Balancing work and family responsibilities: Policy Implementation Options

a report for the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet & Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development

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June 2002
Preface

Work/family balance is an increasingly urgent issue in Australia and other OECD countries. Getting a better balance between work and family responsibilities is a demanding challenge for men and women as workers, and as members of families, communities and businesses. It has significant economic and social consequences and is a crucial issue for governments.

The Victorian government can play a limited but significant role in addressing these issues, and can contribute by co-ordinating a strategic framework in Victoria, by modelling best practice and by actively contributing to the national debate.

In Growing Victoria Together, the Victorian government makes clear its commitment to encouraging employers, workers and families to better balance their work and family responsibilities and their ability to participate in community life. This policy commitment is echoed in the Government’s women’s strategy, Valuing Victoria’s Women.

As part of this commitment, the Victorian Government commissioned RMIT’s Centre for Applied Social Research to research the key trends and to identify policy options that could encourage and enable a better balance of work/life and work and family responsibilities for different groups and stakeholders. The project was managed by a steering committee with representatives from the Office of Women’s Policy and from the Policy Development and Research Branch of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and from Policy and Legislative Services, Industrial Relations Victoria, in the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development.

The report proposes options to contribute to the capacity of workers, families and employers to balance their work, family and community commitments. These include action the Victorian Government could take in co-operation with other levels of government, and with business, unions and the community. The options are based on an analysis of the key problems and trends and draw on a range of innovative policy responses developed by governments internationally and in Australia.

The report does not attempt to provide solutions to all the challenges posed by contemporary social and economic changes, some of which are major structural changes in the organisation of work and family. However it identifies these challenges, to provide insight into a range of policy responses and innovations, and to contribute to continuing policy discussion and community consultation on these issues.

The project team would like to thank Kate Connelly for her research assistance.

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June 2002
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Executive Summary

1. WORK/FAMILY BALANCE – WHY NOW?

Work/family balance is an increasingly prominent issue in Australia and other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Sometimes referred to as ‘work/life balance’ to convey the links between work and being a member of a community as well as a family, the issue is about the tensions and conflicts experienced by many as they grapple with deep-seated structural changes in families and workplaces. The most significant of these changes is the substantial erosion of the traditional model of the male breadwinner and female homemaker. Men and women’s experiences and expectations have changed, but many policies and workplaces have not, and continue to be based on the presumption of an ‘ideal worker’ with few domestic responsibilities, full-time work, and little or no time off to care for family.

The majority of women are in paid work in Australia, yet the research shows women still shoulder the main burden of unpaid ‘family work’. Women’s paid work is often interrupted in order to manage life cycle transitions, particularly those of parenting and caring for the elderly, yet they face obstacles when re-entering the workforce. The retreat of governments from direct service provision has increased demands on the community, particularly on the unpaid caring work usually undertaken by women. At the same time, increased pressures on businesses to be globally competitive have led to new patterns in the form and hours of work, and to substantial deregulation of the labour market.

There are many indications of the difficulties women and men face in managing work/family balance. Men as well as women are seeking a better balance between their work, family and community lives. Women in particular confront problems ranging from juggling motherhood, unpaid ‘family work’ and paid work, to systemic discrimination in the workforce because of their parenting and caring responsibilities. Not surprisingly Australia’s birth rate is declining, while businesses suffer from the loss of skills through women’s employment interruptions and their difficulties returning to work.

This report tackles the issues with particular reference to what a Victorian state government can do. It reviews the key trends in Australia and the OECD, and presents a case for innovative action by detailing options for Victorian government intervention.

2. GOVERNMENTS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Chapter 1 argues that governments can play a critical role in shaping the policy context in which men and women make choices about balancing their work, family and community responsibilities. Well-designed policies can make it easier for parents to participate in the workforce and can support their choices about how they want to do so. Governments can lead by example and provide the focus for community debate.

In Australia, the main focus of industrial policy about work/family balance has been to encourage the negotiation of ‘family friendly’ policies at the level of the workplace.
While reconciling work and family responsibilities has to be worked out at the workplace, OECD experience shows that the enterprise approach is only effective when used in tandem with a framework of minimum standards and entitlements and public provision of services. Effective government intervention needs to combine the key policy principles of supporting the quality of work and community life, promoting gender equality and enhancing labour market efficiency.

The policy response to work/family balance in Australia, particularly at the federal level, is stalled and now lags behind developments in the OECD. However there are some signs of change. It is increasingly clear that leaving these issues to individual negotiation in the workplace is inadequate. There is now a wealth of research on the dilemmas of work/family balance in Australia and evidence of strong community interest and pressure for change. This has been highlighted in the recent release by the federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner of her discussion paper *Valuing Parenthood: Options for Paid Maternity Leave*, which outlines options for a national paid maternity leave scheme.

There are significant opportunities for a state government such as Victoria to develop a progressive, co-ordinated policy response to the problems of work/family balance. Recent Council of Australian Government (COAG) discussions have highlighted the opportunities of a co-ordinated approach to federal arrangements by state and territory Labor governments. Further, Australia and Victoria are well placed to catch up with the experience of OECD countries where there have been exciting innovations in responding to the urgent issues of work/family balance.

### 3. KEY WORKFORCE TRENDS

In chapter 2, we summarise the research on the key trends affecting work and family in the OECD and in Australia. The conclusions of this research include:

**A changing workforce**
There is an increasing proportion of women in the paid workforce, particularly among women with dependent children. Part-time work has increased dramatically, and full-time work is less likely to be continuous and is more likely to be associated with longer hours. Problems of pay inequality, poor wages and conditions, occupational segregation and other systemic discrimination continue to mark women’s employment.

**Changing families**
The increase in employment for women with dependent children is linked with major changes in family types. These changes include lower rates of marriage, higher rates of separation, increased numbers of sole parents, and lower rates of child-bearing. Women are having fewer children and also delaying having children, trends reflected in declining fertility rates. Despite the increased participation of women in the paid workforce, the unequal division of labour in the household has proved resistant to change.

**New patterns of participation**
New patterns of combining paid work with education and with caring responsibilities are leading to significant pressures and costs. There are new and complex patterns of work for mothers, characterised by temporary withdrawal from employment followed by re-
entry (or several re-entries). The majority of mothers not in paid work want and intend to return to the workforce, yet receive little assistance to do so. These new patterns of workforce participation present policy challenges to deal with caring work, exit and re-entry from the labour market, and the demand for, and quality of, part-time work.

**Changing preferences**

In both Australia and the OECD there is little popular support for the old male breadwinner/female homemaker model. There is evidence of a new model based on both parents working. However, this dual earner model faces many obstacles due to taxation and income support arrangements, gender pay inequity, and the absence of employee-oriented workplace arrangements. Consequently, the increasing numbers of dual earner households experience acute time pressures and difficulties in balancing work, family and life. Australia has one of the highest proportions of part-time employment in the OECD, but it is predominantly casual, poor quality work. While many women with dependent children say they would prefer the reduced hours of part-time work, they do not want or deserve the disadvantages of low wages, poor job security and short or unpredictable hours.

Despite these major social and economic changes, policy responses in Australia have been piecemeal and inconsistent. Some federal initiatives introduced to support families have contradicted other social and industrial policies. There has been some support for retaining women’s work skills through unpaid parental leave and encouraging ‘family friendly’ workplaces, but many income support policies, such as the recent ‘Baby Bonus’, are incentives for women with partners to stay out of the labour force. At the same time, welfare reforms insist that single mothers should return to work.

Australia’s traditional structures of work and family – based on the male breadwinner and the female homemaker – have changed forever. Policies that reflect this model cannot respond to the changed families and changed workplaces of the 21st century. The time is ripe for a more integrated approach and the development of innovative responses to the challenges of work/family balance in order to reflect these new community realities.

4. **WHERE AUSTRALIA IS LAGGING**

Chapter 2 argues that there is a danger that the absence of coherent policy in Australia will exacerbate the tensions and difficulties experienced as men and women juggle work and family. Australia lags behind other OECD countries in developing policies to help people manage their life cycle transitions without losing their attachment to the paid work force. For example, Australia is one of only two OECD countries without a national scheme of paid maternity leave, and there are significant gaps, especially for casual workers, in access to carers’ and parental leave.

There is evidence of increasing popular dissatisfaction, and of family-hostile rather than family-friendly developments in Australia’s unregulated environment. Relying predominantly on the voluntary efforts of employers has worsened the balance of work and family for many employees in Australia. The lack of a strategic policy direction affects the capacity of men and women to participate in the community and constrains the choices that families make about balancing their work, family and community
commitments. It exacerbates rather than reduces gender inequality in the workplace and in the home, and leads to labour market inefficiency through the loss of skilled employees.

In contrast, many OECD governments have developed strategic policy frameworks with minimum labour standards that facilitate employee-oriented flexibility and security, and that protect the interests of employers in running efficient and productive businesses. Innovative strategies have been developed to support the quality of work, family and community life, to achieve gender equality and to enhance labour market efficiency. This report draws on these developments to sketch out options and opportunities for state government action.

5. PROVIDING STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND COORDINATION

The federal government holds the key to social security and taxation policy, where serious reforms are required to support a work/family strategic framework. However little proactive action is being taken. Given the scale of change in work and family patterns, and despite the federal policy vacuum, there is a significant role for the Victorian government to:

- develop a whole of government strategic approach to work/family balance issues by leading the public debate, informing that debate, and resourcing research and policy development (Options 1-6);
- implement best practice standards as an employer, including reviewing and improving public sector standards, informing government employees about their rights and entitlements and piloting innovative options (Option 7); and
- lobby, with other Labor state governments, for integrated early childhood education and care services at state and federal level, and for paid maternity leave (Options 8-9).

6. SETTING MINIMUM STANDARDS

International experience shows the importance of a clear and consistent regulatory framework that supports employees and employers to improve the balance of their work and family responsibilities. Despite the referral of much of its industrial relations power to the Commonwealth, there are opportunities for the Victorian government to contribute in both real and symbolic ways. The government can make a serious contribution by:

- adopting ILO maternity leave standards for Victorian public service employees (Option 10);
- extending the rights of carers and parents through legislation giving employees a right to request flexible work arrangements, establishing an employer duty to consider such requests seriously, and increasing protection from discrimination for workers with parental or carer responsibilities (Option 11);
- establishing rights and minimum standards for part-time workers by prohibiting discrimination against part-time workers (Option 12); and
- requiring companies and organisations applying for government tenders to meet minimum work/family balance standards (Option 13).
7. LEADING THE WAY

There is an important opportunity for the Victorian government to demonstrate best practice by piloting innovative work/family practices in both the public and private sectors. This could be done by building on minimum standards frameworks in designated priority areas such as part-time work, and employee choice over working hours. Pilot projects would demonstrate how employees can be supported through a variety of life course transitions in ways that benefit both employees and employers.

These pilot projects could include:
- an initiative to enhance the quality of part-time work in a central government agency (Option 14);
- a trial of employee choice rostering in the residential care sector, building on a similar initiative in New South Wales (Option 15).

8. WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH INDUSTRY

For Victorians to find new, more satisfying and productive ways to balance work, family and community responsibilities, the government needs to develop new partnerships in the workplace. A number of initiatives provide ways in which the government can provide information and support to employers, unions and employees, building on the example of innovative programs from other countries and around Australia.

These include:
- promoting the Partners in Work Program in supporting new initiatives focused on work/family balance (Option 16);
- developing a practical guide for small businesses that details work/family issues and practical proposals (Option 17);
- establishing an employer forum to promote awareness and provide a focus for consultation with business on issues of work/family balance (Option 18).

9. WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY

Developing new partnerships with communities will enable the state government to take the lead in the public debate on work and family initiatives, and to show how getting the balance right can also contribute to strengthening communities.

Options include:
- supporting communities to develop local responses to enhance the balance between work, family and community responsibilities (Option 19);
- developing innovative ways to ensure that information about the rights and entitlements of working parents and carers is available to parents whatever their labour force status (Option 20).
Options for Victorian Government action
as detailed in chapter 3

Providing Strategic Direction and Co-ordination

Option 1
A key option is for the Victorian government to develop a work-life balance strategic framework for government policy and action across the public, community and private sectors though consultation with key stakeholders. Such a strategy could articulate integrated policy objectives that emphasise enhancing the quality of work, family and community life, gender equality, labour market efficiency and the partnership role of government, business, unions and the community in supporting work/family balance.

Option 2
To provide leadership and co-ordination of public and private sector work/family balance activity, the Victorian government could establish a Work and Family Advisory Committee. The Committee could provide a mechanism for high level consultation between government and key stakeholders to review Victorian government work/family balance strategies and to promote awareness of work/family balance issues. Membership of such an Advisory Committee could include representatives from employer groups, unions, community, key state government agencies and experts.

Option 3
To co-ordinate and review public and private sector work/family balance activity, promote relevant government initiatives and raise community awareness of work/family balance, the Victorian government could establish a whole-of-government Work and Family Unit within a central government agency. The Unit could also be responsible for the conduct of ‘work/family audits’ of proposed government policy.

Option 4
To provide a centralised contact point for the collection of information, provide information and links to relevant government policies, programs and research and promotion of particular initiatives, the Victorian government could establish a dedicated website, managed by the proposed Work and Family Unit.

Option 5
To increase the profile of work/family balance, the Premier and other Ministers could encourage discussion of the issue in public forums and media statements as well as publicly launch any policy initiatives in respect of work/family balance.
Option 6
To provide the basis for future policy development to better respond to the work/family balance needs of all Victorians, the Victorian government could commission further research. This could build on the results of the State of Working Victoria Survey, and investigate the work/family needs of particular groups in the Victorian community. The Victorian government could also consider preparing a joint bid with the Australian Bureau of Statistics to undertake a Victorian-based survey around managing paid work and caring responsibilities to identify the specific needs of a wide range of Victorians.

Option 7
To build on current initiatives within a number of individual government departments and agencies, the Victorian government could consider taking an integrated approach to work/family balance within government employment. Responsibility for the coordination and management of a public sector work/family approach could be located in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The main areas of activity would be in:

- developing a comprehensive and inclusive public service work/family policy with a statement of commitment from the Premier;
- reviewing and improving public sector standards and addressing gaps in coverage of work and family provisions in enterprise agreements, executive employment contracts and in departmental and agency policies;
- requiring individual departments and agencies to develop work/family balance plans which conform with a set of minimum public service standards;
- providing information across the public service about entitlements and policies through a government wide intranet;
- sharing and promoting good practice across the public service; and
- undertaking and coordinating government research and pilot programs to trial innovative work/family initiatives in the public service.

Option 8
In appropriate federal, state and territory forums, the Victorian government could take up the following issues as a matter of priority:

- developing a co-ordinated policy framework both at the federal and State level for the development and delivery of universal, integrated and affordable early childhood education and care services;
- advocating for the implementation of a comprehensive national system of paid maternity leave that meets minimum ILO standards.

Option 9
In the event that the Commonwealth government does not announce an intention in the short to medium term to introduce a comprehensive national scheme of paid maternity leave, the Victorian government could consider encouraging local government to provide paid maternity leave to its employees, consistent with ILO minimum standards.
Option 10
To demonstrate leadership in providing for workers with parenting responsibilities, the Victorian Government, in its role as employer, could consider:

- extending the provision of maternity leave in the public service to a minimum of 14 weeks;
- extending maternity leave entitlements to the primary carer as paid parental leave.

Option 11
To establish minimum standards regarding working time and ensure adequate protection for parents and carers in the workplace, the Victorian Government could investigate:

- legislating to provide for an employee right to request flexible work on the grounds of carer and parental status and an employer duty to reasonably consider such requests;
- amending the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act in respect to discrimination on the grounds of parental and carer status to provide for the reasonable accommodation by employers of employees’ family responsibilities.

Option 12
To ensure adequate protection for part-time workers and those who wish to work part-time, the Victorian Government could clarify the current legal position of part-time workers, and if necessary, strengthen the EOA to expressly prohibit discrimination on the grounds of part-time status in the area of employment and provide for the ‘reasonable accommodation’ of part-time workers.

Option 13
To encourage businesses to support the work/family balance of their employees and subcontractors, the Victorian government could consider requiring companies tendering for government business to meet certain minimum requirements.

Option 14
To enhance part-time work opportunities for men and women and to address the barriers to the integration of part-time work across occupations and seniority levels, the Victorian government could undertake a pilot initiative in a central government agency, which would investigate and trial the implementation of quality part-time work.
Option 15
To encourage workplace standards that support employee choice, the Victorian Government could undertake an industry pilot in the residential care industry to trial and evaluate the implementation of employee choice rostering initiatives, which could build on an evaluation of similar initiatives in NSW.

Working in Partnership with Industry

Option 16
The Victorian Government could consider explicitly promoting work/family balance as a feature of the pilot Partners in Work Program to encourage innovative union/business workplace partnerships that both provide support for employee work/family balance and deliver business benefits.

Option 17
To provide information and guidance about how to successfully implement flexible working time and leave arrangements, the Victorian Government could, in consultation with small business, develop a practical guide around work/family balance for Victorian small business. Further the proposed Work and Family Unit could be used to provide a central point for information dissemination to small business.

Option 18
To promote employer awareness of work/family balance issues and provide a structured focus for consultation with business around work/family balance, the Victorian government could consider the establishment of a Victorian Employers for Work/Family Balance Forum.

Working in Partnership with the Community

Option 19
To support communities to develop local responses to enhance the work/family balance choices available to parents, the Victorian government could pilot the ‘times in the city’ approach in one of the rural or regional Community Building Projects, by focusing on investigating the integration of local childcare and other services.

Option 20
To ensure information about work/family rights and entitlements is available generally to parents and carers, whatever their current labour force status, the Victorian government could disseminate appropriate information through

- inclusion in ‘baby bounty bags’ distributed in hospitals after the birth of a child;
- through the maternal and child health network;
- in the ‘parenting tips’ sheets distributed by the Department of Human Services;
- through Department of Human Services support programs and networks for carers of people with disabilities.
Chapter 1: Framing The Discussion

In this introductory chapter, we frame the discussion about ‘balancing work and family responsibilities’. We explain why work/family balance is an important issue for governments, including state governments such as Victoria. We thread our way through the terminology and seek to throw light on the substantive issues underlying definitional differences. We outline four basic arguments in support of work/family policies. We discuss the benefits of a positive use of the ‘business case’, as exemplified by the Labour government in the United Kingdom, but caution against a version that is often used as an excuse for government inaction. Finally, we introduce the local state of play, asserting that after advances in the 1980s and early 1990s the situation in Australia (and Victoria) is now badly stalled. A renewed momentum is urgently needed.

1. WHY IS WORK/FAMILY BALANCE AN IMPORTANT ISSUE?

Work/family balance, or – as it sometimes called – work/life balance, is increasingly prominent in Australia and the other industrialised countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). There is now a vast mountain of research and policy discussion in many countries, leading to numerous policy initiatives. At the international level, two major summary reports from the OECD have recently appeared (OECD, 2001; Evans, 2001). Continental European countries, particularly the Nordic countries, have long been leaders in this field (where the discussion is often couched in terms of ‘working-time’ or ‘equal opportunities’ as well as ‘the reconciliation of work and family’ – Moss, 1996; Pillinger, 2000; European Foundation, 2002).

Signs of renewed action are also evident in the English-speaking countries. For example, the last two years have seen several comprehensive studies and government responses in the United Kingdom (DfEE, 2000; Hogarth, Hasluck and Pierre, 2000; DTI, 2000a; Work and Parents Taskforce, 2001), a major review in Canada (Duxbury and Higgins, 2001), and major reports from the Economic Policy Institute in Washington (Appelbaum et al, 2002) and the Sloan Work-Family Policy Network (Bailyn, Drago and Kochan, 2002). This research and policy discussion is paralleled by significant policy initiatives. Later in this report we detail many of these initiatives, which tackle work/family balance through policies such as paid parental leave, quality part-time work, employee-choice rostering, flexible work schedules, and support for childcare and community-based initiatives.

Why has the issue of work/family balance become so important? On the one hand, the answer is straightforward. Many employees are complaining about tensions or conflicts, that is an imbalance, between their work responsibilities (or aspirations) and their family responsibilities (or aspirations). In other words, the issue has become important because of a feeling of discontent amongst many workers, who would prefer a better balance of work and family responsibilities. Discontent may be most intense amongst women, especially those women trying to juggle motherhood, unpaid work in the household and paid work. But it is also evident amongst men, who – perhaps under the prompting of their partners – are seeking a different connection between paid work and family life. Because it is widespread and persistent, it is a problem not only for individual workers but also for their families, their employers, their communities and governments.
This dissatisfaction is, however, only the tip of the iceberg. Work/family imbalance is anchored in deep-seated structural changes, the most fundamental of which is the *erosion of the traditional male breadwinner/female homemaker model*. This is a profound and sweeping social transformation, affecting a range of social institutions. It centres on an increase in the workforce participation of women, but it reaches out to reconfigure the roles of both men and women. Particularly important is the emergence of complex new patterns of participation in paid work, with temporary withdrawal(s) and re-entry or re-entries, as a pattern of interrupted participation across the life course (‘labour market transitions’). These patterns reflect – at least in part – disruptions to a work career as a result of family responsibilities. As we stress in chapter 2, the challenge of work/family policy is not so much to invent or promote a stable new relationship between work and family but more to manage these inevitable transitions.

The problem of imbalance is not directly caused by these structural changes. It is primarily due to the inadequacy of efforts in workplaces and in public policy to manage the changes. Some countries are more successful than others, but no country can point to a perfect record. In some cases, policy simply compounds the problem, such as by encouraging longer hours at the workplace, by adding pressure on care-givers, such as de-institutionalisation of the disabled and their return to the community without adequate resources, or by adding to the costs of withdrawal from the workforce.

Many countries are trapped in the middle of this fundamental transformation, loaded down with policies and institutions that seem contradictory and non-functional. In too many countries, policies and workplaces remain geared to the old model, which was based on an ideal worker who worked full-time and long hours, took little or no time off to care for children or other family members and had few domestic responsibilities (Williams, 2000: 1). This model assumes that workers left their family responsibilities at the office door or factory gate. Many workplaces have adapted to the new reality, but only in the limited sense that they allow both men and women to try to fit in with these forbidding demands. This intensifies pressures on workers and on their family life and devalues the necessary work of caring that takes place within families.

The traditional structure of work and family — based on the male breadwinner/ female homemaker — has changed and many traditional policies and institutions need to change to accommodate (but also shape) these new realities.

The traditional structure of work and family — based on the male breadwinner/ female homemaker — has changed and many traditional policies and institutions need to change to accommodate (but also shape) these new realities. It is vital to acknowledge that the old structure is gone and there is no prospect of its restoration. It is necessary to push forward. For example, permanent exit from the workforce is no longer an option for the vast majority of women; instead the key debates are to do with the varied methods of combining caring responsibilities, including periods of temporary withdrawal, with paid work. The discussion of work/family balance is here to stay. The dissatisfaction of many workers is not a transient sentiment but an expression of fundamental structural changes.

