundaries around each capital city. Living in the capital city but working outside the exclusion zone is the first criterion used here to define distance labour.

Figure 5.3: Industrial breakdown of workers engaged in distance labour as a combined total of all Australian capital cities.

Figure 6.1: Flow chart showing how sex work is categorised in the ANZSCO (Source: adapted from Pink and Bascand 2009).

Figure 6.2: Question 38 as it appeared on the 2011 Census form.

Figure 6.3: Question 42 as it appeared on the 2011 Census form.

Figure B.1: Recruitment flyers designed for both physical recruitment and as an online attachment.
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: A selection of supportive quotes about mining from sections of the news media, from the 450 analysed articles.................. 100

Table 3.2: A selection of quotes depicting the antisocial nature of miners, from the 450 analysed articles. ................................................................. 105

Table 3.3: A selection of quotes depicting the exploitative nature of miners and the mining industry, from the 450 analysed articles. ................................................. 112

Table 3.4: A selection of quotes depicting the unstable nature of miners, from the 450 analysed articles. ................................................................. 116

Table 3.5: A selection of quotes depicting miners with family-related issues, from the 450 analysed articles. ................................................................. 121

Table 3.6: A selection of quotes depicting the criminal nature of miners, from the 450 analysed articles. ................................................................. 127

Table 4.1: A selection of quotes depicting anxieties around the sexual nature of sex work from the coded analysis .......................................................... 146

Table 4.2: A selection of quotes depicting the ‘criminal’ nature of sex work from the coded analysis. ................................................................. 153

Table 4.3: A selection of quotes depicting the close association between sex work and trafficking discourses from the coded analysis. ........................................... 159

Table 4.4: A selection of quotes depicting the prosaic nature of sex work from the coded analysis................................................................. 168

Table 4.5: A selection of quotes depicting sex workers as vectors of disease from the coded analysis. ................................................................. 178

Table 5.1: Location of distance labourers in the five most populous capital cities on census night, compared with the total employed workforce (Source: ABS 2016a). ................................................................................................. 218

Table 5.2: Workers engaged in distance labour in Australian capital cities in numbers and as a percentage of the total employed population. The top three industries by size, ‘Manufacturing’, ‘Mining’, and ‘Transport, Postal and Warehousing’, colour-match Figure 5.3 (Source: ABS 2016a). ................................................................................................. 220

Table 5.3: Total workers engaged in distance labour in Australian capital cities in numbers and as a percentage of the total employed population. Manufacturing, Mining, and Transport colours match Figure 5.3 (Source: ABS 2016a). ........... 222
Table 5.4: Industry breakdown of ‘Manufacturing’ distance labourers from Brisbane (Source: ABS 2016a). .................................................................229
Table 5.5: Industry breakdown of ‘Transport, Postal and Warehousing’ distance labourers from Brisbane (Source: ABS 2016a). ...........................................................................231
Table 5.6: Distance labourers and total employed people percentages by sex and by industry (Source: ABS 2016a). .........................................................234
Table 6.1: Major divisions of the ANZSCO structure and numbers of subdivisions (ABS 2009a)..................................................................................................................243
Table 6.2: Sex workers number in the three Censuses prior to the 2011 Census (Source: ABS 2015a).........................................................................................251
Table 6.3: Age profile of sex workers (Source: ABS 2014a).............................................252
Table 6.4: Sex worker state of usual residence by sex (Source: ABS 2014a)...........253
Table 6.5: Population of the states of Australia (ABS 2016b). ....................................255
Table 6.6: Sex worker country of birth (Source: ABS 2014a)...............................256
Table 6.7: Sex worker hours worked in the Census week (Source: ABS 2014a). ......257
Table 6.8: Total capital cities employed persons hours worked in the Census week (Source: ABS 2016a). .................................................................257
LIST OF BOXES

**Box 1.1**: Excerpt from *Eureka* by Henry Lawson (1889) .......................................................... 29

**Box 5.1**: My year with the census. .................................................................................................. 207

**Box B.1**: A survey drafted for Scarlet Alliance members for the online ‘Survey Monkey’
platform to examine sex worker perceptions of the Census. ...................................................... 336
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANZSCO</td>
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<td>LDC</td>
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<td>NT</td>
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<td>PAR</td>
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<td>SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PREFACE

The original goal for this project was, and continues to be for me, in both life and research, the reduction of stigma for sex work. Sex workers have a motto: ‘nothing about us without us’. By this they mean: no research on or about sex workers without their explicit consent, approval, support and ideally participation and leadership (Jeffreys 2009b). As I began this research, this was something I took particularly seriously, since it could directly affect my standing not just as a researcher, but as an ally and a member of the queer community in Sydney. I entered the world of researching sex work as a supporter of the industry and its rights agenda, because of how society treated people that I loved that were involved in sex work. Just like sex work abolitionists, my ideas about the industry are deeply entrenched. What this means is that I care deeply about the way sex work is represented, and I believe it to be especially unfair that this kind of work and the people (predominantly women) that participate in it are derided, stigmatised, ‘slut-shamed’, and excluded from society in ways that other labourers and other women are not. Many of my friends (and quite likely some of yours too, whether you know it or not) are, or have been, sex workers; their unique struggle for rights and acceptance drew me into the orbit of the rights agenda. When the opportunity arose to commit to a PhD, I saw an opportunity to address important social justice issues.

Many researchers may have arrived at a negative opinion of sex work based on the work of earlier feminists including Andrea Dworkin and Sheila Jeffreys, who were highly critical of the practice¹. Some have begun research projects with an anti-sex work position only to have it inverted through the course of the research (Wahab 2003). I suspect there

¹ Non-citation of these sources is a deliberate strategy. The Politics of Citation describes the way sections of academia exclude women and people of colour from their citations, failing to recognise their scholarship (Ahmed 2013). In this case, I, alongside other sex work activists, believe the work of these scholars actively harms sex workers, and thus their non-citation here is an activist strategy that will not contribute to the ongoing legitimacy of their work within academia.
are advantages and disadvantages of interacting with the idea of sex work as a cis-gender male (cis = someone who identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth). For example, I have never been called a slut (with malicious intent), or told I ‘look like a hooker’. Thus, I have never been morally disciplined in the same way as many women have been, leading them to conclude that sex workers are inherently ‘bad’. On the other hand, I first discovered the concept of sex work through representations in the media and popular culture generally depicting them as women without virtue, sluts, and the target of ridicule. Growing up in the overwhelmingly Anglo-Australian outer suburbs of Adelaide, I had no reason to question such representations. As an Anglo-Australian male, from a middle-class family, I also didn’t have a lot of interest in feminism, nor research of any kind for that matter. My twenties were lived as a young punk with a penchant for padlock jewellery, Doc Martin boots, loud music and dropping out of university degrees. The punk subculture introduced me to strong, amazing, independent (other than my mum) punk/queer women that helped me discover my queerness, feminism and social justice. I was also living on a welfare-class income (which certainly adjusts one’s way of seeing the world and relationships to money and precarity). My first interaction with actual sex work was through these lived experiences with my own community. What I knew of sex work then did not fit either the cultural narratives or anti-sex work feminist research.

Being drawn to a PhD research project because of a desire for social justice, and with an explicit agenda of reducing sex work marginalisation, did mean that from the outset there was ‘bias’ (as positivist researchers would put it) in the thesis that follows. Pain (2004: 652) has argued that activism for researchers can be “an explicit strategy and outcome of research and vice versa … [with] different activities of scholarship, activism and teaching as linked in their pursuit of change.” My pursuit for change led me to Participatory/Action Research (PAR), and a research relationship with Scarlet Alliance, the peak national
representative body for sex workers. Each state has its own collective representative group, and works on a membership basis, but Scarlet Alliance is based in Sydney and works primarily on policy, research, and lobbying for sex worker rights. They have overseen this research and have had the final word on what is and is not included in this final thesis. Recognising that “the boundaries between one’s own and others’ activism are often blurred” (Pain 2004: 652), I have allied my goals of sex worker destigmatisation with their own. In a somewhat circular fashion, the activist nature of the research gained me access to the group (Scarlet Alliance) that I most needed to give legitimacy to the activism.

Early in my candidacy I had no clear idea how to integrate my social justice aims into a research project. Whilst I was primarily interested in reducing sex worker marginalisation, I was also invested from previous research in the national debate around fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) mining. When I learned that sex workers also participated in this kind of distance labour, I began to sense a topic was possible that brought together these industries – a project based around equalisation and normalisation between the two. The mechanism for this, I proposed, would be an ethnographic focus on intimacy, and how it operated over distance between couples engaged in distance labour. From the outset, the project seemed to embrace the ‘participatory’ aspect of PAR, with the ‘action’ component still to be determined with Scarlet Alliance. My relationship with Scarlet Alliance built slowly over a four-year candidacy. I personally knew some of the employees of the organisation, and had attended events such as protests condemning violence against sex workers, which I believe gave me some initial credibility. van der Meulen (2011: 375) encountered something similar, leading to a conclusion that:
Research on sex work that is being conducted with sex workers by sex worker allies who are politically engaged members of the sex workers’ rights movement will likely not meet the same level of resistance that an ‘outsider’ feminist academic might. However, this did not mean that my research design was not subjected to the same level of scrutiny applied to other researchers.

As the relationship with Scarlet Alliance was building in anticipation of eventually garnering their help with recruitment, I delved deeper into the conceptual nexus, looking for the foundation upon which to build the complete story. I found this in the ‘national imaginary’. I considered that an understanding of distance labour intimacy could potentially re-imagine and ‘queer’ heteronormative understandings of nation. More specifically, how the fluid practices of relationships, sex, and home-making by workers employed in distance labour could unravel definitions of a heteronormativity “that is founded upon static notions of reproduction, domesticity, monogamy and love” (Morrison 2012b: 70). Therefore, if workers engaged in iconic national labour are queering understandings of heteronormativity, can this by extension queer the nation as a whole? If so, then the nation is remade as a space where heterosexuality is contingent on multiple factors and nothing can be taken for granted. Queer-identifying people and other ‘outsiders’ can be embraced equally in the national narrative.

I began to explore the various literatures around this central idea: mobility, nationalism, mining and sex work histories, queer theory and queer methods, intimacy and home. By researching sex workers alongside ‘legitimate’ forms of labour such as mining, and demonstrating (I suspect) the universally challenging experiences of intimacy amongst distance labourers, I hoped that I could normalise the discussion around these industries. As these ideas circulated, together with my supervisors, I began to formulate a research strategy to meet this aim. Conscious of the fact that the university ethics committee could
potentially take umbrage with a project involving sex workers and research in peoples’ homes, I wanted to be as thorough as possible. I had hoped it would be fool-proof research by design. I also didn’t want this project to just consider distance labourer lives – I wanted the partners of distance labourers to be equally part of the project, since intimacy is co-generative and performative (Holmes 2004). I felt like the experience of intimacy for those ‘left behind’ was equally important as for those who travelled. Interviewing both members of a couple also promised to reveal “the negotiated and contested nature of household relationships, and so contribute to the development of more complex and nuanced understandings of gender relations in a domestic context” (Valentine 1999: 67). Therefore, despite my commitment to queerness, and therefore non-linear, non-normative and non-hierarchical relationships, it seemed judicious to concentrate on people in discrete and more conventional coupled and cohabiting relationships.

Nevertheless, the most meticulous planning in the world is sometimes not enough to achieve desired outcomes. My research project ticked the boxes for project management, and eventually gained ethics approval (see Appendix A). So how can a research project fail after ticking all the boxes? Well, because research isn’t a simple box ticking exercise, and research with human beings is fraught with all the hazards the human psyche and institutional bureaucracy can throw at the best laid plans. (Full methods for this ‘failed’ stage of research can be found in Appendix B, and reflections on this process can be found in Appendix C).

Though the project has deviated from its original research questions (as you read on, you will notice that apart from nationalism and industry histories, none of the aforementioned literature was ultimately utilised in this thesis), it has not deviated from its original mission, which was to address sex worker stigma and marginalisation. I have remained
true to this mission through the multiple iterations of this project, and remain committed to this cause in all facets of my life. This position has shaped the research project in ways that are difficult to precisely articulate, but there are two important noticeable manifestations of this position within the work.

The first is language. ‘Sex work’ is the preferred terminology in use by rights activists to describe the various guises of paid sex in Australia. This does not mean that all people who do sex work consider themselves to be sex workers. It does mean that when lobbying for the industry, sex worker rights activists will use this term over historically pejorative terms like ‘prostitution’ and ‘whoreing’. For this reason, these latter two words do not appear in this work, and except in direct quotes, which have, where possible, been avoided. This is because I, like most people working on the rights agenda, strongly believe that sex work is a labour practice, and this language has been agreed upon by the sex worker community in Australia (and often, but not always, elsewhere). Some have argued that using ‘prostitution’ to describe the historical conditions of sex work is more appropriate, because the terminology and political identity of sex work had not yet settled into a stable and accepted form (Grant 2014: 20). In many ways this makes sense. However, I also believe that this does an injustice to sex workers throughout history. Just because their political identity had not yet consolidated does not mean that their labour was not ‘work’. I also believe that words have power. One only has to read the news to see how these terms are pejoratively employed (see Chapter 4). Discontinuing their use can usher in a more respectful dialogue. I also recognise that sex work is a diverse industry, with considerable scope and a variety of practitioners anywhere within the gender spectrum. Nevertheless, this thesis focuses more explicitly on aspects of female sex work as the dominant cultural representation. (There is some discussion on male sex work in Chapter 6.)
The second important consideration is that this research supports decriminalisation of sex work (already in effect in New South Wales). Decriminalisation is substantially different from legalisation (in effect in Victoria and Queensland), criminalisation of sex workers (in effect in Western Australia and South Australia), or the Swedish Model of criminalising clients of sex workers (also in effect in various international contexts). Decriminalisation is the legislative framework where sex workers are regulated by the same civil laws as any other labourer (Jeffreys et al. 2011). Legalisation on the other hand involves the creation of special laws governing how sex workers can operate, and divides sex workers into groups of legal and illegal workers, with the majority (and typically the most marginalised) still criminalised. Criminalisation means sex workers are regulated by the police, can face stiff penalties, and are vulnerable to abuse and corruption. The Swedish Model, a legislative framework that translates into English as the Violence Against Women Act 1999, criminalises clients of sex workers rather than the workers themselves. Hailed as a victory by some feminists, Sweden’s sex work laws were legislated without consultation with Swedish sex workers (Grant 2014), and is a model that sex workers around the world unilaterally reject (Jeffreys 2011, Scarlet Alliance and Rose Alliance 2011, Brown 2014, Levy and Jakobsson 2014). Although this model only legally criminalises clients, it has distinct marginalising effects for sex workers. For example:

- Landlords can be charged with the anti-pimping laws if a sex worker works from home. As a result, there are numerous cases of landlords evicting sex workers upon discovering their tenant to be a sex worker.
- Sex workers, who do not fit the ‘victim’ model, have been denied health and social services, and can be vilified as unfit parents and lose custody of their children.
- Sex workers from non-western countries are disproportionately affected by the Swedish model, which often portrays all migrant sex workers as ‘trafficked victims’ (a
contentious issue that will be discussed in Chapter 4). This has made legitimate trafficking cases much harder to identify (Network of Sex Work Projects 2015).

In light of the marginalising effects of the legislation on sex workers, Donovan et al. (2012: 10) concluded that “even the claim of providing benefit for the women is arguable.” Opposed to the Swedish Model, decriminalisation is the only legal framework supported by the sex worker community. As a result, there is a strong emphasis placed on this model within this thesis where legal frameworks are discussed.

If this thesis was undertaken with the motivation for contributing to the end of sex work stigma and marginalisation, I can’t honestly say that I believe I have succeeded. I wanted something I could be proud to show my community, and to say that I made a difference. But I got instead a struggle, one that deeply tested my resolve, and I am proud of how I overcame the aforementioned challenges. I am immensely glad for the support of Scarlet Alliance and their contribution to the research and my life. The understanding I now have of the antecedents and ongoing mechanisms of marginalisation in Australian society, and the journey through all the literatures and research avenues I worked through have, I believe, made me a fundamentally more comprehending and more comprehensible human being. As is often the case (to use a tried and tested line from a famous song), rather than getting what I wanted, I got what I needed. For this I am thankful.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introducing the Research

Australia is an old place. Minerals dating back as far as 4.4 billion years, almost as old as the planet itself, have been found in hills 800km north of Perth (Oskin 2014). It is home to the oldest continuing culture on the planet (Stubbs 2016), with a connection to lands never ceded. Only a short time has passed since British invaders first arrived in 1788 to colonise the continent. The myths that speak to the nation’s founding, when the British Parliament legislated on the 1st January 1901 for the six independent colonies of Australia to govern themselves as a Commonwealth, are fresh. This has not diminished the power and significance of those myths to the society that has formed around them. Some stories have been lost to history, but the names, places, legends, beliefs, symbols, and stories that are cherished nationally have become iconographic, re-remembered over and over again. That iconography is the Australian national imaginary.

This is a thesis about the national imaginary, and the embodiment of privilege and marginalisation within. The dominant national imaginary cannot speak to all Australians, nor can it represent their multitudinous stories, beliefs and histories. Thus, there are many Australia, with many signifiers coinciding with the many identities contained within, and for whom the dominant narrative is insufficient, inappropriate or downright delinquent. This creates a “tension, between the ideological, legal notion of universal inclusion in citizenship and the fact that in real life, citizenship is based on power, which is exercised through the social, economic and political structures that perpetuate the exclusion of members of certain social groups” (Staeheli and Cope 1994: 444-445).
Specifically, this thesis investigates the privilege and marginalisation of economic forces in the Australian national imaginary, through iconic industries and labour. According to Norton (1888, in Markey 2001: 2), Australia was “a country the foundations and structures of whose constitutions were laid and built by labour, and it is the country where the whole fabric of society is being perfected by the same agency.” This is labour understood not as merely transactional, performed so that there is money available to put dinner on the table; it is labour as an identity practice that structures lives and social relationships (Strauss 2014). The visibility of certain labour identities is likely to affect how individuals perceive themselves, and engage in civic society, and will be shown to be a critical component of marginalisation (see Chapter 6). Privilege and marginalisation are explored through various technologies of governmentality and power – important mechanisms in the structuration of the national imaginary that position these iconic industries and labour practices. According to Dufty (2007: 28), technologies of governmentality are:

an assemblage of practical knowledges, ways of seeing, spatial organisations, calculations, rules, authoritative and managerial structures, machines, and signifiers that are linked together through the common objective of directing the actions of the governed in a particular way.

Technologies of governmentality are also technologies of power, where governmentality is an “ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power” (Foucault 1979: 20). Throughout the thesis that follows, technologies of governmentality and technologies of power are terms used interchangeably in this light.

The thesis follows the story of iconic labour, not in an embodied, ethnographic sense, spending time with these populations in the flesh (which, as stated in the Preface, was the
initial aim). Rather, it spends time with them in the civic imagination, following them through the various discourses that unfurl via technologies of power. These technologies are linked by their effects not only on the national imaginary, but also through their interrelations with moral attachments to gender, masculinity and femininity, and value attachments of these constructs to certain labour types. By charting these technologies and their linkages and trajectories, I seek to uncover hidden parts of the national imaginary – the anxieties, invisibilities and contradictions these iconic industries evoke as they intersect with politics and culture. You won’t see these parts commemorated during ‘Australia’ Day (also known as ‘Invasion’ or ‘Survival’ or ‘Sovereignty’ Day among Indigenous Australians), or ANZAC Day, or at the Broken Hill Line of the Lode memorial, or the Sport Australia Hall of Fame. But these hidden anxieties, invisibilities, and contradictions are equally important, because they speak to whom we are as a nation, and to struggles within for visibility, legibility, recognition and legitimation. These struggles are essentially about understanding ourselves and our identity within an increasingly globalised world.

Motivated by a desire to confront the causes of social marginalisation, this thesis challenges dominant assertions within the national imaginary. The national imaginary can be understood as the iconography of the nation (eds Reynolds and Hunter 2000). It is also a tool, wielded to manipulate the national civic body (Blackton 1961, Hubbard and Wilkinson 2015, Ritchie 2014). Influential on my thinking has been Foucauldian governmentality theory. This thesis investigates three key technologies of governmentality (Dean, 2006, Dean 2010, Rose et al. 2006, Legg 2005), with considerable power to influence the national imaginary in Australia. They express this power through:
a much wider range of things beyond the ‘ordinary’ meaning of ‘technology’. Technologies of government are the technical means (whatever they might be) by which a particular relationship of power is exercised … Through the invention and application of certain technologies of power, those who govern seek to encourage, direct or conduct people to act or conduct themselves in certain ways (Dufty 2007: 28-29).

The key technologies of interest for this thesis are the legal system, the news media, and the Census\(^2\); mechanisms for the exercise of various dimensions of political, social and cultural power. Legal power works through direct and punitive ways, establishing “new criminological discourses and forms of practical knowledge, and new techniques and apparatuses for implementation” (Scott 2011: 68). Media power works through more discursive means to enact effects in the public consciousness, mediating between the public and government through “symbolic construction[s] of place” (Parisi and Holcomb 1994: 377), and the “juxtaposition of stories … produc[ing] a notion of simultaneity … which encompasses the entire citizenship” (Sharp 1996: 98). Census power works by making populations ‘known’, and thence measuring them, using processes that “objectify that which is governed by structuring aspects of life and societies … into disciplines of knowledge” (Dufty 2007: 30) – structuring that often works to ensure submission to “certain ends or domination” (Foucault 1994: 225). I explore these three technologies in depth as the empirical core of the thesis, to reveal how they come to affect the iconic industries and labourers in the national imaginary\(^3\).

\(^2\) Where this word is uncapsitalised, it is referring to the census as a generic technology of power. Where capitalised, it is referring specifically to the Australian Census.

\(^3\) The three technologies of power chosen here are not necessarily all encompassing, but rather offer distinctive perspectives on how labour is categorised, counted, and stigmatised. Police records, for example, are another technology of disciplining populations, and have been previously consulted in analysis of the regulation of sex work (Crofts et al. 2013). The three technologies of power analysed here were selected because they cut across both mining and sex work.
Two iconic industries with vastly different experiences within the national imaginary are scrutinised in this thesis. One is mining, a masculinised labour that has captured and occupied national attention since the mid-nineteenth century, has come to occupy a rarefied position (though not without some anxieties, as we shall see in Chapter 3). The other is sex work, a feminised labour classically invoked to chasten women or inspire moral outrage, and is poorly, if at all, represented in the national imaginary. Mining and sex work were chosen because they form two halves of a whole, frequently co-located geographically, and cinched together throughout Australian history. Their disparate journeys along an axis of social marginalisation form the basis of this research. In drawing attention to the technologies that give rise to stable and enduring heteronormative and masculinist worker identities such as the miner, but also simultaneously exploring how feminised and problematised forms of work are marginalised, I argue for re-thinking national imaginaries as contested, diffuse, diverse, polyvocal, dynamic and evolving. In other words, it is not just that the national imaginary has been welded to a heteronormative masculinist form of work that is problematic, but also, that the persistence of stable or enduring national imaginaries precludes reimagining the nation in more plural ways.

However, throughout the thesis that follows, I also discuss instances where enduring axes of privilege and marginalisation regarding mining and sex work are challenged and unsettled (cf. Miller and Rose 1990). As Dufty (2007: 29) argues:

governmental rationalities and technologies are rarely implemented ‘unscathed’ and therefore seldom considered completely successful in the achievement of their objectives. Rather, government power is understood to be a ‘congenitally failing operation’. This aspect of government as a power relationship is both a strength (a key to the success of government and its capacity to constantly reform and remake itself) and a weakness (the failure of governmental rationalities and technologies is regularly due to the freedom of individuals to act in ways that are inconsistent with the objectives of those who seek to govern).
Examples of this include critical portrayals of FIFO miners in the rural and national print media (see Chapter 3), and sex worker lobbying and activism relating to criminal legal codes (Chapter 2).

Some prior research exists on the connection between mining and sex work. Laite (2009) and Aderinto (2006) provide historical perspectives on the pairing. There is also previous research on gender, sexuality and sex work in Australian mining towns (Davidson 1984, Pini and Mayes 2013, Pini et al. 2013, Mayes et al. 2015). However, for the most part, the connection between the two industries is overwhelmingly neglected. This thesis accordingly seeks to respond to this research gap, and to the social marginalisation the national imaginary reproduces via discourses of morality and labour. Morality in this thesis is understood as “acts and discourses, to understand what men and women do which they consider to be moral or good or right or generous” (Fassin 2012: 7). The novel contribution of this thesis then is to co-locate both mining and sex work as moral forms of labour within the national imaginary, and to contrast discursive effects experienced by workers in these industries through technologies of governmentality: legislation, the news media and the national Census.

This thesis is not intended to be a complete chronicle of the architecture of the national imaginary, but a rich contextual account of two particular forms of iconic labour, created by the interplay of governmental technologies and public moral judgements. Through this account, a better understanding of what fits into Australia’s understanding of itself is developed, and why. The two primary questions I ask are: How are the iconic industries of mining and sex work positioned in the national imaginary? And, how are these positionings refined through technologies of power in ways that amplify or unsettle social privilege and marginalisation? The remainder of this chapter introduces the important
actors within this thesis – cognate researchers, the national imaginary and the iconic labourers – and explains its structure.

1.2 Conceptual Inventory

Informing this thesis are diverse, sometimes overlapping theoretical influences, from which stem an array of conceptual tools. In the broadest sense, my reading has been influenced by and grounded in queer theory as a response to concepts of intimacy, home, desire, love and sexuality. These concepts were central to my original research agenda (see Appendix B). My experience with this literature has had a transformative effect on my life. It has given me the tools and desire to better articulate how my own sexuality fits (or sometimes doesn’t) within the world, and ignited a hunger within me to learn and experience all I can about the agency of human love and sexuality. In this I support the statement by Oswin (2008: 96) that:

The task of queer theorists … is to embrace the critique of identity to its fullest extent by abandoning the search for an inherently radical queer subject and turning attention to the advancement of a critical approach to the workings of sexual normativities and non-normativities.

Although a major focus on queer theory has been left behind in this final iteration of the thesis, I have maintained an openness to the idea that ‘queering things’ can be done by “applying such nonnormative logics from a place of disorientation and nonnormativity” in order to celebrate all things non-heteronormative (Wight 2014: 129). As Peake (2013: 92) succinctly articulates:

Queer geographers recognise … that heterosexuality is a code … the way everyday life is lived out identifies the socio-spatial order as a heteronormative one in which both public and private spaces are inscribed with disciplinary discourses that
normalise and fix heterosexual gendered and sexual behaviours and practices while rendering invisible non-heteronormative bodies.

This will have particular resonance in the discussion of sex work. So, although queer theory does not appear in obvious ways through this thesis, its influence can be found in the very idea of where this research has sprung from, how it has been approached, and infused in my sense of self and subjectivity.

The themes that eventually emerged from within the substantive components of this thesis have been reconciled with this queer disposition. Two other major bodies of thought – intersectional feminism, and poststructuralism – were central. Intersectionality was developed to explore:

> the mutually constrictive nature of social divisions and the ways these are experienced, reproduced, and resisted in everyday life. A successful intersectional practice thus explores relational and reinforcing exclusions and inclusions, the first steps of which are to identify and name these (Taylor 2009: 190).

Poststructuralism on the other hand has sought to rethink:

> concepts of what power consists of, where it is ‘located’ and how it operates ... [and] the relationships between the production of space and its representation, especially through reconfigured concepts of cultural landscape and landscape, but also in other sites of text and textuality, such as literature, film, the media, music and so on (eds Gregory et al. 2009: 572).

Informed by these bodies of thought, this thesis sits at the intersection of more specific critical social sciences literatures to which geographers have frequently drawn and contributed. These are literatures on nationalism and national identity, and feminist and poststructuralist labour geographies.

Nationalism and national identity literatures do not take for granted the ‘nation’ or ‘nation-state’ as a pre-ordained geographic or political unit, but rather seek to understand

The second body of work with which this thesis intersects is the field of labour geographies. Labour geographies emerged from the radical tradition in Marxian economic geography of the 1970s and 1980s to explore such themes as the spatial divisions of labour (Massey 1984), and questions of scale and power in the organisation of collective labour movements (Herod 2002, Castree et al. 2004). Subsequent work in labour geographies has drawn on feminist and poststructuralist influences, including the broader fields of feminist labour studies (Gibson 1992, Gibson-Graham 2006, McDowell 2011, Warren 2016) and governmentality theory (Rose et al. 2006, Rose-Redwood 2006, Prince and Dufty 2009), to explore how labouring bodies are constituted, perceived, and marked by signs of gender as well as class and ethnicity, age and ability (McDowell 2015, Reimer 2015). This thesis aligns most strongly with these latter feminist and poststructuralist influences within labour geographies.

In the chapters that follow, for example, I explore how two iconic forms of labour in the Australian national imaginary are gendered as masculine and feminine, with accompanying moral positionings and enduring legacies (Chapters 2-4). Analysis of the Census in Chapters 5 and 6 draws on governmentality theory to critique the manner in
which particular forms of work are privileged, marginalised, or indeed rendered invisible.

Because this thesis interrogates two forms of iconic labour in the Australian national imaginary, my analysis of each requires requisite, but differing supporting literatures. Influential for the analysis here of the miner, as a form of iconic labour, has been a thread of research spanning feminist rural studies, sociology, and cultural geography on hegemonic masculinities in predominantly rural and agricultural industries: farmers, pastoralists, agricultural managers, fisherman, ranchers, lumberjacks, cowboys, and shearer (Bell 2000, Garceau 2001, Hicks 2002, Pini 2004, Pini 2008, Gibson 2013b). Informing the analysis here of sex workers as a marginalised form of labour, has been another thread of research spanning gender and sexuality studies, criminology, rights to the city, and urban planning (Davidson 1995b, Hubbard 2004, Prior 2008, Hubbard 2009, Crofts et al. 2013, eds Minichiello and Scott 2014, Stardust 2014, Sanders-McDonagh 2015, Maginn and Steinmetz 2015). Themes that specifically relate to iconic labour in the national imaginary are explored in more detail in Section 1.4 below.

1.3 The ‘Nation’

Nationhood is imagined through a social life that incorporates elements of physicality, legality, and emotional commitments (Billig 1995). Smith (1991: 14) conceptualises the nation as “as a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.” These aspects connect in various ways, giving rise to “judgements, shared beliefs, or representations, about nationhood, [and] about ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Billig 1995: 18). The geopolitics of nation-states is founded on the moral order of its citizens (Peake 2013). The themes of “‘us’, ‘our homeland’, ‘nations’ (‘ours’ and
‘theirs’), the ‘world’” all impart certain conscious and unconscious effects on one’s internal sense of what it means to be a citizen of a nation (Billig 1995: 4). To claim and identify with a nation:

not only do members have to imagine themselves as nationals; not only do they have to imagine their nation as a community; but they must also imagine that they know what a nation is; and they have to identify the identity of their own nation (Billig 1995: 68).

Taking this idea of identification further, Cloke and Johnston (2005: 3) argue that:

part of the operation of the state apparatus involves encouraging people to identify positively with their state – to feel part of it, to participate in its activities and to give it a central place in their processes of self-definition … By identifying with ‘our’ state, we are not only accepting the power of its state apparatus over our lives but also accepting … that we do not identify with any other state.

Nations are thus produced for and by both the state and its citizens in a complex relationship of imagination, identification, and iteration. The iterative aspect is what Billig (1995) has called ‘banal nationalism’ – the endemic condition whereby Western nations must daily advertise or ‘flag’ the nation. Flagging is both symbolic – marking the nation through, for example, streets named after famous national figures – and literal, when the national flag routinely flies over state buildings (Gorman-Murray et al. 2008). Such symbols allow citizens to recognise themselves as belonging to a particular nation, and are a “pre-requisite for the formation of the inside/outside, self/other, us/them boundaries that define the topography of nationalist sentiment and rhetoric” (Bell 2003: 64).

Bell (2003: 64), however, argues that theorists of nationalism often fail to address processes of identity construction “across time and space.” This thesis engages with that critique, and utilises national myth-production as a means of interrogating processes of
iconic labour identity construction across multiple time scales. According to Bell (2003: 75), a nationalist myth is:

a story that simplifies, dramatises and selectively narrates the story of a nation's past and its place in the world, its historical eschatology: a story that elucidates its contemporary meaning through (re)constructing its past.

The national imaginary, as understood in this thesis, is complementary to both this assessment from Bell (2003), and Benedict Anderson’s (1991) ‘imagined communities’. Such communities are ‘imagined’ “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members” (Anderson 1991: 6). Therefore, the collective identity of the community is “dependent upon the discourses that form individuals into the seam of a collective narrative” (Popkewitz 2001: 184). Indeed, it may be true that for the production of the national imaginary, the increasingly diverse and/or fractious identities within the nation are taking on a more significant role of organising cultural identities (Mayes 2003). As Hall (1996: 617) explains:

Instead of thinking of national cultures as unified, we should think of them as a discursive device which represents difference as unity of identity. They are cross-cut by deep internal divisions and differences, and ‘unified’ only through the exercise of different forms of cultural power.

But even as the nation moves towards multiculturalism, there is a defiant backlash toward hyper-homogenous nationalities, seen for example most recently in the United Kingdom’s referendum to leave the European Union, and the rise of anti-immigration politics in Europe, Australia and Trump-era United States.

Notwithstanding post-war immigration and official multicultural policies, the Australian nation has significant and durable forces that have asserted dominant myths about the national character and its internal characterisations, and spun particular narratives that
have become part of an enduring national imaginary. Some examples of that power are the legal systems, news media and the Census – all technologies of power scrutinised in this thesis. Grimshaw et al. (1994: 2) suggest that creating a nation “always involves conflict in the encounter between diversity and the incitement to national uniformity.” The identity politics of the nation are of critical importance in the creation of that nation, and determines who is ultimately included and excluded from political representation. Australia was founded on the 1st January 1901, not with a revolution like many nations, but with an act of parliament that peacefully Federated the existing colonies under the Commonwealth. That is not to say there was no conflict involved; rather it took place at earlier times. The dominant national identity that emerged from this conflict is said to be rooted in “equality, ‘mateship’ and practical, improvising skills and on local, as opposed to British imperial, patriotism … contempt for intellectual and spiritual pursuits and a virulent racism” (Ward 1966, in Lawson 1980: 577).

Despite the attempt by the progenitors of Federation to manufacture a unified national character, disunity arose along the lines of race, class and gender (Grimshaw 2002). Grimshaw et al. (1994: 2) argue that “Nationalist mythologies have always been gendered.” Therefore, considering the dominant gender at Federation when many of the myths about Australian identity were emerging, we should not be surprised that that the eventual essential Australian character was overwhelmingly masculine. Some of the dominant manifestations of this masculine identity are the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) soldier; the Man from Snowy River, a protagonist of the 1890 bush poem of the same name; fictitious Australian cinematic icon Crocodile Dundee; bushrangers (embodied by Ned Kelly); (male) transported convicts; (male) sporting heroes; larrikins and gold rush miners (Grimshaw et al. 1994, Tranter and Donoghue 2007, Mayes 2009, Bellanta 2012). The record crowds that turn up to ANZAC Day Dawn
Services (Reinfrank and Thorpe 2015), and the ongoing devaluation of women and sexual diversity in Australian sport (Symons et al. 2010, Dingle 2015), are examples of how the national imaginary influences contemporary civic society, and demonstrate the power of the national imaginary in shaping how the Australian population understands itself (Donoghue and Tranter 2014, Tranter and Donoghue 2015, Drozdzewski 2016).

Australian national identity is not only overwhelmingly masculine, but also heteronormative. Heteronormativity is defined as “the imposition of certain beliefs about sexuality through social institutions and social policies” (Hubbard 2008: 643). Although contemporary Australia is secular, its political landscape reverberates with norms of sexuality and morality inherited from earlier eras when religion and politics was more directly aligned (Bean 1999). Governmental rationalities in Australia are therefore shaped not just by economic ideologies (e.g. neoliberalism), but also by moral ideologies of family, community, ‘respectable’ work, and sexuality (Warhurst 2007). The Australian national imaginary, with its institutionalised, masculine, larrikin character, is set against the reality of diverse and fluid sexualities that do not fit this moral ideology, and yet this masculine character is also unerringly heteronormative. Peake (2013: 99) argues that “the nation is deeply implicated in regulatory regimes that define the contours of heteronormativity.” Heteronormativity therefore feeds into ideas of nationhood, just as the nation feeds back into the heteronormative matrix through forms of state support and regulation (Jones 2004).\(^4\) Difference is excluded from the national imaginary because inclusion of difference would threaten to destabilise the (mythical) unity of moral codes within the community. Those that embody difference to moral norms must necessarily be

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\(^4\) A classic example is the Australian Baby Bonus initiated in 2004. The bonus was a $3000 one-off payment for the birth of every child. At the time, then Federal Treasurer Peter Costello was famously quoted in the media saying “You should have, if you can … one for your husband, one for your wife, and one for the country” (Jones 2004).
erased (Mackey 2002). According to Billig (1995: 28), “The triumph of a particular nationalism is seldom achieved without the defeat of alternative nationalisms and other ways of imagining peoplehood.” Referencing heteronormativity is necessary when considering that one of the iconic industries appearing in this thesis experiences hostility because it exists in defiance of heteronormative ideas about where, when and with whom sex should take place. This will prove to be a critical mediating factor in Chapter 4, where anxieties about sex work unfold in the media.

1.4  Iconic Labour in the National Imaginary

If morality and identity intertwine in the production of a dominant national imaginary, as the previous section established, then they do so frequently via discourses and institutions of ‘economy’ – industries, markets, and forms of labour (Pini and Mayes 2013, Ince et al. 2015). As Gibson (2012: 287) argues, researchers:

would do well to explore ‘economy’ not as an objective entity to be modelled by expert economists, but as an ethnographic interrogation of how humans access, use, and value financial and material resources as moral and social beings.

Foundational to the discussion below are distinctions between mining and sex work as industries, and miner and sex worker labouring identities. At times in the thesis, I discuss both industries and occupations, where the discussion at hand applies to both. For instance, in Chapter 2 when discussing colonial anxieties around sex work, both the emergent industry (sex work), and the occupational identity (sex worker), were subject to moral panics. In other parts of the thesis, the distinction between an industry and an occupational identity becomes a point of cleavage and tension. For example, in Chapter 3 when discussing contemporary anxieties around Fly-in Fly-out (FIFO) mining, the
iconic status of the mining industry within the national imaginary will be revealed to remain secure because of its centrality to the narrative of a prosperous “mining boom”, even while it was increasingly viewed as problematically damaging rural communities, and disrupting relationships and family life for the labouring identity (miners). Throughout the thesis, I therefore use the terms industry (mining, sex work) and labourer (miner, sex worker) in combination, or separately, with specific purpose.

Researchers are increasingly acknowledging the prominence of forms of labour in constructions of the Australian national imaginary (Hearn and Knowles 2006, Haggis and Schech 2009, Gibson 2013a). Building workers in the two biggest colonies of the 1850s, New South Wales and Victoria, were the first in the world to achieve the 8-hour working day (Markey 2004). The Australian Labor Party meanwhile, in 1904, was the world's first organised labour political party to govern at a national level. Labour and infrastructure projects are held aloft as symbolic of nation-building, such as the Australian Snowy Mountains Scheme, understood as a “defining point in Australia's history, and an important symbol of Australia's identity as an independent, multicultural and resourceful country” (Australian Government 2008, Haggis and Schech 2009). A more recent articulation of the importance of labour is former Prime Minister John Howard’s ‘Aussie Battler’, invoked as a “signifier of white male loss of privilege … newly marginalised by the ascendant voices of the liberal-cosmopolitan inner city … and economically drained by the welfare recipient” (Haggis and Schech 2009: 62). Class thus plays a crucial role in our embodied economic identities, particularly in the ways the economy is built into the political notion of “common ‘national’ interests” (Gibson-Graham 2006: 109).

Labour’s importance to the nation is also embodied in conceptions of labour as mobility. The missive that workers must move or prepare to be hyper-mobile in their pursuit of
paid employment is explicit in neoliberal governmentalities aimed at increasing labour mobility (Dufty-Jones 2012, Productivity Commission 2014). Mining in Australia is now synonymous with hyper-mobile FIFO work, and part of the diverse industries that participate in distance labour (Skilton 2015). The airport is a significant feature of the new FIFO mythology, connecting them to “the foundational narratives of modernity … constructed around the brute fact of moving” (Cresswell 2010: 21). These narratives are, as Cresswell (2010: 21) sees them, “Mobility as liberty, mobility as progress”. Implicit in this reading is that immobility is dependence, immobility is stagnation. “Liberty” and “progress” are words often invoked in the rhetoric of ‘banal nationalism’ (Billig 1995), thus supporting the connection between FIFO mining and the national imaginary (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Billboard for MMG, a mining company, at Perth Airport, 2013. Central is the heroic masculine figure of the miner, clad in fluoro ‘high-vis’ workwear. (See Chapter 3). (Photo: Chris Gibson).

Narratives of equality, at least white, middle-class equality, in the birth of Australia at Federation, often fail to recognise that equality for women in the province of labour was
circumscribed by “differential wages and unequal access to employment … [that] enshrined existing inequalities … [and] women’s life chances” (Grimshaw 2002: 33).

Even now, the Australian labourer “is constantly centred and re-centred on the white male against his others” (Haggis and Schech 2009: 60). This is clear in even the most cursory glance at articulations of gender and sexuality within the national imaginary. Mining and sex work are thus on opposite ends of a visibility spectrum within the national imaginary, largely because one embodies the dominant masculine and heteronormative cultural power, and the other embodies femininity, and alternative moral ideologies. At the vanguard of the labour movement, and firmly entrenched as a signifier of the ‘working man’s paradise’, the miner is elevated to a heroic place within the national imaginary (Jensen 2014). The ‘morally deviant’ and ‘sexually fluid’ sex worker, without legitimate protection of the trade union movement, is positioned as a mere adjunct to mining: marginalised or simply rendered invisible. Although they have dramatically different experiences within the national imaginary, it is revealing to investigate miners and sex workers together since they have traditionally occupied, and continue to occupy, Australian rural spaces where the majority of mining occurs. The following two sections introduce and further flesh out these labour practices in the Australian national imaginary.

1.4.1 Defining Iconic ‘Mining’

In Australia, one of the key historical influences on the national imaginary has been, since European colonization, extractive mining activity (Pearse 2009, Dirty Business: How mining made Australia 2013, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia 2013, Knox 2013, Jensen 2014). Australia’s national ‘quarry vision’ explains the circumstances whereby “From every direction, Australians are told that their current
and future prosperity depends on what we dig, drill and smelt for the world” (Pearse 2009: 1). In addition to the legacy of Broken Hill’s silver, lead and zinc mine that gave birth to the now world’s biggest mining company, BHP Billiton, mining is interwoven in the fabric of Australia’s colonial development (Pearse 2009, Blainey 1993, Knox 2013). This is particularly obvious in the built heritage of early mining towns such as Broken Hill, Ballarat, Bathurst, and Bendigo, but also the grand Victorian edifices of Melbourne and Sydney, built with in-flowing goldrush capital. According to Blainey (1993: 2), “All Australia’s large inland cities of the nineteenth century were mining cities, and gold made Melbourne for half a century the largest coastal city in the land.” For Knox (2013: 87), “Even as the first mining boom was fading … an almost evangelical attitude to developing the continent, grew out of the eastern mining rushes, where towns were built to last.”

Often-narrated moments in the ‘official’ history of colonial Australia pivot on mining industry activities, discoveries and disputes. The Battle of the Eureka Stockade (herein Eureka), seen in Figure 1.2, was a rebellion of gold miners against a colonial mining tax. In many respects Eureka was the Australian equivalent of that formative event in United States history, the Boston Tea Party, and is viewed by many as the genesis of the Australian democratic labour movement. The flag of the Eureka Rebellion, visible in Figure 1.2, has become a popular and prominent icon of working-class unionism, but is also connected to the less savoury Australian far-right nationalist movements. Eureka was viscerally rendered (see Box 1.1) in the poems of Henry Lawson, one of the key literary figures of an era in which Australia was rapidly urbanising and seen to be eschewing its rural heartland. A powerful voice in the national imaginary, Lawson here imbued Eureka with national significance, writing for the conservative Bulletin magazine to a new and largely middle-class urban audience. Lawson was also writing just as the cowboy emerged as a mythic figure in the United States in the 1880s, when American masculine
identities were also becoming more urban (Garceau 2001). Hence, there is a degree of fabrication in the national imaginary, and of selective memory re-writing of history in light of key rural figures and industries.

Figure 1.2: An iconic image of the Eureka Rebellion (Smith 2012): ‘Swearing Allegiance to the Southern Cross’ (1854) by Charles Doudiet.
Alongside other mining riots, such as the Lambing Flat race-riot in 1861 on the goldfields in New South Wales, directed against Chinese miners, Eureka helped catalyse the infamous and explicitly racist ‘White Australia’ immigration policy⁵ that lasted until the 1970s (Pearse 2009). Some other powerful narratives and myths of mining in the national imaginary include: the legend of Australian eccentric Harold Bell Lasseter’s discovery of a reef of gold in central Australia in the early 20th century, a famous ‘El Dorado’ legend in Australian folklore (McGowan 2006); and the 1980s and 1990s conflict between the

Box 1.1: Excerpt from Eureka by Henry Lawson (1889).

About the streets of Melbourne town the sound of bells is borne
That call the citizens to prayer that fateful Sabbath morn;

But there upon Eureka's hill, a hundred miles away,
The diggers' forms lie white and still above the blood-stained clay.
The bells that toll the diggers’ death might also ring a knell
For those few gallant soldiers, dead, who did their duty well.

The sight of murdered heroes is to hero-hearts a goad,
A thousand men are up in arms upon the Creswick road,
And wildest rumours in the air are flying up and down,
'Tis said the men of Ballarat will march on Melbourne town.

But not in vain those diggers died. Their comrades may rejoice,
For o'er the voice of tyranny is heard the people's voice;
It says: "Reform your rotten law, the diggers' wrongs make right,
Or else with them, our brothers now, we'll gather to the fight."

'Twas of such stuff the men were made who saw our nation born,
And such as Lalor were the men who led the vanguard on;
And like such men may we be found, with leaders such as they,
In the roll-up of Australians on our darkest, grandest day!

⁵ The Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (Cwlth) stated that immigration into the Commonwealth was prohibited when "Any person who when asked to do so by an officer fails to write out at dictation and sign in the presence of the officer a passage of fifty words in length in an European language directed by the officer." Notable for this thesis, this Act also prohibited "any prostitute or person living on the prostitution of others” from entering Australia.
Federal Government, and a coalition of environmentalists and Aboriginal land rights activists over the Jabiluka uranium mine in World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park (Banerjee 2000). Both Lasseter’s reef and Jabiluka reinforce and reify mining as a key signifier of the Australian condition. More recently, the association between mining and the national imaginary has been buttressed by media and policy obsession with the nationwide ‘resources boom’ – a shorthand phrase for a contemporary era of relative economic prosperity said to have stemmed from extractive activities – occurring from roughly 2003 to 2012 (Lawrie et al. 2011, Denham 2012, McIntosh 2012, Measham et al. 2013, Argent 2015). Colin Barnett, The Premier of Australia’s largest resource state, Western Australia, has publicly called miners in the media “modern day heroes” on “parallel with the migrant workers on the [aforementioned nation-building] Snowy Mountain scheme” (AAP 2013). Mining also generates discourses establishing Australia as a nation rich in resources (Figure 1.3). Australia has seen powerful mining interests fund public relations and advertising campaigns promoting “the contributions of mining to the national interest” (a current example can be seen in Figure 1.4), managing to successfully thwart the then Federal Labor Government attempts to introduce mining and carbon taxes (Gibson 2012: 287).
Increasingly, many of the key resources being mined are found in remote inland areas of the continent, where new ways of connecting labour and worksites are required (Sheppard 2013). The now almost ubiquitous public example of Australian mining practice – FIFO – has expanded since the 1980s after the demise of the traditional mining company town (Storey 2001, Hoath and McKenzie 2013). It differs markedly from the historic and familiar impression of the miner covered in coal dust leaving for work at sunup and returning home at sunset. It is characterised by on-off work ‘swings’, the name given to
a typical roster rotation with a certain number of days on-site, followed by a period of time off (2 weeks on, 1 week off is a fairly typical example). The FIFO workforce encompasses blue and white-collar workers, and a small number of women. It includes workers employed directly in mining (through mining companies and subcontractors), but also those in peripheral ‘support’ industries, such as hospitality and sanitisation. Thus, the ‘heroic miner’ excludes many workers contributing to the mining industry, and representations of the FIFO worker reinforce the connections to normative, white and blue-collar masculinity. While the extent and effect of this work practice is contentious, and debate ongoing, FIFO mining remains a key driver of the national imaginary through its discursive and optical visibility for “the public, media, politicians, and academics alike” (Argent 2015: 361).

The mining industry itself has a solid foundation in the national imaginary\(^6\), but as Chapter 3 will show, the position of actual mining labourers is unsettled as they encounter a contestation of values in rural communities. Nevertheless, diverse narratives of mining in the national imaginary must be contextualised by what Bell (2003: 73) argues are “relations of power and logics of dominance.” The uneven position of other labourers compared to miners in the national imaginary is evidence of this dominance at work. Thus there are hidden sides to this national quarry vision: these include the experience of sex work (Chapters 4 and 6), and of non-mining distance labourers (Chapter 5).

\(^6\) Although increasingly visible protests against the damaging environmental effects of coal seam gas mining have the potential to destabilise this foundation (Mercer et al. 2014, Sherval and Hardiman 2014).
1.4.2 Defining Iconic ‘Sex Work’

Sex work is iconic for reasons very different to mining, stemming from its public perception as ‘the oldest profession’. Sex work is the labour of selling sex or sexuality (Prestage and Perkins 1994). Sex work has been the source of numerous panics over the years. One such moral panic resulted in the Contagious Diseases Acts of the late nineteenth century (Smith 1971, Walkowitz and Walkowitz 1973). Another occurred more recently in New South Wales, when the “visibility given to sex workers after 1995 made prostitution an object of ‘moral panic’ in a number of rural and regional communities” (Scott et al. 2006: 157). It is important to recognise that there is a long history of sex work in colonial Australia (Daniels 1984, Frances 1994, Frances 1999, Frances 2004). Sex work now occurs in a variety of shapes and guises, from full service sexual intercourse, to BDSM (Bondage & Discipline / Dominance & Submission / Sadomasochism) work, stripping, erotic massage, escorting for sex and/or companionship, and pornographic work, with others such as (both amateur and professional) burlesque performers and ‘sugaring’7 skirting the periphery. Whatever the circumstances though, “female sex workers in the urban West are a highly stigmatized population” (Hubbard 1999: 230)8. Sex work has not always been ‘sex work’, and has in the past been variously described as prostitution or ‘the social evil’, and sex workers described as whores, harlots, ‘fallen’ women and “women of the streets” (Walkowitz 1980, Skeggs 1997: 47), though often these terms were easily conferred upon any woman who failed to meet standards of respectability (Agustín 2007). This has changed over

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7 Where for a fee (usually monthly), men and women engage with someone (usually younger) that will “dote on them with affection” in a relationship that may, or may not, include sex (Pardiwalla 2016: 1).

8 As is the rest of the diverse sex worker community, incorporating male, trans and gender-diverse sex workers, who are not often portrayed in the media but still suffer stigmatisation.
recent years, with sex workers seeking to have their work acknowledged as ‘work’ (Figure 1.5). Grant (2014: 13-14) describes the changing signification of sex work:

Commercial sex – as a practice and an industry – as well as the class of people within it are continuously being reinvented … since the middle of the seventies, ‘prostitution’ has slowly begun to give way to ‘sex work.’ It’s this transition from a state of being to a form of labour that must be understood if we’re to understand demands that sex work is work … The most important difference is that the designation of sex work is the invention of the people that perform it.

In describing the transition to an emergent sex worker identity, Grant (2014) argues that it must be purposefully examined, and that the boundaries of the identity should be dictated by sex workers themselves. For this reason, this thesis has been written with sex worker guidance and oversight as recommended by sex worker authored research literature (Jeffreys 2009b). Using the term ‘sex work’ has the consequence of emphasising the labour aspect of the work, and avoiding the stigmatising history of the term ‘prostitution’ (Prestage and Perkins 1994).

Figure 1.5: A sex worker rights rally on Sydney Harbour, arguing that ‘sex work is work’ (Clement-Couzner 2012).
This changing terminology has coincided in Australia with various legislative reforms that have sought to eliminate the worst instances of injustice against sex workers. Sex work in Australia operates under multiple legislative frameworks, state by state, and these multiple legislative frameworks also provide an argument for its status as an iconic industry (Neave 1994). Differences in legislative frameworks are an outcome of complex social, institutional and discursive processes. Different types of sex work, such as street-based work, are often more harshly legislated compared to private escorting work. Decriminalisation is often held up by sex workers as the gold-standard framework for working conditions (Donovan et al. 2012, English Collective of Prostitutes 2015, Scarlet Alliance 2016). It is the legal circumstance whereby sex work would be governed by existing industrial relations laws and planning regulations, rather than special laws that split the industry into legal and illegal categories with the most marginalised sex working populations still typically criminalised. Under decriminalisation:

- Sex workers are more empowered to negotiate with clients.
- Sex workers can attend health and other services and expect a non-discriminatory service.
- Other legislation covers a broad range of issues including sexual and labour exploitation, in both commercial & private contexts.
- Industrial legislation has zoning laws for business that can be applied to sex businesses.
- Sex workers can report violence without fear of arrest & expect a rightful prosecution.
- Corruption decrease [sic] as authorities have less power to demand bribes from sex workers, and sex workers can report corruption.
- Existing Occupational Health & Safety legislation can help sex workers to secure better worker places (Scarlet Alliance n.d.).

