

## **Witness Statement**

**Dr Caron Dann**

I, **Caron E Dann** of

declare as follows:

### **Background/Experience**

1. I am a long-term casual lecturer in communications and literature at the Faculty of Arts, Monash University Clayton/Caulfield campuses, and in media studies and writing at Monash College, Clayton
2. Until 2007, I worked as a journalist. In 2007, I graduated from Monash University with a PhD. Since 2008, I have worked as an academic. In that time, I have held three one-year fixed term contract appointments, and the remainder of my employment has been as a casual, hourly-paid worker.
3. At Monash University, I teach in the School of Media, Film and Journalism (MFJ) and sometimes for the School of Linguistics, Languages, Culture and Literature (LLCL). I coordinate 2 units in the Master of Communications programme: Communications Theories and Practices, and Media, Technologies and Social Change. I also teach (lecture and tutor) in these subjects. These are big units with 51 and 86 students respectively for first semester 2016. Also in semester 1 2016, I will share the teaching (undertaking 50% of it) in Borderless Media in East Asia, a third-year unit for MFJ.
4. Monash College is a not-for-profit pathway institute. Students pay a considerable sum to enter a Diploma of Arts (the section in which I teach), and if they are successful in attaining this certificate, they are guaranteed entry into second year of a Monash University Arts

Degree. This statement focuses on my work as a casual academic at Monash University as Monash College staff are not covered by the *Higher Education (Academic Staff) Award 2010*.

5. I have been an active NTEU delegate since 2014.

### **My experience as a casual academic**

6. As a casual, I am paid the casual rates as prescribed in the relevant enterprise agreements for my two employers. The rate of pay for lectures is drawn from Level B of the academic classification structure. The rate of pay for tutorials, marking and other academic duties is drawn from Level B of the academic classification structure.
7. I am paid for specific duties as listed in my contract of employment. This includes payment for lectures and tutorials, the rates for which assume payment for preparation and delivery of the class, bundled into the "hourly" rate of pay. In my experience, the assumed time in these rates of pay significantly underestimates the actual time I spend in preparation and student consultation.
8. Contracted hours vary from contract to contract, but as an indication of the contact teaching hours I work, my teaching hours for 2016 will be an average 8 hours a week of teaching for the first semester in three separate units. I will also undertake 8 hours a week paid coordination and student consultation work (if the hours schedule includes the same conditions as last year; but as it is week 2 and these schedules still have not been sent out, I cannot be sure). Again, time spent in preparing my classes is not separately paid, but I am paid separately for marking I do requiring significant feedback (but not for small items of marking, such as feedback on oral assessments).
9. If work is not listed on the casual contract, I am not paid for it. Between the hours I am paid for and the additional unpaid hours that are necessary to perform the work to a professional standard, I work very long hours, particularly during teaching weeks.

10. When completing my PhD at Monash University in 2006, I was looking forward to a future undertaking research in my chosen discipline. However, aside from the work of my PhD being published as a book and the publication of a few articles, my teaching load means it is virtually impossible to undertake a significant amount of academic research. Nor, as a casual, am I eligible to apply for a research grant from the major funding bodies such as the ARC. In any case, any research would have to be done in my own time, as it is not a duty either employer has contracted to pay me for. For this reason, I characterise myself as being “precluded from the Academy”. My teaching is valued (I have won two Dean’s awards for teaching), but as I am unable to undertake research, I have been unsuccessful in securing an on-going teaching and research role. I have been told in feedback by selection panels several times that the only reason another candidate was selected over me is that they had a stronger research portfolio. I therefore feel stuck in a cycle and with little prospect of leaving sessional (casual) teaching.
11. I wish to make it clear that I enjoy teaching and work with excellent people, including my supervisors. I realise that higher education relies heavily on casuals and that this system is not necessarily the personal choice of those I work with.

#### **Use of Information Technology for my work**

12. I had a small office at the University in 2012 when I was on a fixed term contract but now, like many casuals, I don’t even have a physical presence on campus and must frequently work from home or other locations. There is communal sessional office space available while I am on campus, but there is no storage facility and no phone that is ‘mine’.
13. I have work responsibilities at both the Clayton and Caulfield campuses of Monash University. Therefore I need to have readily portable communication devices.
14. I have paid for my computer, telephone and iPad. These are necessary tools for my work and being in media I particularly need to be up to date. I spend about \$200 a month on internet

access, data and mobile phone expenses, and my tax shows that 80% of this is a claimable work expense. As I do not have an office at the workplace, I don't have a work number so I use my private mobile phone for work. I also spend my own money if required to buy new hardware or a new application or piece of software. For example, last year I bought a new printer and this year I will need to replace my desktop computer. I also have to pay for all home office expenses: for example, my 2015 tax return shows I spent \$274 on printer ink, all of it for work uses.

15. I do about 40 hours per week work from home, which is evidenced by my annual tax returns. I must carry my laptop or iPad and books with me as I travel, and between classes.
16. I receive no reimbursement from either employer in relation to the expense of maintaining the information technology hardware, software or internet and phone accounts that are essential to being able to perform my duties. I claim for using my devices on my annual tax return. My tax return shows that I claim 80% of use of my equipment – computer, iPad and telephone – for work.

