

Striking the Balance

Women, men, work and family

DISCUSSION PAPER 2005



*Human Rights and Equal
Opportunity Commission*



Striking the Balance: **Women, men, work and family**

Discussion Paper 2005

Sex Discrimination Unit



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Equal Opportunity Commission*

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CLOSING DATE FOR SUBMISSIONS:

30 September 2005

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The Commission will include in its final paper a list of submissions received in response to this discussion paper. It may also refer to those submissions in the text of the final paper and other Commission publications. It may decide to publish them. If you do not want your submission or any part of it to be used in any one of these ways please indicate this clearly.

Abbreviation and Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACCI	Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
ACIRRT	Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AIFS	Australian Institute of Family Studies
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AIRC	Australian Industrial Relations Commission
AWA	Australian Workplace Agreement
BCA	Business Council of Australia
CEDAW	<i>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</i>
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EMTR	Effective Marginal Tax Rate
EOWA	Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency
FaCS	Department of Family and Community Services
FTB	Family Tax Benefit
FTB (A)	Family Tax Benefit Part A
FTB (B)	Family Tax Benefit Part B
HILDA	The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
ILO	International Labour Organization
NATSEM	National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling
OEA	Office of the Employment Advocate
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SPRC	Social Policy Research Centre
UNSW	University of New South Wales
WEL	Women's Electoral Lobby

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Foreword

Within the space of a generation Australia has experienced unprecedented social change, with profound implications for the way men and women use and manage their time.

Over the past forty years women have significantly increased their numbers in paid work, in education and in decision-making positions, and have gained greater reproductive freedom. Yet despite these changes in the public sphere of work and in reproductive choices, the lives of men and women at home, in the private sphere, remain relatively untouched. While the women's movement initially challenged women's greater responsibility for unpaid work in the home and called for men to be more involved in parenting and other unpaid work, this proved much harder than removing barriers to paid work and education.¹ Women have continued to carry the greater responsibility for caring and other unpaid work, effectively working a double shift and living under increased time pressures.²

While much of the current work and family debate has centred on women, a complete analysis of paid work and family issues must include the experiences and attitudes of men. While paid work and family balance is so often framed as the concern of women only – and specifically one for women with young children – men will continue to be seen as the secondary parent and women will continue to face discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of their sex and family responsibilities.³ Australian research and programs in areas such as men's health, fatherhood and early childhood development, and fatherhood and family separation have recently begun to engage with this issue.⁴

Family responsibilities extend beyond parenting to caring across the lifespan. Men and women within families also care for elderly family members or people with disabilities. This caring work shares many of the characteristics of parenting work but has its own stresses and difficulties. It too has a strong gender component, with many more women than men taking on unpaid caring responsibilities.⁵

Many workplaces have come a long way in accommodating workers' family responsibilities, with legislative provisions, awards, agreements and workplace policies in place to allow both women and men greater flexibility about how they participate in family life.⁶ However, despite this progress, legal, policy and social barriers remain which continue to shape the paid work and family arrangements made by Australian families.⁷

1 See p 113
2 See chapter 3.
3 See p 119.
4 See pp 114-115.
5 See pp 39-42.
6 See chapter 8.
7 Some of these are discussed in Part C.

This project is essentially about choice. It is not about favouring some forms of arrangements for managing paid work and family responsibilities over others, but rather an exploration of whether all types of families are provided with real choices for balancing their competing responsibilities. This project therefore focuses on the particular issues faced by men and women in balancing their various responsibilities, on the gender relations that underpin the lives men and women lead, and on the legal, policy and attitudinal frameworks that both facilitate and constrain the choices open to men and women.

Without integrating this broad perspective, women will continue to suffer discrimination and disadvantage at work and carry an unfair burden at home, men will continue to miss out on time with their children, Australian children will continue to miss out on time with their fathers, the Australian workforce and economy will continue to undervalue the productive labour of women and many Australian families will continue to suffer stress and conflict between their paid work and family responsibilities.

Pru Goward
Sex Discrimination Commissioner
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

2 June 2005

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) is an independent statutory authority established under the *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986* (Cth). It has a variety of functions and powers to promote and protect the human rights of all people in Australia.

HREOC administers the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) (the Sex Discrimination Act). The Sex Discrimination Act provides a framework for the investigation and conciliation of complaints of unlawful discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy, potential pregnancy and sexual harassment.

The Sex Discrimination Act also makes dismissal on the ground of family responsibilities unlawful.¹ This can include what is termed “constructive dismissal”, where the employer’s actions give the employee no choice but to leave their employment. This ground of discrimination is more limited than the other grounds under the Sex Discrimination Act.

One of the objects of the Sex Discrimination Act is to give effect to certain provisions of the United Nations’ *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW).² CEDAW requires governments to work towards the elimination of discrimination against women in employment³ and recognises:

... the great contribution of women to the welfare of the family and to the development of society, so far not fully recognized, the social significance of maternity and the role of both parents in the family and in the upbringing of children ...⁴

1 These provisions were inserted into the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) in 1992 to give effect to certain provisions of the International Labour Organization’s *Convention Concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with family responsibilities* (ILO 156). For further discussion see chapter 7.

2 Section 3(a) *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth).

3 Article 11 *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* GA Res 180 (XXXIV 1970) 19 ILM 33 (1980) states (in part) that:

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

(a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;

(b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;

(c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;

(d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work ...

4 Preamble *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* GA Res 180 (XXXIV 1970) 19 ILM 33 (1980).

CEDAW notes that:

...the role of women in procreation should not be a basis for discrimination but that the upbringing of children requires a sharing of responsibility between men and women and society as a whole ...⁵

It also points out that "a change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality between men and women ..."⁶

Another object of the Sex Discrimination Act is to promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the principle of the equality of men and women.⁷

Background and focus

The need to consider the roles of both women and men as carers as well as workers emerged clearly during community consultations conducted by HREOC over the need or otherwise for a national scheme of paid maternity leave. As part of the scheme's development, HREOC consulted widely on an extensive range of objectives that paid maternity leave could meet, as outlined in the interim paper *Valuing Parenthood: Options for paid maternity leave*.⁸

Consequently, paid maternity leave became a widely discussed aspect of the broader and ongoing public discussion about the need for Australians to be able to better balance their work and family responsibilities – the "work and family" or "work-life" debate. In 2002 HREOC released *A Time to Value: Proposal for a national paid maternity leave scheme*.⁹

A number of outstanding issues were identified through the development of HREOC's paid maternity leave scheme. Among its many conclusions, HREOC found that paid maternity leave would make it easier for women to combine paid work and family responsibilities. HREOC made it clear that paid maternity leave is not in itself enough to deliver balanced paid work and family responsibilities to families. Paid maternity leave should be accompanied by other measures to assist families to achieve this balance, including access to flexible work practices and adequate high quality child care.

HREOC's proposal was for a national government funded scheme of paid maternity leave. The scheme was aimed primarily at women, in recognition of the significant needs of women and newborn children for recovery and establishment of breastfeeding in the immediate weeks following birth. However, HREOC clearly distinguished the health needs of women following the biological process of childbirth from the social needs of both men and women to parent.

Many of the submissions received by HREOC on the paid maternity leave project highlighted the need to challenge the gender stereotypes that prescribe "women's work" and "men's work" in both the paid workforce and in the family. Many pointed to the pressures placed on men to focus on their paid work at the expense of their participation in family life. HREOC agrees that there is a need to enable men as well as women to take time out from employment without career penalty in order to participate more fully in caring work. This project will progress the discussion of this issue.

5 *ibid.*

6 *ibid.*

7 Section 3(d) *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth).

8 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission *Valuing Parenthood: Options for a paid maternity leave scheme* HREOC Sydney 2002.

9 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission *A Time to Value: Proposal for a national paid maternity leave scheme* HREOC Sydney 2002.

Why we need a focus on family responsibilities

Over the past several years, HREOC has particularly focussed on sex discrimination and gender equality in the area of employment. Much of this work has acknowledged the serious barriers faced by women in paid work while pregnant and after childbirth.¹⁰

However, during consultations and in the course of researching in these areas, the issue of how working parents manage their family responsibilities continually surfaced. HREOC has been told repeatedly of the struggles many parents experience in meeting their responsibilities to both their families and their workplaces. This issue concerns men as much as women and seems to be growing in urgency, despite much public discussion and some measures to address the problem.¹¹

The increased pressure on Australian families stems in part from social and economic changes.

- Women have been entering the paid workforce in unprecedented numbers yet continue to bear the greater burden of unpaid work.¹²
- More men are expressing the desire for greater involvement with their children, yet men, on average, have increased their full time working hours over the last two decades.¹³
- Changes to the nature of employment and families' greater commitment to paid work can make it more difficult to manage unpaid caring work.¹⁴
- Expectations of parenting have changed, with greater social pressure towards intensive, child centred parenting than in previous generations.
- The ageing population means that Australia will face increasing difficulties in maintaining the size of the labour force; assisting parents and particularly mothers to maintain labour force attachment is an increasingly important response.
- There is growing concern about the future burden of caring given Australia's ageing population, steps towards privatisation of caring for family members with disabilities and continuing limitations on access to child care.¹⁵

Valuing unpaid caring work

The question of how we value care and how we measure and incorporate the value of care into Australian society is at the core of this discussion paper. In looking at current arrangements for balancing unpaid caring work with paid work, this paper will invite discussion on the best ways of assigning responsibility for care between government, employers and families. There is a significant body of research on the value of care, but unpaid caring work is not the subject of significant community

10 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission *Pregnant and Productive: It's a right not a privilege to work while pregnant* HREOC Sydney 1999; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission *A Time to Value: Proposal for a national paid maternity leave scheme* HREOC Sydney 2002.

11 These measures are particularly discussed in Part C.

12 See chapter 3.

13 See p 21.

14 See chapter 2.

15 See chapter 4, pp 72-74 and p 58.

discussion, nor supported by systemic policy interventions aimed at sharing the unpaid work load equally. Despite the value of care to individuals and communities, too often caring work remains invisible.¹⁶

Types of families

Social and economic changes of the past decades have also had an effect on family composition and characteristics. Australian families are more diverse, more complex and dynamic than ever before. There has been a decline in couple families with children, counterbalanced by a rise in couple families without children, lone parent families, and other family forms, including same-sex couple families, non-resident parents, step and blended families.¹⁷

The contemporary family is also ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse. The statistical information that exists tends not to analyse paid work and family arrangements by ethnicity, and there is a dearth of qualitative information on ethnicity, culture or religion and the experience of managing paid work and family responsibilities. HREOC is keen to hear about how families in Australia manage their paid work and family responsibilities.

Families can be characterised as traditional or egalitarian according to whether they follow a strict male breadwinner model or provide for men and women to share both paid and unpaid work responsibilities. However these categorisations do not adequately capture the impact of the various institutions that shape families, nor do they capture changes across the life cycle. Many families will change in character according to their needs and opportunities over time; for example, many families move from an egalitarian to a more traditional model on having children because they are no longer able, or no longer want, to combine responsibilities.¹⁸

Given the importance of gender differences in the way that work and family arrangements are made within families, this paper will generally focus on heterosexual couples with family responsibilities. However, given the diversity of families, including same-sex and sole parent families, HREOC is concerned to hear from all types of families with ideas about the support they need to better manage their paid work and family responsibilities.

As the population ages there will be a greater need for access to family-friendly employment arrangements as women and men juggle not only the care of children but the care of ageing parents. The question of elder care is emerging as one that will affect all workers, regardless of whether they have children. Given this broader social picture the discussion will take a life cycle approach. In doing so HREOC is mindful of the wide range of caring work undertaken within the Australian community and of the need to recognise the intrinsic, social and economic value of this work. The role of care provided, for example, to people with disabilities and the care of children by grandparents is discussed at chapter 4, but the scope of this project is not broad enough to consider the range of issues faced by these carers in any detail.

16 For further discussion of the value of caring work see p 75 and pp 111-112.

17 From 1976 to 2001, the proportion of couple only families increased from 28 per cent to 35.7 per cent of all families. The proportion of couple families with dependent children decreased from 48.4 per cent to 38.6 per cent in the same period. The proportion of one parent families increased from 6.5 per cent to 10.7 per cent: Iain Campbell and Sara Charlesworth *Key Work and Family Trends in Australia* Centre for Applied Social Research RMIT Melbourne 2004, pp 23-24. Same-sex couple families counted in the census doubled in size from 10 000 in 1996 to 20 000 in 2001: *ABS Year Book Australia* 2005 Cat No 1301.0, p 142.

18 See pp 54-55.

Similarly, an extensive examination of the related but complex issues of parenting after separation will not be undertaken in this paper. However, HREOC welcomes submissions from non-resident parents about their particular experiences in combining paid work and family responsibilities.

Averages can conceal diversity

While the diversity of Australian families has been increasing, the data available on the range of experiences of Australian families are limited. Much of the available data are averages across the community, so the appearance of difference is made to seem invisible. In particular, this paper relies on some important studies of Australian families' use of time dating from 1997, and in some cases from 1992.¹⁹ There is little published research about how families with a range of characteristics use their time differently. National time use data rely on averages, and so may at times appear to suggest that all men or all women are the same.

The time use data show that women do the bulk of unpaid caring and housework. This obscures the fact that there are individual men who do share child rearing and housework equally with their female partners.

HREOC recognises the limitations of averages. This paper calls for submissions on the lived experiences of various families across all Australian communities, to help fill in the gaps created by these averages.

What this project on family responsibilities might offer

HREOC believes that further discussion of the gender and sex discrimination aspects of the paid work and family debate should be encouraged for the following reasons.

- While women bear the major responsibility for unpaid caring work, their ability to engage in the paid workforce will be artificially limited.
- This unequal burden will mean that paid work and family balance will continue to be a "women's issue", resulting in women's continuing disadvantage and discrimination in the workplace.
- With work and family balance seen as a women's issue, fathers will have even less ability to obtain part time work or flexibility in their paid work to allow them to share unpaid caring work.
- Men will continue to be locked into a breadwinner role and excluded from participating actively as parents or carers, thus unfairly limiting their and their partners' range of choices.
- Equality for men and women should be recognised in all spheres of life, including the workplace and the home.
- While these arrangements persist, many children will continue to miss out on fully developed relationships with both parents.
- Caring work will need to be supported and shared more equitably in order to meet the greater demand for care as the population ages and ageing parents increasingly rely on their children to enable them to remain in the community.

19 The Australian Bureau of Statistics plans to run another time use survey in 2006 to collect new data.

The federal Parliament's House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services is currently conducting an Inquiry Into Balancing Work and Family. While the Standing Committee's Inquiry shares some of the concerns of HREOC, it is specifically interested in three work and family issues.²⁰ This project is broader, going beyond the usual parameters of the paid work and family debate to consider all the caring responsibilities of Australian families, such as care of people with disabilities and the frail aged, and considering the structures of unpaid work as well as paid work. The findings of the Standing Committee's report, should it be available, will be considered by HREOC in its final paper.

What this paper will do

This paper will tease out the ways in which men and women variously balance their family responsibilities and their paid work. In doing so it will assess the particular pressures facing men and women and the social, cultural, workplace and legislative barriers to families trying to balance their paid work and family responsibilities.

The paper will consider some of the barriers to men taking a more equal share of this unpaid work. Over the life of the project, HREOC will gauge the level of commitment among Australian women and men to supporting the combination of paid work with caring and other forms of unpaid work.

In these tasks, the issue of how our community values work, including the unpaid work of caring for family members, is a fundamental question. It has profound implications for the ways in which Australian families will manage their paid work and family responsibilities now and into the future.

It is not sufficient to say that the growing pressure for men as well as women to achieve better balance between their paid work and family responsibilities is entirely the result of women demanding a greater role in the workforce or of men recognising their caring side, nor even of social recognition that children need parental attention.

These emerging needs of Australian families have also arisen as the result of demographic and economic change. In particular the ageing of the Australian population and our rising longevity are placing new pressures on Australian families to do the work of care, in particular for ageing relatives and neighbours. At the same time changes to the welfare role of government, especially in the financing of aged care, economic globalisation and the need for Australia to continue to compete with the dynamic economic powers of our region, have increased pressure on Australians at work. Australian families are caught between the pressure of paid work and the pressure of care. Widespread public concern and discussion has been the result.

This project is an attempt to reconcile and incorporate these apparently opposing interests into a policy framework that would prevent discrimination against women and men on the basis of their family responsibilities.

20 The Committee is particularly interested in: the financial, career and social disincentives to starting families; making it easier for parents who so wish to return to the paid workforce; and the impact of taxation and other matters on families in the choices they make in balancing work and family life: www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fhs/workandfamily/tor.htm.

This paper acknowledges that various family-friendly measures such as flexible working hours and parental leave are provided for in legislation and policy and that many employers invest considerably in assisting their employees to balance their caring responsibilities with their work obligations. Nevertheless, family-friendly provisions are not uniformly available across the workforce, and as many of these provisions are discretionary, access differs across industry, occupation and employer size.²¹ The project will assess the current level of support provided by government and industry in this area.

The project will ask whether any cultural, social, policy or legislative changes need to be made in order to properly support Australian families in their efforts to balance their commitments.

Informing this project is a systemic approach to preventing discrimination against men and women on the basis of their family responsibilities. It starts from an acceptance of the need to promote the principle of the equality of men and women, in compliance with Australia's international obligations to do so.

To meet this overarching objective, the purpose of this discussion paper is to create a framework for examining the barriers faced by men and women in their efforts to combine their paid work and their family obligations. This discussion paper will begin to:

- identify existing systemic barriers in employment faced by men and women in balancing paid work and family responsibilities;
 - identify how gender roles in unpaid caring work affect the participation of men and women in paid work;
 - examine data on:
 - men and women's access to current and proposed family-friendly employment provisions,
 - community attitudes toward unpaid caring work, and
 - the gender dimensions of efforts to achieve work and family balance;
- and
- examine legislation, policies, practices and services to ensure men and women are able to combine their paid work and family responsibilities.

This paper aims to stimulate and contribute to public debate on current practices and attitudes among Australian men and women and the policies that help shape those practices and attitudes. An examination of caring and domestic arrangements in the home will assist better understanding of the gender relations which structure the paid work and family debate. In doing so, it will attempt to draw links between the "public" realm of the paid workforce and the "private" realm of the household.

21 See pp 18-20 and chapter 8.

About this paper

This paper is divided into four sections:

Part A, chapters 2 to 4, provides an overview of current arrangements for combining paid work with caring, with a particular emphasis on changes to the Australian workplace and how men and women divide their time between paid and unpaid work. This section also provides a discussion of carers of people with disabilities, carers of the frail aged and carers other than parents.

Part B, chapters 5 and 6, considers the implications of the current situation for Australia's families, demographics, public policy, and economy. It provides an overview of the various pressures faced by Australian men and women and explores some of the consequences of poor paid work and family balance.

Part C, chapters 7 to 10, provides an analysis of the legal provisions, workplace policies and practices, government assistance and attitudes that frame the decisions that families make about their paid work and family arrangements. This section assesses progress on balancing paid work and family responsibilities in each of these areas and examines the barriers that are still in place.

The final chapter, Part D, outlines possible courses of action in response to some of the barriers identified in the paper.

Consultations and research

In developing this paper, HREOC has undertaken targeted consultations with employer and industry groups, employee organisations, government, academics and community organisations and representatives. Focus groups with parents were also conducted in partnership with Bankstown and Penrith City Councils in the Sydney metropolitan area.

This discussion paper will be distributed to all of those who contributed to it and other interested individuals and organisations for comment. In particular, correspondents will be invited to pay particular attention to the questions posed in the discussion paper, and to provide additional comment, detail and analysis on those elements that they consider to be most relevant.

As a discussion paper, this document often suggests conclusions in order to stimulate discussion and debate. However, its purpose is to canvas current concerns and raise questions for considered input from interested people, organisations and agencies. In the consultation process, HREOC will listen to and take account of the range of opinions that will be expressed.

Outcomes of the project

A final report will be produced and released in early 2006.

This document will be informed by consultations held around Australia during 2005 and will draw on public submissions received in response to this discussion paper.

Making a submission

Submissions are invited on the issues raised in this discussion paper. Electronic submission by email is encouraged.

Submissions should be sent to one of the following addresses:

By mail:

Paid Work and Family Responsibilities Submission
Sex Discrimination Unit
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001

By email:

familyresponsibilities@humanrights.gov.au

By fax:

02 9284 9789

The closing date for submissions is **Friday 30 September 2005**



Part A:

Paid and unpaid
work in Australian
families: Setting
the scene



Chapter 2:

Australian families in paid work

Introduction

While the paid work and family debate has been largely focused on women, there are specific pressures for men, who may also seek a better balance between their paid work and family commitments. Through their efforts in paid employment, men typically bear the greatest responsibility for financially providing for their families. For men who are the primary or sole earners in their family, the workplace may be more stressful than for women, given that the risk of unemployment carries the added risk of family poverty. Additionally, a high level of engagement in the paid workforce limits the amount of time men can spend on family work, leaving less time for active involvement in their children's lives. Attitudes and culture can make it even more difficult for men to seek changes to their working arrangements than for women.

Women in Australia bear primary responsibility for managing family life.¹ This does not fit easily with the structure of the workplace. The difficulty of accommodating housework and caring work with paid work is captured by the idea of the "second shift" or "double load".² Working arrangements, including working hours and leave arrangements, often make it difficult to accommodate family responsibilities. For example, the standard working hours do not accommodate dropping off and picking up children from school. Similarly, the needs of carers with elderly parents are frequently not consistent with the demands of full time work.³

As women are increasingly combining paid work with family responsibilities and men are increasingly trying to find a better paid work and family balance, these workplace constraints are perhaps becoming more obvious.

This chapter provides an analysis of how men and women use their time in paid work and a summary of the characteristics of the current Australian workplace.

Men and Women engage differently in paid work

The gap between men's and women's employment rate is closing with men's employment rate currently at 55.2 per cent and women's at 44.8 per cent.⁴ There is little evidence that the drop in men's employment rate is linked to their sharing

1 See chapter 3.

2 For a detailed discussion of this concept see Barbara Pocock *The Work/Life Collision* The Federation Press Sydney 2003, pp 125-126 and Arlie Hochschild *The Second Shift: Working parents and the revolution at home* New York Viking 1989.

3 See pp 43-46.

4 ABS *Australian Labour Market Statistics* 2005 Cat No 6105.0, p 37; trend data. By comparison, in February 2000, men's employment rate was 56.1 per cent and women's was 43.9 per cent: ABS *Australian Labour Market Statistics* 2005 Cat No 6105.0, p 37; trend data.

family responsibilities.⁵ Women's employment continues to be the most affected by the increased unpaid work responsibilities associated with child rearing.⁶

Parents' participation in paid work

The employment rate of Australian mothers is higher than in earlier decades. In 1985, 45.6 percent of mothers with dependent children were employed compared to 60.4 percent in 2003.⁷ However, relative to comparable countries Australian women have a low level of workforce involvement. In 2000, of Australian women with two or more children, only 43.2 per cent were in the workforce, compared with 81.8 per cent in Sweden, 64.7 per cent in the United States and 62.3 per cent in the United Kingdom.⁸ Only Ireland, Italy and Spain have similarly low rates of women's participation with two or more children at 40.8, 42.4 and 43.3 per cent respectively.⁹

Table 1: Couples' engagement in the labour force by number of dependent children

Labour force status	%		
	No children	One child	Two or more children
Husband employed, wife employed	55.9	14.5	29.6
Husband employed, wife unemployed	36.5	20.3	43.2
Husband employed, wife not in labour force	36.9	19.0	44.1
Husband unemployed, wife employed	59.0	12.3	28.6
Husband unemployed, wife unemployed	40.8	24.3	34.9
Husband unemployed, wife not in labour force	34.9	23.0	42.1
Husband not in labour force, wife not in labour force	93.6	2.2	4.2
Husband not in labour force, wife employed	77.6	9.7	12.7

Source: ABS *Labour Force Status and other Characteristics of Families 2000* Cat No 6224.0, p 15.

Note: Dependent child refers to all family members aged under 15 years.

The pattern of women's participation in paid work changes according to the age of their children. Participation in the Australian workforce dips markedly for women around childrearing age, rising again as children grow older. The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children found that 40 per cent of mothers returned to work with a year of giving birth.¹⁰ When their youngest dependent child is aged less than five years, the employment rate for mothers is 46.3 per cent. This employment rate rises to 65.5 per cent when the youngest child is aged between five and nine years, and increases again to 69.5 per cent when the youngest child is between 10 and 14 years.¹¹

5 The reduction in employment rates does not reflect an increase in the unemployment rate, however. It is suggested that the rise in part time work and the lower employment rate reflects longer years of study with no or only part time paid work while studying: Iain Campbell and Sara Charlesworth *Key Work and Family Trends in Australia* Centre for Applied Research RMIT Melbourne April 2004, pp 4-5. See also chapter 5.

6 See chapter 3 and chapter 5.

7 Iain Campbell and Sara Charlesworth *Key Work and Family Trends in Australia* Centre for Applied Research RMIT Melbourne April 2004, p 7.

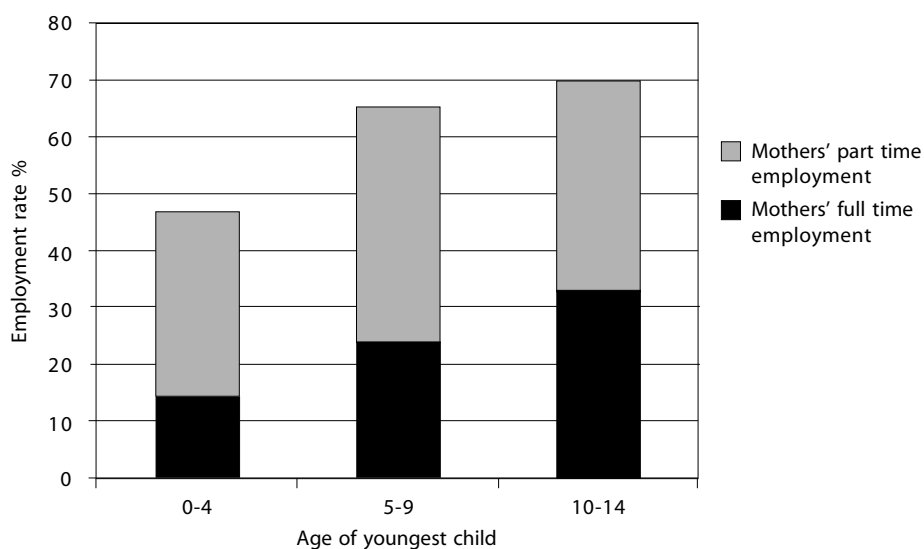
8 *ibid*, p A2-12.

9 *ibid*, p A2-12.

10 Department of Family and Community Services and Australian Institute of Family Studies *Growing Up in Australia: The longitudinal study of Australian children – Annual Report 2004* Commonwealth of Australia Melbourne 2005, p 11.

11 Iain Campbell and Sara Charlesworth *Key Work and Family Trends in Australia* Centre for Applied Research RMIT Melbourne April 2004, p A2-7.

Graph 1: Mothers' employment by age of youngest child 2003



Source: ABS *Labour Force Australia 2003 Data Cubes* cited in Iain Campbell and Sara Charlesworth *Background Report: Key work and family trends* Centre for Applied Research RMIT Melbourne 2004, p A2-7.

Many mothers work part time when their children are young. Of all mothers in 2003, 35.5 per cent were employed part time and 25.1 per cent were employed full time with just under 40 per cent not employed.¹² Mothers' representation in full time work increases with the age of their youngest child.¹³

Women's workforce participation differs according to family type: 55 per cent of coupled mothers with dependent children in 2000 were in the workforce.¹⁴ By comparison, 30.2 per cent of sole mothers were employed at this same time. With the youngest child aged less than five years, 27 per cent of sole mothers were in the workforce. This proportion rose to 46 per cent when the youngest child was aged between five and nine years, and rose again to 51.4 per cent of sole mothers in paid employment whose youngest child was aged between 10 and 14 years.¹⁵

Data from 2000 indicate that the employment rate of all coupled fathers with dependents was 89.5 per cent. Men in couples with a youngest dependent under five years had an employment rate of 89.4 per cent. When their youngest child was between five and nine years and 10 and 14 years, their employment rate was 89.8 per cent and 90.3 per cent respectively.¹⁶ For men aged between 25 and 64 years in families without dependent children, the employment rate was 51.9 per cent.¹⁷

12 *ibid*, p A2-7.

13 When their youngest child is aged under five years, 14.8 per cent of these mothers worked full time in 2003 while 31.5 per cent worked part time. Participation in full time work rose to 23.5 per cent of mothers whose youngest child was aged between five and nine years with engagement in part time work similarly rising to 42.0 per cent of these mothers. When their youngest child is aged between 10 and 14 years, the split between full time and part time work reduces with 32.4 per cent of these mothers working full time and 37.1 per cent working part time: *ibid*, p A2-7.

14 ABS *Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families 2000* Cat No 6224.0, p 20.

15 *ibid*, p 24.

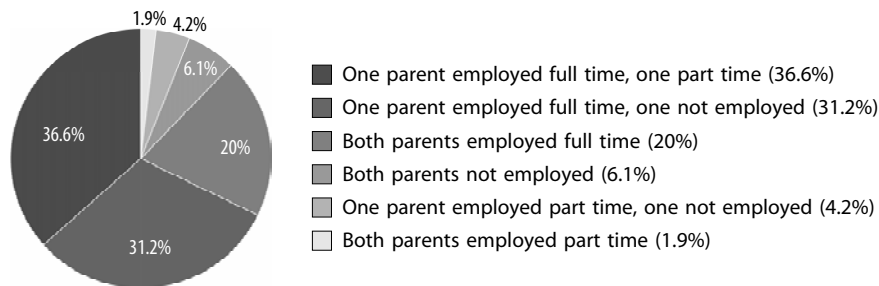
16 *ibid*, p 20.

17 *ibid*, p 27. See also Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling work and family life – Australia, Denmark and The Netherlands* Volume 1 OECD Paris 2002, p 61. See also p 21.

Couple families

Around 30 per cent of couple families in 2003 resembled a traditional “male breadwinner/female homemaker” model.¹⁸

Graph 2: Couple families: Employment status of partner/s with dependents under 15 years



Source: ABS *Family Characteristics* 2003 Cat No 4442.0, p 27.

Women’s withdrawal from the workforce depends on the age of their youngest child. In couple families with a youngest child under five years, almost 48.6 per cent of women were not in the workforce. This fell to around 28.7 per cent of women in couple relationships not in the workforce when their youngest dependent was between five and nine years.¹⁹ Women currently at home caring for young children are likely to spend significant periods of their life in paid work, transitioning in and out of the labour market throughout the life cycle.²⁰ Fathers of young children are likely to be working a greater number of hours than all men.²¹

Women’s participation in part time employment is affected by the presence of children. In couples without children, only 17.3 per cent of women worked part time while in couple families with children, 35.1 per cent of women worked part time.²² The age of their youngest child affects women’s part time employment, with 31.9 per cent of women in couple families with a youngest child under five years working part time while 40.7 per cent worked part time when their youngest child was between five and nine years.²³

18 ABS *Family Characteristics* 2003 Cat No 4442.0, p 27.

19 ABS *Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families* 2000 Cat No 6224.0, p 20.

20 *ibid*, p 19. See also Barbara Pocock *The Work/Life Collision* The Federation Press Sydney 2003, p 30.

21 Graeme Russell et al *Fitting Fathers into Families: Men and the fatherhood role in contemporary Australia* Report prepared for the Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 1999, p 3. When their youngest child was less than five years in 2000, 84.5 per cent of men in couple families worked full time. This figure increased slightly when the age of their youngest child increased to between five and nine years to 84.9 per cent and increased slightly again to 86.6 per cent of men in couple families working full time when their youngest child was between 10 and 14 years: ABS *Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families* 2004 Cat No 6224.0, p 20.

22 ABS *Labour Force Status and other Characteristics of Families* 2000 Cat No 6224.0, p 20.

23 *ibid*, p 20.

Sole parent families

Sole parent families represent 15.7 per cent of all Australian families.²⁴ The overwhelming majority (83.3 per cent) of sole parent families are headed by women and 16.7 per cent are headed by men.²⁵

As with mothers in couple families, the age of the youngest child and the number of her children are key to understanding the participation in work of single mothers. The probability of being in full time or part time employment increases as the age of the youngest child increases.²⁶ Longitudinal data show that over 60 per cent of lone mothers were employed at some stage during a given year.²⁷ In 2002 the full time employment rate for lone mothers was 25.5 per cent, while the part time employment rate was 37.4 per cent.²⁸

Lone mothers are less likely than couple mothers to be employed when they have two or more children of primary school age. One study has indicated that having two or more children of primary school age reduced the probability of paid employment by 15.8 percentage points for lone mothers compared to 10.5 percentage points lower for couple mothers.²⁹ Researchers suggest several reasons for lone mothers' lower workforce participation, notably barriers to employment such as lower levels of education or workplace skills, extended absences from the workforce or no employer continuity, resulting in lone mothers having more difficulty returning to the workforce.³⁰ Lower workforce participation may also reflect the fact that lone mothers have less opportunity to share the responsibilities of child care with a partner,³¹ although non-resident fathers can play an important role in supporting the resident parent in child rearing as well as child rearing itself.³²

A further reason is the effect of employment of one partner on the other. In couple families with children, when the male partner is not employed, the female partner also tends to be unemployed. Conversely, when the male is employed, the female is also likely to be employed.³³

24 ABS *Year Book Australia* 2005 Cat No 1301.0, p 141.

25 *ibid*, p 141. It is important to note here that non-resident fathers also play an important role both in parenting post-separation and through arrangements which assist the resident parent. As noted at p 4, while HREOC is interested to hear from all individuals and types of families with paid work and caring responsibilities, including non-resident fathers, this paper does not attempt to tackle parenting after separation issues. For an extensive examination of these issues see the report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs *Every Picture Tells a Story: Report of the Inquiry into Child Custody Arrangements in the Event of Family Separation* Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2004 and submissions to the inquiry at: www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fcchildcustody/.

26 Matthew Gray et al *Changes in the Labour Force Status of Lone and Couple Australian Mothers 1983-2002* Research Paper No 33 Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2003, p 10.

27 *ibid*, p 3.

28 *ibid*, p 3.

29 Calculated in comparison with mothers in each category with one child in primary school only: Michael Alexander "The Determinants of Employment of Australian Mothers: A further analysis of lone and coupled mothers" Paper delivered at *Families Matter: 9th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference* Melbourne 9-11 February 2005, p 12.

30 Karen Wilson, Jocelyn Pech and Kylee Bates *Parents, the Labour Force and Social Security Policy* Research Paper No 2 Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 1999, pp 16-17.

31 Michael Alexander "The Determinants of Employment of Australian Mothers: A further analysis of lone and coupled mothers" Paper delivered at *Families Matter: 9th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference* Melbourne 9-11 February 2005, p 12.

32 See Bruce Smyth "Parent-Child Contact Schedules After Divorce" (2004) 69 *Family Matters*, pp 32-43 for a discussion of the ways in which different models of shared care can facilitate positive outcomes for children and parents.

33 David de Vaus *Diversity and Change in Australian Families: Statistical profiles* Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2004, p 38.

The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health shows that lone mothers are more likely than other groups of women to be unhappy with their hours of work, in addition to experiencing lower economic wellbeing.³⁴

Some current working arrangements

Workplace arrangements over the last couple of decades are becoming much more diverse. Part time work or a longer working week are becoming as much a norm as the standard 38 hour working week. Significant family-friendly provisions are emerging in the workplace, but there are also arguments that work is becoming more intense and stressful. The last two decades have seen an increase in the rate and proportion of casual employment; there is certainly disagreement about the implications for families of casual work.

Family-friendly provisions

Based on an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) definition, one way of describing family-friendly policies are those that:

- facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life through adequate family and child development resources;
- facilitate parental and other carers' choice about work and care; and
- promote gender equality in employment opportunities.³⁵

Family-friendly policies such as flexible working hours and parental leave provisions help employees with family responsibilities to manage their competing paid and unpaid work obligations.

Family-friendly employment provisions are not uniformly available across different industries, occupations and employer sizes. For example, in 2000, 43.5 per cent of men and 45.1 per cent of women had access to paid paternity or maternity leave in their main job.³⁶ Full time employees were more likely to have access than part time employees with 50.4 per cent of men and 64.3 per cent of women working full time having entitlements compared to seven per cent of men and 24.5 per cent of women working part time.³⁷ People working in the public sector were almost twice as likely as those in the private sector to have an entitlement to paid maternity or paternity leave.³⁸

34 Deborah Loxton "What Future? The long term implications of sole motherhood for economic wellbeing" (2005) 35 *Just Policy*, pp 39-44.

35 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling work and family life – Australia, Denmark and The Netherlands* Volume 1 OECD Paris 2002, p 10. See also chapter 8.

36 ABS *Australian Social Trends* 2003 Cat No 4102.0, p 42. In a telephone survey conducted in November 2002 for the "World of Work" Research Cluster at Sydney University, 43 per cent of employees reported that paid maternity leave was available at their workplace: Marian Baird and Adam Seth Litwin "Unpaid and Paid Maternity Leave in Australia: Access, use and options for broader coverage" Paper presented at the *Association of Industrial Relations Academics of Australia and New Zealand Annual Conference* Noosa Queensland 3-6 February 2004, p 5.

37 ABS *Australian Social Trends* 2003 Cat No 4102.0, p 42.

38 *ibid*, p 42.

Table 2: Access to paid maternity/paternity leave entitlements in 2000

Employment status	Men %	Women %
Full Time	50.4	64.3
Part Time	7.0	24.5
Public Sector	73.0	71.3
Private Sector	36.8	36.0
Length of time in current job		
Less than 2 years	31.5	32.6
2-5 years	42.1	44.5
5 years and over	52.7	57.5

Source: ABS *Australian Social Trends* 2003 Cat No 4102.0, p 43.

Family-friendly arrangements are more likely to be offered to better trained and higher skilled employees.³⁹ Professionals are estimated to be 14.4 per cent more likely to have flexibility over hours than salespersons or personal workers. Plant and machinery operators and drivers are 12.3 per cent less likely to have flexible start and finish times.⁴⁰ In certain male dominated industries, possibilities for family-friendly arrangements are also limited. In the mining industry, for example, long commuting ("fly in, fly out") for long shifts or weeks at a time do not permit the flexibilities of some professional white collar work.⁴¹

39 Matthew Gray and Jacqueline Tudball "Access to Family-Friendly Work Practices: Differences within and between Australian workplaces" (2002) 61 *Family Matters*, p 35. It should be noted that, although this article was published in 2002, it drew on 1995 data from the Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey (AWIRS) which has not been repeated. This, then, is the most recent and robust national workplace based survey information. Data available through the federal Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Workplace Agreements Database and acirrt's ADAM database only consider provisions available in registered collective agreements.

40 Matthew Gray and Jacqueline Tudball *Family Friendly Work-Practices: Differences within and between workplaces* Research Report No 7 Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2002, p 20.

41 See Anne M Sibbel *The Psychosocial Well-Being of Children from Fly-in/Fly-out Mining Families* Unpublished paper Faculty of Community Studies, Education and Social Sciences Edith Cowan University Perth 2001, pp 15-18 for a discussion of "fly in, fly out" mining practices and their impact on families.

Table 3: Ability to work extra hours in order to take time off by occupation and gender

Occupation	Able to work extra hours %	
	Males	Females
Managers and Administration	52.6	53.7
Professionals	44.1	34.5
Associate Professionals	43.6	47.9
Tradespersons and related workers	38.9	40.0
Advanced Professionals	51.3	52.4
Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers	41.2	42.6
Intermediate production and transport workers	25.5	28.0
Elementary clerical, sales and service workers	29.2	27.9
Labourers and related workers	29.7	24.7

Source: ABS *Working Arrangements* 2000 Cat No 6342.0, p 20.

There are gender differences in use of family-friendly provisions. An Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) survey conducted in 2002 found that of employees with a child aged less than six years who took a break when their youngest child was born, six per cent of men took longer than six weeks, compared to around 93 per cent of women.⁴² In 1999 within couple families with both parents employed, 69.8 per cent of mothers used flexible working arrangements including flexible working hours, permanent part time work and working at home, to care for their children.⁴³

In 2003, of employees with children under 12 years of age, women were more likely to take parental or carers' leave than men, and men were significantly more likely to take paid than unpaid leave for all forms of leave.⁴⁴

Table 4: Employees with children under 12 years who took parental/carers' leave in November 2003

	Gender (%) of employees with children under 12 years	Gender (%) of those who took parental/carers' leave in the last 2 weeks
Men	57.3	49.5
Women	42.7	50.5

Employees with children under 12 years who took parental/carers' leave in November 2000

	Gender (%) of employees with children under 12 years	Gender (%) of those who took parental/carers' leave in the last 2 weeks
Men	58.8	33.2
Women	41.2	66.8

Source: ABS *Working Arrangements* 2003 Cat No 6342.0, p 25 and p 26.