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1 Appelbaum et al (2002) describe the outcome as the ‘ideal worker-marginalized caregiver’ model or as the ‘unencumbered worker-devalued caregiver’ model.
Work/family balance is at the centre of many contemporary social and economic issues. A poor balance can lead to problems such as the waste of human resources, poor productivity, barriers to gender equity, poor quality caring, and low fertility rates. It can reduce the quality of life (including quality of choice), intensify inequalities between men and women, and lead to labour market inefficiencies.

Work/family balance is important for a range of social actors. It is undoubtedly important for individual enterprises, since dissatisfaction and waste of human resources impact on enterprise performance. There is a strong rationale for government involvement in this area, on both equity and efficiency grounds (Fagan and Rubery, 1996, 349-353). Leaving the problem to individual workplaces cannot provide a solution. Workplaces must be at the centre of any change, and some initiatives can start at the workplace. But government action is needed to generalise change to all workers, to spread the costs and benefits of change, and to ensure that solutions are well-designed and integrated with the resources of the community. In this report, we argue that the key themes of government action - corresponding to the main problems - should be improving the quality of work, family and community life, promoting gender equality, and enhancing labour market efficiency.

This is an area where governments can make a difference. Well-designed policies can for example make it easier for parents to engage in paid work. This has benefits for the well-being of individuals and families but also for long-term economic prosperity (for example, in supporting high employment rates) and social welfare (for example, by helping to halt or slow the decline in fertility rates). Government responsibilities and capacities are recognised as decisive for good work/family balance in most OECD countries. Though much of the focus is on national governments, opportunities and challenges also exist for state governments such as Victoria. Well-designed policies can improve: the capacity of men and women to combine responsibilities; the capacity of men and women to participate fully in society; life-long learning opportunities; health outcomes; productivity; the welfare of children and the elderly; and community cohesion.

2. DEFINITIONS

This section seeks to establish the boundaries of the topic by introducing different terms and their definitions. Our aim is not to insist on one definition over another, but to uncover the underlying issues and to clarify the confusion that often undermines research and policy. This is an essential starting-point for better research and policy discussion.

Our starting point is the notion of balancing work and family responsibilities. ‘Work’ means paid work, that is employment. The notion of ‘family’ is not restricted to any one form but instead embraces all forms. The implicit stress, however, is on family responsibilities or activities, in particular care of dependent children but also including care-giving for elderly, disabled or ill relatives. This unpaid work of caring within

2 The Victorian Department of Justice offers a useful definition of the family:
“The term ‘family’ is defined within its broadest sense and is inclusive of the wide range of lifestyles of staff. ‘Family’ includes any person dependent upon the staff member for care and support, such as relation by blood (eg. child, sibling, parent, grandparent), marriage (including de facto relationships), adoption, fostering or traditional kinship, without discrimination as to race or sexual preference.”
(Department of Justice, 2001)
families can be called ‘family work’ in contrast to ‘market work’ (Williams, 2001, 1). More broadly, family responsibilities can mean all the activities that make up unpaid work in the family. These activities may not be caring, but often have at least a dimension of caring. According to conventional definitions, for example in time-use surveys, unpaid work includes unpaid caring work, indoor housework (cooking, cleaning, laundry), outdoor housework, household management, and shopping (Bittman and Rice, 2002).

One useful definition of work/family balance is provided by Russell and Bowman (2000, 5), who suggest it is to do with “the desire to have access to employment opportunities and earn an adequate income while at the same time looking after the caring responsibilities of family life”. For individual workers, the immediate issue is imbalance. The most common term in Australia is ‘juggling’, conveying a sense of juggling too many disparate activities that are almost, but not quite out of control (Pocock, 2001a, 5). There is a judgment that paid work does not fit well with other activities, starting with care of dependents. Paid work is felt to be out of balance, and the remedy is couched in terms of establishing a satisfactory balance. The issue is sharpest for many women, who shoulder the primary load of caring work and unpaid labour in the household, but it is by no means confined to women (VandenHeuvel, 1993).

It is sometimes suggested that the reference to ‘balance’ is misleading – it puts too much stress on time in its purely quantitative dimensions and suggests a clash (incompatibility) of the demands of the two spheres. It thereby risks missing the qualitative dimensions of time and the possibility of synergies as well as conflicts between the two spheres of paid work and family. Nor is it entirely clear what a satisfactory balance entails. In addition to ‘balance’, many researchers and policy makers speak of reconciliation (or integration). This is better in that it leaves room to talk about synergies as well as conflicts. However, it lacks the neat antonym (‘imbalance’) that helps make ‘balance’ so instantly comprehensible and useful. Moreover, it lacks the important theme of control that is associated with the metaphor of balance. For many workers, work and family balance is to do with taking charge of aspects of their lives that seem to be eluding their control.

Instead of work and family, it is increasingly common for researchers and governments to speak more broadly of work and life. For example, the UK government prefers to speak of work/life balance and work/life policies. Work/life balance is defined as “adjusting work patterns so that everyone regardless of age, race or gender can find a rhythm that enables them more easily to combine work and their other responsibilities and aspirations” (cited in Pillinger, 2001).

The appeal to ‘life’ broadens the focus beyond caring for dependents to include wider activities. This broader focus retains at least two links to care-giving. First, it recognises that care-giving is implicit in many other aspects of life, for example taking a daughter to netball or mowing the lawn for an elderly relative. Similarly, when tensions between paid work and caring responsibilities arise, they often spill over into all aspects of carers’ lives (including personal care, sleep, not to mention intimate relationships, social and community interaction, recreation and leisure, educational activities and voluntary work). Second, framing the problem as work/life balance invokes the life course. It thereby
reaches out to workers who may not yet have caring responsibilities (for children or elderly), in order to remind them that they too will benefit from work/life policies in the medium or long term. This has several advantages. It helps to minimise divisions based on misplaced envy or resentment. Moreover, it is useful in framing policy initiatives and indeed much of the most creative thinking about work/life policies is couched in terms of redistributing rights and responsibilities over the life course (Boulin and Hoffman, 1999).

Broadening the terminology to work/life balance has the effect, at least in principle, of broadening the groups of workers seen as affected by these issues. It suggests that these policies reach beyond workers with caring responsibilities and with families, or even workers who may one day have caring responsibilities, in order to include all workers. It suggests the wider community can benefit, and recognises that employees are not only members of families but also members of communities (Russell and Bowman, 2000, 4).

The European Foundation …suggests that “reconciliation of work and family life today involves the relationship between different activities – certainly paid work and unpaid caring, but also other activities such as social life, personal development and civic participation”

This broadening of the terminology is sensible (Edgar 1999, 217-218). However we note that a recent European Foundation report follows this line of argument, but decided to retain the older terminology of work and family. Thus, it suggests that “reconciliation of work and family life today involves the relationship between different activities – certainly paid work and unpaid caring, but also other activities such as social life, personal development and civic participation” (European Foundation, 2002, 48). It is important not to lose the focus and a sense of the main priorities for policy action. The central priority should stay with work and caring responsibilities, in particular parenting. This is the site of the main contemporary problems, including the main problems of imbalance and worker dissatisfaction. It is when workers are obliged to juggle paid work with caring responsibilities (care for elderly, sick or disabled relatives or care for dependent children) that the most severe tensions, stresses and sacrifices arise. As a result, this should be the site of the main policy efforts. For these reasons, we continue to use the terminology of work/family balance in this report.

At an enterprise level, work/family policies are sometimes referred to as family-friendly policies. These are best seen as policies above the statutory minima, which have been introduced by individual firms as a specific response to human resource management (HRM) problems. This terminology is useful, and can be complemented with a notion of family-hostile policies. A recent OECD report describes family-friendly arrangements in firms as “practices, facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life, which firms introduce to complement statutory requirements…” (2001, 147). It outlines four main types: 1. leave from work for family reasons; 2. changes to work arrangements for family reasons; 3. practical help with child-care and eldercare; and 4. the provision of training.

3 A recent Canadian report (Canadian Council on Social Development, 1999) speaks of ‘work, family and community’. This can be seen as an effort to broaden the terminology, while still retaining a sense of focus on work and family issues. Of course no terminology is perfect in capturing all aspects of the issue. For example, it can be objected that both ‘work/family’ and ‘work/life’ mask equal employment opportunity issues and distract attention from the crucial role of social and infrastructure provision (childcare, elder care, out-of-school-hours care, income support and access to transport) in resolving problems of imbalance for men and especially women.
and information (2001, 147; see Evans, 2001: 41). The OECD report points to the possibility of disagreement over what should be counted as family-friendly and suggests that “only employees can decide whether or not any particular arrangement is actually family-friendly” (OECD, 2001, 147). We return to these issues in Chapter 2 below.

A recent OECD report describes family-friendly arrangements in firms as “practices, facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life, which firms introduce to complement statutory requirements…”

3. ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF WORK/FAMILY POLICIES

A broad consensus guides much discussion about work/family balance. Though people may disagree about the value of specific measures, and may argue about the appropriate path or mix of policies, there is widespread agreement that these are important issues requiring discussion and policy action. There is an agreement that work/family balance is an important area of discussion and policy making. Four main arguments in support of work/family policies can be summarised.

3.1 Work/family policies aim at removing disadvantages

The major underlying theme of work/family policy is to solve the social and economic problems that accompany the erosion of the traditional model of the male breadwinner/female homemaker. The central policy challenge is to remove or ameliorate the disadvantages and discrimination that affect certain groups of workers as a result of their caring responsibilities, for example to remove the risks of labour market detachment and all its associated consequences (atrophy of skills and threat of poverty and inadequate retirement income) by introducing forms of carer’s leave.

Work/family policies aim at lessening labour market inequities. They should not be seen as a win for some groups and a loss for others. Policy formation is not a zero-sum game. Well-designed policies can produce net gains. Nevertheless, as with most government action, there may indeed be a certain re-distribution of resources or risks. This is not necessarily a point of criticism; it is often the entire point of the action. For example, governments can be seen to have a responsibility to spread some of the risks of child-rearing. This is because children are not just a private benefit but also a social benefit, because the interests of children must be guaranteed, and because children represent the future shapers of society (including the future workforce that will pay taxes to support the aged).

3.2 Work/family policies aim at helping individuals and families to choose the balance that suits them

Work/family policies are aimed at helping individuals and families to choose the balance that suits them. The aim is not to prescribe a new balance between work and family but rather to expand the opportunities for individuals and families to decide for themselves. Governments act by amending taxation or social security policy, by supplying assistance
with supports such as child-care outside the home, and by introducing specific rights and benefits at the workplace. These are conventional paths of government policy, which are fully in the public sphere and cannot be seen as an intrusion into the private sphere.

### 3.3 Work/family policies aim at expanding social choices

The world has changed, and the vast majority of women want to be able – in one way or another – to combine caring responsibilities, in particular parenthood, with paid work. Unfortunately, this is more difficult than it should or could be. Many women are pressured to choose just one role – either paid work without parenthood or parenthood without paid work. This is an unduly constricted range of choices, which imposes unfair costs and penalties.

For example, to choose parenthood risks severe losses over the long-term in terms of income, access to rewarding work, occupational advancement, social recognition, and opportunities to use education and skills. One core issue in work/family policies is to do with recognising the change in women’s preferences and with expanding the range of choices in line with these changed preferences. The issue is one of enhancing the ability of women to choose different options within the preferences the majority of women express for combining parenthood and paid work (see chapter 2, section 1.15). The various options centre on some period of time at home (how much? under what conditions?) and then re-entry into the paid workforce (part-time or full-time? same or different job? with what sort of support?). Work/family policies aim to make the choices easier, for example by removing some of the costs and penalties associated with the preferred choice of combining parenthood and paid work.

