

Casual about truckin'

For some workers permanent employment equals security and a guaranteed income. But, thanks to increased opportunities for casual employment, many workers are now turning their back on job stability in favour of job flexibility and premium rates.

Mal McKenzie is just one of the many people taking advantage of casual employment. A truck driver with more than 30 years' experience, McKenzie, 57, started working as a casual driver through Advance Recruitment in 2001.

"I was just going to do it on the weekends or part-time but it just grew from there," he recalls.

"Advance Recruitment is the best firm I have ever worked for and because of the opportunity it gave me of being an agency driver it meant I wasn't locked into one particular site or operation and I had control of my own destiny.

"It has a downside, because you don't get sick or holiday pay but the upside is I get a higher return and it's more flexible. My wife has got her own business and if she needs me then I can just ring them up and say that I am not coming in today and they get someone else to cover me."

While the thought of not having job security might have some people worried, McKenzie says, in his line of work, there are more jobs than people to fill them.

"I have no fear, there's just so much work out there for drivers," he says. "They always want someone who presents well, and want to know the guy will turn up.

"A lot of the stores we are delivering to have windows where you have to be in there in a certain period of time so punctuality is crucial. There were occasions where I wasn't getting enough hours but over a period



Empowered . . . truck driver Mal McKenzie finds many attractions in casual employment

Picture: JOHN FOTIADIS

of time there have only been rare occasions where I haven't got at least 40-50 hours' work," he says.

For McKenzie, driving trucks is firmly in his blood.

"I grew up with a farming background, and the first thing I drove was a tractor at age eight," he says.

"My father was a fitter but he has had a long background driving equipment as well. All of Mum's four brothers drove trucks, back in

those days it was a pioneering job. When I was a 15-year-old I often did trips with my uncle interstate during school holidays.

"He was one of the guys who taught me to drive a semi and at 75 he is still driving trucks.

"It is a very skilful job, and we are spoilt. These trucks that we drive today are so far advanced from the first truck I ever drove."

ERICA WATSON

How to be ...

a truck driver

You can become a truck driver without formal qualifications but you will need to hold one or more heavy-vehicle licences. More information, the Transport and Logistics Industry Skills Council (03) 9320 4242 or www.tdtaustralia.com