### **Maintaining my Professional and Discipline Currency**

17. Maintaining currency in media studies is a constant. Media changes week to week and I therefore feel I 'live and breathe' media. As I teach media studies, communications and professional writing, I must obviously be right up to date with these changes.
18. Students expect me to know more than them, naturally, and therefore I need the practical skills base with new equipment, software and apps, not just the basic knowledge on how to use them.
19. I also spend at least 5 hours per week reading academic articles, reading about media in different fields – the latest developments in media and journalism, theoretical articles in order to keep up for my Masters students, and reading on professional writing. I maintain

my own academic library at home and subscribe to several academic and other journals, including Australian Journalism Review. While most journal articles are available through the Monash library, most books are un-digitised, while many others are available only short-term, or via a waiting list. In order to carry out my work efficiently, I need to maintain a comprehensive up-to-date home library, which has cost me thousands of dollars to put together since 2008, and on which I still spend at least \$200 a year. Text books are expensive. For example, *The Media and Communications in Australia, 2014*, by Stuart Cunningham and Sue Turnbull, cost me \$55.

20. The media and journalism work is international – our teaching and study is now expected to be very up to date due to the advances in communication resulting from the internet and forms of social media.
21. Some of this work is preparation for my classes. The allowance for preparation time in the hourly rate of pay for lecturing and tutoring is not enough to cover all the time that is involved. Knowing about what is going on internationally takes longer than a few hours ‘preparation’ time for lectures. In media, a high proportion of our students are international, particularly Chinese. We might spend time in class considering media events in China, Indonesia, Korea, Japan and India, for example. An example is a guest lecture I prepared in 2014 on journalism in Thailand, which had to be written from scratch with a PowerPoint presentation. This took many days to prepare, but I was paid only the ‘basic lecture’ rate of pay, which presumes a total of only three hours’ work for preparation, delivery and student consultation. This work was required – I could not let the students down by presenting a half-written or ill-informed lecture. I must also maintain websites on Moodle for each unit I coordinate at Monash University.
22. Much of the work I do to maintain my professional skills and knowledge of developments in the discipline is not done as preparation for specific classes. It is essential that I remain up-

to-date with my field if I am to be able to perform my job competently and thus continue to be offered work. This means keeping on top of things whether or not they are directly related to particular classes or units I am currently teaching.

23. While ongoing staff at Monash University are involved in formal and informal development regarding pedagogy, there is very little opportunity for sessionals to be involved in this development. There may be a couple of meetings a year which we are paid to attend, but these deal with many topics of concern, not just pedagogy. I think about teaching theory and practice throughout my units as a matter of course and I keep a reflective document on teaching practices, my own 'teaching portfolio', as the semester progresses. Otherwise, it is informal and sporadic. For example I spent half an hour the other day talking to a colleague about what is working with our respective teaching methods.
24. Altogether, I would spend at least 2 hours per week on such activities in addition to the time spent in preparation for lectures and tutorials.
25. As for all academics, in order to keep up with my field, I should attend professional and industry conferences, as well as undertaking a variety of professional development courses offered by my employers. However as a casual academic I get no support for doing so – either in payment of registration costs or in payment of wages for time spent in such activities. During my employment with Monash University, I have attended several national and international conferences, and maintained membership of several professional associations, including the Journalism Education and Research Association of Australia, at my own expense.
26. The University recently ran a half-day course in pronunciation of Chinese names and how Chinese students learn. This was a very practical thing to do and I knew it would be incredibly helpful for me, as around 80% of the students in the Master's units I teach are from mainland China. I was told that the University would not spend the \$90 course fee on

casual staff so I asked the Head of School, who referred me to the head of finance, and the answer was still no. So I paid to attend the course myself. (I was not paid wages for the time spent attending the course, and did not expect to be, but undertook it in my own time). This experience made me feel unsupported and excluded – even though the University has relied on me to teach at the Masters level for over 5 years.

27. I am required to comply with employer policies and procedures at Monash University. In practice I need to be familiar with the policies on matters related directly to my work, including assessment, plagiarism, safety, behaviour and conduct expectations, how to record and claim payment for hours worked, expense claims, student grievance procedures, and so on. While I have worked for the University for more than 8 years now, these policies are reviewed and updated from time to time, so I need to make sure I am complying with current versions.

28. I estimate that each year, I would read at least 1200 media reports, at least 4 academic books, 20 further single chapters and approximately 50 journal articles in my field, in addition to those I read in the course of preparation work. I estimate that I spend at least 200 hours a year in such reading. I estimate that I spend at least 20 hours a year in developing my technical skills with new media and platforms. I estimate that I spend at least 20 hours a year in discussion with colleagues about developments and controversies in the discipline. I estimate that I spend at least 5 hours a year engaged in structured professional development associated with pedagogy. I estimate that I spend at least 8 hours a year in refreshing my knowledge of employer policies and procedures.

Dr Caron Dann

10 March 2016