This should not be seen as aimed against the interests of those who are full-time homemakers. On the one hand, it assists the many women who are in this position either reluctantly or only temporarily (while their children are young). On the other hand, it does not inhibit those who genuinely choose to stay in this position. On the contrary, good work/family policies assist all those engaged in caring work, since they are aimed at revaluing caring work (see the discussion of a preferred social model of ‘shared work – valued care’ in Appelbaum et al, 2002).

### 3.4 Work/family policies need to accommodate the interests of business

Work/family policies are – at least in part – aimed at promoting new rights and benefits for workers at the workplace. They thereby join in a long tradition of government regulation, which stretches from early efforts to restrict child labour and ban the use of noxious substances to more recent efforts to promote equal pay. As in the past, it is necessary to ensure that sudden cost shocks are avoided and that regulatory measures accommodate the interests of employers.

More positively, there may well be significant benefits to business from work/family policies and initiatives at the workplace. This is often referred to as the *business case*. Benefits that can accrue to business in implementing work/family initiatives include the attraction and retention of skilled staff, enhanced morale and commitment and increased productivity in the workplace. The broad version of the business case (see below),
identified with the notion of labour market efficiency, is useful in identifying some of the medium to long-term interests of individual employers as well as the medium to long-term interests of the economy. Economy-wide benefits of work/family initiatives include ensuring that the best pool of potential workers is available, maintaining family incomes and lessening friction associated with labour market transitions. Part of the government’s role is to provide a framework of minimum standards as a basis on which to generalise the benefits of work and family policies across businesses and to encourage and support business to adopt additional work/family policies.

4. A BROADER UNDERSTANDING OF THE BUSINESS CASE

Work/family balance is a common theme in government policy in most OECD countries. But the rationales of governments for involvement in work/family issues vary. Most governments appeal to some mix of the conventional imperatives: quality of life, gender equality and labour market efficiency. But the stress can fall in different places, according to factors such as the traditions of the country and the political complexion of the government.

Some countries offer a strong emphasis on the business case. Essentially there are two main versions of the business case – a narrower version, which is an impediment to good policy development, and a broader version, identified with the notion of labour market efficiency, which is an aid to good policy development.

The narrower version of the business case focuses exclusively on the benefits of work/family policies for the short-term financial performance of individual enterprises. There is a strong stress on ‘the bottom line’ in this approach. For example, it is suggested that introducing better work/family policies will mean that businesses find it easier to deliver services; easier to recruit, retain and motivate staff; easier to recruit from a wider pool; easier to reduce stress, sick leave, staff turnover and absenteeism; and easier to increase motivation, loyalty and productivity. In this approach, introducing work/family initiatives is deemed to be in the short-term financial interests of individual businesses. As a result, it is assumed that informed and rational management will move towards voluntary work/family initiatives at the earliest opportunity.

The problem associated with this narrow version of the business case is that it slides from arguing that some firms can benefit from voluntary work/family initiatives in the short-term, which is indeed true, to promising that all firms will benefit in the short-term, which is far more contentious. This is especially problematic because of its hidden implications for government action. In this narrow version, the business case is often used to argue that work/family initiatives can be safely left to the voluntary actions of individual employers. It is assumed that action by government is not needed (except perhaps in the limited form of helping to spread the word about the potential benefits). Thus this limited version of the business case can be used as an excuse for government inaction.

Unfortunately, there is no evidence to support the proposition that all firms will benefit from the implementation of voluntary work/family initiatives in the short-term. The introduction of family-friendly measures does indeed boost economic performance in some individual firms. For example, individual firms that rely on employees with (scarce)
skills and experiences will be particularly conscious of the imperative to reduce turnover and stress (Evans, 2001, 25). But the distribution of costs and benefits is complex, particularly in the short-term, and circumstances that push the balance towards benefits may be highly specific (Evans, 2001, 25; OECD, 2001, 148). What is needed is government action to maximise the potential benefits and minimise the costs for individual businesses and to spread these benefits and costs equitably across all enterprises.

The limitations of relying on the voluntary initiatives of individual enterprises to address the problems of work/family imbalance are now widely recognised (Lewis, 1997; Dickens, 1999; Harker and Lewis, 2001; Evans, 2001: 24-26). The first and most obvious effect is that such initiatives will cover only a small minority of employees. A recent OECD report points out that in countries where there are low levels of legal provision, voluntary arrangements by employers do not fill the gap. Voluntary arrangements tend to be patchy, confined to certain firms (large firms, public sector firms) and certain employees (highly skilled) (2001, 133, 153). Most workers – including those most in need of family-friendly measures – miss out. This is inequitable and can impose hidden inefficiencies on labour markets.

Leaving work/family initiatives solely to the voluntary actions of individual enterprises also means that any gains may be insecure and liable to reversal if economic circumstances worsen. They are also likely to be highly selective measures, that is, the ones most suited to the needs of the organization. There are major obstacles within firms to family-friendly measures that involve persistent absence, such as long-term leave and reduced weekly hours, but great interest in flexible scheduling that would allow valued employees to tend to their family responsibilities while still providing long hours to their employer. In addition, appeals to the ‘bottom line’ can easily backfire and can be used to ratify and sponsor the introduction of family-hostile measures, such as casual contracts, irregular and unpredictable work schedules, long hours, and the imposition of unpaid overtime. This is a critical issue and needs to be carefully considered in the adoption of new work/family policies.

However increasingly there is a broader understanding of the business case, which sees a clear role for government. An example of this broader version of the business case can be drawn from recent UK experience, where the UK Labour government, which first came to office in 1997, uses the business case to embrace the long-term interests of individual businesses and indeed the interests of business in general. Moreover, the business case is

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4 Leaving work/family initiatives up to individual firms alone can also be sub-optimal even for the short-term interests of individual firms. Thus it runs into the classic free rider problem. As Fagan and Rubery (1996, 352) note: “If only a minority of firms provide family policies, they may be subject to ‘poaching’ by competitors once the employee has less need for these policies, for example, when the child is older”.

5 This allows for a broader justification of policy initiatives oriented to minimum standards. These policy initiatives can be justified as in the long-term interests of individual businesses as well as in the interests of the economy as whole (for example, by strengthening families and communities, so creating a better environment for business). It offers a useful reminder of the costs to all parties of doing nothing.
not used as the only rationale for policy, and is balanced by the weight given to other important policy principles such as quality of life, individual choice, and gender equality.

Work/life balance policy initiatives launched by the UK government include commissioning a Green Paper on options for supporting working parents, introducing measures to enhance paid maternity leave (boosting the level of pay, and extending the period of payment to 26 weeks) and introducing new entitlements to paid paternity and adoption leave. In addition, its *Working Time Regulations 1998* extended four weeks paid annual leave to all employees and imposed basic controls on long weekly hours. Most recently, the UK government – responding to discussion of its Green Paper (DTI, 2000a) and to the report of its Work and Parents Taskforce (2001) – has announced it will introduce legislation to place a duty on employers to consider requests for flexible working arrangements from parents with young children. This initiative is part of a burgeoning international debate on how to improve the quality of part-time work, and starts to implement a (qualified) right for employees to move between full-time and part-time hours in response to changes in their family circumstances and their preferences (Fagan, 1999).

In effect, the UK government’s appeal to the business case is a declaration of its commitment to work with business in the implementation of work/life initiatives. It signals a commitment to extensive consultation and support, especially for small business. It is aimed at easing the costs of change, ensuring compliance with regulatory measures, and encouraging ‘family friendly’ policies above the minima. In effect, it is a statement that well-designed policies can spread costs and benefits in such a way that everyone can benefit. This is eminently sensible. As Evans notes (2001, 4), whatever regulations are in place, the detailed aspects of the reconciliation of work and family need to be worked out at the level of the workplace and the job. As such, extensive consultation with and technical support for businesses (and indeed with trade unions) are needed to make implementation effective.

Leaving work and family initiatives up to individual firms is insufficient as a basis for public policy that aims at generalising work/family rights and benefits to all workers. The ‘business case’ can however be understood as a sub-theme within the broader principle of ‘labour market efficiency’. This incorporates the medium to long-term interests of individual employers within the context of the medium to long-term interests of the economy. This broader understanding of the business case is useful if it is complementary to other rationales such as quality of life and gender equality. There is thus a strong case for government working with business, for example by disseminating information and providing technical advice, offering financial support, and promoting discussion of good corporate citizenship (Evans, 2001).
5. THE WORK/FAMILY DEBATE IN AUSTRALIA

In Australia, in contrast to most other OECD countries, the situation around work/family policies is currently lagging. There is some debate and policy-making on work/family balance, largely as a legacy of earlier achievements in the 1980s and early 1990s, and most social actors are committed in principle to the need for improvement in this area. But the key themes of the discussion are still struggling to be heard, and practical initiatives are sadly lacking. This reflects the dominance of a neoliberal view that sees responsibility for policy initiatives in this – as in many other areas – as resting with individual workplaces and individual workers.

Neoliberals often appeal to the ‘business case’. However this is the business case in its narrow version, which is used as an excuse for government inaction. As a consequence of this approach, work/family policy in Australia has been consigned to a sphere of voluntary action by employers. This is a recipe for policy blockage. We examine the situation in more detail in chapter 2 and argue that it is also a recipe for a worsening of the problems of work/family imbalance. It leads to poorer quality of life for many workers, increased gender inequalities and more labour market inefficiencies.

Though the current situation in Australia is stalled, there are some signs of potential movement. Recent COAG discussions suggest a new approach to federal/state government arrangements by state Labor governments. More creative policy ideas are beginning to enter the public sphere (Buchanan and Thornthwaite, 2001). The position of the current federal government on work and family issues is becoming increasingly untenable, and the coming year is likely to witness the resumption of a more spirited discussion, for example on the aberrant position of Australia as one of only two OECD countries to lack a national scheme of paid maternity leave (see HREOC, 2002). It is increasingly clear that leaving work/family issues to individual workplaces and individual workers ensures that the vast majority of workers, including in particular those who need assistance most, have limited access to family-friendly policies. In the remainder of this report, we offer our analysis and suggestions concerning the way in which the Victorian government could help to change this situation and to restore some forward momentum to work/family policy.
Chapter 2: Key Trends

In chapter 1 we argued that contemporary discussion of work/family balance is fuelled by feelings of imbalance amongst many workers. These feelings of imbalance are not transient but are anchored in deep-seated structural changes, in particular the erosion of the traditional male breadwinner/female homemaker arrangement. We argued that the workplace and public policy are struggling to come to terms with the implications of these structural changes. Indeed trends at the workplace and in public policy have often contributed to an escalation of problems of work and family imbalance.

This chapter examines in detail the key trends affecting work and family balance in contemporary OECD societies, including Australia (and Victoria). In the main part of the chapter, we discuss twenty key trends, which encompass work/life issues, with the focus on work and family responsibilities. They are organised under six headings:

- the paid workforce,
- participation in paid work,
- individuals and families,
- preferences and attitudes,
- employers and employees, and
- the regulatory and policy framework.

As these headings suggest, we begin with what could be called the ‘supply’ side of the labour market before moving to the ‘demand’ side and then to the institutional framework that structures both supply and demand. In the case of each trend, we briefly review the situation in OECD countries before introducing our summary of the situation in Australia. In the final part of the chapter, we summarise the impact of these trends on work/family balance in terms of the quality of life, gender equality, and labour market efficiency.