42 ABS *Career Experience* 2003 Cat No 6254.0, p 35. This does not include those who took no leave.

43 ABS *Australian Social Trends* 2003 Cat No 4102.0, p 43.

44 ABS *Working Arrangements* 2003 Cat No 6342.0, p 27.

While women's generally greater use of family-friendly provisions helps them to balance paid work with family, it leaves the gendered nature of unpaid work in home largely unchanged.⁴⁵ Men's lack of access to and uptake of family-friendly provisions also affects their capacity to take on a greater role in family life.⁴⁶

Long hours for full time workers

Average hours worked by full time workers in 2003-2004 was 40.4 hours per week, 41.9 hours for men and 37.5 hours for women.⁴⁷ It is mostly men, often fathers, who work long hours in the paid workforce. In 2004, 34.2 per cent of men worked 45 hours or more per week.⁴⁸ By comparison, only 12.5 per cent of women were in paid work more than 45 hours per week.⁴⁹ While men working long hours experience only a slight increase in stress-related illness, the incidence of such illness rises for women as the hours of work increase.⁵⁰ This can perhaps be explained by women's greater responsibility for family and unpaid work in the home.⁵¹ Men are also more likely to be paid for the overtime they work.⁵²

Work intensification

There has been increased public debate over the issue of work intensification, with some commentators arguing that employees across a range of sectors are required to do more tasks, working harder and faster.⁵³

Unpaid overtime may indicate the presence of an imbalance between the quantity of work and allocated paid time in which to do it. In 2000, over one third of employees who usually worked overtime in their main job took it unpaid.⁵⁴ Workplace culture can lead to increased work intensity. Interview research indicates that expectations of management and co-workers create a sense that working harder is "the right thing to do."⁵⁵

45 See Alison Morehead "Governments, Workplaces and Households" (2005) 70 *Family Matters*, pp 4-9 at p 7. See also chapter 3 for a discussion of unpaid work, chapter 5 and p 131.

46 See p 54 and p 57 for further discussion on this point.

47 *ABS Year Book Australia* 2005 Cat No 1301.0, p 175. Full time working hours grew strongly in the 1980s and early 1990s and have levelled off since the late 1990s: *ABS Australian Social Trends* 2003 Cat No 4102.0, p 119.

48 *ABS Forms of Employment* 2005 Cat No 6359.0, p 16. This is particularly pertinent when the median age for first time fathers is 32.5 years: *ABS Mothers Day 2004 and National Families Week* Media Release 10 May 2004.

49 *ABS Forms of Employment* 2005 Cat No 6359.0, p 17.

50 See p 36 and pp 58-59. See also Mark Wooden "The Changing Labour Market and its Impact on Work and Employment Relations" in Ron Callus and Russell D Lansbury (eds) *Working Futures: The changing nature of work and employment relations in Australia* The Federation Press Sydney 2002, p 63.

51 Mark Wooden "The Changing Labour Market and its Impact on Work and Employment Relations" in Ron Callus and Russell D Lansbury (eds) *Working Futures: The changing nature of work and employment relations in Australia* The Federation Press Sydney 2002, p 63. Longer hours impact on paid work and family balance by eating into the time available to provide care: Bettina Cass "Employment Time and Family Time: The intersection of labour market transformation and family responsibilities in Australia" in Ron Callus and Russell D Lansbury (eds) *Working Futures: The changing nature of work and employment relations in Australia* The Federation Press Sydney 2002, p 149-50.

52 *ABS Working Arrangements* 2000 Cat No 6342.0, p 4.

53 Australian Council of Trade Unions *The Future of Work: Working hours and work intensification policy* ACTU Congress Melbourne 2003, p 2. A 1997 ACTU survey found that 70.3 per cent of respondents noted an increased workload in their workplace and 26.8 percent of respondents experienced excessive performance monitoring in their workplace, a practice that also creates pressure to work harder and faster: Australian Council of Trade Unions *A Report on the ACTU 1997 National OHS Survey on Stress at Work* ACTU Occupational Health and Safety Unit Melbourne 1998, p 7. See also Cameron Allan, Michael O'Donnell and David Peetz "More Tasks, Less Secure, Working Harder: Three dimensions of labour utilisation" (1999) 41 *Journal of Industrial Relations* 4, pp 519-535 at p 523; Barbara Pocock *The Work/Life Collision* The Federation Press Sydney 2003, pp 22-23.

54 That is, not part of a salary package, time in lieu or other arrangements. Of full time employees who regularly worked overtime in 2000, 45 per cent of women and 28 per cent of men were not paid: *ABS Year Book Australia* 2003 Cat No 1301.0, p 170.

55 Janne Skinner "Unintended Consequence of Doing the Right Thing: Why some workers are working harder" (2002) 12 *Labour & Industry* 3, pp 27-41 at p 29.

While working hard in itself can lead to workers experiencing greater autonomy and responsibility, and may well create pride in achievements, it may also be accompanied by high levels of stress.⁵⁶ It is argued that work intensification can lead to job related anxiety, exhaustion and work-related depression,⁵⁷ which spill over into relationships outside of work.⁵⁸

Part time work

There has been a growth in part time work for all employed people in recent decades: from 23.5 per cent in 1993 to 28.5 per cent in 2003.⁵⁹ Much of this part time work is undertaken by women. Of all 2 823 800 people working part time in 2005, 70.9 per cent are women and 29.1 per cent are men.⁶⁰

The increase in part time work has certainly enabled more women with family responsibilities to enter the workforce when they may otherwise have remained out of the paid workforce. While it may be a benefit for women and their families to work part time, men have not generally joined their partners in part time work. This means that more families are under increased time pressure as the total paid and unpaid work load has increased.⁶¹

Part time work can be an important family-friendly mechanism. However, mothers often do not have choice over the quality of the part time work that is available.⁶² Part time jobs are often isolated from the career structure offered by permanent full time work, and so tend to offer little by way of career advancement.⁶³ Some part time jobs have very short hours and as a result many of these employees may be "underemployed".⁶⁴ Although part time jobs are increasingly becoming permanent, they remain more often casual jobs, which have reduced job stability or benefits.⁶⁵

56 Barbara Pocock *The Work/Life Collision* The Federation Press Sydney 2003, pp 22-23. Interviewees for qualitative research, when asked to identify the top three most stressful conditions at work, reported increased workload as the second most common condition: Australian Council of Trade Unions *A Report on the ACTU 1997 National OHS Survey on Stress at Work* ACTU Occupational Health and Safety Unit Melbourne 1998, p 11.

57 Ines Wincert "Job Insecurity and Work Intensification" in Brendan Burchell, David Ladipo and Frank Wilkinson (eds) *Job Security and Work Intensification* Routledge Florence 2001, p 97.

58 Helen Glezer and Ilene Wolcott "Work and Family Life: Reciprocal effects" (1999) 52 *Family Matters*, pp 69-74 at p 72.

59 ABS *Australian Social Trends* 2004 Cat No 4102.0, p 102.

60 ABS *Australian Labour Market Statistics* Cat No 6105.0 April 2005, p 37 trend data. Conversely, for the 7 057 500 full time workers, 34.4 per cent are women compared with 65.6 per cent of men.

61 ABS *Australian Social Trends* 2003 Cat No 4102.0, p 119. See pp 36-37 and pp 58-59 for the discussion of time pressures.

62 The notion of quality part time work is defined and discussed in: Industrial Relations Victoria *Quality Part-Time Work: Working better for everyone* A Report from the Quality Part-Time Work Project Industrial Relations Victoria Melbourne 2005. Quality part time work is defined in the report to include: "...access at all occupational levels and for both men and women; the same protections as full-time work in respect job protection, predictability of hours and to protection against discrimination; pro-rata wages and access to benefits; equal access to training and promotion; possibility of moving either way between full-time and inclusion in the workplace culture and work group": p 7.

63 Many women may not seek promotions, particularly when their children are young, but of course many women do desire a career path, even in part time work. For a discussion of part time work, see Sara Charlesworth, Iain Campbell and Belinda Probert, with June Allen and Leonie Morgan *Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities: Policy implementation options* A Report for the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet and Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development Centre for Applied Social Research RMIT Melbourne 2002, p 35.

64 Almost eight per cent of employed persons in Australia are working less than 10 hours a week: *ibid*, pp 34-35. In February 2005, 70 percent of those working less than 15 hours a week were happy with their current hours, but 11 per cent had actively looked for more work or were available to undertake more work: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations communication, citing ABS *Labour Force Survey* detailed data release, cat no 6291.0.55.001, datacubeE01_may 01. See also ABS *Working Arrangements* 2003 Cat No 6342.0, p 24.

65 Barbara Pocock, John Buchanan and Iain Campbell "New' Industrial Relations? Meeting the challenge of casual work in Australia" Paper presented at the *Association of Industrial Relations Academics of Australia and New Zealand Annual Conference* Noosa Queensland 3-6 February 2004, pp 3-4.

Casual work

Over the last twenty years the proportion of Australians in casual work has steadily increased, as has the proportion of temporary jobs and contract work.⁶⁶ In 2003, 27.6 per cent of all employees were employed casually, rising from 18.9 per cent in 1988.⁶⁷

Significantly, the number of full time casuals grew by 176 per cent in the 15 years from 1988 to 2003, along with an increase of 88 per cent in part time casuals.⁶⁸ Full time casual positions are largely filled by men.⁶⁹ Over this same period, male casual employment grew by 151 per cent and female casual employment by 62 per cent.⁷⁰

Table 5: Percentage of male and female casuals working full and part time in 2004

	Male %	Female %
Full time	53.9	18.9
Parttime	46.1	81.1

Source: ABS *Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership* 2004 Cat No 6310.0, p 34.

Note: The ABS defines casuals as those who reported that they did not have leave entitlements.

Women represented 52.7 per cent of all casual workers in 2004. Eighty one per cent of all women casual workers worked part time in 2004 compared to 46 per cent of male casual workers.⁷¹ This slightly higher representation of women in casual work overall, and their substantial representation in part time casual work in particular, also suggests that women engage in casual work in order to balance paid work and family responsibilities.⁷² Indeed 34.3 per cent of women working casually have dependent children while only 18.1 per cent of male casual workers have dependent children.⁷³

66 Ron Callus and Russell D Lansbury "Working Futures: Australia in a global context" in Ron Callus and Russell D Lansbury (eds) *Working Futures: The changing nature of work and employment relations in Australia* The Federation Press Sydney 2002, p 237.

67 Tony Kryger *Casual Employment: Trends and characteristics* Research Note No 53 Parliamentary Library Department of Parliamentary Services Canberra 2004, p 2. There are problems with using the Australian Bureau of Statistics measurement of casual work. Owner managers are not excluded from the category of self-reported "without leave entitlements" and their presence inflates the number of casuals by at least three percentage points. While the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey does not include owner managers, the earlier Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey only surveyed employees in workplaces over 20 people. Thus, for a comparison across time, the ABS statistics had to be used.

68 Tony Kryger *Casual Employment: Trends and characteristics* Research Note No 53 Parliamentary Library Department of Parliamentary Services Canberra 2004, p 2.

69 Iain Campbell "The Spreading Net: Age and gender in the process of casualisation in Australia" (2000) 45 *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, pp 68-99 at pp 87-88.

70 Tony Kryger *Casual Employment: Trends and characteristics* Research Note No 53 Parliamentary Library Department of Parliamentary Services Canberra 2004, p 2.

71 The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines casuals as those who reported that they did not have leave entitlements. ABS *Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership* 2004 Cat No 6310.0 p 34. See also p 22.

72 A Victorian study indicates that "caring for children" is the second most common reason for working part time, with 23.1 per cent of respondents nominating this reason: Industrial Relations Victoria *Quality Part-Time Work: Working better for everyone* A Report from the Quality Part-Time Work Project Industrial Relations Victoria Melbourne 2005, p 2.

73 ABS *Forms of Employment* 2001 Cat No 6359.0, pp 9-10.

It is often argued that, as casual work is paid on an hourly basis, it offers both employers and employees flexibility and assists families to manage their paid work and family obligations. Certainly, there is evidence that women who work casually in order to meet their family responsibilities experience improved paid work and family balance.⁷⁴ Self-reported measures of satisfaction reveal that casuals are happier than permanent employees with their pay and ability to balance paid work with unpaid work due to increased flexibility.⁷⁵

However, casual employees are less satisfied with job security and the type of work undertaken;⁷⁶ and flexibility comes at the cost of most leave entitlements.⁷⁷ One qualitative study found that casual workers were more likely to view themselves as “on tap” than in charge of their own working time.⁷⁸ More than half of all casual employees in one study (57.5 per cent) reported that their earnings varied on a weekly basis compared to 15.3 per cent of those of all ongoing employees.⁷⁹

Questions

1. *How do changes in arrangements for paid work in Australia affect the family responsibilities of women and men, particular groups of people or particular family types?*
 2. *Do women and men need different workplace arrangements to assist them to balance their paid work and family obligations? Why or why not?*
 3. *Would equality between men and women require a more equal sharing of paid work?*
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74 Amanda Hosking and Mark Western “The Effects of Non-Standard Employment on Work-Family Balance” Paper presented at *Families Matter: 9th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference* Melbourne 9-11 February 2005, p 3.

75 Mark Wooden and Diana Warren *Characteristics of Casual and Fixed-Term Employment: Evidence from the HILDA survey* Working Paper No15 Melbourne Institute Melbourne 2003, p 16. And of course most casuals receive a pay loading.

76 *ibid*, p 16.

77 Rosemary J Owens “The ‘Long-Term or Permanent Casual’: An oxymoron or ‘a well enough understood Australianism’ in the law?” (2001) 27 *Australian Bulletin of Labour* 2, pp 128-129.

78 Barbara Pocock, Rosslyn Prosser and Ken Bridge *Only a Casual...How casual work affects employees, households and communities in Australia* Labour Studies School of Social Sciences University of Adelaide July 2004, p 173. See also Department of Community Services and Department of Employment and Workplace Relations in association with Work and Family Life Consortium *OECD Review of Family Friendly Policies: The reconciliation of work and family life* Canberra 2002, pp 47-49.

79 Tony Kryger *Casual Employment: Trends and characteristics* Research Note No 53 Parliamentary Library Department of Parliamentary Services Canberra 2004, p 4.

Chapter 3:

Australian families and unpaid work

Introduction

Understanding how men and women manage their unpaid work in the home is central to understanding the ways in which Australian families manage the combination of paid work and family commitments. While unpaid work such as caring for children or other adults is often an enjoyable activity, as with many forms of paid work these activities are “work” in the sense that someone has to do them, regardless of how meaningful or pleasurable the experience.

Despite the overall increase in women’s participation in the labour force and a decrease in men’s participation, the distribution of unpaid labour has remained largely unchanged over recent decades. When women spend less time in paid work they spend a much greater amount of time in unpaid work. For men, even a large reduction in time spent in the labour market results in only a small increase in time spent in unpaid work.¹

This chapter provides an overview of available information on the ways men and women use their time in unpaid work and on how Australian families currently combine their paid work and family responsibilities. As a “snapshot” of the current situation, this chapter provides a basis for considering the current paid work and family arrangements and whether there is a need for change.

Definitions

Unpaid work

ABS time use surveys use the category “committed time” to refer to domestic labour, purchasing, child care and the provision of help to others. This will be termed more colloquially throughout this paper as unpaid work.²

Housework

The ABS defines housework as “domestic activities,” which are then divided into the sub-groups “housework” and “total other housework”. Together these categories include food preparation, service and clean-up, washing, ironing and clothes care, indoor cleaning, domestic management, home and car maintenance and improvement, pet care and care of grounds. These activities will be referred to throughout the paper as housework.³

1 Michael Bittman and Jocelyn Pixley *The Double Life of the Family* Allen and Unwin St Leonards 1997, pp 101-102.

2 ABS *How Australians Use Their Time* 1997 Cat No 4153.0, p 1, p 14, p 71 and p 77.

3 *ibid*, p 1, p 4, p 14 and p 71.

Child care

The ABS definition of child care activities includes physical and emotional care of children, teaching, reprimanding, playing with children and talking to children. Where we refer specifically to parental caring for children in this chapter we will use the term child care.⁴

A note on the data

The time use data used in this chapter are derived from two surveys, one undertaken in 1992 and the other in 1997. The 1997 survey provides the most recent time use data available in Australia.⁵

Time use data collected by the ABS provide a unique insight into the ways in which men and women divide their time between different activities throughout the day and the week. These data help to illustrate how Australian families manage the competing obligations of paid work and family and, through international comparisons, can illustrate how social policies affect patterns of paid and unpaid work.⁶

Another source of information on time spent in unpaid work is the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, a household survey which has defined and measured housework as meal preparation, washing dishes, cleaning house, washing clothes, ironing and sewing.⁷ Where not specified otherwise, this paper uses the term housework to refer to both indoor and outdoor domestic tasks, as do the ABS time use surveys.

Time spent in unpaid work

On average, men and women spend a similar amount of their time each day on paid and unpaid work combined, 7.08 and 7.2 hours per day respectively.⁸ However, time use surveys show that gender is the most significant factor in determining how Australians spend their time. Women spend five hours per day in unpaid work, while men spend 2.73 hours per day.⁹

Although housework includes traditionally male tasks such as car maintenance, lawn mowing, rubbish removal, pet care, paperwork and budgeting, women's housework accounts for 70 per cent of all household work in Australian households.¹⁰ Whatever the cultural or individual differences in how certain domestic tasks are allocated and carried out,¹¹ there remains a clear overall gender divide in housework, with tasks traditionally divided into "women's work" (such as cooking, ironing, and house cleaning) and "men's work" (such as home maintenance and

4 *ibid*, p 1, p 6, p 14 and p 71.

5 These data are then analysed by time use researchers, such as Michael Bittman and Lyn Craig. This chapter relies on the work of these researchers to draw conclusions from the data.

6 For a recent example, see the work of Michael Bittman and other contributors in Nancy Folbre and Michael Bittman (eds) *Family Time: The social organization of care* Routledge London 2004.

7 See pp 27-29 and Table 7.

8 *ABS How Australians Use Their Time* 1997 Cat No 4153.0, p 7.

9 *ibid*, p 33. Expressed another way, women spend an average of 69.4 per cent of their day on unpaid work, compared to men who spend 38.5 per cent of their day on unpaid work.

10 Michael Bittman and Jocelyn Pixley *The Double Life of the Family* Allen and Unwin St Leonards 1997, p 96.

11 It should be noted that the figures in this chapter are statistical averages which do not render visible the many individual examples of families which do not conform to this overall pattern. For example, within Filipino families in Australia, domestic work is shared differently, in that vacuuming is viewed as a masculine task because it is heavier work than sweeping, which is traditionally a feminine task in the Philippines. See Grace Soriano "Filipino Families in Australia" in Robyn Hartley (ed) *Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia* Allen and Unwin St Leonards 1995, p 106.

repairs). There has been some change in recent years, with more men preparing meals, cleaning, washing and ironing, and more women taking out rubbish and doing home maintenance or repairs.¹² However, even with these emerging overlaps, there remains a distinct gender segregation of housework, as well as child care.

Table 6: Participation in certain household tasks by men and women – 1997 time use survey

	Participation rate (%)				
	Food preparation	Other indoor laundry	Grounds and housework	Animal care	Home maintenance
Men	49	13	21	33	17
Women	80	52	63	39	7

Source: ABS *How Australian Use Their Time* 1997 Cat No 4153.0, p 5.

Note: The ABS defines housework as food preparation, service and clean-up; washing, ironing and clothes care and other housework such as indoor cleaning and tidying activities. See p 25 for a definition of the way HREOC uses "housework".

Cells do not add to 100 per cent but represent the percentage of men or women who participate in the particular activity.

The time cost in partnering

Across all age groups, women do more domestic and caring work than men. The 1997 time use data indicate that the difference in the amount of unpaid housework, including traditionally male tasks, is accentuated when men and women partner. The difference between time spent on domestic work each day between single men and women is small: single women aged 25-44 years do just 12 minutes more housework a day than single men. When women become part of a couple, however, their domestic work load increases relative to men; partnered women aged 25-44 do 71 minutes a day more housework than partnered men.¹³

Analysis of Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) data indicates that for men, the number of children and presence of preschool children add significantly to the time spent on housework. Men with attitudes described as "liberal" also do more housework than men with "traditional" attitudes.¹⁴ However, marital status remains the biggest factor in determining the amount of time men spend on housework.¹⁵

12 Janeen Baxter "Patterns of Change and Stability in the Gender Division of Household Labour in Australia, 1986-1997" (2002) 38 *Journal of Sociology* 4, pp 399-424.

13 David de Vaus *Diversity and Change in Australian families: Statistical profiles* Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2004, p 293.

14 Janeen Baxter, Belinda Hewitt and Mark Western "Post Familial Families and Domestic Division of Labor" (2005) 36 *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 4 (forthcoming).

15 *ibid.* Unpaid work in this study only refers to indoor activities such as meal preparation, washing dishes, house cleaning, washing clothes, ironing and sewing.

Table 7: Mean hours per week of housework in couple households – 2001 HILDA data

	Women employed full time		Women employed part time		Women home duties		Women unemployed		Women retired	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Men employed full time	6.0	14.3	5.2	20.1	4.6	27.5	5.5	20.5	3.6	23.7
N	868		830		545		39		30	
Men employed part time	6.7	14.3	5.7	18.7	5.9	31.8	5.6	23.4	5.4	21.6
N	98		77		65		5		13	
Men unemployed	10.6	16.0	9.5	16.1	9.2	21.8	8.9	14.7	8.5	21.0
N	31		20		44		15		2	
Men retired	9.0	11.1	9.1	23.9	7.5	25.9	13.2	34.7	7.3	23.2
N	25		34		127		6		523	
Men home duties	13.0	16.5	11.0	11.5	16.4	20.2	3.0	14.0	43.3	10.3
N	28		2		5		1		3	

Source: HILDA data Wave 1 analysis conducted by Janeen Baxter, Belinda Hewitt and Mark Western "Post Familial Families and the Domestic Division of Labor" (2005) 36 *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 4 Table 2 (forthcoming).

N: Number of cases of that household type in the study. Note: Where number of cases falls below 20 results should be interpreted with caution.

Note: The definition of housework in the HILDA survey is limited to "indoor" tasks such as preparing meals, washing dishes, cleaning the house, washing clothes, ironing and sewing.

The same study indicates that women's participation in indoor housework activities increases substantially when they partner, and it is their marital status that is the greatest determinant of hours worked. For women, the presence of children, employment status and hours worked, their attitudes towards gender and their income contribution account for 18 per cent of the difference in hours spent on unpaid work, while for men it is eight per cent.¹⁶

The gendered division of time spent on these household tasks is most apparent in married households, while men and women in de facto relationships tend to have a more egalitarian division of time and labour. Married women do six hours additional housework each week compared to women in de facto relationships.¹⁷ Men in de

¹⁶ *ibid.*

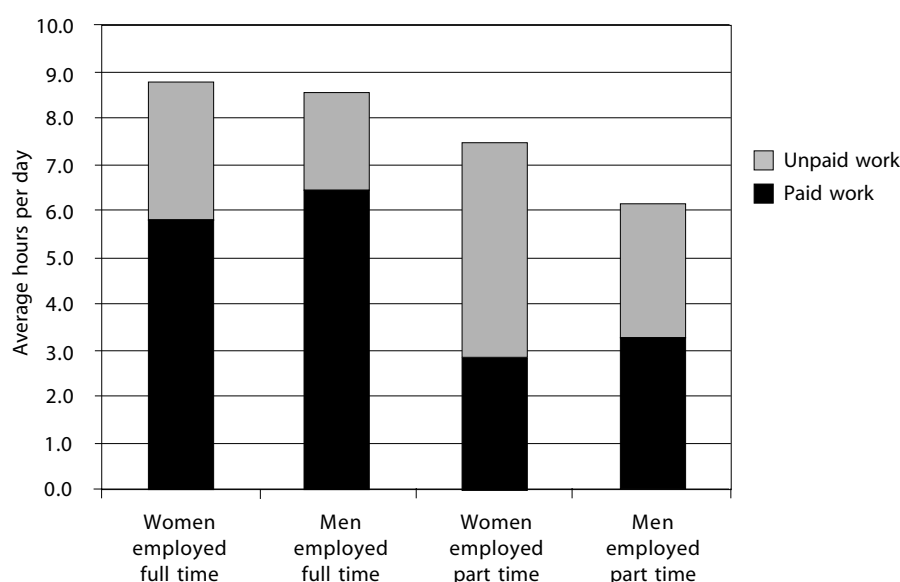
¹⁷ Janeen Baxter "To Marry or Not to Marry: Marital status and the household division of labor" (2005) 26 *Journal of Family Issues* 3, pp 300-321 at p 312.

facto relationships do a greater proportion of indoor housework (40 per cent) than married men (26 per cent).¹⁸ However, there is no difference in the amount of time spent on housework for the two groups of men, at nine hours a week.¹⁹

Women more often take responsibility for household tasks that have to be done at a particular time²⁰ and the effect is more marked for partnered women than their single counterparts.

Partnered women's share of unpaid work may make it more difficult for them to participate in paid work, and certainly 1997 time use data reveal that more partnered women worked less than 20 hours per week than single women: 42 per cent compared to 31 per cent. While 69 per cent of single women worked more than 21 hours per week in 1997, only 58 per cent of partnered women did.²¹

Graph 3: Couples without children work activity (primary activities)
– 1997 time use survey



Source: ABS *How Australian Use Their Time 1997* Cat No 4153.0, p 33.

Note: Much unpaid work is undertaken in conjunction with another activity. Analysis of unpaid work as primary activity may under-report the time spent on it.

The time cost of parenthood

Apart from gender, parenthood is the most significant determinant in men and women's time use. Parenthood brings a greater total work commitment for both sexes at the household level. Parents also re-allocate time towards unpaid work from paid work, recreation, leisure and personal care to meet the greater demands of unpaid work that children bring.²²

18 *ibid*, at p 312.

19 *ibid*, at p 312.

20 Michael Bittman and Jocelyn Pixley *The Double Life of the Family* Allen and Unwin St Leonards 1997, pp 97-101.

21 Lyn Craig *Time to Care: A comparison of how couple and sole parent households allocate time to work and children* SPRC Discussion Paper No 133 University of New South Wales Sydney June 2004, p 8.

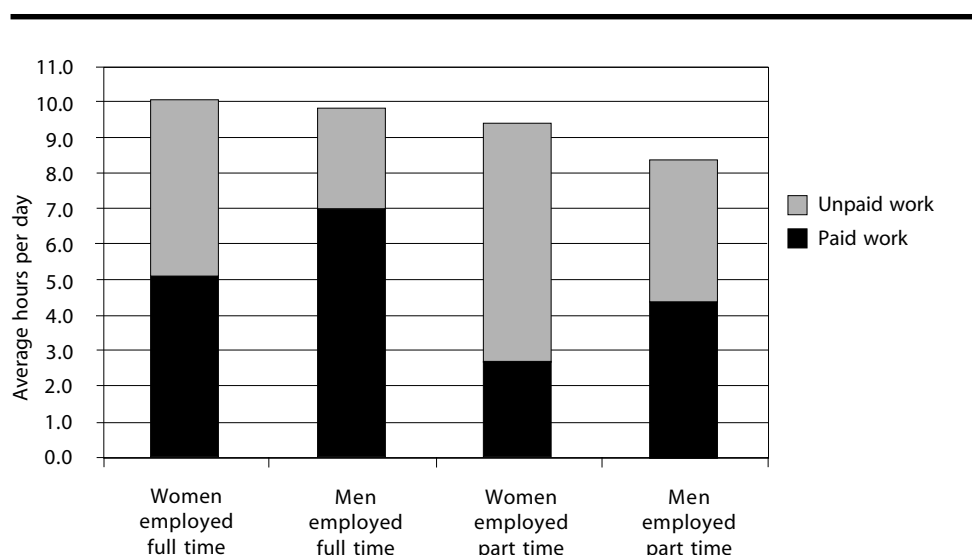
22 Lyn Craig *The Hidden Cost of Parenthood: The impact of children on adult time* PhD Thesis School of Social Science and Policy University of New South Wales 2004, p 89 www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/people/Craig/TheHiddenCostofParenthoodTheImpactofChildrenonAdultTime.pdf.

Men and women have a different experience of parenting as gender determines how the time commitment of parenting is met within households.

Children, gender and unpaid work

The presence of children has a profound and lasting impact on a household's use of time.²³ Considering only the main activity undertaken at one time, households with one child under the age of three years have a total of 10.9 hours a day unpaid work. Compared to couple families without children this is an increase in unpaid work of five hours a day.²⁴ The time allocation to unpaid work appears to vary with the number and age of children in a family.

Graph 4: Couples with children work activity (primary activities) – 1997 time use survey



Source: ABS *How Australian Use Their Time 1997* Cat No 4153.0, p 33.

Note: Much unpaid work is undertaken in conjunction with another activity. Analysis of unpaid work as primary activity may under report the time spent on it.

The effect of children on the amount of unpaid work undertaken in couple families differs for men and women. For both men and women, unpaid work approximately doubles with the birth of the first child. The unpaid work that men undertake increases from 50 minutes per day to two and a half hours per day. Having one child ensures women undertake just under eight hours of unpaid work per day.²⁵

Impact of children on housework

Analysis of the 1997 time use data indicates that much of the increase that parents spend in unpaid work is taken up by the demands of child care. However focusing on child care alone underestimates the other time costs of children on parents. The presence of children increases the amount of time needed for domestic chores such as tidying up after children and shopping.²⁶

23 *ibid*, p 76.

24 *ibid*, p 73.

25 *ibid*, p 90. Note that the Australian Bureau of Statistics time use surveys measure "main activities" and "all activities". Main activities are those activities reported in a particular time period. All activities include simultaneous activities performed at the same time.

26 *ibid*, p 73.

While child care accounts for four and a half of the extra five hours a day of unpaid work in a household with children, domestic time demands that are not direct child care make up the shortfall.²⁷ As the children age, the amount of household time spent on washing, cooking and shopping increases while time spent on direct child care decreases.²⁸

Women undertake almost all of this extra housework. Analysis of the 1992 time use survey indicates that parenthood increases the time women spend in unpaid work other than child care with mothers averaging a total of 4.76 hours per day in contrast to childless women on 4.52 hours per day. However, parenthood *reduces* the time men spend in unpaid housework.²⁹

Table 8: Work activity in hours per day of parents and non parents by gender – 1992 time use survey (primary and secondary activities)

Work activity	Hours per day			
	Non parent		Parent	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Total unpaid work	2.8	4.5	5.6	10.8
Housework	2.8	4.5	2.1	4.8
Childcare	–	–	3.5	6.0
Paid work	4.4	2.5	6.2	1.6
Total work	7.4	7.5	10.7	12.6

Source: Lyn Craig *The Time Cost of Parenthood: An analysis of daily workload* SPRC Discussion Paper No 117 University of New South Wales Sydney 2002, pp 10 - 11.

1997 time use data support this finding. While the unpaid workload increases for both men and women when they become parents, in almost all types of families, men's time spent in unpaid work as their main activity following the birth of a child is mainly allocated to child care rather than to housework.³⁰ Parenthood has almost no effect on the amount of housework that men undertake. When their youngest child is under five years, fathers do about the same amount of housework as men in childless couples. When their youngest is over five years old, fathers actually do less housework than men in childless couples.³¹ As noted at chapter 2, men take on more paid work when they have children.

The reduction in time spent in direct child care as children age is counteracted for women by the time spent in cleaning, washing, cooking or shopping.³² As women are almost solely responsible for this domestic load, mothers not only have an increased time commitment to children when they first become parents, but their unpaid work lasts well beyond when their children need direct child care.

27 *ibid*, p 74.

28 *ibid*, p 75.

29 Lyn Craig *The Time Cost of Parenthood: An analysis of daily workload* SPRC Discussion Paper No 117 Social Policy Research Centre University of New South Wales Sydney October 2002, p 11.

30 Lyn Craig *The Hidden Cost of Parenthood: The impact of children on adult time* PhD Thesis School of Social Science and Policy University of New South Wales 2004, p 91 www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/people/Craig/TheHiddenCostofParenthoodTheImpactofChildrenonAdultTime.pdf.

31 *ibid*, p 103.

32 *ibid*, p 107.

The time that mothers spend on housework associated with children may be becoming even longer with children remaining dependent into their twenties. Children are now dependent for longer, with many young adults staying in the family home and being supported, for example, while completing tertiary education. Over half of 20 to 22 year olds and 37 per cent of 23 to 24 year olds live with their parents.³³ Although there has not been substantial research into the effect of adult children on women's unpaid labour, evidence of women's greater participation in unpaid labour for their children other than child care suggests that the continued presence of children may mean that women may spend longer periods of time in unpaid labour.

Sole mothers do not do more domestic work than partnered mothers; therefore, given that men do little extra housework where there are children,³⁴ the amounts of unpaid housework are similar for couple and single parent households. However, sole mothers carry a much greater burden for child care.³⁵ This is apparent when secondary activity is counted.³⁶

Division of child care tasks between women and men

While the demands of caring for young children are the greatest, older school age children require a significant amount of care and bring their own demands. Ten to twelve year olds receive 36 hours a week of child care time from parents, while 13-14 year olds receive 29 hours per week.³⁷

When they become parents, partnered women spend a significantly greater amount of time with young children as a primary activity (19.6 hours per week) than do men (9.6 hours per week), although men have increased their average weekly hours spent with young children over the past 30 years.³⁸ In 1974 men spent 4.2 hours a week caring for children as their primary activity. This rose to seven hours per week in 1992 and 7.2 hours in 1997.³⁹

The tasks of child care which men and women undertake are also gendered and this affects both men and women's experience of child care and their ability to combine child care with paid work. Some child care activities are more pleasant and irregular such as talking and playing with children and others such as the physical care of children have to be done at particular times and can be less pleasant.⁴⁰ Men spend 40 per cent of the time they spend on child care talking or playing with children, while women spend only 22 per cent of their child care time doing this task. Women spend 51 per cent of their time providing physical care for children, while men spend 31 per cent of their child care time in this way.⁴¹

33 2001 Census data, cited in David de Vaus *Diversity and Change in Australian Families: Statistical profiles* Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2004, p 144.

34 See pp 30-31.

35 Lyn Craig *The Hidden Cost of Parenthood: The impact of children on adult time* PhD Thesis School of Social Science and Policy University of New South Wales 2004, p 107 www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/people/Craig/TheHiddenCostofParenthoodTheImpactofChildrenonAdultTime.pdf.

36 See Lyn Craig *Time to Care: A comparison of how couple and sole parent households allocate time to work and children* SPRC Discussion Paper No 133 University of New South Wales Sydney 2004.

37 Duncan Ironmonger "Bringing up Bobby and Betty: The inputs and outputs of child care time" in Nancy Folbre and Michael Bittman (eds) *Family Time: The social organization of care* Routledge London 2004, p 103.

38 Michael Bittman "Parenting and Employment: What time-use surveys show" in Nancy Folbre and Michael Bittman (eds) *Family Time: The social organization of care* Routledge London 2004, pp 160-161.

39 *ibid*, pp 161.

40 Lyn Craig *The Hidden Cost of Parenthood: The impact of children on adult time* PhD Thesis School of Social Science and Policy University of New South Wales 2004 www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/people/Craig/TheHiddenCostofParenthoodTheImpactofChildrenonAdultTime.pdf.

41 *ibid*, p 131. The definition of "physical care" includes face-to-face interaction, carrying, holding, cuddling, hugging, soothing, feeding, bathing, dressing and putting children to sleep. See Lyn Craig *Time to Care: A comparison of how couple and sole parent households allocate time to work and children* SPRC Discussion Paper No 133 University of New South Wales Sydney 2004, p 6.

Table 9: Childcare activities of mothers and fathers

Type of activity	Proportion of childcare time spent on activities (%)	
	Men	Women
Primary		
Playing with, reading to, talking to or reprimanding children	40	22
Bathing, feeding etc	31	51
Travel/communication	13	17
Passive care	16	10
Primary and secondary	Men	Women
Playing with, reading to, talking to or reprimanding children	30	25
Bathing, feeding etc	13	21
Travel/communication	5	7
Passive care	52	47

Source: Lyn Craig "Do Australians Share Parenting? Time-diary evidence on fathers' and mothers' time with children" Paper presented to the *Australian Institute of Family Studies 8th Annual Conference* Melbourne 12-14 February 2003.

Mothers also do more things at once while caring for their children. Women spend 34 per cent of their child care time exclusively talking and playing with children (with no other simultaneous activity), while men spend 49 per cent of their child care time talking and playing with children as an exclusive activity. As women are spending more time working on different activities at once, or "multitasking", they have to work harder while spending time with their children, which may make the task of caring less enjoyable.⁴²

Fathers also spend little time in sole charge of their children. Fathers of infants spend less than an hour a day in sole care of their child.⁴³ About 25 per cent of men's child care is done in sole charge of children while 70 per cent of women's child care for a school-aged child (60 per cent for a preschool child) is done in sole charge of their child. Men are more often helping with child care rather than taking sole responsibility for it, which does not enable mothers to pursue other activities such as paid work.⁴⁴ Further, fathers' relationships with their children are often mediated by the mother.⁴⁵

42 Lyn Craig *The Hidden Cost of Parenthood: The impact of children on adult time* PhD Thesis School of Social Science and Policy University of New South Wales 2004, p 133 www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/people/Craig/TheHiddenCostofParenthoodTheImpactofChildrenonAdultTime.pdf.

43 These figures are based on time-use diaries of infants in the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children. Department of Family and Community Services and Australian Institute of Family Studies *Growing Up in Australia: The longitudinal study of Australian children – Annual Report 2004* Commonwealth of Australia Melbourne 2005, p 24.

44 Lyn Craig *The Hidden Cost of Parenthood: The impact of children on adult time* PhD Thesis School of Social Science and Policy University of New South Wales 2004, p 135 www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/people/Craig/TheHiddenCostofParenthoodTheImpactofChildrenonAdultTime.pdf.

45 *ibid*, 135.

Total Work

Time use data indicate that prior to parenting men and women spend roughly equal amounts of time in paid and unpaid work when primary and secondary activities are included, averaging about seven hours and 45 minutes a day.⁴⁶ A significant increase in the total workload accompanies parenthood, however, and much of this increased workload falls on women. The gap between the total work performed by men and women significantly increases when they become parents with fathers averaging nearly ten hours a day in paid and unpaid work and mothers averaging twelve and a half hours a day.⁴⁷

While parents spend substantially more time in total work than non-parents, their experience of time is also different. The feeling of time pressure is caused by doing many activities at one time.⁴⁸ Parenthood substantially increases the amount of time in which men and women are doing more than one activity at once. Time use data show that fathers average 6.64 hours a day doing more than one activity at once compared to childless men who spend an average of 5.7 hours a day multi-tasking.⁴⁹ Mothers spend 9.3 hours a day doing more than one activity compared to childless women who spend 6.7 hours a day multi-tasking.⁵⁰ It is evident that women with children spend more total time in paid and unpaid work and that they experience more time pressure than childless women, childless men and fathers.⁵¹

46 See Lyn Craig *The Time Cost of Children* Submission to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Inquiry into Balancing Work and Family www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fhs/workandfamily/subs/sub050.pdf; Lyn Craig *The Hidden Cost of Parenthood: The impact of children on adult time* PhD Thesis School of Social Science and Policy University of New South Wales, 2004 www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/people/Craig/TheHiddenCostofParenthoodTheImpactofChildrenonAdultTime.pdf.

These figures include what is defined in time use surveys as simultaneous "secondary activities"; activities done at the same time as "primary activities", the bulk of which in this study were child care because about half of all child care is done while doing something else at the same time. This study also does not include time in which child care was recorded as a secondary activity to sleeping.

47 Lyn Craig *The Time Cost of Children* Submission to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Inquiry into Balancing Work and Family www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fhs/workandfamily/subs/sub050.pdf and Lyn Craig *The Hidden Cost of Parenthood: The impact of children on adult time* PhD Thesis School of Social Science and Policy University of New South Wales 2004 www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/people/Craig/TheHiddenCostofParenthoodTheImpactofChildrenonAdultTime.pdf.