Where sex work is not decriminalised, sex workers are still subject to victimisation by the State and health services. The State, and specifically the criminal justice system, is known for imprisoning sex workers in jurisdictions where it is criminalised, and
subjecting them to violence and extortion from police (Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service 1995, Koken 2012). Additionally, sex workers are often blamed for sexual assaults against their own persons, and perpetrators are not prosecuted. Sex workers in jurisdictions where sex work is decriminalised, such as New Zealand and New South Wales, are somewhat less stigmatised as a result (at least in the eyes of the law). Sex workers in these jurisdictions are free to prosecute cases of harassment and assault with some chance of success, such as the New Zealand worker who successfully won damages in a harassment case against her former employer at the brothel where she worked (ABC News 2014c). No other industry in Australia has the same level of legislative review every couple of years to determine its ongoing legality or illegality.9

While legislative frameworks can significantly affect a sex worker’s ability to earn, the ever-present social stigma attached to sex work is an especially powerful force in the lives of sex workers (Cunningham 2016). Stigmas are social labels applied to certain persons or groups that do not fit the conditions society deem favourable (Hallgrímsdóttir et al. 2008). Thus stigmas are context specific and may vary between environments. Victims of stigma are typically those that hold less power in society, and the ability to combat stigma is highly dependent on “class … ethnicity, and gender” (Hallgrímsdóttir et al. 2008: 120). Furthermore, “Stigmas have totalizing properties, so that any sign of a stigmatized attribute or behaviour renders a person wholly damaged” (Hallgrímsdóttir et al. 2008: 120). The most succinct definition of stigma comes from Goffman (1963: 3), who claimed that it is “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” such that it reduces the carrier “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one.” Building on this

9 See Prostitution Bill 2011 (WA), Statutes Amendment (Decriminalisation of Sex Work) Bill 2015 (SA), Wightman MP 2012, and Select Committee on the Regulation of Brothels 2015 for recent examples of review.
definition, Falk (2001: 13) claims “All societies will always stigmatize some conditions and some behaviors because doing so provides group solidarity by delineating ‘outsiders’ from ‘insiders’”. Benoit et al. (2015) documented how stigma affects those in low-skilled service industries, such as hospitality and hairdressing, who are discriminated against by those they service. According to Grant (2014: 75), “It was whores who first theorised that all women live under the conditions of what they named ‘whore stigma’”. Anyone who breaks the dominant conventions of virtue, Grant says, can be exposed to whore stigma, and challenging whore stigma for the benefit of all women has been a central contribution of sex worker feminists to feminist discourse.

A review of the literature suggests that stigma has a dehumanising effect on their personal lives. The media analysis in Chapter 4 of this thesis, supported by media analysis conducted by Hallgrímsdóttir et al. (2006), categorises some of the stigmas faced by sex workers. As ‘disease vectors’, as agents of ‘immorality’, and as ‘victims of trafficking’, the widespread representations of sex work are overwhelmingly negative. Because of these stigmas, sex workers can then be subject to a range of consequences such as “shunning and avoidance to restraint and physical abuse and assault” (Hallgrímsdóttir et al. 2008: 120). Sex workers often employ techniques to distance themselves from their work as a form of “stigma coping”, such as creating a sex worker persona that they can leave at the door when they return home, thus distancing their work from their “authentic (presumably non-sex worker) self” (Koken 2012: 211). Managing their sex work identity and to whom they disclose as a stigma-reduction strategy can therefore be a profound challenge for sex workers. Cunningham (2016: 57, with quotes from Bruckert 2012) argues that:

unlike other ‘tainted’ jobs, [sex work] becomes a ‘personal attribute … beyond the sphere of work’ so that it ‘is constructed as a master status that has permanence across
social space . . . [and] time’. The whore stigma then eclipses everything else about the sex worker ‘so that what the individual does is read as who she is’.

Not living authentically among family and friends has the potential to have a detectable impact on mental health (Benoit et al. 2015). Within their intimate relationships, workers can experience shaming from their partners, which can translate into internalised guilt about their profession with further damaging mental health consequences (Murphy et al. 2015). Instead of sex work being the cause or effect of poor mental health as some anti-sex work campaigners claim, the root of the problem is largely attributable to the application of stigma on sex workers, and the internalisation of that stigma (Benoit et al. 2015). Fear of accessing health services due to stigmatisation can also lead to poor physical health outcomes (Begum et al. 2013).

Stigma may damage the possibility of leaving the sex industry and gaining other employment, due to the effects of status loss from making their work public knowledge (Begum et al. 2013, Benoit et al. 2015). It will become apparent, in Chapter 6, that stigma affects even large scale governmental projects with safeguards protecting privacy, such as the Census. In turn, this affects sex workers’ ability to be visible and legitimated by the state and in the national imaginary. Additionally, much of the focus of sex work discourse is on women who sell sex. Others on the gender spectrum are often ignored or are doubly invisible within the discourse, and may explain why men experience different stigmas around the sale of sex, which may have less to do with amorality of selling sex itself and more to do with engaging in homosexual sex (eds Minichiello and Scott 2014).

Morality is an ever-present facet in the censuring of sex work, because “sex must involve a meaningful material and emotional exchange based on procreative sexual intercourse, branding those who indulge in different forms of heterosex as immoral and deviant”
This conceptualisation of sex can be traced to the legacy of Victorian-era morality that exists in many Western societies. Hubbard (2000: 197) argues:

the imagining of certain acts as morally acceptable or unacceptable is crucial in defining heteronormality … In situating particular acts (and thus individuals) as immoral, and thus on the ‘margins’ of acceptability, the ‘centre’ is defined, usually around ideals of family life, the assumption of heterosexual orientation and a related gender identity (i.e., mother and father).

Despite all we know about sexuality and the boundlessness of sexual practice, the fictitious assumption of heteronormality infuses the Australian national imaginary. This leaves little room for a range of practices such as kink, BDSM, and polyamory (Hubbard 2000, Weiss 2006, Klesse 2014), relationships at-a-distance (Holmes 2006), same-sex couples (Bell and Valentine 1995, Waitt 2015) or other types of relationships and families (of which there are many) that fall outside heteronormative understandings (Gorman-Murray 2007, Waitt 2015). Including sex work, such practices and practitioners are positioned by the State as “sexual dissidents”, since they fall outside the heteronormative majority and fail to conform to the model of reproductive heterosex (Hubbard 2001: 53, Browne 2006). Overt displays of sexuality by women are frowned upon, but “women who exchange sex for money are viewed by most as having violated one of the most powerful taboos in western culture” (Koken 2012: 210). Women who were forced into sex work may therefore be deserving of help, but those who chose to engage in sex work may be “held responsible for electing deviancy” (Koken 2012: 211). Heteronormativity provides cover for what Cowen and Story (2013: 350) see as an extraordinary “invisibility of … intimacy, gender and sexuality in the critical geopolitics literature”, and is partially attributable to the taken-for-granted masculinist underpinning of the national imaginary.
Sex workers are not, however, silent regarding their treatment, invested in promoting their own visibility and contradicting discriminatory narratives through art and protest (Jeffreys 2006) (see Figure 1.6). Scarlet Alliance, on behalf of sex workers in Australia, represents its rights agenda in the news media, and works tirelessly on submissions to government inquiries into the sex industry (see Chapter 4). Sex workers also create their own media representations, through avenues such as blogs (titsandsass.com), podcasts (Christian 2014), and social media (#facesofprostitution). Together with their allies, sex workers promote the simple but fundamental assertion that ‘sex worker rights are human rights’ (Fawkes 2014). But sex worker rights are also labour rights (van der Meulen 2012). Miners and other labourers are not forced to constantly assert their right to work. Different standards applied to sex work, compared with mining, expose gendered and sexualised understandings of labour. Importantly for this thesis, the way these coterminous industries and forms of labour have been positioned and understood morally, through various technologies of power that buttress the national imaginary, fuel very different experiences of privilege and marginalisation. The importance of the national imaginary and the opportunities provided by its analysis is provided in the following section.
1.4.3 Why the National Imaginary Matters: Towards a critical political geography of miners and sex workers

The struggle for identity politics, such as those sexual identities that fall outside the heteronormative nation, is a “struggle to construct counternarratives and create new critical spaces and social practices” (Giroux 1993: 31). The national imaginary has an important role in the process of that struggle, as it provides the legitimating narratives for what in this case constitutes ‘Australianness’. Bongiorno (2000) demonstrated that ‘others’ can be introduced into the Australian national imaginary, using the example of
Aboriginal Australians, but perhaps not without some level of cultural (mis)appropriation. Exposing as many of these multiple narratives and new identities as possible though can further deconstruct the myth of a unified national identity, benefitting people on the margins. Paasi (1997: 41) suggests a critical approach to analysis of the national imaginary is necessary, to identify how “national identities develop and change continually, so that each generation modifies it according to existing socio-cultural situation.” Opening up the national imaginary for examination then is an important step in understanding why some stories are privileged over others, and how certain actions enable this process. Exposing the essentialism of the Australian identity through the national imaginary lays bare the sinners and saints, the fairness and injustices, the kinks and quirks, the legends and forgotten peoples, the contradictions and truths that populate the national narrative. Of these, contradictions are perhaps the most instructive, since they highlight the incoherence of identity production within a nexus of power, struggle and space. The two iconic industries and forms of labour under investigation provide an opportunity to observe such contradictions. As this thesis seeks to demonstrate, labourers in both industries evoke many similar reactions in the public, and yet as industries, have disparate positions in the national imaginary. Three technologies for the why and how of this polarised positioning are presented for close examination in this thesis. They are: historical legislation; contemporary news media; and the Census. Methodological choices were made to focus on these technologies, as an unexpected and unpredictable research journey unfolded. I describe this journey now.
1.5 Methods: Activist Praxis?

Informing the development of this thesis was growing critical geographic scholarship on activism and Participatory/Action Research (PAR), where researchers have become attuned to the politics of research. According to Pain and Kindon (2007: 2807), participatory geographies had, as of 2007, “reached critical mass”, acknowledging their importance within the discipline. PAR is a philosophy of research that seeks to enlist research collaborators rather than research participants. It is a method with a focus on breaking down the “hierarchical modes of knowledge production which are taught and practiced” within the academy (Pain et al. 2013: 29). It fits well within the broader spectrum of critical geography, where research often “empathize[s] with the researched, seeking to empower and emancipate them through their writing and teaching”, but unlike PAR, critical geographers “rarely join with them in their ‘struggle’” (Kitchin and Hubbard 1999: 196). PAR may therefore enable critical researchers to reconcile their activism with their academic work. Since much activism is concerned with social justice, and often seeks to empower historically marginalised populations and groups, PAR can be an effective strategy for researching with these groups. Recruiting people from those populations into the research process as partners who develop aims, methods, and interpretation explicitly acknowledges that those people “hold deep knowledge about their lives and experiences” (Torre and Fine 2006: 458). In this respect, PAR can be socially transformative and is often used for social justice research.

Considering my broad project aim of reducing marginalisation and stigmatisation for sex workers, but also sex workers’ insistence on collaborative authoring of narratives about them, PAR was a logical fit. Wahab (2003: 640) came to a similar realisation, finding that:
participatory research with sex workers holds the potential to support personal and collective transformation by providing opportunities for sex workers to (a) define the parameters and realities of their experiences; (b) challenge stereotypes and myths that support discrimination against sex workers; (c) break through some of the isolation they experience, particularly the street workers, by providing and supporting safe environments for them to meet and network; (d) inform policy and services designed to affect their lives; and (e) bridge academic and community divides.

van der Meulen (2011: 371) argued that PAR with sex workers was necessary due to the legacy of past sex work research that has created a perception of sex workers as lacking “the ability to make informed decisions about their lives and work.” Anti-sex work campaigners often present sex workers as victims, and are typically morally and ideologically opposed to the selling of sex. Researchers with this view often conduct research without sex worker involvement, and consequently, its focus is usually on how to eradicate the sex industry. Through PAR, sex workers are “respected as active agents of change, capable of making informed decisions” and research is thus “less imbued with moralism” (van der Meulen 2011: 379, see also Bowen and O’Doherty 2014). I would contest this statement, adding that PAR sex work research can still be deeply imbued with moralism, for in the case of this thesis, there is a liberal moralism at work defending civil and labour rights, and the agency of women.

I met with Scarlet Alliance early in my candidacy to discuss this proposal. My initial meeting was with the Scarlet Alliance policy officer on the 21st March 2013, two months into my candidacy, to discuss the direction of the research and the potential involvement of the organisation (or barring that, their explicit support for the research). I had concerns early about the power dynamics of being a male academic researching with predominantly female sex workers, something on which Hubbard (1999) had already reflected. He queried whether his attempt to research sex worker exclusion “would be
anything more than a masculinist attempt to appropriate the feminine ‘other’” (Hubbard 1999: 231). Hubbard (1999: 233) wrote of the “implicit danger that if [he] was unable to break down the oppressive hierarchies of gender/sex that existed between [himself] and sex workers, then [his] male, heteronormal perspective would merely fetishize sex work rather than resist its oppression.” Hubbard found no resolution to this anxiety. While collaborative ethnographic research with sex worker participants never eventuated in my research, had I succeeded, I am sure I would have struggled with similar questions. I did believe, however, that working with an organisation such as Scarlet Alliance and developing research aims together could help ameliorate such anxieties.

Since Hubbard’s reflections, research on sex work (rather than research with sex workers) has proliferated, with at least one notorious case of an Australian anti-sex work PhD dissertation being published as a book (see Jeffreys 2009b for the highly critical sex worker response to the omission of sex worker voices from that research). Generating knowledge on social marginalisation with sex workers is therefore more necessary than ever. It must be considered that PAR represents an opportunity for sex worker allies, although ‘outsiders’, to contribute to the ongoing rights agenda helping to dispel the negative and/or false representations around sex workers, ideally shifting discourses of sex work “away from discourses of sin, sex and crime into discourses of work, choice and civil rights” (Hubbard 1999: 232). Jeffreys (2009b) provided a list of 43 questions that should reasonably be addressed by those wanting to conduct research with sex workers. This list was created by sex workers during a multi-national sex worker thinktank held in Bali on how sex workers can best assess whether to become involved with ‘outsider’ researchers, and proved to be significant in my research process. In this research these were addressed where relevant (see Appendix B).
Research led conceptually by the researcher rather than the participant organisation can be problematic. Klocker (2011) identified that PhD students who ‘take control’ of the research can imperil the collaborative mission of PAR, but waiting to complete community consultation could impede completion. Increasingly, universities are compelled by funding agencies to ensure timely completion of PhD theses, which can threaten longer-term collaboration conceptually. Whilst being generally supportive of my original research aims, Scarlet Alliance explained that often sex workers had invested too much time and energy into research that when finished, did not align with their own goals. Under-funded and with resources stretched thin, they declined to engage in a full partnership without commensurate funding. This did not mean that my research was not of value to the organisation, or that PAR was not possible, just that the resources of the organisation would be offered on a consultation rather than full collaborative basis. Even when recruitment for the initially-planned ethnography ultimately failed, and participant recruitment was discontinued (see below), an ongoing relationship with Scarlet Alliance ensured that the revised research direction continued to meet the standards required for reducing the social marginalisation of sex work.

As described in the Preface, the intention of the original research project was to interview distance labourers and their partners about practices of intimacy over time and distance. Attention was focussed on recruiting miners, sex workers, and health professionals, though had the recruitment process snowballed, distance labourers from any industry would have been welcome. Alongside interviews, diaries were to be written (or spoken/filmed) to capture the daily complexion of intimacy. Interviews were to be conducted in the home to stimulate reflection on sites and activities of intimacy. One of the goals of this method was to attempt to compare the prosaic nature of sex work as a labour practice alongside other forms of labour. A full account of the methods planned in
the original PAR research, and the ethics application based on those methods are to be found in Appendices B and A respectively. Failure to achieve the aims of this original project can be attributed to recruitment difficulty of the chosen industries, or specifically, recruitment of distance labourers with challenging ‘swinging’ shifts; institutional ethics procedures; and, an overly rigorous and complicated methodology. A further qualitative PAR side-project was initiated late in my candidacy after conducting Census analysis to ascertain sex worker perceptions of the Census (see Appendix B for details). This too failed to advance because of circumstances within Scarlet Alliance (moving office and personnel changes), and changes to Census data retention. Reflections on these methods and subsequent failures can be found in Appendix C.

Such failures forced me to begin to reconsider research directions. While the difficulties with recruitment had been ongoing, I continued to write on what I assumed would be relevant subjects within the research. For example, on Distance Labour (Chapter 5); the challenges of bureaucratic ethics processes (Appendix A); understandings of nationhood (multiple chapters); and the historical connections between Australian mining and sex work (Chapter 2). The project was thus reconfigured as one not about queering the national imaginary through interrogating the intimate lives of workers in iconic mobile labour practices, but through the anxieties and invisibilities this kind of work produces and the effect they have on the iconic labour identities of sex workers and miners in the national imaginary. This new reconceptualisation did not necessarily require interviews, and could instead utilise other data sources.

The three substantive empirical accounts that eventuated (Chapters 2 through 6) each contain their own conceptual influences, data sources and results. First, I examined the themes already apparent in the research I had already undertaken. The histories of the
industries I had already planned to incorporate were written together to demonstrate the
coterminous nature of their relationship, and were framed around legislation as a tool of
governmentality. This formed the major component of Chapter 2.

From analysing Census data, I determined the concept of distance labour contained within
it the thread of ‘invisibility’. This was the seed that eventually became Chapters 5 and 6.
McLafferty (1995: 438) argues that “counting … can be used effectively to reveal the
broad contours of difference”, and so the Census proved to be a useful and productive
method of exposing differing levels of visibility. I developed a geographical methodology
enabling estimation of the diversity and extent of distance labour, allowing the story to
unfold about the ways the heroic mining figure discursively obscured other aspects of
non-mining distance labour. The lack of reliable Census data for sex workers allowed an
equally interesting story to unfold about the way governmentality, via technologies of
power such as the census, produces and suppresses populations, thus sustaining social
marginalisation. Working under the assumption that large scale quantitative data analysis
may be incorporated more easily by “the media, community groups and policy-makers
than qualitative data”, this research may yet prove to have broader appeal (Hubbard 1999:
234). The Census is also the national population stocktake, and as such, is intimately tied
to the national imaginary, the foundation upon which I was building the previous research.
It thus seemed an ideal fit. Although the social justice element of quantitative research
can be less obvious than writing the stories of marginalisation (or normalisation as I
would have attempted with my three participant groups) documented through interviews,
it can boost “the profile and improved understanding of social problems, as well as
actively seeking policy changes at local and national levels” (Pain 2004: 654).
The second theme to emerge, and the one that would eventually encompass the rest of the qualitative work I undertook, was that of ‘anxieties’, forming the basis of Chapters 3 and 4. This theme was first countenanced when investigating the historical connection between mining and sex work in Chapter 2, and became an obvious point of comparison between the historical and contemporary understandings of the two industries and accompanying labour identities. At some point, I also remembered one of my very first moments of clarity around sex work discrimination in the news media. It was the events in Moranbah, Queensland, surrounding a sex worker Karlaa who was prohibited from returning to a motel there by the owners, which spoke to ‘anxieties’ held by the public and reproduced in the media (see Section 4.4.2). Interrogating the news media for representations of anxiety around both mining and sex work would continue the exploration of this theme from Chapter 2. Journalism also has the added advantage of sharing similarities with social science research:

the broad methodologies used by members of both institutions—how they produce their facts—are often hard to distinguish. Both social scientists and journalists conduct interviews, videotape people and events, undertake forms of participant observation, and, in recent years, have increasingly scrutinized online discussion groups (Haggerty 2004: 395).

Thus interrogating media representations became a form of large-scale auxiliary qualitative research.

Throughout these new lines of inquiry, the relationship with Scarlet Alliance remained open, and remained so until the final iteration of the thesis. Continuing with this relationship remained an important aspect of the research because, although featuring first-hand sex worker voices was no longer possible, sex work itself remained a defining case study. This ensured that the values of PAR and sex worker rights activism were
embedded in the published thesis, enabling sex workers the opportunity to be represented in a way that supported sex worker empowerment. The value of Scarlet Alliance’s labour in having their Executive Committee read and approve the thesis was rewarded financially with a consultative fee originally described by the organisation in the budget produced for my ethics application.

The forthcoming chapters can be therefore seen as a response to unforeseen disappointments, with the final product an artefact of persistence. It is demonstrative of the challenges that can arise when following one’s own ethical compass and working with an ‘in-group’. It also speaks more broadly to challenges within the PAR framework (Kindon et al. 2008, Klocker 2011, 2015). Perhaps this thesis, discussing a ‘failed’ activist ethnographic research agenda and a constructive adaptation and response, will act as a guide to other researchers attempting to navigate the difficult waters of PAR. It may also fit Hubbard’s (1999: 233) concept of critical geography as work that may “promote political inclusion”, since it has (despite setbacks), through insistent collaboration with Scarlet Alliance, attempted to reduce sex worker stigma and marginalisation. Moreover, it can now be located alongside one of Australia’s defining industries. It is, with the late insertion and application of some adaptive research ideas, and some re-rendering of the existing data, a research project that ultimately found a story to tell.

1.6 Thesis Structure

So far, I have introduced the critical concepts at play within this thesis: the national imaginary, technologies of power, and two forms of iconic labour. I have outlined why mining and sex work make emblematic examples as case studies for informing the production of the national imaginary in ways that fuel labour-based axes of social
privilege and marginalisation. Chapter 2, the first substantive empirical chapter, uncovers the why of the contemporary prominence of mining and invisibility of sex work in the Australian national imaginary, by paying attention to the legal, regulatory, and disciplinary histories of these industries and forms of work. It argues that these two industries and forms of work are inextricably linked, and follows the industrial relations laws of the era leading up to Federation as they relate to each industry. It demonstrates that Victorian-era middle-class moral ideologies, so influential on life and culture at the time, were a critical factor in the legislative frameworks that coalesced around these industries. It also introduces the idea that these two industries have historically produced a similar reaction of anxiety in the public, despite their rapidly divergent paths in the decades immediately prior to the formation of the Australian nation.

Chapters 3 and 4 comprise the second substantive empirical chapters of the thesis. They take the concept of anxiety into the present day by examining the representation of the two iconic forms of labour within the media, and the typical categories into which each type of labourer is placed. The media has an important role in the production of the national imaginary. For instance, the British Broadcasting Corporation during inter-war era Britain helped popularise the imperial monarchy and its empire, and shared consumption of British cinema at the same time “made the nation seem both knowable as a community and also a familiar object” (Curran 2002: 29). Thus, the media is an ideal place to begin to analyse the mechanisms for the ongoing disparity for these iconic forms of labour in the national imaginary. In Chapter 3, news media articles on FIFO, the pre-eminent form of mining, were analysed over a 6-year period from 2010-2015, roughly coinciding with the zenith and decline of the most recent mining boom. Chapter 4 uses a similar analytical approach towards media discourses of sex work. The sheer volume of news articles around sex work provided ample opportunity to analyse the discourse, but
necessitated shortening the window of investigation to just one year within that period. This technology generated discourses that unsettled some of the dominant understandings of mining and sex work in the national imaginary, but also reinforced others.

Chapters 5 and 6 explore the Australian Census as a technology of power to articulate why mining and sex work have different trajectories within the national imaginary. The census is an integral part of the State’s construction of a national population, a technology of power through which governments count, classify, and ‘know’ the populations that are governed (Rose 1991, Dufty 2007, Ruppert 2009). The census superficially appears less subjective than the news media, and unlikely to provoke anxiety. It does however have the capacity to bring populations into view, and thus into existence, but conversely, also make them disappear from the gaze of the State and policy makers. These chapters will argue that the Census can be employed subjectively to erase, or make conspicuous, populations. Mining in this part of the thesis is shown to be part of a much broader experience of distance labour (Skilton 2015). The resource centric nature of public debate and policy research, combined with a focus by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on enumerating miners, ensures the broader experience of non-mining distance labour is effectively rendered invisible. Census data can, as I demonstrate, reveal a more diverse FIFO/distance labour workforce than generally understood. This in effect de-centres mining distance labour within the national imaginary. The Census is much less efficacious, however, when it comes to enumerating sex workers, again showing the discrepancy between how these iconic forms of labour are positioned by the technologies that produce the national imaginary.

The technologies of power investigated in this thesis, the iconic industries of mining and sex work, and the effects of anxiety and invisibility, are challenging to weave into a
coherent narrative. They each have their own particular literatures and histories. They also require unique methods of analysis, which are explored in the following chapters. Chapter 2 is a synthesis of existing literatures around historical analyses of Australian legislation, and thus needs only a brief methods section. The methods of researching Chapters 3 through 6 and their technologies of national imaginary production however are completely different; each therefore has its own detailed methods section. Each of the technologies of power described in the following chapters play a part in the production of a national imaginary, wherein social privilege and social marginalisation, demonstrated through mining and sex work, are constantly renegotiated, contested and unsettled in ways that have future implications for how Australian miners and sex workers experience citizenship.
CHAPTER 2
MINING AND SEX WORK IN THE NATIONAL IMAGINARY:
PRE-FEDERATION LEGISLATION

2.1 Introduction
This chapter introduces mining and sex work as iconic industries, historicising them within the emergent Australian nation. These two industries have been co-located together historically, as companion industries. Wherever there has been mining, there has been sex work. Yet, I argue, mining and sex work became understood as separate labour practices, in a discursive sense, and were differently coded, in a moral and legal sense, during a key period of the British colonial project in Australia. This disjuncture began in the middle of the nineteenth century through the enactment of enabling or disabling industrial labour laws, during a time of concentrated nation-building. Such laws provide the original, empirical core of this chapter, and demonstrate how sex workers could be “imbued with socio-political significance, linked to the mechanics of life, and managed through criminal apparatuses which sought to produce a civil and healthy social body” (Scott 2011: 59). This chapter responds to the challenge made by Laite (2009: 744) that sex work is “one of recent historiography’s marginal subjects.” The aim of this analysis is to draw attention to how mining and sex work, and associated labour identities, came to be positioned as either marginal or privileged in the Australian national imaginary through legislation, as a juridical technology of power. This occurred during a distinctive phase in which the national imaginary was created in part via middle-class labour laws and identities. As Foucault (1982: 791) argues, possibilities for the transformation of technologies of power require an understanding of “their historical formation, [and] the source of their strength or fragility.” This chapter accordingly traces the emergent colonial
formation of legal technologies of power through which mining and sex worker bodies were regulated, and thus positioned in the nascent national imaginary.

The first goldrush in Australia occurred in New South Wales in 1851, but it was in the goldrushes of the mid-1850s in the colony of Victoria that mining burst into the Australian national imaginary. Independent alluvial miners travelled from goldfield to goldfield hoping for the nugget that would make them rich. It was likely the first time in Australia that sex workers left the cities in significant numbers to seek work opportunities presented by the goldrush, but the surviving records on sex work are “scattered and difficult to use” (Davidson 1984: 171). At the same time as these goldrushes, the middle-classes were emerging in Australia. The middle-class first appeared as a force within English society (and also in the United States, see Garceau 2001) during the reign of Queen Victoria (Kitson Clark 1962). ‘Middle-class’ was originally a pejorative term, but those within eventually came to call themselves such to distinguish themselves from the aristocracy above, and the poor, working-class below (eds Savage et al. 1992). Both miners and sex workers were a provocation to the emerging middle-class who were agitating for self-government on the path to Australian Federation in 1901, and were attempting to control and define the values in a new federated Australian commonwealth.

The middle-class in the nineteenth century was both spatially and culturally diverse, grouped only by their identification with what they were not (rich or poor). Their impact on social values, however, was important, and they were responsible for the promulgation of what became known as ‘Victorian morality’ (Barcan 1955, [eds] Savage et al. 1992). The British were amidst their great global empire-building project, and those values gradually spread throughout the many colonies. The goldrushes saw Australia’s population significantly increase, with many migrants from Britain, but also large
numbers from China (Curthoys 2001). The infusion of British migrants explains how Victorian middle-class values arrived in Australia in the pre-Federation period (Jensen 2014). According to Metin (2012: 14):

Australasians are too remote from other peoples and too exclusively a part of the English world whence they draw all their books, news and information of every kind. That is why they quite naturally have set out to realise English middle-class ideals … Even those who fled England to seek a freer life on the goldfields or in the bush did not revolt at all against the society in which they had been unable to live; rather they re-established it in almost unaltered form in their new country.

In response to the non-English migrants such as the Chinese, the likes of Henry Parkes, Edmund Barton and Samuel Griffith would make racism an intrinsic part of the drive for Federation. Racism, which Ward (1966, in Pearse 2009: 8, emphasis in original) argued “may well be the only major addition to the Australian character” in the late part of the nineteenth century, culminated in the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (Cwlth). This Act was the very first act of parliament in the new Federation, and contributed to fear of non-European labour (Gibbs et al. 2015). It restricted non-Anglo-Saxon arrivals, and remained in effect until as late as 1973. Alongside this racism, a distinctly Antipodean masculinist heroic was also propagated (Blackton 1961). Masculinity was celebrated in the writings of Banjo Patterson and Henry Lawson (the author of Eureka, in Box 1.1, whose father was a gold fossicker). Both were important literary figures in the creation of the Australian national imaginary, and who in the 1880s and 1890s, wrote nostalgic poetry and stories for an increasingly urbane public, romanticising the purported origins of a defining Australian character in ‘the bush’, and its male heroes and anti-heroes (bushrangers, swagmen, drovers, and rebellious miners).

The national imaginary is where “the myths of the nation are forged, transmitted, reconstructed and negotiated constantly” (Bell 2003: 75). Although many of the
characters written into the national imaginary were rural – ratbags and rabble-rousers from convict or other insalubrious backgrounds – it was the middle-class of European origin in pre-Federation Australia who came to dominate the national discussion and myth-making (Blackton 1961). In short supply have been written histories of civic life, intimacies, conflict, comradery, and trans-industrial relationships of working-class women in particular, including sex workers. Alongside other ‘non-white’ histories, such as the Chinese market gardeners (McGowan 2005), and ‘Afghan’ cameleers (Gibbs et al. 2015), sex workers have been an inconsequential detail in the “nationalistic ‘white man’s histories’” (Lovejoy 2007: 40). Middle-class discourses that sought to discipline public spaces, and bring a particular moral order to bear over ex-convicts and new migrants, evoked public anxieties around both sex work and mining through their perceived lack of domesticity, respectability and self-control; qualities the Victorian moralists valued above all. Whereas mining was eventually elevated to the position of ‘nation-builder’ (Gibson 2013a, Dirty Business: How mining made Australia 2013, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia 2013, Knox 2013, Jensen 2014), sex work disappeared into the cracks of imagination, where the unthinkable and unknowable reside.

Theorising how the middle-class wielded their power through acts of parliament in a time of concentrated nation-building enables a better understanding of the historical antecedents of the Australian national imaginary in the 21st century. Legal technologies of power were applied to mining and sex work in polarising ways that positioned them differently within the national imaginary. By paying attention to this relationship between national myths and the classed and gendered aspects of labour history, the polarised positions of the iconic and interwoven mining and sex work industries in the national imaginary become clearer. The method employed here to gain this clarity was the reading and examination of pre-existing, but to-date separate, scholarship on the laws created to
govern these previously unruly industries prior to Federation. This approach was designed to explore the narrative of changing and dynamic positionings of social privilege and marginalisation. The marginalised position of sex work will be shown to be part of a deliberate regime of control through hegemonic middle-class values. Conscious that all governing projects rarely persist “unscathed” (Dufty 2007: 29), I conclude the chapter by asking whether, instead, sex work can be re-evaluated as an important part of Australia’s mining heritage that both diversifies and challenges the predominant national imaginary.

2.2 The Middle-Class, Federation, and Nation Building

During the Victorian-era, Australia was still a collection of individual British (predominantly penal) colonies, with governors who were appointed by, and answerable to, the British parliament. The colonies were New South Wales; Western Australia; South Australia; Tasmania; Victoria; and Queensland, and each had their own governments, military, customs houses, tariffs, and so on. The formalisation of the Australian nation came in 1901, when the six colonies federated by a peaceful act of parliament, becoming the original states of present day Australia. Federation was needed, according to middle-class discourse at the time, to unite the colonies against unwelcome immigration. To galvanise public opinion behind Federation, a campaign was begun to promote national pride. Its key tenets included the exclusion of non-Anglo ethnicities; and an intrepid, heroic and all-conquering masculinity (Osborne 2002). Such themes could be found in the colonial Bulletin magazine, appealing to a largely middle-class urban audience, where the powerful voice of Henry Lawson, author of notable works ‘While the Billy Boils’ and ‘The Drover’s Wife’, and other authors, helped shape the national imaginary. Members of an emergent Australian middle-class in the decade prior to Federation had to reconcile
themselves to the fact that, unlike the protagonists of a Henry Lawson poem, they commanded no position in the national imaginary. Grattan (1947, in Barcan 1955: 64) therefore argues that at best, the pre-Federation Australian middle-class condition could be described as a “buffer between the contemporary group with oligarchical tendencies [the landed gentry], and the working class.” The middle-class therefore had to be content with using existing symbolism within the national imaginary to further their own agenda, such as the ‘noble bushman’, who they canonised as “a heroic race endowed with special democratic, Australian qualities” (Blackton 1961: 353, Ward 1966, Lawson 1980). In this regard there is a distinct parallel to the United States myth of the frontier, on which the American national ‘character’ was purportedly made, via heroic male archetypes such as the iconic cowboy figure (Gibson 2013b). In both cases, rural forms of masculine work provided a template for national myth-making at the very same time that society was becoming more urbanised, sedentary, and classed.

That the middle-class eventually triumphed with their vision of a federated Australia would suggest that they held significant reserves of political power. This was power they could bring to bear not only on the construction of the national imaginary, but through legislation, on what they also considered to be the enemies of morality and acceptable behaviours and practices. The reign of Queen Victoria ended the same year Australia federated. Victorian-era morality punctuated the politics, public discourse, and social relations at the time, and continues even today. Societal gender divisions had taken hold in the early nineteenth century, placing men “firmly in the newly defined public world of business, commerce, and politics; women were placed in the private world of home and family” (Hall 1992: 133). Gender roles were changing as Australia urbanised. In another parallel to the US, sharper distinctions between male and female roles and norms accompanied urban growth, industrialisation, and the rise of factory production,
challenging artisanal and agricultural masculinities (Garceau 2001, Gibson 2016). Furthermore, ideas about respectability and “mastery of the body and the passions” were a disciplining force in society (White 2006: 32). The hegemonic effects of Victorian-era sexuality sustained the manifold relations running throughout the social body (Foucault 2008). Discourses held within institutions such as medicine (through the ongoing medicalisation and pathologising of the body and sex), psychiatry (through the psychoanalytics of sexuality and mental health i.e. ‘perversions’), and the church (where one was always required to ‘confess’ one’s sexual sins) produced specific mechanisms and strategic unities that created a “hysterisation of women’s bodies” (Foucault 2008: 105).

The pre-Federation middle-class intersection of gender, morality, and labour is therefore crucial in understanding how the middle-class perceived itself, and the myths that it created in the process of nation-building. Using iconic labour to examine this interaction is thus instructive. Sex work and mining are preeminent examples. As embodied labour practices they were frequently co-located geographically, in frontier spaces, and yet they experienced diverging moral and legal genealogies. One provoked spectacular levels of outrage, while the other was eventually embraced as part of the masculinist tradition within the national imaginary. The next section unpicks the long association and interplay between these two industries and labour identities.

2.3 The Long Interplay Between Sex Work and Mining

The goldrushes saw Australia’s population significantly increase in a very short time. The population in the Victorian colony, where much of the extractive activity was taking place, rose from 77,000 in 1851 to 538,000 in the space of six years (Knox 2013). This
growth came predominantly from migrants from Britain, but also China (Curthoys 2001), and confirmed Melbourne as the largest city in Australia, as well as the nation’s financial capital (Blainey 1993). Both Laite (2009), and Blainey (1993: 39) suggest that sex work was inseparable from the mining boom, where even on a Monday, “saloons and drinking dens were as busy as if there had been no week-end, serving French champagne or Jamaican rum to lucky diggers and luckier prostitutes.” Indeed, despite the restrictive terrain of Victorian-era morality, “Sex work was widely accepted as an essential part of a frontier community … so long as the rollicking atmosphere of the boom years prevailed” (Davidson 1984: 169). According to Frances (1999: 104):

> The precise role prostitution played in any particular part of Australia depended on sex ratios in specific groups of colonial society … and evolving racial attitudes. Where men continued to predominate, such as in newly-opened gold mining areas or amongst groups of immigrant workers, prostitution was practised openly and was tolerated by the state.

Daniels (1984: 33) argued that “places referred to as brothels … were an integral part of convict/poor working-class culture.” This insouciant cultural attitude towards sex work in colonial times then would have been applied to the working-class goldmining communities in Victoria. However, as the rushes ended, men who remained on the fields chose (or were forced) to relinquish the shifting fortunes of prospecting for the relatively more financially secure company jobs. Mining towns consolidated, and those men brought their wives and families to live in towns such as Ballarat (Victoria), Broken Hill (New South Wales), Queenstown (Tasmania), and Kalgoorlie (Western Australia). It was around this time that “[w]orking-class family life … shifted a little further towards the style of family life cherished by the middle class” (Grimshaw et al. 1994: 202). This shift would explain an “increasing resistance” to sex work in said towns (Davidson 1984: 170). Resistance suggests that working-class women who were the wives of miners were
attempting to distance themselves from the perception of immorality, and were not about to be cast in the same mould as ‘fallen’ sex workers. The interaction between miners, sex workers, their families, and the community was likely to be a complex relationship fraught with nuanced gendered interactions. This relationship continues to play out today in Kalgoorlie, where sex work holds an iconic status through a growing tourism industry based around the Hay Street brothels and hotel ‘Skimpies’\textsuperscript{10} (Pini \textit{et al.} 2013, Mayes et al. 2015). At the core of these struggles is a program of the middle-class to discipline women’s sexuality.

The goldrushes were a time of freedom (Blainey 1993, Wright 2016), and the goldfields provided opportunity to ascend classed expectations, but potentially also despair for those who wagered everything in their quest for riches. Gold was a dominant and disorderly presence in the colonies, transforming and challenging existing social relations (Wright 2016). Existing gendered power structures were challenged by the ‘disruptive’ behaviour of assertive women (Wright 2016). So serious was the problem of disruptive immoral behaviour, where women enjoyed “flash dresses better than making butter and cheese” (Read 1853: 100), that a meeting was convened in Melbourne to decide how “the ever-increasing fickleness of women could be most quickly and safely remedied” (Wright 2016: 1). Politicians and newspapers publicly decried this immoral behaviour, asserting the public sphere should continue to be a place of good moral order and respectability (Wright 2016). Working-class women, for example those working in harsh clothing factories or working as servants (Grimshaw \textit{et al.} 1994), and who were excluded from public life and occupations such as goldmining, may have commenced sex work as a

\textsuperscript{10} Women who work in bars, but wear provocative clothing and may also perform. “Some remove items of clothing while others initiate ‘tricks’ (e.g. throwing coins up in the air with their breasts). At this point they also circulate with what is known as a ‘titty jar’ or ‘bra jar’ seeking additional tips” (Pini \textit{et al.} 2013: 71).
resistance strategy to stifling middle-class hegemony (Laite 2009). Miners were willing accomplices in this resistance, helping to “construct spaces that existed outside of the ordered world of corporate mining development” (Laite 2009: 742).

The denouncement of licentious women, and the increasing marginalisation of sex workers in mining towns through the law (discussed below), obfuscates the many extant similarities between these two industries and forms of labour. Both occupations experienced precarity, albeit in different ways. Whereas miners were subject to the possibility that at some point, the mineral deposit would eventually run out, or international financial markets and mineral speculation would render the price of ore unprofitable, sex workers were forced to evade police scrutiny and gaol, and impossibly, the ageing process that would eventually decrease their earning potential (likewise for miners). Both industries were physically taxing on bodies, and both also shared injury and disease as workplace hazards. For sex workers, hospitalisation from client violence and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) were ever-present threats (Frances 2004, Legg 2009, Walkowitz 1980), whereas miners often suffered from ailments, such as miner's phthisis (a.k.a. Silicosis, caused by inhalation of silica dust), and extreme injury or death, from tunnel collapse or explosion (Eklund 2012, Knox 2013, Laite 2009). As the alluvial gold dried up, and capital was increasingly required to sink shafts and mine underground seams, miners were forced to trade in their self-employed independence for wages. Depending on their class, visibility to police, and legislative status, sex workers at times experienced similar changes that would have forced many to give up independent street-work for essentially waged brothel work.

Despite surface similarities in the actual work being performed, a wider stage was set for the legislative division of these two industries amidst greater bureaucratisation and
regulation in a more urbane, late Victorian/late-colonial-era Australia. Legislation, as a technology of power, works through direct and punitive ways, establishing distinctive criminological discourses as well as forms of practical knowledge, and “new techniques and apparatuses for implementation” (Scott 2011: 68). Punitive power, in both the case of sex work and mining, was applied through industrial relations laws. The rest of this chapter investigates these specific industrial relations laws, and their effects on the positioning of these industries in the national imaginary for the labourers involved.

2.4 Sex Work Legislation and the Middle-Class

Amplified gender divisions in the industrialising and urbanising Victorian-era had separated the male, public sphere of work and politics, from the female, private sphere of home (Garceau 2001). Middle-class expectations of women being confined to the home were a fantasy precluding the necessity of working-class women labouring to sustain themselves or their families (Grimshaw et al. 1994). Women’s positions in the labour market were “the result of a ‘negotiated outcome’ between the forces of capitalism and patriarchy” (Digby 1992: 205). At the very bottom of the labour market were women working in increasingly large industrial clothing factories, where wages typically failed to cover the cost of living for a widow with three children (Grimshaw et al. 1994). The construction of the ideal Victorian woman ignored the subtle ways that women “were central to colonial class formation” (Grimshaw et al. 1994: 121). Middle-class women assured the construction of a ‘backward’ woman, usually “non-white, non-western, [and] non-independent” to advance their own position (Grimshaw et al. 1994: 3). I would push further for the inclusion in this construction of ‘backwardness’ of what the law of the time also called ‘disorderly’ or ‘fallen’ women, now referred to as sex workers.
Sex work then, not unlike now, would often have been opportunistic. Women would support meagre factory and domestic work incomes, where wages “seldom exceeded more than 25 shillings per week in the late 1880s\(^\text{11}\), by engaging in sex work when the need arose. Unlike the women of the middle-class, previous sexual experiences for working-class women would likely have already blurred “the distinction between promiscuity and clandestine prostitution”, making the decision to turn to sex work to support meagre incomes relatively easy (Walkowitz and Walkowitz 1973: 84). Thus Victorian-era sex work was dominated by the ‘lower-classes’. To the middle-classes, these sex workers symbolised sin, but a sin that was at the time deemed a ‘necessary evil’ – necessary because it provided an outlet for the ‘uncontrollable’ lusts and urges of all classes of men, therefore protecting the (middle- and upper-class) ladies of the colony (Arnot 1985, Laite 2009). Despite the tacit acknowledgement of the ‘necessary’ existence of sex work, Victorian morality in an increasingly urban, industrialised society couldn’t allow sex work to remain unregulated.

The earliest law targeting sex work in Australia was enacted in New South Wales in 1835, and was used to specifically arrest sex workers (Arnot 1985). Contained within an anti-vagrancy law, it was designed to restrain those deemed ‘idle and disorderly’. The Act for the Prevention of Vagrancy and for the Punishment of Idle and Disorderly Persons Rogues and Vagabonds and Incorrigible Rogues in the Colony of New South Wales 1835 (NSW) stated that:

\[
\text{[E]very person who having no visible lawful means of support or insufficient lawful means shall not being thereto required by any Justice of the Peace give a good account thereof to the satisfaction of such Justice (Arnot 1985: 2 emphasis added).}
\]

\(^{11}\) Grimshaw et al. (1994: 165) state that “the cost of food, fuel and rent for a widow and three young children was … 26 shillings in 1890.”
Prior to this law, sex work must have been implicitly lawful in New South Wales, since there were no laws governing its operation. This new law did not *explicitly* make sex work unlawful (for that would void the social contract deeming sex work the ‘necessary evil’), but the wording here suggests that it was not exactly considered lawful either, and must therefore have been policed as a prohibited occupation. This creeping shift in the colonies from sex work as an integral part of working-class life (Daniels 1984), to sex work as amoral and unlawful, helped absolve the marred respectability of middle-class male clients who, should they be caught, could claim to be “unsuspecting … victims of prostitutes and their associates” (Horan 1984: 100). In essence, this was a very public performance of Victorian morality de-legitimising sex workers.

Much of the moral panic and outrage directed at sex workers centred on the perception that they acted as a vector of disease, specifically syphilis, which was both rampant and, prior to the discovery of penicillin, frequently terminal (Arnot 1985). Therefore, specific Occupational Health and Safety laws were legislated to impact sex workers. Contagious Diseases Acts, established initially in Britain in 1864, made it an offense occasioning gaol time for a worker to be suffering from syphilis (Arnot 1985). It was around this time that “science and sexuality became linked [as] critical markers and symbols of modernity”, and thus these Contagious Diseases Acts were concerned with more than just medical and sanitary regulation (Levine 1998: 681). They were instead a powerful demonstration of a Foucauldian “disciplinary modernity” (Howell 2004: 446). Under disciplinary modernity, and its essential characteristics of “inscription, inspection, [and] incarceration”, sex workers were subject to police registration and “the extension of surveillance technologies, while their intimate medical inspection embodied the penetrative power of the medical gaze” (Howell 2004: 446). The Acts were imported wholesale to parts of the British Empire (Legg 2009), and subsequently legislated in the Australian colonies of
Queensland (1868), Victoria (1878) and Tasmania (1879), but not others. It was argued that these Acts were a necessary measure to protect the health and stamina of the colonial armed forces (Walkowitz and Walkowitz 1973, Legg 2009). However, they also embodied “imperialist compulsions turned inward toward the domestic colonization of the poor” (Walkowitz and Walkowitz 1973: 75). Thus, these acts had very little to do with the health of either soldiers or sex workers, and everything to do with the control of working-class women, and the moral disciplining of all women’s bodies (Frances 1999).

Contagious Diseases Acts were not uncontested. Under the leadership of Josephine Butler, prominent English feminist and social reformer concerned with the welfare of sex workers, the Acts were roundly denounced by many women (Walkowitz 1980). By positioning sex workers as responsible for the health of the soldiers going to war for their nation, sex workers became an explicit part of the national narrative and imagination, for all the wrong reasons. It created a dichotomy between the right kinds of bodies, responsible for national defence (men) or social reproduction (women), and the wrong kinds of bodies (such as sex workers), responsible for physical decay.

Other laws excluding sex workers from bars in New South Wales (*Licensed Publicans Act 1849*), prohibiting soliciting in Victorian public (*Police Offenses Act 1891*), and the prosecution of Victorian disorderly houses (*Police Offenses Act 1907*), made it clear that the spaces sex workers could use to transact their business were diminishing. This disciplining of space by the middle-class demonstrated to others that there was a moral order in effect, not to be transgressed by poor or working-class women who chose (or were often forced out of economic necessity) to use their labour power in such a way. The visible and unrestrained sexuality of sex workers became, over the course of the Victorian-era, an affront to the middle-class values that were prominent in the nation-building imaginary (Arnot 1985). We can see from the legislation that the desired effect
was to ‘other’ the sex working woman. These acts condoned the harassment of sex workers, eroding solidarity with other women and their social networks, with the objective of “professionalising and casting prostitutes adrift from their communities” (Walkowitz 1980, Allen 1984: 197). The sex worker could then be used as an example to discipline all women through the stereotypes of the ‘good’, feminine woman, opposed to the ‘fallen’ woman (Scott 2011). These laws devalued sex worker labour power, inscribed into law the social marginalisation that sex workers experience today, and therefore excluded them from the national imaginary. Conversely, despite clashing class politics at the time, mining overcame its less than distinguished beginning. As explored in the next section of this chapter, the inevitable march of industry rendered mining an exemplar of the hard-working Australian in the national imaginary.

2.5 Mining and the Middle-Class

Minerals, at the time of the first goldrushes, were considered ‘Royal Minerals’: property of the State rather than the owner of the land – indigenous or non-indigenous – where they were discovered (Birrell 1998). Any person who conspired to keep their finds for themselves was doing so illegally (Birrell 1998). Nevertheless prospecting proliferated, under licenses initially, with miners expected to pay royalties on their finds to the Crown (an arrangement that echoes to this day in relation to government mining royalties). People of all variety of character were irrepressibly drawn to the gold, and saw in it a way of “bettering themselves, of gaining independence, of storing money for old age or sickness, of teaching their children to read or write” (Blainey 1993: 38). Working-class people could rise up the social ladder with one modest claim. This class transgression of miners, combined with the state of social flux created by the goldfields more generally
(such as the aforementioned challenge to gendered social structures), would have been an affront to the middle-class. The accumulation of wealth in the wallets of the working-classes even today causes consternation among the middle-class (Pini et al. 2012). Mining on the early Victorian goldfields therefore became a source of anxiety for the middle-class and colonial governments of the mid-nineteenth century.

Accepting that the lure of gold would be too strong to suppress after witnessing the madness of the California Gold Rush in 1849, and then the rush at Ophir in New South Wales in early 1851, the New South Wales government gazetted the Provisional Regulations of the goldfields in May 1851 (Birrell 1998). These regulations provided for the appointment of a commissioner to issue licenses that endowed the holder to keep any gold they found, and to ensure each miner had a certificate of discharge from their previous employer (Birrell 1998). Most commissioners were young British men educated at private and military schools, and proved unpopular with the working-class miners (Birrell 1998). The mood of the colonial government was such that it was inevitable that these regulations would be passed into law, with amendments to keep pace with developments on the goldfields. So it was that the first law to regulate mining in Australia, the Victorian Act to Restrain by Summary Proceedings Unauthorised Mining on Waste Lands of the Crown 1852 was passed. New South Wales followed suit with the Gold Fields Management Act in December of that same year. The first official correlation between mining, vice and sex work also appeared in the clauses of this act:
Clause 16: Persons holding licenses or leases who may be convicted of felony or
misdemeanour, or of being idle and disorderly persons, or of being rogues and
vagabonds, unlawfully selling spirituous or fermented liquors, or of keeping
gambling or disorderly houses, to forfeit their licenses… (The Sydney Morning
Herald 1852).

The lure of gold took prospectors onto agricultural land where they encountered
resistance from landowners and local Aboriginal people, and so often resorted to
trespassing (O'Hare 1971). In 1852, New South Wales attempted to mitigate this by
granting permission to mine on private lands, which was later repealed, in 1857, on
penalty of conviction (O'Hare 1971). Despite mining’s uncertain legal status and the hard
work required, “for most it was the first time in their lives they were independent and
they cherished this” (Birrell 1998: 18). It was however a violent event on the Victorian
goldfields that acutely transformed the legislative environment and national imaginary
around mining.

The Eureka Lead was a seam of gold just outside Ballarat in the colony of Victoria. The
infamous Eureka Rebellion occurred there in 1854, when miners unhappy about their
mining licence fees and lack of political representation took up arms and violently
dragged the colonies of Australia into the democratic age. Eureka became known not only
as a defining moment in Australian mining, but in Australian history more generally.
Blainey (1993: 56) recounts the scene of the Rebellion:
On Saturday evening, 2nd December [1854], more than a thousand men were in the stockade at Eureka, and more than four hundred soldiers and police were in their camps on the hills two miles away … In the pale light before the sunrise, soldiers and police attacked the stockade … The fighting lasted less than half an hour but killed an uncounted number of miners, perhaps thirty, and five soldiers … and by breakfast that Sunday morning the rebellion was bleeding … Eureka became a legend, a battlecry for nationalists, republicans, liberals, radicals, and communists, each creed finding in the rebellion the lessons they liked to see.

The retelling of this traumatic event through the poems of prominent figures in the national imaginary (such as Henry Lawson in Box 1.1), and the elevation of miners into the political class, eventually ensured both the event and mining became a dominant part of Australian national mythology. Among such diverse company as labour unionists, anarchists, bikies (spiritual successors of the Australian anti-hero title), and racists, the Eureka flag (Figure 1.2) is still viewed today as a popular alternative flag for Australia.

The Rebellion instigated a “long period of continuous review” for the laws governing mining (Birrell 1998: 2). A Royal Commission on goldfields problems and grievances gained urgency after the Rebellion, and in 1855, handed down its recommendations. The largest change came in the form of the ‘Miners Right’, issued instead of the existing gold mining licenses (essentially a tax on mining) (Birrell 1998). Local dispute courts in the mining districts were created, and holders of the Miners Right could be elected to serve on the courts. Miners had gained political representation for the first time. The Miners Right was essentially the pre-cursor to universal manhood suffrage in 1857 (Birrell 1998). Blainey (1993: 57) called this “the high tide of Australian democracy.” As representation of the miners in the court system in Victoria grew, the balance of power shifted away from the then dominant aristocratic pastoral class that largely controlled politics at the time. Barcan (1955: 69) thus concluded that: “Without the influx of goldminers it is doubtful whether the middle classes of town and country (the farmers and merchants)
would have been strong enough to impose political democracy” on Australia’s landed gentry. Mining laws were amended every couple of years thereafter, but did not substantially change until after another Royal Commission on the Conditions and Prospects of the Goldfields of Victoria in August 1862. The recommendations from this commission included the need for a uniform code of mining law, abolition of Mining Boards, and creation of a Minister for Mines with a mining affairs department, most of which was incorporated into the Mining Statute of 1865 (Birrell 1998). This statute shaped the development of mining legislation in all the other Australian colonies.

2.6 Conclusion

The 1850s saw sex workers and miners in Australia indelibly woven together, geographically, socially, and sexually, in the quest for gold. During the early part of this decade, the two industries and forms of labour occupied a similar place in the national imaginary. Both generated anxieties within the political class, and these anxieties increasingly found their way into legislation that attempted to suppress working bodies that were othered, antagonistic to social order, or considered abject. By the end of the decade, fissures had opened that, by the time the colonies federated in 1901, had become chasms. Mining as an industry had become important to the wealth and prosperity of the colonies as the rushes continued to edge their way around the continent. Royalties flowed to governors (and later federal governments), and the European miner had become incorporated into the masculine, heroic signifiers of the national imaginary. The ‘sex worker’ instead had become the embodiment of a social pariah. Elements of the national imaginary were cemented in these decades before Federation by a middle-class that, although nostalgic for a romanticised, frontier past, was also increasingly urban,
industrialised, and in control of political power and the power to legislate (Blackton 1961). We can now see that sex work and mining, existing side by side geographically, and compressed in frontier landscapes that beguiled middle-class nation-builders, had vastly different experiences within public life, legislative frameworks, and the national imaginary. One was pushed to the margins of society, whereas the other was brought into the middle-class vision of a new Australian nation.