It is important to begin this chapter with three caveats. First, we do not provide a comprehensive picture of what is happening across the world. This would be well beyond the scope of the project. The focus is on listing broad trends and the way they unfold in OECD countries and in Australia, as an avenue for developing a framework for the policy options in chapter 3.

Second, the isolation of individual trends and their distribution amongst these headings is artificial. In reality, work and family experiences are interconnected, marked by complex mutual causation and rich feedback loops. The isolation of trends and their allocation to one or another heading are devices to aid presentation.

Third, research into work and family balance is burgeoning, but it remains hamstrung by problems of patchy, overly aggregated and sometimes inconsistent data. This is particularly true for data at a sub-national level. However, where Victorian data are available and point to distinctive features of the state situation, we draw out trends at the state level.
1. KEY TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES

The paid workforce

1.1 A declining proportion of men are in the paid workforce

The proportion of adult men in the paid workforce is declining in most OECD countries. From its peak in earlier periods, when almost all men were employed during the ages of economic activity, the employment rate of men is currently sinking. One factor is the changing form of retirement and the increased numbers of workers who move into early retirement (whether forced or voluntary). Another factor is the change in the form of entry into the paid workforce, as periods of education and training become longer for most men and women (though this may be masked by the ability to combine full-time education and training with part-time work). Another factor is unemployment. Since the mid-1970s, most OECD countries have had to wrestle with persistent problems of high unemployment. In the face of diminished prospects of paid work, some men have fallen into unemployment or withdrawn from the labour force.

The situation in Australia:

In Australia the pattern resembles that found in most OECD countries. For much of the first two thirds of the twentieth century, Australia possessed an employment structure based on a male breadwinner model (though with some peculiarities, for example as a result of strong post-war immigration). This employment structure was associated with high employment rates for men. This employment structure has changed, and the employment rate of men has fallen and continues to fall (for example, from 82 percent in 1980 to 77 percent in 2000 – ABS, 2001a). Figure 1 in Appendix 1 shows that a sharp decline in male employment rates occurred in the 1970s and early 1980s, in particular in the age groups 55-59 and 60-64. Decline in the ‘prime age’ groups – perhaps as a result of unemployment – continued in the subsequent period. Figure 1 also hints at the major transformation in youth labour markets, whereby more young people have continued in full-time study (but a growing proportion of these full-time students have combined their studies with employment).

…the employment rate of men has fallen and continues to fall, for example, from 82 percent in 1980 to 77 percent in 2000.

The ‘employment rate’ (or ‘employment to population ratio’) for any group is the number of employed persons expressed as a percentage of the civilian population aged 15 years and over in the same group (in some cases the civilian population aged 15 to 64). One alternative measure is the labour force participation rate, which is the proportion in employment plus unemployment. Because of the porous boundaries between ‘unemployment’ and ‘not in the labour force’ statuses, measures that include unemployment are increasingly recognised as inadequate (de Neubourg, 1987; for Australia see Watson, 2000a; Denniss, 2001).
1.2 A rising proportion of women are in the paid workforce, including women with dependent children

Women are also affected by early retirement, changes in youth labour markets, and unemployment. But the key trend for women in most OECD countries is in the opposite direction. Whereas under the ‘male breadwinner model’ the employment rate of women was low (expressing the fact that just single women participated in the paid workforce), the dominant trend now is towards a steady increase in the employment rates of women, including in particular women with dependent children. Employment rates for women are converging with those for men. There is no need here to enter the debate about the precise causes of this trend, which are complex and derive from both the demand and the supply side. But we stress that the continued participation of women in the paid workforce after marriage (and childbirth) is strongly associated with the changing needs and preferences of women, for example to exercise their education and skills, to boost household finances, to acquire access to independent income, to acquire the sense of dignity and respect that is associated with paid work, and to exercise a degree of equality with men.

The process of increasing female employment rates is still unfolding. According to a recent OECD study “employment rates of mothers with a child under 6… are rising rapidly” (2001, 132), although the study draws attention to the fact that the trend is strongest for well-educated mothers and is disturbingly weaker for women who have had fewer job opportunities with more limited prospects.

The situation in Australia:

A key trend in Australia has been similar, with the long-term move of women into the paid workforce. The employment rate for women aged 15 to 64 has steadily increased, rising from 29 percent in 1954 to 47 percent in 1980 to 61 percent in 2000 (ABS, 1998a, 2001a). As Figure 2 in Appendix 1 indicates, employment rates for most age groups of women have increased (with the exception of the youngest age group).

The sharpest increase was in the ‘prime-age’ groups, where the employment rates are reaching up towards the level of ‘prime-age’ males. For example, the employment rate for the 25 to 34 age group has risen rapidly from 40.7 percent in 1972 to 64.1 percent in 1998 (66 percent in 2000). The shape of the figure is now much closer to the ‘plateau’ shape characteristic of males in most OECD societies and of females in several societies such as Canada, the United States, and the Scandinavian countries (Rimmer, 1994, 65-74; Rubery and Fagan, 1994, 148-152). Employment rates for ‘prime-age’ women in Australia are now around the average for the OECD (OECD, 2001, 131).

Partnered women participated strongly in this increase (ABS, 1998a). Perhaps most significantly, so too did women with dependent children. The employment rate of mothers varies according to the age of the youngest child. But it is relatively high even for those with young children. The employment rate in Australia for mothers with children under 5 was 45 percent in 2000 (see Table 1 in Appendix 1). This is well below the Nordic countries (and other countries such as Portugal and the US) but not markedly below the mainstream of OECD countries (differences in measurement complicate a precise
Highly educated women, who have easier access to fulfilling and rewarding work, tend to show the highest employment rates (Glezer and Wolcott, 2000, 51).

The employment rate in Australia for mothers with children under 5 was 45 percent in 2000

The increased participation of women in the paid workforce is the starting point of any discussion of work/family balance. However, it is only the starting point. It is important not to leap to conclusions about the implications of this trend. The fact that women’s employment rate appears to be converging with that of men does not mean that gender equality in the workplace or the society has been achieved. On the contrary, this convergence is often accompanied by the persistence of problems such as vulnerability to poor wages and conditions, occupational segregation, and discrimination.

In particular, there may be a significant drag as a result of persistent inequalities in participation in family responsibilities. Nor does this convergence mean that the interests of women have become the same as the traditional interests of men. On the contrary, the increased participation of women in the workforce helps to diversify the interests and preferences of members of the paid workforce. Moreover, this increased participation has several broader effects that need to be traced. For example, it implies fundamental changes in household structures and strategies, which in turn help to influence and diversify the preferences of men. We explore these issues in more detail below.

1.3 In many countries, this leads to a larger paid workforce

In most countries, the increase in female employment rates more than counterbalances the slow decrease in male employment rates. In short, the movement of more women into paid work tends to swell the size of the paid workforce. The overall employment rate in most OECD countries is continuing to rise. It is highest in the Nordic countries, where the employment rate of women is high and unemployment is low, and lowest in countries such as Spain, where the female employment rate is low and unemployment has had a major effect on both men and women (see Table 1). Nevertheless, the direction of the trend is similar in most countries.

The situation in Australia:

As in most OECD countries, the sharp rise in the employment rate of Australian women has more than counterbalanced the fall in the employment rate of men. The paid workforce in Australia is continuing to increase. The employment rate for all persons aged 15 to 64 has risen from 65 percent in 1980 to 69 percent in 2000 (ABS, 2001a, 133; see Hancock, 2001). The overall employment rate in Australia stands around the OECD average (see Table 1 in Appendix 1).

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2 As Peter McDonald (2001) notes, this figure should itself be broken down according to the age of the youngest child. He uses census data to show that participation rates for mothers in Australia within this band display a sharp pattern of increase in line with the increase in age of the youngest child. For example, the figure rises from 39 percent when the child is aged 0 to 68 percent when the child is aged 3-4 years. He points out (2001: 18) that “the participation rate of a mother with one child aged 3-4 years is the same as that for a mother with one child of primary school age”.

Balancing work and family responsibilities 24
The employment rate for all persons aged 15 to 64 has risen from 65 percent in 1980 to 69 percent in 2000.

1.4 Family and household structures are changing

The previous sections stress the increasing employment rates for women, including women with dependent children. This points to the important issue of changing family structures and strategies. We discuss the main aspects of this change – more diverse patterns of family participation in the paid workforce – in more detail below.

However, it is useful to refer here to some background demographic trends that affect family and household structure. These include trends to lower rates of marriage, higher rates of separation, lower rates of child-bearing within marriage, and – where child-bearing does occur – more delayed and fewer children. Evidence from most OECD countries (OECD 2001, 158-159) points to a significant change in family type, with a decline in couple families with children, counterbalanced by a rise in couple families without children, lone-parent families, and other family forms.

These demographic trends are linked – often in complex ways – to changes in the paid workforce. For example, there is concern in many countries that very low and declining fertility rates are depressing natural increase well below replacement levels. This threatens to change both the size and the age composition of the paid workforce. Social forces shape such demographic changes, though it is not easy to specify the precise responsibility of the relevant social forces. Many demographers argue (OECD, 2001, 130; McDonald, 2001, 21-24) that very low fertility rates are linked to late commencement of childbearing, followed by a low level of subsequent child bearing. Both factors, in particular the second, can be seen as exacerbated by poor public policies in the area of work and family balance, and improvement in such policies can in turn be seen as the best way of at least stalling the present decline in fertility rates.

The situation in Australia:

These trends are also evident in Australia. For example, the proportion of women in the 25-34 age group who are childless doubled from about 22 percent in 1966 to about 45 percent in 1996 (McDonald, 2001, 18). Partly as a result, the relative significance of different household types is changing (see Table 2 in Appendix 1). The proportion of the population in households made up of a husband and wife with dependents is declining (from 35.1 percent in 1979 to 28.3 percent in 2000). The fall is balanced by increases in the proportion living in households made up of ‘husband and wife with no dependents’, ‘people not living with relatives’, and ‘sole parent with dependants’ (Burbidge and Sheehan, 2001, 124; see also OECD, 2001, 158-159).

Peter McDonald argues…that work and family policies that support parents in their participation in the workforce, as in Norway and France, are the key to encouraging families to have children. Otherwise, the choice is reduced to one of paid work or family, often at the expense of the latter.
Many of these trends need careful exploration. For example, the issue of ‘delayed’ children seems to be linked with fewer children, more problems in fertility, and a potential bundling up of caring responsibilities for both children and elderly parents. However, the problem of low and declining fertility has only recently become a feature of policy debates in Australia. Peter McDonald (2001, 24) points out that average age of mothers at first birth in Australia is rising, but is still moderate compared with some leading OECD nations. Australia also has a moderate but declining level of subsequent child bearing. McDonald argues cogently that work and family policies that support parents in their participation in the workforce, as in Norway and France, are the key to encouraging families to have children. Otherwise, the choice is reduced to one of paid work or family, often at the expense of the latter.

### Participation in paid work

#### 1.5 There are more pressures for interruption and temporary withdrawal from the paid workforce

The paid workforce is now more diverse. In addition, the forms of participation in paid work have become much more diverse. This is central to the topic of work/family balance. The new, more complicated patterns of participation that have arisen in recent years present significant challenges for public policy, and they demand careful investigation.