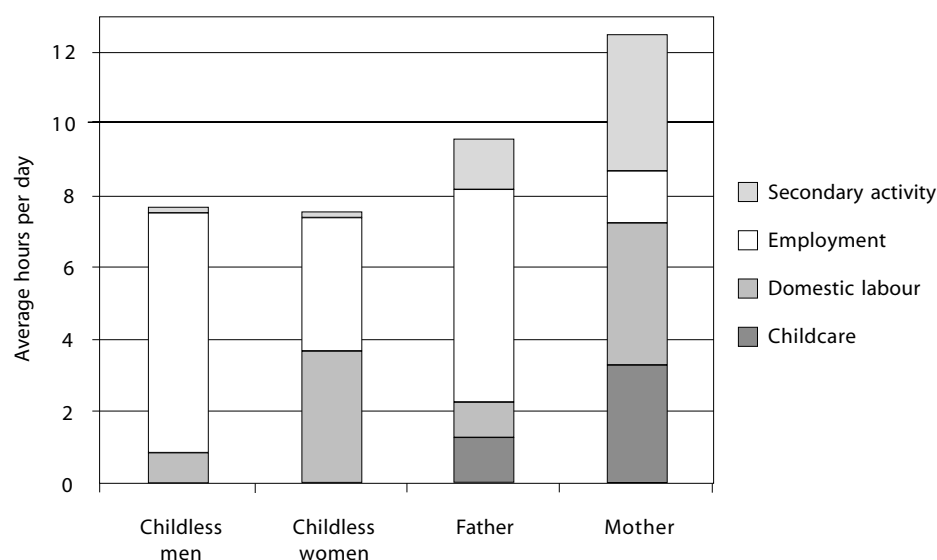
48 Oriell Sullivan "Time Waits for No Wo(man): An investigation of the gendered experience of domestic time" (1997) 31 *Sociology* 2, pp 221-39 at p 222. See also pp 36-37 and pp 58-59.

49 Lyn Craig *The Time Cost of Parenthood: An Analysis of daily workload* SPRC Discussion Paper No 117 University of New South Wales Sydney 2002, p 10. Note: These figures are based on the 1992 ABS Time Use Survey.

50 *ibid*, p 10.

51 *ibid*, p 10. Lyn Craig *The Hidden Cost of Parenthood: The impact of children on adult time* PhD Thesis School of Social Science and Policy University of New South Wales 2004 www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/people/Craig/TheHiddenCostofParenthoodTheImpactofChildrenonAdultTime.pdf.

Graph 5: Total paid and unpaid work by parenthood status by sex



Source: ABS *How Australians Use their Time* 1997 Cat No 4153.0. Graph reproduced from Lyn Craig *The Time Cost of Children: Submission to the Commonwealth parliamentary inquiry into balancing work and family* <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fhs/workandfamily/subs/sub050.pdf>.

Note: These figures are fitted values derived from Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis. The model is set out in Lyn Craig and Michael Bittman "The Effect of Children on Adults' Time-Use: Analysis of the incremental time costs of children in Australia" Paper delivered at *Conference on Cross National Comparisons of Expenditures on Children* Princeton University New Jersey USA 8-9 January 2004.

Sole and partnered mothers' total work

While women with children generally undertake more total work than childless women, having a partner increases the burden again. As mentioned above,⁵² partnering increases both men's and women's total work load. When considering primary and secondary activities, couples in childless families do approximately the same amount of total work, around eight hours a day.⁵³ Partnered women with children have a higher total workload than their male partners and childless women.⁵⁴

Parenthood has slightly less effect on the total work time of sole mothers. A sole mother of two with a youngest child under five years averages two and a quarter hours more total work per day than a single woman, and half an hour less than a partnered mother.⁵⁵ As there were only nine sole fathers represented in the time use survey, the time use data are not statistically sound and have not been analysed.⁵⁶

While there is no statistical difference in the amount of time partnered and sole mothers are engaged in the direct care of their children, when simultaneous activities are considered, sole mothers spend just over seven hours per day in child care

52 See pp 27-29.

53 Lyn Craig *The Hidden Cost of Parenthood: The impact of children on adult time* PhD Thesis School of Social Science and Policy University of New South Wales 2004, p 101 www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/people/Craig/TheHiddenCostofParenthoodTheImpactofChildrenonAdultTime.pdf.

54 *ibid*, p 102.

55 *ibid*, p 102.

56 *ibid*, p 100.

compared to partnered mothers just over six hours per day.⁵⁷ As partnered fathers spend one hour and twenty minutes in child care as both a direct and indirect activity per day, sole mothers make up for the absence of a partner through increased activity.⁵⁸ As sole mothers spend more time than partnered mothers supervising their children as a primary or secondary activity, this limits their opportunities to engage in paid work.⁵⁹

Effect of unpaid work on paid work

Based on an analysis of the 1997 time use survey, it is evident that most households do not just add the unpaid work time that children present to their paid work activity, rather they reduce time spent in other types of activities.⁶⁰

Women tend to reduce their time spent in paid work to meet the increased unpaid work demands, with this effect more marked for sole mothers.⁶¹ While workforce participation rises for partnered mothers as their children grow older, this does not occur for sole mothers as they spend only six minutes per day longer in paid work when their youngest child is school age than when their youngest child is in preschool.⁶²

The 1992 time use survey shows that parenthood increased male and reduced female time in paid employment. While fathers spent 6.2 hours per day in paid work, childless men spend only 4.4 hours per day. Compared to childless women's two and a half hours per day in paid work, mothers averaged only 1.64 hours per day.⁶³

Time pressures and leisure

Women report feeling more "time pressured" in combining paid work and family responsibilities than men, an experience which is associated with outcomes such as poor health and reduced life satisfaction.⁶⁴ Time use studies have also shown that less time in paid work increases leisure time for men, while the same decrease in paid work for women results in an increase in unpaid work rather than increased leisure time.⁶⁵

57 Lyn Craig *Time to Care: A comparison of how couple and sole parent households allocate time to work and children* SPRC Discussion Paper No 133 University of New South Wales Sydney 2004, p 15.

58 Lyn Craig *The Hidden Cost of Parenthood: The impact of children on adult time* PhD Thesis School of Social Science and Policy University of New South Wales 2004 www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/people/Craig/TheHiddenCostofParenthoodTheImpactofChildrenonAdultTime.pdf; Lyn Craig *Time to Care: A comparison of how couple and sole parent households allocate time to work and children* SPRC Discussion Paper No 133 University of New South Wales Sydney 2004, p 15.

59 Lyn Craig *Time to Care: A comparison of how couple and sole parent households allocate time to work and children* SPRC Discussion Paper No 133 University of New South Wales Sydney 2004, pp 17-18.

60 Lyn Craig *The Hidden Cost of Parenthood: The impact of children on adult time* PhD Thesis School of Social Science and Policy University of New South Wales, 2004, p 80 www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/people/Craig/TheHiddenCostofParenthoodTheImpactofChildrenonAdultTime.pdf.

61 Lyn Craig *Time to Care: A comparison of how couple and sole parent households allocate time to work and children* SPRC Discussion Paper No 133 University of New South Wales Sydney 2004, p 12.

62 *ibid*, p 12.

63 Lyn Craig *The Time Cost of Parenthood: An analysis of daily workload* SPRC Discussion Paper No 117 University of New South Wales Sydney 2002, p 11. Note: These figures are average profiles and represent a "synthetic mean day"; five-sevenths of which is drawn from weekdays and two-sevenths from weekends: see ABS *How Australians Use Their Time* 1997 Cat No 4153.0, p 15.

64 Peter Brown, Wendy Brown and Jennifer Powers "Time Pressure, Satisfaction with Leisure and Health Among Australian Women" (2001) 4 *Annals of Leisure Research*, pp 1-16 at p 12. See also pp 58-59.

65 Suzanne Model, Gretchen Stiers and Eleanor Weber "Overtime and Undertime: An analysis of hours worked" (1992) 62 *Sociological Inquiry* 4, pp 413-436 at p 414.

Men have more hours of pure leisure not combined with unpaid work, and leisure time for men is also less likely to be fragmented by and squeezed between work and other activities.⁶⁶

Leisure time is particularly scarce for mothers caring for young children, particularly those whose youngest child is under two years old, who average just two hours and 38 minutes of leisure per week.⁶⁷ Fathers of children below the age of two years enjoy nearly three times more weekly hours of leisure than mothers of children under two.⁶⁸

In the 1997 time use survey, mothers not in the paid workforce averaged 24 minutes of child-free leisure time a day, while mothers in paid work had even less child-free leisure, on average almost none at all. Fathers in that study with children under five years old averaged one hour and 12 minutes a day in child-free leisure time.⁶⁹

In order to spend more time with their children, "...working mothers average less time in housework, personal care and childfree leisure time than other parents."⁷⁰ Parents also sleep less than non-parents, and mothers, whether they are in paid work or not, lose more sleep than fathers.⁷¹

Other unpaid work

Unpaid work within families is not limited to caring for children and housework. Caring within families includes caring for elders and people with disabilities. Home-based caregivers (relatives, friends or others in the home) are estimated to provide about 75 per cent of care for elderly people in Australia who need assistance with daily activities.⁷² This is discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

There are already signs of an emerging "sandwich" problem of care, with women still caring for dependent children while taking on the care of ageing parents.⁷³ This is a consequence of three changes. First, women are having babies later in life – the median age of married mothers giving birth for the first time in Australia was 30.3 in 2003. This is highest on record, continuing a consistent increase since 1972.⁷⁴ Secondly, parents are living longer and within the community, and thirdly, children are living at home for longer.⁷⁵

66 Michael Bittman and Judy Wajcman *The Rush Hour: The quality of leisure time and gender equity* SPRC Discussion Paper No 97 University of New South Wales Sydney 1999, p 21.

67 *ibid*, p 18.

68 *ibid*, p 19.

69 Lyn Craig *How Do They Do It? A time diary analysis of how working mothers find time for the kids* SPRC Discussion Paper No 136 University of New South Wales Sydney 2005, p 12.

70 *ibid*, p 13.

71 Fathers average 8.77 hours sleeping, while employed mothers average 8.37 hours and mothers not in paid work average 8.36 hours sleep a night: *ibid*, p 10.

72 Michael Bittman, Janet E Fast, Kimberly Fisher and Cathy Thomson "Making the Invisible Visible: The life and time(s) of informal caregivers" in Nancy Folbre and Michael Bittman (eds) *Family Time: The social organization of care* Routledge London 2004, p 70.

73 Natalie Jackson *The Policy-Maker's Guide to Population Ageing: Key concepts and issues* Policy Research Paper No 13 Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 2001, p 33.

74 *ABS Births 2003* Cat No 3301.0, p 47.

75 See p 62.

Questions

4. *Why was there so little change in the proportions of unpaid work done by men and women between 1992 and 1997? Are there signs of change since then?*
 5. *Does the imbalance in sharing of paid and unpaid work by men and women affect children, and if so, how?*
 6. *Does the amount of unpaid work done by women affect their capacity to participate in paid work, and if so how?*
 7. *Would equality between men and women require a more equal sharing of unpaid work?*
-

Chapter 4:

Caring for people with disabilities, elder care and grandparents as carers

Introduction

The need for balance between paid work and caring commitments is not limited to those providing parental care to their children. Care is also provided by family members other than parents, notably grandparents, who take on a significant amount of child care work.¹ Participation in paid work can also be affected by the demands of caring for other family members, such as family members with disabilities or aged relatives.

While a range of formal care is also used for the caring needs of elders and people with disabilities, the care provided informally by unpaid family carers in the home helps people avoid or delay institutional care. The economic and social value of this work to the community is high, but it often comes at a great cost to the individual carers, particularly primary carers,² who may experience financial hardship from being unable to participate in paid work, emotional strain and fatigue.³

The extent of care provided within families varies across the life cycle, with care of young children and the combined care of children and aged parents being periods of high demand. The need for elder care will increase as the population ages. Additional pressures may arise as more women, who make up the majority of carers, move into and remain in paid employment. For this reason, the question of who will provide this care and how it will be accommodated within the paid workforce is a critical one for individuals and the community as a whole.⁴

Overview of caring for people with disabilities and elderly people

The 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers found that 2.6 million people provide some assistance to those who need care because of old age or disability. Women make up just over half of all carers, and the majority, 71 per cent, of primary carers.⁵ Many of these carers are also in paid employment; in 1998 employed women made up 34 per cent of all primary carers.⁶

1 In 2002, 19 per cent of children were cared for by grandparents, two per cent by siblings and seven per cent by other relatives: ABS *Child Care* 2002 Cat No 4402.0, p 3.

2 The term "carer" refers to anyone who provides ongoing informal assistance to a person with a disability living in the community. A "primary carer" is a person who individually provides the most informal assistance to someone who cannot adequately care for herself or himself because of severe handicap, through age or disability: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Carers in Australia: Assisting frail older people and people with a disability* Aged Care Series No 8 AIHW Canberra 2004, p 3.

3 See the discussion of social capital and the value of care at pp 111-112 and p 75. Many carers receive income support from the federal Government. See chapter 9.

4 See p 62 and chapter 6.

5 ABS *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of findings* 2004 Cat No 4430.0, p 49.

6 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Carers in Australia: Assisting frail older people and people with a disability* Aged Care Series No 8 AIHW Canberra 2004, p 59.

Women and men are most likely to be carers of people with disabilities or elderly people in mid-life, with peak years for care being between 45 and 54.⁷ The most frequent reason given for taking on the caring role is "family responsibility".⁸

Table 10: Carer status by gender and age, 2003

Age (years)	Males (%)		Females (%)	
	Primary care	Other care	Primary care	Other care
Under 18	0.1	3.5	0.1	3.5
18-24	0.3	8.8	1.3	7.7
25-34	0.6	8.8	2.4	9.7
35-44	1.2	12.1	4.4	15.1
45-54	2.4	13.9	6.2	16.2
55-64	2.5	17.0	7.6	16.5
65-74	3.6	18.5	5.7	13.5
75 and over	5.7	18.5	4.5	8.9

Source: ABS *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of findings 2004* Cat No 4430.0, p 49.

The gender differences in disabled and aged care become less pronounced as carers age: at 65 years and over, 58 per cent of primary carers are women,⁹ and a greater percentage of men over 75 years than women are carers.¹⁰ This is because men who are primary carers are most commonly caring for their partners, while women are much more likely than men to care for a child or parent.¹¹

Women also do the overwhelming majority of care for aged parents: of parents receiving primary care in 2003, 91.2 per cent were cared for by their daughters.¹² In terms of elder care among men, while more care is provided by women overall, men contribute significantly to the care of older people, with 11 per cent of all men providing some care to older people or people with a disability as compared with 14 per cent of all women.¹³

Table 11: Primary carers, relationship to main recipient of care

Relationship	Male ('000)	Female ('000)
Partner	81.7	115.3
Child	34.9	87.6
Parent	9.7	100.8
Other	9.8	34.7
Total	136.2	338.4

Source: ABS *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings 2003* Cat No 4430, p 52.

7 ABS *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings 2004* Cat No 4430.0, p 11.

8 With over 50 per cent citing this reason: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Carers in Australia: Assisting frail older people and people with a disability* Aged Care Series No 8 AIHW Canberra 2004, p xii.

9 ABS *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings 2004* Cat No 4430.0, p 11.

10 In 2003, 24.3 per cent of men 75 years and over were carers, while 13.3 per cent of women 75 years and over were carers: *ibid*, p 49.

11 *ibid*, p 52. See also chapter 3.

12 *ibid*, p 52.

13 David de Vaus *Diversity and Change in Australian Families: Statistical profiles* Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2004, p 251.

Caring for a person with a disability

The nature of caring for a person with a disability varies according to the situation of both the person with the disability and the carer. Carers are often aged over 65 years and/or have a disability themselves; 24 per cent of primary carers are aged 65 years or older and 40 per cent have a disability.¹⁴ Young carers, sole parent carers or older couples with disabilities will obviously experience very different pressures and, if in paid work, will face the challenge of combining work and caring responsibilities. Older parent carers of adult children with disabilities often find the caring role more difficult as they age, not only because of the effects of age on their physical ability to care, but because of worrying about their children's future once they are no longer able to care.¹⁵

The projections for future numbers of people with disabilities indicate that caring pressures on individuals, families and communities will increase. By 2031, people over 65 are projected to account for 62 per cent of all profoundly or severely disabled people, up from 44 per cent in 2001. The numbers of older people with severe disabilities is projected to increase from 539 000 in 2001 to 1 390 000 in 2031, or about 160 per cent.¹⁶ With an ageing population combined with other social trends, such as women's increasing workforce participation and a higher rate of relationship breakdown, pressures on carers are likely to increase.

Caring for the frail aged

Families are the primary source of care for older people, with their spouses or partners providing the most care. Of the 474 600 primary carers in 2003, 197 000 or 41.5 per cent were caring for their partner.¹⁷

Caring for elders is complicated by the fact that many people caring for aged parents or spouses are themselves older people. Almost a quarter of people aged 55-64 years provide some care.¹⁸ For older carers there is evidence of difficulty in managing the caring role and paid work commitments, with carers of elderly parents in one study almost twice as likely as non-carers to say they did not have enough time for themselves or that their parents' needs might restrict their decisions about their own retirement.¹⁹

Data from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health also indicate that the need to provide care to one's spouse or other family member would be important in women's decisions about when to retire.²⁰ More than half of elder carers aged between 50-70 years in this study still had employment responsibilities and around one fifth also had at least one child still living at home.²¹ A quarter of these elder carers also looked after grandchildren and 10 per cent of all respondents were also the main carer for a spouse or other family member.²²

14 ABS *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings* 2004 Cat No 4430.0, p 3.

15 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Australia's Welfare 2003* AIHW Canberra, p 73.

16 Richard Percival and Simon Kelly *Who's Going to Care? Informal care and an ageing population* Report prepared for Carers Australia National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) Canberra 2004, p 26. See also Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Carers in Australia: Assisting frail older people and people with a disability* Aged Care Series No 8 AIHW Canberra 2004, p 28: between the years of 2003 and 2031 the number of people over the age of 85 with a severe or profound activity restriction is projected to increase by 52.5 per cent compared to a 22 per cent increase for all people with a severe or profound activity restriction.

17 ABS *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings* 2004 Cat No 4430.0, p 52.

18 *ibid*, p 49.

19 Christine Millward "Caring for Elderly Parents" (1999) 52 *Family Matters*, pp 26-30 at p 28.

20 Penny Warner-Smith, Christine Everingham and Jess Ford, "Transforming Every Station They Have Passed Through and Showing No Signs of Stopping: Mid-age women's experiences of work and expectations of retirement" (2005) *Just Policy* (forthcoming).

21 Christine Millward "Caring for Elderly Parents" (1999) 52 *Family Matters*, pp 26-30 at p 28.

22 *ibid*, p 28.

The overwhelming majority of elderly parents requiring primary care are cared for by their daughters.²³ In terms of what motivates women to take on caring work, Cahill suggests that female spouse carers and daughter or daughter-in-law carers interpret “family responsibility” differently. Wives generally view their caring work as a natural extension of their marriage relationship. Daughter and daughter-in-law carers were more likely to feel that they had no real choice but to take on the role of primary carer.

Their motivation seemed shaped by several different structural and contextual constraints including gender, labour market positioning, the availability of others within the kinship network, and commitment to other family care responsibilities.²⁴

As labour force projections indicate a sustained increase in the workforce participation of women workers aged 45-64 years, and as women in this age group currently make up more than 40 per cent of female primary carers,²⁵ the tension between paid work and caring commitments is likely to become an issue for more women, and therefore for families and employers.

There are also questions about the future availability of elder carers. Differences in gender expectations among younger generations of women, such as the prioritising of careers over conventional wife and motherhood roles, may affect their availability to provide care.²⁶ Further into the future, it may also be that fewer children per family will reduce the pool of elder carers.²⁷ It is likely that in the future, men as well as women will experience difficulties in managing caring responsibilities with paid work.²⁸

While the need for care of elderly people will increase as the population ages, levels of divorce and separation will mean there are fewer spouses to provide this care. There are an increasing number of separated or divorced people aged over 60 years; between 1991 and 2001 the proportion of divorced people aged over 60 years in the community increased from 6.3 per cent to 9.6 per cent.²⁹

Future care arrangements will also be influenced by geography: Australian families are becoming more geographically dispersed with employed children increasingly likely to move for work and the trend for retirees to move to coastal areas away from family.³⁰

23 91.2 per cent: ABS *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings* 2004 Cat No 4430.0, p 52. See p 40.

24 S Cahill “Caring in Families: What motivates wives, daughters, and daughters-in-law to provide dementia care?” (1999) 5 *Journal of Family Studies* 2, pp 235-247 at p 243, cited in Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Carers in Australia: Assisting frail older people and people with a disability* Aged Care Series No 8 AIHW Canberra October 2004, pp 8-9.

25 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Carers in Australia: Assisting frail older people and people with a disability* Aged Care Series No 8 AIHW Canberra 2004, p 35.

26 Jane Mears *Paying for Care: Repercussions for women who care* Australian Report to the OECD 1998, p 40; see also Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Carers in Australia: Assisting frail older people and people with a disability* Aged Care Series No 8 AIHW Canberra 2004, p 35. Alternatively, see Richard Percival and Simon Kelly *Who's Going to Care? Informal care and an ageing population* Report prepared for Carers Australia, National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) Canberra 2004, p 11, in which the authors suggest that women's increased labour force participation may not affect the availability of carers because carers tend to be older, part time and flexible work arrangements allow paid and caring work to be combined and multiple caring demands on women (eg child care and aged parents) are the exception and may only increase marginally.

27 Richard Percival and Simon Kelly *Who's Going to Care? Informal care and an ageing population* Report prepared for Carers Australia, National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) Canberra 2004, p 10.

28 See p 62 and pp 72-74.

29 Census data quoted in Belinda Hewitt, Gavin Turrell, Janeen Baxter and Mark Western “Marriage Dissolution and Health Amongst the Elderly: The role of social and economic resources” (2005) *Just Policy* (forthcoming).

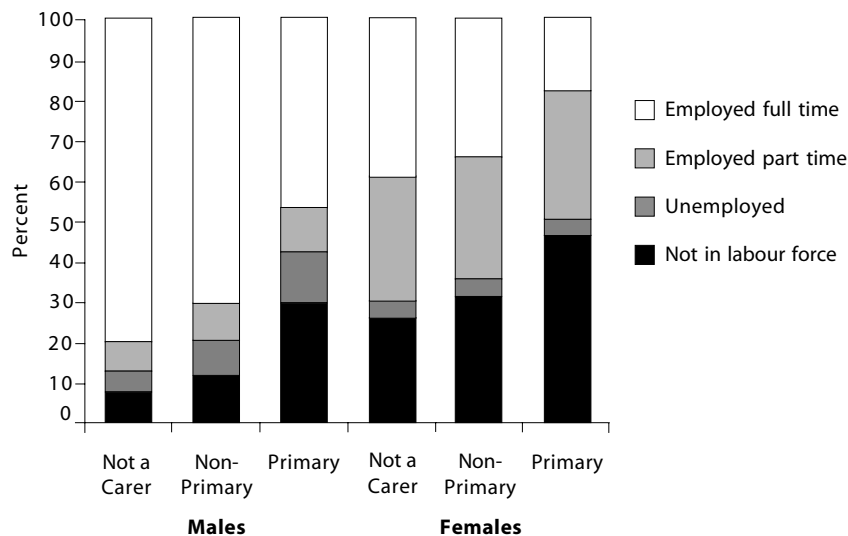
30 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Carers in Australia: Assisting frail older people and people with a disability* Aged Care Series No 8 AIHW Canberra 2004, p 60.

Caring and paid work

As the demands of caring for a person with a disability are often high, primary carers' labour force participation is much lower than that of other carers, particularly in full time employment.³¹ Even so, in 2003 179 500 primary carers (that is, 37.8 per cent of all primary carers³²) reported participation in the paid workforce, with only 45.7 per cent full time.³³ While 71 per cent of these employed primary carers stated that their caring role did not affect the number of weekly hours that they worked, 22 per cent reported that their caring role reduced the number of hours that they could work each week. Twenty four per cent stated that on average, they had to take time off work once a week to undertake their caring role.³⁴ In 2004, the Taskforce on Care Costs conducted a telephone survey on employment and the cost of care which found that 26 per cent of people providing elder care and 29.9 per cent of people providing disability care had reduced their working hours due to the cost of care.³⁵ The survey also found that 40 per cent of people providing elder care and 33.3 per cent of people providing disability care were likely to consider leaving the workforce due to the cost of care.³⁶

Graph 6: Carers by Labour Force Status, Age and Sex

Persons 25-54 years, labour force status by carer status, 1998



31 ABS *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings* 2004 Cat No 4430.0, p 51.

32 *ibid*, p 51.

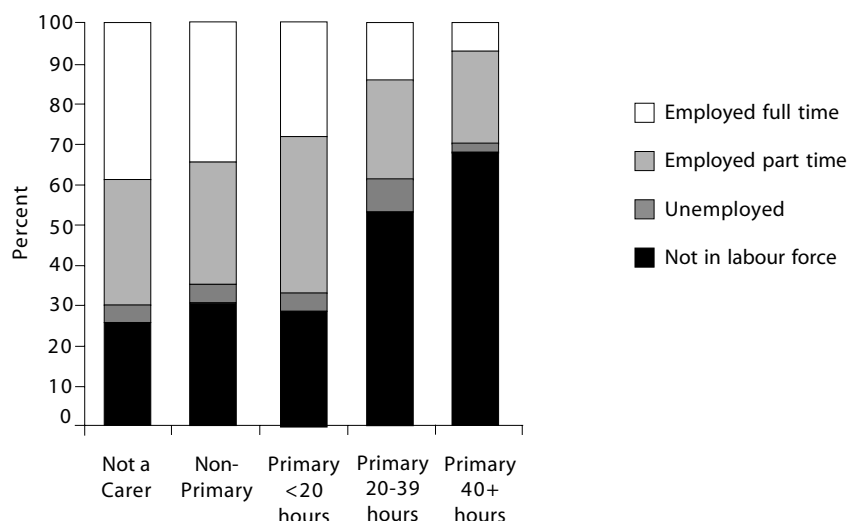
33 *ibid*, p 51. 52.8 per cent of all carers combine their caring role with full or part time work: *ibid*, p 51.

34 ABS *Caring in the Community* 1998 Cat No 4436.0, p 5.

35 Taskforce on Care Costs *Creating Choice: Employment and the cost of care* Sydney 2005, p 20. Paper accessed at www.neeopa.org/.

36 *ibid*, p 20.

Females 25-54 years, labour force status by caring hours per week, 1998



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare analysis of ABS *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers* 1998 Cat No 4430; graphs reproduced from Figures 2.1 and 2.2 of Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Carers in Australia: Assisting frail older people and people with a disability* AIHW Canberra October 2004, p 22.

ABS statistics indicate that, of employed primary carers, 29 per cent believed that a lack of alternative or suitable care arrangements stopped them from gaining employment. This perception is reflected in the discrepancy between the number of primary carers who wished to work (76 800) and those primary carers who actively sought work (21 100).³⁷

Of the 31 per cent of all carers who were not in paid work, the most common reason was lack of alternative care arrangements.³⁸ For those who end or reduce employment in order to provide care, the effects can extend beyond the period of care; returning to paid work is made more difficult because of loss of skills.³⁹ Caring has a further financial cost as the period out of the paid workforce reduces retirement savings.

Carers Australia, the peak body for carers, suggests that nearly half of primary carers rely on government support because they are unable to participate in paid work.⁴⁰ It states that the inability of many carers to stay in paid employment, along with other financial strains associated with caring, such as increased medical costs, often leads directly to financial hardship and disadvantage.⁴¹

One major study of women's health showed that caring work put a strain on employment, finances and careers, and that in many cases women carers could not seek paid employment or were forced to leave satisfying careers because of their caring responsibilities.⁴² In addition, the caring role could interfere with women's ability to perform well in paid work or make it difficult to manage.⁴³

37 ABS *Caring in the Community* 1998 Cat No 4436.0, p 5.

38 *ibid*, p 5.

39 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Australia's Welfare 2003* AIHW Canberra, p 90 and p 104.

40 See Carers Australia *Submission to the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee Inquiry into Poverty in Australia* Canberra 2003, p 3.

41 *ibid*, p 3.

42 Christina Lee "Family Caregiving: A gender-based analysis of women's experiences" in Sheila Payne and Caroline Ellis-Hill (eds) *Chronic and Terminal Illness: New perspectives on caring and carers* Oxford University Press Oxford 2001, p 129.

43 *ibid*, p 129.

Carers Australia has identified the reasons that some carers are unable to participate in paid work as:

- long-term caring responsibilities of more than seven to ten years;
- having sole responsibility for care;
- caring for a person with severe disability or illness; and
- lack of appropriate alternative care.⁴⁴

In addition, particular groups of carers may be particularly vulnerable to work disruptions. Young carers, those aged to 26 years, may find it difficult to obtain adequate education and training, and to enter the workforce, because of their caring responsibilities.⁴⁵

Carers Australia also points out the majority of carers are in paid work or would like to be, and that the issue for them is “being able to maintain a paid position and balance their caring responsibilities.”⁴⁶ It suggests that flexible work arrangements are needed to make workplaces “carer-friendly.”⁴⁷

Grandparents as carers

Grandparents are a much valued part of the extended family structure in Australia. Many grandparents assist parents to participate in the workforce by providing care for their grandchildren. This is particularly the case where formal or other informal child care arrangements are unavailable to parents or in the case of emergencies or sickness. Grandparent carers give parents increased flexibility to participate in paid work (as formal child care is limited to specified daytime hours) and help reduce the costs of child care, as most grandparent care is free.⁴⁸ The majority of informal child care is provided by grandparents, with most care provided by grandmothers.⁴⁹ This care is seen by families to assist mothers to work in paid employment.⁵⁰

44 Carers Australia *Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations Inquiry into Employment: Increasing participation in paid work* Canberra 2003, p 3. Some of the people who may fall into these categories are sole parents with highly dependent offspring; single offspring carers who leave the workforce to care for an aged parent with a demanding disability such as dementia and partner carers of people with severe disabilities such as multiple sclerosis or Parkinson's disease.

45 For a full discussion of issues facing young carers see Department of Family and Community Services *Young Carers Research Report: Final report* Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2002.

46 Carers Australia *Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations Inquiry into Employment: Increasing participation in paid work* Canberra 2003, p 5.

47 *ibid*, p 5; Carers Australia *The Ageing Population: Can we rely on informal, unpaid care to provide?* Discussion Paper Carers Australia Canberra 2005. See also p 18 for a definition of family-friendly policies.

48 In 2002, 89 per cent of all informal child care was at no cost: ABS *Child Care 2002* Cat No 4402.0, p 6.

49 One study showed that grandmothers and grandfathers reported similar levels of time spent looking after a grandchild, however: “when grandfathers reported looking after grandchildren, only 4 per cent of the grandfathers interviewed said they took the main responsibility of care, while around half shared it with their partner or spouse and nearly half said their partner or spouse was solely responsible for the grandchildren. In contrast, more than half (54 per cent) of the grandmothers reported taking the main responsibility of care for grandchildren, with just over one-third saying they shared the responsibility with their partner or spouse.” Christine Millward *Family Relationship and Intergenerational Exchange in Later Life* Working Paper No 15 Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 1998, pp 23-24. See also Barbara Pocock *The Work/Life Collision* The Federation Press Sydney 2003, p 64.

50 Joy Goodfellow and Judy Laverty “Grandparents Supporting Working Families: Satisfaction and choice in the provision of child care” (2003) 66 *Family Matters*, pp 14-19 at p 16, citing ABS *Child Care 2003* Cat No 4402.0.

Grandparents often have to balance caring for grandchildren with other paid and voluntary work obligations. With older people remaining in the workforce longer, grandparents will increasingly have to balance paid work with caring responsibilities.⁵¹

While the caring role is often experienced as positive, care provided by grandparents is not without its difficulties. Grandparent carers report feeling pressured to provide more care than they wish to, and at the expense of work, volunteering or other interests.⁵² In a recent study, grandparents expressed resentment towards any assumption that they would automatically take on the role of child care provider for their grandchildren and objected to this role being taken for granted.⁵³

In addition, there are families where grandparents provide primary custodial care for grandchildren in circumstances where the children's parents are unable to do so. In 2003 there were 22 500 grandparent families with children under 17 years in Australia, around one per cent of all families with children under 17 years.⁵⁴ These carers experience a range of difficulties, including having to give up work to care full time, or spending retirement savings to fund the cost of raising their grandchildren.⁵⁵ In about one third of grandparent families, one or both grandparents were employed.⁵⁶ In these cases it can be expected that grandparents would experience the same difficulties as working parents, as discussed in chapter 5.

Volunteering and community work

Caring for those in need is not limited to family members since it is care for others in its broadest sense that underlies relationships within the wider community. In addition to the caring work undertaken by those who care for children, people with disabilities, elders and other family members, a significant amount of care is provided through volunteering and other forms of community work.

Women's and men's contributions to the community through voluntary work are roughly equal, with a peak for men and women aged between 55-64 years of age.⁵⁷ However, women are more likely to do "caring" work as volunteers in community or welfare organisations and men are more likely to be involved in sporting or business organisations or emergency services.⁵⁸ The level of men's voluntary work significantly increases in retirement, after the age of 65 years.⁵⁹ In financial terms, the value of voluntary work, as estimated from 1997 time use data, is \$9.4 billion per year.⁶⁰

51 *ibid*, p 19. Grandmothers in paid work are more likely to see their grandchildren, a fact probably related to the age of the grandchildren, as working grandmothers are more likely to have very young grandchildren, who are also more likely to require care: Christine Millward *Family Relationship and Intergenerational Exchange in Later Life* Working Paper No 15 Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 1998, p 25.

52 Barbara Pocock *The Work/Life Collision* The Federation Press Sydney 2003, p 64.

53 Joy Goodfellow and Judy Laverty "Grandparents Supporting Working Families: Satisfaction and choice in the provision of child care" (2003) 66 *Family Matters*, pp 14-19 at p 15.

54 *ABS Family Characteristics* 2004 Cat No 4442.0, p 8.

55 Margot Fitzpatrick and Patricia Reeve "Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: A new class of disadvantaged Australians" (2003) 66 *Family Matters*, pp 54-57 at p 56.

56 *ABS Family Characteristics* 2004 Cat No 4442.0, p 9.

57 David de Vaus *Diversity and Change in Australian Families: Statistical profiles* Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2004, p 295.

58 *ABS Voluntary Work* 2000 Cat No 4441.0, p 2.

59 David de Vaus *Diversity and Change in Australian Families: Statistical profiles* Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2004, p 291.

60 *ibid*, p 291.

This work has more than financial value, however, as it provides support and assistance to the individuals and organisations that depend on its contribution. Many public institutions rely on the unpaid work of volunteers to function effectively. For example, schools rely on unpaid parental work to meet school needs for fund raising, supervising reading and accompanying children on excursions.⁶¹

Certain types of volunteering work are protected at work. The *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (Cth) provides that employment must not unreasonably be terminated because of a temporary absence from work because of a voluntary emergency management activity.⁶²

Questions

8. *Are there particular difficulties in balancing paid work with caring for grandchildren, frail aged parents or family members with disabilities?*
9. *Do the experiences of people caring for grandchildren, frail aged parents or family members with disabilities differ for men and women?*
10. *What workplace flexibilities are useful for particular types of carers?*
11. *Are there particular difficulties in balancing paid work with volunteering, and if so, should particular workplace flexibilities be available to promote volunteering?*

61 For further discussion of the value of care and social capital see p 75 and p 111-112.

62 Section 170 CK(2)(i) *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (Cth).



Part B:
Why this is
important



Chapter 5:

Why work and family issues are important for Australian families

Introduction

At the heart of the debate about balancing paid work with family responsibilities is a paradox. Australians believe that caring work and housework tasks should be shared equally between men and women. This matches contemporary social expectations of equality and fairness for women and men in all aspects of public and private life. Yet in practice, the actual patterns of paid and unpaid work do not match these beliefs.¹ The mismatch between expectations about managing family responsibilities and the reality of combining paid work with family life are creating pressures for families, with negative effects on women, men and children.

Modern expectations that women will undertake paid employment co-exist with traditional expectations about women's responsibility for unpaid work in the home. As a result, women are caught between their desire or need to participate in paid work and the expectation that they will continue to do the bulk of unpaid work, from housework to caring for children, the elderly and family members with disabilities. Despite decades of social change, many women are still working a double shift in paid work and at home.

Men's roles in paid work are similarly constrained. The figures on men's full time work hours² indicate that in spite of the range of roles and family arrangements potentially available to men, the breadwinner model continues to dominate the structure of many men's lives. Men are still generally expected to construct their identities primarily through participation in the paid workforce.³ At the same time, expectations of fathers have changed from sometimes distant figures responsible primarily for discipline to nurturing, caring and active parents.⁴

However, there are initiatives to create greater opportunities for men to be involved in parenting, as well as efforts to get men more engaged in housework. This chapter considers the opportunities and institutional support for this engagement, and to what extent these artificially constrain men's and women's choices around paid work and family.

1 See chapter 3.

2 See p 21.

3 Adrienne Burgess and Graeme Russell "Fatherhood and Public Policy" in *Supporting Fathers: Contributions from the International Fatherhood Summit 2003* Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections Series Bernard van Leer Foundation The Hague 2004, p 117.

4 See Michael Flood *Fatherhood and Fatherlessness* Discussion Paper No 59 The Australia Institute Canberra 2003, pp 7-8, for a discussion of images of fathering and the "new father". This is discussed further at pp 114-117.

This chapter considers the gendered relationship between the division of unpaid tasks and the structure of the paid workforce. It explores the changes in attitudes to paid work, parenting, and housework, along with the structural and cultural barriers to a more equitable balance between paid work and unpaid work for women, men and their families. Some of the implications for families of paid work and family pressures are also discussed.

Attitudes to paid work and family responsibilities

Attitudes to paid work and family responsibilities have changed dramatically over the past few decades. This section discusses how attitudinal change affects the paid work and family balance.

Women are now an integral part of the Australian workforce

For the greater part of the last century “work” was associated with men working full time in paid employment, while “family” was considered the domain of women and children.⁵ When paid work and family were treated as separate spheres it was clear that men were responsible for providing for their families financially, while women were responsible for caring for children and the house.

The past few decades in Australia has seen significant change in social expectations about gender roles, supported by changes in women’s labour force participation, changes to government policy, school and university curricula and industry practice. Since women first entered the paid workforce in large numbers during World War II, their labour force participation has gradually increased, from 29 per cent of women aged 15 and over in 1954 to 56.6 per cent in 2005.⁶ Women now represent almost 45 per cent per cent of the Australian workforce.⁷

The removal of barriers to women’s participation in paid work such as the removal of the Commonwealth marriage bar in 1966⁸ and equal pay⁹ and maternity leave¹⁰ test cases in the 1970s have supported and propelled women’s progress. While women still face barriers to equality in the public realm, women have experienced greater opportunities in entering traditionally male domains of public life and taking on non-traditional work.

In the case of women’s engagement in the paid workforce, economic realities have not only supported change, they have propelled it. Economic growth over the last generation has in part been driven by the significant growth of the labour market represented by women’s entry to the workforce and the greater consumer spending power of families with two incomes. Sharp increases in the cost of living, and particularly of housing, have also propelled women into the paid workforce.¹¹

5 See *Ex Parte HV McKay* (1907) 2 CAR 1 (the *Harvester* case). See also; Ian Watson, John Buchanan, Iain Campbell and Chris Briggs *Fragmented Futures: New challenges in working life* The Federation Press Sydney 2003, pp 13-14.

6 *Census 1954*: cited in ABS *Australian Social Trends 1998* Cat No 4102.0; ABS *Australian Labour Market Statistics 2005* Cat No 6105.0, p 37; labour force status trend data. See also pp 13-14 for Australia’s employment rate.

7 ABS *Australian Labour Market Statistics 2005* Cat No 6105.0, p 37.

8 See Marian Sawyer (ed) *Removal of the Commonwealth Marriage Bar: A documentary history* Centre for Research in Public Sector Management University of Canberra 1996, p 14.

9 See Victorian Pay Equity Working Party *Advancing Pay Equity – Their future depends on it* Report to the Minister for Industrial Relations Industrial Relations Victoria Melbourne 2005, p 6.

