

Caring for children and adults

Differential access to family-friendly work arrangements

As the population ages over the next few decades increasing numbers of employees will be providing care for their parents or other adults. Little is known about the use of family-friendly work arrangements for these employees. This paper presents evidence on the use of flexible work arrangements to provide adult care and how this compares to the use by those caring for children.

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The importance of parents having access to work arrangements that enable them to adequately care for their children is widely recognised and accepted. Much less attention has been given to the importance of creating work places that allow employees to provide care for elderly, disabled, or ill parents, spouses or other adults.

As Tolhurst (2001) writes: "If you arrive late for work because of problems with young children such as child care, parent/teacher interviews or medical appointments for your youngsters that is understood. How much sympathy or leeway is given if the lateness occurred because you had to take mum, dad or grandma to the doctors or had to arrange respite care because the district nurse would not be able to visit today to change a dressing or dispense medication?"

There are several demographic and social trends which mean that an increasing proportion of the workforce is likely to have adult care responsibilities. First, the population is ageing. The proportion of the population aged over 65 years is projected to increase from 12.8 per cent in 2002 to 26.1 per cent in 2044. There are currently 5.3 people in the potential workforce for every person aged 65 years or more. By 2044 it is projected that this will have fallen to less than 2.3 (Productivity Commission 2004).



Second, women are more likely to be carers than men and so an increase in female employment rates will increase the proportion of the workforce with adult care responsibilities. One of the key responses by government to the projected ageing of the population has been to encourage mature age participation in the labour market (Treasury 2002).

Third, there is some evidence that the shift from institutional to community care for disabled adults has also increased the burden on carers (Tolhurst 2001).

The delay in having children until their late 20s and 30s by younger Australians, combined with the ageing of the Australian population, is likely to result in an increase in the proportion of the workforce who have both dependent children and elderly parents who require care (Jenson and



Jacobzone 2000). People in this situation are usually in their mid forties to mid sixties and have been labelled the “sandwich generation” (Nichols and Junk 1997). Research in the United States suggests that employed women in this position have higher rates of absenteeism from work and greater difficulties combining work and family than women without both child care and adult care responsibilities (Neal, Chapman, Ingersol-Dayton and Emlen 1993).

Flexible work arrangements (such as paid leave to provide care and flex time) have been shown to be important in assisting employees with all types of caring responsibilities to successfully negotiate their family and work responsibilities. Use of family-friendly work arrangements may differ according to whether the care is for children or for an elderly or disabled adult for several reasons.

First, formal workplace policies may differ according to whether the work arrangements are being used to provide care for an adult or children. Second, the way in which managers apply existing policies may differ. Third, the reactions and views of fellow workers about colleagues taking time-off or using flexible work practices to care for a child as compared to an adult may differ. Fourth, the nature of providing care for an elderly or disabled adult tends to differ from child care as the period of care is generally unknown, unpredictable and time demands on carers are likely to increase rather than decrease. In addition, there is limited availability of formal care such as respite care (Glezer and Wolcott 2000; Tolhurst 2001).

While there is a great deal of information available in Australia on the types of work arrangements used by people to assist with negotiating family and work responsibilities, relatively little is known about the extent to which use of these work arrangements differ according to whether the caring responsibility is for children or for elderly or disabled adults (Glezer and Wolcott 2000). In this paper, evidence is presented about differences in the use of “family-friendly” work arrangements between New South Wales employees with child care responsibilities and those who provide adult care. The work arrangements and types of leave used for caring include: flex time; rostered day off; working from home; time off in lieu; shift-work; part-time work; casual work; informal arrangements with employer; paid leave; and unpaid leave. The use of self-employment or contracting as a way of balancing work and caring responsibilities is also examined.

The analysis is based on the *Managing Caring Responsibilities and Paid Employment Survey NSW*, conducted in New South Wales by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2000). This is one of the few Australian surveys that includes information on type of caring responsibilities, which family-friendly work arrangements are used to provide care, and the extent to which carers report wanting to make more use of flexible work arrangements to provide care (unmet need).