The ‘male breadwinner model’ pivoted on a distinct division of labour between men and women at the point of family formation. It assumed that women permanently exited from the paid workforce in order to concentrate on unpaid labour in the domestic sphere, while men continued, or indeed amplified, their participation in paid work as the sole channel of market income into the new household. In short, men and many women entered the paid workforce as full-time workers after education and training, men continued in the workforce until death or retirement, but women withdrew after marriage (or perhaps the birth of the first child) (Janssens, 1997; Creighton, 1999).

In most OECD societies, this dominant pattern of participation is now gone, replaced by more complex and varied forms of participation. Full-time employment has been joined by varied forms of part-time work. Full-time employment is itself more varied and is less likely to be continuous. Instead, participation is now more likely to be punctuated by varied interruptions or disruptions. This is true for both men and women, but the major change concerns women.

Unemployment, time off for personal interests, life-long learning, and phased retirement are all examples of more complex patterns of participation. These interruptions are important, and the challenge of minimising the costs of the associated transitions is a vital component of work/life policy. Our major focus, however, is on work and family. In this case, the crucial interruptions are linked to caring responsibilities within families. These

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1 It is not as prominently featured as in other countries, perhaps because Australia is a settler country, in which immigration as well as natural increase swells the size and helps to counter the shift in the age structure of the population and the workforce.
include caring for chronically sick, disabled or frail elderly relatives. The majority of such carers are women. As Jenson and Jacobzone note (2000, 60), increased participation of women in the workforce combined with the ageing of the population means that pressures and tensions in this area will continue to grow.

Other major interruptions stem from the normal activities of parenting, that is, the need to care for dependent children. Parenting can be divided into phases according to the ages of the child(ren). The birth of a first child is a major source of pressures for both men and women. Additional children and the needs of caring for existing children further complicate the issue. They lead to subsequent interruptions, as a result of factors such as the need for sick care, the failure of existing child care arrangements, after-school care, and care during school holidays.

**The situation in Australia:**

As in most societies, forms of participation in paid work in Australia have become markedly more complex and varied. Participation is now more likely to be punctuated by varied interruptions or disruptions, for example as a result of unemployment, breaks for education and training, and new patterns of retirement. As in other countries, caring responsibilities in the family are the major source of pressure for interruptions in participation in paid work.

The best overall evidence of the reach of such pressure comes from a recent ABS survey in New South Wales, which indicates that almost one million employees and over 300,000 self-employed persons provided care for another adult or child in the previous six months. In most cases, this was ongoing care for their own children. These caring responsibilities often involved interruptions to paid work. Of the employees who provided care, 40.3 percent stated that they had used some form of working arrangement in the previous six months to help care for another person. The work arrangements most often cited were paid leave, part-time work, informal arrangements with the employer, rostered days off, and flex time (ABS, 2000a; see Wolcott and Glezer, 1995, 40-41).

As in other countries, caring responsibilities in the family are the major source of pressure for interruptions in participation in paid work.

Caregiving responsibilities for elderly, disabled, or ill parents, spouses and children are one form of pressure. These differ from childcare responsibilities as the period of care is generally unknown but often long, caring responsibilities are often unpredictable, time demands on carers are likely to increase rather than decrease, and there is limited availability of formal care such as respite care. Some scattered evidence of the impact of these responsibilities on patterns of participation in Australia is available (Glezer and Wolcott, 2000, 45-47; see also Jenson and Jacobzone, 2000).

According to a recent survey, a significant minority of 12.6 percent of employed persons provided informal assistance to older people and/or people with a disability. This included 11.2 percent of full-time workers and 16 percent of part-time workers (ABS, 1998b). Survey results point to significant tensions in managing paid work and this additional work of caring. In addition, of course, there are many who have chosen or been obliged to withdraw from the paid workforce as a result of not being able to manage the tensions.
This is perhaps especially true of ‘primary carers’, who are predominantly women and predominantly out of the labour force (ABS, 1998b). The shift from institutional to community care in Australia is increasing the burden on such carers (Tolhurst, 2001).

1.6 A changing pattern of participation for fathers?

Many men in the paid workforce are fathers of dependent children. However, parenting responsibilities do not intrude on fathers’ patterns of participation as much as these responsibilities do for mothers. The dominant pattern for men in the parenting phase in most countries is still one of relatively continuous full-time employment (apart from interruptions as a result of unemployment, pursuit of personal interests or further study).

The pattern of relatively continuous participation applies even in the case of the early stages of infancy and even in cases where leave is available to either parent. In some countries, new parenting responsibilities may have a perverse effect on men’s participation, leading to increased hours of paid work (overtime, second job), primarily aimed at generating extra household income to partly compensate for the loss as a result of female withdrawal. The low take-up of parental leave amongst fathers has been an issue in Nordic countries, where it is seen as a sign of continuing gender inequality. One response that has dramatically lifted take-up rates is to reserve a portion of paid leave exclusively for fathers on a ‘take it or lose it basis’, as in the ‘paternity quota’ introduced in Norway in 1993 (Brandth and Kvande, 2001).

This is not to say that men are immune from pressures associated with parenting responsibilities. However, at least in cases where the man is not a sole parent, it seems that the response to these pressures tends to be relatively modest, confined in most countries to taking up a part of the responsibility for disruptions as a result of sickness, breakdown of child-care arrangements, or school holiday care. More major alterations to employment participation such as taking up part-time employment remain rare (with the partial exception of the Netherlands – see Plantenga, 2002).

The situation in Australia:

Many men in the workforce in Australia have dependent children. Over a third (38.6 percent) of employed men are in families with dependent children (ABS, 2000b). The vast majority are in families with a spouse. The vast majority are in full-time employment. Unfortunately, longitudinal data to assess the pattern of participation over the medium term are sparse. However, it seems clear that the presence of dependent children has little immediate effect on the pattern of men’s participation in the paid workforce. Men are still subject to pressures as a result of family responsibilities, but the response remains relatively modest.

... it seems clear that the presence of dependent children has little immediate effect on the pattern of men’s participation in the paid workforce.

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4 They are classified as either ‘husband with dependants’ or ‘lone parent with dependants’. Here ‘dependants’ are defined as “family members under 15 years of age; family members aged 15-19 attending school or aged 15-24 attending a tertiary educational institution full-time…” (ABS, 2000b).
1.7 There is a new, more complex pattern for mothers

For women, parenting generally entails a major change in their participation in paid work. It is not the transformation associated with the male breadwinner/ female homemaker model, in which the woman exited permanently from the paid workforce. Instead, the transformation today is structured around temporary withdrawal(s) for a longer or shorter period of time at the point of childbirth and the early years of childrearing, followed by re-entry (or re-entries). In place of a single permanent event, there is now a complex set of social processes of withdrawal and re-entry, which can vary in their detail amongst individual women and amongst societies. And the form of re-entry can vary, depending on whether it leads to the same, a similar or an entirely different job (or occupation); the length of time out of the workforce; and the quality of the new job (including hours).

The magnitude of this change away from the male breadwinner model for women tends to be masked in official labour force statistics, since the latter are cross-sectional and miss the dynamics of participation in paid work over the life course. In particular, they fail to capture the new dynamics of women’s participation over the parenting phase. Thus official statistics often identify a minority of women engaged in full-time homemaking as well as women engaged in employment. But it would be wrong to assume that all these women are conforming to the old pattern of the male breadwinner and the female homemaker. They are in the main women captured at a point of temporary withdrawal (not permanent exit). In short, the statistics simply identify women in different phases of the same dynamic pattern of participation in paid work. It is a pattern that is totally distinct from that associated with the old breadwinner model.

When mothers re-enter the workforce, the pressures of family responsibilities tend to fall heavier than for fathers. This is particularly true when – as in some countries – re-entry is into a part-time job. However, it also seems to apply in cases where both parents are engaged in full-time employment. In most countries, it tends to be the mother who responds most immediately and most often to interruptions such as those associated with child sickness.

The situation in Australia:

Many women in the paid workforce in Australia have dependent children. As in the case of men, over a third (37.9 percent) of employed women are in families with dependent children (ABS, 2000b). Though the majority are in families with partners, employed women are somewhat more likely than employed men to be lone parents. However, the major difference with the men concerns the hours of employment. In sharp contrast to fathers, only a minority of these employed mothers are employed full-time; instead the majority (56.6 percent) are employed part-time (19.8 percent with 1-14 hours and 34.2 percent with 15-34 hours in the reference week).

…mothers appear to be involved in a new pattern of participation, distinct from the male breadwinner model. This involves some phases of withdrawal but a general pattern of continued participation in the paid workforce. However, continued participation is not always in full-time employment …
As these rough figures suggest, mothers appear to be involved in a new pattern of participation, distinct from the male breadwinner model. This involves some phases of withdrawal but a general pattern of continued participation in the paid workforce. However, continued participation is not always in full-time employment – indeed it is more likely to be in part-time employment (at least in the parenting phases when children are most dependent).

This new pattern of participation is difficult to measure precisely, since the official statistics are cross-sectional. Table 3 in Appendix 1 provides a glimpse through cross-sectional data on employment rates for different groups of women with employed partners. It shows that mothers of dependent children are the group least likely to be in paid employment. However, their employment rate is high and the gap with other women is not dramatic in aggregate (though of course the gap will be influenced by the ages of the youngest children). So the presence of dependent children is associated with a drop in the employment rate, but it is only a modest drop. The major effect is on hours of work. The presence of dependent children is associated with a shift towards part-time hours.

...in the 1996 Australian Family Life Course Study, “when women not in paid work were asked whether they intended to return to the workforce, 87 percent with a child aged 0-4 years said they planned to return, as did 71 percent with a child 5-12 years”.

This offers evidence of a pattern of temporary withdrawal(s) succeeded by re-entry or re-entries. In the case of the minority of women with dependent children who are not currently in the paid workforce, it is wrong to assume that they are living in conformity with the female homemaker ideal. On the contrary, all evidence points to the fact that most of these women have merely been captured at the point of temporary withdrawal from the paid workforce (see also Cass, 2001, 148). This can be gauged by asking about intentions. For example, as Glezer and Wolcott (1997, 4) point out, in the 1996 Australian Family Life Course Study, “when women not in paid work were asked whether they intended to return to the workforce, 87 percent with a child aged 0-4 years said they planned to return, as did 71 percent with a child 5-12 years”.

When women re-enter the workforce after a period of withdrawal, they tend to pick up the major part of the responsibility for ongoing childcare needs. For example, Lee and Strachan (1999, 31; see Buchanan and Thornthwaite, 2001, 20-23) cite data to show that in couple families with both parents employed, 79.8 percent of mothers (and 26.7 percent of fathers) took time off work to care for a sick child.

1.8 In many countries withdrawal and re-entry is structured through new worker rights and entitlements designed to ease pressures and reduce costs to the individual employee

Interruptions associated with caring responsibilities can involve a sharp shift for the individual worker from full-time employment to exit from the paid workforce. This can entail significant pressures and costs.
However, interruptions need not always take this form. There are at least three ways to soften this stark alternative. One is to use special leave and career breaks, such as maternity and paternity leave, parental leave, family/carer’s leave and sabbaticals, all of which allow periods of temporary withdrawal for caring responsibilities while still retaining the framework of an ongoing employment contract. A second is to use part-time work, which frees up more time for regular caring responsibilities. A third is through flexible work schedules (flexitime) that allow employee-initiated variations in the duration or timing of work in response to slight fluctuations in caring responsibilities.

These three mechanisms are the product of policy initiatives, at societal or workplace level. We discuss them here because their presence or absence is decisive in most countries in shaping forms of participation in the paid workforce. They allow interruptions without the worker losing attachment to the paid workforce. They entail partial but not complete withdrawal. In this way they minimise the costs of withdrawal for the employee (and the family and the broader society).