The two industries, already divided along gender lines, became masculinised (privileged), and feminised (problematised) in an increasingly polarised fashion. Mining mobilised the popular imaginary in a way that sex work could not as a predominantly female occupation, consisting mostly of working-class women, and without the legacy of mining’s famous rebellion upon which to draw currency. Mining was a means of raising oneself up from financial destitution, whereas sex work was a pathway to moral destitution, a parable for the ills that could befall any woman with low moral discipline. Although miners were increasingly incorporated into the myths of nation and prosperity, they were not a homogenous group, and one type of miner did not share the rising social prestige and political privilege. Chinese miners were excluded and marginalised from both the goldfields and civic life. The racism afforded this group speaks to ideas of what kinds of people were deemed acceptable within the colonies, and who would be permitted into the national imaginary by the white, urban middle-class. In this regard, sex workers shared a similar discursive position as the Chinese miner. If the European miner increasingly epitomised the heroic masculine figure that dominated the Australian imaginary, Chinese miners and sex workers were the symbolic villains in the production of a hegemonic white, male middle-class citizen of the emergent nation.

*   *   *
The 21st century in Australia opened with a decade-long mining boom, and with miners continuing to dominate the national imaginary. The intervening century has seen mining undergo a transformation. Increasing corporatisation and mechanisation has coincided with militant unionisation, and for much of the 20th century, the heroic miner was pitted against an increasingly powerful mining corporate-class supported by the State. This dynamic began to shift in the 1980s though, when neoliberal State governments moved to support mining companies de-unionise their workforces (Ellem 2015). In so doing, control over the narrative and trajectory of mining was returned to the mining industry at the expense of individual labourers. Yet, against this background, miners are heralded by state leaders as “modern day heroes” (AAP 2013). Furthermore, “From every direction, Australians are told that their current and future prosperity depends on what we dig, drill and smelt for the world” (Pearse 2009: 1). This continues a long tradition of visibility and legitimacy within the national imaginary, beginning with the Miners Right after Eureka. Alternatively, sex work in the intervening years has seen a change in modality with sex workers increasingly engaged in a civil rights agenda to have their work recognised as work, roughly beginning with the sexual revolution in the 1970s. The growing visibility of sex workers is multi-layered. Women are already constructed as the ‘other’ to men in an artificial and outdated binary (Longhurst 2001). In the eyes of much of the public though, women doing sex work are the ‘other’ within the ‘other’ (Cunningham 2016).

Various legislative regimes have placed sex workers on a spectrum of legality and visibility. Highly punitive criminal codes exist in the United States and South Africa (Thukral Esq. and Ditmore 2003, Nyembe et al. 2014). One ex-colony of Australia, New South Wales, has embraced an evidence-based approach to sex work legislation, with decriminalisation in 1995, after the Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service (herein Wood Royal Commission) (1997). The Wood Royal Commission was a
far-ranging investigation into corruption in the New South Wales Police Service, and one of its many findings was “a clear nexus between police corruption and the operation of brothels” (Royal Commission into the NSW Police Service 1997: 13). Most other Australian states still carry penalties attached to a spectrum of more or less repressive laws that commenced in the 1830s. Poor, transgender workers and women of colour are further othered and concealed. The visibility of sex workers through an international cadre of organisations all calling for decriminalisation and recognition of sex work labour value, such as the Global Commission on HIV and the Law (2012), International Labor Organisation (ed. Lim 1998), Human Rights Watch (2014) and World Health Organisation (Vuylsteke et al. 2012), has put the sex work laws of many countries under scrutiny (Grant 2014). Sex workers themselves have collectively been undertaking ongoing advocacy for their right to work, all manoeuvring for increased respect and acceptance in defiance of stigma, starting with COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) in the United States, and leading to Australia’s own Scarlet Alliance. Yet, despite their advocacy, sex workers are still continually forced to defend their right to participate in sex work in a significant global public debate about the merits of various models of sex work legislation. Many of these debates continue to demonstrate anxiety about women’s bodies and female agency that first appeared over a century ago in the Victorian era. The legacies of the laws around sex work and mining, implemented in the years preceding Federation by a middle-class attempting to assert a particular vision of the nation, infusing it with their particular vision of morality, has therefore had a significant effect on these industries and labourers in the present. Sex workers continue to be spatially marginalised, with street-based sex workers often relegated to working in less safe industrial areas, escorts banned from working in hotels (Section 4.4.2), and brothels unable to open near churches or schools. The effect of this moral ideology is to remove
traces of sex work, and non-heteronormative sexuality, from anything resembling public space.

This chapter has interrogated legislation, as a technology of power for an increasingly dominant middle-class during a time of nation-building, to expose how critical parts of Australia’s history have been written out of the national imaginary, and why. Formative legislation during the colonial period has positioned mining and sex work very differently, with corresponding effects of increased social privilege for miners and increased social marginalisation sex workers. The dominance of mining as an industry has allowed miners a certain degree of latitude in how they are judged by the public. The marginalisation of sex work on the other hand has created social stigma for sex workers. This chapter has therefore set about unsettling the narrow, masculinist frame of the national imaginary by revealing and re-locating sex work alongside its companion industry, challenging the stability and homogeneity of the national imaginary.
CHAPTER 3
MINING (IN) THE MEDIA:
PRIVILEGE AND ANXIETY

3.1 Introduction
The previous chapter examined the historical construction of mining and sex work, and the anxieties that led to their separation in the Victorian-era as distinctive forms of labour, with diverging moral positionings in the national imaginary. Mining was propelled into a position of privilege and sex work into a position of marginalisation. This is the first of two chapters that together seek to better understand how these industries and associated labour identities are currently positioned within the national imaginary, through the news media as a technology of power. The news media has a direct link to the national imaginary, as a technology of power that both informs and is shaped by public opinion, and by mediating between the public and government (Parisi and Holcomb 1994). This was evident in Chapter 2, in the examples of the Bulletin’s influence over masculinist national myth-making, and the press acquiescing to public pressure around Chinese miners. The news media is therefore fertile ground for examining the kinds of anxieties being expressed in Australia about mining. After a century of privilege, mining’s position as a heroic form of labour is being contested; contestation that in this case is wrought out of persistent media representations depicting anxiety surrounding the Australian mining industry and its labourers.

Defining anxiety is an important step for understanding its contribution to the representations of mining in the news media. Anxiety is a “prominent and pervasive” emotion, a “tense anticipation of a threatening but vague event; a feeling of uneasy
suspense” (Rachman 1998: 1-2). It differs from fear in that fear often has a specific focus and recedes when the perceived danger is removed, whereas anxiety “is a state of heightened vigilance rather than an emergency reaction” (Rachman 1998: 3). Existential anxiety is not a discrete category within the mental health industry standard *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association 2013). It can though be understood as “an overwhelming and physically manifesting state of fear, distress, loathing, and dread which derives from human awareness of the transient and fragile nature of life” (Neilson 2015: 185). It is this form of anxiety that is relevant to both the following chapters, including investigation of mining distance labourers later in this chapter, as well as sex workers in Chapter 4. An examination of this emotion within the contemporary media can help us understand the forces that may be unsettling the taken-for-granted positioning of the heroic, masculine miner in the national imaginary (cf. Ey et al. 2017).

The analysis in this chapter covers the Australian news media over a six-year period, one which coincided with the apex and decline of the most recent mining boom. A major discussion point in the reporting of mining during this period was the final report of a federal inquiry by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia (2013) into the labour practice of Fly-in Fly-out (FIFO) mining, released to the public in February 2013. It was the latest response to increasingly vocal and oppositional reactions to FIFO work practices, and was evocatively titled ‘Cancer of the Bush or Salvation for our Cities?’ (herein Cancer of the Bush report or inquiry). National and local media alike scrutinised the inquiry from its inception in 2011 until it concluded in 2013, with coverage following the inquiry as it travelled through various rural and remote mining communities across Australia and around the world. The final report was highly critical of the practice of FIFO work, citing the lack of current and accurate knowledge
about the effects of this work on both host and source communities, and FIFO families (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia 2013).

The bulk of this chapter is concerned with the specific renderings of mining and miners through discourses of anxiety in the news media, and the kinds of anxieties being affixed to miners. To understand the relationship between the historical antecedents of mining in the national imaginary (Chapter 2), and the contemporary production of anxiety through mining labourers, this chapter first examines how anxiety permeates the social and cultural terrain, and then how the media intersects with the national imaginary. The following two sections are given over to this necessary conceptual infrastructure. Following these sections, the methods selected for investigating contemporary anxieties of mining in the news media are described, followed by a discussion of the results, and some final conclusions. Chapter 4 follows, and will focus on media analyses of sex work.

3.2 Mining, Rurality, Anxiety

Chapter 2 presented the circumstances whereby mining has come to be understood as part of the heroic and masculinist tradition within the Australian national imaginary. FIFO mining continues this tradition. Contemporary FIFO mining connects with its historical heroic, masculine position in the national imaginary through the ubiquitous high-visibility workwear (‘hi-vis’) uniform (Figure 3.1). The performance of masculinity through workwear has been noted previously in American cowboy culture (Garceau 2001, Gibson 2016). The hardhats, colourful vests and jumpers, and steel-capped boots of the ‘fluoro man’ identity are seen in the emblematic spaces of airports all over the country (Barrass 2012). Airports, spaces considered “the future of urban existence”, where mobility, consumers, and labour collide, “define and undo more traditional conceptions of citizen
and territory through mobile post-national citizenship regimes or re-imaginings of nations” (Adey 2010: 7). The FIFO worker, in their performance of masculinity through their highly visible uniforms in airports, is a reminder that mining is an integral part of the nation.
Figure 3.1: ‘White Mines’ - a collage of miners cut from *Australian Mining*, an industry magazine for readers interested in mining technology and innovation, March 2015 - March 2016. This collage depicts archetypal mining workers. The prevalence of men in hi-vis workwear was an unintended by-product of an art project by Nick Skilton intended to depict ethnic homogeneity in the mining industry, and inadvertently represents the monolithic white masculinity of the industry (Credit: Nick Skilton).
The location of the mines themselves in very remote regions of the country is reminiscent of the early colonial gold rushes that transformed the rural countryside (Blainey 1993, Knox 2013). Just as mining was seen to have helped develop and “civilise” the interior of the continent in the invasion and colonisation periods, bringing people and infrastructure to rural places (Lawrence 2005: 46), the introduction of FIFO labour in the 1980s signalled a change in the modality of rural and remote-area mining. Purpose-built company boomtowns shifted to mine-site ‘dongas’ (see Figure 3.2) (the etymology of this word is unknown), with the proximate towns perhaps lucky to be used as a refuelling centre. This situation formed the basis of Keith Storey’s (2001) groundbreaking ‘fly-over’ theory of the economic geographical effects of mining, which is still influential today (see Measham et al. 2013). Storey (2001: 146) argued that increased use of FIFO in long life mining operations has:

benefitted the Perth metropolitan area in particular. The smaller regional centres have not only failed to capture many of the benefits of resource development within their regions, but have sometimes experienced additional cost burdens resulting from the need to provide services for transient workers and operators with little or no return for their investment.

Bringing urban mining workers into rural spaces and communities with more traditional moral ideologies has also had unintended social consequences. (A critical reading of related perspectives on rural spaces can be seen in Cloke et al. 2006, Gorman-Murray et al. 2013, Pini and Mayes 2013, Pini et al. 2013, Dufty-Jones and Connell 2014).
Figure 3.2: ‘Dongas’: typical remote mine accommodation generally consisting of a portable aluminium shed (Photo: Strueman 2015).

According to Mayes (2003: 16) “local communities need to be understood as in dialogue with the overarching national identity”. In response, “national identity is always mediated by local experience at the level of home, family, village or neighbourhood” (Hage 1993, in Mayes 2003: 16). The media is involved in this dialogue by ensuring readers are aware of who shares their goals, concerns, experiences and identity, and “help to cement precisely which practices become understood and territorialised” (Sharp 1996, Waitt et al. 2012: 36). The effect of the media, and newspaper use in particular, may be especially conspicuous in rural communities where there is a higher ratio of newspaper use relative to metropolitan areas (Beaudoin and Thorson 2004). Thus representations of the FIFO miner traverse the rural news, embedding themselves in local community understandings of this labour practice. Relationships between FIFO miners and rural communities are moderated by these understandings, affecting local interactions and the national imaginary alike (Mayes 2003).

Rurality is a “significant imaginative space” (Cloke 2006: 18), a “powerful discursive category” (Pini and Mayes 2012: 79), and a “social and cultural construct” (Panelli et al. 2009: 355). In other words, rurality encompasses a complex arrangement of human
agents, landscapes, emotions, and material/discursive signifiers that are not readily or authoritatively synergised into one designation. In the Australian context, it is challenging to determine with any certainty what exactly constitutes the rural since, as per Cloke (2006), sign and signification are no longer necessarily complimentary. If, somewhat simplistically, rurality is to be viewed as that-which-is-not-urban, most of the continent must be considered rural. However, “all sorts of spaces – such as the suburb or small town – often appear to fall between these twin constructions” (Phillips 1998: 138). Many of Australia’s rural towns, some large enough to be considered cities, may not differ greatly from suburbs in the coastal capitals and yet are discursively understood as ‘country towns’ simply by virtue of their geographic isolation (remote mining centre Kalgoorlie-Boulder being an illustrative example, with 30,000 residents). Furthermore, understandings that posit the rural as an idealised, peaceful utopia of hard-working masculine heteronormativity and domestic femininity are often theorised without exploring the practices that create or contradict these assumptions (Hubbard 2008). As Gorman-Murray et al. (2012: 69) argued, meanings and practices of rurality are “constituted, circulated and contested” in diverse ways, and “insinuate which people and activities do and do not belong in particular places” (see also Bell 2006, Bryant and Pini 2011).

Emergent research has shown the complicated relationship the new modality of FIFO mining has with both urban and rural society (Pini et al. 2012, Pini and Mayes 2012, Hoath and McKenzie 2013, McKenzie et al. 2014). We saw earlier in Chapter 2 the rendering of sex workers and Chinese miners as abject, as the ‘other’ to middle-class morality, and subject to oppressive legislative changes. Contemporary rural communities may deal with their existential anxiety similarly, by responding to a perceived threat through directing their resentment at ‘outsiders’ (Grattan 2007). Little (1999: 438) has argued for the importance of questioning “Why are certain identities othered, who gains
or benefits from such positioning and who are those who are ‘the same’.” The positions are not fixed and immutable, but are continually constructed and reconstructed as social groups gain or lose social status. If anxieties often occur when there are vague and ill-defined threats at large, then it is worth detailing some existing scholarship outlining how mining may evoke such emotions.

Mining has produced anxieties in the middle-class through the ostentatious displays of FIFO miner wealth paired with traditional working-class values and aesthetics (Pini et al. 2012). However, anxiety surrounding mining is most visibly on display through its interaction with criminality in rural communities. Kerry Carrington has co-written extensively about the resource boom’s dark ‘underbelly’, and the social impacts on host communities (Carrington et al. 2011, Carrington and Pereira 2011, Carrington et al. 2012, Scott et al. 2012a). Carrington et al. (2012: 9) declare that:

> In sociological terms, FIFOs are the classic ‘outsiders’ … and they are subject to ‘crime talk’ of a kind more usually invoked in other rural settings to ‘rationalise’ a racialised politics of exclusion.

Crime talk is thus a reaction to existential anxiety, whereby FIFO workers (rather than the mining industry per se) are imagined as ‘outsiders’ and dangerous interlopers within the rural idyll\(^\text{12}\), bringing unwanted change.

It is unclear when the FIFO worker began to occupy a position of abjection, but the analysis in this chapter confirms the outsider status of FIFO workers. In the case of this research, otherness is being used to identify and marginalise certain groups of labourers, both miners and sex workers, whose chosen occupation can at times take them into

\(^{12}\text{This research acknowledges that the concept of the rural idyll has perhaps outlived its usefulness due to the increasing understanding of variety of rural societies (Little 1999), but here serves as an effective shorthand for much broader power relations than can be described here.}\)
contact with rural communities (see Section 4.4 for a case study of this interaction). This situation is therefore something quite different from Chapter 2, where only sex workers and Chinese miners were problematised after Eureka. This analysis does not intend to fall into the accidental trap of homogenising otherness, but deliberately situates together labourers that Chapter 2 demonstrated were geographically co-located, and yet have come to experience differing polarities of social privilege and marginalisation through an earlier, legislative technology of power. While FIFO miners quite literally embody the ‘outsider’, coming from outside the regions where they work, they are predominantly male (88 per cent), white (91 per cent for the entire mining industry), and nominally middle-class (ABS 2016a). Otherness however is often seen to be embodied by those not white, not male, and not middle-class; namely LGBTIQ people, the poor, the single parent, and those of different ethnicities. The demonstration in this chapter of an othered FIFO mining ‘body’ contests these conditions of otherness not just by embodying the characteristics of patriarchal hegemony, but from the unique position of mining’s heroic legacy and centrality in the national imaginary. As a result of this othering, this chapter argues that, in fact, new representations of mining within the news media can be seen to unsettle the hegemony of the heroic, masculine miner in the national imaginary.

3.3 National Imaginaries and the Media
The struggle between liberal and conservative media forces has been in effect since the Victorian-era, and the battles have “marked out where the outer perimeter of the ‘acceptable’ lay” (Curran 2002: 24). The penny press in the 1830s made news available for all people rather than just the elites, and accordingly, human interest news became as widely reported as politics (Brazeal 2005). Throughout this period, news media proliferated, and mass-produced media became a powerful agent in the construction of a
national ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1991). Coincidentally, the time that the goldrushes were exploding in rural Victoria was also the time that both the modern city and the newspaper were cementing their identities and relationship (Parisi and Holcomb 1994). Parisi and Holcomb (1994: 377) make the point that:

> Among discursive systems, the newspaper is pre-eminently linked to place … Newspapers are local economic institutions whose business might be said to be the symbolic construction of place. The locale may be as small as a neighbourhood or larger than a nation … but some central spatial conception will organise a newspaper’s activities and representations.

Farbotko (2005: 284) argues that “when world events are reported, they are often angled with reference to the newspaper’s locale.” Rural news often relies upon the local community to notify them of media-worthy local developments, which are then reported back to the community. This reciprocal relationship causes the rural news to differ from larger metropolitan news outlets (Richards et al. 2011). Richards et al. (2011) use the example of newspapers from Roxby Downs (a FIFO host community in South Australia), where their research participants identified that the local news, more than national news, told stories relevant to the community. This was important for a town with a transient population, because “stories were important in framing the community for newcomers and restoring and maintaining a sense of community for ongoing residents (Richards et al. 2011: 101). Conversely, state and national news was seen as unimportant to their interest in local community events.

For many readers (listeners, watchers) of the news, the experience of mining towns and camps, and/or FIFO mining and sex work are “unknown through direct experience and [are] created in the imagination through appeals to mediated representations” (Farbotko 2005: 283). Consumers of news media, as well as powerful lobby groups and private
interests, also exert influence in the media communication process. This creates an “interactive discursive arena” where “[o]pinion columns and letters to the editor provide an indication of readership response to certain issues” (Farbotko 2005: 283). In so doing, the media moulds community identity and builds social networks (Beaudoin and Thorson 2004), in a manner that sees representations admitted and re-iterated in the national imaginary (Mayes 2003).

To re-iterate, the national identity and its imagination is a continual avowal of the “patterns of values, symbols, memories, myths, and traditions that form the distinctive heritage of the nation” (Stubbs 2012: 129). In Australia, the mining industry came to be entrenched in the national imaginary through legislative technologies of power that increasingly positioned mining as a heroic, masculine and necessary industry in middle-class productions of nation-building. The symbols and signs of mining are now an everyday part of life, either through mining company billboards at airports (see Figure 1.1), advertising around anti-mining tax legislation (Canning 2010), high-profile protests against Australia’s largest proposed coal mine that could negatively affect the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef (Remeikis 2016), and televised biopics about Australian mining magnate Gina Rinehart (Australia’s richest woman) (House of Hancock 2015). But contemporary mining, in the form of FIFO, would seem to be increasingly problematised. Through its interaction with urban and rural communities, mining has begun to provoke anxieties. The news media, in its complex and dialogic relationship with the national imaginary, is a technology of power that can be interrogated to ascertain how the once secure position of mining may be unsettled through anxieties depicted in the media. The following section describes methods undertaken, the explosion of news articles after 2010, and how they were selected for analysis in this chapter.
3.4 Methods

It is now generally accepted that the most recent mining ‘boom’ in Australia spanned the decade from 2003 to 2013 (Garnaut 2013). Media reporting in Australia during this period has done much for entrenching the idea of ‘the boom’ in the civic mind, thus cementing mining – the industry – in the national imaginary in ways that built upon colonial antecedents (see Chapter 2). This reporting fell on many sympathetic ears, coming on the back of the 2008-2012 Global Financial Crisis in which the dominant narrative suggested Australia survived largely unscathed due to the strength of our mineral resources and relationship with China (who until recently was very keen on what Australia could dig out of the ground). But as with all booms, there comes the inevitable ‘bust’. The analysis pursued here attempts to cover the range of narratives provided over this period of boom and bust.

News media was chosen as the primary source material because, as already mentioned, it has a high degree of use in rural communities, and is also deeply enmeshed in the production of the national imaginary. Reporting, particularly in rural areas, is often presented by people bounded both spatially and socially within those communities (Sigal 1987). This situation is therefore likely to affect their presentation of the news. News media was deemed to be more significant in the production of a national imaginary than other sources that could have been utilised, such as submissions to parliamentary inquiries, and mining family support websites such as Mining Family Matters, FIFO Families, and This FIFO Life (see previous analysis by Pini and Mayes 2012), which are often only read by a small selection of interested parties.

Letters to the editor are an important feature of the news, in that they often serve to define the relationship between the newspaper editor and the newspaper’s readership, and
“provide an indication of readership response to certain issues” (Farbotko 2005: 283). There is a distinct literature around letters to the editor sections and their meanings and values, but they can be summarised as:

patterns of circulation and contribution, editorial considerations, and narrative genres constitute a fragmented contentious zone between politics, the media, and the private life of the limited number of citizens who get a chance to express themselves through the concrete operations of one of the institutions that gives the abstraction ‘the public debate’ whatever reality it has (Nielsen 2010: 21).

It is worth noting that although letters to the editor have been somewhat superseded by social media, the selection of letters by news editors in particular can “shape the public discourse both directly and more covertly” (Wahl-Jorgensen 2002: 184). The who and why of letter writers is murky, but (Nielsen 2010: 24) notes that:

Whereas news is a co-production between journalists and sources … letters must be seen as a co-production between editors and letter writers. The latter seem to be almost exclusively readers of the individual papers in question.

It is also important to note that letters to editors are often written by people with either strong emotions or vested interests. Letters are especially prominent in the rural press. Letters to the editor were accordingly included here in the total sample as part of the national discourse.

This chapter concentrates on the entire Australian news media, including major broadsheet *The Australian*, major statewide tabloids and compacts such as *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The West Australian*, smaller local tabloids from regional centres such as the *Townsville Bulletin* and Mackay’s *Daily Mercury*, transcripts from televised and radio news media, and online news sources such as *The Conversation*. The major publishers were News Corp Australia, Fairfax Media Limited, APN News and Media, and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). The means of accessing articles was
the online search engine Factiva. Factiva is a research tool owned by News Corp that aggregates media content from around the world.

I used Factiva to search over a six-year period, starting 1st Jan 2010 until the 1st December 2015 when the research for this chapter began. This beginning date was chosen since FIFO as a news topic escalated considerably after 2010, coinciding roughly with the start of the aforementioned Cancer of the Bush inquiry in 2011. ‘FIFO’, ‘fly in fly out’, ‘and long distance commuting’ are the three most common terms for public discussion of this labour and so formed one component of the search parameter. Since investigating the Australian national imaginary is the aim of this research, only news articles from the Australian news media were collected. To maintain some semblance of neutrality in the search to avoid picking up only negative articles around FIFO work, ‘impact’, ‘benefit’ and ‘problem’ were all used as limiting terms. The use of these terms allowed for a broad spectrum of possible impacts, either positive or negative, that would not have been possible with more direct search times that could have proved relevant, such as crime, work, or sexuality. Initial searches brought up many articles from corporation briefs, so ‘industry snapshot’ and ‘company snapshot’ were excluded. All articles from ASX Comnews, the dedicated Australian Stock Exchange news service, were also excluded. The exact search algorithm used was: (FIFO OR "fly in fly out" OR "long distance commuting") AND Australia* AND (impact* OR benefit* OR problem*) NOT ("industry snapshots" OR "company snapshots"). Quotation marks shown above were a necessary and deliberate part of the Boolean search operation to search for those exact words in sequence. Likewise, the asterisk performs a truncated search for variations on those words. The brackets contained the individual sections to search the OR expressions before the AND and NOT expressions.
Farbotko (2005: 283) argues in her analysis of news media concerning climate change in Tuvalu, that 117 news articles during a fifteen-year period in only one major newspaper suggests that the issue under investigation in her study was only of minor significance to the news media and public. My own Factiva search by contrast returned 4,501 hits, and although covering the entire country, was within a much shorter timeframe, suggesting that FIFO is of considerable significance. Some 860 articles were duplicates, leaving 3,641 articles in total for analysis. I deemed 3,641 articles an unmanageable number of articles to effectively analyse manually, so these articles were entered into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package that enables users to classify non-numerical information and examine relationships in the data. NVivo refined the search to only include articles that had the search terms ‘FIFO’, ‘fly in fly out’, or ‘long distance commuting’ within 50 words (chosen as the size of a short paragraph) of the limiting terms ‘impact’, ‘benefit’ or ‘problem’. This attempted to ensure some kind of causality between FIFO and its impacts. A subsequent closer reading further identified articles within which the search terms were not related to each other. These too were discarded. This left 519 articles to be coded, accounting for 14.3 per cent of the total found articles. Where possible, quotes from media sources of different scales (i.e. local compared to national news) have been used in the discussion.

The year 2010 had the smallest number of news articles (Figure 3.3), possibly because the Cancer of the Bush inquiry had not yet begun to create a consistent stirring for journalists. There were 1,278 articles published in 2012, the most of any year, likely due to the Cancer of the Bush committee travelling the country conducting research. This is considerably more than any other year, with the next closest being 2011 with 700 articles. Articles about FIFO mining were often conflicted, presenting multiple accounts of the effects of mining. Rather than code each article as either predominantly ‘positive’ or
‘negative’ in tone, each article was coded as many times as positive or negative representations were depicted within. Thus, some mining articles were coded with both ‘benefit’ and ‘problem’ qualities since both were written about throughout the course of the article.

Figure 3.3: Distribution of news articles concerning FIFO with respect to impacts, benefits or problems, 2010 to 2015.

Having acquired the articles for an examination of the Australian news in relation to FIFO work, a methodological framework was necessary for analysis. The framework chosen was Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is the “analysis of the dialectical relationships between semiosis (including language) and other elements of social practices” (Fairclough 2001: 123). CDA was chosen because it considers language use as a crucial component of social practice, and its interest relationships of “dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language”, and is particularly useful in analysing media discourse (Wodak 2001: 2). It can highlight the effect discourse has on social practices by considering the many ways “discourse is historically produced and
interpreted”, and that dominance hierarchies “are legitimated by ideologies of powerful
groups”, such as those who control the concentrated Australian media sector (Wodak
2001: 3). CDA was applied in this analysis by coding quotes within the 519 media articles.
With the understanding that these 519 articles are part of a national discourse around
mining, these coded quotes can be interpreted as likely identifiers through which the
public (via the news) comes to understand and internalise mining as an industry and
profession. Through this spectrum of news sources and range of geographical scales, a
particular narrative of the mining industry and mining labourers is cemented in the
national imaginary. The rest of this chapter is dedicated to a discussion of the analysis of
the final selection of 519 articles, paying attention to the rhetoric and representations used
in the media to understand the contemporary national imaginative space for miners and
mining.

3.5 Discussion
In a 2001 review of the media and other documents, Storey (2001: 139) identified three
strains of overlapping criticisms of FIFO: “the health and well-being of the individual and
the family; the economic impacts of FIFO on local businesses; and the economic and
social vitality of regional communities.” It would appear based on my own coding of
media articles between 2010 and 2015, that not much has changed between then and now.
There are many overlapping themes between this analysis and that of Storey (2001). For
simplicity FIFO has been coded here as a ‘benefit’ or ‘problem’ under the broad themes:

- rural community and social life;
- economic, employment or infrastructure issues;
- worker mental health and job safety;
- family and relationships;
- housing availability and affordability;
• crime; and
• miscellaneous other benefit / miscellaneous other problem.

From these codes, a series of key worker identities that pertain to miners emerged.

There were 69 articles (13 per cent) that were approximately neutral in tone overall, meaning that the reporting was fairly even-handed, and made no claims that FIFO was ‘good’ or ‘bad’. These were not used in the analysis, and the beneficial and problematic representations discussed in this chapter are drawn from a total of 450 articles. In the remaining 450 articles, there were 157 broadly positive references to FIFO (25 per cent). This meant that somewhere within the article, FIFO was referred to by the reporter in a way that suggested it had something positive to offer. There were 473 instances (75 per cent) that problematised FIFO, in the sense that the reporter was clear that FIFO had negative social, cultural or economic impacts. This latter group then was quite clearly the overwhelming majority. Figure 3.4 and Figure 3.5 show the overall distribution of the results of coding the 450 selected media articles. With the media playing a strong role in the shaping of public opinion, the numbers and figures here suggest that although heroic masculine worker identities and the prosperity arising from the minerals boom provided a positive backdrop, the dominant narrative of FIFO work was negative, one of problems and challenges.
Figure 3.4: Total number of instances of beneficial and problematic coded representations of mining, from a total of 450 articles.

Figure 3.5: Total beneficial and problematic representations as a percentage of each code.
Representations were not uniform throughout the media landscape. In the case of Australian regional newspapers, news was likely to be aligned towards the editor’s views on local issues. Communication with an editor at the APN News and Media news desk confirmed that he was, in fact, against the 100 per cent use of FIFO labour in the Bowen Basin region, and was running an editorial line that reflected his own position on the debate (Jacques 2015, pers. comm. 2nd December). This did not necessarily translate to rural news being more critical of FIFO than state and national news. Rural Australia has been experiencing economic decline and withdrawal of services for some time (Lawrence 1987, Brown and Bellamy 2010), a context within which local media might be expected to be well disposed towards positive reporting on mining, as a hopeful form of economic development.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, FIFO mining is now the dominant form of mining labour in the Australian imaginary, through its discursive and optical visibility for “the public, media, politicians, and academics alike” (Argent 2015: 361). It is worth bearing this in mind throughout the preceding discussion. Understanding FIFO mining as being synonymous with the entire mining industry (although this association will be contested in Chapter 5) is critical in order for this analysis to make sense, since much of the data references FIFO rather than mining. The rest of this section is dedicated to articulating the specific ways that FIFO workers have been problematised in the media, and how this representation fuels ongoing community anxiety about the nature of this work practice. The discussion has therefore been broken up into sections reflecting the various themes under which newspaper articles have been coded. The themed sections are listed in order of largest to smallest number of negative coded responses, with Section 3.5.1 first.
providing some context. Prior to these problematisations though, a section outlining the limited spectrum of positive responses pertaining to mining is provided to demonstrate a small measure of continuity of the historically dominant hegemonic miner in the national imaginary.

3.5.1 The Legacy of the Heroic Miner in the Contemporary News Media

Australia’s iconic FIFO worker is embodied in the concept of ‘Fluoro Man’, a heroic figure generating and distributing wealth, but also problematic and challenging:

The arrival of Fluoro Man as the nation’s new golden-haired worker is creating big challenges for mining companies, local communities and governments, but none so pressing as how his choice of work style - fly-in, fly-out - should be used to spread the wealth from the resources boom. – *The Australian*, National Daily Broadsheet (Barrass 2012).

The heroic mining figure, and the hegemonic representation of mining as a necessary embedded part of the Australian imaginary, shines through in these quotes from exclusively right-wing papers, but also introduces new elements into the imagination that reflect contemporary social concerns (Table 3.1). Many of them deal with the idea of family. In a 2012 quote seen in Table 3.1 from South Australia’s daily newspaper *The Advertiser*, a conservative News Corp Australia publication, miner Malcolm Ross defends FIFO mining by claiming “he sees more of his kids now than when he was home” (Debelle 2012). A second quote, from a letter to the editor in response to the first article, appraises the FIFO miner as “a great example of the modern Australian family”, directly positioning by extension all miners as an ideal representation of ‘Australianness’ (Letters to the Editor 2012c). As the FIFO work model has become more entrenched in the mining industry, there has been a rise in online support groups for FIFO workers and their families (Pini and Mayes 2012). One article, from 2015 in the
conservative statewide tabloid *The Courier-Mail (QLD)*, reports on a different form of support provided in aid of FIFO families – a children’s book written by the partner of a FIFO worker. The book is intended to help their children “understand why their Dad, a fly-in-fly-out worker, has to go away to work, what he does, and the importance of resource industries to Australia” (Edminstone 2015, emphasis added). The book, and the journalist reporting on it, positions mining as heroic Australian work, and stresses the positive impact a book for children explaining this concept can have on managing family expectations. The reference to family becomes important in the later sub-sections on the ‘Broken Family Miner’ and the ‘Unstable Miner’, where coded articles position the miner as a figure of precarious mental health, subsequently affecting their intimate relationships, and someone who is failing to meet required standards in a family setting. Together, these representations of poor emotional health and failed family life pose a threat to heteronormative understandings of the Australian nation.
Table 3.1: A selection of supportive quotes about mining from sections of the news media, from the 450 analysed articles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Title of Article</th>
<th>Type of Media</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Political Leaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>FLY-IN, fly-out workforces are an inevitable part of Central Queensland's future mining landscape, Regional Australia and Regional Development Minister Simon Crean says. Mr Crean said the sheer size of the resources boom meant cities like Rockhampton and Gladstone's future growth was secure, regardless of fly-in, fly-out operations. Speaking in Rockhampton last week, Mr Crean said the government's job was to utilise the proceeds from the boom to sustain economic growth into the future.</td>
<td>‘FIFO workers a fact of life, says minister’</td>
<td>Newspaper Article (The Morning Bulletin, QLD)</td>
<td>APN News and Media</td>
<td>Centre-Right (inferred from the publishing company’s flagship newspaper)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>The fact is that FIFO is nothing more than an economically efficient response to capacity constraint, one that ensures that talent is deployed where it will generate the greatest economic benefit. It is that simple.</td>
<td>‘Banks reap rewards for their prudence’</td>
<td>Newspaper Article (The Australian)</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Thanks for your informative article on the impact of mining on country towns (Fly In Squad, 9/6/12) especially the positive slant taken by the Thomas family, who are a great example of the modern Australian family making the most of their opportunities. A FIFO workforce, intelligently managed, could be a lot more sensible on environmental grounds, as it puts far less pressure on the fragile Outback.</td>
<td>‘Letter of the Week’</td>
<td>Letter to the Editor (The Advertiser, SA)</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
<td>Right</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Malcolm Ross … has been commuting to Coober Pedy from Geelong for the past two years, working 12-hour days for two weeks before flying home for a week off … He misses his family but says he sees more of his kids now than when he was home … Ross is one of thousands in the fluoro army crowding business lounges in airports across the country on their way to or from the mines that are the lifeblood of the Australian economy, employing up to 8 per cent of the nation's workforce. “People call Qantas Club 'the miners' lounge.”</td>
<td>‘Work in Progress’</td>
<td>Newspaper Article (The Advertiser, SA)</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Date Source</td>
<td>Publisher</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>IN some regional communities, fly-in, fly-out mining work has been hailed as a saviour … In the small town of Manjimup, about 300km south of Perth, locals are singing the praises of the FIFO model. After the closure of its timber mill last year, which saw over 40 workers laid off, most were able to pick up FIFO work in Rio Tinto’s Pilbara operations. The mill has since re-opened, but the area's acting CEO, Doug Elkins, says if it wasn't for the mining jobs, many would have left Manjimup for good. “Mining has saved us quite a bit,” says Elkins.</td>
<td>10/1/2012</td>
<td>Newspaper Article</td>
<td>(The Australian)</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Noosa man PAUL WOODS has worked in the mining industry for several years and has been a fly-in-fly-out worker since moving to the Sunshine Coast from NSW two years ago. He says he is sick of hearing FIFO workers being ‘demonised’ by politicians, the media and society in general and wants to set the record straight. This is his story … Why do politicians and do-gooders think they have the right to decide what is right for my family? We are all very happy, thank you! If you think we are suffering, why don’t you actually ask the people involved, rather than attempt to dictate to them? The reason this discussion is public in the first place is typical of the great Australian “tall poppy syndrome”. We see others with things that we may want. We don’t necessarily want to endure the discomforts to get these things ourselves. So we take uninformed pot-shots at those people who do. The message here is a simple one: if you want what the FIFO workers have, do the necessary training and find your own opportunity. If you don’t, then leave us alone.</td>
<td>1/1/2013</td>
<td>Newspaper Article</td>
<td>(Sunshine Coast Sunday, QLD)</td>
<td>APN News and Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>After one particularly distressing goodbye at Brisbane Airport, mum Jo Emery put pen to paper to help them [their children] understand why their Dad, a fly-in-fly-out worker, has to go away to work, what he does and the importance of resource industries to Australia. The result – My Dad is a FIFO Dad – has had a huge impact not only on their family, but FIFO families across Australia. “When I read this story to Sahskia, she just looked at me with tears in her eyes and said, ‘Wow Mum, that’s about my daddy and I’, and she was just so proud,” says Jo, 38.</td>
<td>1/1/2015</td>
<td>Newspaper Article</td>
<td>(The Courier-Mail, QLD)</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
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</table>
Whereas the Australian Outback in the national imaginary has been glamorised and romanticised in the written works of Patterson and Lawson and embedded as the ideal Australian landscape, one miner was quoted in the centre-right *Kalgoorlie Miner* as saying:

> I get to come home and enjoy my break in a relatively civilised and cosmopolitan society; away from red dust, flies, snakes, dry boiling heat and every other reason not to live permanently in a remote area – *Kalgoorlie Miner* (WA), Rural Daily Tabloid (Kalgoorlie Miner 2012).

In a reversal of the idea of mining as a great liberator of the Outback, opening up the nation to human presence and economic utility, one letter to the editor *The Advertiser* (SA) directly references environmental concerns regarding the strain mining can put on a “fragile” environment (Letters to the Editor 2012c). Thus, mining, once positioned as a civilising force in a harsh frontier landscape, must now contend with modern environmental concerns. Moreover, the heroic masculine miner has been somewhat tamed by urban (from whence the FIFO miners often come) comforts like air-conditioning and “cosmopolitan society” (Kalgoorlie Miner 2012). Miners confronted with the Australian landscape, deeply embedded in Australia’s national imaginary alongside its charismatic bush characters seen in the works of Patterson and Lawson, are grumbling about its harshness. By articulating their preference for urban landscapes, away from “red dust, flies, snakes, dry boiling heat”, FIFO miners unsettle the stoic masculinity that is typically attached to heroic bush imaginaries. These renderings of mining are therefore problematising the harsh but iconic landscapes of the Australian national imaginary, through concern for its impact on the environment, and lack of urbanity.
Finally, *The Australian* (conservative national broadsheet) and *The Morning Bulletin* (Queensland rural tabloid), position mining and miners in their quotes and titles as an economic necessity; a “fact of life” (Wratten 2011), “inevitable” (Wratten 2011), a “pillar” of the Queensland economy (The Morning Bulletin 2015), and a “saviour” (Cencigh-Albulario 2012). The economic argument representing mining as an unassailable good for the nation, providing opportunity and flexibility, is pervasive. When the only widely-circulated national newspaper, *The Australian*, argues that “FIFO is nothing more than an economically efficient response to capacity constraint … It is that simple”, it reverberates throughout the national discourse (Stevens 2011). In this depiction of FIFO mining, it is simply economic common-sense that FIFO exists, and in so positioning FIFO uncritically this way, mining becomes naturalised as an integral part of the labour force. Together, these articles and quotes continue to reinforce the persistent idea that mining is an intrinsic positive part of the Australian imaginary, though an idea not without contradiction. Yet significantly, they represent a much smaller sample than the following sections depicting the negative reporting provided by the news media over the six-year period.

3.5.2 The Antisocial Miner

FIFO workers are often vilified in the press for their negative contribution to civic life in mining communities, but as one reader succinctly put it in a 2012 letter to the editor from a centre-right rural Queensland paper (Table 3.2), FIFO has become an opportunistic scapegoat for the intractable problems that are felt to be plaguing many rural communities. This transgressive Mackay resident and letter-writer clearly feels that the town should be looking inwards rather than outward as the source of its own problems.
Typically, the moral outrage expressed by mining communities about FIFO “is utilised as a means of galvanising individuals into a sense of solidarity and if required action against the ‘outsider’ and the world, all of whom are viewed with utmost suspicion” (Grattan 2007: 99). Whether or not FIFO workers are responsible for the social ills that have befallen rural mining communities is not the concern of this analysis. It is the perception that matters, and how this is represented in the news media, and from the local media reporting reproduced in this analysis, it is clear that many rural communities feel that FIFO workers have some degree of complicity in the erosion of community life (Table 3.2).
Table 3.2: A selection of quotes depicting the antisocial nature of miners, from the 450 analysed articles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Title of Article</th>
<th>Type of Media</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Political Leaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Each time I visit members in mining communities they comment that Australia needs to reinvest the huge mining profits in our regions. There is no community culture being fostered. Fly-in fly-out is OK by the mine companies. They don't care about how it hurts the community and family life. The reality is they take, but are not ready to give back.</td>
<td>‘Why super tax is good for us’</td>
<td>Newspaper Article (Sunday Telegraph, NSW)</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>A central Queensland business group says it's not surprised by independent research that's found strong community opposition to hiring fly-in fly-out workers in Bowen Basin mines. A survey of more than 500 community representatives and mine workers found just 11 per cent think the mining industry has a positive impact on their lifestyle.</td>
<td>‘Community struggles to accept fly-in miners Moranbah’</td>
<td>Public News Broadcaster (ABC News, national)</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
<td>Centre-Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>I am sick of everyone in Mackay blaming FIFO for the problems in town. I did FIFO for years and it's the same everywhere, it's easier to blame FIFO than look at themselves as the problem. BM, The Leap.</td>
<td>‘I heard Senator Bob Brown say on the radio that if any Australian sees any...’</td>
<td>Newspaper Letter to the Editor (Daily Mercury, QLD)</td>
<td>APN News and Media</td>
<td>Centre-Right (inferred from the publisher’s flagship newspaper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>And the pay-off for towns near the mines is proving less of a boon than was expected - too much disruption from the presence of a largely male workforce and too little real money flowing in. Widespread FIFO mining is a social and economic experiment for the miners, their families and the nation.</td>
<td>‘Work in Progress’</td>
<td>Newspaper Article (The Advertiser, SA)</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Publication Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>FIFO workers often present as an outsider population, who have invaded once peaceful and harmonious rural communities. Worse still, they appear to contribute little to the community and make no effort to integrate. This situation is no better captured by the inversion of FIFO by locals to the slogan “fit in or fuck off”.</td>
<td>‘Mining, sex work and STIs: why force a connection?’ by Thinkpiece (The Conversation, online)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>“Towns in the Surat and Galilee basins should not be sucked dry and left skeletal while cities gorge the profits channelled by the resource industry,” Mr Scott [Federal Member for Maranoa] said. “I will fight FIFO.” Mr Scott said social effects from FIFO operations concerned him. “A disjointed work schedule erodes family life and limits a person’s time to engage with the community.”</td>
<td>‘Federal MP against fly-in fly-out’ by Newspaper Article (South Burnett Times, QLD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>There has been growing disquiet that the FIFO phenomenon is wreaking serious social damage on communities where the workers temporarily stay. “A large influx of non-resident workers is a permanent disruption to the social fabric and feeling of a town and this ‘shadow population’ has a serious and negative impact on the safety, image and amenity of communities,” the report noted.</td>
<td>‘A parliamentary committee yesterday released its report’ by Newspaper Article (Western Advocate, NSW)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Mark Newton … worries the miners' camp will irreversibly change the social fabric of the town, having heard “horror stories” about the impact of thousands of lonely FIFO workers descending on communities in central Queensland and Western Australia. “Why would they need to build it in Singleton?” Mr Newton said. “We're not remote, we've got mining history going back over a century … These will be young, single blokes who'll go out to the pubs and cause an absolute uprising in the community. They'll get on the grog, and we all know what happens then. I don't want my kids near that.”</td>
<td>‘FIFO camp end of the line for local miners – EXCLUSIVE’ by Newspaper Article (The Australian, national)</td>
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</table>
The erosion of community life through mining is depicted by the media in two different ways. The first depiction is twofold, and is concerned with the mining industry. There is the portrayal of a mining industry purely motivated by profit:

    Towns … should not be sucked dry and left skeletal while cities gorge the profits channelled by the resource industry. – South Burnett Times, QLD, Rural Biweekly Tabloid (Galliott 2012).

Alternatively, the mining industry is portrayed as indifferent and contemptuous to communities:

    Fly-in fly-out is OK by the mine companies. They don’t care about how it hurts the community and family life. – Sunday Telegraph, NSW, Statewide Daily Tabloid (Howes 2010). (Note: Howes at this time was the National Secretary for the Australian Workers Union).

The second depiction is concerned with FIFO workers themselves, who are seen to “have invaded once peaceful and harmonious rural communities”, according to Scott and Minichiello (2012) in the academic-written online not-for-profit media outlet The Conversation. Further examples can be found in the conservative press:

    These will be young, single blokes who’ll go out to the pubs and cause an absolute uprising in the community. – The Australian, National Daily Broadsheet (Owens 2013).

The presentation of FIFO work as problematic, and a threat to rural community life shows up in emotive descriptions like “scourge” in the rural Queensland daily tabloid the Blackwater Herald (2015), “damaging” from the national public broadcaster (ABC News 2013), and a “minefield” in Western Australia’s statewide Sunday tabloid (The Sunday Mail 2011), and within article titles calling it a spreading “cancer” (likely inspired by the title of the Cancer of the Bush report (Anderson 2012 - The Australian Financial Review, National Daily
Broadsheet). Such descriptions and titles paint a public picture of FIFO as a troublesome labour practice and occupational identity.

Housing posed a number of serious questions about the antisocial effect FIFO miners have on struggling rural communities. For rural communities, the presence of work camps on their periphery served as a visible reminder that FIFO workers were not part of the community, and their housing needs did not necessarily occupy the same physical space. Rural communities that must live with FIFO workers on their edges were reported as feeling like they were having this situation forced on them by bureaucrats far removed from the situation (McHugh 2012 - ABC News, National Public Broadcaster). Reporting on the relationship between FIFO workers and housing was contradictory, perhaps more than any other aspect of the relationship between FIFO and rural communities. This suggests that it was unclear to reporters how exactly FIFO workers impacted housing. Were they coming from outside mining communities but living in town during their swings, and travelling short distances to the mine site each day? Was this process inflating rental costs, pricing out workers in other industries? With FIFO miners perceived as placing pressure on housing availability and affordability, they were thus potentially impacting upon forces that were key concerns for non-home owners:

The increasing number of workers seeking accommodation in small towns is pushing rents up so high that local residents can no longer afford accommodation in these towns. One town has opened its showground so people forced to live in their cars have a place to 'live' if it can be called living. Sometimes the car has a whole family, including children, existing in it. – *Chinchilla News, QLD*, Rural Weekly Tabloid (Letter to the Editor 2013).

Or were they living in work camps on the mine site, bypassing town accommodation, with presumably no effect whatsoever on demand and rental costs? According to specialist residential property writer Terry Ryder (2013), the vexatious position of FIFO workers as the
cause of rising housing costs in rural communities (despite often residing in work camps) created:

the befuddled notion that workers who don’t live in a town, and therefore do not buy or rent there, can somehow be responsible for local prices rising ... [when] The impact of extensive use of FIFO workers is the opposite. If the federal government banned the use of FIFO labour, it would cause rents and prices to rise because it would mean everyone working on a project needed to live locally. – Property Observer, Online News Website (Ryder 2013).

There is the distinct possibility that in a geographically diverse country, both may be true in different locations.

Excessive rents may have been caused by real estate speculators buying heavily into boomtowns, with house prices skyrocketing (Neales 2015). Under such circumstances, miners were assumed to be able to afford the high (compared to the national average) rents due to their equally high salaries. Demographer Bernard Salt likened this to the ‘Manhattan Effect’, where workers who service Manhattan can no longer afford to live there and are forced to relocate to proximate New Jersey (Cencigh-Albulario 2012). For places such as Karratha and Moranbah though, there was no New Jersey equivalent, and local residents were forced to match the $3000 per week rent prices being offered to miners or involuntarily leave town and relocate to places much further away, beyond realistic drive-in, drive-out (DIDO) distances (Maddison 2011 – ABC News, National Public Broadcaster, Huxley et al. 2012 – ABC News). This ‘befuddling’ reporting presents mining as a lose/lose situation for rural communities, and in turn, unsettles the normative association between mining workers, the extractive sector, and rurality as a source of myth for the national imagination.

However, housing is in the unique position of being able to reconcile at least some of the differences that inhabit the contested insider/outsider space of mining in rural communities.
One article in the conservative national broadsheet reported that mining communities would welcome FIFO workers if they lived in town, rather than work camps, and participated in civic life:

In recent weeks, a number of street demonstrations were held in Queensland’s regional centres, protesting against the [FIFO] practice. The regions want families to move in rather than camps set up for transient workers. – The Australian, National Daily Broadsheet (Bromby 2011).

Such reporting unsettles the contemporary narrative of the problematic and transgressive outsider, and asks instead whether miners could transition into a complementary community insider with the potential to invigorate ailing rural economies. Together with the “‘us and them’ line drawn between the town and the thousands of workers sitting on the outskirts in mining camps” (McCarthy 2012), the media creates the perception of antisociality and exploitation of rural communities by miners (see Table 3.3 in the following section).

3.5.3 The Exploitative Miner

Section 3.5.1 illustrated the ways that the legacy of the heroic miner has influenced contemporary representations of miners and mining in the media. Many of these representations referenced the economic necessity of mining for the Australian economy. The quotes in Table 3.2 and Table 3.3 suggest another side to the mining boom. Mining may indeed be contributing to the wealth of Australia, and was represented as such in various times and places throughout the media, but the economic effects of the boom are not necessarily distributed evenly throughout the country. As a result, the news media also provided an alternative vision of mining and miners, who were represented as exploiting the rural landscape and failing to return
the benefits of the boom to rural communities. This echoes the notion of ‘fly over’ effects articulated by Storey (2001) fifteen years ago. Although the scale at which the mining effects are being represented has shifted from the national level to a more concentrated community level, the representations themselves in the news media continue to play a role in the creation of a national imaginary around mining.
Table 3.3: A selection of quotes depicting the exploitative nature of miners and the mining industry, from the 450 analysed articles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Title of Article</th>
<th>Type of Media</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Political Leaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>The federal Member for O'Connor, Tony Crook, also sees FIFO as a threat to small regional communities within WA. “The towns don't do well financially; people fly into towns, the companies pay for the accommodation, they pay for the food, they rarely would go into a pub and buy a drink or have a meal, because everything is catered for,” he said. “If this is not addressed small communities across WA will diminish.”</td>
<td>‘FIFO workforces criticised as “cancer of the bush”’</td>
<td>News Article (ABC News, national)</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
<td>Centre-Left</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>About 4000 workers have flocked to the area in four years and more than 10,000 more are expected in the coming five years. This is part of a swelling fly-in, fly-out and drive-in, drive-out workforce that could number as many as 50,000 across the nation, fanning fears in local communities that the mining boom is passing them by with each plane load of departing workers. [Isaac Council] Mayor Cedric Marshall says the work camps in the [Bowen Basin] region that provide about 6000 temporary beds operate like enclaves and do very little for the local economy. He says they don't even buy their produce locally.</td>
<td>‘Fly-in workers “sucking life from town”’</td>
<td>Newspaper Article (The Australian, national)</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
<td>Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Mining companies should pay more money for country health services because fly-in, fly-out workers are swamping doctors’ surgeries, the State’s peak medical body has warned.</td>
<td>‘Miners must pay more, say doctors’</td>
<td>Newspaper Article (The West Australian, WA)</td>
<td>Seven West Media</td>
<td>Centre-Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>“This just does not make sense,” she [Queensland Mining Communities spokesperson Kelly Vea Vea] said. “We should be leveraging the mining boom to develop our regions sustainably, not orchestrating this smash-and-grab frenzy that will allow regions to be turned into mere bus stops on the road to massive mining industry profits.”</td>
<td>‘Mining wealth is delivering a darker lode in boom towns’</td>
<td>Newspaper Article (The Courier-Mail, QLD)</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
<td>Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>We have about 12,000 FIFO in our shire every night that do not pay rates, yet they utilise all the shire facilities, all our road infrastructure etc, but we can't get the income from that. They take their money and they spend it when they go home. So we are essentially supporting this whole economy with FIFO workers that don't support our town.</td>
<td>‘Mining sector seeks to preempt fly-in, fly-out criticism’</td>
<td>Broadcast Transcript (ABC Radio, national)</td>
<td>Centre-Left</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>President of the Australian Council for Trade Unions, Ged Kearney, says the KPMG report’s failure to examine the fly-in fly-out mining workforce means it provides a very limited picture of mining towns. “They earn their money and quite rightly they take their money back to their communities where they live,” she said. “People who are not employed in mining, people who are in service industries like teachers and nurses, simply cannot afford to live in the towns any more because rents are going through the roof.”</td>
<td>‘Mining industry claims it's boosting regional towns Anti FIFO sign Moranbah central Queensland Mining industry boosting small town population’</td>
<td>News Broadcast (ABC News, national)</td>
<td>Centre-Left</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>The use of fly-in, fly-out workers housed in man-camps that meet their every need means communities have had little economic benefit from the industry.</td>
<td>‘Letters have your say’</td>
<td>Newspaper Letter to the Editor (The Northern Star, NSW)</td>
<td>Centre-Right (inferred from the publisher’s flagship newspaper)</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>“The very nature of many fly-in, fly-out workers (FIFO) was that they spent with gay abandon as though there was no tomorrow,” Mr Urquhart [from Marketing Focus, a Perth-based market research company] said. “Sadly tomorrow has arrived and the impact is immediate. The economists would say there is a multiplier effect of five working in the economy. For every dollar lost in the earnings of a FIFO worker, it's felt five times through the economy.”</td>
<td>‘After the boom: Luxury car, housing sales down as WA economy shifts gears on back of falling iron ore price’</td>
<td>News Article (ABC News, national)</td>
<td>Centre-Left</td>
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Journalists reporting from mining regions around the country settled on the problems being created by such a large temporary workforce. According to the centre-right daily tabloid in rural mining community Kalgoorlie, Western Australia, long the quarry for iron ore that underpinned the 2003-2013 boom, was in danger of becoming “tomorrow’s rust bucket” because of a failure to reinvest the profits of the boom (Lucas 2014). Brisbane’s conservative The Courier-Mail, in an article on the ‘darker lode’ of mining, quoted the Queensland Mining Communities spokesperson saying the current mining boom resembled a “smash-and-grab frenzy” of profits from rural Australia (McCarthy 2012). In 2015, as the boom had well and truly begun to unravel, commentary represented mining labourers as reckless, having spent and squandered their share of the boom, so that “[f]or every dollar lost in the earnings of a FIFO worker, it’s felt five times through the economy.”