10 See Marian Baird *Who Cares? Work and Family Policy in Australia* WorkSite – issues in workplace relations 2004 www.econ.usyd.edu.au/wos/worksite/baird8.html.

11 David Wesley “House Prices Remain High Relative to Wage and Rents” in AMP and the Real Estate Institute of Australia *Home Loan Affordability Report* Joint quarterly survey No 81 December Quarter AMP Sydney 2004, p 2.

However, while economic necessity is often cited as a reason for mothers' paid work, a change in attitudes has accompanied economic change: 58 per cent of women with children agreed that they would enjoy having a job even if they did not need the money.¹² Young women almost universally expect to be in the paid workforce, including while they are caring for children.¹³ Nearly two thirds of women, compared to over three quarters of men in one study agreed that "it is important to have a paying job in order to be happy".¹⁴

Attitudes to married women and mothers in paid work have shifted over time, with an increasing level of community approval.¹⁵ While 51 per cent of people rejected the view that a married woman should not attach much importance to her career in 1984, this increased to 65 per cent in 2001.¹⁶ There is also increasing rejection of the view that family life suffers if the woman has a full time job. Twenty-eight per cent of people rejected this view in 1984, compared with 41 per cent in 2001.¹⁷

Men and women believe that housework and child care should be shared

Attitudes to parenting and housework among Australian men and women show strong acceptance of flexible and egalitarian gender roles. Research indicates that men and women believe that housework and parenting should be shared, not divided by gender.¹⁸

In 1983, one study found that 87 per cent of Australians agreed with the statement "men and women should share the household jobs".¹⁹ A 1991 study of Sydney couples showed similar support for an egalitarian perspective towards unpaid work in the home: 97 per cent of women and 89 per cent of men agreed with the statement "if both husband and wife work, they should share equally in the housework and childcare".²⁰

Contemporary research supports these figures. Research published in 2002 found that 91 per cent of women with children and 86 per cent of men with children believe that if both partners work they should share equally in the housework and care of children.²¹ Sixty five per cent of people agreed with the statement "children do just as well if mother works and father cares".²²

12 Kathleen Fisher *Fertility Pathways in Australia: Relationships, opportunities, work and parenting* Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 2002, p 35. See also Louise Thornwaite *Work-Family Balance: International research on employee preferences* Working Paper 79 acirrt University of Sydney 2002, p 17.

13 See p 56.

14 Kathleen Fisher *Fertility Pathways in Australia: Relationships, opportunities, work and parenting* Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 2002, p 35.

15 Although it should be noted that attitudes to labour force activity of mothers of preschoolers has remained about the same, with around 70 per cent of respondents in the International Social Science Surveys in Australia from 1989 to 2001 saying that the ideal activity is to be a housewife: cited in David de Vaus *Diversity and Change in Australian Families: Statistical profiles* Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2004, p 312.

16 *ibid*, p 311.

17 *ibid*, p 312.

18 Michael Bittman and Jocelyn Pixley *The Double Life of the Family* Allen and Unwin St Leonards 1997, p 145.

19 Michael Bittman and Frances Lovejoy "Domestic Power: Negotiating an unequal division of labour within a framework of equality" (1993) 29 *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 3, pp 302-321 at p 302.

20 *ibid*, pp 304-305.

21 Kathleen Fisher *Fertility Pathways in Australia: Relationships, opportunities, work and parenting* Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 2002, p 35.

22 David de Vaus *Diversity and Change in Australian Families: Statistical profiles* Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2004, p 311.

Younger people are even more likely to have non-traditional beliefs about paid work and family, with approximately 70 per cent of people in their twenties and thirties agreeing that children do just as well if the mother works and the father provides the caring.²³

In another study of Australian fathers, 96 per cent agreed that mothers and fathers should generally share the responsibilities for bringing up children equally.²⁴

However, as noted in chapter 3, these attitudes are not reflected in the work that men and women do in the home.

Fathers want to spend more time with their families

There is evidence that fathers are increasingly valuing their role as active parents and suffer if they cannot spend adequate time with their family. In one study of parenting, fathers rated the role of financial provider as significant, but valued their role of "hands on" parenting and emotional support in the family more highly.²⁵

In one survey of 1 000 Australian fathers, more than half believed that the major barriers to being involved as fathers were related to their participation in paid work, in particular work load or work commitments, time pressures and the need to earn an income.²⁶ The same survey showed that 68 per cent of respondents felt they did not spend enough time with their children and 53 per cent felt that their paid work and family lives interfered with each other.²⁷

Compared with employed mothers, employed fathers are more likely to say that work interferes with their parenting.²⁸

In another survey, 55 per cent of men working full time agreed that the requirements of their jobs caused them to miss out on home or family activities that they would prefer to participate in, and 60 per cent agreed that working caused them to miss out on some of the rewarding aspects of being a parent.²⁹

Mothers' preferences for part time paid work

Research into the paid work preferences of women with dependent children has found strong preferences for part time work.³⁰ This preference is linked to their typically greater responsibility for unpaid work in the home.³¹

23 *ibid*, pp 311-312.

24 Graeme Russell et al *Fitting Fathers into Families: Men and the fatherhood role in contemporary Australia* Report prepared for the Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 1999, p 34.

25 UnitingCare Burnside and Macquarie University Research *Men in Families and Families First Evaluation Report* UnitingCare Burnside Sydney 2003, p 13.

26 Graeme Russell et al *Fitting Fathers into Families: Men and the fatherhood role in contemporary Australia* Report prepared for the Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 1999, p 39.

27 *ibid*, p 40 and p 36.

28 David de Vaus *Diversity and Change in Australian Families: Statistical profiles* Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2004, p 313.

29 Kathleen Fisher *Fertility Pathways in Australia: Relationships, opportunities, work and parenting* Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 2002, p 29.

30 Helen Glezer and Ilene Wolcott *Work and Family Values, Preferences and Practice* Australian Family Briefing No 4 Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 1997, p 3.

31 Louise Thornthwaite *Work-Family Balance: International research on employee preferences* Working Paper 79 acirtt University of Sydney 2002, p 16.

According to the Australian Life Course Study, conducted in 1996, working hours preferences varied according to the age of dependent children, with 79 per cent of mothers of children under five preferring part time work of up to 29 hours per week.³² As their children grow older, Australian women preferred more hours.³³

There is no doubt that part time work has assisted women to meet their family obligations while remaining in the labour force. However, there is considerable debate over the extent to which women would prefer or indeed “choose” this work if they had a less constrained choice about their family’s paid work and family arrangements. Constraints may include the level of their partner’s participation in paid work, and the availability of suitable childcare as well as flexibilities in their own paid work.

On the one hand, for example, Catherine Hakim’s preference theory posits three static groups of women characterised by attitude to work and family as home-centred, adaptive or work-centred.³⁴

However, Australian research emphasises the degree to which women’s decisions are shaped and constrained rather than the result of free choice or preference.³⁵ Women’s choices are highly dependent on the choices and attitudes of others in the family, as well as the available work options. For example, most men still earn more than their female partners and this will influence whether the woman continues in paid work when the couple has children. Traditional assumptions about women’s and men’s work may mean that, once a mother, a woman may not return to full time work if she cannot find employment flexible enough to accommodate her caring obligations.³⁶

Preliminary analysis of a recent survey on family and paid work decisions suggests that mothers’ attitudes are flexible and shift according to circumstance and life stage.³⁷ For example, while “home-centred” mothers spoke of their role as a parent being most important to them, some of these mothers also valued their paid work experience and many spoke of the difficulty of finding employment that would allow them to meet their parenting responsibilities.³⁸

Men and women have higher expectations of themselves as parents

Despite longer hours of work and greater labour force participation by women, parents are devoting an increasing amount of time to caring for their children.³⁹

32 Helen Glezer and Ilene Wolcott *Work and Family Values, Preferences and Practice* Australian Family Briefing No 4 Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 1997, p 3.

33 Louise Thornthwaite *Work-Family Balance: International research on employee preferences* Working Paper 79 acirrt University of Sydney 2002, p 17.

34 Catherine Hakim *Work-Lifestyle Choices in the Twenty-first Century: Preference theory* Oxford University Press Oxford 2000.

35 Rosemary Crompton and Fiona Harris “Employment, Careers and Families: The significance of choice and constraint in women’s lives” in Rosemary Crompton (ed) *Restructuring Gender Relations and Employment: The decline of the male breadwinner* Oxford University Press Oxford 1999, pp 128-149; Alison Morehead “Beyond Preference and Choice: How mothers allocate time to work and family” Paper presented at the *Families Matter: 9th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference* Melbourne 9-11 February 2005, pp 5-6.

36 See p 57 and pp 127-129.

37 Kelly Hand and Jody Hughes “Mothers’ Attitudes to Parenting and Paid Work: A typology?” Paper presented at the *Families Matter: 9th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference* Melbourne 9-11 February 2005, p 13 and p 14.

38 *ibid*, pp 8-9.

39 Michael Bittman “Parenting without Penalty: Time-use and public policy in Australia and Finland” in Nancy Folbre and Michael Bittman (eds) *Family Time: The social organization of care* Routledge London 2004, p 226 and Suzanne Bianchi “Maternal Employment and Time with Children: dramatic change or surprising continuity?” (2000) 37 *Demography* 4, pp 401-414.

Contemporary child rearing encourages more intense and direct interaction with children,⁴⁰ practices which correspond with the relatively recent notion of “quality time”, which requires undivided attention to children’s activities.⁴¹

Caring for children includes the “emotional work of family maintenance.”⁴² Listening to children, helping them with social problems and generally overseeing the family’s emotional welfare take considerable time and effort. In addition, this level of care, combined with families’ overall increase in working hours,⁴³ requires what has been termed the “additional labour” of maintaining and coordinating paid work and family arrangements. This additional labour is largely done by women.⁴⁴

Young women aspire to be working mothers

The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s Health shows that 91 per cent of young women surveyed expressed a desire to be working at age 35, with 60 per cent wanting to work full time and 31 per cent part time.⁴⁵ Only four per cent of young Australian women aspired to undertake unpaid work full time at home with family in mid-life.⁴⁶

These young women did not expect paid work to be at the expense of relationships or children, with 96 per cent wanting to be married or in a stable relationship by the same age, and 92 per cent wanting a child or children.⁴⁷

Another large scale study of young male and female university students showed that young women shared the same expectations and aspirations for their future careers as male students.⁴⁸ Young women also expected the same earnings growth as men over a thirty year career, despite the fact that the majority of women planned to take significant periods (between one and five years) out of the workforce with the birth of each child.⁴⁹ The majority of male students expected to take less than three months leave with each child.⁵⁰ While the majority of female students (55 per cent) agreed with the statement that “more women than men want to care for their dependents” only 32 per cent believed that women took on this role because they enjoyed it.⁵¹

40 Michael Bittman “Parenting without Penalty: Time-use and public policy in Australia and Finland” in Nancy Folbre and Michael Bittman (eds) *Family Time: The social organization of care* Routledge London 2004, pp 225-226.

41 Michael Bittman and Judy Wajcman “The Rush Hour: The quality of leisure time and gender equity” in Nancy Folbre and Michael Bittman (eds) *Family Time: The social organization of care* Routledge London 2004, p 178.

42 Barbara Pocock *The Work/Life Collision* The Federation Press Sydney 2003, p 123.

43 See p 21.

44 See Alison Morehead “Managing Flexible Working Time Arrangements: Negotiations between mothers and managers in a Canberra hospital” (2003) 14 *Labour and Industry* 1, pp 91-106 and Alison Morehead “Governments, Workplaces and Households” (2005) 70 *Family Matters*, pp 4-9 at p 7. Morehead also argues that the burden of additional labour is greater for lone parents, who in turn find it harder to maintain a relationship between paid work and family: Alison Morehead “Behind the Paid Working of Single Mothers: Managing change and constructing support” (2002) 61 *Family Matters*, pp 56-61.

45 Deirdre Wicks and Gita Mishra “Young Australian Women and Their Aspirations for Work, Education and Relationships” in Ed Carson, Adam Jamrozik and Tony Winefield (eds) *Unemployment: Economic promise and political will* Australian Academic Press Brisbane 1998, p 92.

46 *ibid*, p 92.

47 *ibid*, pp 93-94.

48 Alison Preston “Prospects for a Prosperous and Equitable Australia” Paper presented at the *Future of Work 2nd International Colloquium* Leeds UK 9-10 September 2004, p 15.

49 *ibid*, p 15 and p 25.

50 *ibid*, p 25.

51 *ibid*, pp 20-21.

Pressures on women and men

The changes in attitudes around paid work and family combined with some workplace changes may create pressures for both women and men seeking to balance paid work with their caring responsibilities.⁵²

Men and women accept gendered work and family roles by default

The impact of long working hours is a good example of the gendered ways in which paid work and family intersect. For women and men, longer hours at work mean less time with family. For many families, as the longer hours worker (usually the man) earns the most, this pattern of work can exaggerate the traditional breadwinner model. As a result, the other partner (usually the woman) organises her paid work around these hours and undertakes even more of the unpaid caring work in the home.⁵³ Not only does this give rise to the high levels of time poverty experienced by women,⁵⁴ it can mean less time for men to spend developing close relationships with their children and less real choice for men and women in working arrangements that suit individual preferences and family needs.

The greater responsibility that women carry for unpaid work in the home disadvantages them in the labour market. Those with heavy unpaid work commitments are absent from the paid workforce for longer. If these women are carrying the load at home for the longer-hours male breadwinner, then they are unable to meet the standard for long hours in full time positions.⁵⁵

For men who wish to be more involved in family life there is the risk that the same gendered expectations that lock women into the primary carer role also lock them into the breadwinner role. Women are often relegated to a “mummy track” with less opportunity for promotion when they attempt to put their family responsibilities alongside their paid work responsibilities.⁵⁶ There is also evidence that a parallel “daddy track” exists for men who refuse to submit to a long hours culture.⁵⁷ In addition, as few men take this route, there is a greater and self-perpetuating cultural pressure not to consider it but to continue as the primary breadwinner.

The continuing gap between men’s and women’s pay is another reason many men become locked into the breadwinner role.⁵⁸ Where the male partner’s income is higher, families are likely to make the economically rational decision to maintain a male full time breadwinner and female part time paid worker/carer model. This entrenches the family in an arrangement that exacerbates pay inequities and makes it difficult to break out of gendered stereotyping in future.

Entrenching the “male breadwinner–female carer” family model may suit some families. However it is clearly not the ideal for many others, given the data on women and men’s preferences discussed above, and certainly does little to promote equality between men and women.

52 For a discussion of these workplace changes see pp 18-24.

53 Barbara Pocock *The Work/Life Collision* The Federation Press Sydney 2003, p 142.

54 See chapter 3.

55 Barbara Pocock *The Work/Life Collision* The Federation Press Sydney 2003, pp 148-149.

56 See for example Paula McDonald *The Case for Work/Life Balance: Closing the gap between policy and practice* Hudson Sydney 2005, p 16.

57 Barbara Pocock *The Work/Life Collision* The Federation Press Sydney 2003, pp 146-147.

58 See pp 68-70 for a discussion of the gender pay gap.

Many families are struggling to meet care needs

It is also important to consider the crucial role that accessible and affordable child care plays in supporting women and men's ability to balance paid work with caring work.⁵⁹ In 2002, 520 000 Australian families with children under 15 years reported one or more problems accessing or covering the cost of formal child care.⁶⁰ Difficulties with the costs of care were more common in couple households, while lone parents experienced more difficulties with finding care for a sick child, the right person and hours and good quality care.⁶¹

The Taskforce on Care Costs report shows that child care costs have been increasing over time by a larger percentage than average weekly earnings or Centrelink payments.⁶² The report indicates that the proportion of disposable income needed to pay for child care has increased across almost all family types and working patterns.⁶³

The study also reported that carers of the elderly and people with disabilities experience similar problems with access to care and prohibitive cost.⁶⁴ Average costs for elder care and care of people with disabilities are higher than child care costs.⁶⁵ When asked their reasons for taking on a caring role, 20.8 per cent of primary carers said that a reason was the cost of alternative care and 11.8 per cent said that there were no other care arrangements available.⁶⁶

Recent (2005-2006) federal Budget announcements about care are discussed in chapter 9.

Paid work and family conflict, time pressures and health effects

Working parents are more likely than non-working parents to indicate that they feel rushed "always or often."⁶⁷ Married men and women both feel more pressured for time than single men and women, but not surprisingly married women, mothers of preschool children and lone parents experience the greatest time pressure.⁶⁸

59 It is also important to note that there may be other financial pressures on families which affect decisions about managing paid work and family, such as the costs of raising children, housing and education.

60 Rebecca Cassells, Justine McNamara, Rachel Lloyd and Ann Harding "Perceptions of Child Care Affordability and Availability in Australia: What the HILDA Survey tells us" Paper presented at the *Families Matter: 9th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference* Melbourne 10 February 2005, p 7. ABS *Child Care Australia* 2003 Cat No 4402.0, pp 6-7 also indicates some unmet demand for child care.

61 Rebecca Cassells, Justine McNamara, Rachel Lloyd and Ann Harding "Perceptions of Child Care Affordability and Availability in Australia: What the HILDA Survey tells us" Paper presented at the *Families Matter: 9th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference* Melbourne 10 February 2005, p 9.

62 However, it should be noted that the federal Department of Family and Community Services has advised that their national data collection, which surveys every child care centre service in Australia, shows different results for the average costs of using a child care service. This information is unpublished.

63 Taskforce on Care Costs *Creating Choice: Employment and the cost of care* Sydney 2005, p 16 www.neeopa.org.au. Costs were measured between 2000 and 2002, but the trend has continued, with child care costs increasing at 2.2 times more than earnings in the period November 2002 to March 2004, p 17.

64 *ibid*, p 20.

65 *ibid*, p 20.

66 ABS *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings* 2004 Cat No 4430.0, p 55.

67 Forty-seven per cent of parents in paid work compared to 36 per cent of parents not in paid work: Department of Family and Community Services and Australian Institute of Family Studies *Growing Up in Australia: The longitudinal study of Australian children – Annual Report 2004* Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2005, p 12.

68 Michael Bittman "Parenting and Employment: What time-use surveys show" in Nancy Folbre and Michael Bittman (eds) *Family Time: The social organization of care* Routledge London 2004, pp 152-170 at p 161. See also chapter 3, particularly pp 36-37.

Mothers with long hours of work are also at greater risk of “leisure time poverty”,⁶⁹ which is associated with the burden of the double shift.⁷⁰

The time pressure on mothers and fathers has a potential effect on the quality of health. While employed women generally have better health than non-employed women,⁷¹ women who report feeling time-pressured “everyday” or “often” are likely to assess their health as poor.⁷² The lack of leisure time for mothers⁷³ is of particular interest because while being constantly busy impacts poorly on physical and mental health, the negative effects of this are eased by satisfaction with time spent in leisure activities.⁷⁴

Carers of people with disabilities and the frail aged report declines in physical, mental and emotional health as a result of caring, for example, they may experience physical demands of caring, constant responsibility and the impact of behavioural problems in the care recipient on the carer.⁷⁵ Nearly 30 per cent of primary carers reported that their physical or emotional well being had changed due to their caring role. Over 30 per cent of primary carers frequently felt worried or depressed, and 17 per cent frequently felt angry or resentful because of their caring role. Over 10 per cent of primary carers had been diagnosed with a stress related illness.⁷⁶

Women carers of family members who are disabled, sick or aged report poorer mental and physical health than non-carers.⁷⁷ Mid-age women are more likely to have poorer mental and physical health, while older carers are more likely to experience poorer mental health.⁷⁸ In both age groups of carers, women reported higher levels of stress, feeling busy, rushed or pressured.⁷⁹

Effects on children

While the focus on paid work and family pressures for women has tended to sideline issues for men, the effect of these pressures on children is even less well examined. In part the lack of research is due to difficulties in measuring the indirect effect of work pressures.⁸⁰

69 Michael Bittman “Parenting and Employment: What time-use surveys show” in Nancy Folbre and Michael Bittman (eds) *Family Time: The social organization of care* Routledge London 2004, p 163.

70 Michael Bittman and Judy Wajcman “The Rush Hour: The quality of leisure time and gender equity” in Nancy Folbre and Michael Bittman (eds) *Family Time: The social organization of care* Routledge London 2004, pp 171-172.

71 Lois Bryson and Penny Warner-Smith “Employment and Women’s Health” (1998) 14 *Just Policy*, pp 3-14 reprinted in Christina Lee (ed) *Women’s Health Australia: Progress on the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s Health 1995-2000* Research Centre for Gender and Health University of Newcastle 2001, p 141.

72 Michael Bittman “Parenting and Employment: What time-use surveys show” in Nancy Folbre and Michael Bittman (eds) *Family Time: The social organization of care* Routledge London 2004, p 153.

73 See above at pp 36-37.

74 Peter Brown, Wendy Brown and Jenny Powers “Time Pressure, Satisfaction with Leisure and Health Among Australian Women” (2001) 4 *Annals of Leisure Research*, pp 1-16 at p 12.

75 National Survey of Carer Health and Wellbeing reported in Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Carers in Australia: Assisting frail older people and people with a disability* Aged Care Series No 8 AIHW Canberra 2004, p 24.

76 Australian Bureau of Statistics data from 1998 cited in Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Disability and Ageing: Australian population patterns and implications* AIHW Canberra 2000, p 146.

77 Christina Lee “Family Caregiving: A gender-based analysis of women’s experiences” in Sheila Payne and Caroline Ellis-Hill (eds) *Chronic and Terminal Illness: New perspectives on caring and carers* Oxford University Press Oxford 2001, pp 129-131.

78 *ibid*, pp 129-131.

79 *ibid*, p 130.

80 Lyndy Bowman and Graeme Russell *Work and Family: Current thinking, research and practice*, Macquarie Research Sydney 2000, p 19.

Most parents believe that their work has either a positive or neutral effect on their infants and young children.⁸¹ Almost half of parents, 49 per cent, believe that their work has a positive effect and a further 37 per cent believe the effect is neither positive nor negative.⁸²

While the effect of mothers' employment on children remains contentious, there appear to be no significant developmental problems for the children of employed mothers, and studies show that children derive certain benefits where their mothers are in paid employment.⁸³ As noted above, mothers' employment is associated with only modest reductions in time spent with children, with employed mothers trading off leisure and personal care time to squeeze more active childcare around their working hours.⁸⁴

While there is research on the effects of maternal employment on children, there is little research on the effects of paternal employment demands, despite general public acknowledgment of the importance of active fathering.⁸⁵

As more women have moved into the paid workforce the role of informal and formal child care in assisting families to raise their children has increased. A survey of child care in 2002 reported that one third of children aged 11 years or younger received some informal child care and a quarter received some formal child care.⁸⁶ Of all types of non-parental care, informal care of children by grandparents was received by the largest number of children less than 12 years of age, with 19 per cent having been cared by grandparents in the week of the survey.⁸⁷

There has been often vigorous debate about the effect of formal childcare on children, particularly infants and toddlers.⁸⁸ Public concern has centred on the issues of whether formal child care has negative outcomes for infants and young children and whether children are bearing the burden of their parents' decisions about paid

81 These figures are for parents of infants and children aged three to four years in the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Department of Family and Community Services and Australian Institute of Family Studies *Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children – Annual Report 2004* Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2005, p12.

82 *ibid*, p12.

83 Lyndy Bowman and Graeme Russell *Work and Family: Current thinking, research and practice* Macquarie Research Sydney 2000, p 17 conclude that there is general agreement on this point within childhood development literature. Children are also protected from poverty, which other studies have shown has a significant detrimental effect, when their mothers work: Bruce Bradbury, Steven Jenkins, and John Micklewright (eds) *The Dynamics of Child Poverty in Industrialised Countries* Cambridge University Press Cambridge 2001.

84 See chapter 3. See also Lyn Craig *How Do They Do It? A time-diary analysis of how working mothers find time for the kids* SPRC Discussion Paper No 136 Social Policy Research Centre Sydney 2005, pp 14-15. See also international research from Keith W Bryant and Cathleen D Zick "An Examination of Parent-Child Shared Time" (1996) 58 *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, pp 227-237 and John F Sandberg and Sandra L Hofferth "Changes in Children's Time with Parents: United States 1981-1997" (2001) 38 *Demography* 3, pp 423-436.

85 Lyndy Bowman and Graeme Russell *Work and Family: Current thinking, research and practice* Macquarie Research Sydney 2000, p 17.

86 David de Vaus *Diversity and Change in Australian Families: Statistical profiles* Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2004, p 243.

87 *ibid*, p 243. For a discussion of grandparents caring for children see chapter 4, particularly pp 45-46.

88 See for example "Home Versus Childcare Debate Reopens" *PM* Australian Broadcasting Corporation Radio transcript 20 April 2001 reporter Petria Wallace; Deborah Smith "Extended Day Care Not So Harmful" *Sydney Morning Herald* 11 April 2005, p 5.

work. Despite these concerns, Australian researchers have concluded that the overriding evidence is that child care is not harmful to children when it is of high quality, and is at times beneficial.⁸⁹

What appears to be more relevant is the association between parents' work schedules and children's wellbeing.⁹⁰ Findings of a Canadian study show that children with parents who work non-standard working hours (evenings, nights and weekends) are more likely to have emotional or behavioural difficulties as compared with children in families where parents work standard hours.⁹¹

The work hours and work stress of fathers appear to affect children by increasing the work of caring of the mother and decreasing the father's perception of his involvement as a nurturer.⁹²

The effects of parental participation in paid work differ according to the age and developmental stage of children. Children and parents are generally positive about the financial rewards of paid work but less positive about the time constraints and the stress and negative mood spillover resulting from parents' work.⁹³

Additionally, most young people prefer more time with their parents over more money gained through parental work.⁹⁴ While young people are pragmatic and understanding about their parents' paid work and the benefits it brings, many express a yearning for more time with the breadwinner parent, or the parent who is absent most.⁹⁵ This "time hunger" is especially strong in couple households with a "hyper-breadwinner" working long hours, even in households where the other parent is at home after school hours.⁹⁶

This study also notes that an important issue for young people is how the paid work of both parents affects their mothers and fathers. The negative effects on parents of a discrepancy between their preferences for work hours and intensity and their actual job characteristics affects children, for example by making parents bad tempered and tired.⁹⁷ In some instances, it appears children protect themselves by withdrawing from the overworked parent.⁹⁸

89 See for example Sarah Wise and Ann Sanson *Child Care in Cultural Context: Issues for new research* Research Paper No 22 Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2000, p 1. Some overseas studies have shown negative effects of formal child care; for example, findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth in the United States showed that extensive maternal employment in the first two years of children's lives was associated with increased behavioural problems. However, the latest findings from this study show no signs of behavioural problems caused by long hours of childcare at the end of year three at school: Jay Belsky and David Eggebeen "Early and Extensive Maternal Employment and Young Children's Socioemotional Development: Children of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth" (1991) 53 *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 4, pp 1083-1098. See also Deborah Lowe Vandell "An Exchange on Maternal Employment and Young Children's Adjustment: Belsky and Eggebeen's Analysis of the NLSY: Meaningful Results or Statistical Illusions?" (1991) 53 *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 4, pp 1100-1103, for a critical scrutiny of these results. Latest results were reported in Deborah Smith "Extended Day Care Not So Harmful" *Sydney Morning Herald* 11 April 2005, p 5. Overall, research in this area shows that it is the quality of the care that is important, with various studies showing cognitive and social benefits of high quality child care: Gordon Cleveland and Michael Krashinsky *Fact and Fantasy: Eight myths about early childhood education and care* Childcare Resource and Research Unit University of Toronto 2003, pp 12-14.

90 Lyndall Strazdins et al "Around-the-Clock: Parent work schedules and children's wellbeing in a 24-h economy" (2004) 59 *Social Science and Medicine*, pp 1517-1527.

91 *ibid*, p 1524.

92 Lyndy Bowman and Graeme Russell *Work and Family: Current thinking, research and practice*, Macquarie Research Sydney 2000, pp 17-18.

93 Virginia Lewis, Kelly Hand and Jacqueline Tudball *Family and Work: The family's perspective* Department of Family and Community Services and the Marriage and Family Council Canberra 2001.

94 Barbara Pocock and Jane Clarke *Can't Buy Me Love? Young Australians' views on parental work, time, guilt and their own consumption* Discussion paper No 61 The Australia Institute Canberra 2004, p 13.

95 *ibid*, p 18.

96 *ibid*, p x.

97 *ibid*, pp x-xi.

98 *ibid*, pp x-xi.

When parents are satisfied with their paid work and life balance, and return home from paid work in a positive frame of mind, children enjoy the experience of a happier parent and home environment.⁹⁹

While there is little specific research on Australian children's attitudes towards their fathers, one report found that while children mostly perceive fatherhood as "positive and life enhancing" and generally recognise fathers' economic contribution to the family, they also regret the way their father's role in the paid workforce reduces their contact time with him.¹⁰⁰

Caring for ageing parents and people with disabilities

As noted in chapter 4, caring takes place across the lifespan, not only when children are young. Carers of people with disabilities and the frail elderly face considerable pressures. Many women and men balance paid work not only with parenting but also with other caring responsibilities, for example, caring for frail parents, or for children or adults with a disability.

Combining paid work with caring for people other than children has effects that are ongoing across the life course, with both enhancing and stressful aspects.¹⁰¹ In the Australian Family Life Course Study, the effects of lack of time and stress were similar to those for people with parenting responsibilities.¹⁰²

For the majority of women who combine paid work with a disproportionate share of caring and domestic work, the double shift is likely to become a "triple shift" in the future. Women are having children later in life: the median age for mothers in Australia is 30.5 years, continuing a consistent increase since 1972.¹⁰³ In addition, many children remain dependent for longer, remaining in the family home well into adulthood.¹⁰⁴ With these changes, the likelihood of overlap between caring for children and caring for ageing parents will also increase. The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health data show that 40 percent of mid-age women are caring for someone who is elderly, frail or ill, with over 40 per cent also providing care at least occasionally for children.¹⁰⁵ This phenomenon is referred to as the "sandwich generation", where women are being squeezed between the demands of care for children and care for elders.¹⁰⁶

As noted at page 41, with levels of informal care for people with disabilities likely to increase, it is clear that more Australians will have more caring responsibilities, and many will have multiple caring responsibilities. With workforce retention to greater ages, we should expect that more carers will be in paid work over coming decades, and this will place increasing pressure on workplaces to respond.

99 *ibid*, p 27.

100 Graeme Russell et al *Fitting Fathers into Families: Men and the fatherhood role in contemporary Australia* Report prepared for the Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 1999, Executive Summary.

101 Helen Glezer and Ilene Wolcott "Work and Family Life: Reciprocal effects" (1999) 52 *Family Matters*, pp 69-74 at p 72.

102 *ibid*, p 72.

103 ABS *Births Australia* 2003 Cat No 3301.0, p 11.

104 More than half of young people aged 18-29 live with their parents, and while it is common for many young people to leave home in their 20s, 53 per cent of these returned at least once, according to 2001 *Census* figures: David de Vaus *Diversity and Change in Australian Families: Statistical profiles* Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2004, pp 144-145.

105 Penny Warner-Smith, Christine Everingham and Jess Ford "Transforming Every Station They Have Passed Through and Showing No Signs of Stopping": Mid-age women's experiences of work and expectations of retirement" (2005) *Just Policy* (forthcoming).

106 Natalie Jackson *The Policy-Maker's Guide to Population Ageing: Key concepts and issues* Policy Research Paper No 13 Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 2001, p 33.

Effects of lack of balance between paid work and family on relationships

The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey (HILDA) shows a strong negative correlation between parenting stress and relationship satisfaction. More than half of mothers (53.6 per cent) and 60.4 per cent of fathers who report low levels of parenting stress report high levels of satisfaction in their relationship, while only 28.7 per cent of mothers and 20.3 per cent of fathers with high levels of parenting stress report high levels of relationship satisfaction.¹⁰⁷ Over two thirds of fathers and over half of mothers with low levels of paid work-family stress have high levels of relationship satisfaction.¹⁰⁸

The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey (HILDA) results also demonstrate that some of the significant sources of stress in married life are different for men and women. While the majority of both men (52 per cent) and women (53 per cent) attribute the reason for time stress to trying to balance work and family, time stressed women are much more likely than men to attribute being rushed to the demands of their families (31 per cent compared to 14 per cent), with men much more likely to cite demands of work (39 per cent to 23 per cent).¹⁰⁹

Relationships and men themselves benefit when they have a high degree of involvement in caring and housework, forming stronger bonds with their partners as well as their children.¹¹⁰

A Relationships Australia survey found that 89 per cent of Australians agreed that relationships suffer because of work-life conflict, and that 40 per cent of parents feel that they have no real choice regarding their ability to balance paid work and family.¹¹¹ Fathers were significantly more likely than mothers to say that they did not have a choice in how they balance paid work with family commitments.¹¹² This survey also showed that the biggest negative influence on partner relationships was "lack of time to spend together" (38 per cent).¹¹³

Interviews with parents show what Pocock calls the "hidden cost" to intimacy of the paid work and family time squeeze and lack of equity in managing unpaid work.¹¹⁴ The pressures for women who bear the greater responsibility for unpaid work in addition to paid work were found to be significant, being a source of anger, tiredness and strain in many relationships, and for some constituting grounds for divorce.¹¹⁵

Some studies directly link marital happiness and intimacy with shared responsibility for unpaid work. In a study undertaken in Melbourne, 80 per cent of female respondents said that if their husbands shared responsibility for domestic tasks this would contribute significantly to their marital happiness.¹¹⁶ In a review of over 200 articles and books on household labour, Coltrane found that for women who

107 Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research *HILDA Survey Annual Report 2004* Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research University of Melbourne 2005, p 27.

108 Sixty-nine per cent of fathers and 53.6 per cent of mothers: *ibid*, p 27.

109 Kathleen Fisher *Fertility Pathways in Australia: Relationships, opportunities, work and parenting* Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 2002, p 3. See also David de Vaus *Diversity and Change in Australian Families: Statistical profiles* Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2004, p 315.

110 Scott Coltrane *Family Man: Fatherhood, housework, and gender equity* Oxford University Press New York 1996, pp 76-78.

111 Relationships Australia *2003 Relationship Indicators Survey* Canberra 2003, p 22 and p 25.

112 *ibid*, p 22.

113 *ibid*, p 10.

114 Barbara Pocock *The Work/Life Collision* The Federation Press Sydney 2003, pp 105-130.

115 *ibid*, pp 113-118. Michael Bittman also speculates that "time poverty" is a reason for divorce: "Parenting and Employment: What time-use surveys show" in Nancy Folbre and Michael Bittman (eds) *Family Time: The social organization of care* Routledge London 2004, p 165.

116 Kenneth Dempsey *Inequalities in Marriage: Australia and beyond* Oxford University Press Melbourne 1997, p 170.

shoulder a disproportionate share of household labour activities, their perceptions of fairness and marital satisfaction decline. For men, by contrast, the division of housework is typically unrelated to marital satisfaction.¹¹⁷

Larger scale research on marital longevity does not indicate that good paid work and family balance or equal sharing of unpaid work is a contributing factor; however one study lists “values of trust, respect, understanding and equity” as one of five significant factors. In this study, reciprocity of values such as fairness within the marriage for each spouse was an important protection against marital dissatisfaction.¹¹⁸ The same research also indicates that intimacy is a key factor in marriage longevity; the time squeeze and women’s intense unpaid responsibilities may have an underlying influence.¹¹⁹

Women are more likely to lodge applications for divorce than men. Forty three per cent of applications for divorce were lodged by women in 2003, compared with 32 per cent by men and 25 per cent joint applications.¹²⁰ The presence of children makes it more likely that a woman will make the application for divorce.¹²¹ The Australian Divorce Transition Project showed that nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) of women compared with one-fifth (21 per cent) of men say that it was mostly themselves who decided to separate.¹²² Significantly, results from a survey of 779 participants in dual income marriages found that women who perceive their division of household labour as unfair are more likely to divorce than those who perceive their share of housework to be fair. Men conversely, were less likely to associate housework and divorce.¹²³

Relationship breakdowns and post-divorce consequences

The consequences of divorce for children and their parents range from mild to severe; and poverty and parental estrangement are frequent outcomes.¹²⁴ After divorce women are most likely to continue on in the role of primary carer of children, but also experience an often dramatic decrease in financial security which they then have limited power to change, particularly if they have previously spent time out of the workforce. Some women are seriously impoverished after divorce; given increasing rates of relationship breakdown their numbers can only be expected to rise.¹²⁵

117 Scott Coltrane “Research on Household Labor: Modeling and measuring the social embeddedness of routine family work” (2000) 62 *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 4, pp 1209-1233 at p 1209.

118 Robyn Parker *Why Marriages Last: A discussion of the literature* Research Paper No 28 Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2002, pp 11-12.

119 *ibid*, p 12.

120 ABS *Australian Demographic Statistics Population Feature Article: Marriages and divorces Australia* 2004, p 4. Note that this does not always imply that that applicant initiated the separation or divorce, merely that he or she lodged the paperwork.

121 ABS *Marriages and Divorces* 2001 Cat No 3310.0, p 103: “[f]or divorces that involved children, more women (56%) than men (28%) were the applicant and joint applications were lower (17%)”.

122 Ilene Wolcott and Jody Hughes *Towards Understanding the Reasons for Divorce* Working Paper No 20 Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 1999, p 14.

123 Michelle L Frisco and Kristi Williams “Perceived Housework Equity, Marital Happiness, and Divorce in Dual-Earner Households” (2003) 24 *Journal of Family Issues* 1, pp 51-73 at p 68.

124 Australian Institute of Family Studies *Submission of the Australian Institute of Family Studies to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs Inquiry into Child Custody Arrangements in the Event of Family Separation* 2003, pp 7-8; Bruce Smyth and Patrick Parkinson “When the Difference is Night and Day: Insights from HILDA into patterns of parent-child contact after separation” Paper presented at the *HILDA Conference 2003* University of Melbourne 2003. For a discussion of the national economic costs of divorce see p 76.

125 The number of divorces rose steadily during the 1980s and early 1990s. Since the mid-1990s the rate has been reasonably steady at between 50 000 and 55 000 per year. Based on current trends, it is expected that in 2005, 48 per cent of all marriages will end in divorce and by 2025, 54 per cent of all marriages are likely to end in divorce: AMP and the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling *Love Can Hurt, Divorce Will Cost: The financial impact of divorce in Australia* Income and Wealth Report Issue No 10 AMP 2005, pp 3-6.

For men post-divorce, the greatest effect is often felt on their relationships with their children. Without having the experience of day to day care of their children, and with father-child relationships often mediated through their partners, men who spent long hours being “breadwinners” feel punished for the role after relationship breakdown. Men often do not have a relationship with their children that is as direct and resilient as women’s, as evidenced by the common experience of estrangement after divorce, and struggle to become active fathers at a time of great stress.¹²⁶ It is clear that the current distribution of unpaid caring responsibilities contributes to the disadvantage suffered by many men in this position. This is clearly a serious loss to fathers and is a source of sadness for their children and their parents, the children’s grandparents.

The traditional pattern of unequal unpaid work responsibilities is reinforced in post-separation arrangements. In cases of disputed custody, the Family Courts are driven by the interests of the child and is likely to award residence to the parent with the demonstrably stronger bonds with their children, the primary day to day caregiver and the parent to whom the children are closer and more familiar. Generally this is the mother, who has spent more time with her children than the father, frequently limiting her paid work commitments in order to do so.

Shared parenting after separation depends on whether shared parenting is in place prior to relationship breakdown.¹²⁷ Studies show that shared parenting prior to separation was one of the indicators of post-divorce shared care, while preliminary findings from an Australian study indicate that the earlier fathers become involved in caring for children, the more they feel able to share parenting post-divorce.¹²⁸

Putting aside families where violence, abuse or entrenched conflict are involved, it is generally agreed that children thrive with male as well as female role models and involved parenting.¹²⁹ Positive and nurturing parenting by mothers and fathers has a positive influence on children’s development.¹³⁰

126 “Several factors work against men in terms of emotional well being after separation ... [men] are less in touch on emotional and relationship matters than are women and men generally tend to be less prepared for separation and shut down their feelings. Add to these the deep emotional impact that separation from their children has on many fathers”: Bruce Smyth *Post Separation Fathering: What does Australian research tell us* Fatherhood Research in Australia Report Family Action Centre University of Newcastle 2004, p 46.

127 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission *Submission of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs Inquiry into Child Custody Arrangements in the Event of Family Separation* 2003, pp 19-20.