The survey also contains information on whether carers have made employment changes in the past in order to better manage their caring responsibilities. Three combinations of care are considered in this article: children only; children and adults; and adults only. Throughout the paper carers are defined as those with a child less than 15 years of age, and those who provided care to any other of the following people in the previous six months – any other child under 15 years of age, an elderly person, or any person with a short or long term sickness, injury or condition where this care is not done as part of paid work.¹ In the survey, children who require care were defined as those under 15 years and hence the analysis is limited to this group. While the survey is restricted to New South Wales, there is no particular reason to think that the pattern of results would fundamentally differ in other States of Australia.

Caring responsibilities and labour force status

According to the *Managing Caring Responsibilities and Paid Employment Survey NSW* (ABS 2000), 39.5 per cent of working-age men (18-64 years) and 49.3 per cent of working-age women had caring responsibilities. For both men and women the most common type of caring responsibility was for children only (33.1 and 37.4 per cent respectively). Having caring responsibility for an adult without having any child care responsibilities was much less common (3.7 per cent of men and 5.9 per cent of women). Just 2.7 per cent of men had both child and adult care responsibilities. A somewhat higher proportion of working-age women had both child and adult care responsibilities (6.1 per cent).

Women without any caring responsibilities had higher rates of employment (69.7 per cent) than did women with caring responsibilities (ranging from 55 to 60 per cent). Women without caring responsibilities were also more likely than other women to be employed full-time (Table 1). There was little difference in the employment rates of women with children only and adult only caring responsibilities (55.7 per cent and 55.2 per cent respectively). Women with caring responsibilities for both children and adults had an employment rate of 60.4 per cent. The higher employment rate of women with both children and adult care responsibilities is probably a reflection of the fact that these women were less likely to have very young children (the employment rate of mothers increases with the age of their children (de Vaus 2004)). Women with children were more likely to be employed part-time and less likely to be employed full-time than women with only adult care responsibilities.

The pattern for men is quite different. Men with child only responsibilities had an employment rate of 88.6 per cent and those with children and adult care responsibilities had an employment rate of 84.0 per cent. This is higher than the employment rates of men with adult care only responsibilities (68.2 per

cent) and those without any caring responsibilities (77.6 per cent). This reflects the fact that the care of children, particularly younger children, is primarily done by women, and that men still take greater responsibility for income earning in families (Bittman 1995). The relatively low rates of employment of men with adult care responsibilities is probably, in part, a reflection of the older average age of these men (de Vaus 2004) combined with the decline in employment rates which occurs for men beyond the age of 50 (Productivity Commission 2004).

The *Managing Caring Responsibilities and Paid Employment Survey NSW*, asked carers not-in-the labour force whether their caring responsibilities were the main reason they were not seeking employment. Among females with caring responsibilities who were not in the labour force, 55.7 per cent said the main reason they were not looking for paid work was their caring responsibilities. Among males with caring responsibilities who were not-in-the labour force, 19.3 per cent reported that the main reason was their caring responsibilities. For Australian research on the impact of caring for elderly or disabled adults on the likelihood of being in paid employment, see de Vaus (2004), Glezer and Wolcott (2000), and Jenson and Jacobzone (2000).

The importance of caring responsibilities as a reason for not looking for work also differed according to type of caring responsibilities. Only 10.7 per cent of men with children under 15 said that caring responsibilities were the main reason for not seeking paid employment. Women not in the labour force who had child care but not adult care responsibilities were much more likely to report that their caring responsibilities were the main reason for them not seeking employment (60.7 per cent). Again this reflects the fact that primary responsibility for child care is more likely to be taken by mothers than fathers (Bittman 1995).

