



# Many think of starting new career

JAYNE RICKARD

For those dreading going back to work after a relaxing summer break, the start of a new year can bring with it the motivation to take a risk and change careers.

More than 14 per cent of Australian workers dream of a different career that could offer more money, greater flexibility or just simply make them happier, but only a small percentage make the jump each year, according to a recent survey by training organisation Upskilled.

Perth-based career coach Lois Keay-Smith said it was becoming more common for workers to seek a more satisfying job but many did not know how to go about choosing a new career or putting the steps in place to make it happen.

Self-confessed "girly girl" Kelly Discombe, of Warnbro, traded acrylic nails and high heels for work gloves and steel-capped boots when she gave up her 15-year career as a beauty therapist to become a plumber.

The change came after she and partner Steve March decided to knock down their house and rebuild.

"I did not think I was capable of

climbing into roof spaces, knocking over brickwork and driving a bobcat," Ms Discombe said.

Statistics show fewer workers are making the career plunge: 7.3 per cent of the workforce changed industries in 1990, compared with 5.95 per cent in 2002 and 5.1 per cent last year, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

But this could have more to do with workplaces offering negotiable hours, extra leave entitlements and flexible roles in a bid to retain staff.

Conrad Jayatilaka, 58, spent 25 years in IT working for both government and private industry, but he started to dread spending many more years of long hours, a heavy workload and high stress levels.

After several years juggling part-time music teaching — his true passion — with his IT role, Mr Jayatilaka quit his highly paid job to become a full-time piano teacher.

"The first six months of this change was even more stressful than the IT job I resigned from," he said.

"Going from a stable income which helped pay the bills to earn-

ing \$14 a fortnight from one student was a bit of a shock to the system."

Wembley resident Simon Reynolds was all too aware of the financial risk he took in leaving a highly paid graphic production role in Britain to become a remedial sports therapist in WA five years ago. The 45-year-old realised he wanted to make the change when he noticed something wrong with his young daughter's legs, which had so far gone unrecognised by medical experts but was later diagnosed as cerebral palsy.

"You've really got to be sure ... follow your dream if you've got the courage to do it, but you've got to be sure you can pay for it and that's the only thing that's going to stop me pursuing this (further)," Mr Reynolds said.

Cade Broomhall, 28, was a crocodile wrangler in the Northern Territory but is now an IT technician based in Welshpool.

He is part of a younger generation reluctant to spend decades in the one occupation.

"I couldn't think of anything worse than doing one thing for 25 years," Mr Broomhall said.



From filing nails to filing pipes: After more than 15 years as a beautician, Kelly Discombe has become a plumber. Picture: Ian Munro