128 See Helen Rhoades, Reg Graycar and Margaret Harrison *The Family Law Reform Act 1995: The first three years* University of Sydney and Family Court of Australia Sydney 2000, p 1; Susan Steinman “The Experience of Children in a Joint-Custody Arrangement: A report of a study” (1981) 51 *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 3, pp 403 - 414 at p 407; Bruce Smyth, Catherine Caruana and Anna Ferro “Some Whens, Hows and Whys of Shared Care: What separated parents who spend equal time with their children say about shared parenting” Paper presented to the *Australian Social Policy Conference* University of New South Wales Sydney 9-11 July 2003, p 20. Fathers taking on shared care may go through a period of adjustment and doubt on commencing the role: Graeme Russell *The Changing Role of Fathers?* University of Queensland Press St Lucia 1983, p 101 and pp 125-126.

129 Australian Institute of Family Studies *Submission of the Australian Institute of Family Studies to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs Inquiry into Child Custody Arrangements in the Event of Family Separation* 2003, p 1.

130 See Michael E Lamb and Catherine S Tamis-LeMonda “The Role of the Father: An introduction” in Michael E Lamb (ed) *The Role of the Father in Child Development* 4th Edition Wiley Hoboken 2004, pp 1-33 and others in this collection. See also Michael Flood *Fatherhood and Fatherlessness* Discussion Paper Number 59 The Australia Institute Canberra 2003, pp 23-26.

Conclusion

While ideas about gender have changed dramatically, men and women remain locked in gender roles that do not necessarily suit the interests of contemporary Australian families. The traditional model of the man as breadwinner and the woman as primary carer continues to shape behaviour in spite of the array of choices theoretically now available to both men and women. While this may suit the preferences of some men and women and support their choices, this model does not suit the preferences of all.

Women remain responsible for the bulk of unpaid work, while taking less of a role in the public world of paid work than men. For at least some of the women who take this role, their choice is likely to be affected by their existing lower status in the workforce and the limited work options available to them, as well as social and familial expectations that they are the natural carers. Time out of the workforce and reduced focus on paid work in favour of caring is likely to entrench this position.

Men's generally superior earning power combined with social and familial assumptions about their responsibility to financially provide for families lock them into full time working roles, often at the expense of time with their families, denying them the opportunity to be the fully involved fathers they would like to be.

The daily stresses associated with managing these roles, the time squeeze that many parents feel in combining paid work and family and inequitable domestic arrangements, leads to pressure on individuals and couples that inevitably affect children's happiness and well being.

It may be, as Cannold suggests, that the current difficulties in balancing paid work and family equitably are a product of "transitional times". As families, workplaces and economies are changing, the gender roles and workplace policies and practices that accompany these changes are a "work in progress".¹³¹ Viewed in this way, the relationships between paid work and family are likely to continue to change. In the next chapter, these relationships are discussed in terms of their broader national interest implications.

Questions

12. *What effects, if any, do external factors such as partner and community attitudes, social policy or workplace relations have in shaping men's and women's decisions about paid work and family arrangements?*
 13. *What are the relationship, health and other effects of paid work and family conflicts on Australian parents and carers? Do the effects differ for men and women, particular groups of people, particular family types or different types of carers?*
 14. *What are the effects on children where their parents have difficulty in balancing paid work with family responsibilities?*
 15. *Are children affected differently by mothers' and fathers' paid work and family conflicts?*
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131 Leslie Cannold *What, No Baby? Why women are losing the freedom to mother, and how they can get it back* Curtin University Books Fremantle 2005.

Chapter 6: Why work and family issues are important for Australia

Introduction

This chapter examines the implications for Australia's national interest of the present division of paid and unpaid labour between men and women. It also anticipates the consequences of economic and demographic change further into the century.

The division between the paid and unpaid responsibilities in people's lives is subject to the limits of time. A range of economic, demographic and social factors and changes are now interacting to increase the time pressures experienced by Australians with both paid work and caring responsibilities. This has national consequences.

Australia's national interest is made up of a broad range of objectives. Those examined in this chapter are relevant to the way in which households, families and communities apportion their responsibilities. They include gender equality and freedom of choice. These objectives are connected to a number of other desirable outcomes including Australia's economic competitiveness and prosperity and the sustainability of our current demographic distribution. Another objective is social cohesion and contentment, as demonstrated through low rates of relationship breakdown and low family stress and conflict levels. These goals also maximise good outcomes for children and the sustainability of Australian society.

As discussed in chapter 3, gender is the most significant determinant in how Australians spend their time. The gendered nature of the division of both paid and unpaid work is an area that has great potential to affect productivity and distribution of work effort and therefore is a key lever for economic growth.

This chapter also examines the extent to which public policy affects the division of paid and unpaid labour between men and women and its consistency with national interest objectives. There is not always unanimous agreement on the nature of the national interest and it is therefore important to also ask what sort of society and what sort of relationship we want between society and the economy.

The effect of unpaid and paid work responsibilities on gender equality and freedom of choice

The federal Sex Discrimination Act commits Australia to the objectives of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).¹ CEDAW's primary objective is equality between men and women in public life.² The Sex Discrimination Act also has the promotion of equality between men and women as one of its principal objectives, reflecting the importance both the Australian community and the federal Parliament place on gender equality and its place in the national interest.³

There are clearly differences in the preferences of men and women in many aspects of life such as child rearing, consumer purchases, leisure activities and paid work; gender equality does not imply that these preferences need be the same. The Sex Discrimination Act is concerned with gender inequality that arises when choices are unfairly restricted and men and women are prevented from accessing opportunities because of their sex.

Underlying the decisions that men and women are able to make about their lives are more subtle influences that are not generally the subject of law, but are important in shaping behaviour. These include social expectations such as a man deciding to remain in paid work full time after having a child because it has never occurred to him, nor been suggested by anyone he is close to, that caring for a child full time might be something he could happily and usefully do. Options such as both parents working part time while children are young, fathers working shorter hours or other more flexible arrangements may be appealing to some families but simply not encouraged by systemic or cultural supports.

All choices made by all people are more or less constrained; gender inequality is concerned with those systemic and disadvantageous constraints people face as the result of their gender.

The "downward spiral": women's economic lives

In the case of paid work and unpaid caring responsibilities, it is evident that for so long as women are expected to bear the major responsibility for unpaid caring they are unlikely to participate equally with men in paid work.⁴ There are, after all, only so many hours in each day and mothers in paid work are already using almost all of them.⁵ As a result, women are less likely to earn or own as much as men⁶ and more likely to live as economic dependents or in poverty as sole parents than men.⁷ In other words there are economic consequences of gender inequality and constrained choices.

1 Section 3(a) *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth).

2 See pp 1-2 and p 81.

3 Section 3(d) *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth).

4 See chapter 3 and p 57.

5 See pp 29-37.

6 Overall, women in Australia and New Zealand have mean wealth holdings that amount to only about 85 per cent of those of men: Yann Campbell Hoare Wheeler *Women's Economic Status "Equal Worth" Final Report: Output 4* Report prepared for the Australian Commonwealth/State and New Zealand Standing Committee of Advisors for the Status of Women Canberra 1999, p 1.

7 Senate Community Affairs References Committee *A Hand Up Not a Hand Out: Renewing the fight against poverty* A report on poverty and financial hardship Canberra March 2004, p 211.

The lives of contemporary women who partner and have children can be seen as an economic “downward spiral”: young women start out with high expectations of their future working lives,⁸ are well educated for anticipated careers and initially gain valuable skills in the workplace, but as time passes they are less likely to be promoted or to increase their earnings at the same rate as men. They face discrimination and harassment at work in greater numbers than men.⁹ As noted above, parenting creates competing priorities that lead many women to abandon the workforce or limit their participation in paid work.¹⁰ Time out of the workforce or returning to work part time contributes further to pay inequities, reduced opportunities and lower retirement incomes.

One of the main indicators of economic inequality is the ratio of women’s to men’s ordinary full time earnings, known as the gender pay gap.¹¹ Some of this gap is the result of women taking work which accommodates their family caring responsibilities instead of work which fully rewards their skills and experience.¹² Additionally, industries and occupations in Australia remain highly gender segregated and women’s work is still often undervalued.¹³ Teaching, for example, is considered to be so undervalued men are now reluctant to do it, as male to female teacher ratios reflect.¹⁴ Women are still significantly under represented in the most highly paid industries and occupations. Continuing discrimination also contributes to the earnings gap.

It should be noted that the gender pay gap does not include women in part time positions nor paid overtime work. Counting all earnings including overtime only widens the pay gap, although women’s full time adult total earnings have been very slowly increasing over the last decade.¹⁵

The absence of financial independence in retirement or old age also means poverty for many women. Currently women are two and a half times as likely to live in poverty in old age as men.¹⁶ As retirees in the future come to depend increasingly on retirement benefits received as a result of work related contributions over a

8 Chilla Bulbeck “Schemes and Dreams: Young Australians imagine their future” Abstract for paper presented at *Australian and International Feminisms: Where have we been and where we’re going. Celebrating 30 years of HECATE: Interdisciplinary Journal of Women’s Liberation* Sydney University 12-14 December 2004, p 9.

9 In a national survey on incidences of sexual harassment conducted by HREOC, 72 per cent of the targets of sexual harassment were women and 28 per cent were men: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission *Sexual Harassment 20 Years On: The challenges continue – Sexual harassment in the Australian workplace* HREOC Sydney March 2004, p 9.

10 See pp 54-59.

11 The gender pay gap, also known as pay equity, is measured in terms of ratios, which convert female earnings into a proportion of male earnings: URCOT *Pay Equity: How to address the gender pay gap* A research report for Industrial Relations Victoria 2005, p 6.

12 See NSW Department of Industrial Relations *Pay Equity Inquiry: Summary of findings and recommendations* Matter No IRC 6320 1997, pp 5-8.

13 Alison Preston and Gillian Whitehouse “Gender Differences in Occupation of Employment within Australia” (2004) 7 *Australian Journal of Labour Economics* 3, pp 309-310.

14 Ed Lewis, Jude Butcher and Peter Donnan “Men in Primary Teaching? An endangered species?” Paper presented at the *Australian Association for Research in Education Conference* Melbourne 1999, p 1.

15 When comparing adult full time ordinary time earnings, the current gender pay gap is 15 per cent, that is, women earn, on average, 85 cents for every dollar men earn. When overtime, casual and part-time work and the earnings of junior employees are added to the equation, the pay gap between men and women widens to 33.7 per cent. Figures current to February 2005: ABS *Average Weekly Earnings* Cat No 6302.0 2005, p 4; Table 1 trend data.

16 In 2000 there were 106 000 single women over 65 living in poverty compared to 40 000 men in the same age group: Senate Community Affairs References Committee *A Hand Up Not a Hand Out: Renewing the fight against poverty* Report on poverty and financial hardship Canberra 2004, p 211. The current average superannuation balance of women at \$43 300 is just over half the average balance of men at \$78 700: Ross Clare “Why Can’t a Woman be More Like a Man: Gender differences in retirement savings” Paper presented at the *Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia National Conference and Super Expo* Adelaide 10-12 November 2004, p 4.

long period, the disparity between men's and women's outcomes in old age is expected to worsen. The widening gap in retirement incomes is the result of the gap in women's contributions to superannuation during their years spent caring for family,¹⁷ and also because they live longer than men on the retirement savings that they do have.

The barriers to women participating in the paid workforce are also barriers to women's greater influence in public life. Denying women opportunities to exert influence or to give expression to their personal capacities and talents in the public realm because of the overwhelming nature of their unpaid caring responsibilities is both a contributor to and indicator of gender inequality.

The "highway to retirement": men's economic lives

Gender inequalities also have consequences for men. Denying men the time to invest in personal relationships with partners, children and other relatives, or shortening their expected life span because of the onerous nature of work commitments are negative constraints on men's choices. Traditional assumptions about the roles of men and their relationships with women limits the choices men have; few, for example, choose to be the secondary earner or primary carer.

Men are generally expected to live an economic life that is a "highway to retirement"; that is, they are expected to start work immediately after completing their qualification, and then to continue working without any significant break or diversion until they retire. Men who experience broken working lives usually do so because of unemployment or illness, not because they chose to do something other than paid work.¹⁸ Arguably this working pattern is damaging to men's physical, mental and emotional health; it bestows on them the overwhelming financial responsibility for family, insufficient breaks from workplace stress and insufficient time to devote to family and intimate relationships.¹⁹

Post-divorce outcomes for men and women demonstrate the problems that flow on from artificially constrained working patterns and the traditional division of family responsibilities between men and women.

Macro economic consequences of paid work and family imbalances

The impact of the unequal sharing of paid and unpaid caring responsibilities not only directly affects the distribution between men and women of wealth, income and influence in Australia; it also has a number of macroeconomic and social consequences of concern which are already in evidence today.

The Treasurer has identified the three "Ps" – the three factors that contribute to GDP growth – population, participation and productivity.²⁰ Each of these three factors is influenced by the paid work and family arrangements of Australian families; greater equality in this regard will assist in pursuing each of these goals.

17 Ross Clare "Why Can't a Woman be More Like a Man: Gender differences in retirement savings" paper presented at the *Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia National Conference and Super Expo* Adelaide 10-12 November 2004, p 4.

18 For example, men are less likely to take unpaid leave or cease work after the birth of a child: *ABS Australian Labour Market Statistics Feature Article: Spotlight on parental leave* 2003 Cat No 6105.0, p 2.

19 A significant number of fathers experience high levels of stress, insufficient time for family and believe strongly that the major barrier to being an effective parent is commitment to paid work: see p 54.

20 The Hon Peter Costello MP Treasurer "The Paths to Increasing Australian Prosperity" *Address to the Australian Financial Review Leaders' Luncheon* Sydney 7 August 2002.

Workforce participation has become a key economic issue for Australia.²¹ The entry of women into the workforce since the 1960s has been a significant economic as well as social change for Australia. It has not only boosted Australia's participation rate over all,²² it has been a strong boost to rising family living standards and, by driving up demand for goods and services and expanding the size of the Australian domestic market, has enabled the Australian economy to continue to grow. Despite predictions that it would cause unemployment among men to rise, today's official unemployment rate of just over five per cent belies this.²³ Employers are now able to draw from a much larger pool of potential recruits than previously which has assisted in maintaining the productivity of the Australian workforce.

Women have not only entered the paid workforce in large numbers, there has also been significant growth in the numbers of women and girls completing secondary and in particular tertiary and professional education. This has further contributed to the competitiveness of the Australian workforce and is expected to remain a significant contributor to productivity gains. However, paid work and family arrangements that discourage well educated and skilled women from participating or participating as fully as they would like in the paid workforce will continue to be a source of productivity loss. The declining birth rate may also limit future productivity.

Workforce participation

It is clear that a greater involvement of Australians, particularly Australian women, in paid work would help maintain Australia's economic growth over the coming decades.²⁴

Australia's female participation rate of 56.6 per cent²⁵ is only moderate by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) standards and is particularly low among mothers and women over the age of fifty five.²⁶ The OECD has described motherhood as having a particularly marked "dampening effect" on women's employment in Australia – a 10 per cent effect for mothers of one child under 15 years in 2000, while those with two children under 15 years had a dampening effect of over 20 per cent.²⁷

For women with training, experience and skills accumulated before pregnancy, several years' absence from the workforce is long enough to ensure they will have great difficulty returning to work of a similar standard. Yet this is the situation faced by significant proportions of Australia's mothers who seek to return to paid work. The loss of their skills and experience to the economy cannot be underestimated.

21 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development *Economic Survey of Australia 2004* Policy Brief OECD Paris 2005, p 1.

22 See pp 13-15.

23 See also George Megalogenis "Hiding Behind Skirts" *The Australian* 12 February 2005.

24 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development *Economic Survey of Australia 2004* Policy Brief OECD Paris 2005, p 1. See also Women's Economic Policy Analysis Unit *Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Workforce Participation's Inquiry into Employment: Increasing participation in paid work* Canberra 2005, p 33.

25 ABS *Australian Labour Market Statistics 2005* Cat No 6105.0, p 37; labour force status trend data. See also pp 13-15 for employment rates and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development *Employment Outlook 2004* OECD Paris 2004, p 296 for an internationally comparable statistic on employment rates for women.

26 Iain Campbell and Sarah Charlesworth *Key Work and Family Trends in Australia* Centre for Applied Social Research RMIT Melbourne 2004, p A2-11.

27 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development *Employment Outlook 2002* OECD Paris, 2002, pp 77-78. See also Iain Campbell and Sarah Charlesworth *Key Work and Family Trends in Australia* Centre for Applied Social Research RMIT Melbourne 2004, p A2-11.

To return to an earlier point, it might be that Australians consider such a low participation rate desirable for happy family life. In this sense this low participation rate represents a choice willingly made. However, it is crucial to look at the possible constraints behind such choices and the consequences of those constraints on the decisions made. For example, a shortage of suitable childcare, long hours of work or inflexible welfare provisions will discourage potential second income earners from entering employment. The rise in female participation following the greater availability of part time work in the 1990s suggests that families have been willing to undertake more paid work if it suits their unpaid caring responsibilities. A more equitable spread of part time paid work between family members may produce better outcomes for men and women.

Productivity in an ageing society

The ageing of the Australian population is now beginning to increase the pressure on prime aged workers to work and to work harder. Even allowing for the increased participation of older workers encouraged by the federal Government, the ratio of aged dependents to tax payers is still expected to significantly increase,²⁸ and with it increasing pro rata tax burdens.

By 2044-2045 one in four people in Australia will be 65 years or over, double today's figures.²⁹ Formal aged care needs alone are projected to increase by between 180 per cent and 250 per cent of current expenditure by 2044-2045.³⁰ Over this time the total cost of aged care is expected to rise to 2.79 per cent of GDP in 2042-2043.³¹

Ageing is a double-edged sword for Australian families; it is a source of increased pressure to engage in both paid and unpaid work. On the one hand extending employment life into the late sixties and seventies is increasingly necessary for individuals to accumulate sufficient individual retirement savings to finance a lengthy period of old age. In addition, the taxes paid by these older workers fund the aged care needs of those other older Australians who rely on tax payer funded benefits. If policies aimed at financial self sufficiency in old age do not produce a reduced dependency rate it is likely that future governments will need to review their commitments to aged care programs.³²

At the same time there is more pressure on working aged people to care for elderly retirees on a voluntary basis. Governments are increasingly encouraging the elderly not to rely on government provided aged care facilities, especially residential and hospital facilities. This reflects not only cost concerns but community recognition that modern medicine enables many people to live active and independent retirements for longer than ever before.

28 In 2002, the aged to working-age ratio (the proportion of people aged over 65 to people of traditional labour force age, 15 to 64) was 19 per cent. This is projected to rise to almost 41 per cent by 2042: Department of the Treasury *Intergenerational Report 2002-03* Budget Paper No 5 2002-03 Canberra 2002, p 23.

29 Productivity Commission *Economic Implications of an Ageing Australia* Research Report Productivity Commission Canberra March 2005, p 1.

30 *ibid*, p 185.

31 *ibid*, p 185.

32 It should be noted here that while the federal Government's *Intergenerational Report* concludes that Australia is well placed to meet the future challenges of ageing, increasing employment among people of working age and mature workers in particular will be critical for continuing fiscal sustainability. See Department of the Treasury *Intergenerational Report 2002-03* Budget Paper No 5 2002-03 Commonwealth of Australia 2002. Of particular interest for this paper is the *Intergenerational Report's* lack of attention to the gendered impacts of demographic change, particularly given the unpaid caring commitments of female workers.

The economic value of care to the annual gross domestic product is estimated to be \$18.3 billion for adults alone.³³ Unpaid caring work reduces the pressure on Australian governments to divert resources to paid caring programs and in this sense, assists Australia's economic prosperity. Assisting people to provide care within the family will ease the burden in terms of the financial costs that caring for poses for the government, in particular the costs of elder care.

As more people live longer in the community, a greater responsibility devolves to community based services, volunteers and family carers, mostly adult children and spouses. As discussed above, the provision of this care is highly gendered.³⁴

The ageing of Australia throws up some particular challenges for unpaid care. As the baby boomer generation moves into retirement and old age, governments are increasingly expecting retirees to be economically self-sufficient in order to reduce anticipated public expenditures on aged care. Australians need to be more involved in paid work in order to fund their retirement. This is consistent with the need for economic growth but is clearly at odds with the increasing demand for informal elder care. It is unrealistic to expect women to meet this demand while maintaining their labour force participation.³⁵ Women are only likely to be able to reconcile these competing demands if support is available. This support includes flexible working hours, phased retirement and the ability to share the provision of care with other family members. Encouraging and enabling working men to take on a greater role in caring is one strategy for addressing future caring needs as well as developing strong and equitable relationships within families and communities.

The high percentage of unpaid elder care provided by women may contribute to Australia's moderate work force participation rate of 40.8 per cent for women over the age of 55.³⁶ This is exactly the same group that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the federal Government believe should be working more, not less, to add to the country's total work effort.³⁷ The labour force participation rate among older Australians is slightly lower than Portugal's, not as low as southern European countries such as Turkey, Italy and Greece but much lower than the wealthy European nations of the north, the United Kingdom and United States. In Sweden, 69.5 per cent of women 55 to 64 years are in paid work.³⁸

In order for Australia to meet both these apparently conflicting objectives of increasing the amount of paid and unpaid work performed by older Australians, male family members will be required to share some of this unpaid work. Since it is almost invariably women who have left or reduced their work effort in earlier years to care for children, so reducing their accumulation of superannuation savings, arguably it is they who have the most to lose by reducing their working hours again in these middle years.

33 Carers Australia *Pre Budget Submission 2004-05* Canberra 2003, p 1. The value of all unpaid work (not just caring) is estimated to be between \$244 and \$408 billion: James Doughney et al *Lifelong Economic Wellbeing for Women: Obstacles and opportunities* Report prepared by the Work and Economic Policy Research Unit for the Security4Women consortium Victoria University Melbourne 2004, p 62.

34 See chapter 5 and chapter 4.

35 See p 62, pp 41-45 and Penny Warner-Smith, Christine Everingham and Jess Ford "Transforming Every Station They Have Passed Through and Showing No Signs of Stopping: Mid-age women's experiences of work and expectations of retirement" (2005) *Just Policy* (forthcoming).

36 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development *Employment Outlook 2004* OECD Paris 2004, p 303. It should be noted that there are no doubt a range of other reasons that may contribute to this lower workforce participation rate as well.

37 See pp 71-72.

38 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development *Employment Outlook 2004* OECD Paris 2004, pp 303-305.

On this basis, it is unlikely that women will continue to provide the overwhelming bulk of unpaid informal care to parents in future. If they continue to provide current levels of care, however, these women will continue to have high rates of financial dependence in old age, on either the state or their spouse. The country's dual objectives of greater workforce participation and continuing or increased levels of informal aged care will not be achieved without a better gender balance of unpaid and paid work.

Fertility

If Australia is to both expand its tax payer base and increase its productivity, it will need to engage not only more older people but also more young people in paid work. The group of prime aged workers least likely to work is parents, particularly mothers. It will also need to raise its fertility rate to boost the number of young workers over the long term.

Australia's current average fertility rate is 1.75 children per woman,³⁹ well below the natural replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman.⁴⁰ This rate is not high enough to maintain the current ratio of aged dependents to tax payers. Despite recent small upward movements in the fertility rate,⁴¹ it is currently expected that the fertility rate will fall further.⁴²

Australia's declining fertility rate has been linked to various social factors including changing preferences, the availability of safe and reliable contraception, women's increased participation in the labour force, men and women choosing to marry later, limited access of Australian mothers to supportive work, and a host of other factors.⁴³ It has also been linked to the unequal sharing of unpaid work, with empirical studies suggesting that countries with higher birth rates are those in which the division of labour following childbirth is most equitable.⁴⁴ This is supported by the work of Torr and Short, who directly link the equal division of housework with positive effects on fertility.⁴⁵

Researchers in countries with low birth rates, such as Italy, link low ratios of male to female unpaid household work and job uncertainty, particularly for women, with low fertility rates. For example a recent study of low fertility rates in Italy and Southern Europe concludes that women are unlikely to have children when their prospect of work is low and when their prospect of being able to return to work after childbirth is also low.⁴⁶ This study also indicates that female workforce participation is not only driven by macro economic conditions but also by the particular availability of work suitable for family life. In addition to the direct effect family-friendly working condit-

39 ABS *Births* 2004 Cat No 3301.0, p 6.

40 ABS *Australian Social Trends* 2002 Cat No 4102.0, p 12.

41 In 2000, the fertility rate declined to 1.7, the lowest on record: ABS *Australian Social Trends* 2002 Cat No 4102.0, p 12.

42 Based on current trends, the total fertility rate is projected to fall to 1.6 by 2042: Department of the Treasury *Intergenerational Report 2002-03* Budget Paper No 5 2002-03 Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2002, p 23. However, it should be noted here that there is a degree of uncertainty inherent in the projections and assumptions made regarding fertility and aged dependency ratios. See Productivity Commission *Economic Implications of an Ageing Australia* Research Report Productivity Commission Canberra 2005.

43 David De Vaus "Fertility Decline in Australia: A demographic context" (2002) 63 *Family Matters*, pp 14-21; Ruth Weston, Lixia Qu, Robyn Parker and Michael Alexander "It's Not for Lack of Wanting Kids..." *A report on the Fertility Decision Making Project* Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2004.

44 Lyn Craig *A Cross-National Comparison of the Impact of Children on Adult Time* Discussion Paper No 137 Social Policy Research Centre Sydney 2005, p 16.

45 Berna Miller Torr and Susan E Short "Second Births and the Second Shift: A research note on gender equity and fertility" (2001) 30 *Population and Development Review* 1, pp 109-130 at p 113.

46 Daniela Del Boca *Why are Fertility and Participation Rates so Low in Italy (and Southern Europe)?* The Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America New York 2003, p 5.

ions such as paid maternity leave are likely to have on participation rates, for a range of developed countries the availability of part time work is linked to rises in the female participation rate and thus to fertility.⁴⁷

The social benefits of care

Caring is an activity which is central to the role of the family, but which, because of its personal nature and the emphasis sometimes placed on care as an individual choice, is often undervalued.⁴⁸ It is also the case that work considered to be women's work is generally undervalued. While there is a range of financial and service supports provided by government⁴⁹ the work of caring for family members is essentially unpaid.

Voluntary and unpaid caring is based on mutual trust between the parties as well as an assumption of responsibility from which family and community relationships derive their strength. Although caring confers non-monetary rewards to the carer by providing opportunities for intimacy or the demonstration of love or duty, the substantial individual, social and economic benefits of this work tend to be overlooked.

The benefits of caring within the family flow on to the broader society, including those who do not have children. Care includes the care of parents or other members of the extended family or even of the community. Care is a form of mutual obligation; how we value our vulnerable or weak or those who have cared for us.

There are also significant health benefits that flow from valuing and supporting care. The benefits that HREOC argued would come from paid maternity leave in ensuring that health and wellbeing of mothers and babies immediately prior to and following birth can be extended to encompass the health and wellbeing of fathers.⁵⁰ Close interaction and bonding between fathers and their children in the first few weeks after birth is recognised as beneficial for the mother and father as well as the developing infant.⁵¹

Assisting fathers to have a closer interaction with and responsibility for children in their early and later years of life is likely to have positive health and other outcomes, particularly in the event of family separation. These issues are addressed in chapter 5. The social health implications of a lack of shared caring responsibilities within families, such as stress and relationship breakdown are also discussed in chapter 5.

Valuing care also means that as a society we value the children and the elderly who are the recipients of care. The development of children in particular is contingent on the quality of interaction with their parents or other primary carers. Family-friendly paid work helps to cover the costs of children by enhancing parents' ability to remain attached to the labour force during child rearing years. This is also discussed in chapter 2 and chapter 5.

47 Peter McDonald "Gender Equity, Social Institutions and the Future of Fertility" (2000) 17 *Journal of Population Research* 1, pp 1-16 at p 9.

48 See also pp 111-112 for a discussion of social capital.

49 See chapter 9.

50 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission *A Time to Value: Proposal for a national paid maternity leave scheme* HREOC Sydney 2002, pp 51-61.

51 Tony White and Graeme Russell *First-time Father* Finch Publishing Sydney 2005, pp 119-121.

Family stress and relationship breakdown

If divorce rates continue to increase at current levels, the estimated percentage of all marriages ending in divorce in 2005 will be 48 per cent.⁵² This is roughly comparable with other English speaking western countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom.⁵³ The rate of breakdown of de facto marriages would ideally also be considered, however reliable figures are not available.⁵⁴

In addition to the costs of breakdown for the individuals involved, including damage to parent-child relationships, relationship breakdowns impose a heavy economic cost on Australia. These costs are primarily borne by governments and non-government organisations.

Parenting Payment (Single) is available to resident parents after relationship breakdown. Government outlays on this benefit alone totals \$4.2 billion a year.⁵⁵ Additional costs of relationship breakdown may include costs of the Family Court, community counselling programs, emergency accommodation and some public housing.

While studies of separating couples do not demonstrate that inequitable division of domestic and caring work causes relationship breakdown, there are clear indications of a link between division of work and relationship satisfaction.⁵⁶

Future pressures

Australia's economic prosperity in the 21st century is likely to be particularly sensitive to newly burgeoning economies such as those of India and the People's Republic of China. By 2045 the United Nations estimates China and India are expected to have a combined population of three billion people.⁵⁷ International Labour Organization (ILO) data demonstrate that the opening up of these two economies in the past twenty years has already almost doubled the size of the global workforce.⁵⁸

This growth presents both threats and opportunities for Australian workers and their families. Although there will be opportunities in the huge expansion of consumer markets likely to flow from the improved prosperity of those countries, it is likely that this rapid expansion of the global workforce will also place competitive pressures on Australian workers and on wage rates.

Australia's manufacturing sector may well shrink in size under global pressure. However, it is the developing competition in the services sector being made possible by improved information technology, real time processing and the freeing of international trade that may well, in the future, have a much greater effect on Australian employment levels and wage rates as significant parts of the services

52 AMP and National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling *Love Can Hurt, Divorce Will Cost: The financial impact of divorce in Australia* Income and Wealth Report Issue No 10 AMP and NATSEM Canberra 2005, p 6.

53 United Nations *Demographic Yearbook 2002* Table 25 Divorce and crude divorce rates at unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2.htm

54 AMP and National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling *Love Can Hurt, Divorce Will Cost: The financial impact of divorce in Australia* Income and Wealth Report Issue No 10 AMP and NATSEM Canberra April 2005, p 2.

55 Auditor General *Review of the Parenting Payment Single Program* Audit Report No. 44 2002-03 Department of Family and Community Services Centrelink Canberra 2003, p 13. See also chapter 9.

56 See pp 63-64.

57 United Nations Population Division Department of Economic and Social Affairs *The Two Billionaires: India and China* at www.un.org/esa/population/pubsarchive/india/indchi.htm

58 Richard B Freeman *Doubling the Global Work Force: The challenge of integrating China, India and the former Soviet Bloc into the world economy* Presentation to Centre for Economic Performance London School of Economics November 8 2004, p 3.

sector becomes internationally contestable.⁵⁹ The services sector currently employs 82 per cent of the Australian workforce compared with 12 per cent in manufacturing,⁶⁰ yet it accounts for less than a quarter of Australia's total imports (\$34 252 million⁶¹), and more than half of these services are trade-related. It is likely that the importation of services will increase, placing pressure on the Australian services sector.⁶²

How Australia, and particularly employers and workers in the services sector, responds to this challenge will inevitably have a significant effect on the paid work and family balance for workers in that sector.⁶³ In turn, with careful policy responses, including in relation to the three "P's" of productivity, participation and population,⁶⁴ the result may well be improved standards of living. Future economic prosperity relies on families in Australia being able to combine paid work with family responsibilities efficiently and sustainably.

Questions

16. *Do women's and men's different paid and unpaid work obligations affect their economic outcomes, health, relationships and life chances? Do men and women or particular groups of people experience any such effects differently?*
17. *Do men's and women's paid and unpaid work arrangements have an effect on productivity in Australia?*
18. *What will be the effect of the ageing population upon men's and women's willingness and abilities to undertake unpaid caring work?*
19. *Are fertility rates sensitive to social and economic conditions and if so, what specific conditions and how sensitive are they to changed conditions?*
20. *Is unpaid caring work important for developing social cohesion and social capital? If so, how?*
21. *What effect would a balance between paid work and family responsibilities for Australia's workers have on Australia's productivity and international competitiveness?*
22. *What effect would a more equal sharing of unpaid household work between men and women have on Australia's productivity and international competitiveness?*

59 For example legal and financial services and customer service.

60 Productivity Commission *Trends in Australian Manufacturing* Research Paper Productivity Commission Canberra, 2003, p xix.

61 ABS *Australia Now, International Trade in Goods and Services, Australia, International Accounts and Trade Feature Article: Australia's importers 2003-04* 2004 Cat No 5368.0, p 2.

62 The situation is complex, of course, and wages and conditions may improve in some parts of the sector, for example tourism and related services may stand to benefit from stronger income growth in China and India. Other services are un-traded and may well be unaffected.

63 For example, if international competition drives down pay and conditions in the heavily female dominated services sector, families may respond by working longer and harder to maintain current living standards, putting work and family balance further out of reach. The opening up of the global economy to international competition in the 1980s had a significant impact on the manufacturing sector, including a major decline in employment within the industry: Ray Broomhill "Globalisation: The regional impact" in Paul Gollan (ed) *Globalisation and its Impact on the World of Work* Working Paper No 38 acirrt Sydney 1995, p iii.

64 See 70-71.



Part C:

What has been
done, what can
be done?



Chapter 7:

Anti-discrimination legislation and family responsibilities

Introduction

This chapter describes how the Sex Discrimination Act operates to assist Australian families to balance their work and family obligations and considers whether further reform may be necessary.

The Sex Discrimination Act

The federal Sex Discrimination Act is the centrepiece of the Australian Government's implementation of CEDAW.¹ The Sex Discrimination Act is intended to give effect to certain provisions of CEDAW.²

The Sex Discrimination Act makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, or to sexually harass another person, in many defined areas of public life, such as education and employment. It is also unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis of their family responsibilities by dismissing them from employment.

Most complaints under the Sex Discrimination Act have been made in the area of employment, reflecting the importance of workforce participation for women over the last 20 years. This legislation, and the similar legislation that is in place in each State and Territory, is an important tool for promoting the recognition of equality between men and women in practice in Australian workplaces.³ In the 20 years of its operation, over 13 000 complaints alleging discrimination under the Sex Discrimination Act have been received, 12 000 of them in the area of employment. Beyond the complaints handling function, the legislation has had an important influence on behaviour and shaped attitudes towards equality between men and women.

The complaints process

A person who believes that they have been discriminated against can make a complaint to HREOC. If the complaint is accepted, it is investigated by a complaints officer and efforts will be made to resolve the complaint by conciliation. This usually involves holding a conciliation conference (either voluntary or compulsory) where the parties are given the opportunity to settle the complaint on mutually agreed terms.

1 Section 3(a) *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth).

2 For further discussion of the relevant provisions of CEDAW see pp 1-2 and p 68.

3 The State and Territory anti-discrimination acts are: *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW); *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (WA); *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (SA); *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* (Vic); *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld); *Discrimination Act 1991* (ACT); *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998* (Tas); *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992* (NT).

Conciliation can result in a variety of outcomes such as financial compensation, an apology, promotion, reinstatement, introduction of equal opportunity policies and programs, counselling or disciplinary action. If the complaint cannot be conciliated, the President of HREOC may terminate the complaint. Complaints may also be terminated for a variety of reasons including that they relate to events more than twelve months old, they are lacking in substance, the alleged conduct is not unlawful or there is an adequate alternative remedy.

When the complaints are terminated for whatever reason, the complainant can apply to the Federal Court of Australia or Federal Magistrates Court to have the original allegations heard and determined. Decisions of the Federal Court of Australia and Federal Magistrates Court are binding.

International Labour Organization Convention 156

The family responsibilities provisions were inserted into the Sex Discrimination Act in 1992 to give effect to certain of the provisions of the International Labour Organization's *Convention Concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities* (ILO 156), which Australia had ratified in 1990.⁴ Amongst other things, ILO 156 obliges Australia:

- to ensure that family responsibilities shall not, as such, constitute a valid reason for termination of employment;⁵ and
- with a view to creating effective equality of opportunity for men and women workers, to take measures to take account of the needs of workers with family responsibilities in terms and conditions of employment.⁶

ILO 156 has a dual purpose, to create:

[e]quality of opportunity...between men and women with family responsibilities, on the one hand, and between men and women with such responsibilities and workers without such responsibilities, on the other.⁷

The rationale for that approach was that:

[i]t was considered that full equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women could not be achieved without broader social changes, including a more equitable sharing of family responsibilities and that the excessive burden of family and household tasks still borne by women workers constituted one of the most important reasons for their continuing inequality in employment and occupation...⁸

4 ILO 156 was opened for signature in 1981 and entered into force for Australia on 30 March 1990, [1991] ATS 7. Second Reading Speech to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Legislation Amendment Bill (No 2) 1992 *House of Representatives Hansard* 3 November 1992, pp 2399-2400. The then Industrial Relations Act was amended also to ensure that the Australian Industrial Relations Commission took account of the family responsibilities of workers in its work. This legislation is discussed at chapter 8.

5 Article 8.

6 Article 4(b). See also the Preamble and articles 3(1) and 6.

7 International Labour Organization General Survey *Workers with Family Responsibilities* International Labour Conference 80th session 1993: Geneva Report III Part 4B 1993, p 25.

8 *ibid*, p 25.

Family responsibilities provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act

Discrimination on the ground of family responsibilities under the Sex Discrimination Act occurs where an employer discriminates against an employee on the basis of family responsibilities by dismissing the employee.⁹ Family responsibilities are defined in the Act as the responsibility to care for or support a dependent child or immediate family member, being a spouse, adult child, parent, grandparent, grandchild or sibling of the employee or of a spouse of the employee.¹⁰ The definition of de facto spouse excludes a same sex partner.¹¹

The family responsibilities provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act are relatively limited. When they were introduced, the family responsibilities provisions were seen to be a work in progress. Parliament apparently had in mind that wider provisions would be enacted at a later stage but no further action to broaden the scope of the provisions have been taken.¹²

The restriction of the family responsibilities provisions to dismissal from employment has not proved as significant as may first appear. This is because courts have interpreted dismissal to include constructive dismissals.¹³ A constructive dismissal occurs where the employer's actions give the employee no choice but to leave their employment.

Additionally, indirect discrimination is not covered in the family responsibilities provisions, unlike other forms of discrimination.¹⁴ Indirect discrimination occurs when there is a condition, requirement or practice that is the same for everyone but has an unfair effect on a particular group of people.

This limitation of family responsibilities provisions to direct discrimination has proved to be a more serious restriction.¹⁵ Most unfavourable treatment that people experience in the workplace because of family responsibilities is the indirect effect of inflexible workplace policies and practices. For example, requirements to work full time, overtime or rotating shifts appear to be fair because they apply to all employees

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- 9 Sections 7A and 14(3A). Section 7A of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) reads:
For the purposes of this Act, an employer discriminates against an employee on the ground of the employee's family responsibilities if:
(a) the employer treats the employee less favourably than the employer treats, or would treat, a person without family responsibilities in circumstances that are the same or not materially different; and
(b) the less favourable treatment is by reason of:
(i) the family responsibilities of the employee; or
(ii) a characteristic that appertains generally to persons with family responsibilities; or
(iii) a characteristic that is generally imputed to persons with family responsibilities.
- 10 Sections 4 and 4A *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth).
- 11 Section 4 *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth). This omission is coupled with weak protection at federal level against discrimination on the ground of sexuality under the *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986* (Cth). These provisions reflect the general omission at federal level to protect against discrimination on the basis of sexuality.
- 12 See Second Reading Speech to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Legislation Amendment Bill (No 2) 1992 *House of Representatives Hansard* 3 November 1992, pp 2399-2400.
- 13 See John von Doussa QC and Craig Lenehan "Barbequed or Burned? Flexibility in work arrangements and the Sex Discrimination Act" (2004) 10 *UNSWLJ Forum: The Sex Discrimination Act - A Twenty Year Review* 2, pp 43-50 at pp 46-47.
- 14 Section 14(3A) *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth).
- 15 Like other direct discrimination provisions, there is a requirement that a comparison be made between the treatment of the person alleging discrimination and the way another person without the relevant characteristic, in this case, family responsibilities, is treated or would be treated in the same or similar circumstances. This is referred to as the comparator element. For discrimination to be made out, there must have been less favourable treatment accorded to the person alleging discrimination than their comparator would have received. In addition, as with other direct discrimination provisions, a test of causality between the less favourable treatment and the ground of discrimination applies. See John von Doussa QC and Craig Lenehan "Barbequed or Burned? Flexibility in work arrangements and the Sex Discrimination Act" (2004) 10 *UNSWLJ Forum: The Sex Discrimination Act - A Twenty Year Review* 2, pp 43-50 at p 45.

equally. However, workers with family responsibilities will often be disadvantaged by them, for example, by being unable to apply for promotion to a position if it requires overtime.