Turning to adult care, 45.3 per cent of men not in the labour force who provided adult care only said that their caring responsibilities were the main reason they were not seeking employment. Caring responsibilities were given as the main reason for not seeking work by 29.7 per cent of women with adult care responsibilities but not child care responsibilities. Of women with adult and child care responsibilities who were not in the labour force, 48.1 per cent said that their caring responsibilities were the main reason for not seeking employment. The corresponding figure for men was 26.5 per cent.

Overall these figures suggest that the impact of adult care responsibilities on paid employment varies less between men and women than the impact of child care responsibilities. Even though a higher proportion of women than men have responsibility to care for an elderly or disabled adult, where men do have such responsibilities, their employment is significantly lower.

There are a number of possible explanations for the differential effect of child and adult care responsibilities on the employment of men. Men with adult

Table 1 Employment, by type of caring responsibilities and gender, NSW 2000

	Type of caring responsibilities			
	Children only %	Children and adults %	Adults only %	No caring responsibilities %
Male				
Total employed	88.6	84.0	68.2	77.6
Part-time employed	5.6	7.9	7.1	9.3
Full-time employed	83.0	76.1	61.1	68.3
Population total ('000)	665.3	53.9	74.0	1,214.9
Female				
Total employed	55.7	60.4	55.2	69.7
Part-time employed	30.0	32.6	23.6	20.8
Full-time employed	25.7	27.8	31.6	48.9
Population total ('000)	748.0	121.7	118.1	1,014.3

Notes: Table population is 18 to 64 years. Contributing family workers and employees paid in kind are classified as being employed.
Source: ABS (2000).



Women without any caring responsibilities had higher rates of employment than did women with caring responsibilities. They were also more likely than other women to be employed full-time.

care responsibilities may, on average, spend more time providing care than men with child care responsibilities whose partner often takes primary responsibility for the care of children. It may also be the case that when families are deciding who will care for elderly parents, children who are not employed, whether male or female, are more likely to assume primary responsibility for the caring than their employed siblings. It is not possible to distinguish between these explanations using the *Managing Caring Responsibilities and Paid Employment Survey NSW*.

Work arrangements used to provide care

In this section, the arrangements used by employees with different types of caring responsibilities in the six months prior to the survey interview are described. Almost half (47.3 per cent) of women with child care only responsibilities had used a family-friendly work arrangement to provide care (Table 2). A much lower proportion of men with child care but no adult care responsibilities reported having made use of family-friendly work arrangements (29.8 per cent).

The higher rate of usage of family-friendly work practices by women than men with children is not surprising, given that mothers provide more child care than fathers do, and are more likely than men to organise their work around those caring responsibilities (Bittman 1995). Previous studies have also shown low rates of use of family-friendly work provisions by men to care for children (for example, Bittman, Hoffman and Thompson 2004).

While it is also more common for female than male employees to provide care for elderly or disabled adults, women who have such caring responsibilities have only slightly higher rates of use of family-friendly work arrangements than do men with these responsibilities. For both men and women, those with responsibility for providing care to both adults and children were much more likely to make use of family-friendly work arrangements than those with only child care or adult care responsibilities.

While there are some differences in the types of work arrangements used by men and women, the pattern is quite similar. The main difference is that women were much more likely than men to use shift, casual

or part-time work as a way of managing caring responsibilities, particularly for children². Women with child care responsibilities but no adult care responsibilities were more likely to have made use of unpaid leave (7.4 per cent) than men with child care only responsibilities (2.8 per cent). There was little difference in the use of unpaid leave between males and females with adult care responsibilities.