The common theme in all these mechanisms is the enhanced capacity of the employee to respond to the constraints in their life by means of variations in their work arrangements. Employees acquire more options at work to implement in response to their needs and preferences. They acquire more and better ways of combining work and family. This is what can be usefully called employee-oriented flexibility (Campbell, 1993, 12-13). In Europe, where discussion of these mechanisms is most advanced, it is often called ‘time sovereignty’ (Doyle and Reeves, 2001; Campbell, 1997, 218-220).

These three mechanisms can be seen as rights and benefits attached to the standard full-time continuing (‘permanent’) employment contract. In effect they introduce more variation and more employee-oriented flexibility into this standard employment relationship (Campbell and Mathews, 1998). In most OECD countries, the standard employment relationship has been extensively modernised in this way, though still in a patchwork fashion that leaves significant gaps (Supiot, 2001). In most countries, the three mechanisms apply primarily to mothers (and sometimes fathers), and the situation of persons engaged in other caring (eg for frail elderly) is often overlooked (Jenson and Jacobzone, 2000). Similarly, interruptions due to other reasons, such as education and training, are relatively neglected.

Interruptions to paid employment due to caring responsibilities appear to be more poorly managed in Australia than in most other OECD countries. They are less likely to be the subject of rights and benefits, even for permanent employees.

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5 The discussion is couched in terms of employees. However, these mechanisms can also be open to the self-employed. For example, self-employed persons who are able to exercise control over their hours can initiate part-time hours or flexible work schedules. Indeed, this control over hours is often cited as an important attraction of self-employment. Special leave and career breaks are most closely associated with employees, but even in cases where such leave is paid it is possible to design schemes that can incorporate at least some self-employed persons.
**The situation in Australia:**

Interruptions to paid employment due to caring responsibilities appear to be more poorly managed in Australia than in most other OECD countries. They are less likely to be the subject of rights and benefits, even for permanent employees. Moreover, Australia faces the special problem of a high and rapidly rising level of temporary employment, primarily comprising casual employees. The latter lack most rights and benefits, even the most basic entitlements such as paid sick leave and paid annual leave (Campbell and Burgess, 2001).

As a result of the scarcity of these rights and benefits, interruptions due to caring responsibilities in Australia are often associated with severe pressures and costs. Either the caring is neglected or work is sacrificed by a shift out of the workforce. Because women are the group most liable to participate in interrupted patterns of participation, they are the group that have to shoulder the major burden of these pressures and costs. The problem is most severe in connection with interruptions for mothers in the varied phases of childbirth and childrearing.

In Australia, as in most countries, women follow the new pattern of temporary withdrawal and re-entry. But in Australia, more than in most other countries, this seems to be associated with substantial problems and barriers that make the process more difficult than it should be. Employed women are missing many of the rights and benefits that would soften the pressures of caring responsibilities for children. This lack begins right from childbirth, with the result that the female pattern of participation around childbirth in Australia tends to be marked by complete withdrawal and then re-entry into a different job (often of poor quality, with inferior wages and conditions). A substantial literature points to the large direct and indirect costs to mothers in terms of reduced lifetime earnings (eg Gray and Chapman, 2001).

1.9 Development of special leave and career breaks

Special leave and career breaks have diffused throughout most OECD countries and are now widespread. For example, paid maternity leave is almost universally available to employed mothers in almost all OECD countries, often for lengthy periods beyond three months (HREOC, 2002). The paid period can readily be extended through entitlements to unpaid maternity leave. Moreover, maternity leave is often supplemented with paternity leave, and both readily extend into entitlements to parental leave. One (advanced) example is Norway, where paid maternity leave starts at nine weeks, paid paternity leave

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6 Around one quarter of all employees are classified by the ABS as ‘casual’, that as lacking entitlements to paid sick leave and paid annual leave. The only other country where it is possible to find a large minority of employees lacking such basic entitlements is the United States (Campbell, 2000, 73-75). Casual employment is an important site for a general lack of rights and benefits (Smith and Ewer, 1999; Campbell and Burgess, 2001). This in turn has particular implications for female employees (around one third of whom are casual – see Table 5 below), including female employees with children under 12 (40 percent of whom are casual – ABS, 2000c). It is occasionally suggested that casual employment is beneficial for workers with family responsibilities, in that they can alter their hours to suit their family responsibilities and can even leave at will (for example to be at home during school holidays). In reality, most casual employees feel that the flexibility of their employment is employer-oriented flexibility, and many complain about the harsh impact of unpredictable and short-term variations in hours on their family life (Smith and Ewer, 1999).
is six weeks, entitlements to paid parental leave can reach 39 weeks (at 80 percent of the parental benefit, or 29 weeks at 100 percent), and then there is up to two years of unpaid parental leave (Brandth and Kvande, 2001, 255-256).

Career breaks and sabbaticals are still areas of experimentation, but there is extensive experience with these forms of leave in countries such as Denmark, Finland and Belgium (Nätti, 1999; Madsden, 1998).

The situation in Australia:

Special leave and career breaks are relatively non-existent in Australia. Bereavement leave is a rare example of a standard award entitlement to paid leave for caring purposes, and long service leave, established in state legislation, is an isolated example of a career break entitlement. There is a reasonably widespread entitlement – initially established in a test case but now enshrined in legislation – to unpaid maternity leave of 12 months duration for women with 12 months or more continuous service. More recently, another test case established limited standard award rights to access paid sick leave as family/carer’s leave.

The fact that maternity leave for most employed women is unpaid limits its impact, and it is not clear how often this entitlement is used. Adequate maternity leave is very important, since in its absence women are unlikely to be able to return to their previous job and instead are obliged to find a different job – maybe with different skill demands and wages and conditions – on re-entry.

Insofar as other special leave and career breaks exist, they are benefits confined to a small minority of individual enterprises (where access may well be restricted). They are not general rights and entitlements. The gaps are quite fundamental. Thus Australia is one of only two OECD countries – the other is the US – where there is no national scheme for paid maternity leave. Paid maternity leave is only available to a minority of employed women (HREOC, 2002). The fact that maternity leave for most employed women is unpaid limits its impact, and it is not clear how often this entitlement is used (see ABS, 2000a). Adequate maternity leave is very important, since in its absence women are unlikely to be able to return to their previous job and instead are obliged to find a different job – maybe with different skill demands and wages and conditions – on re-entry. As such, the absence of adequate maternity leave limits choice and can have a deleterious effect on the entire subsequent pattern of participation (including lifetime earnings).

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7 Initially, casual employees were excluded. However, a recent test case lodged by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) in the federal industrial relations jurisdiction allowed unpaid maternity to be extended to casual employees with 12 months continuous service. Initiatives in NSW and Queensland have provided similar coverage to casual employees employed under state-based industrial relations systems in those States (Watts, 2001).
1.10 Development of good quality part-time employment

Reduced (part-time) hours are widely available in OECD countries. The proportion of the workforce (or the population) that participates in part-time work has grown rapidly and is now very significant in most societies (Table 4 in Appendix 1). The Nordic countries were early leaders in providing part-time jobs, especially in the public sector. More recently, the Netherlands has strongly promoted part-time employment (Fagan, Rubery and Plantenga, 1995; Plantenga, 2002). In most countries, part-time jobs have been largely taken up by women. The quality of such part-time jobs has been extensively debated, and the danger of problems such as low wages and lack of career prospects and training have been identified. In response, many countries have developed policies to ensure that part-time employment is ‘integrated’ and not ‘marginalised’ (Fagan, 1999).

The situation in Australia:

Part-time employment is also widely available in Australia. We noted earlier that many women with employed partners take up this option. Indeed, the data indicate that the major employment effect of the presence of dependent children is not on participation in paid work as such but rather on the form of participation (with mothers more likely to take up part-time employment). In cross-national comparisons Australia has a very high part-time share in total employment. As Table 4 indicates, Australia currently ranks second to the Netherlands in the incidence of part-time employment (first for men and fourth for women).

In cross-national comparisons Australia has a very high part-time share in total employment … Australia currently ranks second to the Netherlands in the incidence of part-time employment …The existence of part-time jobs in Australia is a welcome development. But the evidence points to the fact that most of these jobs are of poor quality.

Reduced hours can be a good platform for combining paid work and other responsibilities. But if we are to assess the extent of its contribution to work/family balance, it is necessary to probe deeper. The existence of part-time jobs in Australia is a welcome development. But the evidence points to the fact that most of these jobs in Australia are of poor quality. As such they are not as beneficial as they might be if they were good quality part-time jobs, as in countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands.

The poor quality of part-time jobs in Australia is evident in several ways. First, many part-time jobs are associated with very short hours. Almost eight percent of employed persons in Australia (12.5 percent of female employed persons) are working in jobs of less than ten hours per week (ILO, 1999, 157; see also OECD 1999, 39). Similarly, a substantial part of part-time employment is under-employment. The proportion of part-

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8 It is increasingly important to distinguish different forms of part-time work. One central dimension concerns the duration of part-time hours. Hakim (1997, 23-32) suggests a useful division between ‘marginal’ part-time (1-14 hours a week); ‘half-time’ (15-29 hours a week); and ‘reduced full-time’ (30-34 hours a week).

9 The relatively high proportion of males who take up part-time work in Australia is primarily the result of the high levels of part-time casual work amongst young males, many of whom are students. It seems to be a different phenomenon in the Netherlands, where many ‘prime-age’ males have taken up the option of part-time work (Plantenga, 2002).
time workers wanting more hours rose rapidly in the recession of the early 1990s, reaching 29.2 percent in 1993 before receding back to more modest levels (ABS, 2001a). There is some evidence that it is once again increasing (it rose to 26.2 percent in 2001 – ABS, 2001b; see also Cully and Ngo, 2002). Underemployment is in fact very high in Australia, in comparison with other OECD countries (ILO, 1999, 285-300). It particularly affects male part-time workers, but the level of underemployment amongst female part-time employees is also high (22 percent). Another sign of the inadequate duration of some part-time jobs is the trend towards multiple jobholding, in which workers put together two or three part-time jobs in pursuit of satisfactory hours and income (ABS, 1997).

Second, part-time jobs tend to be segregated from full-time jobs. There is little evidence in Australia of more advanced forms of part-time employment such as genuine job-sharing or rights to reduce hours in a full-time job (often associated in other countries with return from maternity leave). Instead part-time employment is largely confined to a separate part of the employment structure. Some jobs are regarded as unavoidably full-time, or indeed more than full-time, and others are treated as just part-time. As a result, part-time employment is sheered off from a career structure and offers few attractions to employees concerned to advance their careers. Much part-time employment constitutes a ghetto of low status occupations and jobs.

Third, many part-time jobs are associated with poor conditions that are inimical to the interests of workers. This goes beyond the issue of very short hours. The distinctive mark of poor conditions is casual status. Around two thirds of all part-time employee jobs are casual. In other words, they lack most rights and entitlements, starting from the basic entitlements to paid sick leave and paid annual leave. Table 5 in Appendix 1 shows the changing distribution of female and male employees amongst the different employment arrangements. It indicates that around 45 percent of female employees are part-time, but this part-time employment is predominantly casual (in contrast to full-time employment, which is predominantly permanent – though with a fast rising casual component).