A number of recent cases under the family responsibilities provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act have illustrated these difficulties.¹⁶ It appears that the direct family responsibilities discrimination provisions may have limited value for those seeking redress for apparently unfair treatment.¹⁷

Perhaps as a result of these limitations, there are relatively few complaints under these provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act. Over the last three years, family responsibilities complaints comprised only four or five per cent of complaints under the Sex Discrimination Act.¹⁸

Family responsibilities and sex discrimination: case example

In a matter before the Federal Magistrates' Service, the applicant was a full time employee of the respondent prior to taking maternity leave.¹⁹ While still on maternity leave she discussed with her employer the possibility of returning to work part time, but the issue was not resolved.

On her return to work, the applicant told her employer that she was available for part time work. Her employer told her that no part time work was available and terminated her employment.

The applicant argued in court that her dismissal was discrimination on the ground of family responsibilities, as well as direct and indirect sex discrimination. She was successful on all grounds, with the magistrate finding that she was treated less favourably than a male employee without family responsibilities (direct sex discrimination) and that an unreasonable denial of part time work was likely to disadvantage women because of their disproportionate responsibility for the care of children (indirect sex discrimination).

Family responsibilities discrimination: case example

In another matter, the applicant would leave work for a brief period each day, from 2:55 pm to 3:15 pm to transfer her son from kindergarten to a carer.²⁰ The applicant claimed that this was done with the knowledge and consent of her employer, which her employer disputed. After unsuccessfully trying to negotiate an alternative arrangement with the applicant, her employer directed her to work her contract hours of 9:00 am to 5:00 pm with a lunch break at 12:00 to 12:30 pm. The applicant continued to leave work at 2:55 pm to transfer her child and return at 3:15 pm.

In response, the employer deemed that the applicant's employment status be changed to permanent part time, and her new hours of employment were declared to be 9:00 am to 3:00 pm with half hour lunch to be taken between 12:00 and 12:30 pm, reducing her hours to a 27 and a half hour week.

16 *ibid*, pp 45-47.

17 *ibid*, pp 46-47: "Rather, we might expect many more matters where the evidence indicates that flexibility was refused for reasons that are less than clear (even to the participants), raising possible difficulties in terms of causation; or that **all** attempted departures from the ideal worker norm (be they for reasons associated with family responsibilities or for other reasons) will be met with refusals, meaning that it will be difficult to make out the comparator element."

18 Sixteen of 399 complaints under the Sex Discrimination Act related to family responsibilities discrimination in 2001-2002; 19 of 380 in 2002-2003; and 14 of 353 in 2003-2004. All but one complaint in the last three financial years related to the area of employment.

19 *Escobar v Rainbow Printing Pty Ltd (No2)* [2002] FMCA 122.

20 *Song v Ainsworth Game Technology Pty Ltd* [2002] FMCA 31.

The applicant submitted in court that the requirement that she move from full time to part time work constituted dismissal on the grounds of family responsibilities under the Sex Discrimination Act.

The Federal Magistrate found that changing the applicant's employment arrangements from full time to part time without her consent amounted to a constructive dismissal and that the reason for the dismissal was her family responsibilities. The Federal Magistrate ordered reinstatement to full time work on terms that allowed the applicant to meet her family responsibilities and awarded the applicant damages.

Sex and pregnancy discrimination complaints under the Sex Discrimination Act

Rather than relying on the limited family responsibilities provisions, many women complainants are using the sex and pregnancy discrimination provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act to pursue allegations of workplace failure to accommodate family responsibilities. In particular, the indirect sex and pregnancy discrimination provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act have proved useful to complainants.

Indirect sex discrimination occurs where the alleged discriminator imposes or proposes to impose a condition, requirement or practice which has or is likely to have the effect of disadvantaging people of the same sex as the applicant, and where that requirement condition or practice is unreasonable in the circumstances.²¹

There has been a series of such cases, beginning with *Hickie v Hunt & Hunt* in which Commissioner Evatt inferred:

...from general knowledge that women are far more likely than men to require at least some periods of part-time work during their career, and in particular a period of part-time work after maternity leave in order to meet family responsibilities.²²

Since then, the courts have accepted:

...sometimes as a matter of judicial notice without any specific evidence, that this disadvantage stems from the fact that women are more likely to require part-time work to meet their family responsibilities.²³

The indirect sex and pregnancy discrimination case law is emerging as a useful tool to assist women to obtain redress where their employer has refused to provide workplace flexibilities to accommodate family responsibilities.

Men's use of the Sex Discrimination Act

Despite the fact that the family responsibilities provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act are equally available to both men and women, men have not generally made use of them.²⁴

21 Sections 5(2) and 7B *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth). See section 6(2) of the Act for the same definition of indirect discrimination on the ground of pregnancy or potential pregnancy.

22 Unreported, HREOC Commissioner Evatt 7 March 1998, extract at (1998) EOC 92-910.

23 John von Doussa QC and Craig Lenehan "Barbequed or Burned? Flexibility in work arrangements and the Sex Discrimination Act" (2004) 10 *UNSWLJ Forum: The Sex Discrimination Act - A Twenty Year Review* 2, pp 43-50 at p 47.

24 Of 16 complaints under the family responsibilities provisions under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* in 2001-2002, three were made by men; of 19 in 2002-2003, three were made by men; and of 14 in 2003-2004, one was made by a man.

However, certain restrictions apply to men in their use of some provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act. They are unable to access the sex discrimination provisions to address discrimination on the basis of their family responsibilities, as women have done. This is because men cannot argue, as women have, that *as a sex* they are more likely to take on family care obligations and that less favourable treatment because of family responsibilities is therefore attributable to their sex. Men have not traditionally had primary responsibility for caring work, and so could not argue that such responsibilities were associated with being a man.²⁵

This in effect restricts men's abilities to seek assistance under the Sex Discrimination Act. The application of the indirect sex discrimination provisions in these cases may, by protecting women but not men, actually serve to entrench traditional domestic arrangements as the responsibility of women and discourage a more equal sharing of caring and domestic work.

Together with workplace cultures that may discourage men from claiming a better balance between their paid work and family responsibilities, this failure of the federal anti-discrimination framework effectively locks men into the breadwinner model.²⁶

Individual complaints and beyond

There remains debate about the proper role of anti-discrimination laws. On the one hand, it is generally recognised that:

[L]aw is one of the instruments of change in our society. It is a useful educational tool even if it has only a limited direct role in social change and reform. At the very least, it can guide legal inquiry in the right direction and can help to reveal and alter assumptions and practices that need correction.²⁷

25 In addition, to avoid problems of constitutional validity, sections 9(2) and 9(4) of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) make clear that the Act has effect only by the operation of section 9(3) and sections 9(5) to (20), which reflect relevant heads of Commonwealth legislative power. Of particular note is s 9(10), which reflects the external affairs power. It provides that, where CEDAW is in force, the relevant provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act have effect to the extent to which the terms of the Act give effect to CEDAW in relation to discrimination against women. This gives the Sex Discrimination Act a broad application in proceedings brought by female applicants. Men seeking to use the Sex Discrimination Act must rely on other provisions in section 9 (such as section 9(11)–(12) which reflect the corporations power).

26 This issue was raised in the recent case of *Howe v Qantas* [2004] FMCA242 before the Federal Magistrates Court. In that case, a woman complained of family responsibilities and indirect sex discrimination, arguing that inflexible working conditions conflicted with her caring responsibilities. The respondent argued that allowing women to claim discrimination on the basis of sex by reason of family responsibilities is to entrench gendered stereotypes that women are the natural primary carers. The Sex Discrimination Commissioner, participating in that case, argued that so long as family responsibilities are not equally shared between the sexes and overwhelmingly devolve upon women, a claim for indirect sex discrimination under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) is and should remain available to women. The Commissioner accepted that there will be no relevant "disadvantage" (under the indirect sex discrimination provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act) when the unequal sharing of family responsibilities is addressed. However, until that time, women will continue to be disadvantaged by family responsibilities as compared to men and a claim for indirect sex discrimination under the Sex Discrimination Act is and should remain available to prevent this inequality **between the sexes** within the family from restricting women's possibilities of preparing for, entering, participating in or advancing in economic activity. See also International Labour Organization General Survey *Workers with Family Responsibilities* International Labour Conference 80th session Geneva Report III Part 4B 1993, p 29. However, as discussed in chapter 8, the workplace relations system may provide an avenue for men to address discrimination they face on the basis of their family responsibilities. For example, in a recent case before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, a male factory worker successfully argued that the relocation of his work site would significantly impede his caring responsibilities to his two children and his frail mother, and was effectively a dismissal: *Han Jian Liu v NHP Electrical Engineering Products Pty Ltd* AIRC C2004/6073, 6 December 2004.

27 New South Wales Law Reform Commission *Review of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)* Report No 92 NSW LRC Sydney 1999, para 1.8.

On the other hand, "...employers resist their workplaces being used to engineer social attitudes or to experiment with policy that is ahead of community attitudes."²⁸ Certainly, employers would take issue with further workplace regulation where current rights are not being fully used.

It is clear that legislative responses to discrimination are more generally accepted where they carefully balance the social and economic imperatives to eliminate discrimination and inequality with the need to allow business to operate without undue restriction.

Many commentators suggest that more is needed to provide the long term impetus for social change around men and women's roles in paid work and the family. There is a range of options for using the anti-discrimination framework in this process.

First, and most simply, legislating to broaden the federal family responsibilities provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act would provide an avenue to assist men and women to better balance their family responsibilities with paid work. It would also promote public awareness and cultural change around men's role in the family and paid work. As the New South Wales Law Reform Commission has noted, "...it would be quite inappropriate to provide protection to women (as a form of sex discrimination) and not to men who undertake such responsibilities."²⁹

Perhaps more ambitious are recommendations for positive duties upon employers to accommodate family responsibilities. Similar duties have been proposed by the Productivity Commission in the context of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth).³⁰ As with the recommended amendments to the Disability Discrimination Act, failure to meet those duties would constitute discrimination. The outer limits of the duties could be defined by reference to concepts of reasonableness or unjustifiable hardship.³¹

The current individual complaints system has many benefits. For example, it provides a remedy for individuals who feel aggrieved by discriminatory work practices and allows for beneficial legal precedents to be set through court cases. However, some argue that relying on an individual complaints mechanism to address discrimination is onerous on complainants and fails to promote systemic change and prefer "[s]ome reshaping of social institutions to suit women as well as men...".³² Suggestions have included an Equality Act, a federal act ensuring that women's equality is legally protected, or a process like the United Kingdom's Women and Work Commission, which will identify the sources of women's disadvantage at work and make recommendations for redress.³³

28 Peter Anderson "The Sex Discrimination Act: An employer perspective" 10 *UNSWLJ Forum: The Sex Discrimination Act - A Twenty Year Review* 2, pp 51-56 at p 51.

29 New South Wales Law Reform Commission *Review of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)* Report No 92 NSW LRC Sydney 1999, para 5.188. Although, again, the constitutional limitations of federal legislation, not shared by States, referred to at p 86 must be considered.

30 Productivity Commission *Review of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992* Productivity Commission Canberra 2004 recommendation 8.1, p 196.

31 As suggested by the Productivity Commission *Review of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992* Productivity Commission Canberra 2004. John von Doussa QC and Craig Lenehan "Barbequed or Burned? Flexibility in work arrangements and the Sex Discrimination Act" 10 *UNSWLJ Forum: The Sex Discrimination Act - A Twenty Year Review* 2, pp 43-50 at pp 48-49. Chapter 8 discusses progress in the industrial arena towards imposing positive obligations on employers to accommodate family responsibilities.

32 See for example Beth Gaze "The Sex Discrimination Act after Twenty Years: Achievements, disappointments, disillusionments and alternatives" (2004) 10 *UNSWLJ Forum: The Sex Discrimination Act - A Twenty Year Review* 2, pp 57-61 at pp 59-61; Jill Murray "Work and Care: New legal mechanisms for adaptation" (2005) 15 *Labour and Industry* 3 (forthcoming): "The remedial system of anti-discrimination law has serious limitations ... and to date in Australia has played only a muted demonstration role in provoking workplace change."

33 See Beth Gaze "The Sex Discrimination Act after Twenty Years: Achievements, disappointments, disillusionments and alternatives" (2004) 10 *UNSWLJ Forum: The Sex Discrimination Act - A Twenty Year Review* 2, pp 57-61 at p 61.

Questions

- 23.** *Can anti-discrimination systems assist men and women better balance their paid work and family responsibilities? Why or why not?*
 - 24.** *Why do men with family responsibilities not make more use of the family responsibilities provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act?*
 - 25.** *Should the Sex Discrimination Act be amended to give greater assistance to men and women to address any workplace disadvantage they may face on the basis of their family responsibilities? If so, what particular amendments are necessary? If not, why not?*
 - 26.** *Can an individual complaints mechanism adequately deal with discrimination on the basis of family responsibilities? If not, what other changes may be necessary?*
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Chapter 8:

Workplace relations, policies and practices and the business case for change

Introduction

A variety of legislative measures and workplace policies exist to support women and men with family responsibilities. Industrial and workplace relations legislation have enshrined measures of equality and work standards for workplace policies and practices.

Federally, workplace regulation comprises legislation, awards and collective and individual agreements, principally detailed in the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (Workplace Relations Act). Awards and agreements are documents that set out pay and conditions applying in the workplace. Awards normally cover industries and types of jobs while agreements cover workplaces, a business or an individual.

Within the equal employment opportunity (EEO) framework, “work-family” balance or “work-life” balance have emerged as central issues. At the same time, a number of business case arguments have developed that highlight the benefits of family-friendly initiatives.

This chapter summarises the legislative, workplace and business responses to paid work and family issues and highlights some of the continuing gaps and challenges. The chapter concludes with a discussion of some possible ways forward, including the role of cultural change in the workplace.

The workplace relations framework

The workplace and industrial relations framework in Australia has experienced considerable change in the past two decades. Industrial tribunals, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) at the federal level, conciliate disputes between employers and unions, set wages and regulate matters such as hours of work and leave entitlements.

The federal system of workplace relations regulation is set to change with reforms recently proposed.¹

Work and family issues and the Workplace Relations Act

The direct references to work and family in the Workplace Relations Act lie in its principal object of “...assisting employees to balance their work and family responsibilities effectively through the development of mutually beneficial work practices

1 See The Prime Minister the Hon John Howard MP “Ministerial Statements Workplace Relations” *House of Representatives Hansard* Parliament of Australia 26 May 2005 and pp 92-93.

with employers...² and preventing and eliminating discrimination on a range of grounds, including family responsibilities.³ The Workplace Relations Act further provides that the AIRC must perform its functions taking account of the International Labour Organization's *Convention Concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities* (ILO 156)⁴ and in a way that furthers the objects of the Act as above.⁵

ILO 156 is included as a schedule to the Workplace Relations Act.⁶ Australia's responsibilities under ILO 156 have led to a number of other provisions in the Workplace Relations Act in particular:

- termination of employment is unlawful in relation to family responsibilities and parental/maternity leave;⁷ and
- a minimum 12 month entitlement for unpaid parental leave.⁸

Work and family issues are also included in other sections of the Workplace Relations Act stating that the AIRC must refuse to certify an agreement if it discriminates against an employee on a range of grounds, including family responsibilities.⁹

Awards and the safety net

The Workplace Relations Act continued a trend of decentralisation to the enterprise level and represented a significant change in the Australian workplace and industrial relations landscape. The Workplace Relations Act reduced the role of federal awards to a safety net of 20 allowable matters and introduced individual agreements termed Australian workplace agreements (AWAs) between employers and employees. Allowable matters under the Workplace Relations Act include part time work, carer's leave and parental leave.¹⁰

The term, "award safety net," is used in the Workplace Relations Act,¹¹ and refers to the minimum level of wages and conditions which an employee has access to in the absence of a collective or individual agreement.¹²

Agreements

The capacity of enterprise agreements to deliver family-friendly work provisions has been widely debated.¹³

2 Subsection 3(i) *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (Cth).

3 Subsection 3(j) *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (Cth).

4 Section 93A *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (Cth).

5 The AIRC has functions in relation to award making and dispute prevention and settlement (S88B(1)), agreement making (S170LA) and Australian workplace agreements (S170VCA).

6 Schedule 12 *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (Cth).

7 Section 170CK *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (Cth).

8 Division 5 of Part VIA *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (Cth).

9 Section 170LU(5). Similarly, section 170VG provides that the content of Australian workplace agreements must include provisions relating to discrimination.

10 Section 89A(2) *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (Cth). But see pp 92-93: there is currently a federal Government proposal to reduce the number of allowable matters to 16.

11 The Objects of sections 3(d) (ii) and 88A refer to the maintenance of "an effective award safety net of fair and enforceable minimum wages and conditions of employment".

12 Award reliant workers are concentrated in three industry sectors – accommodation, cafes and restaurants; retail trade; and health and community services. Donna Hristodoulidis, Grant Belchamber and Andrew Watson "The Impact of Safety Net Adjustments on Wages and Jobs of Award-reliant Workers" Paper presented to *Australian Labour Market Research Workshop* University of Western Australia December 2004.

13 See also pp 18-20.

It is argued that enterprise bargaining allows employees, particularly women, to strike workplace level agreements, tailored to their individual and family circumstances. The majority of enterprise agreements appear to provide what has been described as a limited range of family-friendly provisions.¹⁴ Around 87 per cent of employees covered by a certified agreement are covered by an agreement with at least one family-friendly provision and 91 per cent by an agreement with at least one family-friendly or flexible hours provision.¹⁵ The most common family-friendly provisions in certified agreements are family/carers' leave and part time work which were each contained in around one quarter of all certified agreements.¹⁶

AWAs are also used by enterprises to introduce family-friendly working conditions.¹⁷ The most recent data from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) show that the majority of AWAs contain at least one provision relating to family-friendly leave or working arrangements.¹⁸ These were most commonly bereavement leave, with around one quarter of agreements containing parental leave and family/carers leave.¹⁹

Enterprise or individual agreements certainly provide a mechanism by which flexibilities, such as part time work, can be introduced into workplaces. Critics have suggested, however, that increased working hours flexibilities have been traded off against other conditions.²⁰

Some research suggests that agreement making through certified agreements, and particularly AWAs, while generally containing provision for family-friendly working arrangements, tend in fact to make balancing work and family responsibilities more difficult for employees because they commonly also include provisions which expand the hours of ordinary work both during the week and on weekends, and reduce penalty and overtime rates.²¹ A survey on AWAs conducted for the Office of the Employment Advocate found evidence that AWAs were being used less to enhance work and family balance than to extend working hours so that enterprises' trading hours could be increased.²²

14 Steve O'Neill *Work and Family Policies as Industrial and Employment Entitlements* Research Paper No 2 2004-05 Economics, Commerce and Industrial Relations Section Information and Research Services Parliamentary Library Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2004, p 17.

15 Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and Office of the Employment Advocate *Agreement Making in Australia under the Workplace Relations Act 2002 and 2003* DEWR and OEA Canberra 2004, p 59.

16 *ibid*, p 57.

17 See Office of the Employment Advocate *Improving the Work Family Balance* Commonwealth of Australia Sydney 2000.

18 Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and Office of the Employment Advocate *Agreement Making in Australia under the Workplace Relations Act 2002 and 2003* DEWR and OEA Canberra 2004, p 95: over 70 per cent of all AWAs contain either a family-friendly leave or family-friendly flexible work arrangement.

19 *ibid*, p 96. It is not known to what extent these simply replicate award provisions.

20 For example Suzanne Hammond (ed) *Equity Under Enterprise Bargaining* acirt Working Paper No 33 University of Sydney 1994; Barbara Pocock, Rosslyn Prosser and Ken Bridge *Only a Casual... How casual work affects employees household and communities in Australia* University of Adelaide 2004.

21 Kristen van Barneveld and Betty Arsovska *AWAs: Changing the structure of wages?* acirt Working Paper No 67 University of Sydney 2001. See also Gillian Whitehouse "Australian Workplace Agreements and Work/Family Provisions" Paper presented at *The AWA Experience: Evaluating the evidence* acirt – OEA Conference University of Sydney September 2001.

22 Steve O'Neill *Work and Family Policies as Industrial and Employment Entitlements* Research Paper No 2 2004-05 Economics, Commerce and Industrial Relations Section Information and Research Services Parliamentary Library Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2004, p 18. The former Employment Advocate indicated that the survey found "[t]he main reasons employers gave for making AWAs were as follows: Flexibility of hours – working time arrangements established that better suit the needs of the organisation (45 per cent)" Jonathan Hamberger *The Future of Workplace Agreements* Speech to the Australian Human Resources Institute Brisbane 28 November 2001.

Test cases on paid work and family

The AIRC also has a role in addressing issues of paid work and family responsibilities through considering applications for new test case standards for awards. While there is no mention of test cases in the Workplace Relations Act there is provision for Full Benches of the Commission to establish precedent-setting principles for award variations.²³

The AIRC has over the years considered a number of test cases in relation to work and family matters including:

- 1979 – Maternity Leave;²⁴
- 1985 – Adoption Leave;²⁵
- 1990 – Parental Leave;²⁶
- 1994 – Family Leave;²⁷
- 1995 – Personal/Carer’s Leave;²⁸
- 2001 – Parental Leave for Casual Employees;²⁹
- 2002 – Reasonable Hours/Working Hours.³⁰

The Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) is currently considering the Family Provisions Test Case following an application by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) to vary a number of awards lodged in July 2003. National employer groups also made applications to vary the awards.³¹ The Full Bench has retired to consider its decision with an outcome likely around the middle of 2005.

An agreement has been reached between the employee and employer parties to extend the amount of paid personal leave available for caring purposes from five to ten days per year, with further unpaid leave available to care for sick or otherwise needy dependents. The agreement also provides that casual employees who were otherwise ineligible for time away from work to attend to family care will be able to take up to two days per occasion involving the birth, death, illness or other emergency involving a dependent. This agreement is subject to the approval of the Full Bench of the AIRC.

Proposed changes to workplace relations

The Prime Minister has recently announced a range of significant changes to the Australian workplace relations system.³² While the proposed legislation is still to be released, the key changes announced in Parliament include the following.

23 A test case is essentially a number of identical applications seeking change to a common award variation. If the variation to the common award is successful, it becomes a test case standard. Any variation is immediately applied to the awards that were named in the test case and may then be applied to other awards on request: www.workplace.gov.au.

24 Print D9579.

25 Print F9852.

26 Print J3596. Minimum parental leave entitlements for Victorian employees are contained in Schedule 1A *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (Cth).

27 Print L6900.

28 Print M7000.

29 PR904631.

30 PR072002.

31 Further details of the Test Case can be found in Australian Industrial Relations Commission *Family Provisions Case 2004 Fact Sheet 1* AIRC 2004 or at the AIRC’s dedicated website www.e-airc.gov.au/family-provisions/.

32 See The Prime Minister the Hon John Howard MP “Ministerial Statements Workplace Relations” *House of Representatives Hansard* Parliament of Australia 26 May 2005.

- The establishment of an Australian Fair Pay Commission to set a single minimum adult wage and adjust junior, training and disability rates, award classification wages and casual loadings.
- A new set of legislated minimum conditions for annual leave, personal leave, parental leave (including maternity leave) and a maximum number of ordinary working hours.
- A reduction in allowable award matters, removing jury service, notice of termination, superannuation and long service leave.
- Removal of the “no disadvantage test” so that most award conditions can be traded off in negotiations between employers and employees. Agreements will be checked against a new test – the Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Standard – based on minimum wages and legislated minimum conditions.
- A significant reduction in the role of the AIRC removing the responsibility for approving collective agreements (to transfer to the Office of the Employment Advocate) so that the AIRC retains only dispute resolution, award simplification and hearing limited unfair dismissal applications.
- An exemption from unfair dismissal laws for businesses with up to 100 employees.
- Probation periods under which an employee can be dismissed without cause increased to six months.
- A move towards a single national industrial relations system.³³

The federal Government has committed to retaining protection from unfair termination for workers on discriminatory grounds.

While employer groups have welcomed the announcements, unions are warning that the changes will increase working hours through the reduction in shift penalty payments and overtime rates, increase in ordinary time working hours, and reduction in casual loadings.³⁴

Work and family cases under the Workplace Relations Act

Legal developments in workplace relations in relation to family responsibilities have been reasonably limited, although in recent years a number of key cases have provided some indications of the ways in which the workplace relations framework may be used to achieve better paid work and family balance.

As noted above, the Workplace Relations Act makes it unlawful for an employer to terminate the employment of an employee for a proscribed reason which includes “family responsibilities”. This makes it possible for employees to bring claims of unlawful termination on the basis of family responsibilities in the AIRC.

In *Laz v Downer Group*, the Federal Court considered whether there was an inherent requirement to work overtime without notice. The applicant, Ms Laz, could work overtime when it was arranged in advance, but on occasion could not do so without

33 *A New Workplace Relations System: A plan for a modern workplace* Statement on the new workplace relations system 26 May 2005 available from www.pm.gov.au/news/interviews/Interview1401_supplement.html.

34 ACTU *Cutting Employment Conditions Fact Sheet* 26 May 2005.

advance notice as finding care for her 18 month old child at short notice was difficult. The Court upheld Ms Laz's claim of unlawful termination under the Workplace Relations Act.³⁵

In *AS Webb and the Australian Customs Service* an employee lost his unfair dismissal claim after the AIRC found that the Service considered his family responsibilities in the context of other competing interests and "produced a balance that was about right". Mr Webb and his family were posted to Cairns for a three year term in 1998. During this time, his marriage broke down and he separated from his wife. By a private arrangement, he agreed to care for the children for 15 out of each 28 days. As the expiry of the Cairns contract approached, the employee's ex-wife decided that she and the children would not relocate to Brisbane but would stay in Cairns. Mr Webb was granted a one year extension to his contract, but further requests were denied and although he offered to revert to a lower grade this was also refused. Eventually his employment was terminated as a result of his refusing a direction to attend work in Brisbane. The AIRC found that the employer had acted reasonably in the circumstances.³⁶

It is worth noting that as in the above case, the workplace relations system provides an avenue for men to address discrimination they face on the basis of their family responsibilities. In another recent case before the AIRC, a male factory worker successfully argued that the relocation of his work site was unreasonable, would significantly impede his caring responsibilities to his two children and his frail mother, and was effectively a dismissal.³⁷

Apart from taking unfair dismissal action, the other option for employees to pursue claims relating to family responsibilities in the industrial jurisdiction is for the employee's union to notify an industrial dispute with the AIRC. In a recent example of this approach, the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) notified a dispute on behalf of a member, Ms Angelis, against her employer company. The member was an accounts officer, employed by the company for 14 years who normally worked from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. After the birth of her second child, she sought to arrange new hours following her return from maternity leave and requested that she finish no later than 3:00 pm so she could pick her eldest child up from school. She was prepared to start work as early as 7.30 am if necessary. Deputy President Ives found that taking into account Ms Angelis' circumstances and the company's operational requirements, that the company's approach "...appears to be nothing more than sheer bloody-mindedness..." and ordered a three month trial of the arrangement.³⁸

Possible barriers to paid work and family balance in the workplace relations system

It has been suggested by researchers that there are a number of barriers to employees taking up workplace or industrial entitlements to assist them to balance their paid work and family responsibilities.

- Employees perceive a risk to their job security or career progression if they avail themselves of family-friendly work practices.
- Management culture does not support using family-friendly work practices.

35 *Laz v Downer Group* [2000] FCA 1390.

36 *A S Webb v Australian Customs Service* AIRC PR948530, June 28 2004.

37 *Han Jian Liu v NHP Electrical Engineering Products Pty Ltd* AIRC C2004/6073, 6 December 2004.

38 *Community and Public Sector Union v CSL Limited* AIRC PR921278, 13 August 2002.

- Managers only make the practices selectively available to employees.
- The flexibility is arranged to suit the employer not the employee.
- Paid work and family policies tend to be considered only available to women.³⁹

In research carried out for the Department of Family and Community Services, the particular barriers to fathers taking up family-friendly working provisions were examined.⁴⁰ The study found that barriers to men's use of available provisions arose from three sources: the organisation of the workplace; the business environment in which the firm operated; and the domestic organisation in employees' own homes.

Among the workplace barriers discouraging fathers' take-up were:

- the unevenness of provision of family-friendly conditions;
- the novelty of men's utilisation of family-friendly conditions;
- doubts about the legitimacy of men's claims to family responsibilities;
- negative attitudes on the part of immediate supervisors;
- informal practices and taken-for-granted assumptions;
- the workload burden resulting from measuring performance by outcomes rather than by length of time spent at the workplace.⁴¹

Employees, supervisors and even some senior managers thought that breaks or reductions in working hours could irreversibly damage men's careers.

Factors identified arising from the business environment included competitive pressures to maintain market share and increase earnings and dividends.

Men in the study reported a powerful link between earning income and having a career and their masculine identity. Loss of work—or being passed over for promotion—threatened their sense of manhood and most men tended to give priority to work over family.⁴²

Workplace policies and practices

Many paid work and family provisions are contained in organisational policies in addition to (or instead of) awards and agreements. These policies are often wide ranging and some businesses provide excellent conditions to assist employees to balance their work and family responsibilities.

39 Louise Thornthwaite and John Buchanan "Likely Future Developments in Work and Family Policy and Practice" Paper presented at the *Annual Labour Law Conference* Sydney 1 April 2004 cited in *Workplace Info* Australian Business Limited 2 April 2004. See also Louise Thornthwaite *Work-Family Balance: International research on employee preferences* Working Paper 79 acirt University of Sydney 2002. In addition, the degree of career attachment also influences men and women taking parental leave, particularly if they view work as an important source of self identity and regard taking leave as a threat to their career goals.

40 Michael Bittman, Sonia Hoffmann and Denise Thompson *Men's Uptake Of Family Friendly Employment Provisions* Policy Research Paper No 22 Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 2004, p x.

41 *ibid*, p x.

42 *ibid*, p x.

A number of these are showcased in the annual Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) /Business Council of Australia (BCA) National Work and Family Awards.⁴³ The Awards recognise best practice in paid work and family, especially those organisations that seek out and respond to their employees' particular needs while meeting business demands.

Organisations with best practice work and family policies report a range of positive effects, including higher retention rates, better morale, increased return rates from parental leave, higher productivity, fewer workers' compensation claims easier recruitment of high quality applicants, less industrial action, low levels of absenteeism and better customer satisfaction.⁴⁴

Equal employment opportunity & workplace diversity

Equal employment opportunity (EEO) principles have featured in the Australian workplace landscape for 30 years. During this time, EEO principles have progressively entered mainstream human resources practices.

EEO principles seek to ensure that workplaces are free from all forms of unlawful discrimination and harassment and aim to redress past disadvantage experienced by women and other groups.⁴⁵

EEO principles are now entrenched in the workplace through legislation. The Commonwealth has enacted several pieces of anti-discrimination legislation including the Sex Discrimination Act.⁴⁶ State and Territory governments have also enacted anti-discrimination legislation that includes provisions prohibiting sex discrimination.⁴⁷ For a list of anti-discrimination provisions relating to paid work and family see page 81.

The Commonwealth Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) was established in 2000 by the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999*. The 1999 legislation aims to promote merit in employment, support equal employment opportunity, eliminate employment discrimination and encourage consultation between employers and employees on these issues. The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act requires private sector companies, community organisations, non government schools, unions, group training companies, and higher education institutions with 100 or more employees to establish a workplace program to remove the barriers to women entering and advancing in their organisation and to report to the EOWA.

43 See www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Category/SchemesInitiatives/WorkFamily/WorkandFamilyAwards.

44 Department of Employment and Workplace Relations *Winning Workplaces: ACCI/BCA National Work and Family Awards* Commonwealth of Australia 2004. The difficulty for employees with such policies is that they may not be legally enforceable in workplace or industrial relations tribunals if the policies are not included or regulated under a registered industrial instrument. However, some industrial practitioners have suggested that it may be possible for an employee to take legal action for breach of contract. See Joellen Riley "Contracting for Work-Life Balance: Mutual trust and confidence as gateway" Address to the *Annual Labour Law Conference* 1 April 2004 cited in *Workplace Info* 14 April 2004 Australian Business Limited.

45 See, for example, Attorney General's Department of New South Wales, Information page on Equal Employment Opportunity at www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/Lawlink/Corporate/II_corporate.nsf/0/4a31e00954d51f25ca256e5a0017a0f0?OpenDocument.

46 See chapter 7 for a discussion of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth). Other legislation includes the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth), *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth), *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986* (Cth) and the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999* (Cth).

47 The grounds covered by State and Territory legislation include sex, marital status, pregnancy, family responsibilities and sexual harassment. Discrimination is prohibited in areas such as employment, provision of goods and services, education, membership of clubs and accommodation amongst others. There are however many exemptions that relate to religious, charitable and voluntary bodies, competitive sport, courts and some services.

While EEO principles have been legislated in the form of anti-discrimination laws, the particular workplace implementation of EEO policies has remained voluntary. Many employers have adopted “workplace diversity programs”, aimed at valuing individual differences and acknowledging that each employee brings a different perspective to the workplace.

More recently, workplace diversity has taken on a wider scope than the initial focus on gender, race and disability towards one in which a flexible and diverse workforce is seen as beneficial to all workplace participants, including employers.⁴⁸ Increasingly, workers with children or caring responsibilities have been identified as a group with special needs in workplace diversity programs. The broadening of these definitions has, along with the changing demographics of the Australian workforce, led to the prominence of “work-family” or “work-life” balance as an issue within the EEO framework.

These two terms, “work-family” and “work-life” balance tend to be interchangeable, although “work-family” balance is more explicit in its recognition of the difficulties and tensions faced by women and men as they attempt to gain a better balance between their paid work and family lives. “Work-life” balance initiatives generally emphasise a gender neutral approach that encourages a greater focus on men, as well as activities outside the family.⁴⁹ “Work-life balance” also encompasses the connection between paid work and being a member of the broader community.⁵⁰

Research indicates that the number of employers offering a range of family-friendly work practices and the number of employees availing themselves of these opportunities have increased. However, the finer details of the provisions and the extent of availability are difficult to examine. In addition the lack of uniformity across business, occupation and industry may be a barrier to acceptance and awareness.⁵¹

What is a family-friendly employer?

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines a family-friendly employer as one that recognises the family responsibilities of employees and accepts that such responsibilities can have an impact on employees’ working lives.⁵² A family-friendly organisation will try to help employees to reconcile paid work and family responsibilities and to make them feel supported in balancing their paid work and outside work commitments. Being family-friendly is more than having a set of practices recorded in the organisation’s rules and regulations: a commitment to these practices and a work culture supporting the values of work-life balance and encouraging the use of the practices is critical when successfully putting family-friendly policies into practice.⁵³

48 Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency *Annual Report 2001-02* Commonwealth of Australia Sydney 2002.

49 Sara Charlesworth, Philippa Hall and Belinda Probert *Drivers and Contexts of Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Action in Australian Organisations* (forthcoming) Informit RMIT Publishing Melbourne 2004.

50 Sara Charlesworth, Iain Campbell and Belinda Probert with June Allan and Leonie Morgan *Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities: Policy implementation options* a Report for the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet and Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development Melbourne 2002.

51 Matthew Gray and Jacqueline Tudball “Access to Family Friendly Work Practices: Differences within and between Australian workplaces” (2002) 61 *Family Matters*, pp 30-55 at p 30.

52 See also p 18.

53 International Labour Organization *The Family Friendly Workplace* Information Sheet WF3 International Labour Office Geneva 2004. Other characteristics of a family-friendly workplace include income security (having a regular and predictable income), employment security (predictable hours and on-going employment), access to training and career path, access to care arrangements and flexible leave arrangements: Glenda Strachan and John Burgess “The ‘Family Friendly’ Workplace: Origins, meaning and application at Australian workplaces” (1998) 19 *International Journal of Manpower* 4, pp 250-265.

Recognition by business that workers belong to families and that these families bring their own demands has resulted in an increasing number of “family-friendly workplaces” as more organisations provide flexible work arrangements.⁵⁴

The term “family-friendly” can also meet some resistance from employees without current family responsibilities, and some organisations have broadened their policies to encompass work and life responsibilities, recognising that all workers have responsibilities and interests outside the workplace.⁵⁵

Paid work and family balance: the business case

Businesses are increasingly recognising that it makes good business sense to adopt EEO programs. The provision of flexible work arrangements that permit employees to integrate their personal lives with their work lives has numerous benefits for both employee and employer. Employees who have access to flexible arrangements are likely to experience increases in morale, loyalty to the organisation and job satisfaction, in turn increasing productivity. For employers, the opportunity to develop and enhance the workplace culture will result in savings through lower staff turnover and absenteeism and higher profits through increased staff productivity.

EOWA has identified the following “business case” arguments.

1. Attraction and retention of the best talent. The costs associated with recruitment and staff turnover are considerable and include advertising costs, administration costs, time spent training, termination pay, loss of corporate and specialist knowledge and the possibility of low staff morale and reduced productivity.
2. Productivity and innovation. The diverse set of skills and experiences employees bring to their work, if harnessed, can lead to increased innovation and hence increased productivity.
3. Enhancement of a company’s management style. Increasingly a mix of female and male management styles are desired for the value and diversity of methods they bring to the workplace.
4. Attraction of more female customers. Women make up over 50 per cent of Australia’s population and, notably, Australian women are responsible for spending 90 cents in every household dollar. With this kind buying power it is in business’ best interest to keep women both as employees and customers.

54 The ACCI/BCA National Work and Family Awards have been held since 1992 to recognise organisations that provide family-friendly work environments for their employees. The awards recognise excellence in work and family initiatives and showcase small, medium and large organisations with outstanding flexible working arrangements which meet the needs of the business and its employees. Businesses participating in the awards are always very clear about the benefits to their organisations, not just their employees, offered by flexible work arrangements. See Department of Employment and Workplace Relations *Winning Workplaces: ACCI/BCA National Work and Family Awards Commonwealth of Australia 2004*.

55 See Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) “Work Life Balance” at www.eowa.gov.au/About_Equal_Opportunity/Key_Agenda_Items/Work_Life_Balance.

5. Reduction of company risk. By considering reasonable requests and attempting to accommodate the needs of employees with caring responsibilities, employers are protecting themselves from possible legal action.⁵⁶

In addition, companies are increasingly recognising their role in society as being greater than the return to shareholders and company profits. The recent growth in “triple bottom line” reporting and the demand for socially responsible corporate behaviour has highlighted the role organisations play in contributing to social cohesion.

Drivers for change

While workplace policies and practices, and enlightened EEO and human resources practitioners work to produce institutional and attitudinal change, it is workplace culture that is the real driver for change.

A study for the federal Department of Family and Community Services highlighted that policies and programs cannot be successful unless they change the culture of organisations. Cultural change is particularly important to prevent family-friendly policies reinforcing gender stereotypes. The study found that factors important in promoting the necessary organisational change are:

- leadership;
- integration of work/family issues with business strategies and corporate policies;
- addressing barriers to change (especially traditional assumptions about gender roles and accepting that men want balance as well as women);
- emphasis on research;
- employee involvement;
- including the full range of issues affecting work/family balance.⁵⁷

A recent study of Australian organisations identified a number of key drivers for the implementation of EEO/Diversity Action.

- A business case for attraction/retention.
- The right thing to do, for both social justice and corporate citizenship reasons. The social justice case involved organisations responding to perceived community standards and expectations. The corporate citizenship case is based on a rationale of enhancing the reputation and stature of the organisation in the public sphere for a number of reasons including improving the stock price and recruitment opportunity.
- Organisational commitment/cohesion.

56 Australian Government Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) *Why Equal Opportunity Makes Sense* at www.eowa.gov.au/About_Equal_Opportunity/Why_EO_Makes_Business_Sense.asp.

57 Graeme Russell and Lyndy Bowman *Work and Family: Current thinking, research and practice* Department of Family and Community Services Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2000.