A limitation of much of the existing research into the use of family-friendly work arrangements is that very little information is available on the extent to which there are employees who would have been able to better balance work and family responsibilities if they had been able to make greater use of flexible work arrangements. An unusual feature of the *Managing Caring Responsibilities and Paid Employment*

Table 2 Type of flexible work arrangements used to provide care, by type of caring responsibility and gender, NSW 2000

	Type of caring responsibilities		
	Children only %	Adults and children %	Adults only %
Male			
Flex time	7.1	8.2	5.3
Rostered day off and time off in lieu	10.2	17.2	12.0
Shift, casual and part-time work	5.3	11.7	7.3
Working from home and informal arrangements	9.1	23.0	19.2
Paid leave	12.1	28.6	10.7
Unpaid leave	2.8	5.0	5.4
Other	0.5	0.0	3.5
None	70.2	40.5	60.5
Population total ('000)	425.1	34.3	37.5
Female			
Flex time	5.8	9.4	5.5
Rostered day off and time off in lieu	9.0	20.7	9.1
Shift, casual and part-time work	24.8	29.8	17.4
Working from home and informal arrangements	10.8	19.7	12.5
Paid leave	11.5	23.5	10.3
Unpaid leave	7.4	4.6	6.6
Other	0.6	0.0	2.0
None	52.7	36.9	56.4
Population total ('000)	347.1	58.8	56.2

Notes: Table population is the employed 18 years plus. Columns may sum to more than 100 since a person could use more than one type of working arrangement.
Source: ABS (2000).

Survey NSW is that it contains a question on whether those with caring responsibilities would have liked to make greater use of particular work arrangements to provide care. This is a particularly valuable question, since from a policy perspective, what is very useful to know apart from the actual usage of family-friendly work arrangements is the extent to which employees could have benefited from increased access to these work arrangements.

Overall, the level of unmet need among the employed for flexible work practices and provisions were quite low (Table 3). For men with child care but no adult care responsibilities, almost 10 per cent would have liked to be able to make greater use of some kind of

family-friendly work arrangements. For women, 12.1 per cent wanted to make more use of such arrangements in order to provide care for children. Interestingly, there were higher levels of unmet need for work arrangements to care for elderly or disabled adults than to care for children – among both men and women. This applies to almost all types of work arrangements except shift, casual or part-time work and unpaid leave. The level of unmet need was highest for women with both child care and adult care responsibilities (20.1 per cent).

The *Managing Caring Responsibilities and Paid Employment Survey NSW* (2000) also asked those with unmet need for family-friendly work practices the reasons why they could not make more use of flexible work arrangements to provide care. The small number of respondents with elder or disabled adult care responsibility who wanted to make greater use of family-friendly work arrangements means that reliable estimates cannot be obtained for all types of reasons for respondents with this type of care. Therefore, in Table 4 only figures for those with child care responsibilities are presented. However, the absence of published data on this issue for those caring for adults makes it worthwhile presenting selected information for this group. It must be stressed that the estimates for this group are based on small sample sizes and are therefore potentially unreliable and need to be treated with caution.

While the overall pattern of reasons was similar between men and women, there were some differences. For both men and women, the two most common reasons were “Do not have adequate working arrangements” and “Work commitments”. Men were more likely than women to say that work commitments prevented them from making more use of family-friendly work arrangements (36.7 and 22.6 per cent respectively). Women were almost twice as likely as men to say that they “Didn’t apply, as thought they would say no anyway”.

Both men and women with adult care responsibilities were much more likely than those with child care only responsibilities to say that even though they wanted to make greater use of flexible work arrangements, they didn’t apply because they thought their employer would say no than are those with adult care responsibilities. Among men with responsibilities for providing care for children only, who had unmet need, 6.9 per cent reported that they hadn’t applied because they thought their employer would say no. This is much lower than the proportion of men with adult care only and both adult care and child care responsibilities who gave this reason for not having made greater use of flexible work arrangements (21.4 and 44.4 per cent respectively).