Miners were also held responsible for the economic decline in many rural communities. While the presence of a large, mobile workforce arguably raised the cost of living in many proximate mining communities with astronomical rents, those same miners did not then return any of the benefits of their relatively large wages by shopping in the community. President of the Australian Council for Trade Unions, Ged Kearney, was quoted in the left-leaning ABC News saying:

> They earn their money and quite rightly they take their money back to their communities where they live … People who are not employed in mining, people who are in service industries like teachers and nurses, simply cannot afford to live in the towns any more because rents are going through the roof – ABC News, National Public Broadcaster (Duxfield 2013).

In this “smash and grab frenzy” (McCarthy 2012) in rural communities, miners weren’t even “buy[ing] their produce locally”, since everything was catered for in the camps (Cleary and
Another aspect of the economic exploitation of host communities by miners was through the use of services and infrastructure in the communities. In an interview with the *ABC*, a shire president in the Pilbara mining region stated that the 12,000 FIFO workers in the shire every night were still utilising the shire-maintained roads and facilities, but not paying any rates, and were depriving the shire of income needed for their upkeep (Kirk 2013). There were also reports in the statewide West Australian news of FIFO workers “swamping doctors’ surgeries” and putting a strain on already struggling remote health services (Tillett 2012).

As the mining boom unravelled, it became clear that FIFO could be tolerated while it continued to support the nation and its economic fortunes. However, as those fortunes began to fall, the perceived inability of miners to share the wealth of the boom with host communities became the dominant narrative, creating the figure of the self-serving, exploitative miner.

3.5.4 The Unstable Miner

The legacy of the heroic miner figure evokes the image of a hard-working labourer defying the harsh conditions of the Australian landscape to earn a wage and support the nation through industry. These miners can be stoic, entrepreneurial, independent, collectivised, defiant (as in Eureka), but rarely are they seen as vulnerable human beings, with the potential for health issues, apart from occupational problems such as coal workers’ pneumoconiosis (known as ‘Black Lung’). Exposing vulnerabilities of miners, such as mental and physical health issues through reporting (Table 3.4), contradicts many of the base assumptions of the heroic Australian miner in the national imaginary. The result of the reporting was to produce a representation of unstable miners, and a mining industry that cared little for the safety of its workers.
Table 3.4: A selection of quotes depicting the unstable nature of miners, from the 450 analysed articles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Title of Article</th>
<th>Type of Media</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Political Leaning</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 2011 | Talk to anyone who has worked in the Pilbara and they have a story about a FIFO worker whose relationship has broken down, is depressed or who finds it hard to cope with not being able to say goodnight to his kids. Many will also, quietly, acknowledge a problem with suicide; they haven’t seen any statistics, but they have heard stories.  

‘Depression the dark side of mining boom’  

(‘The Australian, national’)  

News Article  

News Corp Australia  

Right |
| 2011 | Doctors have reported a surge in the number of fly-in, fly-out workers contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases through unprotected sex during holidays in South East Asia. They believe the increase is a result of WA’s “boom town mentality” causing bored workers to behave recklessly. Australian Medical Association WA president Dave Mountain said anecdotal evidence showed more and more FIFO workers were having unprotected sex during their time off work.  

‘HIV surge among mineworkers’  

(‘The West Australian, WA’)  

News Article  

Seven West Media  

Centre-Right |
| 2012 | [A report] warns that the growing use of fly-in fly-out (FIFO) workers and high rates of mental illness and drug and alcohol problems among employees “can only increase the potential for unstable and unpredictable employee conduct”.  

‘Breivik-style offshore threat feared’  

(news.com.au, online)  

News Article  

News Corp Australia  

Right |
| 2012 | WA Health Department research has revealed FIFO workers take far more risks with their health—drinking more, weighing more and smoking more than other types of employees. “When you look at the risk factors, 80 per cent are overweight or obese, which is higher than the general population, and 65 per cent are drinking more than two drinks a day—so there are real health issues there,” Tarun Weeramanthri, the department’s Public Health Division executive director, said.  

‘Workers who fly under the radar’  

(‘The West Australian, WA’)  

News Article  

Seven West Media  

Centre-Right |
2014 | The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union says some fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) workers are choosing not to take anti-depressant medication for fear of losing their jobs. The union says an online survey of more than 300 FIFO workers in the Pilbara revealed widespread fears that admitting to mental ill-health would put their jobs at risk. But the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies (AMEC) says that's news to them, and mining companies have already put a range of mental health support services in place. | ‘AMWU claims workers fear the sack for admitting depression’ | Interview Transcript (ABC News, national) | Australian Broadcasting Corporation | Centre-left |

2014 | The family of a fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) worker who took his own life has backed calls for an inquiry into a spate of suicides involving workers on resources projects in Western Australia's Pilbara region. In the past 12 months, nine workers have taken their own lives while living away from home and the West Australian Government is considering a parliamentary inquiry. | ‘FIFO suicides: Family of Steven Migas backs call for inquiry into spate of fly-in fly-out worker deaths in Pilbara region’ | News Broadcast (ABC News, national) | Australian Broadcasting Corporation | Centre-Left |

2015 | The Australian Medical Association hit out at organisers and attendees of this year's Diggers and Dealers this week, expressing disappointment the conference made no reference to mental health. AMA president Michael Gannon said conference organisers had informed the AMA that there had not been formal mention of FIFO health or the impact of mining on health generally. “This is pressing issue that needs to be properly addressed, not ignored by the industry,” Dr Gannon said. | ‘Diggers director denies FIFO failure’ | News Article (Kalgoorlie Miner, WA) | Seven West Media | Centre-Right |

2015 | MENTAL health issues affect not just fly-in, fly-out workers, but their partners and families as well. Bunbury Counselling family therapist Carrina Bradbury said she sees regular presentations of FIFO workers and families struggling with depression and other mental health issues. The comments are in line with recent research from Edith Cowan University which showed that FIFO workers suffered from depression at more than twice the rate of the general Australian population. | ‘FIFO depression has a ripple effect: Bunbury counsellor’ | Newspaper Article (Bunbury Mail, WA) | Fairfax Media | Centre |
Much was made of the mental health of miners in the media in the period of inquiry. This coincided with the increase in FIFO work in the last fifteen years. Some of the reporting focussed on the positive steps being made to address miner mental health, such as mining companies being proactive about “bringing the black dog to heel in the workplace” (‘black dog’ being a reference to the national health issue of depression) (Robb 2012 - *The Australian*, National Daily Broadsheet), and “dig[ing] deep to tackle mental health” (Parsons 2011 - *The Kalgoorlie Miner* (WA), Rural Daily Tabloid). However, these representations were in the minority. Much of the reporting in the news media, and general online discussion in FIFO support website message boards and inquiry submissions, instead fixated on the anecdotal evidence of the poor mental health of workers. A Western Australian parliamentary ‘Inquiry into Mental Health Impacts of FIFO Work Arrangements’ and FIFO Workers’ Mental Health’ was instigated in August 2014 and concluded 10 months later, specifically investigating miner mental health (Education and Health Standing Committee 2015). It is unclear whether the inquiry was instigated directly as a response to suicide reports in the media (Turner 2011, Herbert 2014), but it is representative of the complex and powerful relationship the media has with politics.

Just as the media paid close attention to the earlier federal Cancer of the Bush inquiry, it also scrutinised the Western Australian inquiry, and in turn contributed to further media reporting of the mental health issues of FIFO workers. They reported not only on how “recent research from Edith Cowan University … showed that FIFO workers suffered from depression at more than twice the rate of the general Australian population” (Miller 2015 - *Bunbury Mail* (WA), Rural Daily Tabloid), but how “Job losses in Western Australia's mining industry have created a climate of fear that makes fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) workers reluctant to seek help about mental health problems” (O'Connor 2015 - *ABC*
News, National Public Broadcaster). Overall, the reporting contributed to an image of FIFO workers as unstable; a condition which the ABC News (2014b) was not suggested could spill over into domestic violence.

Despite existing anxieties about FIFO workers and their place in rural and remote communities, much of the reporting was evidently the result of concern for the welfare of FIFO workers. However, it must be considered that the mere fact of increased visibility of FIFO workers in the media positions them discursively as ‘other’ to ‘regular’ workers. For example, the kind of scrutiny placed on FIFO workers and their health in the media simply is not replicated for other categories of worker. For example:

‘You've got men who are constantly eating, half a dozen schnitzels from the canteen. Sixty per cent of the guys on mine sites are overweight. They're close to diabetic level, then they go home and do nothing. The blast crew are at the other end, always pumping iron at the (mine site) gym. The underground guys on night shift who don't see daylight for a month are notorious. When the shift change happens . . . they have 24 hours where they go from night to day shift, and they get on the booze, fall asleep, then go on their next shift’. – The Australian, National Daily Broadsheet (Laurie 2012).

The complicated relationship between media and the public in the exchange of information and opinion can be a problematic one for mental health if ultimately the consistent reporting of FIFO workers as mentally and physically ill increases the stigma faced by FIFO workers in already hostile rural communities.

FIFO workers were therefore represented in the media as unhealthy and unstable. This is the embodiment of the morally corrupt and impure person the rural idyll explicitly rejects, and upon which rural communities can focus existential anxieties (Little 1999). As such, the representation of the unhealthy FIFO worker fed directly into the idea that FIFO workers were unwelcome outsiders in rural communities, and that their unstable qualities
were in direct contradiction with the present conception of the mining figure in the national imaginary.

### 3.5.5 The Broken Family Miner

Section 3.3.4 probed the contradiction between the stoic miner of the national imaginary, and the harsh reality of FIFO mental health as reported in the news media. This section connects the ways that poor mental health may impact the relationships and family life of miners. Reporting emphasising the mining family as broken and in need of aid (Table 3.5), raises the spectre of failed heteronormativity within the national imaginary. Emotive titles used during the period of inquiry included “FIFO is tearing families apart” (The Morning Bulletin 2011 – *The Morning Bulletin (QLD)*, Rural Daily Tabloid), and four years later “FIFO ruining towns, families” (Grant 2015 – *Australian Associated Press News*, Multi-Ownership National News Agency). Such titles suggested that the anxiety around mining and family values has not significantly shifted over time. This reporting may also have the added effect of playing into community fears about what *kinds* of people are involved in FIFO families. It explicitly positions the familial dysfunction of FIFO families in contrast with the conservatism and traditional values of permanently cohabiting families more generally.
Table 3.5: A selection of quotes depicting miners with family-related issues, from the 450 analysed articles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Title of Article</th>
<th>Type of Media</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Political Leaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>MORANBAH: A Peak Downs mine employee in Moranbah has told the inquiry into fly-in, fly-out and drive-in, drive-out workforces the practice “tends to tear families apart”. In a submission to the Standing Committee on Regional Australia, Kate Johnstone said keeping FIFO to the bare minimum would greatly benefit families and couples.</td>
<td>‘FIFO is tearing families apart: mine worker’</td>
<td>News Article (The Morning Bulletin, QLD)</td>
<td>APN News and Media</td>
<td>Centre-Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>“Even the strongest, toughest couples, when you are separated by two, three, four weeks at a time, it can be really difficult.” … That's Alicia Ranford, a mother of two, who has experienced firsthand the challenges of having a partner who works fly-in fly-out.</td>
<td>‘A fly-in, fly-out workforce can test relationships’</td>
<td>News Article (ABC News, national)</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
<td>Centre-Left</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>The partners of shift-working employees were unlikely to be able to work full-time, and 83% of partners surveyed said they took on the majority of household tasks. Only 10% of workers said their working patterns closely aligned with their partners. This led to high levels of anxiety among families, with 69% of employees’ partners reporting that their spouses’ absence during the night made them anxious, and 77% worrying about their spouse travelling to and from night shifts.</td>
<td>“‘Human havoc” in shift work’</td>
<td>News Article (Sunshine Coast Daily, QLD)</td>
<td>APN News and Media</td>
<td>Centre-Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>A LANDMARK probe into the social impacts of fly in, fly out jobs has likened the work to cancer. But David Burger, a continent-crossing pipe-fitter based in Bathurst, has his own analogy of the increasingly popular lifestyle: he describes it as a pair of “golden handcuffs”. “It's not for everybody,” Mr Burger said. “There are a lot of stories going around about the flash lifestyle ... I don't have a lifestyle, I'm at home for five, six days a month, just to sleep. It's hell on family life ... you can ask my partner; ask the kids. Every time I come home, they're that much taller.”</td>
<td>‘A parliamentary committee yesterday released its report’</td>
<td>News Article (Western Advocate, NSW)</td>
<td>Fairfax Media</td>
<td>Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Family law solicitor Lisa Stansfield … sees the impact the situation has on relationships, with an increase in the number of family law clients, where one partner has a fly-in fly-out position, seeking advice. Lisa says that in the past year “of all new clients seeking legal advice about the breakdown of a relationship approximately one in every three involved a party with a fly-in, fly-out job”.</td>
<td>‘Job price too high’</td>
<td>News Article (Cairns Sun, QLD)</td>
<td>Right</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>Director [of financial service MyBudget] Tammy May said it had been inundated with requests for help from West Australians, mainly couples and fly-in, fly-out workers. “If couples are not on the same page with their finances it can be a recipe for a disastrous financial situation and relationship … One of the biggest problems is when one, or worse, both are not in control of their spending, creating a debt cycle which can quickly snowball and have a negative impact on a couple’s finances.”</td>
<td>‘Crunch time for FIFOs’</td>
<td>News Article (Sunday Times, WA)</td>
<td>APN News and Media</td>
<td>Centre-Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Police say a spike in the number of reported domestic assaults in Western Australia could be partly due to more pressure placed on families with fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) partners. Senior police officers told an estimates hearing on Friday that the increase in domestic violence incidents between the 2009/10 and the 2013/14 financial years was partly due to more victims coming forward and more thorough recording of incidents by police. But they said the rise could also be partly attributed to an increase in the size of WA's FIFO workforce.</td>
<td>‘Domestic violence “could partly be due to FIFO pressures”’</td>
<td>News Article (ABC News, national)</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
<td>Centre-Left</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>“Most families have tended to cope with the lifestyle, but it does not suit everyone,” Ms Robinson [Manager of Child Family Community Australia] said. “Children may experience negative emotions as the result of the FIFO parent's absence … Parenting is a challenge for FIFO families, particularly for partners at home who have to manage the continual transitioning from solo parenting to co-parenting and back again, while providing for the physical, emotional and intellectual needs of children…”</td>
<td>‘Fly-in, fly-out work poses parenting challenges but lifestyle is not all doom and gloom’</td>
<td>News Article (The Australian, national)</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
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While there were occasional positive reports on the FIFO condition as it related to families (17 instances), they were usually told from the first-person perspective, with a FIFO worker describing their own uniquely positive experience. The negative narrative also contained individual characterisations of misery and dysfunction, but there was a more prominent universalising quality to this strain of reporting.

Featured in the reporting were multiple articles about strained relationships and relationship breakdown:

‘Quite often, you'll see a bloke outside the mess on the phone having an argument with his missus. I've heard the guy saying: “Get a f…king lawyer, I don't care. You can take the bloody house, I'll buy another one.”’ – *The Australian*, National Daily Broadsheet (Laurie 2012).

Conservative publishing company News Corp owns *The Australian* national broadsheet and is politically inclined to favour a ‘strong family values’ mind-set. Printing these kinds of stories suggests a deep permeation of the underlying mood in the Australian national imagination of what kind of existential threat FIFO labouring poses to family values. The quote at the beginning of this chapter’s discussion also introduced the idea that FIFO miners were responsible for the transmission of STIs (Geiger 2012), another signifier of relationship breakdown. Reporting linking FIFO workers to STIs was pure misinformation and fearmongering, as noted by Scott et al. (2012b: 28):

>[t]here is currently no evidence to support the link between FIFO and high prevalence of STIs in local rural communities, nor has the link been made between increased STI prevalence among urban-based partners of FIFO mineworkers.

As briefly discussed in the previous section, the news media was not hesitant to report the horrifying scenario that FIFO workers could be responsible for an increase in instances of domestic violence. According to the statewide centre-right Tabloid *The West*
Australian (WA), women’s refuges in Western Australia were reported as having a surge in demand due to partners of FIFO workers requesting their services (O’Leary 2012). Reports of domestic violence portrayed FIFO workers as more prone to violence and therefore less desirable to have in or near rural communities. But perhaps even more horrifying was that by 2014, this unfortunate situation had still not been officially verified:

Senior police officers told an estimates hearing on Friday that the increase in domestic violence incidents between the 2009/10 and the 2013/14 financial years was partly due to more victims coming forward and more thorough recording of incidents by police. But they said the rise could also be partly attributed to an increase in the size of WA’s FIFO workforce. – ABC News, National Public Broadcaster (ABC News 2014b).

On appearances, it would seem that no one has actually done the requisite criminological research to determine whether or not this situation is genuinely occurring and attributable to FIFO workers and the FIFO lifestyle. Carrington et al. (2011: 342) identified that “breaches of domestic violence protection orders in 2008–09 for a dominant large mining region of Queensland were 1.63 times the rate applicable for the state capital”, but this is unlikely to include FIFO workers if their families remain in metropolitan source communities.

Relationship breakdown leading to depression, or vice versa, was the dominant message of this coded theme. Adding to the severity of this negativity was the alluded threat of miners being responsible for increased instances of domestic violence. Rural community anxieties were therefore fuelled by reporting on a mining industry populated by unsafe individuals no longer anchored by familial connections. The national imaginary was thus confronted by a mining figure that failed to live up to its historical legacy, and was instead
both fallible and susceptible to relationship breakdown, with subsequent consequences for the national heterosexual idyll.

3.5.6 The Criminal Miner

The concept of ‘crime talk’ was raised earlier in this chapter as an important reaction to FIFO in rural communities (Carrington et al. 2012). It is such a dominant abstraction because it contrasts so effectively the peace and gentility of the rural idyll. ‘Crime talk’ featured prominently in the reporting of FIFO labour (see also Table 3.6):

The presence of the miners on Narrabri's doorstep, venturing into town for recreation or business, can lead to problems. Submissions to a current Senate inquiry into fly-in, fly-out workforces alleged women were being harassed at Narrabri pubs and, in some cases, offered money for sex. Other groups reported that violent outbreaks were on the rise as tensions between miners and residents overflowed – *The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW)*, Statewide Daily Compact (Hasham 2012).

In the case of this quote from Fairfax Media’s politically-centre masthead *The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW)*, the complicated circular relationship between the news and politics via the Cancer of the Bush inquiry can again be seen. We see in this quote from Hasham, and other similar news articles that appeared during the course of the inquiry, the depiction of miners as dangerous and unsafe: in effect, representing miners as a criminal working-class. The *ABC News* (2012) reported that “many girls living in mining communities feel threatened by FIFO workers”, raising the serious fear of men predating on young women, and even on other men within the mining camps, with one worker “drugged and sexually assaulted at the camp where he lived four weeks in five” (The West Australian 2010). The reporting of problematic and often anecdotal news stories about FIFO miners that followed the Cancer of the Bush inquiry illustrates how anxieties
play out in rural mining communities, who then hear their stories being affirmed publicly in the media, which can make them appear more real and more true. This aligns well with the observation by Scott *et al.* (2012b: 27) that anxiety about crime “may actually be concern about unwanted social change – a threat to ‘how the place used to be’”, but it also stands in opposition to the factual evidence that suggests crime may have decreased in some former boomtowns (Lawrie *et al.* 2011).
Table 3.6: A selection of quotes depicting the criminal nature of miners, from the 450 analysed articles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Title of Article</th>
<th>Type of Media</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Political Leaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>BOOZE-FUELLED violence, illegal sex workers and social disorder are rampant near mining towns, according to a new three-year study … revealing a “violent underbelly” to the mining boom.</td>
<td>‘Violence rife in mining towns’</td>
<td>News Article</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(The Sunday Mail, QLD)</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Michael thought he was set for life when he finally got a construction job on the seemingly-hallowed ground of a WA mine site. In the beginning he embraced life at the camp site, where it seemed that men were men and cash was king … But his family and his aspirations for a better life fell apart in late 2006 when he was drugged and sexually assaulted at the camp where he lived four weeks in five.</td>
<td>‘Meth on our mines’</td>
<td>News Article</td>
<td>Seven West Media</td>
<td>Centre-Right</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(The West Australian, WA)</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>The presence of the miners on Narrabri's doorstep, venturing into town for recreation or business, can lead to problems. Submissions to a current Senate inquiry into fly-in, fly-out workforces alleged women were being harassed at Narrabri pubs and, in some cases, offered money for sex. Other groups reported that violent outbreaks were on the rise as tensions between miners and residents overflowed.</td>
<td>‘The outsiders: mining camp splits a town’</td>
<td>News Article</td>
<td>Fairfax Media</td>
<td>Centre</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW)</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Point Samson Community Association representative John Graham, who has lived in the Pilbara for 16 years, told the committee that transient workers hired for oil, gas and mining projects were having a detrimental impact. “They were falling out of the buses and urinating in public,” Mr Graham told the inquiry. Fights in overcrowded taverns were common. “It's changed the whole setting of this area … women especially don't feel safe walking around,” Mr Graham said.</td>
<td>‘Fly in, fight it out’</td>
<td>News Article</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Sunday Territorian, NT)</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>The seizure of about 150 anabolic steroid tablets from raids on mining charter flights could be an isolated incident or “the tip of the iceberg”, according to the Kalgoorlie-Boulder based Gold Stealing Detection Unit.</td>
<td>‘Mine clean sweep Organised crime has “tight rein” on distribution’ News Article (Kalgoorlie Miner, WA) Seven West Media Centre-Right</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>In Queensland's Bowen Basin, Australia's largest coal reserve, these miners who spoke to ABC Rural say there's a drug culture at the camps where FIFO workers live. “I've seen guys smoking pot, talking about taking drugs, ecstasy, coke, speed, get on the pingers. I think it's because they're cashed up; it's not an issue for the expense of it.”</td>
<td>‘Miners tell of drug abuse in FIFO towns Miners say a drug culture exists in FIFO camps Miners, industry discuss drug use’ News Article (ABC News, national) Australian Broadcasting Corporation Centre-Left</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>The head of Australia’s third biggest iron ore miner made the comments after police and sniffer dogs searched fly-in, fly-out workers heading for Fortescue’s Christmas Creek mine yesterday. Carried out with cooperation from Fortescue, the raid comes after police seized methamphetamine, scales and $25,000 in cash at a company-owned workers village at Port Hedland in October.</td>
<td>‘Fortescue workers in drugs search’ News Article (The Advertiser, SA) News Corp Australia Right</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>Anecdotal evidence suggests the arrival of crystal methamphetamine in some remote communities has been linked with the arrival nearby of fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) mining workers, the National Ice Taskforce meeting in Darwin has heard.</td>
<td>‘National Ice Taskforce hears…’ News Article (ABC News, national) Australian Broadcasting Corporation Centre-Left</td>
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Pini *et al.* (2013: 173) have elsewhere argued that there is a “dangerous, frontier hypermasculine heterosexuality” in many mining towns, which links to early colonial-era discourses of unruly gold prospectors precipitating suppressive laws around mining. The connection made in the previous section between FIFO miners and STI outbreaks is evidence of this reasoning (often connected by the assumption of visitation with sex workers). Pini *et al.* (2013: 173) in their fieldwork in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia, a remote gold mining town with a highly visible sex work industry, were confronted repeatedly in interviews with a public image of the problematic FIFO miner as:

bored, frustrated and lonely, as well as comparatively highly paid … and where there is a high level of disposable income you will necessarily invite ‘the holy trinity’ of ‘gambling, drinking, women.’

Adding violence into this mix generated what Fraser (2010), in News Corp’s *The Sunday Mail (QLD)*, called “social disorder” and, referring to a report by Carrington *et al.* (2011), “a ‘violent underbelly’ to the mining boom.”

Early ‘crime talk’ news articles during the period of inquiry tended to focus on aspects of violence in FIFO mining (see Table 3.6), but over time, the focus tended to shift to a possible culture of drug use and dealing in the mining camps:

In Queensland’s Bowen Basin, Australia’s largest coal reserve, these miners who spoke to ABC Rural say there’s a drug culture at the camps where FIFO workers live. ‘I’ve seen guys smoking pot, talking about taking drugs, ecstasy, coke, speed, get on the pingers. I think it’s because they’re cashed up; it’s not an issue for the expense of it’ – *ABC News*, National Public Broadcaster (Gribbin 2013).

Drug use and drug busts on mine sites and in workers’ camps were reported from both sides of the media’s political spectrum, including the *ABC News*, Western Australia’s *Kalgoorlie Miner*, and South Australia’s *The Advertiser*. Crime reporting on miners dealing with issues such as drug use, or perpetrating sexual assaults, negatively
contributes to the pervasive anxiety about what FIFO workers bring to rural communities, and unsettles the layered conditions of heroism built around mining in the national imaginary.

3.6 Conclusion
This chapter explored the news media as a technology of power that positions mining, as an iconic form of labour, in the national imaginary. Importantly, it reveals the contestations and varying subject identities constructed for miners, against the backdrop of a dominant, heroic masculinist identity. In the context of recent anxieties around FIFO work, it has connected the public and private spheres of identity production, demonstrating community attitudes on FIFO mining are a complex network of contested views all vying for media space. FIFO manifests throughout this network as a provocateur with multiple meanings, most of which come attached to some type of anxiety. The strength and pervasiveness of the anxieties surrounding FIFO presented in the media may reflect the strength of rural morality and norms against which FIFO workers are viewed as ‘other’. Or perhaps instead it reflects the fragility of the image upon which mining has always been built in the national imaginary, which is only now seriously being challenged. With anxiety comes a “heightened state of vigilance” (Rachman 1998), and FIFO miners will likely continue to be scrutinised. The end of the boom, and resulting reduction in the size of the FIFO workforce, may have arrived in time to dissipate some of the animosity and anxiety directed at FIFO miners, but there is enough evidence in this chapter to suggest that there has been a sustained period of public anxiety towards miners in the media. This influential technology of power has potentially unsettled the position miners have held in the national imaginary for over a century.
Mining at the turn of the twentieth century had transitioned from a source of anxiety in the early gold rush days, to a bedrock of industry and economy in a newly federated Australia. Over a century later it appears to be reversing back to a source of anxiety. Over time, the rural landscape was colonised with people who embodied a certain kind of stoic conservatism, valuing family and community (Little 2003). Anxieties are triggered now less by the miner’s working-class independence (discussed in Chapter 2), and more by their dangerously unruly or antisocial behaviour unregulated by connection to local community or family. Such anxieties are fuelled by a general fear of change that FIFO work has introduced into once static rural communities, and together such concerns have been amplified by a receptive media (both left- and right-leaning). The overall effect is to unsettle the image of the heroic miner in the national imaginary.

The narrative of the mining industry as heroic, a saviour, and as central to the national imaginary and economic prosperity, no longer seamlessly translates into support for the labouring bodies upon which mining nowadays depends (Cencigh-Albulario 2012). The media, across various scales, were willing to tap into existing community unease about being left out economically from the mining boom. Transformed labour-capital relations ushered in by corporate executives in Melbourne or London created the modern hypermobile miner, yet its accompanying labour identity in media discourse is overwhelmingly as an unruly ‘outsider’. Instead of economic or community benefits, miners bring social problems. For many rural communities, such discourses of ‘outsiders’, and neglect from the metropoles, are nothing new. Urban bureaucracies time and again are perceived as working against the social realities of rural communities, whether it be through land and heritage management practices (Skilton et al. 2014), housing policies (Dufty 2007), or the removal of agricultural trade protections (Pritchard 2000). Pre-existing anxieties towards urban experts and decision-makers are further
amplified around FIFO workers and a perceived lack of control. Reading about FIFO workers in the press, particularly from national broadsheets and broadcasters, gives media consumers in rural communities a focus for their anxieties. In so doing, the media are tapping into broader national sentiments of anxiety and mistrust about these workers, building further mistrust in the rural communities themselves. This demonstrates not just that masculine norms are contestable in the national imaginary, but also the problems of “governing-at-a-distance” (Argent 2005: 29). Moral ideologies of work, gender and community central to the national imaginary are contested at the local (rural) scale – a site of tension and anxiety.

The Cancer of the Bush inquiry, along with the pursuant media spectacle, has promulgated the negative effects of FIFO, and such coverage has created a public mood of anxiety bordering on a burgeoning ‘moral panic’ towards these workers in both rural ‘host’ communities and urban ‘source’ communities. That mood of anxiety lends credibility to the notion that FIFO work does not sit comfortably with the Australian public, for multiple reasons, despite its perceived economic importance. FIFO workers have become the bogeymen of the outback, gossiped about at the pub, and pilloried in the press. According to Chamber of Minerals and Energy Chief Executive Reg Howard-Smith, quoted in the ABC News:

‘If there's evidence, data or research – share it. The odd anecdote, isolated example, urban myth or neighbourhood gossip is not evidence … FIFO is getting the blame for just about everything that's wrong in modern society and resources sector employees are getting sick of the stigma and being judged.’ – *ABC News*, National Public Broadcaster (ABC News 2014b).

Reg Howard-Smith’s incredulity that miners should be experiencing stigma may have two origins: as men they are being positioned in opposition to ‘normal’ society when they
have always occupied a privileged place in the patriarchy; or as miners they have always held a privileged position in the national imaginary. Either way, the privilege that miners have come to expect would seem to have been unsettled.
CHAPTER 4
SEX WORK AND THE MEDIA:
MAINTAINING MARGINALITY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is the continuation (from Chapter 3) of the analysis of the media as a technology of power, and its role in maintaining or unsettling privilege and marginalisation of the iconic worker identities of miners and sex workers. Whereas Chapter 3 dealt exclusively with FIFO miners in terms of its conceptual scope and objectives, this chapter concerns itself with contemporary representations of sex workers in the Australia media. Hubbard (2001: 53) argues that “conflicts between different sexualities, moralities and identities are often orchestrated by the press in a lurid and sensationalist manner to create national ‘moral panics’ about particular individuals and groups.” Sex workers encapsulate this intersection between sexuality and morality. Media sensationalism around sex work serves to keep sex workers marginalised. It is symbolic of what can befall women who exercise agency over their bodies and sexuality in a way that challenges heteronormativity, and also has material effects. As described by Hallgrímsdóttir et al. (2008: 120):

newspaper narratives (as a modality of discourse) have historically constructed and continue to construct sex work in ways that legitimate certain techniques of speaking about and intervening in the industry … The (mis)representations of sex workers found in mainstream media outlets thus have the potential to shape both day-to-day interactions sex workers have with the public and their clients as well as the legal and policy environments that shape their lives.
The news media is therefore an important mechanism of positioning sex workers within the national imaginary, even if the resulting positioning is one of absence. This chapter concentrates on representations of sex work in the media during a single year, and the kinds of anxieties they produce, and how this connects to or compares with the anxieties directed at FIFO miners seen in Chapter 3.

Sex work occurs in both urban and rural contexts. Chapter 3 has already shown us that rural communities are anxious about the social changes ‘outsiders’ bring to their once purportedly stable communities. FIFO Miners are part of this anxiety, but so too are FIFO sex workers, who challenge heteronormative conceptions of rural domesticity (Hubbard 2000, Pini et al. 2013). According to Scott et al. (2006: 153), sex workers defy the “gendered divisions of rural communities in which women are idealised as wholesome homemakers.” Locally-based sex workers in more sparsely-populated rural communities are required to be more clandestine than urban and FIFO sex workers, so they do not draw unwanted attention to themselves, possibly inviting recrimination from the community. Even when sex workers are known to be present within rural communities, they have been rendered invisible because they are “an aspect of rural life that did not fit within mainstream rural mythologising” (Scott et al. 2006: 155). Sex workers’ labour is not considered to be productive in a rural landscape defined by masculine labour (Gurd 2013). Pini et al. (2013: 168) invoke Hubbard’s concept of ‘scary heterosexualities’ in their analysis of ‘skimpies’ in Australian mining towns, but the same ‘scary heterosexualities’ arguably apply equally to escorts and brothel workers in these mining towns, since they are also “disconnected from notions of the nuclear family.” Perceived to transgress the dominant social, cultural and moral mores of rural communities, sex workers are either rendered invisible within perceptions of rurality, or enter the rural psyche as abject, and othered.
Much as they did during the early goldrushes, contemporary rural sex workers have followed miners to places such as Kalgoorlie, Karratha, and Moranbah (Haxton 2012, Overington 2012, Mayes et al. 2015). As the mining boom gathered pace, and more FIFO miners separated from their families for weeks at a time were found in or near rural communities, sex workers too began to fly in and out of these communities to take advantage of the “cashed-up”, but bored and lonely miners (Carrington and Pereira 2011, Education and Health Standing Committee 2015, Lockie et al. 2009, Pini et al. 2012: 142). FIFO sex workers have achieved a degree of renown within the news, with news outlets depicting sex workers as opportunistic:

> Increasingly, sex workers are travelling to Australia's remote mining communities hoping to cash in on the lonely, mostly male workforce. – *ABC News, National Public Broadcaster* (Lewis 2012).

But also depicting sex workers as problematic:

> A SURGE in “fly-in fly-out” prostitutes illegally operating from motels in Ballina and Alstonville has prompted a call for the mandatory licensing of sex workers. Ballina Shire Council has told a state parliamentary inquiry into brothel regulation of an increase in complaints about prostitutes working outside the region's two licensed brothels. – *Sunshine Coast Daily (QLD), Suburban Daily Tabloid* (Calcino 2015).

Representations such as these in the media influence rural community understandings of sex work. When FIFO sex workers do visit mining communities and interact with community members, media representations then significantly affect how these interactions are mediated.
4.2 Methods

The method for this chapter paralleled the previous chapter, using Factiva as the tool for searching the news media. As in Chapter 3, I could have exclusively investigated FIFO sex work, rather than simply all sex workers in the media. This would have assisted in determining whether sex worker representations in the media were attributed to their status as a FIFO worker or a sex worker. Unfortunately, this was not possible. A media keyword search similar to the one undertaken in Chapter 3 could not be constructed that effectively captured this conjunction. The resulting sample size was too small, and virtually all the sex work news was from an urban perspective. Indeed, one news story about a Member of Parliament’s misuse of credit cards to visit sex workers absorbed the media for the better part of 2012. This scandal embodied the lurid sensationalism often orchestrated by news media around sexuality and morality (cf. Hubbard 2001).

There were many different search parameters initially employed. It began with: FIFO AND ‘sex work’; Mining AND ‘sex work’; and Moranbah AND ‘sex work’. Moranbah was used as a search term because, as Section 4.4 will reveal, it was a ‘hotspot’ for anxieties around FIFO and sex work. A total of 17 articles appeared with these initial search parameters – a number insufficient for analysis. Therefore, a subsequent data search was developed for a more generalised dataset. The search algorithm was amended to just ‘sex work’ OR prostitut* in the Australian news media. The year 2012 was chosen as the limiting time period for the search, because it was the year with the greatest number of FIFO articles, based on the data analysed in Chapter 3, and also because it was the year in which the Moranbah Drovers Rest Motel legal case occupied the media. Somewhat replicating problems experienced with the media search on FIFO labour, however, this search generated 5659 hits, an unmanageable number for analysis. Therefore, these
parameters required another phase of refinement. In order to better understand some of the anxieties that might have existed around legal issues with sex work and/or legislative reform occurring that year, the search parameters were amended to include ‘sex work’ OR prostitut* AND law*. This yielded a more manageable total of 907 articles.

The difference in methods between this and the previous chapter lies largely in the way discourse analysis ensued. The two industries were coded with different categories due to the differing nature of the reporting. Sex work articles were often single issue or single mention articles (unlike many of the longer mining articles which covered a wide range of issues), and so each was coded once for the general theme and tone of the whole article. However, due to the aggregation of data through Factiva, a small number or articles contained multiple letters to the editor, and hence there is a small discrepancy between the number of articles in total (907), and the number of coded instances (921). Many of the articles were not relevant to this analysis because they weren’t centrally about sex work or sex workers, and had only been captured by the broad search terminology. For example, many simply referenced crimes in which sex workers by happenstance were involved, and as such were coded as ‘Miscellaneous crime reporting involving sex workers’. Similarly, the category ‘Miscellaneous international’ was used for all articles about international press. Finally, a large portion of the articles were coded as ‘Craig Thomson’, since 2012 was the year of his union funds misuse scandal13.

13 Craig Thomson, a former national secretary of the Health Services Union, and in 2012, a Labor politician, was accused of misusing union funds for personal benefit, including financing his election campaign. The media focused heavily on his alleged use of a union credit card to pay for the services of sex workers. He was eventually convicted in 2014 of theft.
4.3 Discussion

The results of the coding process on the 902 total articles produced twelve broad themes (Figure 4.1). As described in the Methods however, not all of these were relevant to an analysis of sex work in Australia’s national imaginary. Therefore, the relevant coded themes that emerged from the methods used were: Sex Worker Anxiety (78 instances); ‘Crime talk’ (97 instances); Trafficking (36 instances); General Support for Sex Work (34 instances); Sex Worker, Owner and Client Perspectives (24 instances); Disease Vector (15 instances); and the Drovers Rest Incident (10 instances). From these codes, a series of key worker identities that pertain to sex workers emerged. These are discussed below, in turn.

Figure 4.1: All the coded themes and instances resulting from the methods described in Section 4.2.
Sex work reporting in 2012 started on a positive note, with prominent sex worker and rights activist Elena Jeffrey’s (2012a) New Year’s Day opinion piece in the centrist weekly compact *The Sun-Herald (NSW)*. Entitled ‘Pay heed to those who know’, the article discusses her work and the prejudices surrounding it, ending with the statement “repeat after me: IT’S OK TO PAY!” (Jeffreys 2012a). Sex work prejudice and abolitionism is rooted in moralism (Hubbard 1998, Hubbard 2009). A pervasive and deep-seated antipathy towards sex work leads Pini et al. (2013: 169) to argue that morality underlines “typically unsubstantiated opposition claims such as that adult entertainment sustains criminality, and that adult entertainment exploits vulnerable women, while generating morally-infused identities such as the ‘normal woman’ or ‘the vulnerable child.’” These tropes also feature throughout the analysis of news articles from 2012.

The use of puns in headlines relating to sex work was commonplace, undermining the possibility of mature discussion of relevant issues of health, rights and safety. As examples, ‘Working girl ruling: Appealing sex worker not prepared to take decision lying down’ from Leah Fineran (2012) of the conservative suburban daily *Gold Coast Bulletin (QLD)*, and ‘Inn and out for sex workers’ from Rae Wilson (2012) of the centre-right rural daily *The Morning Bulletin (QLD)*. Both caricatured sex workers, and suggested that sex work could not be written about seriously. As a reaction to their own aversion, reporters and editors resorted to cheap shots disguised within tittering bawdy humour. Letters to the editor were similarly mocking:

I can’t believe there’s a syphilis outbreak in mining communities. Our miners deserve the cleanest prostitutes available. This is a state of emergency and the government needs to send a relief effort of 50 prostitutes immediately. If we don’t act now, some miners might have to have normal relationships and that could destroy our mining

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14 Not to be confused with the right-leaning *Herald Sun (VIC).*
industry. – Townsville Bulletin (QLD), Rural Daily Tabloid (Letters to the Editor 2012).

The effect was to both trivialise and demean the work that sex workers do. Furthermore, word puns and mocking tones set precedents about the things that are able to be said about sex work and sex workers, essentially positioning them as objects of ridicule.

During 2012, a number of legislative reforms for sex work were in various stages of debate in states throughout the country (coded as ‘Legal Responses’, see Figure 4.1). As a result, there was increased media visibility for sex workers: in South Australia – 13 articles; in Tasmania – 15 articles; and in Western Australia – 46 articles. A private member’s bill in South Australia, a state where all forms of sex work are effectively criminalised at this time, aimed to decriminalise all forms of sex work. This progressive Bill was supported by sex workers, but vociferously rejected by conservative MPs and Councillors, and the Bill was eventually defeated by a single vote (Kelton 2012, Kemp 2012). In shades of Victorian-era legislating, a Western Australian Prostitution Bill 2011 was slated to remove sex workers from residential areas, and force them into a licensing system in order to work, under what Scarlet Alliance called “radical and hostile legislation for sex workers” (Jeffreys 2012b: 1). Western Australia already has some of the most repressive laws in Australia, and in this instance, it was conservative MPs who campaigned against this Bill, complaining that it would ‘legalise’ sex work (Adshead et al. 2013). Much to the relief of sex workers, the Bill was ultimately dismissed. Alongside articles on these specific reforms were more general articles calling for legislative reform in favour of the ‘Swedish Model’ (laws that are intended to criminalise the purchaser of sex, rather than sex worker: see Preface). The presence of articles debating these various legislative changes in the media may have impacted the style and content of the reporting on other sex work stories, and letters to the editor.
4.3.1 The Sex(ual) Worker

General anxiety about the sexual nature of sex work was a coded theme within the analysis, and counterposes the later section on general support for the prosaic sex worker. This anxiety is bound up with peoples’ anxieties around sex more generally, making it difficult for people to separate the working lives of sex workers and their own relationship with sex and sexuality. The following quote by David Penberthy, Editor-in-Chief of news.com.au, was part of a syndicated editorial published in Adelaide-based The Advertiser. It encompasses many of the anxieties discussed in the following sections, but within a single article:

It's [Haberfield, an inner suburb of Sydney] such a family-minded place that it boasts the fact that it doesn't even have a pub. Its quaint high street, Ramsay Rd, feels like an Italian village, with its own fruiterer, a cheese shop, a chocolate shop, a butcher, biscuit-makers and fresh pasta providores. Yet in the middle of it all, stuck between two family-run pizza restaurants and about 100m from a Catholic school, there's a brothel where old pervs come and pay for sex and skulk off down the footpath after their tawdry commercial encounters … Born-agains are annoying but they're nowhere near as annoying as sitting at an al fresco table at your favourite pizza bar with sheepish johns darting in and out of the neighbouring knock-shop. They're nowhere near as annoying as finding that a madam has hung out her shingle over the road from your kid's school. Or as a parent having to field questions from your 10-year-old about what they're selling at that funny new shop with the red light and the big canvas awning out front … Unless our priorities have now changed to the extent that the interests of prostitutes and their shabby clients come first, the very first question that should be addressed is location … If this sounds like Nimby-ism [Not In My Back Yard], that's because it is. I don't want a brothel in my backyard, and I suspect that unless you happen to be Larry Flynt, you don't either. – The Advertiser (SA), Statewide Daily Tabloid (Penberthy 2012).

There are no less than six intertwining elements of moral ideology at work in this passage.

First, Penberthy deploys notions of community as a moral norm, consistent with long-held national and religious ideologies. Only certain types of “family-minded” people are
acceptable in suburban communities, and other displays of sexual identity are not welcome. Editorials such as this one use the media, as a technology of power, to privilege a singular view – in this case a particular moral ideology of the suburbs – without the need to canvass alternative perspectives. Penberthy uses his platform to appeal to the reader that yes, surely, after this story of immorality in a suburban neighbourhood, they too must feel the same way. Unless of course, the reader is by chance a producer of pornography like Larry Flynt and therefore part of the amoral ‘other’, just like sex workers, their parents, and their “shabby” clients.

Second, Penberthy links morality and the ‘(dis)respectable work’ of sex to discourses of family and children. The presence of the Haberfield brothel generates anxiety for people like Penberthy, who may be required to explain “what they're selling at that funny new shop with the red light.” Parents who are unwilling to engage with discussions about women’s sexuality and autonomy, instead resort to trying to eliminate these aspects from the sphere of their children’s lives. This wilfully ignores the fact that online pornography is readily available for free on the internet, and children with smartphones can easily access such content. Moreover, the argument for eliminating deviant sexualities from the suburbs under the guise of ‘protecting the children’ misrepresents the minimal impact sex workers have in their communities (Hubbard et al. 2013).

Third, the presence of sex in the suburbs outside of the heteronormative, sanitised spaces of the home, makes Penberthy, and others like Johns (2012), from the rural Area News (NSW), manifestly uncomfortable. Johns (2012: 1), writing about escorting in hotel rooms, writes: “no council in its right mind would ever allow sex to be sold in a motel room just metres from where a child could be sleeping.” The implication of course is that
sex acts performed in the home are fine, but to engage in sex outside the home is a monstrous offence to heteronormativity (Hubbard 2000, Crofts and Prior 2012b).

Fourth, Penberthy has been drawn into what Crofts and Prior (2012a: 136) argue is the fear of “unseemly or scantily clad women soliciting in the public arena”, who threaten the heteronormative idyll of the previous point. Thus Penberthy chooses to ignore the fact that legally in New South Wales, as per the Summary Offences Act 1988, it is illegal to solicit within view of a school, church, hospital or dwelling. Again, research has shown that in reality, the impact of brothels is minimal, and many residents are unaware of any brothels in their neighbourhoods (Crofts and Prior 2012a). Although this is clearly not the case with Penberthy himself, it might have been for his readership prior to the publication of this opinion piece.

The fifth theme of Penberthy’s moral ideology is concerned with clients of sex workers rather than the idea of “unseemly or scantily clad women.” Language employed to describe clients, such as “shabby”, “skulking”, “tawdry”, “old pervs” and “sheepish johns”, positions clients of sex workers as amoral, dirty, or embarrassed by their actions. Stereotypes describing clients of sex workers as ‘pervy old men’ ignores the documented reality that clients of sex workers are from a wide range of ages, and visit sex workers for a variety of reasons (Xantidis and McCabe 2000, Sanders 2008). Therefore, problematic stereotypes are being perpetrated to support Penberthy’s own moral position on sex work.

The sixth and final theme lies in a letter-to-the-editor response to Penberthy’s article, demonstrating Penberthy’s appeal to the moral citizenry has in fact had its desired effect. Citizens, through letters to the editor, are reproducing and reinforcing moral ideologies. This letter reveals that the media, as a technology of power, is more than a linear method
of distributing ideology from the centre to the provinces. The response to Penberthy stated:

Journalist David Penberthy has helpfully personalised his observations about the negative impact of a legalised sex trade (The Advertiser, yesterday). Additionally, no sensible parents would want their son or daughter to enter that pitiful and wretched occupation. If MPs would be horrified about that prospect for their own children, it makes no sense to legalise and effectively approve that option for others who are perhaps less fortunate. DAVID d’LIMA, Sturt. – The Advertiser (SA), Statewide Daily Tabloid (Letters to the Editor 2012g).

The tone of this letter writer makes it clear that, of course, no person in their right mind would want a child of theirs to be engaged in labour that does not comply with designated moral ideologies about ‘respectable work’. The letter writer is thus attempting to not only shame sex workers, but also their families who may support them in their work. It is therefore a vehicle for citizens to govern the conduct of others, in collaboration with the selection choices of editors, whereby “letters must be seen as a co-production between news editors and letter writers” (Nielsen 2010: 24). Penberthy’s editorial contained multiple instances of how anxieties surrounding the sexual nature of sex work interface with the moral ideologies of the community and the nation. Yet, more examples of anxieties about ‘respectable work’ could be found (see Table 4.1).
Table 4.1: A selection of quotes depicting anxieties around the sexual nature of sex work from the coded analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Title of Article</th>
<th>Type of Media</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Political Leaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>LAUNCESTON Deputy Mayor Jeremy Ball has slammed Tasmania's brothel laws for leaving aldermen powerless when dealing with prostitution in residential areas. He said a South Launceston home offering sex on premises has had a major effect on nearby residents. “They’ve had people who are clients of that business in this street knocking on their doors at all hours of the day or night,” he said.</td>
<td>‘Ball slams brothel laws that allow sex in the city’</td>
<td>News Article (The Examiner Newspaper, TAS)</td>
<td>Fairfax Media</td>
<td>Centre</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Zelda’s mother Leslie said she had no idea the area was frequented by street walkers when they moved in six months ago. “Even when I walk outside, I get stares, intimidation . . . it’s territorial,” she said … City of Vincent mayor Alannah MacTiernan said that area of Highgate was “hell on earth for women”. At a public meeting, more than 60 residents recounted stories of harassment, including being propositioned by kerb crawlers, and disturbing levels of violence.</td>
<td>‘Girl, 13, faces sex jeers after school’</td>
<td>News Article (The West Australia, WA)</td>
<td>Seven West Media</td>
<td>Centre-Right</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>From an outsider’s perspective, it may appear that decriminalisation is unnecessary in Victoria, which has one of the oldest systems of legalised prostitution in the world. But … the sex industry would rather have free rein to boost its profits. Scratch the surface and it is clear that the Sex Party is really just window dressing for a sex industry lobby group.</td>
<td>‘Political party or lobby group? The dark side of the Australian Sex Party’</td>
<td>Thinkpiece (The Conversation, online)</td>
<td>Conversation Media Group</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>I remember when this newspaper had an announcement in the classifieds saying that no ads selling sex would be allowed or something to that effect. Now look. Hookers galore. Is the adult products and services section really necessary? Isn't prostitution illegal? Come on, get a real job. I stand up in my workplace.</td>
<td>‘SMS THE EDITOR All texts must be signed with a name or initials to be published’</td>
<td>Letter to the Editor (News Mail, QLD)</td>
<td>APN News and Media</td>
<td>Centre-Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Party</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>It is a well known fact that the brothels that advertise in the glossy pages of local papers are full of hapless underage Asian girls brought into the country as illegal immigrants with the promise of real jobs and then forced to work as sex slaves … Then it is a fact that every year thousands of Australian men, too ugly or repulsive to get a gig in their own country, travel … every year with the object of making use of under-age Asian girls who have been forced into prostitution by poverty. Apart from that the loonie left of the Labor Party and The Greens have an agenda to lower the age of consent anyway.</td>
<td>‘Fracking cattle’ Letter to the Editor (Northern Rivers Echo, NSW)</td>
<td>APN News and Media Centre-Right</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>TB ROCKY. It seems our local men can't even look up machinery, farming, cars or building services in the Bully without being forced to look at hookers every time they go to that section of the paper. Are you promoting marriage breakdown and illicit affairs? If not, let's lift the standard and get these visuals away from decent people, especially children. EDITOR: The ads comply with national advertising standards. Please complain to the Prostitution Licensing Authority.</td>
<td>‘JAMES, PA. Byrneys replaced by beauty at WIN TV. Weather report. Smart way to...’ Letter to the Editor (The Morning Bulletin, QLD)</td>
<td>APN News and Media Centre-Right</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>DESPITE what the Tasmanian ALP Attorney-General stated, legalising prostitution is not good for the men, women and children of Tasmania. Lifelong fertility problems, totally unenforceable condom-use laws, constant threats of violence, everyday exposure to countless incurable sexually transmitted diseases, daily sexual activity with numerous sex partners and meaningless health checks are what awaits the unfortunate girls who are forced into sex work.</td>
<td>‘Letters to the editor’ Letter to the Editor (The Mercury, TAS)</td>
<td>News Corp Australia Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Several arguments are put forward for the legalisation of brothels. These include that brothels are a safety valve, they will make the streets safer for women. Yet Melbourne, with a host of licensed and unlicensed brothels still has a high, and increasing, rate of rape and serious sexual assault. Then it is suggested that the unpartnered must have access to sexual services. Nonsense! Nobody needs sex.</td>
<td>‘Main head’ Letter to the Editor (The Ballarat Courier, VIC)</td>
<td>Fairfax Media Centre</td>
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The media presented the theme of anxiety around non-heteronormative identities in a way that contributed to the idea that sex workers were responsible for the degeneration of ‘regular’ people’s heteronormative sex lives:

Sex therapist Robert Weiss predicts a tidal wave of sex addiction is heading our way, triggered by the internet. RHYS BLAKELY heads to the Los Angeles clinic where Weiss tries to cure his patients of their dependence on pornography and prostitutes.
– Sunday Times Magazine (WA), Statewide Inserted Weekly Glossy (Blakely 2012).

Furthermore, according to a letter writer, because of their amorality, sex workers were responsible for their own marginalisation, and do not deserve real love:

To the escort who earns 10,000 a week, you r [sic] a prostitute who sells your body for cash, it doesn't take brains to do that. Just very easy money for you. Will all the cash be worth knowing what people think, and knowing love might never be real for you. I'll take my 9-5 job. – Gold Coast Bulletin (QLD), Suburban Daily Tabloid (Letters to the Editor 2012a).

These two quotes demonstrate how norms around ‘community’ and ‘respectable work’ are deployed through the media.

Another prominent theme, particularly in letters to the editor, is that sex workers need to be rescued from harm, because sex is harm:

Who wants a brothel in their street or next to their kids' school (“Pincer move on sex laws”’, The Advertiser, yesterday) … It is also hard to understand why these politicians are pushing laws that will exploit women. Our elected representatives should be working to protect women from mental and physical harm, not opening the door to it via prostitution. JOSH ALSTIN, Australian Family Association, Stepney.
– The Advertiser (SA), Statewide Daily Tabloid (Letters to the Editor 2012e).