- Legislative compliance.
- Industrial negotiations/employee pressure. This encompassed both union and employee pressure as well as the proactive rationale of containment of union influence.
- Personal leadership/commitment.⁵⁸

Significantly, research has found that the most frequent use of the business case argument applied to organisations where retention and attraction of employees had been identified as an issue. In most instances the issue of retention and attraction formed part of a broader business case rationale, less concerned with immediate cost savings than with the medium to long term interests of the organisation.⁵⁹

This study also identified a number of internal and external factors that propel organisations to take action around EEO and diversity in a specific way or at a specific time. Internal factors include organisational values and culture, work and workforce organisation, organisational change and industrial or workplace relations systems. External factors on the other hand might include industry or global demands and pressures, legislative requirements, government policy and perceptions of social and community responsibility.⁶⁰ Legislation is a big driver of change in countries such as the United Kingdom, which recently legislated the right to request part time work following the birth of a child, a "light touch regulation" which places a legal obligation on employers to consider a request for part time work.⁶¹

Questions

- 27. Are amendments to the workplace relations system needed to give greater assistance to men and women to address any workplace disadvantage they may face on the basis of their family responsibilities? If so, what particular amendments are necessary? If not, why not?*
 - 28. Do men make adequate use of the workplace relations system to assist them to balance their paid work with their family responsibilities?*
 - 29. Do informal workplace policies work well to assist employees to balance their paid work and family responsibilities? Do they assist some employees more than others, and if so, is this appropriate?*
 - 30. Have EEO policies and business case arguments produced a greater acceptance of the need for workplaces to be family-friendly?*
 - 31. How can Australian workplaces be made more family-friendly?*
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58 Sara Charlesworth, Philippa Hall and Belinda Probert *Drivers and Contexts of Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Action in Australian Organisations* (forthcoming) Informit RMIT Publishing Melbourne 2004.

59 Sara Charlesworth and Belinda Probert "Why Some Organisations Take on Family-Friendly Policies: The case of paid maternity leave" Paper presented at the *Association of Industrial Relations Academics Australia and New Zealand Conference* Sydney 9-11 February 2005.

60 *ibid.*

61 For an overview of this legislative provision, see Jill Murray *International Legal Trends in the Reconciliation of Work and Family Life* Report for the Family Provisions Test Case Melbourne 2004, pp 57-60.

Chapter 9:

Government support for working families

Introduction

Australian governments produced varying kinds and degrees of support for families throughout the twentieth century. Reconciling paid work with family responsibilities has been a significant part of federal Government agendas in recent years, with paid work and family declared an important issue, particularly for parents with young children, prior to the federal Government's re-election in 2001.¹

The federal Government identifies some of the key policy objectives of this support as assisting families to balance paid work and family responsibilities and facilitating choice and expanded opportunities for women.² This support both reflects and shapes changes in the labour market, social expectations, attitudes and national interest objectives.³ Policy work on paid work and family balance most recently has been affected by government responses to issues such as increasing workforce participation, the ageing population, declining fertility rates and addressing skills shortages.⁴

This chapter outlines federal Government policies which aim to help families reconcile paid work with caring responsibilities and lists the main forms of government payments available to different types of families. The chapter then outlines some of the literature examining the effects of these measures for Australian families.

Government assistance for families

The federal Government provides income support payments, such as Parenting Payment, Disability Support Payment, Newstart Allowance, and Carer Payment, targeting people in the most need to ensure that those with no other means of support are assisted with their basic costs of living.

1 See transcript of The Prime Minister the Hon John Howard MP *National Press Club Address* Canberra 8 November 2001 www.pm.gov.au/news/speeches/2001/speech1324.htm and transcript of The Prime Minister the Hon John Howard MP *Address to the Strategic Leadership for Australia Policy Directions in a Complex World Committee for Economic Development of Australia* Sydney 20 November 2002 www.pm.gov.au/news/speeches/2002/speech1996.htm.

2 Australian Government *What the Australian Government is Doing for Women* Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2004, p i; Transcript of The Prime Minister the Hon John Howard MP *Address to the 100th Anniversary Dinner for the Australian Women's National League* Melbourne 16 July 2004 www.pm.gov.au/news/speeches/speech997.html.

3 An historical overview of federal Government assistance for families is provided in Peter Whiteford, David Stanton and Matthew Gray "Families and Income Security: Changing patterns of social security and related policy issues" (2001) 60 *Family Matters*, pp 24-35.

4 See Steve O'Neill *Work and Family Policies as Industrial and Employment Entitlements* Research Paper No 2 2004-05 Department of Parliamentary Services Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2004, pp 6-7; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling work and family life – Australia, Denmark and The Netherlands* Volume 1 OECD Paris 2002, pp 9-10.

Family assistance payments are made in general recognition of the costs of raising children and aim to support the needs and choices of families, strengthen family relationships and protect against family breakdown.⁵ The Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) describes these payments as assisting families to raise their children, improving rewards from working and helping families to balance their work and family responsibilities.⁶

Support for carers of people with disabilities or severe medical conditions is also provided by income support payments and income supplements for people who are unable to participate substantially in the paid workforce because of their caring responsibilities. A range of further support services such as additional respite services and programs for carers were also announced in the 2004-2005 Budget.⁷

The following are the main payments provided to families and caregivers.⁸

Parenting Payment – A means tested payment to carers of children under 16 years, primarily in single income families (including sole parent families) with low income. Sole parents receive up to \$476.30 per fortnight, while partnered parents receive up to \$360.30 per fortnight.

Carer Payment – A means tested payment paid under pension conditions to people who provide full time care to someone with a severe physical, intellectual or psychiatric disability who is expected to require care for at least six months. The basic rate of payment is \$476.30, which is the same as the Age Pension.

Carer Allowance – A non-means tested supplementary payment for people who provide daily care to a person with a disability or medical condition. More than one allowance can be received if two or more people are cared for. The basic rate of payment is \$92.40 per fortnight and may be paid in addition to an income support payment.

Family Tax Benefit Part A (FTB (A)) – Families with dependent children under 21 or full time dependent students aged 21-24 years receive this payment, which is income tested on family income. The benefit cuts out when income reaches \$89 803 for families with one child under 18 years, \$98 940 for two children and \$108 077 for three children. FTB (A) can be paid fortnightly, as a lump sum after the end of the financial year, or as reduced tax withholdings from wages paid to a customer or their partner. The maximum rate for a child under 13 is \$133.56 per fortnight, or \$4 095.30 per year. Different rates apply to older dependent children and to children in approved care organisations.

5 Department of Family and Community Services *Annual Report 2003-04* Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2005, p 1.

6 *ibid*, p 2.

7 *ibid*, p 2.

8 Information on these payments is sourced from House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Workforce Participation *Working for Australia's Future: Increasing participation in the workforce* Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2005, Appendix F, pp 239-240; Centrelink *A Guide to Commonwealth Payments 20 March – 30 June 2005* Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2005.

Family Tax Benefit Part B (FTB (B)) – Single income families, including sole parent families, receive this payment. In two parent families, FTB (B) is income tested on the second (or lower) earner's income only, and payments are reduced by 20 cents for each dollar of income earned over \$4 000. Where the youngest child is under five, the second income earner can earn \$18 947 per year before the payment cuts out. Where the youngest child is over five, the second earner can earn \$14 421 before the payment cuts out. Payments can be paid fortnightly, as a lump sum after the end of the financial year, or as reduced tax withholdings from wages paid to a customer or their partner. The maximum rate of FTB (B) for a child under five years is \$114.66 per fortnight or \$2 989.35 per year, and \$79.94 per fortnight or \$2 084.15 per year for children between five and 15 years (or 16-18 years if a full time student).

Child Care Benefit – This is provided to families using either approved formal child care or informal (registered) child care. This subsidy either reduces fees at a child care service, or can be paid as a lump sum to parents at the end of the year, and only approved care is income tested on family income. A rate of \$0.471 per hour up to \$2.81 per hour (up to \$23.55 per week) is provided for approved care for families with incomes over a threshold of \$93 299 for one child in care, \$101 149 for two children in care and \$114 910 for three children, plus \$19 198 for each child after the third. For registered care the minimum or basic rate is \$0.471 per hour.⁹ Families on low incomes can receive up to \$140.50 for 50 hours of care a week.

Maternity Immunisation Allowance – A lump sum payment of \$216.20 is paid for children aged 18-24 months who are fully immunised.¹⁰

Maternity Payment – A payment of \$3 079 to families (usually a lump sum) following the birth or adoption of a baby. The payment will increase to \$4 000 from July 2006 and \$5 000 from July 2008. In the 2005-2006 Budget, access to this payment was extended to parents who adopt children up to two years of age.

Many parents and carers also receive income support through other government payments such as Newstart Allowance and Disability Support Payment. In particular, many fathers (both single and partnered) receive Newstart Allowance because Parenting Payment is restricted to one partner in low income couple families and in cases where separated parents both provide care, even if that care is equally shared.

9 "Approved care" includes long day care, family day care, in-home care, out of school hours care, vacation care and some occasional care services. "Registered care" is child care provided by grandparents, relatives, friends or nannies for work-related child care, and can include some care provided by pre-schools, kindergartens and out of school hours care: Family Assistance Office *The What, Why and How of Family Assistance* Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2004, p 24.

10 This allowance is also payable if an approved immunisation exemption has been obtained for the child.

The decision in the 2004-2005 Budget to introduce the maternity payment followed nationwide calls for paid maternity leave.¹¹ While this payment differs from paid maternity leave in that it is not linked to employment, the payment responds to the needs of many mothers for support at the time of birth of a child.

Other recent changes to family assistance include a 30 per cent child care tax rebate for out-of-pocket child care expenses (less Child Care Benefit, which is reconciled at the end of the financial year) to a maximum of \$4 000 per year per child. The rebate can first be claimed in the 2005-2006 financial year, for child care costs incurred from 1 July 2004.¹² There is also improved access to Child Care Benefit for grandparents who have primary responsibility for raising their grandchildren and receive an income support payment such as the Age Pension.¹³ Grandparent carers can now access Child Care Benefit for up to 50 hours a week, when previously they could only access 20 hours if they were not working, training or studying.¹⁴

Policy changes announced in the 2005-2006 Budget include changes to the level of family income allowed before FTB (A) begins to be withdrawn (by \$4 139 to \$37 500 a year from July 2006) and a one-off bonus for carers who receive either Carer Payment (\$1 000) or Carer Allowance (\$600).¹⁵

The new Welfare to Work package introduces major changes to income support arrangements for people of working age, in particular sole parents, mature aged workers and people with disabilities who receive the Disability Support Pension. From 1 July 2006, Parenting Payment will only be available to new claimants where their youngest child is less than six years of age. Where the youngest child is older than six, parents will have to claim Newstart Allowance, which requires an activity test to be satisfied – for most parents this will be a requirement to seek part time work of 15 hours per week. People with a disability applying for income support after 1 July will also be required to seek part time work if they have the capacity to do so.

Coupled with this measure is a package to boost child care including an extra 84 300 Outside School Hours Child Care places and 2 500 family day care places to assist working parents.¹⁶ At the time of writing the implications of these changes for families balancing paid work and caring responsibilities were being debated.¹⁷

Work and family policies

Apart from policies specifically designed to help families manage their paid work and family responsibilities, a much broader range of social policies affect how Australian families manage their competing obligations. These include health and elder care policies, retirement policies and education policies, all of which help to shape individual preferences, decisions and family formations.¹⁸ Access to family-

11 See for example Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission *A Time to Value: Proposal for a national paid maternity leave scheme* HREOC Sydney 2002.

12 Family Assistance Office "Changes to Family Assistance" in *The What, Why and How of Family Assistance* Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2004.

13 *ibid.* Grandparents with primary responsibility for raising a grandchild are also eligible for other family assistance payments including FTB (A) and (B): see chapter 4, particularly pp 45-46 for further discussion of grandparent carers.

14 *ibid.*

15 Australian Government *2005-2006 Budget Overview* Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2005, p 10.

16 *ibid.*, pp 11-13.

17 See, for example, National Council of Single Mothers and Their Children *Work First Approach Leaves Children Last* Media Release 10 May 2005; National Council of Single Mothers and Their Children *Sole Parents Work Requirements to Keep Job Network Full* Media release 12 April 2005 www.ncsmc.org.au; Christine Jackman "Pregnant Pause as Family-Friendly Policies Aborted: Budget 2005" *The Australian* 11 May 2005, p 1.

18 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling work and family life – Australia, Denmark and The Netherlands* Volume 1 OECD Paris 2002, pp 9-10.

friendly arrangements, whether provided through workplace and industrial relations legislation, awards or agreements, plays a significant part in determining how people balance paid work with family obligations.

Government policy also shapes the availability and affordability of child care, which is an important factor in determining whether parents – traditionally mothers – are able to return to paid work following the birth of a child. Financial support in the form of the Child Care Benefit¹⁹ is provided to parents to give them choice in terms of the quantity and type of child care.

Government input on awards and workplace practices

The federal Government promotes family-friendly work practices by some legislation such as that for a minimum 12 months unpaid parental leave, providing the frameworks for collective or individual bargaining and encouraging the adoption of family-friendly provisions by employers.²⁰ The federal Government also participates in test cases before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) to have input on the content of awards.²¹

At the time of writing, a decision on the Family Provisions Test Case before the AIRC is pending. The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and employer parties are seeking a range of flexibility provisions to be included in federal awards.²²

Relevant government agencies

A number of federal Government agencies have responsibility for supporting and promoting paid work and family balance and family-friendly arrangements within Australian workplaces. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) encourages organisations and individuals to adopt work and family policies using the agreement making process in the industrial relations system. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI)/Business Council of Australia (BCA) National Work and Family Awards aim to promote best practice family-friendly arrangements within the business community.²³ FaCS has produced a number of reports on family and paid work issues and funds a range of programs which support families such as the Men and Family Relationships Services program and the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy.²⁴ As part of educating and assisting workplaces to achieve equal opportunity for women, the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) also promotes family-friendly practices and work-life integration through educational tools, guides and case studies.²⁵ HREOC also works to promote paid work and family balance.

19 See p 103.

20 *ibid*, p 199.

21 See chapter 8, particularly p 92.

22 See p 92.

23 See the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations www.workplace.gov.au website for more information on the National Work and Family Awards and other government work and family initiatives. See also chapter 8.

24 The Men and Family Relationships Services program funds services which target men, including parenting skills and relationship education. The Stronger Families and Communities Strategy has funded parenting education projects. See pp 114-115.

25 See p 96 and pp 98-99 for further discussion.

Effect of government policies

While federal Government policies for reconciling paid work and family responsibilities emphasise choice and acknowledge that “there is no single solution for managing demands of work and family”,²⁶ some of these policies have come under criticism for making some choices more difficult than others. Commentary on the family payments changes announced in the 2004-2005 Budget shows a concern about the effect that these changes have on the decisions that women and men make about balancing paid work with caring, particularly caring for young children.²⁷

Expert analysis suggests that the complex interaction of family payments, other benefits and tax rates complicates individual and couple tax liabilities, requiring detailed calculations and making family and financial planning difficult.²⁸ If couple families opt to receive their family payments fortnightly, thereby assisting with their day to day costs, they risk incurring overpayments and having debts to repay if their income exceeds the estimate they provided at the start of the year.

Changes introduced in the 2004-2005 Budget, such as the reduction in the rates where family payments cut out and the increase in income test threshold for FTB (B), appear to have eased some of these pressures.²⁹

However, the complexity of the system remains and, inevitably, the decisions families make about whether and how a secondary earner will re-enter the workforce will not be unconstrained. The costs of child care, loss of government payments and the prospect of high effective marginal tax rates (EMTRs) will all affect these decisions.³⁰ The challenge for government is to ensure policies do not unfairly promote certain family arrangements over others.

There are considerable costs for women who leave the paid workforce to have children, and the decision to re-enter the workforce can have significant financial implications. The effect of taxation, loss of government payments and benefits as earnings increase, and the cost of child care act as disincentives to mothers who want to work full time. For example, a study by National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) suggests that the reduction of family assistance and

26 Transcript of The Prime Minister the Hon John Howard MP *Address to the 100th Anniversary Dinner for the Australian Women's National League* Melbourne 16 July 2004 www.pm.gov.au/news/speeches/speech997.html.

27 See Alison Morehead “A Review of New Australian Government Initiatives for Families With Children” (2004) 69 *Family Matters*, pp 94-99, for an overview of this commentary.

28 See, for example, Peter McDonald “Reforming Family Support Policy in Australia” (2003) 11 *People and Place* 2, pp 1-15 at pp 6-7; Michael Keating and Simon Lambert *From Welfare to Work: Improving the interface of tax and social security* Discussion Paper No 35 National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling Canberra 1998, p 1; The Centre for Public Policy *Working Age Income Support* Discussion Paper New Social Settlement Project National Consultation Strategy University of Melbourne, p 3; Denise Cullen “Pay Load” *Sydney Morning Herald* 27 April 2005, p 11.

29 This measure is part of a major new package *More Help For Families* announced in the 2005-2006 Budget which delivers \$19.2 million over five years. It also includes increases to maximum and base rates of FTB (B) and measures to help families avoid or reduce overpayments by allowing them to negotiate a new rate of ongoing FTB payment when they inform Centrelink of a change in their income estimate during the year. See Department of Family and Community Services *Portfolio Budget Statements 2005-06* Canberra 2005.

30 The Department of Family and Community Services defines an EMTR as “the percentage of an additional dollar of private earnings that is lost in taxation and/or benefits as private income increases”: Karen Wilson, Jocelyn Pech and Kylee Bates *Parents, the Labour Force and Social Security* Policy Research Paper No 2 Department of Family and Community Services Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 1999, p 21.

the increasing costs of child care deter mothers with young children from working full time and that mothers of two or more children are likely to be far better off working part time.³¹

High EMTRs are a consequence of the way the family payments system is structured in terms of targeting it to those most in need, and progressively withdrawing benefits from families on higher incomes also helps limit the cost to government. However some individuals and family types appear to be particularly burdened as a result. Employed women in couple families are carrying a substantial tax burden as tax transfer schemes containing less progressive marginal rates and joint income targeted transfers lead to less progressive average tax rates.³²

FTB (B) further increases this burden.³³ Second earners, generally mothers, who earn more than the threshold at which FTB (B) cuts out, are disadvantaged by paying income tax and having their family tax benefit withdrawn. FTB (B) appears to be an incentive for partnered women to remain out of the paid workforce or to undertake only a small amount of part time work.³⁴ It is likely to discourage double income families, particularly at certain income levels. As a woman increases her paid work hours and thus income, she progressively loses her child care entitlement, FTB (B) and depending on her partner's income, will begin to lose parenting payments and FTB (A).³⁵

In the 2004-2005 Budget the federal Government announced a measure to assist the lower income earner in a couple, usually the mother, to return to the workforce after the birth of a child by making her eligible for the maximum rate of FTB (B) for the period in the financial year that she is caring for a child at home and not on leave before returning to work. This aims to avoid overpayments for that period due to the second earner returning to work and will commence on 1 July 2005, in respect of the FTB (B) entitlement for the 2005-2006 financial year.

FTB (B) has the effect of providing financial help for couple families with one income and supports couples who have made the choice to have one parent remain at home. It is only income tested on the second earner's income, which means that families with very high incomes also receive the payment. Nearly 30 000 couple families with a single income of more than \$100 000 received FTB (B) in the 2002-2003 financial year.³⁶ The federal Government argues that FTB (B) is designed to compensate single income families for having access to only one tax free threshold.

31 A NATSEM study found that for partnered mothers with two or more children in care, regardless of her wage rate, her family would be worse off if she worked full time rather than part time taking into account Child Care Benefit, FTB (B), income tax and reductions in income tested payments. Lone mothers with two children in care are marginally better off working full time if they earn female average weekly ordinary time earnings but worse off if they earn minimum wage rates or have more than two children in care: Matthew Toohey "The Effectiveness of Child Care Benefit at Improving Returns to Work for Women" Paper presented at the *Families Matter: 9th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference* Melbourne 9 February 2005, pp 7-14.

32 Patricia Apps *The High Taxation of Working Families* Working Paper University of Sydney 2004.

33 See discussion above at p 103.

34 However, it should also be noted that this does not apply to sole parent families, who can receive the maximum rate of FTB (B).

35 Peter McDonald "Reforming Family Support Policy in Australia" (2003) 11 *People and Place* 2, pp 1-15 at p 6.

36 Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee *Answers to Estimates Questions on Notice Family and Community Services Portfolio 2004-05 Supplementary Budget Estimates* Question 99 December 2004, p 150.

Nevertheless, supporting mothers to stay out of the workforce is arguably not consistent with 2005-2006 Budget measures discouraging low income partnered mothers and lone parents receiving parenting payments from staying out of the workforce once their youngest child begins school.³⁷

FTB (B) may also deter greater sharing of the care of children. Couple families on similar high incomes are not eligible for any benefit if both parents contribute an equal share to family income.³⁸ There is no government incentive for both parents to work part time and share the care of their children more equally.

Government policies are among the factors that shape the decisions women make about re-entering the workforce after bearing children.³⁹ These decisions not only affect families' current arrangements for paid and unpaid work, they also affect women's levels of superannuation and household saving.⁴⁰

The impact of high tax rates on second earners is a significant disincentive to women's increased labour force participation. The disincentives within Australia's taxation policy and family assistance schemes may also be influencing the decisions women with young children are making with respect to balancing their paid work and family commitments. It may have an effect on fertility levels.⁴¹ Family policies and entitlements focussed on young families influence women's decisions to have children, particularly the choice to have more than one child.⁴²

Government support in the form of family assistance payments is primarily directed toward supporting families with caring responsibilities for young children.⁴³ While there is an obvious need for support for these families, the support provided for people with other caring responsibilities such as for people with disabilities or frail aged people is limited to the Carer Payment or the Carer Allowance. Despite a recent change to the eligibility requirement for the Carer Allowance,⁴⁴ carers still often experience considerable hardship.⁴⁵ Respite services give carers time out from caring that may be used to participate in paid work, however other forms of support for carers who may be balancing their caring responsibilities with paid

37 See Australian Government *2005-2006 Budget Overview* Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 2005, p11 and the Hon Peter Costello MP Treasurer "Sustaining prosperity: New reform opportunities for Australia" *Address to The Australian/Melbourne Institute Conference Dinner* Melbourne 31 March 2005.

38 See Adele Horin "Mega-Rich Reap Child Benefit" *Sydney Morning Herald* 2 March 2005, p 3.

39 Data from the Australian Institute of Family Studies Family and Work Decision Study suggests that while most mothers weigh up the financial costs and benefits of returning to work with children at some stage, whether money matters and how much is dependent on other circumstances of their lives such as their relationship situation, partners' employment, the age of their children and their beliefs about children's care needs, gender, and the intrinsic value of paid and unpaid work and money: Jody Hughes and Kelly Hand "Does Money Matter? Mothers' views about money and how it influences employment decisions" Paper presented at the *Families Matter: 9th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference* Melbourne 9-11 February 2005, p 15.

40 See pp 68-70. Household saving is much higher in families where there are two incomes: Patricia Apps *The High Taxation of Working Families* Working Paper University of Sydney 2004, pp 22-23.

41 See Patricia Apps *The High Taxation of Working Families* Working Paper University of Sydney 2004. See also pp 74-75.

42 JaneMaree Maher, Maryanne Dever, Jennifer Curtin and Andrew Singleton *What Women (and Men) Want: Births, policies and choices* School of Political and Social Inquiry Monash University Melbourne 2004.

43 As noted above, FTB is payable for qualifying dependent full time students aged up to 24 for FTB (A) and 18 for FTB (B). Other forms of assistance such as maternity and immunisation payments and Child Care Benefit are principally directed towards families with young children with significantly fewer families remaining eligible for FTB (B) after children reach school age when many mothers return to work.

44 Prior to a change which was introduced on 1 April 2005, carers were only eligible for the Carer Allowance supplement if they resided with the person they provide care for.

45 Welfare Rights Centre "Carer Votes Counted in Budget" (2004) 22 *Rights Review: Quarterly newsletter of the Welfare Rights Centre* 2, p 4.

work are limited.⁴⁶ A measure announced in the 2005-2006 Budget which increases the hours primary carers can participate in part time work and study without losing their eligibility for the Carer Payment (from 20 to 25 hours per week) may ease some of the strain on carers combining care with paid work.⁴⁷

The policy focus on couple families with young children may also need review in coming years as family compositions change and more families undertake care of ageing relatives.

Questions

32. *Is federal Government assistance to families appropriately directed?*
 33. *Does the cumulative effect of this government assistance facilitate choice for women and assist them to balance paid work and family roles? If not, how could this be achieved?*
 34. *What effects do government policies have on decisions made by individuals and families about paid and unpaid work arrangements? Are these effects appropriate?*
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46 The Carer Allowance is available to people who are in paid work. There are some State government initiatives such as the NSW Working Carers Support Gateway project, which targets low income and isolated carers who have both caring and paid work responsibilities: www.workingcarers.org.au.

47 Statement by the the Hon Peter Costello MP Treasurer *Making Australia Stronger: Delivering our commitments 2005-06* 10 May 2005, p 68.



Chapter 10:

Attitudes to paid work and family

Introduction

Legal, workplace and social policy frameworks significantly shape behaviour and attitudes toward men's and women's paid and unpaid work. These frameworks have been examined in the previous chapters. However the structure of these frameworks and how they operate in practice are also the outcomes of social attitudes.

The relationship between attitudes, behaviour, the law and social policy is complex; each may effect changes in the others. Changing the law will frequently directly affect behaviour but may also change attitudes over time. More often a change in attitudes stimulates subsequent changes to laws and public institutions; for example, the Sex Discrimination Act followed, rather than led, changes in socially accepted attitudes about women's roles.¹

Widespread changes in attitudes rarely occur without the existence of social movements and other responses to forge and shape both new ideas and policy responses. Many of the changes to Australian legislation, workplace practice and government policy have been triggered by social movements that have changed the way that Australians think about gender equality, paid work and care. Social movements are also able to build some degree of community consensus in favour of a public policy response.

This chapter considers Australian attitudes to unpaid caring work, and the underlying ideas that have changed, and continue to change, how Australians structure their paid work and family responsibilities. It focuses on two key areas of social change: changes to ideas about the value of unpaid work and changes in attitudes to gender roles that underlie paid and unpaid work arrangements. This chapter then considers the factors that prevent or promote further attitudinal change around paid work and family.

Changes to valuing unpaid caring and housework

Traditional notions of family and community have assumed that caring work was undertaken largely by women within the family without financial reward, and that extended families and neighbourhoods would be further supported by the unpaid work of men and women in those communities. This work was not valued in the way that paid work was valued, either economically and socially. With changing family and community composition these traditional assumptions about unpaid work can no longer be taken for granted. With the entry of women into the workforce

1 Pru Goward "Women, Work and Equity: An overview" and Marian Sawer "The Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act: Aspirations and apprehensions" Papers presented at *Women, Work and Equity: A special forum to mark the 20th anniversary of the Sex Discrimination Act 1984* University of Sydney 1 August 2004.

in conjunction with other social changes, managing the time spent in unpaid caring work has become difficult.² There is a general concern that people are unable to care sufficiently for one another, both within a family and across the broader community. In response, new ways of valuing and supporting care are being developed and are beginning to be taken seriously by both communities and policy makers.

One recent development in ascribing value to unpaid work is to consider it as an important component of "social capital". While approaches to definition and measurement differ, social capital can be understood as "networks of social relations characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity and which lead to outcomes of mutual benefit"³

Underlying the relations of trust and reciprocity that define social capital is the notion of care for those in need. The value of this care can be measured in terms of the personal and civic wellbeing generated by reciprocal networks where people know each other and are able to support each other. Outcomes may be measured in terms of neighbourhood wellbeing, for example tolerance of diversity and reduced crime.⁴

Too much time in the workplace or on household activities may both diminish the abilities of people to make appropriate connections with other spheres of activity and reduces social capital. The time to attend school functions, to help in tuckshops or on sports day, to spend leisure time with children, to be involved in local issues, all contribute to better social networks and better parenting. A balanced division of labour in the home allows adults to remain engaged with other adults, contribute their labour outside the home, be available for community functions and maintain informal networks with others outside the home, thereby making links that contribute to social capital and wider societal wellbeing.

The concept of social capital has been of particular interest to government and policy makers in recent times given the potential for social capital to achieve positive outcomes for individuals and communities.⁵ Encouraging community involvement through improving "community capacity" is one of the goals of government initiatives such as the federal Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, which aims to foster self-reliance within family and community networks.⁶

Increasingly unpaid work is recognised economically not only for the cost saving it achieves for government but for the value of the social cohesion it builds. However, this is an attitudinal change that is still underway, and unpaid caring and housework still does not have the value or status of paid work. Arguably one of the reasons that it is difficult to convince some men that it is worth reducing their paid work in order to participate more in the home is that they are being asked to give up work with economic value and status for work that remains low status and undervalued.⁷

2 See chapter 3.

3 Wendy Stone and Jody Hughes *Social Capital: Empirical meaning and measurement validity* Research Paper No 27 Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne 2002, p 1.

4 *ibid*, p 2.

5 See, for example, Productivity Commission *Social Capital: Reviewing the concept and its policy implications* Research Paper Canberra 2003; ABS *Measuring Social Capital: An Australian framework and indicators* Information Paper 2004 Cat No 1378.0.

6 Wendy Stone "Social Capital and Social Security: Lessons from research" (2000) 57 *Family Matters*, pp 10-13 at p 11.

7 Some commentators argue that it is possible that the gendered division of unpaid work persists because it is not in men's interests to do the housework and caring work. See for example Michelle Adams and Scott Coltrane "Boys and Men in Families: The domestic production of gender, power and privilege" in Michael S Kimmel, Jeff Hearn and RW Connell (eds) *Men and Masculinities* Sage Publications Thousand Oaks 2005, p 240. See discussion below at p 117 and p 120.

Changing attitudes to gender roles

Social movements and the paid work and family debate

The social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, particularly what is known as the “second wave” of the women’s movement, initiated discussion about paid work and family balance through its questioning of the sexual division of labour.⁸ Divisions of labour in the home and the workplace were considered to be mutually reinforcing: women’s role in the home sphere limited access to the labour market and allowed their paid work to be seen as a natural extension of their domestic roles and thus to be given less value.⁹ In addition to improving conditions for women in paid work, the women’s movement advocated ascribing a higher value to unpaid work and shared parenting as ways of both supporting women in their workforce participation and freeing women and men from restrictive gender roles.¹⁰

Broader social responses and public discussion complemented the women’s movement’s efforts to challenge Australians’ assumptions about gender.¹¹ However, there were also women who objected strongly to the new conceptions of gender and family roles. A counter movement challenged the new assertions about the rights and needs of women in paid work and sought instead to promote the importance of innate gender differences and traditional family values.¹²

While there are differing views about women’s roles in paid and unpaid work, both the women’s movement and the counter movement have emphasised the importance of unpaid work.¹³

With the economic reforms of the 1980s, the women’s movement and a new group of fellow travellers, this time those concerned with economic competitiveness and diversity in the workforce, developed and promoted the economic and business case for the provision of family support to mothers in paid work.¹⁴

Extensive lobbying, researching and promoting what have become known as family-friendly policies and workplaces has occurred over the past twenty years and has propelled some of the changes sought by the women’s movement.¹⁵ In recent years, the women’s movement promoted the importance of women being able to

8 That is, the “allocation of work on the basis of sex, both within the home and the workplace, as well as that division between home and the workplace”: Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle *Gender at Work* Allen and Unwin St Leonards 1983, p 14.

9 Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle *Gender at Work* Allen and Unwin St Leonards 1983, p 134 and Lois Bryson “Women, Paid Work and Social Policy” in Norma Grieve and Ailsa Burns (eds) *Australian Women: Contemporary feminist perspectives* Oxford University Press Melbourne 1994, pp 188-89.

10 Lynne Segal provides a summary of the women’s movement’s early approach to unpaid and paid work in *Slow Motion: Changing masculinities, changing men* Virago London 1997, pp 46-48. See also Fiona Williams “Troubled Masculinities in Social Policy Discourses: Fatherhood” in Jeannie Popay, Jeff Hearn and Jeanette Edwards (eds) *Men, Gender Divisions and Welfare* Routledge London 1998, p 80; and Marilyn Lake “A Question of Time” in David McKnight (ed) *Moving Left: The future of socialism* Pluto Press Sydney 1986, pp 136-137 and pp 144-145.

11 For example, women in professional groups, such as lawyers, and politicians, who although not necessarily self-identified with the women’s movement, also enriched the campaign for better conditions for working mothers. See, for example, the women politicians described in Marisa Ruedas *Women in the Senate* Senate Brief No 3 Commonwealth of Australia Canberra 1999 and professional organisations such as Women Lawyers New South Wales www.womenlawyersnsw.org.au.

12 See, for example, the Women’s Action Alliance (Australia), established in 1975: www.womensactionalliance.com.au/.

13 See, for example, Marilyn Waring *Counting for Nothing: What men value and what women are worth* Allen and Unwin Wellington 1988 and Women’s Action Alliance (Australia) *Evaluation of Unpaid Work* Policy paper www.womensactionalliance.com.au/evaluation.html.

14 See pp 96-100 for a discussion of equal employment opportunity and the business case for change.

15 Other changes sought by the second wave of the women’s movement have not been realised, such as the demand for accessible 24 hour child care. See, for example Ann Curthoys “The Theory of Women’s Liberation” in Ann Curthoys *For and Against Feminism: A personal journey into feminist theory and history* Allen and Unwin St Leonards 1988, p 16.

under-take both paid work and parenting, and in particular, has stressed the importance of providing men with the same choice.¹⁶ The views and expectations of young women in particular, while not necessarily identifying with the women's movement, have helped to focus the debate around equality within relationships and the full involvement of men in the work of parenting.¹⁷

Men's role in the paid work and family debate

Although men have played a part in the modern debate about women's rights and identity, they have remained relatively silent on the implications for their own identity until relatively recently. Australian men have begun to question the roles they are playing as fathers and homemakers and are instigating public debate about men in these roles. A diverse group of men working in academia, community and social services, and men's groups and networks have helped to build expertise about the current and future roles of men in paid and unpaid work.¹⁸ Some of these developments are consistent with the women's movement's objectives around work and family, while some are not.

Of particular relevance for this project is the concern about fathering and men's relationships, as reflected in a number of family relationship programs, groups and individuals who advocate a "father-friendly" approach within parenting and other community services.¹⁹ This emerging institutionalisation of a network of committed male service providers concerned with fatherhood has been described as a "quiet revolution" assisting men to "rewrite the rules on fathering".²⁰

16 See Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) Australia *WEL Australia National Policies 2002: Work and Income: Family responsibilities* www.wel.org.au/policy/00pol1.htm#Family. For an earlier example of the ways in which the women's movement has encouraged men's participation in family life see Marilyn Lake "A Question of Time" in David McKnight (ed) *Moving Left: The future of socialism* Pluto Press Sydney 1986.

17 YWCA of Australia *Response to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's "Valuing Parenthood: Options for paid maternity leave: Interim paper 2002"* Unpublished submission to HREOC Sydney 2002, p 3, p 12 and p 16. The YWCA submission supports arguments for parental leave, noting that "many of the young women we have consulted with . . . consider as a matter of course that they would expect their partners to share in the responsibilities of child rearing".

18 Those working in men's issues form a very diverse collection of groups and individuals concerned with men's health, personal growth and support, pro-feminist social action, men's role in parenting, programs for boys in schools, and father's rights. A useful introduction to the men's movement's various ideological strands and themes is provided in Bob Pease *Men and Gender Relations* Tertiary Press Croydon 2002, pp 32-48. Pease notes that there is some debate over whether the men's movement can be described as a social movement, given the heterogeneity of those involved and the lack of unity among the different groups. Anti-feminist men's rights-based organisations, for example, are very different from "mythopoetic" groups concerned with men's personal growth and healing. For some international perspectives see Ulla Bjornberg "Equality and Backlash: Family gender, and social policy in Sweden" in Linda L Haas, Philip Hwang and Graeme Russell (eds) *Organizational Change and Gender Equity* Sage Publications London 2000; Margaret O'Brien "Social Science and Public Policy Perspectives on Fatherhood in the European Union" in ME Lamb *The Role of the Father in Child Development* 4th ed Willey Hoboken 2004; Warren Hatten, Louise Vinter and Rachel Williams *Dads on Dads: Needs and expectations at home and at work* Equal Opportunities Commission Research and Discussion Series EOC Manchester 2002.

19 See Adrienne Burgess and Graeme Russell "Fatherhood and Public Policy" in *Supporting Fathers: Contributions from the International Fatherhood Summit 2003* Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections Series Bernard van Leer Foundation The Hague April 2004, p 113 and Clare O'Brien and Karen Rich *Evaluation of the Men and Family Relationships Initiative: Final report and supplementary report* Prepared for the Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 2002. Programs for men include the federal Men and Family Relationships Services Program, which has funded community-based services to develop targeted programs for men, including those that focus on engaging men with their children, such as father-inclusive antenatal education, parenting skills and father and son workshops.

20 Adele Horin "Quiet Revolution of Lost Tribe of Dads" *Sydney Morning Herald* 16 October 2004, p 1.

One of the concerns of some researchers and those working in the men's services sector has been the approach taken by the women's movement to the contribution of men in the unpaid work of the home, particularly child care. They have argued that an emphasis on statistical averages downplays men's involvement and that a focus on household tasks as drudgery has had the effect of shaming men and has been counter-productive.²¹

These researchers have developed and advocated what is called a "generative fathering" approach to men's parenting and workplace programs. This approach builds on men's positive contributions, in contrast to a "deficit perspective," which considers men and fathers in a negative light.²² It also recognises that many men are not fully engaged with their families due to a range of factors such as socialisation, work commitments, workplace cultures, lack of support, lack of parenting skills, family separation, and a perception that family services are geared towards the needs of women and children.²³

Changing attitudes among both men and women to men's role in the family tend to focus on parenting responsibilities. Men's involvement in housework appears to be of lesser concern, unless it too is linked to the development of good family relationships skills and benefits to children.²⁴ As yet, the division of household responsibilities has not been seriously considered by men's groups as an issue which needs addressing within an equality framework.²⁵

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- 21 Alan J Hawkins and David C Dollahite "Beyond the Role-Inadequacy Perspective of Fathering" in Alan J Hawkins and David C Dollahite (eds) *Generative Fathering: Beyond deficit perspectives* Sage Publications Thousand Oaks 1997, pp 4-7; Rob Palkovitz "Reconstructing 'Involvement': Expanding conceptualizations of men's caring in contemporary families" in Alan J Hawkins and David C Dollahite (eds) *Generative Fathering: Beyond deficit perspectives* Sage Publications Thousand Oaks 1997; and Adrienne Burgess and Sandy Ruxton *Men and Their Children: Proposals for public policy* Institute for Public Policy Research London 1996, pp 2-3. See also p 117.
- 22 The strengths-based or "generative fathering" approach argues that starting from a perspective that views men as inadequate in their paternal role does little to assist the personal transformation required for men to be able to father better. From this perspective, while fathering is variously supported or constrained by social, economic and other conditions, change must start with harnessing men's own individual desires for greater involvement with their children: Adrienne Burgess and Graeme Russell "Fatherhood and Public Policy" in *Supporting Fathers: Contributions from the International Fatherhood Summit 2003* Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections Series Bernard van Leer Foundation The Hague April 2004, p 113; Alan J Hawkins and David C Dollahite (eds) *Generative Fathering: Beyond deficit perspectives* Sage Publications Thousand Oaks 1997. Examples of the deficit approach include stereotypes of men as "emotionally-challenged" or disinterested in family life: Alan J Hawkins and David C Dollahite "Beyond the Role-Inadequacy Perspective of Fathering" in Alan J Hawkins and David C Dollahite (eds) *Generative Fathering: Beyond deficit perspectives* Sage Publications Thousand Oaks 1997.
- 23 See Clare O'Brien and Karen Rich *Evaluation of the Men and Family Relationships Initiative: Final report and supplementary report* Prepared for the Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 2002, p 61. These programs are based on the observation that many female dominated generalist services are not "male-friendly" environments, lacking the policies, practices and images that would explicitly address men as fathers and make them feel welcome: Andrew King, Steve Sweeney and Ross Fletcher "A Checklist for Organisations Working with Men" *UnitingCare* Burnside 2004, p 2. Some of these points were also addressed by a number of HREOC's Paid Work and Family Responsibilities Community Advisory Panel members, Roundtable meeting HREOC Sydney 16 December 2004.
- 24 Alan J Hawkins and David C Dollahite "Beyond the Role-Inadequacy Perspective of Fathering" in Alan J Hawkins and David C Dollahite (eds) *Generative Fathering: Beyond deficit perspectives* Sage Publications Thousand Oaks 1997, p 10. "Housework" refers here to both indoor and outdoor domestic activities. See pp 25-26 for a detailed definition of the term as it is used in this paper.
- 25 This does not mean that the attitudes towards men and women's responsibility for housework are unchanged, with the 2003 Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey finding that 91 per cent of mothers and 86 per cent of fathers believe that if both partners work they should share equally in the housework and child care: Kathleen Fisher *Fertility Pathways in Australia: Relationships, opportunities, work and parenting* Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 2002, p 35; see also discussion in chapter 5.