Among women with responsibilities for providing care for children but not adults who had unmet need for flexible work arrangements, 13.1 per cent gave the reason that they hadn’t asked their employer because they thought they would say no. As for men, the proportion of women with adult care and both child and adult care responsibilities who gave this reason was higher than for those

Table 3 Unmet need for flexible work arrangements, by type of caring responsibilities and gender, NSW 2000

	Type of caring responsibilities		
	Children only %	Adults and children %	Adults only %
Male			
Flex time	2.3	3.5	7.5
Rostered day off and time off in lieu	2.8	#	2.9
Shift, casual and part-time work	0.8	0.0	#
Working from home and informal arrangements	3.1	5.0	5.6
Paid leave	1.8	#	3.2
Unpaid leave	0.6	#	#
Other	0.7	0.0	0.0
None	90.5	85.4	85.1
Population total	425,100	34,300	37,500
Female			
Flex time	3.6	5.3	4.6
Rostered day off and time off in lieu	2.1	3.1	4.6
Shift, casual and part-time work	2.2	#	#
Working from home and informal arrangements	4.0	4.6	3.6
Paid leave	3.5	5.1	4.4
Unpaid leave	1.3	#	#
Other	0.3	#	#
None	87.9	79.9	84.3
Population total	347,100	58,800	56,200

Notes: Table population is the employed 18 years plus. Column total may sum to more than 100 since a person could want to have made more use of multiple work arrangement. # indicates that the figure was not released by the ABS due to confidentiality concerns due to small cell sizes.
Source: ABS (2000).

Table 4 Reasons for unmet need for those with child care responsibilities only, by gender, NSW 2000

	Male %	Female %
Applied or asked but was refused	5.5	7.1
Do not have adequate working arrangements	36.2	37.9
Didn't apply as thought they would say no anyway	6.9	13.1
Work commitments	36.7	22.6
Not paid for time off	#	10.2
Pressure from bosses or other workers	7.2	8.6
Anything else	14.4	11.0
Population total	40,300	42,000

Notes: Table population is the employed 18 years plus. Columns may sum to more than 100 since multiple reasons could be nominated. # indicates that the figure was not released by the ABS due to confidentiality concerns due to small cell sizes.
Source: ABS (2000).



While it is also more common for female employees than male employees to provide care for elderly or disabled adults, women who have such caring responsibilities have only slightly higher rates of use of family-friendly work arrangements than do men with these responsibilities.

providing care for children but not adults (19.3 and 20.2 per cent respectively). This suggests that feelings of entitlement to make use of flexible work arrangements may be less for elderly and aged care than they are for child care.

Employment changes and caring responsibilities

An important way of responding to difficulties in providing care responsibilities because of job demands can be to change jobs, change the number of hours worked, or change start or finish times. In the survey, employees with caring responsibilities were asked whether they had made any job changes in the past six months in order to make caring easier, such as changing jobs, applying for a promotion, changing their work hours or changing their work schedule.³

Among those with children, 4.7 per cent of men and 11.8 per cent of women had made job changes in the previous six months in order to care for those children (Table 5). Among those with caring responsibilities for an elderly or disabled adult but no child care responsibilities, 7.3 per cent of men and 10.0 per cent of women had made job changes in the previous six months in order to manage that care. Consistent with the findings for use of family friendly work arrangements, men's employment was affected more by adult care than child care responsibilities. Men and women with both adult and child care responsibilities had the highest rates of having made a job change in the previous six months in order to provide care (10.5 and 14.1 per cent respectively).

The rates of making job changes would appear to be quite high given that the changes refer only to those occurring in the previous six months. The impact of caring responsibilities on paid employment decisions might be most evident at particular points in time, say, when people first take on caring responsibilities and/or leave or return to paid jobs. For example, when adults take on caring responsibilities for an elderly relative or when parents seek and return to paid employment following the birth of children.

Caring responsibilities may also restrict a person's working life by limiting their ability to make a job change or take up new job opportunities. For men with caring responsibilities, only a very small

proportion reported there was a job change (such as changing job, applying for a promotion, or changing their work hours or schedule) they wanted to make but could not because of their caring responsibilities. For example, among men with caring responsibilities for children only, just 4.0 per cent reported not being able to make a job change they wanted to make. Among men with adult care responsibility, only 5.9 per cent reported having not made a job change they wanted to make, and among those with caring responsibilities for both adults and children 7.0 per cent reported having not made a job change they wanted to make.