Josh Alstin, speaking on behalf of the Australian Family Association, wants to rescue sex workers, a recurrent theme in anti-trafficking rhetoric (Agustín 2007). Again, the
following letter writer wants to rescue women, and is another example of the circular relationship between the moral ideologies of editors and letter writers:

I did appreciate Claire Van Ryn's Keeping the Faith column “Legalising prostitution sends the wrong message” (The Examiner, March 5). I agree it is a difficult issue and found this article helped me gain a clearer view of what this discussion paper was about. This profession does destroy families and in so doing destroys the fabric of our society. The only way is the Biblical view. The idea of bringing in programs to support women who believe prostitution is their only option clearly makes sense. Any more laws regarding this indecency are not going to help and will be a pure waste of money which can be better utilised on programs as suggested. K. MORSE, Longford. – *The Examiner (TAS)*, Citywide Daily Tabloid (Letters to the Editor 2012f).

Not only do such letters to the editor demonstrate anxieties around amorality (“this indecency”), NIMBYism (“who wants a brothel in their street”), heteronormativity (“love might never be real for you”) and the welfare of women (“programs to support women”), they show prominent Christian values that colour their point of view with obvious particularities on what is acceptable sexuality (Wilson 2012). Christian values, heterosexual, community and family, together with representations of amorality and anxiety attached to particular kinds of work, are thus linked to the moral ideologies of the nation. Such quotes are not just representative of the local papers and communities from whence they emerge, but as technologies of power, they reinforce normative national moral ideologies. What this discourse largely misses is an understanding of the actual lived experiences of sex workers, which is often very prosaic (see Section 4.3.4).

The following sections tease out the dominant themes in the news media concerning sex work in 2012. As described in the Methods, there were additional coded themes that have not been included in the following sections. Two omissions bear mentioning since they further define the articles discussed. ‘Miscellaneous Crime Reporting Involving Sex
Work’ contained articles reporting crimes mentioning sex workers (distinct from the code below entitled ‘Crime talk’). Not all of these articles featured sex workers as the victim of a crime, but it is worth acknowledging the argument that “Identifying victims of violent crime as ‘prostitutes’ has a distancing effect: it makes ‘normal’ women feel safe” (Smith 2013: 1). Whereas that posits sex workers as merely passive agents in whatever criminal circumstances are being reported, this research is, by contrast, more interested in how sex workers actively appear in representations by the media. ‘Miscellaneous International’ contained articles that referenced various crime or human-interest stories from elsewhere in the world. Although a case could be made that their appearance in Australian news would influence Australian public perceptions of sex workers, this research is specifically interested in the representation of the unique conditions of Australian sex work as iconic labour.

4.3.2 The Criminal Sex Worker

Whereas the ‘Criminal Miner’ was the second (after Miscellaneous Problems) least commonly coded category during the analysis of news articles on mining (39 instances), the ‘Criminal Sex Worker’ was at the other end of the spectrum for news articles on sex work (with 97 instances), suggesting immediately the different ways these labour identities are conceived of in the news media. Community anxiety and ‘crime talk’ are iteratively related, and seek to “‘rationalise’ a … politics of exclusion” (Carrington et al. 2012: 9). Indeed, sometimes they can even appear in the same article, as in the following example, drawn from The West Australian:

A public meeting will be held tomorrow to address claims street prostitution and crime are on the rise in Highgate and Mt Lawley. Police, council officers and City of Vincent mayor Alannah MacTiernan will meet concerned residents calling for action
against the “disturbing levels of prostitution and associated issues”. Rob McCormack, who owns a property on Stirling Street and organised the meeting, said street prostitution in the area was a long-running problem which had escalated in the past 18 months. “It’s not a moral issue—it’s simply a case of community safety and the right of the community to live in peace and quiet,” he said. “It is more the issues surrounding prostitution, such as drug-taking, violence, break-ins and public sex.” He said such incidents were common and he wanted prostitution moved to non-residential areas. – *The West Australian (WA)*, Statewide Daily Tabloid (King 2012).

The community member/property owner Rob McCormack explicitly stated that “it’s not a moral issue – it’s simply a case of community safety.” Implicit in his statement was the realisation that moral judgements against sex work are easily dismissed, and he didn’t want to be seen as a moralist. Instead, he frames it explicitly as an opposition to crimes associated with sex work, and thus played on pre-existing anxieties within the community. How McCormack concluded that violence and break-ins could be attributed to sex workers is unclear. Crofts and Prior (2012a: 133) argued that such assumptions “tend to be based on common sense in the absence of any empirical support.” ‘Common sense’ may in turn reference the stereotypical positioning of this labour in the media and society more broadly. Street-based sex workers, in places such as Western Australia where sex work is criminalised, are unlikely to be drawing attention to themselves by committing other offenses, since it could directly impact their ability to work. Yet, the concerned community members of Highgate and Mount Lawley appeared to follow the reasoning that:

people who work in or go to a brothel are immoral and engaging in unlawful activities, and are thus likely to break other moral and legal codes, such as parking and driving regulations. Illegality contaminates and it is especially important to keep it away from our homes (Crofts and Prior 2012a: 133).

Ironically, it was *actual* crimes perpetrated by the police, such as extortion, corruption, blackmail, and threats of violence against sex workers, rather than *perceived* crimes
committed by sex workers, which eventually led to the watershed Wood Royal Commission (see Section 2.6). Justice Wood recommended that police be removed from the regulation of sex work due to corruption, and sex work in New South Wales was consequently decriminalised (Royal Commission into the NSW Police Service 1997).

In relation to criminality, sex workers share a similar position in the media as the FIFO miners, being discussed as criminal or associated with crimes despite any lack of supporting evidence (Table 4.2). There were 97 articles coded as containing ‘crime talk’, far more than any of the other themes analysed. This ‘crime talk’ often occurred with little consideration for the legislative context within which sex work operates. Some of the examples of how sex work and violent crime were married together were in reporting of the threat of bikie gangs (McGregor 2012), and through the ‘cleaning up’ of violence through taskforces:

In a declaration of war against alcohol-fuelled thugs, graffiti and vandalism, Police Minister Peter Ryan yesterday revealed he was examining measures to make Melbourne and Victoria's regional cities safer. He is going to New York to investigate how its crackdown cut street crime and made subways safe … New York's campaign included a highly visible police presence to tackle minor and major street crime, including muggings, drunken violence, prostitution, drug dealing and vandalism. – *Herald Sun (VIC)*, Statewide Daily Tabloid (Moor 2012).

Even within states that criminalise certain aspects of sex work, discussing illegal sex work in the same sentence as violent crimes is a deception, one aimed at stigmatising what is otherwise a victimless ‘crime’.
Table 4.2: A selection of quotes depicting the ‘criminal’ nature of sex work from the coded analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Title of Article</th>
<th>Type of Media</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Political Leaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>“Mr Blewitt is a man who has sought immunity from prosecution. Mr Blewitt admits to using the services of prostitutes in Asia. Mr Blewitt has published lewd and degrading comments and accompanying photographs of young women on his Facebook page. Mr Blewitt, according to people who know him, has been described as a complete imbecile, an idiot, a stooge, a sexist pig, a liar, and his sister has said he's a crook and rotten to the core.”</td>
<td>‘Blewitt's Territory link’</td>
<td>News Article (Sunday Territorian, NT)</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
<td>Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Negative effects from having 6000 construction workers converging on Broome were “seriously underestimated” … Author Annie Holden, of Impaxia Consulting, said most workers presented little risk but elements of large male construction forces “fuelled by alcohol, long working hours and the heat” could be antisocial as they looked to “party”. She warned that rises in prostitution, sexual infections, sex assaults, relationship issues, drug trafficking and alcohol problems were possible.</td>
<td>‘Broome LNG boom has risks’</td>
<td>News Article (The West Australian, WA)</td>
<td>Seven West Media</td>
<td>Centre-Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Begging is usually a last resort activity, engaged in to supplement income and meet subsistence needs. Fining people for such activity exacerbates the causes that underlie it and may encourage people to engage in other illegal income supplementing activities such as shoplifting, drug dealing and prostitution.</td>
<td>‘Poverty goes begging for change’</td>
<td>News Article (Geelong Advertiser, VIC)</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
<td>Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Harm from illicit drugs is not only serious to users; it affects their families and entire communities, especially when addiction leads to crime and prostitution. Drug use is understandably perceived as a threat by the community because of the violent behaviour that is associated with some drugs.</td>
<td>‘A new approach to drug reform: regulated supply of cannabis and ecstasy’</td>
<td>Thinkpiece (The Conversation, online)</td>
<td>Conversation Media Group</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>By law the Casino, Liquor and Gaming Control Authority conducts regular reviews of the [Star Sydney] casino's compliance with licence conditions. While last year's review, by Gail Furness, SC, recommended the casino's licence be renewed, it raised concerns, including problems with suspected or actual criminal activity, such as loan sharking, prostitution and money laundering.</td>
<td>‘Casino ethics were allowed to deteriorate, review told’</td>
<td>News Article</td>
<td>Fairfax Media</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>THE Gold Coast must accept the rough with the smooth if it wants to become an international destination, according to a leading criminal lawyer. A rise in population has coincided with an increase in crime. Now prostitution, murder and drug use occur on the Gold Coast more than anywhere else in the state. There were nine murders, 5248 drug offences and 74 prostitution cases reported across the Gold Coast and Coomera police districts last year - an increase from seven, 4616 and 67 respectively from 2010.</td>
<td>‘Crime part of Coast's city status’</td>
<td>News Article</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Now it is Kings Cross – a place where heroin-dazed hookers vomit into rubbish bins, where nightclub bouncers hoon around the streets, where fired-up drunks look for easy prey – that may prove just as historic … [barrister Dixie] Coulton cites the rejuvenation of Times Square in New York as an example the Cross could follow. Not long ago Times Square was a place where drug dealers openly plied their trade, and it was full of seedy tattoo parlours, &quot;massage&quot; parlours and strip joints … Crime is down significantly from the days when pimps, prostitutes, drug addicts and dealers prowled the streets.</td>
<td>‘Battle for the soul of Sydney’</td>
<td>News Article</td>
<td>Fairfax Media</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Police tried unsuccessfully for decades to curb the trade by targeting [sex] workers, Senior Sergeant Brad Daly from St Kilda police said. But halfway through the new two-year strategy, they noticed that the switch to targeting clients was having unwanted consequences. “If we do push them out of the area, they won't necessarily all leave the industry——and they'll either adopt online or they'll go and work in another location,” he said. “We might be creating things that we haven't thought of yet.”</td>
<td>‘Phone apps shifting sex off the streets’</td>
<td>News Article</td>
<td>Fairfax Media</td>
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The reporting on the dormant luxury Double Bay Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Sydney emphasised the way that ‘crime talk’ is interwoven with spatial imaginaries, and can implicate sex work as a crime in the concrete (and classed) spaces of the city, despite it being decriminalised in New South Wales:

According to Double Bay sources Mr Churchill, who runs Churchill Security, has been renting the hotel's rooms to a mixture of students, vagrants and prostitutes for about $250 per week. The price excludes cleaning services, linen or any kitchen facilities. The Sunday Telegraph has learned female sex workers have been ushering in customers through a side-door. Retailers reported a string of sleazy incidents at the hotel, including naked dancers gyrating against each other on balconies while men sat by and smoked, and "women who were definitely not Double Bay women" coming and going after dark. – *The Sunday Telegraph (NSW)*, Statewide Weekly Tabloid (The Sunday Telegraph 2012).

Community anxiety was conflated with class and gender stereotypes, about “women who were definitely not Double Bay [a suburb with the most expensive real estate in Sydney] women.”

Reporting of the case of Ralph Blewitt, who was implicated in a union scandal that embroiled former PM Julia Gillard, was somewhat difficult to code. It was reported on numerous times through the year, and perhaps not explicitly linking sex work to ‘crimes’, it nevertheless linked the use of sex workers with a disreputable “crook”:

Mr Blewitt is a man who has sought immunity from prosecution. Mr Blewitt admits to using the services of prostitutes in Asia. Mr Blewitt has published lewd and degrading comments and accompanying photographs of young women on his Facebook page. Mr Blewitt, according to people who know him, has been described as a complete imbecile, an idiot, a stooge, a sexist pig, a liar, and his sister has said he's a crook and rotten to the core.\(^\text{15}\) – *NT News (NT)*, Statewide Daily Tabloid (Adlam 2012).

\(^\text{15}\) Quote attributed to then Prime Minister Julia Gillard.
Through the use of sex workers in Asia, alongside his other poor qualities, the Prime Minister sought to discredit him.

As with FIFO miners (Chapter 3), sex workers were explicitly linked to the use of drugs, representing them in such a way that one inevitably leads to the other – again through spatial imaginaries. Places like Kings Cross and Broome are “where heroin-dazed hookers vomit into rubbish bins” (Clark 2012), and where a rise in sex work can be mentioned alongside “sexual infections, sex assaults, relationship issues, drug trafficking and alcohol problems” (Prior 2012). In this schema, all sex workers are drug users, and work to support their addiction. There are many recreational drug users in Australia, with the United Nations ‘World Drug Report 2014’ claiming that Australia has one of the highest uses of recreational drug use in the world (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2014). The Alcohol and Drug Foundation state that “41.8% of Australians aged 14 years and over had used illicit drugs in their lifetime” (Alcohol and Drug Foundation 2016). Presumably, not all of these drug users are sex workers or criminals, and therefore people working in many industries are using drugs. Yet those who use (and abuse) drugs that are not sex workers, whether they are office workers, bricklayers, or nurses, do not have their drug use connected to their labour in the same way by the media.

Such examples demonstrate some of the extent of ‘crime talk’ around sex work, and how it subjects sex workers to the same kinds of stigma that are normally reserved for hardened criminals and violent crimes. These associations make sex workers more likely to be marginalised by their broader communities in which they live and work. The issue of representations in the media, and their effect on community attitudes and in the national imaginary, reoccurs throughout the analysis of FIFO and sex workers. ‘Crime talk’ in the
media then is closely associated with the theme of ‘The Sex(ual) Worker’, as they likely feed in to each other.

4.3.3 The Trafficked Sex Worker
The dominance of the narrative of the ‘trafficked’ sex worker has filtered into the way sex workers have come to be understood worldwide (Agustín 2007), and is now part of their iconic status. In this interpretation, sex workers are always vulnerable and harmed, and in need of rescue and protection. It is unsurprising then, based on the intensity and volume of the international legal and human rights discourse around trafficking, that trafficking was one of the emergent themes coded in the analysis (Table 4.3). These narratives, and their critiques, have been addressed by numerous authors (Agustín 2007, Grant 2014, O’Brien 2015, Petersen 2015, Walker and Oliveira 2015). Trafficking and the Swedish Model were interconnected in Australia’s media coverage, much as they are in the academic discourse (Hall 2012, Pearse 2012, Prismall 2012b). The Swedish Model, first mentioned in the Preface, is heavily favoured by the religious right and radical feminists, since it challenges the perceived right of a man to a woman’s body, and positions the buyers of sex (usually men) as criminals, while the sex workers (usually women) are seen as victims of male violence. Sex work abolitionists employ trafficking discourses within the media to garner support and further their aims (see Table 4.3). Appeals for the Swedish Model in the media were often coterminous with states reviewing their sex work legislation, and the Swedish Model is the favoured option for the anti-trafficking lobby. For people that are not invested in the politics of sex work, and are unaware of the dangers of the Swedish Model for workers (see the Preface), it would appear to be a sensible solution to sex trafficking. The anti-trafficking lobby therefore
utilises the media, as a technology of power, to exploit the ignorance of much of the citizenry, and draws upon pre-existing moral ideologies in the Australian national imaginary to further a conservative, moralistic approach to sex work. Sex workers have a more difficult time taking advantage of the media to further their ‘rights, not rescue’\textsuperscript{16} advocacy message.

\textsuperscript{16} A common slogan employed by sex workers and their allies.
Table 4.3: A selection of quotes depicting the close association between sex work and trafficking discourses from the coded analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Title of Article</th>
<th>Type of Media</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Political Leaning</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>AN ACCUSED illegal brothel owner—who was netted by a police inquiry into human trafficking and Chinese criminal syndicates—was unaware that women were masturbating clients in his East Melbourne massage parlour, a court has heard.</td>
<td>‘Accused brothel owner “unaware”’</td>
<td>News Article</td>
<td>Fairfax Media</td>
<td>Centre</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>The annual US State Department Trafficking in Persons Report ranks Australia in the top tier of countries fighting human trafficking and slavery. But that does not mean Australia has no trafficking problem, the report says. “Australia is primarily a destination country for women subjected to forced prostitution and to a lesser extent, women and men subjected to forced labor,” the report says, adding that some child sex trafficking also occurs.</td>
<td>‘Australia ranks high in anti-slavery fight’</td>
<td>News Article</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>AUSTRALIA is one of the top destinations for sex traffickers. The reason is simple: there is a belief among many that sex is a commodity and it's the right of every man to purchase a woman's body for sex … as long as there is a high demand for prostituted women, sex trafficking will continue to be a threat, simply because there is a profit to be made … The WA Government should follow Sweden's lead to limit the expansion of brothels and the number of women in prostitution by making the purchase of sex illegal.</td>
<td>‘Paying the price for sex’</td>
<td>Opinion Piece</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
<td>Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>A senior Korean official told The Sun-Herald the sex trade was &quot;a very significant issue” for them and that several investigations were in progress into Korean syndicates operating in Australia … “We know prostitution is legal in some parts of Australia but it is illegal in Korea. But, if the women are victims of trafficking, or in slave-like conditions, then it is illegal under both countries' laws … We want to stop Korean sex workers doing sex business in Australia and to stop the organisations associated with this activity,” he said.</td>
<td>‘Seoul asks for help to stem sex slavery’</td>
<td>News Article</td>
<td>Fairfax Media</td>
<td>Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Sex trafficking is a controversial subject … [academic Dianne] McInnes … believes allowing Asian sex workers into Australia to work legally is the best way to stem injustice and utilise limited police resource … “Sex trafficking is a problem, but by magnifying the size of the problem we create a moral panic that is simply not justified.”</td>
<td>‘Bad Tricks’ (Gold Coast Bulletin, QLD)</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
<td>Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>PROSTITUTION'S legal status in most Australian states could make it an appealing location for sex trafficking. The state government will release a discussion paper this month on Tasmania's sex industry laws after years of debate that the 2005 criminalisation of brothels made sex workers vulnerable to exploitation … “I don't think it is realistic to believe that (sex trafficking) doesn't happen here when there is evidence to suggest that it is a very widespread – if difficult to identify – practice in Australia and worldwide,” Launceston's Laurel House senior counsellor Rachel Portsmouth said.</td>
<td>‘Debate rages over impact of legal prostitution’ (The Examiner Newspaper, TAS)</td>
<td>Fairfax Media</td>
<td>Centre</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>People trafficking is a large-scale and growing problem in Australia and more migrants are being coerced into prostitution or exploitative conditions, Law Society of WA president Christopher Kendall has warned. Dr Kendall is part of a panel that will discuss sex trafficking at WA’s Supreme Court on Thursday. He said women from Eastern Europe and Asia, particularly China, Korea and Thailand, were being trafficked into Australia to work in debt-bonded prostitution.</td>
<td>‘Fear laws may lead to rise in trafficking’ (The West Australian, WA)</td>
<td>Seven West Media</td>
<td>Centre-Right</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>The ACT's Chief Police Officer Roman Quaedvlieg said the force would place increased scrutiny on unregulated brothels over the next 12 months, as they investigated whether human trafficking was occurring on a major scale. Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg said the legal, regulated brothels in the ACT were generally clean, healthy, and had relatively low levels of associated criminal behaviour. But he suspected that organised illegal prostitution rings, operating out of sight of local authorities, could be involved in sex trafficking.</td>
<td>‘Fears syndicates are running sex trafficking’ (Canberra Times, ACT)</td>
<td>Fairfax Media</td>
<td>Centre</td>
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It is true that human trafficking exists, and that it exists sometimes for sexual slavery. However, the anti-trafficking lobby – often a strange coalition of conservative religious groups and radical feminists – has very successfully managed to conflate human trafficking with sex work so as to be indistinguishable from each other, and “with little regard for the important differences between these practices (David 2000: 11).

Articles with titles such as ‘Fears syndicates are running sex trafficking’ connect earlier themes of ‘crime talk’ with the anxieties surrounding sex industry trafficking. In that article:

>The ACT’s Chief Police Officer Roman Quaedvlieg said the force would place increased scrutiny on unregulated brothels over the next 12 months, as they investigated whether human trafficking was occurring on a major scale … he suspected that organised illegal prostitution rings, operating out of sight of local authorities, could be involved in sex trafficking. "I think there are likely syndicated networks that are working and I wouldn't be surprised to realise that there are also trafficked sex workers in that unregulated industry," he said. "We're going to take a closer examination of the unregulated industry, just to satisfy ourselves that we don't have major human trafficking, sex trafficking problems, or other criminal problems in that sector." – *The Canberra Times (ACT)*, Statewide Daily Broadsheet (Knaus 2012).

Here, the reporting focused on the conjectural statement of the Australian Capital Territory’s Chief Police Officer who “suspected” human trafficking was occurring in Canberra brothels, despite any evidence to the contrary. Such a conclusion is foregone when sex work and human trafficking become commensurate.

Through the connection between migratory labourers, particularly from locales that have been traditionally been associated with sex tourism such as South-East Asia, and the stereotypes of “sexual availability and exoticity” long associated with ‘Asian women’ (Pettman 1998: 400, see also Davidson 1995a, Rao 1999, Sanders-McDonagh 2010), sex
Trafficking discourses are deeply enmeshed in the moral and racial ideologies of the nation. Moreover, political and social debates in Australia around refugees have seen people that traffic in other people labelled ‘people smugglers’. Although the Australian Attorney-General’s Department (n.d.) has attempted to distinguish between ‘human trafficking’ and ‘people smuggling’, the associated is embedded. According to Debney (2016: 10):

scare narratives surrounding people smuggling … critically contribute to the production of deviance and thus of moral panic. In demonising and misrepresenting the nature of the means refugees use to arrive in Australia, those orchestrating the moral panic over people smuggling delegitimise the plight of refugees though guilt by association, confirming the xenophobic stereotype of the ‘queue jumper’.

Trafficking in Australia, in the form of ‘people smuggling’ then, is also about xenophobia, and thus about who is ‘Australian’. These discourses at this time in Australia make trafficking a high profile moral panic, one that also encapsulates the ‘trafficked’ sex worker, and one that is increasingly cemented in the national imaginary via fears of being ‘invaded’ from the north by ‘unwelcome’ people.

With such narratives permeating the media, the invisibility of sex work in the national imaginary is actually contested by other more visible trafficking discourses, such as those surrounding people smugglers and migrant sex workers. The argument by the anti-trafficking lobby that the legal and decriminalised status of sex work in some Australian jurisdictions makes Australia a destination and haven for sex trafficking (Ford 2001), is contradicted elsewhere in statements such as: “there is no evidence-based research in Australia indicating that the incidence of sex trafficking can be attributed to either legalisation or decriminalisation of the sex industry” (Frances and Fiona 2012: 1, see also Jeffreys 2009a, Interdepartmental Committee on Human Trafficking and Slavery 2015).
The increased visibility of sex work in the national imaginary through media representations of migrant sex workers, however, raises levels of anxiety around sex workers more generally and entrenches the perception of their victimhood. A case in point is the presence of Asian sex workers in the rural mining community of Mount Isa:

Freelance prostitution have [sic] been rife in Mount Isa for years, with some prostitutes reportedly earning up to $7000 a week from local miners. Insp Biggin said many of the illegal prostitutes were not from Australia, spoke poor English and were poorly educated. ‘Certainly they don't have the capacity to arrive to Mount Isa, set up accommodation, advertise, put phones together of their own free will,’ he said – *Townsville Bulletin (QLD)*, Rural Daily Tabloid (Bateman 2012).

In response to such arguments, the Migrant Research Officer at Scarlet Alliance (being paraphrased by media aggregator *Media Monitors*) stated:

sex work has been decriminalised in most parts of Australia and that she does not understand what [Biggin] is referring to. Kim says that most people who speak poor English have a university education in their home country and are in Australia voluntarily. Kim says the police are being ignorant if they believe that a lack of English is a key indicator of exploitation. – *ABC Capricornia Rockhampton Mornings*, National Public Broadcaster (Buchanan 2012).

Migrant sex workers in the mining community of Roxby Downs in South Australia were also covered by the conservative national broadsheet, *The Australian*:

Police in Roxby Downs in South Australia have been called to respond to complaints about Asian women putting "hot Asian massage" flyers on the windcreens of cars parked at BHP Billiton's Olympic Dam village. – *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, National Weekly Inserted Glossy (Overington 2012).

In this quote, the author makes no effort to clarify whether people are taking exception to the sex workers because of the flyer drops or because they are Asian. One might suspect the former, but the effect of the language makes the connection between ‘Asian’ and ‘problem’. As constructions of otherness in rural places, both migrant sex workers and
miners, and their “spiritual, physical and social character … are hidden … both as residents or tourists” (Panelli et al. 2009: 356).

It is worth noting that there were exceptions to the conflation of sex work and trafficking, such as this example from the ABC:

DAVID WEBER: Is it prostitution that's the key area of concern?

CHRIS MCDEVITT: I just want to emphasise that the AFP [Australian Federal Police] is not interested in prostitution at all. We’re about human trafficking. What we're interested in is people who are forced into that, certainly sexual servitude is the biggest side of the business at the moment. We have 167 out of those 187 victims were women and 151 of those were actually from sexual servitude. The rest of those were forced into other labour trafficking situations. – ABC Transcripts, National Public Broadcaster (Weber 2012).

Other examples containing such nuanced expressions of the difference between sex slavery and sex work were extremely rare. One academic was captured in News Corp’s Gold Coast Bulletin (QLD) acknowledging that sex trafficking is problematic, but overstated:

Sex trafficking is a problem, but by magnifying the size of the problem we create a moral panic that is simply not justified. – Gold Coast Bulletin (QLD), Conservative Suburban Tabloid (Brown 2012).

However, such voices were largely in the minority.

Given what we know about constructions of otherness (see Chapter 3), anxieties around sex work are compounded when discussing migrant sex workers and trafficked slave labour (Jeffrey 2002, Agustín 2006). The contraction of what is a highly nuanced human rights issue encompasses volatile (moral) issues such as gendered labour, migration, poverty, and sex. Sex workers who choose to work in the sex industry are often forced to defend their right to work. When migratory sex work is discussed, they must also defend
the rights of women from developing countries to seek better labour conditions, whilst simultaneously denouncing the appalling and illegal practice of actual sex trafficking (Doezema 2012, Scarlet Alliance 2003). The conflation between sex work and ‘trafficked’ workers makes this defence difficult. The trafficking fiction has the unintended effect of creating a public narrative whereby people assume that most sex workers, particularly those who appear to be non-Anglo-Saxon, must therefore be trafficked. The success of the anti-trafficking lobby and their narrative has ensured that ‘The Trafficked Sex Worker’ has become one of the dominant impressions of sex work. In media representations then, the presence of sex workers in rural communities implies further sinister networks behind the scenes. The presence of Asian sex workers in particular foments deep subterranean racial anxieties that have been an intrinsic part of Australia’s national imaginary since the ‘White Australia Policy’. The intersection of trafficking and ‘crime talk’ discourses therefore fuels anxieties in communities about ‘outsiders’ who infiltrate and threaten both the perceived rural idyll, and the Australian nation. The effect of this kind of moralistic and poorly informed narrative of sex work in the media, contradictorily raises the visibility of sex work in the national imaginary, but perpetuates victimhood for sex workers, and silences other narratives, including those of the mundane, quotidian, and prosaic sex worker.

4.3.4 The Prosaic Sex Worker

This section departs from discussions of sex work as a generator of anxiety, to feature media representations of sex workers as ‘regular’ people: safe, happy, valued, responsible, indeed necessary members of the community. Such discourses were present, though rare within the analysis (Table 4.4). Throughout 2012, only 11 written news
articles, and 23 letters to the editor were broadly supportive of sex workers (4 per cent). There were an additional 24 articles out of the 907 (3 per cent) that included the actual voices of sex workers, clients of sex workers, or brothel owners – the people with the most intimate knowledge of the sex industry in Australia. Coding for ‘support’ included almost any reference that was not unequivocally negative. Even comparatively ‘neutral’ representations made their way into this theme. This is not to suggest that neutrality is implied sympathy; rather that the numbers of articles that were not completely negative was so small that grouping non-negative articles together better accounted for an alternative viewpoint. Support for sex work, in the context of this section, could thus be overt, or ambivalent. Full support for sex work found in the media was typically argued for by sex workers themselves:

“You have got me for an hour and you do not have to pay for it,” a sex worker joked with her audience at a leadership forum in Launceston yesterday. Rachel Wotton addressed about 20 people at a Tasmanian Leaders Program lecture day at the Silverdome. Ms Wotton, 38, of Hobart, said she had been in the sex industry for 18 years and had worked in different parts of the industry but now specialised in an overlooked clientele – people with a disability. She said people at the forum could probably go home that night and be “frisky” if they wanted, but some people with a disability had to plan three months in advance, because that was how long it could take to see a sex worker. “We put man on the moon ... but in Australia we are still talking about the right of consenting adults to touch each other,” she said of sex law reform. – The Examiner (TAS), Citywide Daily Tabloid (Lowe 2012).

The media has, however, also presented the conclusions of academics:

“Jurisdictions that try to ban or license sex work always lose track as most of the industry slides into the shadows,” the report's lead author, Professor Basil Donovan from the University of NSW's Kirby Institute, said in a statement. “In NSW, by contrast, health and community workers have comprehensive access to and surveillance of the sex industry. This has resulted in the healthiest sex industry ever documented.” The report, prepared for the NSW government, found there were at
least 101 brothels within 20 kilometres of Sydney's CBD and estimated that between
3000 to 4500 sex workers operated in the region in any one year. On the whole, sex
workers surveyed also reported being “well adjusted and comfortable with their
Agency* (AAP 2012).

Further examples are presented in Table 4.4.
Table 4.4: A selection of quotes depicting the prosaic nature of sex work from the coded analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Title of Article</th>
<th>Type of Media</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Political Leaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>I have to take issue with headlines inside Tues paper “prostitute says man raped her”; are you going to identify male offenders in court as “male user of prostitutes”? Why couldn't this woman be identified just as a woman? Is rape not so important or serious if it happens to a woman employed in that industry? Just once I'd like to see headlines “male user of prostitutes appears in court for whatever”, because it's quite likely he is one.</td>
<td>‘AMY. PM, for the records, and refer to my first text put in on Thursday last...’</td>
<td>Letter to the Editor</td>
<td>APN News and Media</td>
<td>Centre-Right</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Sexual literacy is increasingly important in our media saturated world and I encourage parents to discuss sexual issues with their adolescents. Exotic dancing is a legitimate form of artistic communication, so why oppose that in an already culturally lacking town? If a strip club is against your moral values, then simply do not go there. Christians should be known for what they do and support, rather than what they oppose. Don’t punish those who don’t follow their scripture based moral values. T. HOHN, Toowoomba</td>
<td>‘Lack of support from council disappointing’</td>
<td>Letter to the Editor</td>
<td>APN News and Media</td>
<td>Centre-Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>I THINK we should legalise sex workers as they provide a valuable service. They have saved a lot of people from getting raped and they also get customers who just want to talk. In addition, a lot of marriages are saved because the wife has become frigid and the husband is sexually frustrated. I am a Christian but see the need for sex workers.</td>
<td>‘Swedish model best’</td>
<td>Letter to the Editor</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
<td>Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Denise Beckwith … won a bronze medal at the Sydney Paralympics and now works with Disabilities Australia. She says her use of a prostitute meant she could develop in ways she otherwise may not have. “I have a disability and my first sexual experience was with a sex worker, and I really value that experience because it gave me confidence to then pursue other relationships, so sex work has an educative function,” she said.</td>
<td>‘Call to legalise sex workers for people with disability’</td>
<td>News Article</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
<td>Centre-Left</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Text</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>My closest girlfriends know what I do and they are supportive of the choices I have made. I know not everyone approves of sex work, but I am simply providing a service for which there will always be a demand, and at this stage of my life it allows me to have the perfect work and family balance.</td>
<td>‘Working girl’</td>
<td>Fairfax Media Centre</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>“The sex industry is a lot like childcare because we are always in need and demand is so high we have to run three shifts of eight women a day. Patronage has also changed and in the past few years we have seen a rise in younger men and couples looking to explore fantasies.”</td>
<td>‘Brothel racks up 10 years’</td>
<td>News Corp Australia Right</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>He's a FIFO miner who regularly sees one “special lady” - they've taken trips together to Bali and even to Sydney for a few days – &quot;but once the law comes in, she'll be illegal, and she could go to jail, and her clients could potentially go to jail. But sex is natural, and they should take the morality out of it. The majority of people don't go to church. Why should we have to live by rules made by churchgoing people?”</td>
<td>‘Pay dirt’</td>
<td>News Corp Australia Right</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Two local working girls fronted Rockhampton Magistrates Court this week – one under investigation by immigration officers – after police arrested them in Rockhampton. A local sex worker, known only as Emily, said prostitution laws in Queensland were much harsher than in other Australian states … Emily said the laws also threatened the safety of girls who were prevented from teaming up with other sex workers.</td>
<td>‘Sex worker says prostitution laws too tough in QLD’</td>
<td>APN News and Media Centre-Right</td>
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Support from elsewhere in the community was also reported, though it was more mixed in its composition. Full support was found in the *North West Star*, centrist daily tabloid of small rural mining town Mount Isa:

Prostitutes regularly operate from at least two Mount Isa motels, and motel management couldn't be happier. Abacus Motel managers Robbie McCarthy and Jodie Mihajlovic said they received a letter several months ago from an anti-discriminatory group informing them it was against the law to deny a room to a sex worker. “Apparently some motels in the Isa were denying rooms to working girls and an email was sent out to all hotels and motels,” Mr McCarthy said. “The sex workers who stay at our motel are always honest about what they do,” he said. “They are polite and clean, they clean their own rooms and always pay in advance. We never have any problems. We have more problems from random clients off the street.” – *North West Star (QLD)*, Rural Daily Tabloid (Fisher 2012).

At least in this instance, the moral ideologies that inspired the restrictive legislation of the Victorian-era have not permeated the Abacus Motel managers. This quote stands in stark contrast to the Drovers Rest Motel incident described below in Section 4.4.2, where the owners used condoms they found in the garbage as evidence of the unsavoury character of a sex worker. The Mount Isa case above was to be the only such unmitigated support for the prosaic sex worker from a non-sex industry business reported in the Australian media for 2012. A more ambivalent and nuanced reflection was apparent in this opinion piece from *The Canberra Times*:

… if a drunk man is kicked in the face while passed out on the footpath, we don't say he "asked for it", despite the fact that he was intoxicated in a violent street. His victimhood is straightforward: his body was violated, and his attacker is vilified. Violations of women's autonomy do not receive the same simple condemnation. Likewise, the problem with teenage escorts is not that they are having sex, assuming they are mature enough to consent. The problem is that, in many cases, they are having sex for money, because that is the only way they are valued: as sexual pleasure for older, richer men. Not all sex work is a tragedy of forced choice. But, for many
young women, choice is a luxury for their clients. – The Canberra Times (ACT), Statewide Daily Broadsheet (The Canberra Times 2012).

This comment acknowledged the issue of morality that almost inevitably surfaces in discussions of young women’s sexuality, and yet completely disassociated itself from such sentiment. Instead, it focused on the uneven power relations between older men and younger women, and more importantly, hinted at the veiled class dynamics implicit in all labour, sexual or otherwise.

Outside of sex workers themselves, and sympathetic academics, support for sex work in the media could be found in letters to the editor. Some letters showed unmitigated support:

Roslyn Phillips (Inbox, July 14-15) seems compelled to prove that prostitution is a damaging occupation for every woman who takes part. I'm sure an 11-year study of bankers, teachers, doctors, cleaners, receptionists, secretaries, mothers and others would find that they, too, had to sometimes mentally switch off or use alcohol and drugs to ease the pain. Prostitution can be difficult, enjoyable, or neutral. Some women are damaged by it. But let's accept that for others, it's a comfortable and interesting path to earning the best money of their lives. Ellen Rodger Newtown, NSW. – The Weekend Australian Magazine, National Inserted Weekly Glossy (Letters to the Editor 2012k).

Ellen Rodger from Newtown, a bastion of left politics in the inner-city suburb of Sydney, echoes one of the enduring arguments often recited by sex workers about their own work being prosaic labour – like any other form of work (Prestage and Perkins 1994, van der Meulen 2012). Essentially, sex work in and of itself is not more or less inherently damaging than other forms of labour under capitalism, and in fact, is one of the few industries where women can exploit the male gaze for their own benefit. Other letters were more ambivalent, or downright confusing:

Since Bob Katter's party, in his own words, is ‘the fun and freedom party’, is anti-wowser and opposed to the nanny state (Sunday Tasmanian, November 25), we can
surely expect that Katter's Australian Party will want to legalise and promote prostitution and embrace pornography with consenting adults only, in all cases. Tony Sturges Rosetta. — *Sunday Tasmanian (TAS)*, Statewide Weekly Tabloid (Letters to the Editor 2012d).

Tony Sturges from Rosetta is somewhat less clear in his purpose and representation of sex work. On the surface, it appears the statement supports sex work, but there is a particular tone to the letter (“is anti-wowser and … we can surely expect that…”) that suggests that Tony is actually lampooning Katter’s Australian Party and sex workers are the punchline to a joke.

And while elsewhere I have made much of the role of morality and the intersection with Christian values, at least one Christian letter writer in South Australia’s statewide daily *The Advertiser* was willing to publicly support sex workers since they “provide a valuable service” (Letters to the Editor 2012i). Support for sex workers can therefore be found in many sections of the community. If not directly legitimating sex workers as prosaic labourers, such representations in the media add nuance and complexity to the otherwise monochromatic and dominantly negative discourse. The intersection of this support with the anxieties on display elsewhere has unclear outcomes, but the potential for supportive views to be overwhelmed by the sheer number of articles reciting tired tropes of sex worker immorality or victimisation is ever-present.

Meanwhile, with only 24 articles that included the voices of sex workers, brothel owners, or clients, there was not much room for diverse opinions between the three groups. Within the limited sample, the media representations in this small sample were sympathetic to the industry and the workers, and showcased some of the variety of the sex industry, and those who use its services. There was considerable interest by the media in disabled
clients and the sex workers who service them, as the quote from Launceston’s *The Examiner* earlier reporting on the work of Rachel Wotton, and the one below, attest:

Denise Beckwith, who grew up in Sydney's south-west with cerebral palsy, won a bronze medal at the Sydney Paralympics and now works with Disabilities Australia. She says her use of a prostitute meant she could develop in ways she otherwise may not have. “I have a disability and my first sexual experience was with a sex worker, and I really value that experience because it gave me confidence to then pursue other relationships, so sex work has an educative function,” she said. – ABC News, National Public Broadcaster (Nightingale and Staff 2012).

To have the issue of how disabled people meet their sexual needs brought out of the shadows can be attributed in no small part to the campaigning of Wotton, who participated in a TV documentary on the subject (*Scarlet Road* 2011). Such coverage has the potential to challenge the way people perceive sex work precisely because of its raw humanity, rather than the shadowy ‘crime talk’ and abstract moralities that generate anxieties about the work. While Wotton was campaigning for acceptance of sex work in Tasmania, a Tasmanian ex-sex worker was promoting an alternative view in response to legislative changes proposed in that state:

Legalising brothels would not be good for our community. This was made clear by a woman known as Shannon, speaking on ABC Radio in Hobart about her life as a prostitute. “Vulnerable women, already sexually abused and with low self-esteem, are targeted all the time to work in brothels. Drug-taking is commonplace. It’s all about role play. I had to use drugs to dissociate myself.” She believes the distribution of pornographic videos from the ACT and on the internet is leading younger men to demand increasingly degrading acts to live out their fantasies. When asked whether there was any difference between being in legal or illegal brothels, she replied: “No, because you get the same sorts of clients and the same sorts of girls.” Shannon believes legalisation “sends the message that the government approves of women being degraded, damaged and sexually assaulted. Rather than legalising brothels, the government should be proactive and tackle the underlying problem, which is the
breakdown of social and cultural values.” – *The Examiner (TAS)*, Citywide Daily Tabloid (Prismall 2012a).

The reporter, Barry Prismall, has also written other articles speaking out against sex work (Prismall 2012b). In this endeavour to campaign against sex work reform, Prismall follows a standard sex work abolitionist tactic of putting on display the few ex-workers that agree with their point of view (Grant 2014), and disregarding the views of the national representative body, Scarlet Alliance, with its large membership of sex workers. And yet, there is a tension in the effort here to illustrate representations of the prosaic nature of sex work in the media, with wanting to respect the authority of Scarlet Alliance as the institution best placed to speak on behalf of Australian sex workers, but not at the expense of ex-workers like Shannon. However, the opinion put forward by Shannon did not appear to reflect the majority of views reported by sex workers in 2012.

Finally, the reported views of brothel owners were mostly supportive of sex work. This is hardly surprising when there is money to be made, and acknowledges that brothel owners are often, if not always, the capitalist, property-owning class in sex work who exploit sex workers and profit from their surplus labour value. The quotes below attributed to brothel owner Ms Snow refute much of what abolitionists and anti-traffickers argue is true for sex work, and again paints a more prosaic picture of the lives of sex workers:

“There's nothing shonky about it. I run a professional drug-free, alcohol-free work environment,” she says. There are 80 full and part-time girls who see about a total of 500 customers a week. Ms Snow admits she has been approached by standover merchants wanting part of the action. “A few people have knocked on my door, extortionists wanting protection money,” she says. “I've given them short shrift. I've seen brothels become involved with shonky types only to go under.” She describes the working girls as “a wonderful and diverse lot”, different ages and from different social backgrounds. Ms Snow says many of her part-time workers are nurses who
work as prostitutes on the side. She believes nurses often make the best brothel workers “because they know how to deal with the clients.” – *Geelong Advertiser (VIC)*, Citywide Daily Tabloid (Bennett 2012).

It is tempting here to refer to arguments about the politics of respectability (Skeggs 1997) with quotes such as “I run a professional drug-free, alcohol-free work environment.” The claim that many of her workers are nurses raises questions for the reader about what types of prosaic labouring bodies participate in sex work and the type of expertise required to “deal with the clients”. Brothel owner Ms Snow in this quote makes the novel connection that nurses make good sex workers. In so doing, she places nurses and sex workers in equal standing, incidentally further reinforcing discourses that presuppose the suitability of women for these ‘feminine’ and ‘nurturing’ industries, and raising questions about how women’s labour is valued more generally (Guy and Newman 2004).

The stories reported within this section, although few, generated counterposing viewpoints to the dominant discourses of transgressive and problematic sex work – discourses with the potential to fuel public anxieties about the unknown. Instead, we had representations of people involved in a prosaic industry. These representations did much to contradict the misinformation and moral condemnation evident in previous sections. Public support in the media for sex work as a more prosaic form of labour played a critical role in providing alternative understandings of sex worker labour identities, and the sex industry more broadly. This situation may serve to counter the stigma and marginalisation sex workers experience. However, due to the sensationalised nature of news reporting, the more prosaic the labour, the less likely it is to appear in the news. For example, the media does not often run censorious editorials, such as the one in Section 4.3.1 by David Penberthy, on plumbers, academics, or nurses. This sensationalism around their labour is yet another thing that both mining and sex work share. Sex workers may therefore, to a
certain extent, have a sound strategy in attempting to appropriate the power of the media to facilitate new discourses around the prosaic nature of their work. At some point, however, the prosaic nature of sex work may surpass the sensational nature of sex work, and reporting on sex work will eventually recede. The final section returns to long-standing and misinformed anxieties about sex workers.

4.3.5 The Unclean Sex Worker

The historical link between miners and sex workers finds a strong contemporary grounding in this section. The iconic form of labour constructed here is of the ‘unclean’ or ‘diseased’ sex worker: one of the longest enduring stereotypes of sex workers. However, there were only 15 articles (2 per cent) that touched on this theme (Table 4.5). As we saw in Chapter 3, miners were accused of spreading STIs. In this section, sex workers too were linked to STI outbreaks:

Mount Isa's booming illegal prostitution trade has been blamed for an outbreak of syphilis in the northwestern mining town. The Queensland Government yesterday launched an education campaign in northwest communities to raise awareness about the curable sexually transmissible infection and encourage residents to have regular testing … The manager of the My Room Brothel, who asked not to be named, said illegal operations were placing the region's customers at risk. – Townsville Bulletin (QLD), Rural Daily Tabloid (Matheson 2012)

The argument that sex workers are responsible for spreading STIs has a long history. Operating towards the end of the nineteenth century and early into twentieth century, Contagious Diseases Acts in some states of Australia were a direct response to the existential threat of decreased national virility and defensive capability of the nation (Arnot 1985) (see Chapter 2). The trope of the ‘unclean’ sex worker has persisted into the
twenty-first century, despite high rates of condom use, and lower rates of STIs amongst sex workers than in the general population (Scott et al. 2012b).
Table 4.5: A selection of quotes depicting sex workers as vectors of disease from the coded analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Title of Article</th>
<th>Type of Media</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Political Leaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>TWEED brothel owners want tighter controls on prostitutes offering unprotected sex, despite the NSW Government saying laws banning it would drive the practice underground. More than 500 prostitutes in the state's south have admitted offering unprotected sex to clients in a survey by consulting firm Brothel Busters. There are no NSW laws banning unsafe sex, unlike Queensland and Victoria, and the alarming trend has prompted Tweed brothels to call for the NSW Government to address the issue, which is arguably contributing to the spread of sexually transmissible infections.</td>
<td>'Brothel owners want tougher safe-sex laws'</td>
<td>News Article (Gold Coast Sun, QLD)</td>
<td>News Corp Australia</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>A MELBOURNE prostitute accused of intentionally infecting clients with HIV over a year-and-a-half fears for his safety in prison, a court has heard. The 36-year-old man, who cannot be named, worked as a sex worker from his Reservoir home while knowingly infected with the virus between January 1, 2011, and May 23 this year, prosecutors allege. The man faces charges of attempting to intentionally infect someone with a very serious disease, recklessly engaging in sexual intercourse while knowingly infected with HIV without lawful excuse, and working as a sex worker while infected with HIV.</td>
<td>'HIV prostitute fears prison'</td>
<td>News Article (The Ballarat Courier, VIC)</td>
<td>Fairfax Media</td>
<td>Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>At the height of public concern over the HIV epidemic in 1985, the Sydney Morning Herald ran the headline “AIDS spread linked to prostitutes”. These claims were supported by some health professionals and resulted in widespread public concern and legislative changes, despite research at the time indicating most sex workers used condoms. The latest available data (from 2005) shows HIV has not transmitted in a sex industry setting in Australia. In fact, Australian sex workers have very low rates of HIV and STI infection and high rates of condom usage.</td>
<td>‘Mining, sex work and STIs: why force a connection?’</td>
<td>Thinkpiece (The Conversation, online)</td>
<td>Conversation Media Group</td>
<td>Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>MOUNT Isa's booming illegal prostitution trade has been blamed for an outbreak of syphilis in the northwestern mining town. The Queensland Government yesterday launched an education campaign in northwest communities to raise awareness about the curable sexually transmissible infection and encourage residents to have regular testing. Five cases of syphilis have been reported in the Mount Isa Health Service District this year, double the figure recorded during the whole of 2009. There were 16 cases of early syphilis detected in the region in 2010 and more than 80 cases in 2011. The manager of the My Room Brothel, who asked not to be named, said illegal operations were placing the region's customers at risk.</td>
<td>‘Sex health warning workers will “do anything”’ News Article (Townsville Bulletin, QLD)</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Bud Greenhalgh, who manages a licensed brothel in Mackay, said STIs could be greatly reduced if freelance sex workers were subject to the same health checks and legal requirements as sex workers operating from licensed brothels. “At the end of day we're here to ensure the safety of our girls and our clients,” Mr Greenhalgh said. “Our girls get three monthly (STI) screenings. We're very harshly regulated by the Prostitution Licensing Authority and that's for a reason. “But what I'd like to know is why the private sector is not regulated when we're trying to do everything right.” Mr Greenhalgh said current laws made it more difficult for sole sex operators to refuse clients if the client had a suspected STI.</td>
<td>‘STI EXPLOSION Unlicensed sex workers come under fire’ News Article (The Daily Mercury, QLD)</td>
<td>Centre-Right</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>The city of Sydney’s sex industry is awash with unsafe sex practices and no one is doing a thing about it, writes Chris Seage, tax consultant, former ATO audit manager and owner of Brothel Busters … Nick Tabakoff revealed in today’s Daily Telegraph that 507 prostitutes are providing oral sex without a condom in defiance of NSW Health and WorkCover guidelines recommending the use of condoms in all commercial sex engagements and it may lead to an increase in sexually transmissible infections (STIs).</td>
<td>‘Sydney: where people play Russian roulette with their health’ News Article (Crikey, online)</td>
<td>Centre</td>
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</table>
In the context of such high rates of condom use and low STIs, New South Wales brothel owners asking for legislative reform on condom use seems unnecessary:

Tweed brothel owners want tighter controls on prostitutes offering unprotected sex, … call[ing] for the NSW Government to address the issue, which is arguably contributing to the spread of sexually transmissible infections. – Gold Coast Sun (QLD), Suburban Daily Tabloid (Westthorp 2012, emphasis added, full quote in Table 4.5)

The viewpoints of brothel owners in the two quotes reported above argue for increased regulation of the sex industry under the guise of safety, playing into omnipresent fears about diseased sex workers that have lingered from the Contagious Diseases Acts. Perpetuation by the media of the belief that sex workers spread STIs, despite research by Scott and Minichiello (2012) concluding that this is not the case, can be directly linked to the old trope of the ‘unclean worker’. A more cynical interpretation of the brothel owners’ call for reform may be that sex workers operating independently from brothels are cutting into brothel owners’ profits. Considering the anxieties that are already present in rural communities due to the presence of FIFO miners (Chapter 3), misrepresenting sex workers in this fashion negatively impacts the reception FIFO sex workers receive in those communities, further increasing their marginalisation.

Although for a brief moment in history sex workers were rendered visible in the national imaginary due to the Contagious Diseases Acts, they were just as quickly obscured after their dissolution. Through contemporary media renderings of the unclean worker, both miner and sex worker were again co-located in the rural imaginary; in this case as the responsible parties for STI transmission. More importantly, the media makes it clear with reporting such as “Mount Isa's booming illegal prostitution trade has been blamed for an outbreak of syphilis in the northwestern mining town” that sex workers are again putting
the health of the nation at risk, but this time rather than the armed forces, it is the economic force of mining that is at risk.

The process of othering for miners, as Chapter 3 discussed, was a new and unsettling experience. Yet for sex workers, their representation in the media as the ‘unclean worker’ is all too familiar, and maintains their iconic but marginal position in the national imaginary. The consequences for such representations of both miners and sex workers as unclean in the media has the very real consequence of removing the burden of safe sex from community members, since only those ‘others’ are responsible for STI transmission in the rural context. Therefore, not only is such reporting damaging for sex workers, raising anxieties about their presence, but it is actively doing a disservice to the sexual health of rural communities. The final section of this Chapter is given over to the case study of Moranbah, Queensland, to illustrate the many threads of anxiety surrounding miners and sex workers already discussed at work. The geographical co-location of both FIFO miners and sex workers in newsworthy coverage of a single place illustrates uniquely their parallel positionings, and was thus worth drawing out separately as its own example.

4.4  Sex Work Meets Mining in Moranbah

4.4.1  Background

Moranbah, a small town located 1000km northwest of the Queensland capital Brisbane, has been a flashpoint for many of the anxieties around FIFO work. Built in 1969 as a company town for Utah Development Coal Mining to service nearby coal mines, it was purchased by BHP in 1984 (Haxton 2013), and eventually incorporated into the Isaac Regional Council. Population growth has climbed steadily over time from its initial 1,000
residents to 9,000 inhabitants (ABS 2014b). In 2011, at the height of the most recent boom, Moranbah was Queensland’s most expensive place to live (Maddison et al. 2011), and in 2012, it was the fifth fastest growing municipality in Australia (Basson and Basson 2012). Working coal mines surround the town, two of which – Caval Ridge and Daunia – operate with a 100 per cent FIFO workforce (Figure 4.2).
Figure 4.2: Coal mines of the Moranbah region (©Esri, ©OpenStreetMap contributors).
A social impact report released in 2007, only a couple of years after the onset of the minerals boom, noted that Moranbah residents, when describing positive features of their community, included: “social infrastructure and community services, economic and employment opportunities, and physical infrastructure, local leadership, amenity and environment, and a strong community identity” (Petkova-Timmer et al. 2007: 3). Significantly affecting these initially positive impressions have been: the construction of the 100 per cent FIFO mines locking locals out of employment; closure of local businesses (some of which first opened when the town was built); and subsequent job market contraction (Haxton 2013). Basson and Basson (2012: 1) found that:

the decision by BMA (endorsed by State Government) to run a 100 percent FIFO operation at Caval Ridge, and the subsequent housing of workers in accommodation villages, contribute towards tipping the non-resident/resident ratio towards the non-sustainable end and creating fears of a Fly-Over effect.

Basson and Basson (2012: 1) concluded by stating: “the long term social impact of mining can be comparable to that of a serious natural disaster.” The disaster to which they refer is the erosion of the health and wellbeing of the community. With soaring house prices at the height of the boom, many long-time residents sold up and moved to more populous locales. Such an exodus “eroses the stable permanent resident base … who represent the culture, character and life style of the Moranbah community” (Basson and Basson 2012: 1). Alongside the problem of diminishing culture of the town, is the problem of unsustainable planning, with 23,000 ratepaying Issac Regional Council residents forced to finance infrastructure and services for a population of 42,000 when taking into consideration the FIFO workforce (Basson and Basson 2012).