Barriers to attitude change

It has been argued that, although attitudes towards women in the workplace have changed, it remains women's responsibility to do the bulk of the work in the home.²⁶ The term the "stalled revolution" refers to this stagnation, and describes "the strain between the change in women and the absence of change in much else."²⁷ Time use surveys bear out the small changes in the amount of housework done by men, although their time spent in child care has risen and there is strong anecdotal evidence of some men contributing extensively to household tasks.²⁸

Although there is considerable private and public discussion about the importance of unpaid work and a more equal sharing of it within households, a range of factors inhibit the building of momentum for change.

Socialisation

Although men generally have a desire to be involved with their families,²⁹ lack of sufficient motivation, skills and self-confidence, social support and father-friendly institutional practices, make involved fatherhood difficult.³⁰

Men are generally still not socialised to seek help or support for their caring role in the ways that women are, and consequently initial access to both general parenting services and those targeted at men is low.³¹ Traditional ideals of masculinity, such as those which expect men not to show emotions, may play an important role as well, as they are among the factors that influence men's help-seeking behaviour in other areas.³²

Men are socialised to put paid work ahead of family in terms of time and energy, even if they value their family life more. One consequence of men's time in the paid workforce is that it limits their time at home. An American study on men's involvement in families shows that when men undertake child care, especially time spent alone with children, they do more housework.³³ Similarly, when women spend more time away from the home they are more likely to relinquish their managerial role at home and share the responsibility for household tasks with their partners.³⁴ The same study also notes that when women lower their housecleaning standards, their partners do more housework.³⁵

26 Arlie Hochschild *The Second Shift: Working parents and the revolution at home* Viking New York 1989.

27 *ibid*, p 12.

28 See chapter 3.

29 See, for example, Graeme Russell et al *Fitting Fathers into Families: Men and the fatherhood role in contemporary Australia* Report prepared for the Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 1999; Michael Bittman, Sonia Hoffman and Denise Thompson *Fathers' Uptake of Family Friendly Employment Provisions* Final report prepared for the Department of Family and Community Services Canberra April 2003.

30 See Michael E Lamb and Catherine S Tamis-Lemonda "The Role of the Father: An introduction" in Michael E Lamb (ed) *The Role of the Father in Child Development* 4th Ed Wiley Hoboken 2004, pp 11-14 for a detailed analysis of these factors.

31 Clare O'Brien and Karen Rich *Evaluation of the Men and Family Relationships Initiative: Final report and supplementary report* Prepared for the Department of Family and Community Services Canberra November 2002, p 6.

32 M R Sayers, K M Miller and Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention *Help-Seeking Behaviours of Suicidal Men Aged 17-35 Years: A consumer consultation and participation pilot project* Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention Perth 2004. This summary publication identifies traditional views of masculinity as one of the contributing factors influencing men's attitudes.

33 Scott Coltrane *Family Man: Fatherhood, housework and gender equity* Oxford University Press New York 1996, p 79. This study also finds that marital relationships improve when men and women share parenting and other unpaid work. See also chapter 5.

34 *ibid*, p 79. See also pp 117-118.

35 *ibid*, pp 74-75.

Researchers in the area of masculinity studies focus their work in this area by looking at dominant models of masculinity and the ways in which men's lives have changed as a result of broader social changes.³⁶ Analysis of the power relationships between men and women, and the structural barriers to gender equality is a significant part of this body of work. For example, Connell has noted how men have significant motives to resist change to current arrangements and "old" relationships of inequality given that men's incomes still outweigh those of women and men predominate in positions of power and authority.³⁷

It may also be that there is a lack of interest from men to change given the material benefits of avoiding caring and housework.³⁸ Others point to the distribution of power within relationships, where women resign themselves to shouldering greater responsibility for caring and housework because of the resistance they encounter when they ask men to do more.³⁹

A recent masculine ideal of the "new man" or "new father" has emerged that challenges older ideals of masculinity. This model emphasises both men's desire and capacity to be active, involved and nurturing participants in family life.⁴⁰

Female gatekeeping

As noted above, it is sometimes suggested that it is not in men's interests to upset the gender roles that have served them well.⁴¹ There are also arguments that for the same reason, it is often in women's interest to maintain control of the unpaid work of the family. The traditional domestic role has allowed women to exert control within the home.⁴² This maternal "gatekeeping" behaviour is seen as a barrier to greater sharing of unpaid work.⁴³

While there is anecdotal information about gatekeeping behaviour by women there is little evidence in this area, although the Australian time use statistics show that women tend to play a managerial role in households, organising and overseeing tasks.⁴⁴

36 See, for example, RW Connell *Gender Polity* Oxford 2002 and *Gender and Power* Allen and Unwin St Leonards 1987.

37 RW Connell *Gender Polity* Oxford 2002, pp 142-145 in particular. Here Connell terms the benefit men as a group get from current gender arrangements as the "patriarchal dividend", noting also that "individual men may get more of it than others, or less or none, depending on their location in the social order": p 142.

38 Anthony McMahon *Taking Care of Men: Sexual politics in the public mind* Cambridge University Press Cambridge 1999, pp 31-32 in particular.

39 Bob Pease *Men and Gender Relations* Tertiary Press Croydon 2002, p 90. Pease also provides a useful summary of the different arguments which explain men's involvement in family life at pp 86-92.

40 See Michael Flood *Fatherhood and Fatherlessness* Discussion Paper Number 59 The Australia Institute Canberra 2003, pp 33-34; Tom Morton *Altered Mates: The man question* Allen and Unwin St Leonards 1997, pp 230-231.

41 See p 112 and the discussion of socialisation at p 116.

42 The women's movement recognised the need for women not only to ask men to contribute more in the home but to give up some of "their domain": Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle *Gender at Work* Allen and Unwin St Leonards 1983, p 137; Marilyn Lake "A Question of Time" in David McKnight (ed) *Moving Left: The future of socialism* Pluto Press Sydney 1986, p 144.

43 See, for example, Fiona Williams "Troubled Masculinities in Social Policy Discourses: Fatherhood" in Jeannie Popay, Jeff Hearn and Jeanette Edwards (eds) *Men, Gender Divisions and Welfare* Routledge London 1998, p 83, and Anna Dienhart and Kerry Daly "Men and Women Cocreating Father Involvement in a Nongenerative Culture" in Alan J Hawkins and David C Dollahite (eds) *Generative Fathering: Beyond deficit perspectives* Sage Publications Thousand Oaks 1997, p 152 where the authors discuss a similar concept, women's "maternal entitlement" to parenting.

44 Men's child care, for example, is qualitatively different from women's in that they tend to "help out" rather than take responsibility for the job as a whole. See Lyn Craig *Caring Differently: A time-use analysis of the type and social context of child care by fathers and mothers* Social Policy Research Centre Discussion paper Number 116 Sydney 2002. See also chapter 3.

The issue of differing standards of housework and child care between men and women is sometimes raised as a reason why women take on this managerial role. However, a study undertaken in 1995 found that there is high degree of consensus among men and women as to the frequency with which household task should be performed.⁴⁵

Attitudes to outsourcing

Outsourcing of unpaid work is one of the solutions to tackling the unpaid workload. There is time use evidence which shows that while the time spent in unpaid labour by women has decreased, this has in part been the result of outsourcing unpaid work through the market or state.⁴⁶

Some writers have advocated moving many tasks out of individual households and into the market,⁴⁷ while others are uncomfortable in doing so and point to the exploitative conditions experienced by many domestic workers.

There are also questions of affordability and responsibility for organising outsourcing. Just as formal child care is often considered to be for the benefit of working women, organised by them and paid out of their income, it is possible that paid domestic services would similarly be viewed as something women are responsible for organising and purchasing, rather than men. Women already perform a significant amount of what Morehead terms "additional labour" in order to maintain their paid and unpaid work arrangements, such as negotiating working hours with employers and negotiating with partners over domestic work.⁴⁸ While an increase in outsourcing may reduce women's unpaid work burden, it would not necessarily provide a solution to the gendered differences in unpaid work.⁴⁹

Workplace attitudes

As with participation in caring activities, some argue that the structures of the paid workforce, in particular long hours and inflexible schedules, present the main barriers to men's greater participation in housework.⁵⁰ Cultural barriers within the workplace also significantly deter men's more active involvement with their families.

The Fitting Fathers into Families study found that a significant number of fathers believed that the major barrier to effective parenting was their employment commitments, with 57 per cent citing workplace factors.⁵¹ This barrier is not only related to long working hours, career insecurity or competitiveness and workplace

45 See Michael Bittman and Jocelyn Pixley *The Double Life of the Family* Allen and Unwin St Leonards 1997, pp 159-164.

46 Michael Bittman "Parenting Without Penalty: Time-use and public policy in Australia and Finland" in Nancy Folbre and Michael Bittman (eds) *Family Time: The social organization of care* Routledge London 2004, pp 226-228. A significant proportion of this outsourcing is for food preparation, for example, meals out, food-to-go and school lunches, p 230.

47 Eva Cox "Changing Gender Roles to Deal with Work and Family" in Jane Inglis and Lyla Rogan (eds) *Flexible Families: New directions for Australian communities* Sydney Pluto Press 1994.

48 For a discussion of the concept of additional labour see Alison Morehead "Governments, Workplaces and Households" (2005) 70 *Family Matters*, pp 4-9 at pp 7-8.

49 As Morehead notes, outsourcing "sweep[s] gender issues in the home under the carpet by ensuring neither parent has to do the domestic work": Alison Morehead "Beyond Preference and Choice: How mothers allocate time to work and family" Paper presented at *Families Matter: 9th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference* Melbourne 9-11 February 2005, p 15.

50 William R Beer *Househusbands: Men and housework in American families* JF Bergen Publishers South Hadley Mass 1983.

51 Graeme Russell et al *Fitting Fathers into Families: Men and the fatherhood role in contemporary Australia* Report prepared for the Department of Family and Community Services Canberra 1999, Executive Summary.

inflexibility, but to men's strong identification with paid work and career-building.⁵² Workplace culture and practices such as unsocial hours, frequent short-term travel and the perception that there is no support for taking time out are also major barriers to better balance for men.⁵³

Accordingly, some men's programs have used the workplace as a point of intervention, for example, programs that aim to help organisations and their workers, particularly fathers, to balance the demands of employment with involved fathering.⁵⁴

Work and family is seen as a "women's issue"

Partly because of the advocacy role played by women in changing gender roles in Australia, along with traditional ideas of children and the home as women's domain, work and family issues are still commonly thought of as women's issues. One danger in seeing paid work and family imbalances as a "women's issue", is that any developments support only women's family responsibilities, excluding men. This entrenches traditional family arrangements and limits the other options available to Australian families.

Certainly, feminism, and the social, economic and technological changes that both accompanied and facilitated it, opened up many opportunities for women to enter public life, including the world of paid work.⁵⁵ The paid work and family debate is in part a response to young women's expectations that they should not face disadvantage in balancing paid work and children.⁵⁶

Clearly, however, balancing paid work with family responsibilities is an issue for men as well as women, especially those men who want to spend more time with their families.

Promoting attitude change

While many of the aims and approaches of women's groups and men's groups differ, both have argued for sharing caring and paid work. Developing the links between a gender equality approach and a generative or strengths-based approach to fathering may be one way of enabling greater involvement by men with their families while highlighting the benefits which flow to men, women and children.

52 Adrienne Burgess and Graeme Russell "Fatherhood and Public Policy" in *Supporting Fathers: Contributions from the International Fatherhood Summit 2003* Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections Series Bernard van Leer Foundation The Hague April 2004, p 117.

53 Michael Flood *Fatherhood and Fatherlessness* Discussion Paper Number 59 The Australia Institute Canberra November 2003, p 50.

54 See, for example, Graeme Russell and Peter Llewellyn-Smith "Working with Fathers Where They Are: Learnings from the workplace" Paper presented at the *2nd Australian Building Family Strengths Conference* University of Newcastle 5 December 2001.

55 For example, increased access to higher education and the removal of the expectation and requirement that women leave the workforce on marriage: Marilyn Lake *Getting Equal: The history of Australian feminism* Allen and Unwin St Leonards 1999, p217 and p 214.

56 However, the difficulties of participating on an equal basis with men in the paid workforce as well as bearing and raising children have also given rise to the notion of the "superwoman" or "supermum", who is expected to effortlessly combine a high flying career with traditional motherhood: See, for example, Arlie Hochschild *The Second Shift: Working parents and the revolution at home* Viking Press New York 1989, pp 1-2; Susan Maushart *The Mask of Motherhood: How mothering changes everything and why we pretend it doesn't* Vintage Press Sydney 1997, p 29-31 for discussions of this mythical figure.

Positive aspects of caring and housework

Some commentators have argued that the most successful way to promote positive attitudes towards unpaid work in the home is to present these tasks as positive activities, as opposed to a low status burden.⁵⁷ Arguably, attempts to increase men's participation in family life have often failed as they represent both men and domestic work in negative terms, trying to make men feel guilty about not taking part in drudgery.⁵⁸ While there are undoubtedly menial and boring tasks associated with childrearing and certainly with the related domestic work, framing the argument for men's greater involvement with their families in this way overlooks the pleasures and satisfaction of family work.⁵⁹

Supporting quality and equality in relationships

There have been surprisingly few government policies or public education campaigns around unpaid work and gender equality. One exception is the (then) federal Office of the Status of Women's Sharing the Load campaign, part of Australia's effort to support workers with families after ratifying the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 156.⁶⁰ This campaign included a range of educational material to lessen "the inequitable 'double load' of women in performing paid and unpaid work."⁶¹

Practitioners working in the men's services area have identified support for one's partner around the time of birth as a key intervention point for motivating men.⁶² In a similar vein, developmental texts such as Biddulph's *Raising Boys* highlight the desirability of encouraging boys to do housework as a way of equipping them for future independent life and facilitating close relationships through shared tasks.⁶³

Far less common within men's groups and the men's service provider network is the consideration of shared housework as an essential part of equitable relationships, although a broad recognition of paid work and family balance and barriers to shared care are sometimes raised.⁶⁴ However international experience in placing parental leave policies within a gender equality framework is instructive. In Norway, where parental leave policies encourage gender equality in the workplace as well as the home, fathers make a substantial contribution to caring and household work.⁶⁵

57 Adrienne Burgess and Sandy Ruxton *Men and Their Children: Proposals for public policy* Institute for Public Policy Research London 1996, p 2.

58 *ibid*, pp 2-3.

59 *ibid*, p 2. Burgess and Ruxton also argue that an outcome of this approach is that participation in child rearing becomes an issue of justice in terms of fathers' rights to time with children, as opposed to a more positive sharing of child rearing, p 3.

60 Office of the Status of Women *Working Families: Sharing the load: An issues kit for the Workers with Family Responsibilities Program* Australian Government Publishing Service Canberra 1992 and Office of the Status of Women *Working Families: Sharing the load: Resource material for parent educators and families* Prepared by the Employment Research Group Macquarie University Australian Government Publishing Service Canberra 1992.

61 Office of the Status of Women *Working Families: Sharing the load: An issues kit for the Workers with Family Responsibilities Program* Australian Government Publishing Service Canberra 1992, p 1.

62 This point was raised in a workshop facilitated by Andrew King "Improving Engagement with Men: A checklist for working with fathers: The non-deficit perspective" at the *Valuing Men, Valuing Relationships: Men and Family Relationships National Forum* Sydney 19-20 October 2004.

63 Steve Biddulph *Raising Boys* Finch Publishing Sydney 1997, pp 102-104.

64 See, for example, Canberra Fathers and Children Service (CANFaCS) *Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs Inquiry into Child Custody Arrangements in the Event of Family Separation* Canberra 2003; CANFaCS *Guiding Values* unpublished document; Mensplace "Mensplace Response to A New Approach to the Family Law System Implementation of Reforms Discussion Paper" Submission to the Attorney-General's Department *A New Approach to the Family Law System Discussion Paper* 2005.

65 Adrienne Burgess and Graeme Russell "Fatherhood and Public Policy" in *Supporting Fathers: Contributions from the International Fatherhood Summit 2003* Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections Series Bernard van Leer Foundation The Hague April 2004, p 132.

Family policy in Norway is closely tied to its gender equality policy of facilitating men's and women's participation in the paid workforce on an equal basis while also equally sharing caring and housework.⁶⁶ It is not surprising that in this context there is a high level of contact between non-resident fathers and their children following divorce in Norway.⁶⁷

Broadening family and employment policy initiatives to address explicitly men as carers is one way of bringing men more fully into family life. Campaigns to encourage men to do more caring and housework such as those undertaken in the Netherlands⁶⁸ may also be worthwhile for stimulating debate and effecting behavioural change, particularly if they combine a gender equity perspective with a strengths-based approach.

Benefits to men and women of sharing paid and unpaid work

There is an obvious link between the personal or relational benefits that men derive from active fathering and the benefits to women of greater opportunities for participation within the paid workforce. Enabling women to share the breadwinning role opens up more opportunities for men to be involved in family life. This is another area where attitudinal change could be promoted, for example, by making the connection between arrangements in the paid workforce and unpaid arrangements in the home more explicit in parenting programs for men.

66 The Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth, and Family Policies at Columbia University *Norway Country Summary* www.childpolicyintl.org/ and Ministry of Children and Family Affairs (Norway) "Gender Equality in Norway" [/odin.dep.no/bfd/engelsk/gendereq/bn.html](http://odin.dep.no/bfd/engelsk/gendereq/bn.html).

67 Adrienne Burgess and Graeme Russell "Fatherhood and Public Policy" in *Supporting Fathers: Contributions from the International Fatherhood Summit 2003* Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections Series Bernard van Leer Foundation The Hague April 2004, p 132.

68 See European Commission "Practical Examples: Equal opportunities – Men taking the lead" The Hague January 2004 europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/practical-examples/opport-men-taking-lead_en.cfm and the website of the campaign led by the Netherlands National Ministry of Social Affairs, targeting men and unpaid work at www.wiedoetwat.nl/campagne/.

Questions

35. *What are the best ways of incorporating and supporting the value of care into Australian society?*
 36. *What are the barriers to changing attitudes towards a more equal division of paid work and family responsibilities?*
 37. *What are the best ways of engaging men in the work of caring (for children, elders or other family members) and other unpaid work?*
 38. *How important are workplace cultures, as opposed to workplace structures, as a deterrent to men's more active engagement with their family responsibilities and more equitable sharing between men and women of unpaid work in the home?*
 39. *How can workplace cultures be encouraged to change to promote a better balance between paid work and family responsibilities?*
 40. *What responses to paid work and family conflict would assist to promote equality between men and women?*
 41. *What are the possibilities for combining the lessons learnt by the women's and the men's movements to address inequitable paid and unpaid work arrangements?*
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Part D:
Where to
from here?



Chapter 11:

Striking a balance

Introduction

This paper is fundamentally concerned with the choices people make about how they spend their unpaid work time and the effect this has on their choices and opportunities in paid work. Amongst other things, legislative frameworks, government assistance, workplace cultures and attitudes shape the very different arrangements men and women make for unpaid caring, housework and paid employment. This paper focuses on unfair constraints based on gender in all of these areas.

The consequences of these constraints are felt not only by individuals but by their families, communities and the nation. Constraints are inevitable and choices are never made in a vacuum. However, when men and women find themselves facing different choices, despite similar responsibilities and capacities, and where those choices confer particular and different disadvantages on men and women, it is reasonable to describe the outcomes as unfair.

Many have observed that men have little choice when it comes to choosing between being a primary breadwinner and spending time with their children. Job demands almost invariably win out in a forty year working life. The capacity of men to be engaged parents, particularly following divorce or partnership breakdown, is accordingly compromised. The constraints that paid work imposes on men's unpaid time use frequently deny them the opportunity to enjoy their families and fulfil their responsibilities to other family members.

Similarly, while women work on average longer paid and unpaid hours than men, they are frequently impoverished or economically dependent as a result. They are often grateful to have part time work even if it does not reflect their skills, training or previous work status, so long as it accommodates their children's needs. Many women have distinctly modest expectations about the contribution their male partners can make to sharing the household and unpaid care responsibilities.

Likewise some women and men spend years in unpaid work caring for sick or disabled relatives, with no immediate prospect of any other life, inadequate support and a restricted capacity to save for their own future.

Public debate often proceeds as if all of these scenarios are simply the result of private choices freely made, blind to the level of exhaustion and disquiet in Australian families which shows that the opposite is true.

This paper has provided an overview of how Australian families are currently managing their paid and unpaid work responsibilities and demonstrated the importance of these issues to the national interest. It has also outlined some of the legal, policy and attitudinal frameworks affecting the decisions men and women make regarding paid and unpaid work.

This concluding chapter considers how some of these interrelated factors influence each other and raises some options for change. The chapter considers what practical measures might be taken to assist families to reach a balance in their paid and unpaid work that is to the betterment of not only the families and individuals concerned, but also of the nation.

The paid work and family picture

Much of the research and public debate concerning paid work and family responsibilities takes a sectoral or issues focus. However, genuinely addressing work and family issues requires an approach that looks at the range of issues and considers how they operate together and influence each other.

Progress towards achieving a balance between paid and unpaid work in one area may be positively or adversely affected by other areas. For example, anti-discrimination frameworks may not be being adequately used by men not because of deficiencies in that framework but because workplace cultures instil a stoicism in men about their paid work that prevents them complaining or exercising their rights. Workplace cultures may have a strong influence on men's decisions because of men's own perceptions of themselves as breadwinners and the importance of maintaining their earning capacity.

Paid and unpaid work issues, therefore, must be considered from several angles at once in order for any outcomes to be meaningful and to achieve lasting change.

As a consequence, paid and unpaid work issues need to be seen as reflecting legislative, workplace and cultural conditions if change is to be lasting, sensible and useful. Enabling individuals and families to manage their paid work and family responsibilities depends not only on individual circumstances and the policies available, but also on the mix of responsibility for these issues between government, employers, communities and individuals.

While perspectives on this question will differ, the links between these pieces of the paid work and family picture are undeniable. Governments may be unwilling to take on more responsibility for these matters but, almost by default, remain responsible for ensuring that the system works properly; oversighting if not regulating where appropriate. In any case governments must respond to the intended and unintended consequences of current arrangements.

Issues shaping the debate

Several issues are worth highlighting here because they indirectly but crucially inform the paid work and family debate. They have been referred to throughout the paper but are discussed in more detail here.

The place of unpaid work

One of the reasons that unpaid work has only recently been the subject of general scrutiny and debate is that it as part of the private world of domestic arrangements and family life, it can easily disappear from public agendas. Unpaid work can mistakenly be understood as standing apart from public issues such as the economy, paid work or population growth. While this is clearly not the case, unpaid work is often dismissed as less important than paid work.

Unpaid work is the linchpin of the work and family debate. The recurring problems of managing paid work and family will not be solved until issues of valuing, supporting and managing unpaid work are squarely faced and dealt with.

As this paper demonstrates, unpaid work responsibilities shape decisions about labour force participation, are a factor in the timing and number of children in families and are crucial to the running of the economy. It is imperative that they remain a focus of all of these areas of debate and that they are taken seriously as an area of public concern.

Choice constraints

The decisions that families and individuals make regarding how they balance paid work and family are not made within a social and economic vacuum. The conditions under which men and women make their choices and express their preferences need to be given serious consideration.

Without equal footing in the labour market and equal sharing of unpaid work, women and men face different choices. Women who bear the greater burden for unpaid work within a household will be more limited in the number of hours they can, or are willing to, spend in paid work. Enterprise level working conditions may further constrain their paid work choices. Similarly, without employers acknowledging that men have a legitimate role to play in raising their children or caring for other relatives, men are presented with little choice in how they balance the demands of paid work with family responsibilities. Government policies can contribute to the shaping of options by providing incentives and disincentives for men at work just as they have shaped options for women.

Men and women frequently face career penalties, potential ill-health, relationship stress and other negative effects of poor paid work and family balance, especially when their paid work fails to provide any time flexibility. On the other hand this flexibility, while welcomed by many with family and household responsibilities, is frequently achieved by compromising on the quality and remuneration of work and of job security.

Preferred family and mothering types

Much energy is wasted in debating which types of family provide the best outcomes for children and for social stability more generally and are thus most deserving of social support. Working mothers, sole parent mothers and stay at home mothers especially feel as if they are each targeted for criticism, and there is an abiding sense that mothers cannot do anything right in contemporary society. They bear disproportionate responsibility for child care, whether they undertake it in full or organise alternative care. If in paid work, they are expected to shoulder full commitments as parents and employees, and are criticised if they cannot meet such unrealistic demands.

Yet families, whatever their structure and whatever the role of the mother, are the basic unit of Australian society. The needs of Australian children demand all family types be given support. Today's vast and complex array of family structures and decisions made by Australian families makes public policy preferencing of certain types of mothers and families increasingly hazardous. The so-called and much derided "social engineering" is an inevitable outcome of any workplace policy or practice or any government policies that shape and change work and family arrangements. The interaction between these levers and their influence on current arrangements has to be frankly acknowledged and examined.

Fairness

Most people would agree that it is desirable for working arrangements within families and in society to be fair. However what that means in practice will differ from person to person.

Fairness is sometimes a factor even when it is not identified by those involved. For example, many mothers in paid work may say that they are satisfied with the role their spouses play as fathers; they may also say that they are overworked and need more leisure time. While they have identified a problem in the amount of unpaid work they do, they may be less willing to identify an inequitable division of labour in their relationship as a possible cause of the problem.

In part, this is due to the personal nature of unpaid work: the work of caring and its location within the private realm of the home and relationships means that many men and women have a deeply emotional investment in this work. As a result, they may be reluctant to acknowledge openly the inequity of their arrangements. This reluctance may also be linked to the absence of an appropriate framework or language for describing the feelings of unfairness and a lack of practical models for generating positive change without damaging otherwise healthy relationships. Domestic harmony may be seen as a trade-off for ignoring unfair arrangements, yet ignoring these paid work and family tensions poses a number of negative long term threats to individual health, workforce participation rates, women's retirement incomes, fertility rates, the nation's productivity and of course relationships themselves.

Carer needs

Throughout this paper we have discussed the pressures on carers of all kinds, as well as some of the surrounding structures that affect the choices people make, the pressures they feel, and the barriers to them structuring their lives in a balanced way.

Consultations for this project will focus on the needs of people with caring responsibilities and how they can address these needs. However, there are already indications from existing research of some of the key problem areas.

The specific problem for men is that they are unable to spend as much time with their families as they would like. Despite the many changes in gender roles that have taken place in recent decades, many men remain committed to the role of primary breadwinner. The ageing of their so-called baby boomer parents and their need to remain in the community and be cared for by their children, only adds to the pressure of unpaid caring responsibilities now experienced by men.

Women, on the other hand, already balance their paid and unpaid work in a more diverse number of ways than men. Some women, for example, are likely to be working in tenuous paid work positions but well able to meet their unpaid caring responsibilities, while others are in secure and full time paid work but also doing more unpaid work than their male partners. Some women might prefer fewer hours of paid work but at their previous level of seniority, while others might prefer to do more paid work but cannot find a job that offers them both the hours that suit their family responsibilities and also at a level commensurate with their skills and experience.

Carers of the frail aged and people with disabilities often say that they need more support in terms of respite from care or alternative care arrangements, better financial support and recognition for the work they do. In order to participate in

paid work and have some balance between this and their unpaid work, many primary carers need greater external support.

The goals of change

Before ideas for changing current paid work and family arrangements are discussed, the goals of any potential changes should be considered.

Some possible goals might be:

- a more equal distribution of unpaid work between women and men;
- a re-valuing of unpaid work as central to the economic and social aims of the nation;
- governments that provide adequate support for families to make real choices; or
- workplaces that are culturally and structurally flexible.

HREOC values comment on these or other possible goals.

Options for change

In seeking to make meaningful and lasting changes to the paid work and family balance, there are a range of broad approaches that can be taken. As individual components, these correlate to earlier chapters, however, as noted above, they cannot be considered in isolation from each other.

Depending on the findings of national consultations and submissions from interested individuals and interest groups, the range of options for achieving these changes may include the following.

Legislative change

Law reform may be the most obvious way of changing current work and family arrangements; it can be seen as the most direct. However, law reform has also been criticised as a blunt tool for change, and often it needs to be accompanied by other changes, such as education campaigns, in order to be fully effective.

Some possibilities for law reform are:

- consideration of changes to anti-discrimination legislation covering family responsibilities discrimination;¹ or
- more or different workplace regulation such as amendments to workplace laws or regulations, including the right to, or the right to request, part time work or legislated paid maternity and paternity leave.²

Social policy change

Some possibilities for social policy reform are:

- changes to assistance to families to encourage greater engagement of men as carers by better supporting families with two part time incomes;³

1 See chapter 7.

2 See chapter 8.

3 See chapter 9.

- changes to family assistance to encourage women to maintain workforce attachment, for example, by lowering effective marginal tax rates that act as a disincentive to women to work;⁴
- changes to social security taper rates that act as a disincentive for carers to combine caring responsibilities with paid part time work;⁵ or
- greater assistance to families to access affordable, quality care for children or other family members.

Cultural change in the workplace

The workplace is obviously a key arena where paid work and family issues are played out. Changes to workplaces can come about through legislative change and changes to government policy, but also through change to individual company policies or industry-wide structures.

Some possibilities for workplace cultural change are:

- initiatives to encourage workplace cultural change such as encouraging employers to consider flexible arrangements, tailored for both men and women;⁶
- continuing to emphasise the business case for cultural change towards shorter working weeks, greater flexibility and the importance of “doing the right thing” as a key driver of change;⁷
- canvassing and promoting different ideas for creating family-friendly employment arrangements, such as staggered hours, compressed working hours, shift swapping, part time work and working from home;⁸ or
- government support for parenting programs for men in the workplace.⁹

Attitudinal change

The most commonly proposed tool for achieving attitudinal change is education. This may be through formal processes such as school curricula or structured community education programs that focus not only on the desirability of both men and women being able to meet unpaid work and caring responsibilities, but also teach boys as well as girls the practical skills for doing so. Parenting programs and interventions should also stress the importance of equipping both men and women with the capacity to manage all aspects of their lives, including the preparation of food and other housework.

Education may also occur as a by-product of other reform. For example, legislative change can be educative by demonstrating to the community what is and is not acceptable (lawful) behaviour.

4 See chapter 9.
 5 See chapter 9.
 6 See chapter 8.
 7 See chapter 8.
 8 See chapter 8.
 9 See chapter 8 and chapter 10.

Some possibilities for achieving attitudinal change are:

- educational programs through school curricula encouraging equality between men and women and promoting fairer sharing of unpaid work;
- educational programs focussed on the workplace, considered separately for men and women as appropriate;
- further research to discover how gender stereotypes are created and what leads to change;
- public campaigns aimed at raising awareness that a fair division of paid and unpaid work is important to achieving equality between men and women; or
- strong leadership in equality and sharing of unpaid work by role models and national leaders.¹⁰

Problems of reform

Since paid work and family issues are all closely connected and affect one another, a potential problem of reform is that changes will have unintended consequences. For example, family-friendly policies in the workplace are most likely to be used by women, and some would argue that this then further identifies women with unpaid work, makes them less desirable employees and entrenches current gender roles.¹¹ It is important that reforms include and engage both men and women.

Conclusion

The ramifications of not changing current arrangements for the division of paid and unpaid work are considerable. In stifling recognition of the need for more equitable sharing of parenting responsibilities between men and women they confirm the widespread belief that family-friendly work arrangements are required only by women. On this basis employers continue to discriminate against women because of their caring roles while men and their families continue to be denied the opportunity to give and receive sufficient fathering. The unfairness of these current arrangements works against the principles of a democratic and just society.

From a more positive perspective, the benefits of greater equity and a broader definition of men's and women's roles in paid work and in caring roles are even more significant. It is in the national economic and social interest to use the talent of the greatest proportion of workforce, which means encouraging women and older people to participate in the workforce.

Caring for older people will need to be factored into family-friendly measures and care itself shifted from the periphery of peoples' working lives to the centre of a balanced life of paid and unpaid activities. All of these contribute to the broader social and economic good.

To do this, family responsibilities will need to be accommodated and shared in ways that make it easier for both women and men to meet their caring responsibilities as well as to enjoy the rewards of caring. Arguably the ageing of Australia's population and the trend towards greater self-sufficiency in retirement will drive public policy and women themselves to demand a more extensive realignment of unpaid caring responsibilities with those of men. In this sense this discussion paper is an attempt

¹⁰ See generally chapter 10.

¹¹ See p 21 and p 57.

to anticipate the inevitability of change and to encourage awareness and early policy intervention. Doing so will lessen social and economic shock.

The model career of the future will need to look very different to the forty year linear trajectory associated with the traditional male breadwinner. Already there is agreement that forty years is no longer enough. As unpaid work responsibilities become increasingly the lot of men as well as women, the standard working lives of men will also increasingly resemble those of women. This means the standard working life will be likely to include changes to the intensity and hours worked over the life course and be able to adapt to contingencies as a matter of course.

The costs of choosing to do nothing are great; the benefits of change are greater.

Questions

- 42. What do you think should be the key goals of paid and unpaid work arrangements in Australia?*
 - 43. What do you think should be the role for each of government, employers and families for promoting appropriate divisions of paid and unpaid work by Australian families?*
 - 44. What options are needed for promoting appropriate change to the divisions of paid and unpaid work in Australian families?*
 - 45. What evidence is lacking on the issues covered in this paper? What else does HREOC need to know in its consideration of these issues?*
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Consultations

HREOC formed a number of honorary advisory panels. HREOC consulted with members of these panels formally and informally and sought comment on drafts of this paper. HREOC is grateful for this assistance.

Academic Panel

Janeen Baxter	University of Queensland
Michael Bittman	University of New England
Sara Charlesworth	RMIT University
Lyn Craig	University of New South Wales
Michael Flood	La Trobe University
Alison Morehead	formerly the Australian Institute of Family Studies
Barbara Pocock	University of Adelaide
Alison Preston	Curtin University of Technology
Graeme Russell	Macquarie University
Penny Warner-Smith	University of Newcastle

Employment Panel

Peter Anderson	Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Tim Ayres	Australian Metal Workers' Union
Cath Bowtell	Australian Council of Trade Unions
Melinda Cilento	Business Council of Australia
Vasuki Paul	Australian Industry Group
Alison Peters	Unions NSW
Bill Shorten	Australian Workers Union
Tony Steven	Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia

Community Panel

Julie Austin	Carers Australia
Robert Boyle	The Benevolent Society
Adrienne Burgess	Fathers Direct
Eva Cox	Women's Economic Think Tank
Jenny Earle	Women's Electoral Lobby
Robert Hicks	Goldfields Men's Health
Warwick Marsh	Fatherhood Foundation
Gerry Orkin	Canberra Fathers and Children Service Inc.
Shawn Phillips	Mensplace
Tony White	UnitingCare Burnside
Paul Whyte	Sydney Men's Network

HREOC sought comment on the draft of this paper from the following agencies.

Attorney-General's Department
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
Department of Family and Community Services
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

The views expressed in this paper remain those of HREOC alone.

HREOC also held several focus groups with the assistance of Bankstown and Penrith Councils. HREOC is grateful for this kind assistance.

Questions:

1. *How do changes in arrangements for paid work in Australia affect the family responsibilities of women and men, particular groups of people or particular family types?*
 2. *Do women and men need different workplace arrangements to assist them to balance their paid work and family obligations? Why or why not?*
 3. *Would equality between men and women require a more equal sharing of paid work?*
 4. *Why was there so little change in the proportions of unpaid work done by men and women between 1992 and 1997? Are there signs of change since then?*
 5. *Does the imbalance in sharing of paid and unpaid work by men and women affect children, and if so, how?*
 6. *Does the amount of unpaid work done by women affect their capacity to participate in paid work, and if so how?*
 7. *Would equality between men and women require a more equal sharing of unpaid work?*
 8. *Are there particular difficulties in balancing paid work with caring for grandchildren, frail aged parents or family members with disabilities?*
 9. *Do the experiences of people caring for grandchildren, frail aged parents or family members with disabilities differ for men and women?*
 10. *What workplace flexibilities are useful for particular types of carers?*
 11. *Are there particular difficulties in balancing paid work with volunteering, and if so, should particular workplace flexibilities be available to promote volunteering?*
 12. *What effects, if any, do external factors such as partner and community attitudes, social policy or workplace relations have in shaping men's and women's decisions about paid work and family arrangements?*
 13. *What are the relationship, health and other effects of paid work and family conflicts on Australian parents and carers? Do the effects differ for men and women, particular groups of people, particular family types or different types of carers?*
 14. *What are the effects on children where their parents have difficulty in balancing paid work with family responsibilities?*
 15. *Are children affected differently by mothers' and fathers' paid work and family conflicts?*
 16. *Do women's and men's different paid and unpaid work obligations affect their economic outcomes, health, relationships and life chances? Do men and women or particular groups of people experience any such effects differently?*
 17. *Do men's and women's paid and unpaid work arrangements have an effect on productivity in Australia?*
 18. *What will be the effect of the ageing population upon men's and women's willingness and abilities to undertake unpaid caring work?*
 19. *Are fertility rates sensitive to social and economic conditions and if so, what specific conditions and how sensitive are they to changed conditions?*
 20. *Is unpaid caring work important for developing social cohesion and social capital? If so, how?*
 21. *What effect would a balance between paid work and family responsibilities for Australia's workers have on Australia's productivity and international competitiveness?*
 22. *What effect would a more equal sharing of unpaid household work between men and women have on Australia's productivity and international competitiveness?*
 23. *Can anti-discrimination systems assist men and women better balance their paid work and family responsibilities? Why or why not?*
 24. *Why do men with family responsibilities not make more use of the family responsibilities provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act?*
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25. *Should the Sex Discrimination Act be amended to give greater assistance to men and women to address any workplace disadvantage they may face on the basis of their family responsibilities? If so, what particular amendments are necessary? If not, why not?*
 26. *Can an individual complaints mechanism adequately deal with discrimination on the basis of family responsibilities? If not, what other changes may be necessary?*
 27. *Are amendments to the workplace relations system needed to give greater assistance to men and women to address any workplace disadvantage they may face on the basis of their family responsibilities? If so, what particular amendments are necessary? If not, why not?*
 28. *Do men make adequate use of the workplace relations system to assist them to balance their paid work with their family responsibilities?*
 29. *Do informal workplace policies work well to assist employees to balance their paid work and family responsibilities? Do they assist some employees more than others, and if so, is this appropriate?*
 30. *Have EEO policies and business case arguments produced a greater acceptance of the need for workplaces to be family-friendly?*
 31. *How can Australian workplaces be made more family-friendly?*
 32. *Is federal Government assistance to families appropriately directed?*
 33. *Does the cumulative effect of this government assistance facilitate choice for women and assist them to balance paid work and family roles? If not, how could this be achieved?*
 34. *What effects do government policies have on decisions made by individuals and families about paid and unpaid work arrangements? Are these effects appropriate?*
 35. *What are the best ways of incorporating and supporting the value of care into Australian society?*
 36. *What are the barriers to changing attitudes towards a more equal division of paid work and family responsibilities?*
 37. *What are the best ways of engaging men in the work of caring (for children, elders or other family members) and other unpaid work?*
 38. *How important are workplace cultures, as opposed to workplace structures, as a deterrent to men's more active engagement with their family responsibilities and more equitable sharing between men and women of unpaid work in the home?*
 39. *How can workplace cultures be encouraged to change to promote a better balance between paid work and family responsibilities?*
 40. *What responses to paid work and family conflict would assist to promote equality between men and women?*
 41. *What are the possibilities for combining the lessons learnt by the women's and the men's movements to address inequitable paid and unpaid work arrangements?*
 42. *What do you think should be the key goals of paid and unpaid work arrangements in Australia?*
 43. *What do you think should be the role for each of government, employers and families for promoting appropriate divisions of paid and unpaid work by Australian families?*
 44. *What options are needed for promoting appropriate change to the divisions of paid and unpaid work in Australian families?*
 45. *What evidence is lacking on the issues covered in this paper? What else does HREOC need to know in its consideration of these issues?*
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