A higher proportion of female employees with caring responsibilities had not made a job change they wanted to make because of their caring responsibilities. For example, amongst those with child care only responsibilities, 8.9 per cent had not made a job change, of those with adult care responsibilities 11.0 per cent had not made a job change, and of those with adult and children responsibilities 17.5 per cent had not made a job change.

The final type of job change considered is the decision to become a contractor or start one's own business in order to make caring easier. It is sometimes argued that becoming self-employed may make it easier to combine paid work with caring responsibilities because it means more control over work hours, work-loads and work arrangements (Berke 2003; Bell and La Valle 2003). Employed men are more likely to be self-employed or a contractor (23.2 per cent) than women (13.2 per cent) (Table 6). Women with caring responsibilities were about twice as likely to be self-employed as women with no caring responsibilities (17.6 per cent versus 9.9 per cent). For men,

Table 5 Proportion making job change in order to care by type of caring responsibilities and gender, NSW 2000

	Type of caring responsibilities		
	Children only %	Adults and children %	Adults only %
Male	4.7	10.5	7.3
Female	11.8	14.1	10.0

Source: ABS (2000).

those with caring responsibilities were also more likely to be self-employed than those without caring responsibilities (27.1 per cent versus 20.5 per cent), although in proportional terms the increase is not as great. Those with adult only care responsibilities had the highest rates of self-employment or contracting (30.3 per cent).

Among the self-employed with only child care responsibilities, 9.1 per cent of men said that they became a contractor or started their own business in order to make caring easier (Table 6). The proportion of women with children only care responsibilities who said that they became self-employed in order to make caring easier was more than three times that of men (29.1 per cent). Of those with adult care responsibilities, 15.4 per cent of men and 10.9 per cent of women said they became a contractor or started their own business in order to make caring easier.

Conclusion

The importance of parents having access to work arrangements which enable them to adequately care for their children is widely recognised. However, there has been much less attention paid to the need for access to family-friendly work arrangements to provide care for an elderly or disabled adult. As the Australian population ages over the next few decades, the proportion of employed people who will be needing to provide care for elderly or disabled adults is likely to increase.

Despite the growing importance of this issue, there is very little empirical information on the use of family-friendly work arrangements by those with

caring responsibilities for elderly or disabled adults, nor how it differs from those with caring responsibilities for children only. This paper has used survey data collected in New South Wales in 2000 to examine this issue. While the data presented in this paper is restricted to that state, there is no particular reason to think that the pattern of results will fundamentally differ in other states of Australia.

Among employees with caring responsibilities, there are clear differences in use of family-friendly work arrangements between those with child care responsibilities and those with responsibility for providing care to elderly or disabled adults. There are also differences evident between males and females – particularly for those with child care but not adult care responsibilities.

For women with child care responsibilities but not adult care responsibilities, almost half had used a family-friendly work arrangement to provide care in the previous 12 months. A much lower proportion of men with child only care responsibilities reported having made use of family-friendly work arrangements.

In contrast, while women were also more likely to have caring responsibilities for the elderly or disabled, among those that did, women had only slightly higher rates of use of family-friendly work arrangements than did men with these responsibilities.

For both men and women those with responsibility for providing care to both adults and children were much more likely to make use of family-friendly work arrangements than those with child care or adult care only responsibilities. This means that men with responsibility for care for elderly or disabled were more likely than men with children to make use of flexible work practices and provisions.

For women, patterns of usage of family-friendly work provisions are similar for those with children and those with caring responsibilities for the elderly or disabled. Men and women vary in the different types of work arrangements they make use of in order to provide care. Women are much more likely to use shift, casual and part-time employment in order to manage caring responsibilities, while men are more likely than women to work from home or rely on informal arrangements with employers.