Such was the fervour and intensity of anxiety in Moranbah in 2012 that the ABC’s Four Corners television program ran a special on the town entitled ‘Casualties of the Boom’
(Fowler and Cronau 2012), and ABC Radio National followed up in 2013 with a Background Briefing entitled ‘After the Boom’ (Haxton 2013). Other news outlets were also drawn to the unfolding ‘disaster’ in Moranbah as part of the Cancer of the Bush inquiry:

THE economic health of Moranbah is through the roof … It's the other health, the community one, where Moranbah and its sister towns of Dysart and Blackwater are showing aches and pains. Whether it's based on reality or not, fear in Moranbah is obvious. There is an ‘us and them’ line drawn between the town and the thousands of workers sitting on the outskirts in mining camps. A 17-year-old-schoolgirl, Chantell Winter, has told a federal parliamentary inquiry she is too scared to walk the streets of the central Queensland mining town because of the thousands of young men living on the town's outskirts. – The Courier-Mail (QLD), Statewide Daily Tabloid (McCarthy 2012).

It was in this climate of fear and anxiety in Moranbah, directed towards both miners and mining companies, that the example of the ‘Drovers Rest Incident’ arose. This incident was a watershed event for sex workers and sex worker activists, capturing the attention of the news media across Australia, and even internationally.

4.4.2 The Drovers Rest Incident

Sex work in Queensland, like many Australian states, operates within a continuum of legality. Brothels must be licensed, and sex workers may work legally if they work within the confines of a licensed brothel. They may also legally conduct private escorting (i.e. not in the employ of an escort agency), so long as it is not conducted in pairs (Harcourt et al. 2005). Crofts et al. (2013) see such regulation as an exercise in biopower that shapes social understandings of sex. Regulation like licensing, sits alongside other juridical processes, and religious/moral dictates that constitute “regimes of practice”, which make
clear those sexualities that are “virtuous and useful” and those that “will be penalised through governance” (Kerkin 2004: 185).

According to news outlets, in June 2010, the owners of the Drovers Rest Motel in Moranbah told Karlaa, a FIFO sex worker working from one of their rooms, not to return in the future (Haxton 2012, Dibben 2013, Mcguirk 2013). Karlaa was a solo operator, and thus working legally. Karlaa recognised that this was discrimination, and confronted the motel owners, who replied "So sue me" (Overington 2012: 1). Karlaa did take the owners to court, and the initial case, the appeals, and the ensuing fallout were well documented in the media during 2011 through to 2013 (capturing the period of analysis in this chapter). Although Karlaa’s case was initially dismissed in October 2011, it subsequently won on appeal in July 2012:

A sex worker's discrimination victory against a Queensland motel has alarmed the accommodation industry. The Accommodation Association of Australia is worried the ruling robs hotel and motel owners of the right to refuse guests. The Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal ruled that a motel in the mining town of Moranbah breached the Anti-discrimination Act for denying the woman a room. Her lawyer argued people used the internet and telephone at the motel for business, and a bed was no different. – The Advertiser (SA), Statewide Daily Tabloid (The Advertiser 2012).

This reporting from South Australia’s conservative The Advertiser demonstrates that the rest of the nation was watching, and that this was not just a case of significance for the local Moranbah community, but for the nation as a whole. Indeed, the story resonated internationally, and the Drovers Rest Incident travelled well beyond its small spatial confines to feature in the UK’s conservative The Telegraph, and the online, but United States-headquartered International Business Times.
Anti-discrimination legislation was effectively introduced to counter the discriminatory behaviour of hoteliers. Quoting Terry O’Gorman from the Queensland Council of Civil Liberties, Smail (2012) from the ABC reported that:

The whole history of why anti-discrimination legislation has been brought in around the country, but particularly in Queensland, is because you had, particularly in country areas in the past, in the 70s and the 80s, hotel and motel owners refusing accommodation, particularly to Aboriginal people, because they thought they lowered the tone of the place. – ABC Transcripts, National Public Broadcaster (Smail 2012).

That it is now considered completely unacceptable to exclude and discriminate against Aboriginal people, but seemingly allowable to exclude sex workers, points to the shifting and mobile power relations that create ‘otherness’.

The Queensland government rejected the decision by the court that Karlaa was discriminated against:

“The Government stands on the side of business owners and supports their ability to make decisions about what does or does not occur on their premises,” Mr Bleijie said yesterday. Under the Liquor Act 1992, sex workers cannot ply their trade from a licensed premise … FamilyVoice Queensland state officer Geoffrey Bullock congratulated Mr Bleijie on his move to appeal the decision. “The Tribunal decision could have disturbing consequences,” Mr Bullock said yesterday. “If one prostitute can legally service clients in a hotel or motel bedroom, then 10 or more prostitutes could do the same thing in separate rooms in the same hotel. There would be nothing the manager or owner could do about it.” – Daily Mercury (QLD), Rural Daily Tabloid (Ekert 2012).

That FamilyVoice Queensland, an organisation with a “Christian voice to our nation upholding family, faith and freedom” according to their website (FamilyVoice Australia 2016), is quoted in the centre-right Daily Mercury as a legitimate authority on the matter
likely says much about the positionality of Ekert, and the moral ideology of the residents of Mackay, Queensland.

Media representations were divided on the issue of whether sex workers should be able to work from hotel rooms, though this division did not appear to follow any particular political or ideological schism by the publishers. The Queensland Attorney-General, Jarrod Bleijie, made it very clear that his own personal moral ideologies were in opposition to the decision by the court:

JARROD BLEIJIE: Well it's not an industry that I would like to see thriving, of course. I think it devalues people by participating in this industry. If a sex worker has particular concerns of where they're going or where they want to work, then I would encourage them not to do it. I'd encourage them to get out of the industry. – *ABC Transcripts*, National Public Broadcaster (Smail 2012).

Sex workers on the other hand were supportive of the decision, recognising the discrimination of the Drovers Rest Motel owners, and acknowledging the ruling would make their working conditions better:

Most sex workers expressed fears about being forced on to the streets, being put in unsafe situations if they were evicted from motels at night and being exploited by motel owners charging them inflated room rates. – *The Courier-Mail (QLD)*, Statewide Daily Tabloid (Dibben 2012).

The Drovers Rest Motel owners, who were being taken to court by Karlaa, and who refused her service in the first place, unsurprisingly didn’t recognise that perspective:

Barrister Daniel Edwards, for Ms Hartley [owner of the Drovers Rest Motel], urged the tribunal to consider the Pandora's Box that could be opened for accommodation providers if they were forced to allow sex workers to operate from their businesses. Mr Edwards said earning a public reputation as a ‘whorehouse’ could depreciate the value of any premises. – *Gold Coast Bulletin (QLD)*, Suburban Daily Tabloid (Fineran 2012).
Sex workers as a rule find the term ‘whore’ particularly offensive. In the way used by Barrister Daniel Edwards, it appeared to be a carefully chosen expression designed to denigrate sex workers. He used an economic rationale to explain why sex workers should not work from hotels, and ‘whorehouse’ in this instance was intended to conjure the image of a salt-of-the-earth hotel descending into immorality and disorder (in the ‘disorderly house’ sense of the word). For the Drovers Rest owners and their Barrister, no respectable person would want to stay at their motel if sex workers were operating within, an argument seen pervading Section 4.3.1. This logic fails to acknowledge that sex workers are likely to be discrete to avoid recrimination, and ignores the fact that other customers could just as easily be having indiscrete sex in their hotel rooms. That the owners claimed “cleaners once counted 10 used condoms inside a tied-up, translucent plastic garbage bag left in her motel room trash can” as evidence of her work was both unsavoury from a privacy angle (Mcguirk 2013), and completely missed the point that Karlaa was courteous and diligent in cleaning up after herself. Journalists and other observers also seem unwilling to connect this evidence of safe sex practice by one particular sex worker with the undocumented false claims that sex workers are spreading STIs (Scott et al. 2012b) (Section 4.3.5).

Anxieties stemming from fear of contamination by the ‘unclean’ sex worker, likely collided with conservative and religious values that are part of the moral ideology of the Australian nation, and are often more conspicuous in rural communities (Scott et al. 2006). Business owners may have been anxious about being perceived as amoral themselves if not seen to be actively discouraging sex workers from using their establishments. This idea of the ‘unclean’ sex worker is part of an even broader idea of embodiment within the rural idyll, insofar as sex workers do not conform to rural expectations of bodies and a heterosexuality that are “passive, benign and non-
threatening” (Little and Leyshon 2003: 269). The response to this transgression can be seen in the following letter to the editor in the newspaper of the neighbouring Queensland town of Rockhampton:

T, RPTON. So how much lower can Australia sink, same-sex marriages on the verge of being granted & now motels having 2 allow prostitutes 2 conduct their business in the rooms. Whatever is happening 2 family values, proper families are being put further down the ladder of respectability. – The Morning Bulletin (QLD), Rural Daily Tabloid (Letters to the Editor 2012h).

Moral ideologies of ‘community’, ‘family’ and heterosexuality, observable in Chapter 3, clearly intersected with the anxieties surrounding the ‘disreputable’ work of sex.

Despite the moral ideologies circulating through the media, Drovers Rest was an incident, at its core, about anti-discrimination rights. After Karlaa won her case on appeal in July 2012, the Queensland Attorney-General (who had previously stated “If a sex worker has particular concerns of where they're going or where they want to work, then I would encourage them not to do it”; quoted in Smail 2012), went further than encouraging sex workers not to undertake their work, by actively changing the law to make it harder for sex workers to work. Attorney-General Bleijie introduced the Youth Justice [Boot Camp Orders] and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 (QLD), which amended the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991, to legally enable accommodation providers to discriminate against sex workers. This change of legislation creates the precedent that any kind of aversion and discrimination against sex workers is not just tolerated by the State, but actively endorsed.

The kneejerk reaction by the Queensland Government was ultimately unnecessary, after a final Queensland High Court of Appeal verdict in May 2013 eventually overturned the appeal won by Karlaa. The owners of the Drovers Rest were happy with the result: "Now
I just want it known as the Drovers Rest - the nice, quiet, homely, friendly place it's always been” (Dibben 2013). For the owners, the desired moral ideologies of ‘family’ and ‘community’ had been re-instated, and order had returned. The amplification of sex worker marginalisation through decisions such as these by the Queensland Government and the High Court of Appeal cannot be overstated. It will likely lead to further, ongoing acts of discrimination against sex workers in their pursuit of safer spaces to work, whether that be in rural locations or larger towns and cities.

In an epilogue of sorts to this case study, sex workers, as consumers of news media, discovering themselves unwelcome and able to be legally discriminated against in Queensland, stopped patronising the Drovers Rest. But other accommodation users outside of the sex industry had also dried up as the mining bust began to affect the flow of people. In an ironic twist, during 2015, as the mining ‘bust’ worsened, the Drovers Rest Motel owners complained to the media they now had just 3 per cent occupancy of rooms (Haxton 2015). The Drovers Rest Motel owners, by exercising their now legal right to marginalise and discriminate against sex workers, had discovered that continuing to perpetrate the outmoded positioning of sex workers as historically ‘unclean’ and ‘disreputable’ left their business in a worse state than when they banned Karlaa in 2010. In time they may be left wondering whether worrying about their “public reputation as a ‘whorehouse’” was ultimately worth the cost to their business (Fineran 2012).

4.5 Conclusion
The increasing speed at which news in the digital age travels has at its core a tendency towards ever-increasing “sensationalism ... gratuitous spectacles and ... dubious emotionalism” (Fenton 2015: 82). Curran (2002: 26), in arguing that the newspaper is
especially important in “making the nation a focus of identity” for the ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1991), marks the interaction between the media, as a technology of power, and the production of a national imaginary. It is not just national media that is important in this production, but also local media, which mediates this interaction “at the level of home, family, village or neighbourhood” (Hage 1993, in Mayes 2003: 16). If the media provides “a forum of debate in which people can identify problems, propose solutions, reach agreement and guide the public direction of society”, from the analysis in this chapter and that of Chapter 3, both FIFO mining and sex work constitute identities that may trouble and potentially unsettle longstanding positions in the national imaginary.

Whereas for mining, this challenge comes from the representation of miners as a problematic incursion into the rural idyll, the unsettling of the sex worker position comes from the very small but important sample of 2012 articles representing the Prosaic Sex Worker, and the sections discussing the Trafficked Sex Worker and the Unclean Sex Worker. The Prosaic Sex Worker challenges stereotypes and misconceptions about sex worker victimhood, while the Trafficked Sex Worker and the Unclean Sex Worker actually raise the profile of the industry in the national imaginary – where their work is traditionally undervalued and invisible – but for problematic reasons. Such portrayals, to a certain degree, demonstrate that media representations are dynamic over time, and are contradictory, yet often with remarkable consistency. Examples include: the enduring association between sex workers and STIs; and the continued use of the term ‘prostitute’ despite the long advocacy of sex workers requesting the use of their preferred terminology (Dickson 2014).

Where public anxieties between miners and sex workers diverge is along the lines of gender. Anxieties about miners fixate on the implicit danger of groups of men, with their presumed anti-sociality and the threat they may pose to women, whereas anxieties about
sex workers are typically framed around sexuality as a moral issue. Anxieties about sex workers are more consistent with other anxieties about women’s bodily autonomy (Hubbard 2000, Gibson 2004, Andrijasevic 2007). Female sex working bodies, unconstrained by the dictates of heteronormativity, provoke disgust (Crofts and Prior 2012b, The Sunday Telegraph 2012), condemnation (Letters to the Editor 2012f, Letters to the Editor 2012g), and ridicule (Fineran 2012, Wilson 2012). The analysis suggests then that, in the media at least, sex work does indeed queer normative understandings of sexuality and nation. These responses to how women express and use their sexuality to advantage, rather than remaining constrained by an only-in-private sexuality, illuminate how anxiety can be triggered by existential threats to patriarchy and heteronormativity (Waitt 2015). A prominent theme within the media of Christian morality, thoroughly steeped in patriarchal understandings of sexuality and gender, appears to be contradictorily conflated with a radical feminist opposition to sex work as women’s exploitation. Although it does not manifest in the media with the same regularity, in this dialectic, sex work is problematised because it implies unfettered access by men to women’s bodies. Thus, women are deemed to lack the basic agency to use their sexuality as they so desire.

The interaction between representations of both forms of iconic labour then is crucial to understanding constructions of otherness, following the call from both Little (1999: 438) and Cavanagh (1998) to be more attentive to the “difference within groups of so-called others”, and “between the other and the same.” In the Australian rural context, we have more degrees of complexity, with two ‘others’ (mining and sex work) opposed to the ‘same’ (rural communities). Although there appears to be some heterogeneity in the rural and city press, the dominant interpretation of sex work is that of a problem: something that needs to be fixed, or better yet, eradicated (Letters to the Editor 2012e, Moor 2012).
Discussions of mining rarely call for complete eradication, instead focusing on how, often through better integration, problems with FIFO mining can or should be ‘fixed’. This is a fundamental difference in representation between the two industries. There is room, conditionally, for FIFO mining within rural communities, so long as FIFO miners ‘settle down’ in sedentary residences (renouncing their mobility and outsider status) within ‘normal’ familial and sexual relations. Apart from one motel in Mount Isa however, sex work has no place at all, with the Drovers Rest Incident in Moranbah indicating that (some) businesses would rather fail than accept or support sex workers. This suggests how two iconic forms of labour are being othered differently, despite being coterminous.

The long connection between mining and sex work, paired together since the gold rushes of the nineteenth century, and the similar types of anxieties attached to their labour (criminal, unclean, anti-family), demonstrates the need to see these two forms of labour as two parts of a whole. Although miners may be othered in the media, with some level of this filtering through into personal interactions between miners and rural communities, there is still some degree to which miners can fall back upon the privilege of their enduring legacy in the national imaginary. Unlike miners, sex workers have a long history of experiencing high levels of marginalisation, and continue to do so in the present day. They have been consistently denied legitimacy within the national imaginary, and overwhelmingly persistent representations of criminality and uncleanliness in the media are unlikely to have any effect on present levels of marginalisation. Despite some opportunities presented by the media to unsettle their position and increase the understanding – both in the community and on a national level – of the prosaic nature of sex work, sex workers continue to be marginalised in the national imaginary by their ‘otherness’. Once again, this is an example of the persistence of enduring national imaginaries that preclude the reimagining of the nation in more plural ways, such as
seeing the valuable contribution that sex workers make to the national and rural economies, including those of non-Anglo ethnicities that may be perceived as ‘trafficked’. Another of technology of power that refracts and amplifies otherness, the census, will now be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.
CHAPTER 5
MINING AND DISTANCE LABOUR IN THE CENSUS:
STATE LEGITIMATION AND INVISIBILITIES

5.1 Introduction

The census is an authoritative, scientific technology of governmental power with a two hundred-year history. Most European states and their colonial interests had, by the end of the nineteenth century, started collecting population data about ethnicity, language and religion (Kertzer and Arel 2002). The comprehensive population ‘stocktake’ began as documentation to support the progress or regress of the nation, and is still used in this way. The categorisation of populations became a key development in the making of a modern nation-state. As Hannah (2001: 517) states:

In a real sense, modern nations have only existed and been governable as nations to the extent that the people, activities, and resources that make them up have been gathered together in the form of statistics and other surveys. The particular features or attributes singled out by a ruling state for enumeration and cataloguing literally structure the national social body, emphasising certain features as important and others less so.

The Australian Census of Population and Housing (the Census) is conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), and is defined as:

a descriptive count of everyone who is in Australia on one night, and of their dwellings … Census data are … used by individuals and organisations in the public and private sectors to make informed decisions on policy and planning issues that impact on the lives of all Australians (ABS 2014c).

Furthermore, questions and topics chosen for inclusion in the Census are based on the following criteria:
• The topic is of major national importance.

• There is a current need for data on the topic for small population groups and/or at the small area level.

• The topic is suitable for inclusion in the Census (ABS 2011b).

While censuses began as documentation, they also eventually became “part and parcel of the legitimating narratives of the national … state” (Kertzer and Arel 2002: 3). In the words of the ABS’s Chief Statistician: “For more than 105-years, the Census has been the centre of the Australian story, fully and accurately recording our nation’s development while enabling fact-based debate and evidence based policy making” (Kalisch 2016). Furthermore, “The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has a statutory duty to provide reliable information” (ABS 2010b). The language used in the above definition and criteria from the Australian Census emphasises how Census data determines what is significant to the national community, and who may have visibility within the nation.

Critically, the census can operate as a surveillance technology, making populations ‘known’ so they can be governed. It legitimises and makes credible populations, especially minorities, who struggle for recognition. Dufty (2007: 30) argues that the production of the governable subject involves processes of objectification, whereby:

‘studies’ of individuals and populations are undertaken and then used to come to broad ranging conclusions, which in turn are used to justify and naturalise the implementation of further governing technologies and rationalities.

Population censuses are an exemplary case of this type of objectification. Social science research exercises such as the census do “not simply describe the world as it is, but also enact it” (Law and Urry 2004: 390). In other words, the census is a performative method that not only ‘discovers’ the population but actively makes governable subjects known, influencing how populations are brought into existence. According to Ruppert (2008: 1)
though, the challenge is to “reveal its performativity rather than accept the state's version of what the census enacts … [and] question the social realities and worlds that the practice legitimises.” Critical for this thesis then, are how labouring identities, as discrete categories of governable subjects, are brought into being (or not), and privileged or marginalised in relation to the national imaginary through the Census, as a key objectifying technology of power.

This and the following chapter proceed as accompanying explorations of the statistical presence and invisibility of miners and sex workers. They interrogate the Australian Census as a technology of power, much like Chapters 3 and 4 did with the Australian media. Together, these chapters “question the social realities” of the Australian Census that reveal presences and enable invisibilities to manifest (Ruppert 2008: 1). They ask how the technology of the Census can amplify or unsettle positions of privilege and marginalisation for the iconic industries of mining and sex work. This thesis has thus far concentrated exclusively on the positions of mining and sex work in the national imaginary. This chapter and the next retain a focus on mining and sex work, but also raise associated questions of how such positionings may impact other labourers outside these two industries. Specifically, this chapter focuses on how the dominance of mining in relation to understandings of FIFO labour simultaneously downplays the broader mobile labour practice of ‘distance labour’ (Skilton 2015).

While miners may be the most iconic distance labourer, distance labour encompasses all labourers participating in long distance travel for work, often spending significant amounts of time away from home (Skilton 2015). As Castree et al. (2004: 71) argue, “while wage-workers are typically place-based they are not necessarily place-bound.” However, as will become evident in this chapter, the Census currently has no way to
capture the extent of this varied industrial work practice. I argue that non-mining distance labourers are rendered invisible by the Census, and by dominant understandings of mining as the exclusive domain of distance labour, through terminology such as Long Distance Commuting (LDC) and Fly-in Fly-out (FIFO). ‘Distance labour’ (Skilton 2015) is, I argue, a more inclusive term that can accommodate other types of labourers who may experience challenges in their work similar to those widely documented in the literature on LDC and FIFO (Hoath and McKenzie 2013, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia 2013, Measham et al. 2013). Distance labourers are part of a broader trend of labour migration, and were singled out by a recent Australian Productivity Commission (2014) inquiry into ‘Geographic Labour Mobility’ (arguably hampered by a lack of qualitative data; see Skilton 2015). With labour mobility having national significance (Productivity Commission 2014), rather than dismiss the measurements and numbers of Censuses outright, in this chapter I strategically, and critically, engage with Census results.

This chapter uses Census data from 2011 to quantitatively demonstrate the diversity of distance labour. Through an analysis of Census data tables generated using pre-existing, publicly available ABS data obtainable through their website, this chapter will show that far from being simply another term for FIFO, distance labour represents a broad spectrum of labour types. It also explores the radical potential of the census to expose invisibilities, with marginalised groups able to harness the power of the technology to use heightened census visibility to generate greater civil participation, or at the very least, expose inconsistencies in governance. The next section, entitled ‘Foucault’s Census’, provides a conceptual analysis for both this and the following chapter, and considers how the census functions as a tool of State power, how invisibilities are constructed, and how they manifest in the census. Following this will be a ‘strategic unveiling’ of distance labourers
in the most recent (2011) Australian Census utilising Geographical Information System (GIS) technology. This chapter will argue that census technology, combined with the heroic mining figure in the national imaginary, has rendered the wider population of non-mining distance labour less visible. Finally, some conclusions are provided for how this affects our understandings of privilege and marginalisation for mining within the Australian national imaginary.

5.2 Foucault’s Census

it is instructive … to reflect on the wider issue of how the Census has evolved from its historical role as an instrument of regulation to one aimed at facilitation … from a tool of state domination to one designed to document the condition of the people. The growing size and shifting focus of the Census reflects the rising need for knowledge to enable government to meet its expanding responsibilities, but it is also the mechanism that enables minorities – be they spatial, ethnic, economic or social - to document and assert themselves (Bell 2015: 2).

Statistics are a privileged science in modern politics. Numbers make for hard evidence and healthy soundbites in explanations to the electorate. They are seen to be “objective criteria to evaluate, judge and govern” (Ruppert 2008: 1). Numbers and statistics are easily mistaken for irrefutable evidence. One of the most important functions of the census is to document population figures eventually used to apportion political representation. Ruppert (2008: 1) argues that the census “has become both relatively taken for granted as well as a deeply embedded cultural practice of documenting identification and governing population by numbers.” As the quote by Bell above suggests, however, the census has taken on a broader role with a shifting focus that better meets the needs of the expanding role of government in our lives.
5.2.1 Governmentality

The purpose of the census is to simplify the profound complexity of society to better understand how to rule (Kertzer and Arel 2002). This technology not only documents populations, but becomes the mould into which the state presses people by creating “a particular vision of social reality” (Kertzer and Arel 2002: 5). The census is also an invisible organiser of our lives in imperceptible quotidian ways, through discrete governmental spatial categories such as Local Government Areas (LGAs), city and country boundaries, states and nations. These may not resonate with one’s own embodied experiences of space. Drawing on Foucault, Brown and Knopp (2006: 236) call this “‘biopower’ in a quite concrete form, and it reminds us of the ubiquitous, insidious power of governmentality generally.” ‘Remind’ may not be the ideal word here, since we are talking about aspects of governing that are so omnipresent they almost make us ‘forget’ they exist. Through the census, people are made into subjects; the census is therefore a technique “for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations” (Foucault 2008: 140). Censuses have the power to render certain citizens visible and legitimise their civil and social participation, but equally have the power (perhaps unintentionally) to create and reinforce invisibilities within certain sectors of society. Legg (2005: 145) calls this “Geopolitical Imaginations.” Marginal citizens are particularly prone to this phenomenon.

The deployment of numbers in governing can be problematic. Appadurai (1998: 133) is critical of the reductionism inherent in the process, stating: “statistics are to bodies and social types what maps are to territories: they flatten and enclose.” This flattening allows governments to neatly compartmentalise populations into discrete units, forming official government categories that are then used to govern. It should be considered a success of the format then that the non-response rate for the 2011 Australian Census was only 3.7
per cent (ABS 2013), emphasising the earlier point by Ruppert (2008: 1) that the census “has become relatively taken for granted.” Most people appear to be more than willing to be co-opted into being governed by this particular technology of power of the State. But the census does more than merely objectively ‘count’. It also defines to a large extent “salient social relationships and categories on behalf of government authorities” and in so doing, informs the way policy is formulated through a relationship with numbers that becomes political in its usage (Brown and Knopp 2006: 223). This is a form of ‘pigeon-holing’, and those pigeon-holes are given legitimacy through the census. The ways people re-interpret this act of pigeon-holing to create and affirm for themselves identities legitimated by the state are a by-product of the process, with important ramifications for invisibilities in the census.

While Appadurai (1998) favours a fairly bleak assessment of governmentality by numbers, Bell (2015) suggests that creative use of the census can be welded to activism around political subversion and visibility. For example, the State may utilise the census to determine policy, but researchers can use the census as a tool to help explain specific phenomena. Using sophisticated methodologies, such as the case described in the following section where New South Wales Sports and Recreation used Census data to establish women’s-only swimming classes, researchers can highlight certain activities occurring at multiple scales based on what is ultimately one of the most formidable macro-scale projects the State could undertake. Bell (2015: 3) describes how this unrivalled power of the census to document population at such a fine scale can help “highlight small and spatially concentrated groups who otherwise disappear below the radar, including immigrants and indigenous people”. Ruppert (2008: 1) instead sees a different census, one that claims to be complete and inclusive but always produces “others.” These ‘others’ are rendered invisible by census technology, with consequences
for how they are positioned and legitimised in the national imaginary. Thus, there are multiple ways the census creates and masks subject identities, depending on who is analysing and utilising the data.

5.2.2 Identity and visibility

There is a long history of government using methods of counting and mapping to exercise power over population, from territorial disputes (Ruppert 2009), to ethnic oppression (Kertzer and Arel 2002). The census, as one of those methods, does not just preside over existing social bodies, but is active in the construction of identities (Hannah 2001). The census does not just reflect society, but defines the parameters of majority and minority groups and their political potential and visibility (Pavlovskaya and Bier 2012). A discussion of identity is relevant to the census, particularly when considering which identities gain legitimacy through visibility, and which become suppressed by “those who occupy positions of power and who have the authority to define knowledge” (Bondi 1993: 86). The visibility of certain identities is therefore likely to affect how individuals perceive themselves, and engage in civic society. Gallup (1982: xii) rightfully pointed out that these identity power relationships “must be continually assumed and immediately called into question.” Some identities that may be rendered more or less valuable in the production of national identity are ethnic groups, sexualities, or labour types. The ‘White Australia’ immigration policy enacted at Federation is one example of valuing a Western European identity over all others to distil a particular idea of national ethnicity in the national imaginary. Contemporary Australian examples can be seen in current refugee policy (demonising asylum seekers), inaction on marriage equality (valuing hegemonic heterosexuality over other kinds of sexual expression), and panic about jobs losses in
iconic male-dominated mining or manufacturing sectors (ignoring or undervaluing female-dominated nursing jobs or sex work).

Alongside the census, identities are produced through a diverse array of social projects and actants, including political manoeuvring. Politics is especially relevant to marginalised groups who are actively seeking to politicise their position, such as sex workers, who have worked to build a sex worker identity that can be used as a platform for emancipatory action. A politics of identity resists the essentialism that the census imposes. The census can never articulate the richness and diversity within the human condition. Individual journeys to create some kind of ontological security are often formed by far-reaching power structures. Combined with others that share similar sensibilities, collective communities and identities “demand a place at the table in some kind of a liberal imagination” (Knopp 2004: 123). The concept of ‘population’ abstracts and dematerialises humans, but as Legg (2005: 140) rightly determined, “people have rarely escaped the shackles of place.” Following Foucault’s enduring critique of structuralism however, people can use imagination to create alternative sites of resistance through attention to spatial difference and place-based identities (Legg 2005).

Invisibilities have long been recognised in censuses, with minority groups often the least visible. This is, according to Brown and Knopp (2006: 233), a “political issue … at the core of oppression and resistance.” For example, Gates and Ost (2004) in the 2004 (USA) Gay and Lesbian Atlas performed geographic analysis of the census to show that official population statistics for couples does not reflect the cultural reality and existence of non-heterosexual couples. This raised for Brown and Knopp (2006: 223-224) “important questions about the spatiality of governmentality – in this case, the role of governmentality in the construction of the closet.” In a similar way, but concerning
ethnicity rather than sexuality, Pavlovskaya and Bier (2012: 485) argue that the United States census has marginalised the section of the population identifying as ‘Arab Americans’ by “failing to provide viable and inclusive categories for their self-identification.” Again, similar to the previous example, their official non-recognition (i.e. invisibility) made it easier for governments to disregard their cultural needs. Nonetheless, both examples highlight how increased census visibility and creative use of census data can make visible an oppressed group (Pavlovskaya and Bier 2012).

It could be argued that the Australian Census is failing to provide inclusive categories on its Census form. As illustrated in Figure 5.1 for example, although the Census does have a question pertaining to mode of travel to work, it does not include a check box for ‘Plane’ – the exemplar transport technology used by FIFO and other forms of distance labour.

![Figure 5.1: Image from the 2016 Australian Census paper form depicting Question 45 regarding method of travel to work.](image-url)

Omissions like this matter, because as Kertzer and Arel (2002) noted, visibility and identification can be linked to the options available on the census form (Kertzer and Arel 2002). Australian Census data has, however, been utilised in novel ways to increase
visibility and identification. The benefits of an enumerated population became evident when New South Wales Sports and Recreation (NSWSR) used Census data to determine that people from culturally diverse backgrounds were underrepresented in sports (ABS 2011a). NSWSR went on to identify that Muslim women were not participating in swimming lessons because these classes were mixed gender. They next used Census data to establish women-only swimming classes in areas with large numbers of Muslim women (ABS 2011a). In another Australian example, Gorman-Murray et al. (2010) used 2006 Census data to map same-sex couples. The authors argued that this form of “Participatory GIS” allows minority groups to “‘collate’ and ‘represent’ their spaces, and thus ‘constitute’ their collective identities and histories, through visually mapping their communities” (Gorman-Murray et al. 2010: 384). The political imperative of the project was to demonstrate the ubiquity of same-sex couples, thus securing future legal and social recognition.

The reflexive practice of recognising oneself within the census can connect people to a population of similar politics (Ruppert 2008). Governmental control over census information however can be discomforting, which is largely responsible for my own unease about participating in past Censuses, and perhaps other males 20-35 years old who comprise 19.4 per cent of the estimated Census undercount (ABS 2012b). According to Leszczynski (2015: 15): “Control over personal identity is of critical importance to not only democracy … but also … to regulating and indeed sustaining social relationships.” Having never filled out the Census as an adult (see Box 5.1), I find the implicit potential of Ruppert’s reflexive practice engaging. That the process of researching the Census has forced me to interrogate my lack of Census participation is evidence of this connection to a political subjectivity.
Box 5.1: My year with the Census.

I’ve never filled out a census as an adult. It always seemed like the government was spying on me. As I entered my late 20s, I also felt like they probably didn’t need the information about another white middle-class male. I have a long history of being anti-government. Full disclosure: I also don’t vote. My life experiences haven’t endeared the State to me. Having someone come to my door and want my intimate identity details for what I perceived to be some nebulous purpose then wasn’t likely to embolden trust between us. I was surprised then when part way through my PhD, I found myself on a quest to uncover the hidden data of distance labourers in the Australia Census. Suddenly the Census had a purpose and a meaning! For the first time, I filled out an old Census form as part of a methodology to understand how the data is collated. The questions seemed reasonably benign. But the potential possibilities for how they could be utilised seemed fantastic. With invaluable help from an Australian Centre for Cultural and Environmental Research colleague, Alex Tindale, without whom I wouldn’t have even known where to begin in the impossible web of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) website, we started building tables of distance labourers in all the capital cities based on Place of Residence / Place of Work. As a researcher attempting to tease out from the shadows the scale of distance labour in Australia, I now had new sets of questions around representation, visibility and voice. This began to raise the issue of the politics of the Census, and to mean more than just a large-scale exercise in ‘counting’. It became clear though that what is counted, matters.

I began to read more and more about censuses: what they did; how they worked; their history; their context. The process has been transformative. I think there is a problem if one does something just because the government commands it. I also believe the government has a problem when it fails to explain its methods of governance, and the technologies it uses for that purpose, such as the Census. This is why I am intrigued by questions such as: why has the Census traditionally been viewed so uncritically in Australia, and how has it been positioned and advertised by the government? Males in my age group are significantly underrepresented in the Census, so clearly I was not alone in missing the value of the exercise. However, now having done some research on the subject, I became entirely willing to fill out the next Census. I read their confidentiality agreement and was satisfied that my privacy would be protected (ABS 2016c). I could see how filling out the Census was political. My individual responses are a process of creation of a cultural
identity that creates and legitimises that identity within the state. I’m not saying I didn’t still have concerns about the Census. The gender binary is obviously a massive problem and needs to be rectified as soon as possible as an act of basic recognition for transgender, non-binary and genderqueer people. We’ll never know the full diversity of Australian life through the Census. And as with any kind of ‘nation-building’ project, the idea of ‘nation’ itself sits uncomfortably with me, because it implies horrible things like ‘borders’ and oppressive state apparatus. But in doing research on the census, I found myself wanting to see myself represented in there. That I am counted. That my cultural essence is represented as accurately as possible in the largest and most comprehensive register of Australia’s bounded human community.

Yet, since writing this, the ABS has changed their data privacy conditions so that personal identifiers will be retained for four years (Simpson 2016). They argued that this was to:

- bring together Census data with other survey and administrative data would enable the ABS to meet the growing demand of policy agencies (e.g. Department of Social Services, Department of Health), service providers and the research community for higher quality ‘joined-up’ information to better inform planning decisions and government policies in the public good (ABS 2015b: 7).

The Census had become a value-adding exercise with the possibility of sharing personally identifiable information between government departments. Significant media debate ensued, raising unparalleled critical concerns about the ‘Big Brother’ uses of Census data (Johnston 2016, Simpson 2016). I did not fill out the census after all.

5.3 Invisible Labour in the Australian Census

Having established the possibilities of what the Census is, does, and can do, I now investigate how the Census operates in the Australian context to render a population of workers invisible, and how that intersects with the privileged position of the heroic mining figure in the national imaginary. The means through which governments accrue census information is the standardised census form, “a paper technology that seeks to direct and shape messy, imprecise and individual narratives into a form that can be added
up to something called population” (Ruppert 2008: 1). However, this creates problems when the rigid structure of the paper (or electronic) form has no avenue for identification of the individual’s particular narrative; for example, the Arab Americans in Pavlovskaya and Bier’s (2012) research, and in the case of this chapter, the non-traditional working lives of distance labourers. So far, this thesis has investigated the position of the iconic industries of mining and sex work in the Australian national imaginary, and technologies of power, including legislation and the news media, fuelling experiences of privilege and marginalisation. Media representations helped unsettle the dominant imaginary of the heroic mining figure through the presentation of various forms of manifested anxiety around the nation. Yet mining is part of the broader work practice of distance labour, and this chapter will demonstrate that the focus on the iconic, heroic mining figure, by the ABS and through the Census, marginalises other non-mining forms of distance labour.

Distance labour involves spending extended periods at, or travelling to, work followed by a period at home (e.g. 4 weeks on, 1 week off) (Skilton 2015). But significant travel that prevents individuals from returning home after work on a regular basis is not well-served by current popular definitions, such as LDC (Houghton 1993, Hoath and McKenzie 2013), and FIFO (Storey 2001, Brueckner et al. 2013, McKenzie et al. 2014). Both are already heavily associated with the mining industry (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia 2013, Productivity Commission 2014). Hoath and McKenzie (2013: viii), who argue that the “LDC workforce is diverse and is not limited to the resource industry”, later go on to use LDC as the “encompassing term for the range of non-residential workforce arrangements currently in use in the resource sector” (2013: 1), essentially welding the term to the resource industry. Conflation of this type is problematic, since it comes at the expense of other, but no less significant, industries. For example, The House of Representatives ‘Cancer of the Bush’ inquiry into
FIFO work produced a report within which, despite a submission from sex working distance labourers, sex workers were referenced only once in the final report, as ‘prostitutes’, in a paragraph ostensibly about ‘crime talk’ (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia 2013)\(^\text{17}\). Sex workers, despite being legitimate distance labourers, had their voices ignored because they were not seen to be connected to the resource sector.

The most recent Australian Census from which data is available, in 2011, as well as previous Censuses, failed to adequately capture distance labourers despite the rise of the phenomenon, and the extent of the practice is not known with any degree of certainty at this time. Hence this chapter sought to extract distance labour data from pre-existing Census data (see ‘Methods’ Section 5.4). The ABS seems at least partially aware that their underrepresentation of the distance labour sector is problematic (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia 2013: 37):

> Regions need information about resident and service populations to plan for the opportunities and demands of industries using FIFO practices, and to monitor the impacts of these practices on communities and workers in the region. Without adequate data, regions will be unable to anticipate demand for infrastructure and amenities (such as housing, health and emergency services).

Based on lower than expected response rates from mining camps in 2006 due to issues with private camp accommodation remoteness, accessibility and intransigency, the ABS developed the *Mining Enumeration Strategy* for the 2011 Census to improve “awareness, participation, correct reporting and operations for the enumeration of mining sites” (ABS

\(^{17}\) “The New South Wales Government confirmed that social service providers in the state have been reporting an increasing use of alcohol, drugs and prostitution and a greater level of alcohol-related violence, including domestic violence” (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia 2013: 99).
However, this attempt to more accurately record mining distance labourers did not extend to other non-mining distance labourers, say, through specific queries in the Census form itself (as per Pavlovskaya and Bier 2012).

The absence of quality Census data has also been acknowledged in official government inquiries undertaken in recent years, and informed the first recommendation of the Cancer of the Bush inquiry into FIFO work practices (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia 2013: xix):

**Recommendation 1**

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government fund the Australian Bureau of Statistics to establish a cross-jurisdictional working group to develop and implement a method for the accurate measurement of:

- the extent of fly-in, fly-out/drive-in, drive-out workforce practices in the resource sector; and
- service populations of resource communities.

This recommendation, however, falls into the trap of limited, circular reasoning, by only looking for new data about FIFO (which, as established earlier, is a limited definition that fails to account for non-mining distance labourers), and the resource sector. This is another tangible example of how the privilege of the monolithic mining industry overshadows other distance labourers. Local governments servicing mines seem particularly anxious for quality data, and feel that “the estimation of FIFO workforce numbers is deliberately and unrealistically low” (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia 2013: 28). However, given that ABS data are used to allocate funding and resources, pertinent questions are whether a five-year Census is adequate to capture the itinerancy of distance labourers, and what the detrimental effects might be of the continuing limited focus on the resource industry.
To complicate matters further, the Executive Director of the 2011 Census has stated:

We would argue very strongly that the census was never designed to measure a number of the things that people are trying to measure in relation to fly-in, fly-out in the resource communities and we seriously doubt whether it could be redesigned at purpose (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia 2013: 17).

In an effort to rectify the situation, the ABS indicated it would include “a question relating to a second residence for the next Census in order to attempt to capture this lost data” (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia 2013: 35). This never occurred, and doubt remains whether this approach could capture the full scope of distance labour, since it presumes a second residence, when many miners would be in work camps, and non-miners may be in hotels or other temporary accommodation. With the recent 2016 Census also precluding distance labour visibility, I have attempted here to nevertheless extrapolate an (admittedly incomplete) account of distance labour from the existing Census data.

5.4 Methods

To investigate the extent of the distance labour workforce, I identify three defining criteria of distance labour:

1) Travelling further than 400km each way to their workplace.
2) Spending at least one night away from home in the course of a single shift.
3) Spending at least 4 nights away from home per month for work.

These are not prescriptive and further research may for instance choose to include customary Indigenous and/or non-Western understandings of what might constitute distance labour. Any type of criteria such as the above are tools of governmentality used
to identify and control populations, and the application of these criteria will have potential deleterious effects. Nevertheless, in the interests of making visible otherwise invisible labouring bodies and populations, I made the above informed definitional choices.

The critical consideration for identifying distance labour in this analysis was the first criterion: travelling 400km each way, a figure considerably greater than the 100km travel distance proffered by auditing firm KMPG in an investigation into LDC for the Minerals Council of Australia (KPMG for the Minerals Council of Australia 2013). I felt that 400km was a more appropriate commuting distance to use as a threshold for distance labour, since we can deduce based on the travel time required to cover that distance, that workers are more likely to spend at least one night away from home in the course of their work (see Figure 5.2 for a visual depiction of these 400km travel zones). For a figure of 100km, it may be possible for workers to commute without an overnight stay. By contrast, 400kms virtually guarantees at least an overnight stay, unless source and destination are on a major airline route. We can also deduce that if a labourer fulfils the first two criteria and is engaged in some kind of regular work, then long distance travel and home absences are likely to occur more than once over the course of a month. Although this may look different to the more regulated FIFO mining ‘swing’ shift, the accumulated time spent away from homes and families over the course of a month may end up being similar to a miner’s on-off shifts.
Figure 5.2: Distance labourer travel distances in relation to the capital cities in which they reside (except Canberra, which lies almost equidistant between Sydney and Melbourne). The circles represent the 400km exclusion boundaries around each capital city. Living in the capital city but working outside the exclusion zone is the first criterion used here to define distance labour.
In order to calculate the number of distance labourers using these criteria, a geographical method was used, combining statistical Census data with mapping through a Geographical Information System (GIS). GIS software (ArcGIS), in combination with the ABS definition of ‘Statistical Area Level 2’ (SA2)\(^{18}\) (ABS 2010a), were used to define exclusion zones around Australia’s (ABS defined) Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (GCCSA)\(^{19}\). Workers must travel beyond these exclusion zones for distance labour classification in this research. SA2s were the logical choice, since the larger SA3s covered too much area, with too much of each SA3 often existing within the 400km exclusion zone. Smaller SA1s were not used since there are approximately 55,000 (compared to 2,196 SA2s) – a level of granularity deemed unnecessary. Considering some small overlap of certain SA2s with the 400km exclusion zones did occur, a more fine-grained attention to detail using SA1s could be achieved. However, whereas SA1s may achieve a finer resolution of data to work with, they would be unlikely to offer significantly greater insights.

Once these exclusion zones were defined, custom datasets were produced using TableBuilder Pro, an online, browser-based software platform from the ABS that can tabulate Australian Census data. Sets of SA2s were compiled into two groups of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the 400km exclusion zones around each capital city. Using the Census categories of ‘Usual Residence’ (defined as the GCCSA), ‘Place of Work’, and the custom ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ categories, it was possible to determine which of Australia’s 16.5 million employed people were distance labourers working outside the 400km

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\(^{18}\) SA2s are designed by the ABS as a statistical area that aims to represent “a community that interacts together socially and economically” (ABS 2010a).

\(^{19}\) GCCSAs were used since they best represented the urban boundaries of the cities. It was necessary to use Significant Urban Area instead for Canberra because the GCCSA for Canberra included the whole boundary of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).
exclusion zone around any given capital city, whilst residing in the capital city. Workers listed under ‘Migratory / Offshore / Shipping’, although not part of the exclusion zones, were also included since those workers are likely to be working a typical FIFO style roster, but those falling under ‘State and Territory Undefined’ were not since they could potentially fall within the 400km zone. The ABS randomly adjusts cells in the tables to avoid the release of confidential data, and for this reason, no reliance should be placed on small counts in any resulting data (ABS 2006b).

5.5 Results and Discussion: Distance labour is more than mining

The location of workers on Census night is important for confirming the veracity of the distance labour criteria used to generate distance labour data. Table 5.1 is perhaps one of the most compelling datasets and shows that compared to the 95 per cent of the total national workforce who were home on Census night, distance labourers in four of the five most populous capital cities were just as likely to not be home. Brisbane, the city with the most distance labourers (57,578), was anomalous within this dataset. In Brisbane, 88 per cent of distance labourers were at home rather than elsewhere on Census night. Therefore, although distance labourers in the other capital cities were equally likely to not be home as they were to be home on Census night, the final total of 72 per cent of distance labourers being at home on Census night is skewed by the outlier of Brisbane’s distance labourers. It was unclear whether this was because the sample size was larger, or due to some other unknown factor. Perth, another resource state capital, also has a sizeable population of distance labourers (22,537) but its ratio more closely resembles that of the other capital cities. One possible explanation is that Brisbane’s distance labourers work predominately in manufacturing or transport, whereas Perth distance labourers are
predominantly miners. Miners on a swing at the minesite would not be able to return home on Census night, whereas it may be much easier for those in transport or manufacturing to return home. Numerically speaking though, Brisbane distance labour outnumber the other four cities put together, which limits room to draw any definitive conclusions without instigating a subsequent investigation.
Table 5.1: Location of distance labourers in the five most populous capital cities on census night, compared with the total employed workforce (Source: ABS 2016a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sydney Distance Labourers</th>
<th>Melbourne Distance Labourers</th>
<th>Brisbane Distance Labourers</th>
<th>Adelaide Distance Labourers</th>
<th>Perth Distance Labourers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Census Night Location</td>
<td>Census Night Location</td>
<td>Census Night Location</td>
<td>Census Night Location</td>
<td>Census Night Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At home</td>
<td>Elsewhere in Australia</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>At home</td>
<td>Elsewhere in Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,293</td>
<td>4,036</td>
<td>8,329</td>
<td>4,262</td>
<td>3,834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>51.54</td>
<td>48.46</td>
<td>52.64</td>
<td>47.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL EMPLOYED</th>
<th>TOTAL DISTANCE LABOURERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>from the five most populous capital cities</td>
<td>Census Night Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At home</td>
<td>Elsewhere in Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15,639,651</td>
<td>884,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>94.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.2 and Table 5.3 show great variation in the numbers of distance labourers working out of the capital cities of Australia, as listed by industry and state. The total percentages for each industry from Table 5.3 are visualised as a pie chart in Figure 5.3. Overall, Table 5.3 shows that distance labourers in all the capital cities account for just 1.54 per cent of the total workforce. However, this still equates to approximately 105,000 people – a significant number. Also, the data here only captures capital city distance labourers and numbers are likely to be higher when taking into consideration those distance labourers working out of regional centres (including large cities such as Wollongong, Newcastle, Townsville, Geelong, and Rockhampton) and the many other small towns around the country.

The mining total here is significantly less than the 213,773 people pursuing LDC work across Australia estimated by KPMG (for the Minerals Council of Australia 2013). KPMG claimed that almost half are working in mining or ‘mining-allied’ jobs. One likely reason for this differential could be that this chapter concentrates purely on capital cities, whereas KPMG extracted data countrywide from the Journey to Work Census dataset (KPMG for the Minerals Council of Australia 2013: 10). Another likely reason for this could be the different 100km criteria KPMG used to evaluate and measure what constitutes a LDC worker. The difference between the criteria used in this analysis and by KPMG highlights how these kinds of determinations affect results, and yet they may not always be entirely visible, or the implications apparent. Moreover, they further illustrate the somewhat arbitrary nature of statistics. Nevertheless, using the criteria I established earlier, the data generated here are more likely to represent other industries experiencing similar challenges to work and home life experienced by miners, since the non-mining distance labourers represented here are working at least 400km from their homes.
Table 5.2: Workers engaged in distance labour in Australian capital cities in numbers and as a percentage of the total employed population. The top three industries by size, ‘Manufacturing’, ‘Mining’, and ‘Transport, Postal and Warehousing’, colour-match Figure 5.3 (Source: ABS 2016a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Greater Sydney</th>
<th>Greater Melbourne</th>
<th>Greater Brisbane</th>
<th>Greater Perth</th>
<th>Total (Syd - Per)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA2s Outside Sydney 400km Buffer</td>
<td>SA2s Outside Melbourne 400km Buffer</td>
<td>SA2s Outside Brisbane 400km Buffer</td>
<td>SA2s Outside Perth 400km Buffer</td>
<td>Total outside 400km buffers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and Support Services</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Recreation Services</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>871</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Training</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial and Insurance Services</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Media and Telecommunications</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Scientific and Technical Services</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration and Safety</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail, Hiring and Real Estate Services</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Postal and Warehousing</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequately described</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5832</td>
<td>2509</td>
<td>8341</td>
<td>5477</td>
<td>2626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total employed persons</td>
<td>1103994</td>
<td>959275</td>
<td>2063269</td>
<td>1030556</td>
<td>897172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance labourers as % of total employed</td>
<td>0.53%</td>
<td>0.26%</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
<td>0.53%</td>
<td>0.29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.2: (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greater Adelaide</th>
<th>Greater Hobart</th>
<th>Greater Darwin</th>
<th>Canberra &amp; Queanbeyan</th>
<th>Total (Adelaide - Canberra)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SA2s Outside Adelaide 400km Buffer</strong></td>
<td><strong>SA2s Outside Hobart 400km Buffer</strong></td>
<td><strong>SA2s Outside Darwin 400km Buffer</strong></td>
<td><strong>SA2s Outside Canberra 400km Buffer</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total outside 400km buffers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and Support Services</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Recreation Services</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Training</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial and Insurance Services</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Media and Telecommunications</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>1216</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1309</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Scientific and Technical Services</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration and Safety</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Postal and Warehousing</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequately described</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3860</td>
<td>1214</td>
<td>5074</td>
<td>554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total employed persons</strong></td>
<td>302763</td>
<td>274058</td>
<td>576821</td>
<td>49190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distance labourers as % of total employed</strong></td>
<td>1.27%</td>
<td>0.44%</td>
<td>0.88%</td>
<td>1.13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.3: Total workers engaged in distance labour in Australian capital cities in numbers and as a percentage of the total employed population. Manufacturing, Mining, and Transport colours match Figure 5.3 (Source: ABS 2016a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>2418</td>
<td>2676</td>
<td>5094</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and Support Services</td>
<td>1757</td>
<td>1207</td>
<td>2964</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>821</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Recreation Services</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>1091</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>9371</td>
<td>1002</td>
<td>10373</td>
<td>9.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Training</td>
<td>1164</td>
<td>1654</td>
<td>2818</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services</td>
<td>2156</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>2684</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial and Insurance Services</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>1393</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>1351</td>
<td>2870</td>
<td>4221</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Media and Telecommunications</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>1095</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>10412</td>
<td>2914</td>
<td>13326</td>
<td>12.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>14422</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>16337</td>
<td>15.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
<td>1782</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>2415</td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Scientific and Technical Services</td>
<td>4111</td>
<td>1608</td>
<td>5719</td>
<td>5.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration and Safety</td>
<td>4033</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>6028</td>
<td>5.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>1299</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>2886</td>
<td>2901</td>
<td>5787</td>
<td>5.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Postal and Warehousing</td>
<td>9976</td>
<td>3829</td>
<td>13805</td>
<td>13.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>4074</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>6082</td>
<td>5.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequately described</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>1342</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>74529</td>
<td>30208</td>
<td>104737</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total employed persons</strong></td>
<td>3626503</td>
<td>3184656</td>
<td>6811159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distance labourers as % of total employed</strong></td>
<td>2.06%</td>
<td>0.95%</td>
<td>1.54%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.3: Industrial breakdown of workers engaged in distance labour as a combined total of all Australian capital cities.
With only capital city data analysed here, regional centres with known high proportions of distance labourers, such as Stawell in Victoria (McKenzie et al. 2014), are not included in the total number of 104,737 distance labourers found in the results. Furthermore, the proportion of distance labourers in the total workforce varies from state to state, with Brisbane containing the most (5.7 per cent) and Sydney the least (0.4 per cent). Of note is that the ‘resource state’, Queensland, which recently conducted two parliamentary inquiries into FIFO mining (Department of State Development 2015, Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee 2015), has twice as many distance labourers working in construction than in mining, and four times as many working in manufacturing. It is unclear why these industries are offering distance labour work, or why these workers choose to travel long distances to work rather than residing in their location of work, though the increased pay that typically comes from FIFO work is likely to be a drawcard.

The imaginative power of the heroic miner overshadows all other non-mining distance labour and has so far obscured non-mining distance labour to the point that it is effectively discursively invisible. The lack of acknowledgement of its existence has ensured that raw data on non-mining distance labour has not been collected on either its scope or variety. Combined, these circumstances have thus far prevented governments and policy makers from asking questions that might render this population visible, and begin to determine how best to enact appropriate labour policies, and policies that ameliorate the worst of the effects associated with this type of labour. The following subsections provide further detail on the distance labour workforce.
5.5.1 Mining

The most telling insight to emerge from Table 5.3, represented visually in Figure 5.3, is that mining, the iconic form of distance labour in the Australian imagination, comprises only 15.6 per cent of the total capital city distance labour population. The remaining 84.4 per cent, however, remains invisible from resulting research and policy discourse despite its overwhelming majority. It is worth noting that mining occupies a considerably higher industry percentage within the distance labour population (15.6 per cent) than it does amongst all employed people (1.0 per cent). However, 15.6 per cent is by no means monolithic. Mining’s high degree of discursive visibility – the numerous newspaper reports, opinion pieces, parliamentary inquiries, support groups etc. – despite its relatively small contribution, both within the distance labour workforce, and the Australian workforce in total, exemplifies Pearse’s (2009) ‘Quarry Vision’. Recent discourse, such as the raft of very alarming suicides in the Western Australia mining camps precipitating a parliamentary inquiry (Education and Health Standing Committee 2015), combined with negative media exposure (Chapter 3), has arguably exacerbated this condition. However, it would be difficult to imagine that conditions such as social isolation, long work hours, and separation from family are not also experienced by the broader distance labour workforce.