Caring responsibilities were more likely to lead to job changes or prevent job changes for women than men, particularly caring responsibilities for children. There was less difference between men and women in the impact of adult care responsibilities on paid employment. Men and women with both adult and child care responsibilities had the highest rates of having made a job change in the previous six months in order to provide care. The rates of making job changes would appear to be quite high given that the changes referred only to those occurring in the previous six months.

Many self-employed carers also said they became self-employed in order to make caring easier, particularly women with child care and men with adult care responsibilities. This highlights the attractiveness of self-employment for carers in terms of

Table 6 Employment status by type of caring responsibilities and gender, NSW, 2000

Type of caring responsibilities	Employment status		
	Employee %	Self-employed or contractor %	Became self-employed or contractor to make it easier to provide care %
Male			
Children only	73.0	27.0	9.1
Children and adults	75.0	25.0	9.6
Adults only	69.7	30.3	15.4
Had no caring responsibilities	79.5	20.5	-
Total	76.8	23.2	9.7
Female			
Children only	82.9	17.1	29.1
Children and adults	79.4	20.6	37.5
Adults only	82.5	17.5	10.9
Had no caring responsibilities	90.1	9.9	-
Total	86.8	13.2	28.3

Notes: Table population is the employed 18 years plus. Contributing family workers and employees paid in kind are excluded since it is not possible to determine the nature of the employment relationship. The percentages who became self-employed in order to make caring easier are percentages of self employed persons only. Respondents who said that they didn't know whether they became self-employed in order to make caring easier are classified as not having become self-employed to make caring easier.
Source: ABS (2000).



The importance of parents having access to work arrangements which enable them to adequately care for their children is widely recognised. However, there has been much less attention paid to the need for access to family-friendly work arrangements to provide care for an elderly or disabled adult.

providing flexibility and choice in decisions about when, where and how much to work. However, as self-employment is likely to have its own set of challenges for carers, this finding also highlights the need for policy to consider how to ensure adequate support is provided for the self-employed as well as employees with caring responsibilities (Bell and La Valle 2003).

While rates of unmet need for flexible work practices and provisions were relatively low overall, they were higher for elderly and/or disabled care than for child care. This applied to almost all types of work arrangements except shift, casual or part-time work and unpaid leave. The reasons given suggest that people think employers are more likely to refuse use of flexible work practices and provisions for elder and/or disabled care than for child care.

Although the levels of unmet need were relatively low among employees, caring responsibilities were given as a major reason for not seeking employment among those not-in-the labour force who had child or adult care responsibilities. It is likely that improved access to family-friendly and flexible work arrangements will lead to movements into the labour force among at least some of this group.

It is important that the awareness of issues surrounding use of flexible work arrangements to provide care for elderly, disabled, or ill parents, spouses or other adults be raised, and that both formal workplace regulations and informal practices provide greater recognition of the importance and value of this type of care.

Endnotes

- 1 Excluded from the definition of carers are those who had provided care only once within the previous six months. In most cases, people in this situation will have quite a low level of caring responsibilities. People were defined as having caring responsibilities for their own children if they had children under the age of 15 years and had more than limited access to those children. Excluded from the analysis in the paper are respondents who reported that their job involved providing care. For these respondents it was not possible to separate paid care from unpaid care. Therefore the results are not generalisable to occupations that involve providing care.
- 2 Although figures for shift, casual and part-time work could not be reported separately in this paper due to small cell sizes, when they were examined separately in supplementary analyses it was found that gender differences were predominantly in part-time and casual work, rather than shift work.

This is consistent with previous research that has shown in particular much higher rates of part-time work among women than men (Bittman, Hoffman and Thompson 2004).

- 3 These four types of work changes were prompted, but any other types of changes respondents mentioned were also recorded.

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