The two biggest resource states of Western Australia and Queensland had the greatest proportion of distance labourers in their capital cities. Reflecting its ‘resource state’ association, miners in Perth accounted for 49 per cent of all distance labourers operating from that city. Nevertheless, this means that 51 per cent of the distance labourers working from Perth are not miners. By contrast, in the other big resource state Queensland, mining accounted for only 4 per cent of the 57,000 distance labourers operating from Brisbane.
The above tables and figures confirm the insight that distance labour comprises so much more than mining (see Skilton 2015).

5.5.2 Construction

A notable component of Australia’s distance labour population works in ‘Construction’ (9.9 per cent). Considering that much of the mining ‘boom’ in Australia has been because of the construction phase of large-scale mining projects (Sheehan and Gregory 2013), it would be reasonable to expect that mining construction might account for a large proportion of these distance construction labourers. However, according to the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC), there is room for interpretation in the labour classifications:

5.5 A large number of new business units start up in any given period. Before commencing regular operations, some of these units need to undertake significant capital formation. In many instances, these units may decide to undertake the capital formation (e.g. construction of a furnace, a railway line, a factory or a mine) themselves. This raises the issue of whether these units are primarily engaged in construction activity, or engaged in the purpose for which the construction is being undertaken.

5.6 ANZSIC 2006 classifies a unit which undertakes own account capital formation to the industry covering its intended future operations, rather than to construction (ABS 2006a: 25).

What this means is that construction workers who are working on the construction of a mine are more likely to be coded under ‘Mining’ than under ‘Construction’. This would suggest that the numbers of Construction workers in Table 5.2 are therefore not likely to
be involved in mining-related construction. However, this is complicated by a later clause of the ANZSIC:

5.40 Renting, hiring and leasing heavy machinery with an operator is included in the division where the equipment is predominantly used. This is because the output being provided is a particular service, rather than just the provision of equipment for rent, hire or lease. For example, when construction machinery is hired in conjunction with the operator, the service being paid for is a construction service and not just for the use of equipment for a day. Examples of hire with operator include:

- hire of construction machinery with operator (Class 3292);
- hire of motor vehicles with driver (Class 4623);
- hire of boats with crew (Class 4820); and
- hire of aircraft with crew (Class 4900) (ABS 2006a: 30).

This clause would imply that if any mining companies were to hire equipment for the purposes of construction, then this would indeed be coded in the ‘Construction’ industry category. In light of this somewhat contradictory nature of these clauses, it may be best to assume, without a finer-grained analysis, that there is at least the potential for some of these distance labourers coded under ‘Construction’ to instead be working in the broader mining industry. This confusion may contribute to the estimation by KPMG that there are 100,000 people working in mining or mining-allied distance labour.

5.5.3 Brisbane’s Distance Labourers

Brisbane, as the capital city with the greatest number of distance labourers, is worth investigating in further detail. Despite being located in Queensland, one of Australia’s two key resource states, Brisbane has a mining distance labour force of just 4 per cent of the total distance labourers working from that city. The second largest distance labour category, just behind ‘Transport, Postal and Warehousing’ (19.3 per cent), was
'Manufacturing’, with 18.3 per cent of the total. The large quantity of distance labour manufacturers seemed unusual, and in defiance of the traditional understanding of manufacturing as a locally-based industry embedded in industrial regions (Amin and Thrift 1992). Table 5.4 shows that ‘Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing’, ‘Food Product Manufacturing’, and ‘Transport Equipment Manufacturing’ were the biggest sectors. The large number of ‘Food Product Manufacturing’ employees may be partially explained by an itinerant workforce of fruit pickers travelling the continent for work, but residing in Brisbane (Hanson and Bell 2003). The large numbers of people travelling long distances to work in ‘Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing’ and ‘Transport Equipment Manufacturing’ is harder to hypothesise and warrants further investigation.
Table 5.4: Industry breakdown of ‘Manufacturing’ distance labourers from Brisbane (Source: ABS 2016a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry 2nd Digit Level</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total #</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Chemical and Chemical Product Manufacturing</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing</td>
<td>1219</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>1411</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Product Manufacturing</td>
<td>1005</td>
<td>878</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture and Other Manufacturing</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>1081</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing (not further defined)</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Metallic Mineral Product Manufacturing</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petroleum and Coal Product Manufacturing</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polymer Product and Rubber Product Manufacturing</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Metal and Metal Product Manufacturing</td>
<td>904</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>1047</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing (including the Reproduction of Recorded Media)</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulp, Paper and Converted Paper Product Manufacturing</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile, Leather, Clothing and Footwear Manufacturing</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport Equipment Manufacturing</td>
<td>1229</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>1431</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood Product Manufacturing</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8087</td>
<td>2433</td>
<td>10520</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the ‘Transport, Postal and Warehousing’ industry (Table 5.5), ‘Air and Space Transport’, ‘Road Transport’ and ‘Transport Supper Services’ account for the largest share of the sector. Considering the size of the state overall, it makes sense that transport takes up such a large proportion of distance labourers. It is notable that this trend was not mirrored in the data for Western Australia, since that state is even larger. However, due to the larger number of significant population centres along Queensland’s coast, one could expect more road freight up and down the east coast than along the more sparsely-populated west coast of Australia.
Table 5.5: Industry breakdown of ‘Transport, Postal and Warehousing’ distance labourers from Brisbane (Source: ABS 2016a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry 2nd Digit Level</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total #</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air and Space Transport</td>
<td>2470</td>
<td>1359</td>
<td>3829</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal and Courier Pick-up and Delivery Services</td>
<td>819</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>1291</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail Transport</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road Transport</td>
<td>2161</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>2676</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport Support Services</td>
<td>1858</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>2715</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Postal and Warehousing (not further defined)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehousing and Storage Services</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Transport</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Transport</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7805</td>
<td>3335</td>
<td>11140</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5.4  Sex

This chapter has begun to show how the focus on mining marginalises non-mining distance labour, but another striking conclusion to be extracted from the data is that women are not well-represented in distance labour\textsuperscript{20}. Table 5.6 shows that there are substantially more males undertaking distance labour than females (71.2 per cent vs. 28.8 per cent). This equates to a ratio of roughly 2.5 male distance labourers to every female distance labourer. The total capital city workforce, on the other hand, shows much greater equality (53.2 per cent male vs. 46.8 per cent female). More males than females undertake distance labour across every industry, except for ‘Retail Trade’, ‘Accommodation and Food Services’, ‘Education and Training’ and ‘Health Care and Social Assistance’. Even in these latter two industries of education and health care, which are industries where females clearly outnumber males in the total capital city workforce, the balance swings approximately 10 per cent towards distance labour males in both instances.

Although some of the industry sex ratios remain the same between the distance labour workforce and the total workforce, there are some such as ‘Professional, Scientific and Technical Services’, and ‘Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services’ that are substantially different. Females are less well-represented in every distance labour industry than their counterparts in the total workforce, except in the case of ‘Transport, Postal and Warehousing’, which demonstrates a slight increase in percentage. Accordingly, the percentage of males is higher in every distance labour industry compared to the regular workforce, except for the aforementioned ‘Transport, Postal and Warehousing’. Distance labour therefore effectively amplifies existing gender ratios in the total workforce. Whether this is due to overt discrimination of women applying for distance labour jobs,

\textsuperscript{20}To provide a critical analysis of the data, it is necessary to stand aside critiques of the problematic categorisation of humans into binary characteristics; particularly binary sex characteristics.
the ‘blokey’, masculine environment of mining worksites discouraging women from participating, or the circumstances (personal or societal) that mean women often choose to stay at home and work less to raise a family, is unclear from Census data alone.
Table 5.6: Distance labourers and total employed people percentages by sex and by industry (Source: ABS 2016a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Capital City Total Distance Labourers</th>
<th>Capital City Total Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>47.47</td>
<td>52.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and Support Services</td>
<td>59.28</td>
<td>40.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing</td>
<td>68.21</td>
<td>31.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Recreation Services</td>
<td>59.76</td>
<td>40.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>90.34</td>
<td>9.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Training</td>
<td>41.31</td>
<td>58.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services</td>
<td>80.33</td>
<td>19.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial and Insurance Services</td>
<td>59.66</td>
<td>40.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>32.01</td>
<td>67.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequately described</td>
<td>73.70</td>
<td>26.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Media and Telecommunications</td>
<td>64.11</td>
<td>35.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>78.13</td>
<td>21.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>88.28</td>
<td>11.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>62.79</td>
<td>37.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
<td>72.96</td>
<td>27.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Scientific and Technical Services</td>
<td>71.88</td>
<td>28.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration and Safety</td>
<td>66.90</td>
<td>33.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services</td>
<td>67.36</td>
<td>32.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>49.87</td>
<td>50.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Postal and Warehousing</td>
<td>72.26</td>
<td>27.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>66.98</td>
<td>33.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>71.16</strong></td>
<td><strong>28.84</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.6 Conclusions

The custom dataset produced in this chapter exposes some of the weaknesses in Census data collection that discursively produce invisibilities. Censuses are more than mere tools for productivity. The literature shows they create identities, and people then embody these identities. If these identities, such as non-mining distance labour, can only be made visible through a dedicated geographical method, and knowledge of ABS TableBuilder Pro, then it is likely these distance labourers will not be a focus for labour policy makers. There are other tangible reasons why these effective invisibilities are problematic – they reproduce social marginalisations evident more broadly in the national imaginary. In an age where political representation is shifting away from two-party political systems to different means of representation, such as “public opinion polls, private and state-sponsored surveys of all sorts, and censuses” (Hannah 2001: 515), the political implications of Census data cannot be denied. Once the non-mining distance labour population realises its size, these distance labourers could potentially use Census numbers to mobilise “against a state to demand justification, explanation or provision” (Legg 2005: 143). However, Kertzer and Arel (2002: 18) may be right to question whether “the politicisation of the census represent[s] the undermining of an exercise that should be left in the hands of scientific experts”. If the Census is “enacting” the world rather than merely “describing” it (Law and Urry 2004: 390), it is creating a world that renders non-mining distance labour unimportant. This chapter has demonstrated that non-mining distance labour is, in fact, vastly more prevalent than mining distance labour. Yet, in its analysis of Census data, the government and other researchers have chosen to render mining as the totality of the distance labour population. The “Geopolitical Imagination” of this situation is one in which miners continue to be imbued with greater importance through the objectifying technology of the Census (Legg 2005: 145).
It is important to bear in mind that the insights in this chapter have been created through a creative interpretation of Census data, since distance labour is as yet unarticulated in the Census form. There are no easy solutions to a better capture of distance labourers in the Census. However, more detailed questioning around the labour mobility, perhaps along the lines of the distance labour criteria proposed earlier, may provide a clearer framework in future Censuses from which to extract this analysis, and to bring non-mining distance labour out from underneath mining’s dominance in the national imaginary (Chapters 2 and 3). It is not the fault of the ABS necessarily that visibility has been denied to distance labourers. Rather, the technologies of documentation that the Census employs have not kept up with society’s increasing mobility. Special enumeration strategies may target and engage with miners, but in so doing, they miss all the other distance labourers who may be home on census night or indeed are elsewhere just as miners are on their on-off shifts. These special enumeration strategies, such as the Mining Enumeration Strategy for the 2011 Census referenced in Section 5.3, emphasise that mining is too important to the nation for economic and symbolic reasons to allow any significant undercount to occur. Underscoring this phenomenon are the results in this chapter showing the large disparity between numbers of male and female mining distance labourers (88 per cent vs. 12 per cent). This disparity goes some way to explaining how the entire distance labour workforce can be equated with mining (seen in the discourse on LDC and FIFO), since it reaffirms the position of the heroic mining figure as overwhelming male, and thus more privileged and deserving. Likewise, the construction industry, which as described may include some workers employed on mining industry projects, is similarly skewed.

This chapter sought to expose variability in what is seen and what is unseen, what is legitimate and what is not, via the Census as a key governmental technology: a technology
crucial in the production of the national imaginary. The results show that distance labourers can be found participating in every industry, and yet are invisible, except for miners, with implications for how this labour is valued and understood in Australia. There is a strong need to work collectively with qualitative researchers and with distance labourers themselves to provide a more complete picture of their working and non-working lives, which may go some way to introducing the importance, scope and variety of non-mining distance labour to the Australian imaginary. In the following chapter, I will use the lessons learned in this chapter about how the Census, as a technology of power, produces invisibilities, and return to investigating sex workers and their ongoing marginalisation and invisibility in the national imaginary.
CHAPTER 6
SEX WORK AND THE CENSUS:
WHEREFORE ART THOU, SEX WORKERS?

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the census and its capacity for bringing populations into existence (Brown and Knopp 2006, Gorman-Murray et al. 2010, Pavlovskaya and Bier 2012). Populations are rendered visible and invisible through the technology of counting. Such mechanisms have operated to exclude and render invisible the population of certain groups, such as non-mining distance labourers, from the national imaginary. This chapter draws on the same literature as the previous chapter to argue that sex workers are similarly affected by technologies of counting, maintaining their invisibility in the national imaginary. Although the distance labourer population identified in Chapter 5 was difficult to assess, their various occupations were captured by the Census and could be deduced through geographical analytical techniques. Sex work as an occupation on the other hand, is almost totally absent in the Census, despite best estimates suggesting there are 20,000 workers Australia-wide in any given year (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2008, Renshaw et al. 2015).

Sex workers are not the only group to lack numerical visibility in the various censuses around the world. Participation is also varied amongst ethnic groups, the homeless, and migrants. According to Hannah (2001: 521):

Members of these groups also often have real reasons to distrust or avoid contact with the government, whether by mail or in person. These reasons can be historical and collective, or they can be individual concerns about present-day costs and benefits … More generally, in a climate of distrust, the claim that surrendering information will
bring benefits without compromising individual confidentiality is easy to dismiss as fanciful.

Pavlovskaya and Bier (2012: 494) have argued for the ways that visibility in the census can empower marginal citizens, with Arab Americans in post-911 New York using census data on Arab ancestry to construct positive visibility. Kertzer and Arel (2002: 28) have suggested that the methods employed to create this visibility can sometimes look more like “a political campaign than … a technical exercise in counting.” While mining per se is not rendered invisible by the Census (it is too important for the national economy and identity), it is part of the broader experience of distance labour, something that is rendered effectively invisible. Special enumeration strategies around mining in the Census, seen in Section 5.3, attempt to return more accurate data about mining in Australia. Not only is this an important political project, to ensure the narrative around the economy is complete, but it is symbolically important for bureaucratic projects of nation building and the national imaginary. Although distance labourers share the condition of (effective) invisibility (see Section 4.5) with sex workers, the mechanisms for sex worker invisibility are different to those of distance labourers. Sex workers have a discrete category within the official occupation classification system within Australia (Section 6.2), whereas distance labourers do not. Yet, the ‘labour’ aspect of distance labour is captured in the Census, even if the ‘distance’ part is not, and numbers can be at least approximated or deduced. Sex workers are, put simply, numerically absent. The differences between these avenues to invisibility highlight the power of counting and being counted, and how the Census, as a technology of power, legitimates certain identities over others, with implications for the national imaginary.

Ruppert (2008: 1) argues that people may be right to be wary of the census, particularly when they are part of a marginalised identity group:
the census demands that the individual simultaneously identify with the categories of numerous classifications: age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, origins, language and so on. As the numbers and diversity of individuals increases and more classifications and categories are asserted and recognised then the more likely a person’s identification when strung together on a census manuscript form will constitute a particular individuality. Even when the string of data is stripped of a person’s name and specific address (unique identifiers) the particular combination of every person’s identifiers is often unique, especially for individuals who have highly visible or ‘disclosive’ identifications (e.g. such as minority ethnic and occupation categories, or residence in small, remote geographical areas).

Wariness of the census may also be symptomatic of what Leszczynski (2015: 1) states is a general fear of big data:

the fear that the personal information that individuals disclose about themselves and that others generate about them is intercepted and analyzed by the intelligence services within emergent praxes of pervasive dataveillance.

A review of confidentiality research literature by the United States Bureau of the Census showed a number of reasons why people might be suspicious of the census:

- Don’t trust local enumerators.
- Thought information in computers is not secure.
- Were unaware of the legal restrictions associated with the use of census data.
- Did not trust/were afraid of the government.
- Were afraid that census data would be used against them/others.
- Were only willing to report information that will not bring harm to themselves or others (Mayer 2002: 6-7).

All are likely to be applicable to sex workers in Australia.

The decision to be suspicious of the census is not baseless. The United States Census Bureau has been accused of facilitating the round-up and internment of Japanese-Americans immediately after Pearl Harbour (Okamura 1981). Concrete evidence has never been revealed that supports the claim that the War Department was given names
and addresses, but punch cards were provided containing “census tracts and other small areas with high concentrations of Japanese”, which could have been used to narrow down searches (Seltzer and Anderson 2000: 1). This was not technically illegal, since as the Bureau said when defending itself against these allegations: “Neighbourhood characteristics... are available to all” (Seltzer and Anderson 2000: 1). At the same time, collusion with another government department did little to engender trust, and the legacy of this data transfer still reverberates through the Japanese-American community today (Seltzer and Anderson 2000, Mayer 2002).

Mayer (2002: 33) also articulates the major ways confidentiality can be breached, through “accidental release” (human error or failing to follow protocol), “malicious release” (unauthorised exposure of data via staff or hackers), “compulsory release” (ordered by a court), and “statistical disclosure” (identifying someone through census data and data from other sources). All of these avenues for release are something that sex workers might have any number of reasons to fear. For example, the hacking event that culminated in the release of hundreds of private photos by celebrities on the anarchic website 4chan may add to a fear of reprisal should someone seek vengeance on sex workers (McCoy 2014). Mayer (2002: 4) went on to suggest that, “as the legitimacy of the requestor increases, information is likely to be viewed as less private”, and is exemplified in changes to privacy laws more generally here in Australia, and in the United Kingdom and the United States, to counter ‘terrorism’ (Pearson and Busst 2006, Baldino 2015).

This chapter then seeks to uncover how the Census, as a technology of power of the State, in tandem with the stigma faced by sex workers around their work, maintains their present marginalisation. Census data on sex work using the presently available, but insufficient, occupational categories, is presented to illustrate sex worker invisibility. Prior to the presentation of results is a contextualising discussion of the ways that sex work has been
made invisible and the ways that invisibility is experienced. Following that is an exploration of how the ABS positions sex work as labour without skill or value through the hierarchy of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO). Next, the methodology for capturing Census data is explained, before going on to analyse the data itself. It is important to note here at the outset then that without qualitative research conducted with sex workers (which this research attempted but failed to achieve, described in detail in Appendix B), the numbers represented here lack context and subjectivity. By analysing such numbers here, I do not intend to simplify the heterogeneous backgrounds and experiences of sex workers. Rather, the numbers are consulted to illuminate how technologies of power such as the census bring populations and identity categories into being – or not.

### 6.2 Sex Work: The Census and the State

The Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO), the official classification for analysing occupational statistics in Australia, is divided into eight main occupation groups. Each can be further sub-divided four more times. The final 5th level is the level of individual occupation title. Some examples at this level in the ANZSCO are ‘Aged or Disabled Carer’, ‘Screen Printer’, ‘Flying Instructor’, ‘Cartographer’ and ‘Mushroom Picker’. There are 1014 occupations in total classified within the ANZSCO (Table 6.1).
Table 6.1: Major divisions of the ANZSCO structure and numbers of subdivisions (ABS 2009a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Group</th>
<th>Sub-Major Groups</th>
<th>Minor Groups</th>
<th>Unit Groups</th>
<th>Occupations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Managers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Professionals</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Technicians and Trades Workers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Community and Personal Service</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Clerical and Administrative Workers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Sales Workers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Machinery Operators and Drivers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Labourers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sex work has a discrete category in the fifth level of the ANZSCO with the occupation code: ‘451813 Sex Worker or Escort’, and is defined as:

**451813 SEX WORKER OR ESCORT**

Alternative Title: Prostitute

Provides clients with sexual services or social companionship.

Skill Level: 5

Specialisations:

Dominatrix

Telephone Sex Worker (ABS 2009c).

It is unclear whether this category incorporates other occupations that are parallel to ‘full-service’ brothel and escort work such as erotic massage. Exotic dancing (formerly known as ‘Striptease Artist’ in the 1997 precursor to the ANZSCO) is a specialisation under the Code: ‘211112 Dancer or Choreographer’. Stripping is therefore not included as sex work by the ANZSCO. Data for 211112 cannot be combined with 451813 to tally a total ‘sex worker’ labour force, since it would have captured not only strippers, but all other dancers.
and choreographers. This is raised to clarify that the numbers presented here are likely to conceal other forms of sex work hidden within other Census occupation categories.

Skill level is a definitive rating given to each occupation within the ANZSCO. It ranges from 1 (highest), to 5 (lowest). Skill level is defined as:

a function of the range and complexity of the set of tasks performed in a particular occupation. The greater the range and complexity of the set of tasks, the greater the skill level of an occupation (ABS 2009b).

Skill level is measured by:

- the level or amount of formal education and training
- the amount of previous experience in a related occupation, and
- the amount of on-the-job training required to competently perform the set of tasks required for that occupation (ABS 2009b).

Figure 6.1 shows how sex work is located within the sub-groupings of the ANZSCO, and the skill level with which it is associated, on par with Hair and Beauty Salon Assistant.

Sex work, being qualified as a Level 5 skill is, in an administrative sense, accurate, since no qualification is needed to be a sex worker. However, this is somewhat disingenuous, taking a very simplistic view of what is actually involved in sex work. Sex workers will attest to the “range and complexity” of tasks, human beings having a deeply complex array of physical and emotional needs. Factoring in also the skills required to be a dominatrix, or work with clients with disabilities (‘Aged or Disabled Carer’ is Skill Level 4), the level of skill and training required is likely to increase. We already discovered in Chapter 4 that at least one brothel owner believes that nurses (Skill Level 1) make the best sex workers because of their skill with managing clients, something they likely learned over time working in their other occupation (Bennett 2012). Skill level then, by primarily valuing formal education, creates an arbitrary distinction between the difficulty of occupations requiring tertiary education, and those that require significant learned
emotional labour, such as sex work. The ANZSCO work description does acknowledge in an official capacity ‘social companionship’ as part of the role of sex workers (and in so doing, recognises something often overlooked by anti-sex work campaigners). Effective social companionship is a skill that takes dedication, time and training. The ANZSCO thus underestimates the “training required to competently perform the set of tasks required for that occupation” (ABS 2009b). Exotic dancing by way of comparison, although also skilful, is stated as Skill Level 1, the highest skill level. There is the potential then for the ANZSCO classification system, just as with statistics, to “flatten and enclose” the diversity within occupations (Appadurai 1998: 133).
Figure 6.1: Flow chart showing how sex work is categorised in the ANZSCO (Source: adapted from Pink and Bascand 2009)
The questions contained within the Census form itself are likely to be the most important way respondents can interact with their own identity production. Examples provided within the questions have been found to have a significant effect on identification. For example, in Canada, “whether an ethnic group was listed or not as an example in the ancestry question made a huge difference in the number of respondents identifying with that particular group” (Kertzer and Arel 2002: 17). The Census has limited space to provide examples for questions regarding person’s occupation or industry of employer. Figure 6.2 shows that there are six occupational examples given, and Figure 6.3 shows that there are nine industry tick boxes with an open-ended ‘Other’. How people then identify with their occupation and industry may be linked to the opportunities provided to them on the Census form. Any person who does not associate themselves with one of the examples listed on the paper form is forced to self-define their own industry or occupation. For many this is an easy task. For others, perhaps working more obscure or indefinable jobs, it is not so easy. It is then the role of Census data entry processes to interpret these answers and assign them a specific ANZSCO code. Much of the data entry is automated, employing scanning and character recognition technologies (ABS 2011b). According to the ABS (2011b: 1), “most responses are coded automatically using official classifications with legal value checks built into the system … Errors are more likely to arise during automatic coding of ‘write in’ answers.” Therefore, those people self-identifying with ‘write-in’ responses are at a greater risk of being assigned a different category than was intended.
Methods

As we have seen in Chapters 2 and 4, sex workers are problematised by society. Since Victorian-era times, they have been rendered simultaneously abject and necessary by a society in which they cause anxieties amongst the non-sex working public (Chapter 4), and from which they are excluded from public space and public life (Chapter 2). Chapter 5 used Census industry data to bring into existence a diverse distance labour population including, but also more than, mining. This chapter instead relies upon Census occupation data. The 5th level, 6-digit occupation category of ‘451813 Sex Worker or Escort’ is too
refined to be accessed using the publicly-available TableBuilder software on the ABS website, which can only investigate groupings down to the 4-digit level. It was thus necessary to place a custom data request with the ABS for access to the sex worker data. The initial request was for a number of different cross-tabulations of data for occupation 451813. It included a request for tables using Census categories of state of residence vs: age; country of birth; highest level of educational attainment; sex; and language spoken at home. There was also a request for distance labour sex workers using the methodology from the previous chapter. In response to the request, an information consultant at the ABS stated:

Overall in Australia, the population of persons who stated their occupation as "451813 Sex worker or escort" is quite small so that any breakdown by other variables will result in very small cells, particularly in the smaller populated states. Some of this could be alleviated by grouping some of the smaller states … With regard to table 6 in your request [distance labour sex workers], most workers lived and worked within the same state. While I understand that you are trying to capture the numbers of sex workers working at a distance from their place of usual residence, the population for 451813 is too small to support the breakdown you have asked for (Jackson 2014 pers. comm., 18th November).

From the outset then, the numbers were too small to try and confirm the existence of distance labour sex workers in the Census. However, I decided that it would be a valuable relationship-building exercise with Scarlet Alliance to see what kind of information they would be interested in finding out about sex workers in the Census. Scarlet Alliance had never before gained access to this kind of data. Communication between myself and Scarlet Alliance highlighted many areas in which they were interested. With the knowledge that the numbers were likely to be small, and so categories would have to be condensed in order to have meaningful sums unaffected by the ‘introduced random error’ process (ABS 2006b), we agreed on nine variables that could be interrogated on a
nationwide scale: age; country of birth; level of highest educational attainment; sex; state of residence; language spoken at home; proficiency of spoken English/language; hours worked; and year of arrival, some of which are featured in the discussion below.

6.4 Results and Discussion: The official absence of a sex worker population

Sex work has an estimated 20,000 workers Australia-wide in any given year (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2008, Renshaw et al. 2015). By way of comparison, this estimation is roughly twice the number of dentists in Australia (ABS 2008). The first thing to test then was whether this was reflected in the 2011 Census data, and to compare the 2011 Census data against previous Censuses (Table 6.2). The most startling thing about the data in Table 6.2 was the total number of sex workers officially recorded and recognised by the Australian nation in 2011: 369. This is a gross underrepresentation of a magnitude no other (legal) occupation would likely experience (acknowledging also that sex work is not decriminalised or legalised in all states). The *Mining Enumeration Strategy* was enacted after a significant undercount in one previous Census (see Section 5.3). Table 6.2 shows that the significant undercount of sex workers has been ongoing for at least fifteen years. This immediately reminds us of the power of mining to mobilise the nation and bureaucracy due to its significance in the national imaginary, in stark contrast to sex work, which is deemed insignificant and rendered invisible in the national imaginary.
Table 6.2: Sex workers number in the three Censuses prior to the 2011 Census (Source: ABS 2015a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>2011 (Persons no.)</th>
<th>2006 (Persons no.)</th>
<th>2001 (Persons no.)</th>
<th>1996 (Persons no.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other(b)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>369</strong></td>
<td><strong>383</strong></td>
<td><strong>421</strong></td>
<td><strong>365</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One benign reason for the undercount may be simply that the Census calls for the main source of income in the Census week, and sex work frequently being opportunistic, was not in fact the main source of income for respondents in that week. It is very unlikely, however, that only 369 workers had sex work as their main source of income in the Census week. Another possible reason may be that within a household, some members are unaware that their mother, sister, brother, housemate etc. are involved in the industry, and to truthfully fill out the Census form would expose this deception. Yet another reason may be that sex workers working other paid jobs or doing domestic work may have, even in the face of having earned significantly doing sex work that week, chosen (wrongly according to Census requirements) to identify with their other work. This may be viewed as a little white lie that will minimise any risk to them. Alternatively, it may speak more to the production of individual identities, and some people may not wish to consider themselves a sex worker; sex work instead just being something they do to make ends meet as part of the feminisation of poverty.
Having determined that sex worker numbers in the Census are grossly underrepresented, and have remained relatively unchanged over time, the variables of interest to Scarlet Alliance were examined. However, the small total number involved makes it hard to make meaningful conclusions about sex workers in Australia. Acknowledging the data’s severe limits, it is unsurprising that Table 6.3 shows that the largest age grouping of sex workers is 26-35 years. This is likely reflective of the level of comfort or success the sex worker has found in order to self-identify in the Census at that particular stage in their life, combined with the experience and the age group clients may be seeking. Roughly 20 per cent of sex workers are over 46 years of age, dispelling the conservative and uninformed argument that sex work is just the exploiting of vulnerable young women by “old pervs” (Penberthy 2012). Again, self-identifying at this age may reflect the increasing level of comfort sex workers have in identifying with their work as they grow older (Scott et al. 2006). It may also be indicative of the spatial character of the industry. There is higher competition for clients in metropolitan areas, but rural locations provide opportunities for mature sex workers to continue working (Scott et al. 2006).

Table 6.3: Age profile of sex workers (Source: ABS 2014a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Persons (no.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 - 25 years</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 - 35 years</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 - 45 years</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 years and over</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Acknowledging that the data is unreliable does not discount the curiosity of some of the findings from the data. For example, Table 6.4 shows that in New South Wales, South
Australia, and Western Australia, the sex ratio between workers is comparable. Much of the anti-sex work discourse frames sex work as the exploitation of women (demonstrably seen in the ‘Swedish Model’ legislation). The circumstances that produced the invisible female sex worker in the Australian national imaginary have been especially potent with respect to male sex workers, who are essentially an invisible population within an invisible population. However, this dataset suggests that sexual services are also provided by males who identify their labour as sex work. Grant (2014: 19) claims that male sex workers are invisible in the anti-sex work discourse because they are “rarely considered members of the same occupation”, but this also means that they often do not attract the same kind of rapprochement as female sex workers. Therefore, we can posit that experiencing less ‘whore stigma’, male sex workers are more likely to self-identify in the Census. The power of the Census then, and the results produced here (although unreliable), have the potential to unsettle taken-for-granted and generalised assumptions about sex work as labour that exploits women, and women only.

Table 6.4: Sex worker state of usual residence by sex (Source: ABS 2014a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State of Usual Residence</th>
<th>Male (no.)</th>
<th>Female (no.)</th>
<th>Persons (no.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania/Territories</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The division of sex workers into their states of usual residence would appear to naturally follow the size of the general population in those states (Table 6.5). When considering the different legislative frameworks governing sex work around the country though, this starts to make less sense. Sex workers view the regulatory system of legalisation in Victoria, requiring licensing of sex workers and mandatory health checks in order to work, “as safer than illegal sex work, but still not socially acceptable” (Begum et al. 2013: 85) (see the Preface and Section 1.4.2 for further clarification between the differences between legalisation and decriminalisation). And yet the numbers in Victoria are slightly higher than New South Wales. This comes despite New South Wales having a higher overall population, and the decriminalised sex work framework, which sex workers claim as the best practice industrial relations framework (Scarlet Alliance 2016). These numbers between the two states have remained roughly the same over time (Table 6.2). One might expect that decriminalising sex work in New South Wales would have some impact on the Census figures, just as it has produced “more favourable responses towards sex premises in Parramatta and (especially) the City of Sydney than have been noted in previous studies reporting high levels of antipathy towards new sex premises” (Hubbard et al. 2013: 136). This poses questions about the effect workplace laws have in the context of the workers subjected to them. It may also speak to the sex worker identity and culture, and the attributes of Melbourne that might make it more attractive to sex workers despite the legislative controls.

One final consideration should be that sex workers who identify in the Census are likely to be ‘out’ about their work. As previously indicated, sex workers are unlikely to self-identify in the Census if their household is unaware of their work. Sex worker activists are more likely to be ‘out’ than not, due to attendance at protests and other such ‘public’ or visible presentations. Therefore, the strength of the activist community in various cities
is likely to affect the numbers of sex workers identifying in the Census for that state. Only qualitative research can clarify these considerations.

Table 6.5: Population of the states of Australia (ABS 2016b).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>6,917,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>5,354,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>4,332,737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>2,239,171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>1,596,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>495,351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>357,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>211,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21,504,686</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of sex workers that self-identify in the Census were born in Australia (70 per cent, see Table 6.6). However, there is a large migrant sex worker community within Australia (Renshaw et al. 2015). Data therefore supports the idea that certain groups within already marginalised groups can be further othered. These layers of invisibility should concern the ABS. According to the research by Renshaw et al. (2015: xi-xii):

The survey responses and literature highlighted the intersection of social and structural barriers that may marginalise migrant sex workers from accessing services and resources, such as the stigma associated with sex work, limited access to safe migration pathways, fear of deportation and language barriers.

Stigma then is also a likely reason for such a high non-response rate for migrants in the Census, with the fear that answering truthfully on the Census may lead to deportation because of collusion between government agencies. This would not be inconceivable for
migrants from places such as China, with its oppressive centrally-controlled government, and its relatively new census that only introduced a confidentiality statement on the census form for the first time in 2000 (Lavely 2001).

Table 6.6: Sex worker country of birth (Source: ABS 2014a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Persons (no.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East Asia</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other and Not stated</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, Table 6.7 paints a comparatively different picture of working hours compared to that of the general capital city workforce (Table 6.8). 38 per cent of sex workers work 1-24 hours per week, compared to just 20 per cent of workers nationally. In capital cities, 46 per cent of the total working population surpass 40 hours work per week, whereas only 35 per cent of sex workers do. One possible explanation for the high percentage of sex workers working less than 25 hours per week would be that as an industry dominated by women, many may be performing other gender-typical work such as parenting or housework with the rest of their time that would otherwise be given over to waged work. However, this does not necessarily explain the results here, since 41 per cent of the sex workers in the Census are male. Another reasonable explanation would be that because we know sex work is often opportunistic (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2008), or connected to “periods of ‘crises’” (Scott et al. 2006: 161), sex work at any given time may not amount to a full working week. The data suggests that sex workers are potentially
split into distinct groups of the ‘opportunistic’ and the ‘careerist’, since a large percentage do also work 40 plus hours per week. Furthermore, since ‘Hours Worked’ as a Census category defines itself through hours worked only in the week of the Census, the numbers presented here may be substantially different from the numbers if the Census was again conducted the following week.

Table 6.7: Sex worker hours worked in the Census week (Source: ABS 2014a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours Worked</th>
<th>Persons (no.)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-24 hours</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-39 hours</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 hours and over</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.8: Total capital cities employed persons hours worked in the Census week (Source: ABS 2016a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours Worked</th>
<th>Persons (no.)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>254,805</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-24 hours</td>
<td>1322538</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-39 hours</td>
<td>1901815</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 hours and over</td>
<td>3041289</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>117654</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,638,101</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If responses must fit pre-determined classifications such as the ANZSCO and ANZSIC, then this could explain some of the missing sex worker numbers. A large percentage of sex workers, at least in Sydney, are migrants, and according to Renshaw et al. (2015: xi),
“Migrant respondents were more likely than non-migrants to work at massage parlours and less likely to work at brothels.” However, there is no classification within the ANZSCO for ‘erotic massage’. It is likely then that these sex workers (bearing in mind that they may not view themselves as such) are in fact being lumped in with another occupation, most likely as ‘Massage Therapists’ or ‘Beauty Therapists’. Again, it is not possible to ‘split’ these ANZSCO categories further in order to arrive at an accurate estimation of all kinds of sex workers.

Sex workers are clearly not self-identifying in the Census, and have apparently failed to gain the requisite social legitimacy for special enumeration strategies in the Census such as the one initiated for miners after an undercount in one prior Census. This lack of attention to enumerating a large undercount comes despite the visibility and legitimacy gained by sex workers in New South Wales after the industry was decriminalised in 1995 (but yet to be achieved in other jurisdictions). Based on informal conversations I have had throughout this PhD experience with Scarlet Alliance members, this non-disclosure in the Census is a privacy issue. The ABS should be concerned that they have failed to assure sections of the public that their data is private. The reason that privacy is such a concern for sex workers can be, at least in part, attributed to stigma (see Section 1.4.2).

Privacy and confidentiality regulations governing the Census should make it impossible for stigma to be a concern for sex workers filling in the Census form (ABS 2016c). The Census had, prior to the 2016 Census, a rigorous condition of de-identifying data after 18 months so that Census answers cannot be attributed to individuals (ABS 2016c). Another condition designed to minimise the risk of identification was the introduction of small random errors into the data (ABS 2006b), where, for instance, should a certain Census question return a result of less than five for a certain geographical area, a number between 1 and 4 is given as a randomised result, making it impossible to identify individuals.
So how is it that the confidentiality clauses built into the Census are not registering with sex workers? Intimated to me by a Scarlet Alliance member though is the fact that, although a Census collector can be prosecuted under the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* (Cwlth), they feared the collector may see this disclosure and act upon it in some way. Informal conversations with sex worker friends proved to me how pervasive the effects of long-term stigma can be. For example, one said: “sure, it’s built into the law now, but governments change, and laws change, and who’s to say that they won’t retroactively dig into that data to find out who has been doing sex work and ‘out’ us, persecute us.” There is a complex relationship between individual privacy and data gathering, but this hints at the way those individuals experiencing stigma are more likely to feel systematically under threat from government intervention and/or retribution. The relationship between stigma and the non-response rate, it would seem, may be part of a broader question of whether sex workers in Australia trust their government. To attempt to answer this question in this research, I hoped to work cooperatively with Scarlet Alliance, utilising an online survey with their membership. For various reasons described in Appendix A, the online survey did not eventuate, but it would have questioned sex workers about their sex work identification and what they saw as the role of the Census. It would have been pitched as an opportunity to determine sex worker opinions of the Australian Census and possible reasons for the undercount, and to help determine whether visibility in the Census was something that sex workers could see as being beneficial to their rights agenda. However, the changes in Census data retention by the ABS effectively ended any potential for this endeavour. Thus it is incumbent on the ABS to develop and maintain public confidence in the practice of Census-taking.
6.5 Conclusion

As the nation’s biggest stocktaking exercise, the statistics from the Census play a role in how people visualise their ‘imagined community’. According to Ruppert (2008: 1), “The state needs to and wants to find subjects who can identify with its census categories”, but in order to do so, “it needs subjects to tell the truth about themselves, and it needs to affirm that they can recognise themselves as part of the population.” Sex worker invisibility raises broader questions about what it means to be a woman, a worker, sexualised within that work, and marginalised by society for those conditions. Chapter 4 described the contemporary position of sex work in Australia through the media as a technology of power. The anxieties around sex work described in that chapter are a poignant reminder of how such technologies can influence other aspects of society. Sex work has been consistently written out of the national narrative since the early days of settlement. When it has been actively discussed, it has been written about as an activity that encourages or actively participates in criminality and amorality (Carrington et al. 2011). The Census, as another key technology of power and governmentality, produces an account of sex work that, despite its discrete occupation category in the ANZSCO, fails to accurately represent this labour. In so doing, sex worker labour is rendered inconsequential, and thus, through this technology, continues to be positioned as marginal to the national imaginary.

Despite the small sample of data from the Census consulted in this chapter, some general conclusions can be made, if not necessarily about the results themselves, then as reflective of broader power struggles and sites of resistance in society. Considering the discrete occupational category of sex work, and the undercount, the ABS has a clear enumeration problem. If there was an undercount of this magnitude in any other industry, there would be special enumeration strategies put in place, such as the Mining Enumeration Strategy.
in the 2011 census (ABS 2012c). The 369 sex workers account for only 1.85 per cent of the estimated 20,000 strong sex worker population (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2008, Renshaw et al. 2015). Judging by the results from Table 6.2, which shows total numbers of sex workers remaining steady over time, it does not appear to be a problem the ABS is in any hurry to address. There are many occupations that may similarly lack visibility in the Census. The reasons why sex workers may choose not to identify as such in the Census are therefore also a consideration. Stigma, discussed in detail in Section 1.4.2, is an important reason for sex worker non-disclosure, and one that warrants further attention.

Sex worker reluctance to participate in and engage with a technology of State power is not hard to understand when they are routinely subjugated to stigma from both the State and the public. Mayer (2002: 3) argues that “every time the Census Bureau requests information from a household for the decennial census or a demographic survey, it is involved in a complicated interaction regarding privacy concerns and confidentiality beliefs.” Knowing that their work is no longer illegal, and that there was until recently a strong culture of privacy and de-identification within the ABS, should, in theory, have emboldened sex workers to be ‘out’ about their work, if not in broader society, at least in the Census. Moreover, continuing processes of legislative review, such as the New South Wales Legislative Assembly Select Committee on the Regulation of Brothels, forcing sex workers to continually fight for their right to work, are not likely to inspire security in their future right to work unmolested by State interference. Nor is there any guarantee that if the State did re-criminalise sex work, past Census data wouldn’t be used as incriminating evidence. However, increased enumeration and visibility for sex workers in the Census could assist in their political representation, demonstrating that there are 20,000 votes to be won or lost, 20,000 real lives that matter. This is unlikely to occur
unless concerns around Census privacy and confidentiality, and more importantly, the root causes such as stigma are addressed.

Throughout this thesis, the national imaginary has been shown to exclude sex workers. In the previous chapter, this exclusion was extended through the Census to all other distance labourers that are not miners. Unlike distance labourers, sex workers have a strong political presence and labour identity, despite, or perhaps in defiance of their media marginalisation (Chapter 4). With the “unmistakable power” given to numbers and statistics though (Rose 1991: 673), sex worker invisibility in the Census harms their case for legitimacy since the Census is “part and parcel of the legitimating narratives of the national state” (Kertzer and Arel 2002: 3). Although stigma seems likely to be involved in causing the low Census numbers, the relationship will likely remain unclear without further qualitative research. Currently, the Census continues to marginalise sex workers through their undercount, and render them invisible in the national imaginary. There is however the future potential for sex workers to appropriate this technology of power for themselves, and use it to unsettle the way it positions them. In so doing, they may add even greater depth and nuance to their work.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis explored the representation/construction of the labour identities of miners and sex workers in Australia. It proposed that these two industries have been coterminous throughout history, yet rarely have they been theorised together and given equal weight. Instead, they have been placed on an axis of marginalisation by technologies of power that have positioned them as privileged, marginal, or invisible. The stigma attached to sex work, and marginalisation experienced by sex workers, was a catalyst for this research. This thesis proposed that re-thinking the national imaginary as diverse and contested could reimagine the nation in more plural ways. To determine how those working in the coterminous mining and sex work industries could end up with such obvious and materially different understandings of their labour in the public imagination, the following research questions were asked:

- *How are the iconic industries of mining and sex work positioned in the national imaginary?* And;

- *How are these positionings refined through technologies of power in ways that amplify or unsettle social privilege and marginalisation?*

produce and maintain privilege and marginalisation in the national imaginary. The three technologies of governmentality and state power ultimately chosen to assess the position of the iconic industries of mining and sex work were historical industrial relations legislation, contemporary news media, and the Census. Through these technologies of power, mining has been historically positioned as heroic and essential in the national imaginary (albeit at times subject to anxieties), and social privilege followed. This came at the cost of other no less important industries, including sex work, and other non-mining distance labour, which have been rendered less visible by this dominant imaginary. It has not been the intention of this thesis to create a hierarchy of importance for various industries by elevating sex work or other non-mining distance labour above mining. Instead, the aim has been to highlight the disparity in pre-existing understandings of the value of labour in Australia. Rather than focusing on the heroic mining industry, or its inflated contribution to the national economy, this thesis has presented a case for a more inclusive imagining of prosaic Australian industries and workers.

This research has exposed some of the taken for granted representations that allow social marginalisation to occur within the national imaginary. Like other inconvenient truths, such as the fiction of *Terra Nullius*, the denial of the contribution of sex workers in Australian labour history is built into the very fabric of ‘Australianness’. Sex work occupies a peculiar position, in that it is iconic, known colloquially as ‘the world’s oldest profession’, but not worthy of celebration for its long history in the nation and the size of its labour force. This can be in no small part be attributed to the State failing to enumerate sex workers and recognise the size of the labour force, since the Census has only 369 recorded persons who engage in this labour (Chapter 6), and the particular moral ideologies of the nation. The absence of sex workers from the national imaginary, combined with the stigma attached to their work refined through the technologies of
power, had the predictable effect of amplifying their social marginalisation. Mining, on the other hand, apart from the earliest days of the Victorian goldrush, has been positioned as labour that is both crucial to the national economy, but also symbolically important in the national imaginary through the heroic mining figure. This positioning has endured to the present day.

Through this investigation, we learned how the legacy of the British Empire and the dominant moral code of the Victorian-era began a chain of events that polarised the positions of these two forms of labour, which, as I argued in Chapter 2, should be understood as both coextensive and co-located. Historical legislative practices enacted by a dominant middle-class in a time of nation-building were instructive for understanding how the two industries came to be initially separated. Through such a lens, the national imaginary was shown to be one that operated to exclude labour that was neither important in the project of nation building, nor explicitly masculine and heteronormative. Since that time, discursive effects have maintained this fiction of mining and sex work as separate. By illuminating these discursive effects, the fragility of the imaginaries of both mining and sex work have been uncovered. Yet through the on-going iteration of the technologies of power explored in this thesis, representations that were set in motion through legislative mechanisms prior to Federation have shown remarkable durability. The two iconic industries were differently mythologised, and for the mining industry, this mythology has carried into Australia’s present ‘Quarry Vision’ (Pearse 2009). Mining continues to be understood as crucial to Australia’s success as a nation, perpetuated by a strong and unified mining lobby with deep pockets and political connections. The mining industry has become almost the ‘banal’ icon of nationalism in recent years (Billig 1995), appearing ubiquitously in discussions of the economy, public health, productivity,
politics, and quality of life, and simultaneously arousing passions around environmental concerns and land sovereignty.

Miners were nevertheless at times sources of anxiety, and were thus portrayed ambiguously in the news media. Chapter 3 demonstrated a sustained atmosphere of public anxiety directed at both the mining industry and FIFO mining labourers, which contradicted the dominant understanding of mining in the national imaginary. Furthermore, these narratives ran contrary to other on-going discursive elements crediting the economic necessity of mining (Measham et al. 2013). Chapter 3 supports the claim by Knox (2013: 77) that anxiety over mining booms has less to do with worker mobility, and is more concerned with “what mining booms do to society itself.” Sex work on the other hand, as an industry, was shaped by discourses of Victorian-era morality that persist into the present day. These discourses have produced a “highly stigmatised” sex working labourer, still criminalised in various jurisdictions, and ever a source of anxiety for certain sections of the public who harbour misgivings about the labour, and spread misinformation about these workers. Because the news media is an agent of the public imagination, and a dynamic and influential technology of power, this mechanism of representation for the sex industry had very particular discursive affects that contribute to sex worker marginalisation. These effects included setting the boundaries of what can be said about these ‘outsiders’, how they can be discussed, and how they should be positioned in society. Feminism is divided ideologically on sex work along the lines of liberal and intersectional feminists who broadly support sex work, and those feminists who vehemently oppose sex work. It is clear that the latter perspective, combined with a hangover of the ‘moral panic’ and moral outrage from the Victorian-era, was the dominant variant gaining prominence in the contemporary media. Such representations, as described by Hallgrímsdóttir (2008: 120), “have the potential to shape both day-to-day
interactions sex workers have with the public and their clients as well as the legal and policy environments that shape their lives.”

The privilege experienced by miners means that the anxieties generated around their labour through the technology of the news media have appeared to do little to tarnish their present image in the national imaginary. Whether this leads to a transformation of mining in the national imaginary over a longer period remains to be seen, but this thesis provides a compelling vision of an alternative imaginary for mining that is neither heroic nor privileged. The marginal position long experienced by sex workers has shifted in recent years as they have advocated for their work to be recognised alongside other labour (Hubbard 1999: 230, Grant 2014). However, there was limited evidence in this thesis that the technologies of news media and the Census positioned a less marginal sex worker. Unfortunately for sex work, the lack of positive representation is likely to maintain current levels of stigma in the long term. This research in Chapters 3 and 4 thus sought to contribute to an understanding of a technology of power and its reproduction of particular public identities, and the contestation and uncertainty around those identities.

Chapters 5 and 6 turned to another powerful technology, the Census, to ascertain whether the discursive environment that had positioned these two industries very differently in the national imaginary was reproduced in the scientific population management technologies of the State. Although the anxieties projected in the news media may be unsettling the national imaginary and public perception of the mining industry and mining labour, there is still “the centrality of the extractive industries in Australia’s economic narrative” (Measham et al. 2013: 190). The Mining Enumeration Strategy 2011, employed by the ABS to aid data collection for underrepresented FIFO miners in the Census, reflects this centrality. By focussing solely on mining distance labour, commonly referred to as FIFO, and its effect on families (Pini and Mayes 2012) and productivity (Productivity
Commission 2014), a much larger and highly diverse population of non-mining distance labourers remains visible only through sophisticated analytical methods. The lack of visibility of distance labourers in the Census is important, because it in turn feeds back into the idea that the resource sector is the only employer of distance labourers. As Rose (1991: 673) states: “The exercise of politics depends upon numbers; acts of social quantification are politicised; our images of political life are shaped by the realities that statistics appear to disclose.” Nowhere is this focus more evident than the introduction to the Parliamentary Cancer of the Bush report, which states that: “Nonetheless, FIFO/DIDO work is predominately associated with the resources industry” (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia 2013: 1). While it is true that the term FIFO is predominately associated with mining, Chapter 5 demonstrated through critical use of Census statistics that labour mobility is practiced by almost all parts of the labour spectrum, and some parts with a greater proportion than mining. The absence of “viable and inclusive categories for … self-identification” (Pavlovskaya and Bier 2012: 485), creates an environment designed to obscure non-mining distance labour, even as the heroic mining distance labourer is problematised. This is not unlike the situation experienced by sex workers.

Sex workers, like distance labourers, are an invisible population in the Census. This invisibility comes by way of a grossly inaccurate undercount. Unlike mining, no special enumeration strategies have been attempted. It could be argued that it is not necessarily the role of the ABS to chase down underrepresented groups in the Census. Moreover, those groups may have good reasons to want to be underrepresented, as Chapter 6 articulated. Considering though, the on-going processes of public debate and legislative review underway in many Australian states, witnessed in the news media in Chapter 4, there is a clear need for accurate Census data for evidence-based policy making. However,
if “The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has a statutory duty to provide reliable information” (ABS 2010b), and “For more than 105-years, the Census has been the centre of the Australian story” (Kalisch 2016), then the absence of sex workers in the Census has put them at the periphery of the Australian story, and the ABS has failed to fulfil its statutory duty. The disparity between how the ABS approaches the two undercounts is indicative of the different values placed on these different industries by the State. The State and the ABS, through the Census as a technology of governmentality, is complicit in reproducing on-going positions of privilege and marginalisation. By highlighting such inconsistencies, this research seeks to contribute to critical literatures on the Census as not just a benign form of counting, but as a tool that can be wielded for particular aims (Brown and Knopp 2006, Pavlovskaya and Bier 2012). Importantly, the Census reiterates pre-existing social positions that have been embedded in the national imaginary and applied by the State, and these are further used in processes of governmentality to amplify privilege and marginalisation.

The results in this thesis have demonstrated that a dominant masculine, heteronormative imaginary, deeply shaped by inherited Christian moral ideologies of family, community, ‘respectable’ work, and heterosexuality, is celebrated in the national imaginary. This arrangement immediately marginalises a large portion of the population, including sexualities that do not conform to heteronormativity, and women (Hubbard 2008). Grimshaw et al. (1994: 2) argue that “National mythologies have always been gendered”, and this is precisely the case when looking at the divergent positions of mining and sex work. The cumulative effect of a masculine heteronormative national imaginary is that it positions some populations as ‘insiders’ and some as ‘outsiders’, where ultimately the experience of citizenship is positively or negatively experienced by those populations (Staeheli and Cope 1994, Bell 1995, Hubbard 2001). This is the exact opposite imaginary
required for a diverse and plural nation. In recognising sex work as equal to mining, and important amongst the spectrum of industries and labour types performed in Australia, an opportunity exists to recognise the often under-appreciated contributions of women, those who identify as queer, and migrant (often non-white) workers. A critical investigation of mining and sex work has therefore sought to destabilise “the foundations upon which identity and sexuality are constructed” in the national imaginary (Phillips 2009: 13).

The national imaginary has thus formed entrenched ‘moral landscapes’ – the moralities that “dominate some spaces and places … [and] their contradictions and dialectics” (Knopp 2007: 52) – and mining and sex work have been positioned within this moral landscape in ways that reinforce and refine privilege and marginalisation. This is ultimately political, for particularly in the case of sex work, representations are “not simply a process of description but a productive process that helps shape the cultural landscape” (Zatz 1997: 294).

There is potential, however, for the technologies of power analysed in this thesis to be a site of resistance, because the national imaginary is “an always-yet-to-be-finalised structure” (Hage 1996: 478). Appropriating these technologies in ways that unsettle the paradigm of privilege and marginalisation, such as through sex worker commentary in the news media, and increased visibility in the Census (which, as discussed for sex workers, is unlikely to happen due to associated risks), ultimately affect the constitution of the national imaginary. However, such progress here is likely to be slow.

In conclusion, I have argued that the iconic industries of sex work and mining are reproduced unevenly in the national imaginary of Australia. The data sources and results in this thesis have shown that an axis of marginalisation infuses the national imaginary through intersecting moral, economic and institutional processes and discourses. An
understanding of the national imaginary through these points of intersection shows that the narratives of our ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1991) are not haphazard remembrances, but very specific mechanisms of identity production. The unsettling of certain representations in the national imaginary, through the production of anxieties, or the political subjectivities of various marginalised groups, may in turn produce new identities. The national imaginary is therefore a powerful agent in reproducing social marginalisation, one which continues to venerate a heteromasculine icon at the expense of plurality and diversity.

Social marginalisation along moral economic lines is unobtrusively written into the national imaginary. This process began in the Victorian-era, with discriminatory legislation enacted by the colonies, and persists today because of this early discursive separation. It is unclear from this analysis whether the remedy for this marginalisation is recognition and visibility in the national imaginary, or whether sex work would be better served by a broader public understanding of sex worker labour identities as prosaic. The following interpretation can be taken as a provocation. Parallels may be drawn between contemporary understandings of sex workers, and the transformation of how the LGBTIQ community has come to be understood in recent decades. Sex workers are still currently disengaged from the “heteronormative matrix”, and have thus failed to “express their loyalty to the nation” (Peake 2013: 99). On the other hand, spectacular and iconic representations of LGBTIQ lives, such as the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, and Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, alongside more prosaic cultural renderings accompanying the same-sex marriage debate in the media, have increased visibility, recognition and acceptance for LGBTIQ peoples in the Australian national imaginary. This has led to decreased stigma, and greater sexual citizenship in the nation (Rankin 2000, Hubbard 2001, Baird 2006). I would thus argue that both greater visibility for sex work in the
national imaginary, and more nuanced understandings of sex worker labour identities, including the prosaic nature of the labour, would be helpful to the reduction of stigma and marginalisation. This phenomenon deserves further attention if we as a nation are serious about social justice.

7.1 Contributions to the Sex Work and Distance Labour Literatures

Despite their historical connection, there is little scholarly work that explicitly connects the mining and sex work industries, or gives sex work equal attention to other connected industries (notable exceptions include Davidson 1984, Laite 2009, Pini et al. 2013, Mayes et al. 2015). This research contributes to academic work by providing further context for the two industries, highlighting their importance to each other, and using them as a means of interrogating the national imaginary. Directions for further research can be found in Appendix D.

This research was undertaken with a position of sex worker advocacy, and the research question was informed by a broader goal of attempting to reduce sex worker stigma and marginalisation. This thesis has contributed to the literature on Participatory/Action Research (PAR). Through a detailed Methods chapter, which outlines the failed aspects of the PAR component of this research (see Appendix B) and reflects on the challenges PAR presents (See Appendix C), this thesis has contributed to the ongoing discussion on PAR praxis (Kitchin and Hubbard 1999, Wahab 2003, Pain and Kindon 2007, Kindon et al. 2008, Klocker 2015). It has shown that PAR is a necessary part of sex work research for ‘outsiders’. More to the point, for researchers committed to social justice, it is in fact necessary to research with sex workers (Jeffreys 2009b), despite the challenges that this commitment entails. An activist position such as this is in keeping with critical geography
and Participatory/Action Research (PAR) (Kitchin and Hubbard 1999, Pain 2004), where this project began (see Preface). Critical to bringing these ideas into focus was research materialising from the sex worker rights movement (Jeffreys 2009b, Fawkes 2014, Renshaw et al. 2015 and other content such as TitsandSass.com, #FacesofProstitution).

Alongside interactions with my own community, literature emanating from sex workers (scholarly or otherwise) and allies has shaped my perception that selling sex is a prosaic form of labour, no different in most ways to any other form of labour, including mining. The polarity of the debate around sex work, and the deeply entrenched positions of those who support or denounce this labour, means that I am obligated to reflect on my position in the context of this research. Also important is how this research has articulated the benefits of perseverance. Although participatory research may not always achieve the goals it sets out to achieve (Klocker 2015), the collaborative relationship built during the research tenure of this thesis has proven to be both a source of legitimacy, and a source of personal satisfaction for the research. Scarlet Alliance were consulted very early in the research, and provided assistance and direction at multiple junctures, contributed to research design, and oversaw the final publication of this thesis to ensure that this research remained committed to the reduction of stigma and marginalisation of sex workers. This research has contributed to the wider literature on the effects of stigma on the sex worker population (Hallgrimsdottir et al. 2006, van der Meulen 2012, Grant 2014, Cunningham 2016), most obviously through its identification of how stigma may affect sex worker invisibility within the Census. Seen in the context of this literature, the extreme undercount of sex workers should not be entirely unexpected. The low numbers in the Census indicate that social stigma overrides both New South Wales legislation regarded by sex workers as the gold standard of industrial labour laws, and the confidentiality of personal data in the Census and Statistics Act 1905 (Cwlth).
This research has also identified clear bias within the news media. Not exceptional in and of itself, it does demonstrate that despite the hard work sex workers and their allies have put in to redefine their representation from moral outcast to everyday labourer (Brewis and Linstead 2000, Jeffreys 2009b, Crofts et al. 2012, van der Meulen 2012, Grant 2014), there remains a gap between institutional depictions of sex work, public reception to sex work, and the realities of sex worker lives. The research further contributed to the literature that seeks to know how heteronormativity is maintained and reinforced through cultural institutions (Butler 1990, Bell et al. 1994, Hubbard 2000, Gorman-Murray 2007, Puar 2013, Hubbard and Wilkinson 2015). Furthermore, by providing evidence of sex worker voices from the media within an academic thesis (acknowledging all the troubling dimensions of how certain knowledges are privileged over others), sex workers may find it useful in contradicting anti-sex work narratives about their exploitation. This may be useful to the sex worker community as evidence for lobbying for use of the media for better representation, and as a snapshot of both general opinion and also the specific things being said by and about sex workers in the media at this particular point in time (a point that has been intimated to me by a Scarlet Alliance member). This thesis has therefore, I hope, enriched the literature on the means and effects of sex worker marginalisation.

Distance labour is an as-yet-undertheorized part of the labour market, not just by geographers, but all scholars. Hoath and McKenzie (2013) and Storey (2010) are the leading geographers studying the conditions of FIFO work in Australia, but as I have argued in published work produced as part of this thesis (Skilton 2015), they are primarily focussed on the resource sector. Therefore, this research has made a very clear contribution to the understanding of hyper-mobile labour practices in Australia by bringing into view diverse forms of distance labour, including sex work. In the process
of rendering this population visible, this research has contributed another example of literature that mobilises the Census to expose invisibilities (Brown and Knopp 2007, Pavlovskaya and Bier 2012). By targeting a labour practice that is very much part of the current zeitgeist of government (Productivity Commission 2014), it has potential to connect the literature of Foucauldian governmentality theory, to concrete practices of governance. Furthermore, this research may have value for governments to address what has until now been a systemic contraction of the scope of understanding distance labour practices in Australia.

The most iconic form of distance labour – mining – has arguably escaped sustained scrutiny in the geopolitical literature on nationhood. The work of Blainey (1993), Pearse (2009), Knox (2013) and Eklund (2015) has done much to elevate the status of mining as a defining part of Australia’s history and future. But as Jensen (2014: 118) points out, little has been done to “assess mining’s actual long-term influence on the national imaginary.” This thesis has described the systemic ways that technologies of power have produced hierarchies of status in the national imaginary for different labour types. Much of this separation has been performed through raising or limiting visibility of certain labour types, or legitimising some industries over others. But some technologies of power have also concerned themselves with respectability, and the propagation of anxiety.

Anxiety around sex work has always centred on the amoral and corrupting influence of sex work. In the potential for public displays of sexuality (ignoring the materiality of typically discrete and unnoticed sex work in reality), communities find in sex workers an outlet for disciplinary power, and the negotiation of community ‘values’ (Legg 2005). Sex workers in rural spaces are thus perceived to embody a lack of moral discipline being exerted by the community. This stood to reason in the Victorian-era, and continues to this day, as seen in the Drovers Rest Incident. Miners on the other hand embody a different
kind of anxiety. Although there is a dimension of amorality, found in concerns around a
dangerous and antisocial hypermasculinity lurking at the edges of rural communities,
threatening women and abusing alcohol and drugs, there is also a strong vein of anxiety
directed at miners who are perceived to be exploiting rural communities. Though this is
largely out of their control, and is directed by the mining companies, FIFO miners are the
material and visible personification of a ‘fly over’ mentality (Storey 2001). FIFO miners
therefore are yet another reminder that rural communities are insignificant in the face of
economic development originating in the capital cities. This thesis concludes that set
against the historical heroic mining figure who opened the rural frontier and is now the
‘foundation of the Australian economy’, for a new generation of Australians, the iconic
miner of the national imaginary may not be one of heroism. Instead, continued attention
to the anxieties caused by miners may cause a shift in how mining is understood in the
national imaginary. Through distance labour, and specifically mining as its most iconic
form, this thesis has contributed to the body of literature that seeks to understand
Australia’s national imaginary through labour categories and identities.
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Research ethics have come under increasing scrutiny in the last twenty years. Increased sensitivities around researching marginalised groups in society have prompted new methods and philosophies for research, such as Participatory/Action Research (PAR), that in turn have seen the deployment of new research ethics. Coextensive with this turn towards more inclusive research methods has been an increase in the authority and jurisdiction of human research ethics committees (HRECs). HRECs are situated within the university. These are typically populated by academics and laypeople who decide whether research projects constitute good ethical practice, and can request alterations or reject applications, forcing researchers to rethink their projects. HRECs in Australia are governed by the guidelines in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (herein the National Statement), developed jointly by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the Australian Research Council (ARC), and the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee (AVCC). The National Statement sets the statutory obligations for any research with human participants in Australia, and invites an ethical “ethos that should permeate the way those engaged in human research approach all that they do in their research” (NHMRC et al. 2015: 3). Risk-averse institutions have been producing institutionalised ethics protocols, administered by the HRECs, that do not necessarily adhere to the National Statement, and instead serve the interests of the institution rather than researchers or their research participants (Knight et al. 2004).
Citing confusing approval or rejections decisions, lack of transparency within the ethics approval process, and the inquisition of academic integrity, academics across a broad range of disciplines have been problematising the “ethics creep” of HRECs (Haggerty 2004: 391). Haggerty (2004: 393-394) describes ‘ethics creep’ as:

- a move away from a system based on an assumption of professional competence and responsibility to one based on institutionalized distrust … [and] involves a dual process whereby the regulatory structure of the ethics bureaucracy is expanding outward, colonizing new groups, practices, and institutions, while at the same time intensifying the regulation of practices deemed to fall within its official ambit.

The fervour of critiques of HRECs has escalated over the past decade (Halse and Honey 2007, Hammersley 2009, Richards 2009, Langlois 2011, McCormack et al. 2012). The increasing bureaucratisation of universally applied risk-averse research ethics, and the mistrust shown researchers by their own university HRECs, has the damaging potential of limiting ethical engagement with participants through one-off ethics compliance practices that provide “no guarantees that researchers will be ethical once they are in the field” (Hemmings 2006: 16). It is, at its roots, about resisting a “politics of containment”, one which asserts “the right way of the institution to determine the ‘correct’ way that research should be played out” (Tauri 2014: 135).

Research in the social sciences is conducted in complex ways, particularly when research approaches and topics embrace messiness, destabilisation, transgression, embodied norms, sensuous bodies, and alternative (non-western) ethics. Highly competent researchers may be forced to utilise methods for which there are no established protocols, no formal paint-by-numbers guidelines, and no predictable boxes to tick. Expectations by HRECs currently require researchers to submit plans for their research from start to finish, before it has even begun, for assessment and approval. In their critique of this process, Halse and Honey (2007: 344-345) state:
what is taken to be ethical research within institutions will be reduced to no more
than a performance by researchers of a suite of textual competencies deemed
necessary and desirable within the discourse’s governing conditions: the ability to fill
out the forms in the approved way, to deploy “ethics-speak” as required, and to couch
a research project in the language of scientific objectivity that resonates with many
ethics review committees.

Researchers are thus required to learn, not how to be ethical, creative and inspired
researchers, but how to master ethics processes and manipulate bureaucracy so as not to
attract unnecessary attention that may delay or prevent the start of their fieldwork.

Qualitative research is often open-ended, with no clearly defined ‘end’ or pre-determined
‘destination’. As McCormack et al. (2012: 33) state: “Qualitative designs are emergent
in nature and not fixed from the outset; the design evolves in response to the emergence
of new, and often unforeseeable, discoveries.” When HRECs require an outline of
“anticipated future research activity”, they arguably demonstrate a lack of appreciation of
the qualitative research process (McAreavey and Muir 2011: 396). Informed consent must
instead remain fluid and renegotiated throughout the project (McCormack et al. 2012).
Documentation, such as ‘consent forms’, however fail to “take into account the
importance of re-establishing consent with participants on a regular basis”, and instead
assume “ongoing consent due to a one-off signature” (McAreavey and Muir 2011: 398).
Practically speaking, ‘informed consent’ is a fiction, completely realised at the inception
of fieldwork, and then effectively forgotten, ignored or discarded immediately thereafter.
Indigenous ethics add another layer of complexity. Requiring an individual signature of
consent may be problematic when verbal agreements and designated individuals that
consent on the behalf of a collective may be more appropriate depending on the context
(Tauri 2014).
Researchers that comply with the ethics of their chosen research community may be forced to defend their ethical praxis to a HREC of diverse composition, who are ultimately attempting to apply the universalising and risk-averse standards of the institution. This has the effect of creating “tension between ethical regulation and ownership and … between ethical reflection and practice” (McAreavey and Muir 2011: 396). This process may ultimately serve as an agent of negation for academic freedom. Academic freedom can be infringed upon in multiple ways. Ideally, the HREC evaluates research ethics applications “based on the quality of their ideas” (Tierney and Corwin 2007: 389). Nevertheless, research may instead be evaluated by peers who are constrained by established institutional ethical frameworks produced by “administrators or legislators for instrumental or ideological reasons” (Tierney and Corwin 2007: 389). Some academic journals now require ethics approval letters to be attached to submitted manuscripts before being considered for review (Elsevier 2017). In this case, without HREC approval, research cannot be published, and knowledge production grinds to a halt. The unintended consequence of HREC withholding approval is that it “explicitly subordinates researchers to the authority of research committees” (Halse and Honey 2005: 2154). Other subtler encroachments on academic freedom occur when multiple reviews (and their accompanying paperwork) increase already heavy workloads, slowing timeframes and affecting productivity.

Qualitative researchers are best placed to protect the rights and wellbeing of their participants and collaborators in the context of an unfolding research project, reflexively responding to events and situations as they occur in real time. What happens in this process if the “discomfort with the ways that ethics processes can position researchers as other than ethical” (Halse and Honey 2005: 2156) causes the researchers to doubt the ethics of their project, despite a deeper understanding of the intricacies of ethical
engagement in their research? Or worse, second guess their participants as agentic and consenting individuals? Halse and Honey (2007: 348) adopt the position that:

Disciplining and control [by HREC] works to legitimate and perpetuate the continued moral regulation of research ethics and the identity of the institutional order as the champion of the defenceless research subject against the barbarian researcher.

Halse and Honey are not suggesting that HRECs have never been necessary, and there is a historic precedent to suggest that they are vital in the medical sciences (Flicker et al. 2007). What this system does, however, is punish all the researchers that are dedicated to being the best ethical researchers they can be, for the negligence of the very few actual “barbarian” researchers who are lazy, unengaged, or in a worst-case scenario, deliberately unethical (Halse and Honey 2007: 348).

Tierney and Blumberg Corwin (2007) argue that some degree of risk is always implicit in a human research project. This risk lies on a continuum between ‘no risk’ “because no research is done” and an “‘anything goes’ mentality where individuals could be routinely harmed without any protections whatsoever” (Tierney and Blumberg Corwin 2007: 393). Wherever the risk lies on the continuum, how it is defined is “an interpretative act” (Tierney and Blumberg Corwin 2007: 393 emphasis added). Interpretation is the crux here: a lack of interpersonal, constructive dialogue between the researcher and the HREC leaves too much open to interpretation. In complex research projects where there is an interpretive process already going on between multiple actors, as in the case of PAR, errors in interpretation can rise exponentially, potentially leading a HREC to consider research that has been validated by a participant group to be unethical, or vice versa. The following ethics process explores some of the discrepancies between the rules and regulations of HREC research ethics expectations, and the realities of ethical research
praxis when “anticipated future research activity” cannot be known (McAreavey and Muir 2011: 396).

My research exploring privilege and marginality in certain industries in Australia’s national imaginary focused on mining and sex work. Sex workers in recent times have been advocating for their right to influence “ethics approval, research planning, question formulation, methodology development, data collection, analysis and promotion” (Jeffreys 2009: 7), and have actively refuted their status as the “defenseless research subject” (Halse and Honey 2007: 348). Thus, from the outset of the research, Scarlet Alliance, the peak national sex worker advocacy group in Australia, were consulted. PAR thrives upon good relationships (eds Kindon et al. 2008). Without them, research is impossible. HRECs have the potential to test these relationships through institutional ethics demands.

The ethical commitment to work with Scarlet Alliance was based on the researcher’s own moral compass, direct advice from sex workers, and best practice research from a sex worker PAR standpoint (eds Showden & Majic, 2014; van der Meulen, 2011). At the very least, Scarlet Alliance’s participation in the project was critical for researching sex work and contributing to their rights agenda, and it was hoped that there would be some measure of collaboration and access to their membership base for research participants. As would be expected for an industry that is constantly forced to defend its right to work, and which has been repeatedly victimised and problematised by much of the academy (see various works by Carole Pateman or Sheila Jeffreys), it took time to develop trust between myself and Scarlet Alliance. As this relationship was developing, and trust being negotiated, the issue of financial compensation (or appropriate lack thereof) arose as a hurdle to full partnership status. The university HREC took no issue with the ethics of researching with and alongside sex workers, something that other researchers have found
problematic (Sanders 2006). The difficulty lay with the lack of definition in the emerging and tentative role and contribution of Scarlet Alliance. This lack of clearly defined relationship made it difficult to explain at any given stage of the ethics application process where exactly I stood with respect to Scarlet Alliance, and their exact contribution to the research.

The initial review came back with the welcome requirement of alterations that would address minor ethical concerns around “respect, research merit and integrity, justice, and beneficence” – the cornerstones of ethical research as declared in the National Statement (NHMRC et al. 2015: 9). These were summarily amended, but nevertheless, three further lengthy reviews were completed, delaying research. Paperwork requirements took on a life of their own, and became a blockage in the process of gaining approval from the HREC.

The second HREC review came with the requirement: “Formal approval to participate in the research is still required from Scarlet Alliance. This approval should clearly state the nature of the Alliance’s participation in, and contribution to, the research” (Clapham 2014a, pers. comm., 23rd May). As the discussion above of the emergent relationship should make clear, there was no formal approval, nor was there a clear understanding of what Scarlet Alliance’s contribution to the relationship would be. Conscious of the fact that Scarlet Alliance are busy, understaffed and underfunded, but wanting to move forward with fieldwork without imperilling an emergent partnership, an email was sent requesting a formal letter outlining our relationship to give to the HREC. Concurrently, a meeting was arranged with a HREC committee member to discuss the contents of a formal statement from Scarlet Alliance in an effort to ensure that the next review would be the final one. During this meeting, I was assured that any pre-existing email outlining
Scarlet Alliance participation was formal enough, provided a cover letter was included outlining the main points.

The email from Scarlet Alliance I attached to the review stated that they “appreciated [my] efforts in consulting with [them] and following up in regards to [my] methodology and project aims” (Policy Officer 2014, pers. comm., 29th May). They also declared that: “we can agree to review and provide feedback on the writing of the sex work component of the research” and “can provide background on your process and forward the call out on to our members” (Policy Officer 2014, pers. comm., 29th May). These statements illustrate the open-ended nature of an on-going research relationship, and Scarlet Alliance’s willingness to participate in the research and allow me access to their membership, without explicitly “endors[ing] the project” to their members. Lack of ‘endorsement’ of the project was due to it not being a Scarlet Alliance initiative, and the lack of full collaboration (because of funding). I attached an accompanying cover letter prefacing these comments with the statement:

[Scarlet Alliance] are happy with how the research process has proceeded so far and are willing to tell their members this if asked, but are unable to go so far as to tell them it would be a good idea to participate in this research project. (Skilton 2014, pers. comm., 30th May).

Approval was again denied, with the HREC misunderstanding the wording of the email. Specifically, they required “a revised protocol and any revised materials such as recruitment letters, Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms … in light of the Scarlet Alliance statement [in their email] that they ‘cannot endorse the project’ in its current state” (Clapham 2014b, pers. comm., 19th June). Thus, despite my meeting with the HREC member, where I comprehensively explained this relationship with Scarlet Alliance, I was forced to struggle with the “moral circularity of trying to be ethical”, while
being treated like a “barbarian researcher” by a HREC acting as the “champion of the defenceless research subject” (Halse and Honey 2007: 348). This situation is not only an example of “condescending research ethics” (Tauri 2014: 134), but also highlights the mismatch between fluid, real world partnerships, and arbitrary HREC requests for formal, one-off letters to satisfy risk-averse bureaucracies. Approval was finally granted after five months and four reviews.

The differences between working through the ethics process with respectively the university and Scarlet Alliance were striking. The relationship with Scarlet Alliance was transparent and obvious with clear and direct (if not timely) correspondence. The same details provided to the HREC were given to Scarlet Alliance, which they took to their Executive Committee for discussion. Following this, senior members of the organisation initiated a face-to-face conversation about their concerns about the project, including aspects of the methodology, interview questions and funding. Assurances were made by myself during the meeting that changes would be made to the research design to address said concerns. These changes were promptly incorporated and returned to Scarlet Alliance for further discussion/approval. The relationship continued to develop and change throughout the period of my PhD, with advice and input often conferred. The ethics of the shifting terrain of research requirements were constantly negotiated, and expectations managed. The HREC process, comparatively, was vague, obtuse and one-sided, and failed at utilising collective knowledge and experience to provide clear, useful feedback and potential solutions.

Bearing in mind that HRECs are governed by the National Statement, and that research must be “ethically reviewed and monitored in accordance with this National Statement”, it is worth then reflecting on how the HREC applied the National Statement in this case. Reiterating the statement by McCormack et al. (2012: 33) that “Qualitative designs are
emergent in nature and not fixed from the outset”, my participatory ethics application seemed to be largely misunderstood by the University of Wollongong HREC. The National Statement does not appear to have been consulted during the deliberations, which requires “at least two people with current research experience that is relevant to research proposals to be considered at the meetings they attend” (NHMRC et al. 2015: 72). Experienced researchers in qualitative and especially participatory research would have recognised that “by focusing on minutiae—which boxes are checked and minor changes in consent form language” (Wolf 2010: 81), the HREC had the potential to disrupt the ongoing process of relationship-building with a participatory organisation. Instead they fell into the trap of “box ticking” and “ethics speak” (Halse and Honey 2007: 345).

For the creation of an ethical “ethos that should permeate the way those engaged in human research approach all that they do in their research” as promoted by the National Statement (NHMRC et al. 2015: 3), an opportunity for dialogue must be opened between researchers, the HREC, and any participant groups that must be involved. The National Statement acknowledges, “Misunderstandings can often arise when only written communication is used” and even suggests that HRECs “should consider face-to-face meetings to resolve issues about research proposals that have not been resolved by written or telephone communication (NHMRC et al. 2015: 75). And yet even with a face-to-face meeting, the application still required more box-ticking, suggesting some contradictory and divergent opinions within the committee itself on what was either ethical, or more likely, what would reduce the risk to the university. Either way, none of this was communicated, unlike the open dialogue I had with Scarlet Alliance.

Some of the difficulty may have lain with the unfortunate use of language used by Scarlet Alliance when stating they could not “endorse the project” (Policy Officer 2014, pers.
comm., 29th May). This phrase clearly meant something different to Scarlet Alliance than it did to the HREC. But potential research partners, particularly ones that are understaffed and thus short on time, should not be expected to be proficient in couching the language of their correspondence in the risk-averse vernacular of the HREC. The fact that there was, in fact, clearly an on-going relationship with Scarlet Alliance, supported by their correspondence, indicated that the HREC was more interested in the amelioration of risk than it was about promoting an ‘ethos’ of ethical research. Furthermore, nowhere in the National Statement does it specify that formal paperwork detailing participant organisation involvement is required, something that was requested during my second review (NHMRC et al. 2015). Again, this indicated that the requirement was actually a more-than-necessary feature of the University of Wollongong HREC. Instead of being ruled by the requirements of the National Statement governing HRECs, HREC members are being forced to comply with risk-adverse institutional requirements. A more worrying alternative may be that HREC members are not versed in the requirements of the governing document, leading to personal interpretation.

One way to mitigate the disruptive and unnecessary (according to the National Statement) workload of excessive paperwork could be to issue a simple mandate for “ongoing attention to ethical concerns … [and] ethical reflexivity” (Cannella & Lincoln 2007: 327). Halse and Honey (2005: 2159) echo this sentiment in proposing that we think of ethics as:

a continual process of collaboration [that] would open up opportunities to dissolve the (mis)conception that ethics approval means ethical research; to erase the differential power relationships among researchers, ethics committees, and participants; and to interrupt the mechanisms that make researchers and research complicit in the “othering” of research participants.
Institutions could follow the novel strategy proposed by Langois (2011: 152), whereby researchers undergo regular standardised “research ethics training” that once completed, could ensure that researchers are released from the requirement of completing ethics applications for every new project. One of the key elements of this training would be to enshrine the need to be self-reflexive, ensuring that researchers are competent in locating and addressing ethical considerations as they arise for research participants and researchers alike. This could potentially mitigate inconsistency in ethics application decisions between institutions. Training would also ensure that researchers have the required competencies to navigate the unpredictability of qualitative research, and are able to reengage with participant consent and research needs as new situations emerge.

HRECs could also be more studiously attentive to simple things that are already suggested within the National Statement, such as “invit[ing] researcher/s … to be present for discussion of their proposed research”, and “encourage[ing] informal communication with researchers” (NHMRC et al. 2015: 75).

There is currently a review with public consultation underway for Sections 3 and 5 of the National Statement as part of their ‘rolling review’ (NHMRC, 2016). Section 5 deals with the role and responsibilities of HRECs, and this should be seen as an opportunity to evaluate and assess HREC review practices. However, institutions and their HRECs seem to be increasingly exercising their mandate within the National Statement to “establish their own processes for ethical review of research” (NHMRC et al. 2015: 68), ones that can be considered part of the general “ethics creep” moving throughout the academy (Haggerty 2004: 391). In an increasingly litigious society, institutions are instead adopting more risk-adverse policies – policies that may directly infringe on the ability to conduct participatory geographical research. We must continue to pressure universities that maintain a singular, universal means of assessing ethics, ask questions about how
HRECs can be made more accountable, and attempt to engage with them in ways that offer practical solutions.
APPENDIX B:
FAILED RESEARCH DESIGN METHODS

B.1: Prior to Discontinuing Participant Interviews

The following sections describe attempted ethnographic recruitment measures for the three distance labour industries I felt would best represent diversity within the distance labour workforce: health professionals, particularly locum nurses; miners; and sex workers. With the particular sensitivities of the project in mind, I decided it would be best to not be too specific in my recruitment materials such as advertisements and introductory participant letters about the groups being targeted. Instead, I opted for recruitment materials asking potential participants to partake in knowledge generation that could counter dominant narratives of FIFO life as harmful.

Like much qualitative research in the social sciences, we deemed semi-structured interviews to be those most effective way to gain access to peoples’ intimate lives. Investigating such an intimate subject requires great nuance to be effective. I decided based on existing literature that the home, as a defining part of the national imaginary, and both a site and source of intimacy, would be an ideal place to interview participants (Blunt 2005, Blunt and Dowling 2006, Waitt and Gorman-Murray 2011, Cowen and Story 2013, Wight 2014). This could allow them to reflect in situ about their practices of intimacy, and had been employed with some success by Morrison (2012a). Considering the subject matter and the location of the interviews, a ‘softly-softly’ approach seemed appropriate to avoid scaring away potential participants. I considered multiple strategies, but settled for a staged approach.
First was an introductory interview with the couple together to introduce myself, the project and the research aims. Joint interviewing is important for understanding the “negotiation and mediation [that] takes place between couples in the production of a single collaborative account for the interviewer … providing richer, more detailed and validated accounts than those generated by interviews with individuals” (Valentine 1999: 68). It would also be an opportunity for the participants to ask questions of me. Second, after a brief break, the couples would be interviewed separately for a much deeper articulation of their intimate lives. Separation between interviewees gives participants freedom and privacy to discuss their partners, and can provide opportunities to be honest about experiences that may occur outside a partner’s knowledge and consent (Valentine 1999). Third, both participants in the couple would be asked to complete an ‘intimacy diary’ through a media of their choosing for one month. Diaries have been used with success in qualitative work (Meth 2003, Harvey 2011, Morrison 2012b). According to (Morrison 2012b: 69), unlike interviews which are a one-off interaction, diaries:

- have the potential to offer a more considered and nuanced insight into the embodied and emotional complexities of everyday life … They allow for flexibility, variation and changeability in what is recorded and reflected upon, and provide the space for a multiplicity of emotions and lived experiences to be documented.

Importantly though, such diaries must be acknowledged as occurring “within the power dynamics of the research relationship” (Harvey 2011: 675). Finally, if the participants were willing, a final follow up interview for reflection on the research would be encouraged. Quality of data was valued over quantity, and therefore the number of couples required would not have needed to exceed 12 or thereabouts, although no one would have been turned away, and half as many may have been sufficient. Participation in all stages was not required, and this was made explicit in Participant Recruitment Letters. For health professionals and miners, these later stages would have financial
incentives attached due to their sensitive nature and time demands. For sex workers, there would instead be a financial reward for participation in all stages. (The reason for this discrepancy is described in more detail in the section on Sex Worker Recruitment).

B.1.1: Health Professional Recruitment

Early on in my review of FIFO mining literature I discovered papers suggesting health professionals were also involved, or at least beginning to be involved in FIFO work (Hart et al. 2013, Weeramanthri and Jancey 2013). I began investigating ways that I might recruit people in this industry. The most obvious place to start was a locum medical service. Locum work is when a person temporarily fulfils the duties of another, and in the medical context, occurs often when a hospital or medical service is short-staffed. It is also a practice that frequently occurs in rural Australia because of the difficulty in retaining qualified health professionals in rural and remote locations. I contacted the Nursing & Allied Health Rural Locum Scheme (NAHRLS) about the possibility of recruiting through them. They responded by saying:

we are not in a position to assist with your research at this time due to the fact that Charles Sturt University is currently undertaking an evaluation of the NAHRLS Programme which, like yours, will involve interviews, surveys, etc of our staff. I think by having two research organisations asking questions of staff may cause some confusion amongst our locums (Ellis 2014 pers. comm., 21st May).

This effectively eliminated this option, and I moved on to unions.

Unions proved to be a problematic option in the context of my research parameters, because while I was interested in interviewing people at home in the Greater Sydney area, workers were registered with the union in the state in which they predominantly worked. Therefore, I would likely need the support of multiple unions or the support of one state
union with a large client base living in Sydney. I decided to concentrate my efforts on Queensland, a state with a large geography and many rural communities. The Queensland Nurses Union was receptive to my research, and agreed to publish my call for participants in their online newsletter. I had one response in August 2014 from a nurse living in Queensland, who therefore fell outside of my research parameters, since I was interested in interviewing people in their homes (as a site of intimacy), and Queensland was too far to travel. At the same time, I was in contact with the Australian Student and Novice Nurse Association who were also receptive to my research. They agreed to publish my call for participants on their Facebook page at the end of August 2014. I received no responses.

Finally, I contacted the UOW Global Challenges program for advice. Global Challenges is an inter-disciplinary research centre attempting to “transform lives and regions” (University of Wollongong 2016). Their ‘Living Well, Longer’ Challenge Leader responded in August 2014. As someone with years of experience in nursing and holding numerous university and community appointments, they committed to using their personal contacts to attempt to find a means of recruitment. Despite their help, I did not find any other means of accessing FIFO health professionals, and decided to discontinue this line of recruitment.

B.1.2: Miner Recruitment

Recruitment of miners and their families was a slow process. My first point of contact was the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) Illawarra branch. They were unable to help but directed me to the editor of ‘Common Cause’, the journal of the CFMEU Mining and Energy Division. The editor informed me that because most of the FIFO miners were not actually part of the union and were effectively
subcontractors, that running an advertisement in the journal would be pointless. There was thus very little they could do to help. This effectively discontinued this avenue of recruitment.

My next step was contacting some of the online support websites for mining families. I emailed two such organisations: FIFO Families and Mining Family Matters. FIFO Families requested $550 for a post to their email list, one on their Facebook page and an advertisement in their newsletter. I declined their offer since this seemed too much for my limited budget, which also had to accommodate compensation for research participants. Mining Family Matters agreed to offer the same service free of charge. At the beginning of August, they posted my call for participants on their website (Anderson 2014). In October they also offered to pass out some flyers (Figure) at the New South Wales Mining and Engineer Expo in Newcastle. Although they gave out some 100 or so flyers, I received no responses.
Finally, I attempted to use my own personal connections to enlist the help of miners that were friends of friends. Contacts at university attempted to put me in touch with various people they knew. Also, one of my neighbours who, at the time engaged in FIFO work in the Bowen Basin, took some of the same flyers up to the worksite on a ‘swing’ and left them in the communal spaces of the mining accommodation camp. I was uncomfortable with the idea of recruiting my neighbours themselves since they are my housemate’s best friends, and asking them questions about their intimate lives seemed (literally) too close.
to home. I also attempted to use social media as an avenue for recruitment, with the UOW Global Challenges program putting up my call for recruitment on their Facebook page.

The only one of the above methods that yielded any type of result was through the Mining Family Matters mailing list. Two couples responded. I hoped at the time that with their help, the research might snowball, but this did not eventuate. Both couples implied that their friends in the industry all lived interstate. One of the couples lived in the south Illawarra. They were in their 30s and had two young children. The partner of the miner had a parent who worked at the university, and she said that she understood the importance of research and it was a motivating factor for getting involved. We completed the first part of the three stages of research: the introductory interview. It lasted almost an hour and was convivial. They did not seem opposed to the idea of participating in the second stage, and I left thanking them for their help, assuring them I would be in touch soon with a transcript and an invitation for the next stage of research. The second couple lived in the Newcastle region. Also in their 30s, they were in the process of building a house and were getting married the following week. The interview went very well, also lasting approximately an hour. Once again, I left feeling hopeful that they would participate in the second stage of the research. Both interviews took place in September 2014.

Over the next fortnight I transcribed the interviews. When completed, I sent a copy to each of the couples for their perusal, with an invitation to make a date for the next stage of research. Despite an initial response to my immediate ‘thank you’ email, I did not hear back again from the first couple despite following up with two subsequent emails attempting to re-engage with them. The second couple were interested in persevering with the research. However, the miner had lost his job a couple of days before the wedding and was unsure of the details of his new work arrangements that were likely to begin at
Barrow Island in Western Australia. Once work details were confirmed in November, we attempted to make another interview time when he would be back from his three-week swing. I didn’t hear from them for a while and missed his first return visits home. We eventually reconnected and again they seemed to want to meet up in February, but again failed to definitively confirm the date and February passed. When I eventually heard back from them in March they were moving into their newly built house, and so we tried to set a date for April, but he didn’t arrive back again until the day after I left the country for a conference. I confirmed that I would like to meet them when I got back, but by May 2015, without any other participants, I decided to discontinue fieldwork.

B.1.3: Sex Worker Recruitment

On the urging of friends, early in my candidacy I began consulting with Scarlet Alliance, the peak national representative body of sex workers in Australia. Initial contact was productive, and they were tacitly approving of the general idea, though they admitted it was not a priority research agenda for them. One of the central tenets of PAR is that projects are collaborative, where the ‘‘researched’’ are directly involved in some or all stages of research, from problem definition through to dissemination and action” (Pain and Kindon 2007: 2807). Instead I took my research proposal to Scarlet Alliance for approval, and thus sex workers were not involved in the “problem definition” stage. However, I consulted sex worker peer literature to help formulate my questions and methods, including a list created by sex workers during a multi-national sex worker thinktank held in Bali on how sex workers can best assess whether to become involved with ‘outsider’ researchers (Jeffreys 2009b). This meeting, combined with the literature on best-practice methods, was also responsible (alongside informal conversations) for
deciding to have “peer educators present who can halt the research interview”, and Furthermore, influenced my decision to allow Scarlet Alliance to “have total control over the outcomes of the research” (Jeffreys 2009b: 16). To gain Scarlet Alliance’s full support if not full partnership (full partnership would have required a level of funding that I was unable to procure on a PhD budget), I would need to pay sex workers for their involvement with a sum that reflected their expertise and time sacrifice. I suspect this was also a strategy employed by Scarlet Alliance to deter researchers that may be looking to exploit sex workers. A value for compensation for sex worker participants was eventually agreed upon. The value of sex worker compensation ended up being significantly more than that paid to workers from other industries involved in the research, who made no such demands. Non-sex workers do not have the same history of alterity and research exploitation, and therefore it is reasonable to expect different contributions for different workers. Furthermore, non-sex worker participation did not hinge on the cooperation of a central organisation, in this case, Scarlet Alliance.

Although the research was participatory, the lack of funding required to facilitate a full collaborative partnership prevented Scarlet Alliance from explicitly asking sex workers to participate. Instead, they could advertise my research and explain that they support the research in principle, but it would still be my research, and ‘consultation’ rather than full ‘collaboration’. After a meeting with Scarlet Alliance to discuss the research proposal, I incorporated their suggested revisions to project design and interview questions. The amendments were eventually approved by the organisation. Thus, I completed the first stage of what would be an ongoing relationship with Scarlet Alliance. Together with my supervisors, and with the support of Scarlet Alliance, I was happy with what had become a concise and highly nuanced research plan, refined and revised over the preceding months, and its potential to achieve the research aims. The whole methodology to that
point was compiled in an ethics application and sent to be reviewed by the UOW Human Research Ethics Committee, and was eventually approved. This process is described in more detail in Appendix A.

To better capture the lived experiences of sex worker working lives, I was determined to employ a sex worker peer research assistant (RA) to conduct the sex worker interviews (as suggested by Jeffreys 2009b). I employed someone I knew through my friendship networks, and paid them the award university rate for their qualifications. Together we refined some of the interview questions and the Participant Recruitment Letters. Recruitment material was sent out through the Scarlet Alliance mailing list in August 2014. Part of the reason for the length of time between my initial contact with Scarlet Alliance and recruitment through their mailing list was due to the developing relationship and their contribution and revisions to the methodology, but it was also affected by a delayed ethics approval, which did not occur until July of that year.

After the recruitment email, we waited for responses, but none were forthcoming. Some feedback I received from people I knew on the mailing list suggested they barely ever read those emails. My RA and I decided that perhaps it would be better to just try and recruit through work and friendship networks. We got to the point of having arranged an interview with a sex working couple, but they were forced to cancel at the last minute. After multiple attempts to reschedule, I again met with my RA to assess our options. This coincided with my failed efforts to re-engage with the mining couples. My RA suggested that although they could, with a high degree of certainty, attract other participants, but without the participation of miners or other groups in the research, the research would become just another research project about the intimate lives of sex workers. This would be in direct opposition to the destigmatising and normalising aims of the research (see Preface), whereby the relational aspect to other FIFO industries would demystify sex
work. It was after this meeting that, together with my supervisors, we decided to discontinue all fieldwork.

### B.2: After Discontinuing Participant Interviews

Although initiated later in my candidacy (July 2015) after recruitment for interviews had been discontinued, there were further plans to utilise the relationship with Scarlet Alliance to generate a smaller PAR side-project around Census data and sex worker invisibility, to which the organisation seemed receptive. Early analysis of the Census data showed that sex workers were grossly underrepresented as an industry (Chapter 6). Researching the conceptual framing for the ‘invisibilities’ chapter highlighted the power of census data to emancipate marginalised groups (Pavlovskaya and Bier 2012). This sparked an idea that would involve two components. The first would be a short (5 mins) online survey asking sex workers about their work disclosure in the Census and their reasons for their choice (see Box B.). The second would be a campaign with sex workers to raise their understanding of the Census and the possibilities that increased Census visibility could offer. I had hoped that this would lend greater authority to the chapter, and make use of the relationship between myself and Scarlet Alliance to generate some data that would be beneficial for both me and the organisation. This would be in the lead up to the 2016 Australian Census, with the possibility that the campaign may directly influence how sex workers report their work status in the Census. I pitched this proposal to Scarlet Alliance in a scheduled meeting to update and review the project to that point. As discussed in Appendix C, various events and national controversies surrounding the 2016 Census conspired against this eventuality.
Box B.1: A survey drafted for Scarlet Alliance members for the online ‘Survey Monkey’ platform to examine sex worker perceptions of the Census.

“The Census of Population and Housing is a descriptive count of everyone who is in Australia on one night, and of their dwellings … Census data are … used by individuals and organisations in the public and private sectors to make informed decisions on policy and planning issues that impact on the lives of all Australians” (ABS 2014c). Some have argued that the Census does not just reflect the population, “but constitutes social actors by defining majority and minority groups and their political possibilities” (Pavlovskaya and Bier 2012: 486). An absence of Census information “aids marginalization by making it easy to disregard or negatively stereotype group identity” (Pavlovskaya and Bier 2012). Conversely, “minorities – be they spatial, ethnic, economic or social” can use a Census (as the ‘official’ measure of social relationships) “to document and assert themselves” (Bell 2015: 2). For example, Census research has raised the visibility and political currency of same-sex couples (Brown and Knopp 2006) and Arab Americans (Pavlovskaya and Bier 2012), demonstrating the effectiveness of numbers in government lobbying. It is possible that similar political action could be undertaken by sex workers with an increased visibility in the Census. Considering that possibility, the following survey would help to gain an understanding of sex worker perceptions of the Australian Census.

**SEX WORKER SURVEY**

**DEMOGRAPHY**

Did you complete the 2011 Census: YES / NO

If NO, thank you for your participation. If YES:

Age:

Gender: Cis-Female / Cis-Male / Trans-Female / Trans-Male / Gender fluid / Other
Postcode OR State (check which is most appropriate)

QUALITATIVE

Is sex work your primary income? YES / NO

Do you declare sex work as your primary income on the Census? YES / NO

If YES, thank you for your participation. If NO:

- Do you trust your government?
  Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

- Do you believe sex work should be a visible and legitimate form of labour in society?
  Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

- Do you believe the Census is anonymous and confidential?
  Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe there will be repercussions for ‘outing’ yourself in the Census?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe the Census form adequately describes its purpose?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Would you be interested in learning more about how Census research has helped other minority/marginalised groups in the lead up to the 2016 Census? YES / NO
A critical geography thesis without the traditional qualitative interview component of research raises questions about the authenticity of conclusions. In this thesis experience, abandoning ethnographic fieldwork created a sort of existential anxiety about my whole research project. It felt, to be blunt, like a ‘failed’ project. There may be an argument to be made for the character-building aspect of failure, but I discovered that the various failures throughout this project were both demoralising and destabilising for an academic in training. I was often forced to remind myself that interviews may not be always an appropriate method, since they explain the subjective experience rather than the “representational effects and the effects of subcultural production” (Dahl 2010: 150). I am glad I saw the project to fruition, but I suspect I would not begin the same project again, unless the budget and time constraints of a PhD project were relieved (impossible), and without significant prior research experience that would help alleviate the crushing sense of defeat when things go awry. Failure originated from multiple research corners, leaving me to conclude that the following effects combined to derail the participant recruitment process:

a) over-thoroughness and complexity of methodological design;
b) degree of difficulty in recruiting my chosen case study participants; and,
c) stymied ethics applications.

While going into the field without a clear plan was obviously ill-advised, going in with a plan that was too pre-emptive proved to be problematic. Setting up so many qualifying
factors such as ‘in the home’, ‘couples together’, ‘couples apart’, ‘Greater Sydney Area’ (see Appendix A), I believe proved fatal. What originally seemed like thoroughness and attention to the literature around articulations of home and intimacy ultimately made recruitment impossible by narrowing the field of potential participants. Because research of this nature doesn’t yet exist, there was no way I or my supervisors, with whom I developed my methodology, could have known this was the case. In retrospect, it seems somewhat predictable. Perhaps we were trying to be altogether too clever and too original. Had I my time over again, I would utilise the tried-and-true method of sitting in the airport, or the pub of a remote mining community, and spend time there attempting to recruit people. This latter option was actually discussed very early on in my candidacy, and I had a shortlist of potential places drawn up. Budget constraints in the end discontinued this line of thought, and instead, perhaps unwisely, I opted to try and focus on recruiting people in the Greater Sydney area whom I could easily visit in their homes. However, although this may have been cheaper and easier, there is no ‘easier’ if there is no recruitment at all. I didn’t have a realistic contingency plan; an oversight that should have been incorporated into the project design from an earlier stage.

My initial plan to include health industry workers who undertake distance labour was based on limited evidence that the health industry was, in fact, engaging in this work practice (Hart et al. 2013, Weeramanthri and Jancey 2013). Whether my means of recruitment was unsuitable, or simply that the pool of health industry distance labourers was too modest cannot be known for sure. I suspect limited numbers were the cause, since as the Census data from Chapter 5 eventually signified, there were only 4221 ‘Health Care and Social Assistance’ distance labourers working from the capital cities out of a total of 104,737. In hindsight, attempting to recruit people working in ‘Manufacturing’ or ‘Transport, Postal and Warehousing’ may have yielded better results since they had
significantly higher proportions of people involved in distance labour. I could not have known this at that stage of my research since utilising the Census analysis occurred much later.

I attempted to recruit miners through a variety of sources (see Appendix A), and yet all failed. I could speculate that couples may have seen the call for participants and chosen against spending what little time they have together, often one week or less at a time, sitting down with a researcher asking them questions about their intimate lives. Or perhaps they themselves had not even interrogated their practices of intimacy, and a researcher asking questions could have forced them to make conclusions about their relationship they weren’t yet willing to make. An even more simple rationale for lack of recruitment may be that potential participants just didn’t want to participate in research on this topic. Torkington et al. (2009: 1) described how “the male-dominated mining culture seems to be impacting on willingness to participate [in research] – in the words of a local woman whose husband is a FIFO miner: ‘Good luck getting those blokes to talk!’” Although some research has been effectively conducted with FIFO families (Cater 2013), even around touchy subjects such as intimacy (Longhurst 2015), others have commented on the difficulties of engaging with miners, with Torkington et al. (2009: 1) remarking that: “Participant recruitment is proving challenging despite good local media coverage and positive feedback from the community.” Although two mining couples were ultimately recruited into my research project, their failure to progress to Stage 2 of the research (see Appendix A) was likely a combination of limited time at home, disinterest in further engagement, and other factors that may have been impacting their lives. For example, the miner in one couple was laid off one week after our initial interview and was forced to take a new job with a more onerous schedule.
Being an ethical researcher is something to which everyone should aspire, but there are endless interpretations of what is ‘ethical’. Does ‘ethical’ mean satisfying higher education institutional human research ethics committees (HRECs)? Does it mean being true to your own cultural ethics or those of your research participants? Or the ethics of supervisors or research funding? What about the ethical responsibility to finish a research project you have begun, even if it has deviated significantly from whence it began?

Ethical dilemmas infuse our lives and our research. Institutional ethics, however, are something else. While I appreciate that this is simply a facet of researching within institutions, I do believe that there is room for improvement. Some suggestions can be found in Appendix A. The effect of a five-month ethics approval process on a PhD, pushing back the start of participant recruitment, cannot be downplayed. Klocker (2011: 149) argues that it is “unsurprising that geography postgraduates are attracted by PAR’s seductive promise of ‘meaningful’ collaborative research.” This is indeed one of the reasons I chose to embark on a PhD candidacy. Yet meaningful collaborative research is clearly an area where “ethics creep” (Haggerty 2004: 394) by HRECs is producing unintended consequences.

The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (National Statement) sets the statutory obligations for any research with human participants in Australia, and invites an ethical “ethos that should permeate the way those engaged in human research approach all that they do in their research” (NHMRC, ARC, & AVCC, 2015, p. 3). The National Statement makes no deliberate statements about PAR. Nor does it have specific guidelines for HRECs on emergent research relationships like the one I was building with Scarlet Alliance. The demands of the HREC (see Appendix A) ran counter to the cultivation of “intimacies necessary to shape new types of alliances and strategies for alternative social worlds” (Detamore 2010: 169-170). These types of
demands from the University of Wollongong HREC are an example of ‘ethics creep’ (Haggerty 2004). It is unclear whether beginning recruitment earlier in my candidacy would have resulted in successful fieldwork outcomes, but at the very least it would have provided more opportunity to try alternative methods.

PAR projects need special care in the project design stage and cannot be approached in a haphazard manner (Kindon et al. 2008). To do so is to risk diluting the liberatory potential of this method that seeks to bring marginalised groups from outside the academy, collaborating with the experts of their own marginal experiences. Klocker (2011) argues that a PhD gives the researcher the opportunity to be completely singular in their engagement with a research project more so than at any other point in an academic career. This may be true, but based on my experience with the HREC, and the relationship building process with Scarlet Alliance, four years was not enough time for a PAR PhD project. While I don’t wish to make “PAR seem too difficult for [other] students to contemplate”, I want to re-iterate Klocker’s (2011: 150) point that students should be encouraged to be “realistic about its challenges.”

While my failures with recruiting health professionals and miners were indicative of methodological problems, on reflection I believe the whole project failed because of conceptual problems that arose at the very beginning. Namely, by taking my research concept to Scarlet Alliance, rather than working with them to determine where my time and skills would have been of most value, if indeed this would have been welcome. This meant that my research was not a priority to the organisation, something that van der Meulen (2011) also experienced with her research with sex workers. Had I taken the alternative method of waiting to develop a project with Scarlet Alliance at the beginning, it may at times have felt like my research project was failing to progress (no doubt a key anxiety for all researchers), but having priority research with an under-funded and under-
staffed organisation would have saved time later at multiple opportunities and junctures, and been more in keeping with participant-driven goals of PAR (Wahab 2003, van der Meulen 2011).

The PAR side-project late in my candidacy to determine sex worker perceptions of the Census as a means of interrogating their undercount was similarly undermined by very specific reasons. The first reason arose when Scarlet Alliance lost some of their funding, and as a result, was forced to downsize their office from their Redfern location to a smaller location in Newtown in the latter half of 2015. I believe this also involved some staff changes. This was obviously incredibly disruptive for the organisation and I suspect my research was deprioritised during this difficult time. At this point, time was beginning to be a critical factor, as I was in my third year of candidacy. The second, and perhaps more important reason that the project never materialised, was the revelation in December 2015 that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) would no longer de-identify data after 18 months (ABS 2016c), in a move that privacy consultants stated threatened to undermine Census credibility (McCauley 2016). An understanding of the confidentiality clauses built into the Census was one of the foundational aspects of the pitch to Scarlet Alliance, allowing sex workers to declare sex work as their primary occupation without fear that they may somehow be identified and ‘outed’ as such. The increased 4-year period that data is not de-identified provides a bigger window and therefore opportunity for something nefarious to happen with that data, however unlikely. Thus, with these two justifications, the project was shelved.

Although no harm was caused during the research, PAR ideology suggests that research should also “do good on participants’ terms, rather than academics’” (from the Participatory Geography Research Group Constitution 2009, in Wynne-Jones et al. 2015: 218). I do not believe that this aim has been realised. There are no ‘research participants’
in this thesis per se, but there were research collaborators in Scarlet Alliance, and it is difficult to see how any of this research has been on their terms. Since the collapse of my fieldwork, and with the ‘action’ part of the research less-obvious or non-existent, the stubborn continuation of the research could be construed as continuation solely for my own personal benefit and qualification. This is not a realisation I relish, and takes a substantive shine off any qualification I may receive. On the other hand, I am glad I did not compromise on my ethical commitment from the beginning of the project to work with Scarlet Alliance. Gaining their trust and negotiating our different priorities on different schedules has taught me valuable lessons about working with organisations with different priorities and commitments. While occasionally frustrating, I learned to be both patient and to manage expectations.

Despite what I have termed here ‘failed’ research methods, the complicated relationship with Scarlet Alliance was a source of stability throughout the research. Although the participant interviews with sex workers never eventuated, the research still required sex worker oversight to ensure it contributed to destigmatisation (or at the very least, did not increase stigmatisation). Much like Wahab (2003) in her research with sex workers, I have not been able to fully comprehend how I was perceived by Scarlet Alliance: an ally, a voyeur, a nuisance, or a sex worker by virtue of some work I did early in my PhD, which may have seemed self-serving in order to gain traction with the organisation as an ‘insider’. Perhaps at times I was some or all of these things to the organisation. At no time did I get the sense that my gender negatively impacted my relationship with Scarlet Alliance. This is likely because my interactions with Scarlet Alliance were not burdened by the power imbalances that enter the process when members of the academy interview marginalised groups, or when males interview females. Workers that have read sections of this thesis have intimated that it describes the relationship between sex work and
society at a point in time, and there is merit in that, but compared to my original aims, this feels hollow.

Through the years of this research project, I have learned a great deal about the sex worker rights movement globally, and participated in social media activism and critiques, and more formal rights work such as submissions to government inquiries into the legalities of the industry. It also gave the project a sense of moving beyond the academy into the ‘real world’ and my relationship with Scarlet Alliance was ultimately one of the most satisfying parts of this research. There is no easy resolution for these internal conflicts, and my hope is that perhaps at some point in the future, the benefits of this relationship and eventual research outcomes will outweigh the negative aspects described here.
APPENDIX D:
DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The challenges of conducting a PAR PhD have already been described in detail, but there remains a necessity to continue to engage with sex workers to showcase the mechanisms by which their social marginalisation persists. This research identified that there was an undercount of sex workers in the Census, and attempted but ultimately failed to build a small PAR project to determine why sex workers are reluctant to self-identify in the Census. Completing this research would make a valuable contribution to understanding the intersection between favourable industrial relations regimes, and their failure to reduce social marginalisation for sex workers. Conducting research with the ABS to determine why they do not consider it necessary to address sex worker undercount would also explain this phenomenon from a different perspective.

The second area identified for future research is the expansion of the distance labour dataset. The ABS may address distance labour invisibility through specific questioning in the next (2016) Census, but then again, they may not. Completing a finer grained analysis on existing Census data can flesh out our understanding of this type of labour. Since this research only concentrated on capital cities, an obvious place to start would be to work through the same process undertaken in Chapter 5 for all the cities and regions in Australia. More importantly though, understanding distance labour requires qualitative research. Due to the resource-centric nature of most research into labour mobility thus far in Australia, we know very little about the lives of these other workers. Specific attention should be paid to the gender discrepancy between males and females, and the wage gap. Grants by the Australian Research Council, such as the one given to investigating “the
changes wrought by different sorts of mobile work on household life in Australia, with specific attention to personal and family wellbeing\textsuperscript{21}, are a welcome step in the right direction (Australian Research Council 2016: 1).

\textsuperscript{21} Researchers: Dr David Bissell (Australian National University) and Dr Andrew Gorman-Murray (University of Western Sydney).