The poor conditions of part-time casual employees include a wide range of dimensions. Part-time casual employees lack employment security. They often lack control over their basic conditions. Many work on a regular roster with steady hours (and pay), but others are subject to irregular, unpredictable hours, where only short notice of variations is provided (Smith and Ewer, 1999). They may lack any guarantee of minimum hours to underpin their irregular hours and earnings. Some part-time employees are vulnerable to high work demands, leading to extra hours of unpaid overtime. They are more likely to be engaged for night work or weekend work. And casual employees enjoy little access to training or career progression (VandenHeuvel and Wooden, 1999; Hall, Bretherton and Buchanan, 2000; Campbell, 2001a). Even with the somewhat misleading boost provided by a casual loading, the hourly wages of casual part-time employees are well below those of full-time employees. Moreover, the gap has widened markedly in the 1990s (Whitehouse, 2001a, 68-70; Preston, 2001, 170-171; see Mitchell, 1999).

Part-time employment that is not formally casual can also be poor quality in Australia. Marginal self-employment, often part-time, has been increasing in recent years. Permanent part-time employment has traditionally served as a good quality option for women in certain sectors of the economy such as the finance sector, retail, and the public sector. But there is substantial case-study evidence of degradation in the recent period.
(Junor, Barlow and Patterson, 1993; Deery and Mahony, 1994; Probert 1995; Charlesworth, 1996; Whitehouse, Lafferty and Boreham, 1997; Junor, 1998, 2000). As in the case of casual part-time employees, the ratio of hourly wages of permanent part-time employees to the hourly wages of full-time employees is below one and has fallen sharply in the 1990s (Whitehouse, 2001a, 69).

Our analysis points to a complicated assessment of part-time employment. In effect, part-time employment represents a trade-off for many women, whereby in return for the opportunity to work reduced hours, they tolerate poor conditions. This appears as an extra cost of trying to balance work and family responsibilities. When part-time work is predominantly poor quality, it imposes costs such as low employment security, low wages and short, unpredictable hours. From this point of view, part-time work cannot be regarded as unambiguously ‘family-friendly’. Indeed, in at least some cases, part-time employment can be family-hostile. Any assessment must depend on measuring not only the duration but also the wages and conditions. In short, it is necessary to assess the quality of part-time employment (Commission of the European Communities, 2001). Only good quality part-time employment deserves to be considered as family-friendly (for further discussion of good quality part-time work see chapter 3).

1.11 Development of employee-oriented flexible working arrangements

Work schedules that offer employee-oriented flexibility come in many forms, and many are still in an experimental phase of development. However, flexitime systems are familiar in most countries. They have a long history, and they have recently been extended via measures such as employee-choice rostering systems and ‘working time accounts’ (Schulten, 1998; Freyssinet, 1998).

The situation in Australia:

Only some flexible working arrangements contribute to a good work/family balance. The crucial criterion is that their flexibility is under the control of the individual worker. Flexible working arrangements in this sense are hard to find in Australia. Moreover, what has been in existence in the past appears to be slowly disappearing. Flexitime was a familiar element in the public sector, but it seems to have slowly declined in line with changes in the public sector as a result of privatisation and the introduction of new public sector management techniques. Where it survives, work intensification and changes in workplace culture can impede effective access. Rostered days off (RDOs) were an important achievement of the shorter hours campaigns of the early 1980s, and in some instances they allowed employees to choose when to take a day off. Recent evidence suggests that entitlement to RDOs is shrinking (ABS, 2000c; Buchanan and Thornthwaite, 2001, 12).
Balancing work and family responsibilities

1.12 Full-time work is changing in other ways

As well as acquiring additional rights and benefits, full-time work is changing in other ways. The average duration of full-time work is continuing its historical decline in most OECD countries (OECD, 1998). Reduced full-time hours are crucial in ensuring that full-time employment is itself ‘family-friendly’, and this has provided one rationale behind the lengthy efforts of trade unions to reduce working hours over the past century and a half. Working-time reductions play a major role in further improving not only the quality of life but also gender equality. As lengthy historical experience indicates, reduced full-time hours also contribute significantly to labour market efficiency, for example by stimulating better work organisation and technological innovations (Bosch and Lehndorff, 2001). One recent experience with consciously reducing standard full-time hours (with controls on overtime to ensure that the reductions press through to actual hours) has been in France, and this initiative appears to have been strikingly successful (Campbell, 2001b, 22-25; Bilous and Vincent, 2001).

Though shiftwork, in response to employer needs, is an inevitable part of modern society, it is tightly controlled in most OECD countries and often comes with additional benefits in terms of both pay and reduced hours. Similarly, variations in the length of hours (eg overtime), in response to employer needs, are controlled in most OECD countries.

The situation in Australia:

In contrast to most other OECD countries, Australia has not modernised its standard form of employment. Indeed, full-time permanent employment is being degraded. Insofar as new aspects are added, they tend to be aspects that worsen work and family relationships, for example, new flexible working arrangements oriented to employer needs (see below). In addition, full-time employment is less and less likely to be offered in the form of permanent work. Casual full-time jobs are expanding rapidly, at the same time that permanent full-time employment is stagnating (Borland, Gregory and Sheehan, 2001).

Average weekly hours for full-time employees are long and lengthening ... they increased by 3.7 hours between 1982 and 2000 ... Australia is one of only a handful of countries experiencing this peculiar trend towards lengthening full-time working hours

The most startling example of degradation concerns the hours of full-time work. Average weekly hours for full-time employees are long and lengthening (Campbell, 2001b; ACIRRT, 2001). As Table 6 in Appendix 1 indicates, they increased by 3.7 hours between 1982 and 2000. For male full-time employees the average rose by 4.3 hours, while for female full-time employees the average rose by 3 hours. This amounts to over 21 million extra hours per week, compared to what the present-day full-time employees would have worked if they had worked 1982 full-time hours. It is equivalent to 6.5 percent of all current weekly hours of paid work or, otherwise expressed, it is equivalent to over 550,000 full-time jobs (at 1982 full-time hours).
phenomenon, given that declining full-time working hours were the long-term historical experience in Australia up until the early 1980s (and given that decline continues in most other OECD countries).

Australia is one of only a handful of countries experiencing this peculiar trend towards lengthening full-time working hours. The other members of this small group are the United Kingdom and the United States (and probably New Zealand). However, the trends in Australia appear much stronger than the trends in these other countries. Moreover, there appears to be a major difference amongst these countries in the composition of the extra hours undertaken by full-time employees. Whereas the extra hours in the US appear to be largely in the form of increased paid overtime and the extra hours in the UK appear to be made up of increases in both paid and unpaid overtime, the much more substantial growth in extended hours in Australia seems to be almost entirely composed of increases in unpaid overtime (Dawkins and Simpson, 1993, 7-13; Campbell, 2001b).

Lengthening average hours are anchored in the experience of a growing minority of full-time employees who are working very long hours (Table 7 in Appendix 1). It is true that several countries exhibit an increase in the proportion of full-time workers who work extended hours, predominantly in the form of unpaid overtime (OECD, 1998; Boulin and Plasman, 1997). However, in most of these countries the increases are slight and confined to a small proportion of workers, generally high-level managerial workers. In Australia, by contrast, this trend is very strong, spreading well beyond the ranks of managers and based on patterns of not just extended but often very extended hours.

The issue of long (‘unreasonable’) hours is currently before the Full Bench of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC). As evidence before the Commission indicates, this issue is very important. Long hours are bad for family relationships, children and the community fabric (Pocock 2001b, 30; see also Pocock et al, 2001). They have direct effects on full-time employees across several dimensions of life, including health (Dawson et al, 2001). These direct effects of long hours often have more impact on work/family balance than the presence or absence of a particular family-friendly measure (Probert, Whiting and Ewer, 2000a). In addition, there are important indirect effects, for example in erecting a barrier to female entry into full-time jobs and acting as a constraint on household strategies for combining male and female participation in paid work.

**Long hours are bad for family relationships, children and the community fabric**

As the reference to unpaid overtime suggests, the problem here does not concern just duration. The problem of long hours is linked with other changes. There is some evidence that full-time permanent employment is becoming more irregular. There is more work in unsociable hours (Bittman and Rice, 2002). Increased hours are often linked with intensification (Allan, O’Donnell and Peetz, 1999) as two sides of the same coin of increased work effort. This signals a deteriorating situation for many – though by no means all – full-time permanent employees.
**Families and individuals**

1.13 *Families and households are wrestling with new forms of participation in paid work*

Most societies have experienced a marked diversification of forms of participation in paid work, which in turn overlaps with the changes in the relative size and composition of the paid workforce discussed earlier. Both changes can be viewed in terms of working-time over the entire life course (Bosch, 1999). They represent more paid work for women, but less paid work for men. Especially for men, paid work appears to be bunched up in fewer years between (late) entry into full-time work and (early) retirement.

Over the entire life course, both men and women can expect to experience many pressures for interruptions. They can expect several periods of withdrawal and re-entry. If available, they can expect to use special leave arrangements, part-time employment and flexitime. The pressures tend to be greatest at the time when households are most involved in family formation and caring for children. This is the point of greatest work/family imbalance and greatest sense of time squeeze. The pressures are heaviest for women, who can expect a significant interruption as a result of childbirth and the early period of child rearing.

The focus in the above discussion has been on individuals. However, such individuals are located in households and families, and their decisions about participation in paid work are often the product of distinct ‘household strategies’, seeking for example to balance out the need for household income with other needs. There is no room to discuss these aspects in detail but it is important to consider participation in paid work from the point of view of families as well as individuals. The ‘male breadwinner model’ was in fact one form of family participation in paid work, now displaced from its position of predominance in most OECD societies and overshadowed by a variety of other forms.

We can distinguish a ‘dual breadwinner model’, characterised by husband and wife both engaged in full-time employment, and a ‘one-and-a-half breadwinner model’, characterised by a husband full-time and a wife part-time. Each of these can in turn be differentiated depending on the presence or absence of dependent children (and on how many children and on the age of the youngest child).

**The situation in Australia:**

There is more paid work for women in Australia, but less paid work for men, and paid work is now concentrated into a narrower band of years. As in most countries, men and especially women in Australia can expect to experience many pressures for interruptions.

The changes in Australia can be viewed from the point of view of the household. Buchanan and Thornthwaite distinguish four key ‘parenting pathways’ where one or both parents are in the labour force. These include the traditional model of the sole breadwinner household in which the male is the wage earner for the family; the career couple model with two parents in full-time paid work; the one plus model with one partner employed full-time (usually the male) and the other part-time (usually the female); and the one parent model (Buchanan and Thornthwaite, 2001, 19-20). Table 8 in Appendix 1 focuses on couples with children; it reveals a decline in the single earner
household, based on one full-time worker. The main substitute is the dual earner household, with strongest growth in the ‘one-and-a half breadwinner’ model but also strong growth in the ‘dual breadwinner’ version. However, it is also worth noting the relative growth in the ‘no earner’ household. As Burbidge and Sheehan (2001) stress, there are worrying signs here of ‘polarisation effects’ at the household level.

(There has been) a decline in the single earner household, based around one full-time worker. The main substitute is the dual earner household, with strongest growth in the ‘one-and-a half breadwinner’ model but also strong growth in the ‘dual breadwinner’ version. However, it is also worth noting the relative growth in the ‘no earner’ household.

1.14 The unequal division of labour in the household is resistant to change

Hidden behind the discussion so far is the question of changes in forms of participation in other aspects of life, such as unpaid domestic labour, caring work in households, education and training, volunteer work in the community, and sport and hobbies. These form one side of the issue of work/family balance.

One problem for work/family balance in most countries concerns the persistence of an unequal division of labour within the household. This has a major impact in structuring forms of participation in paid work, and it appears highly resistant to change. In most countries, changes in the sphere of paid work have been more radical than changes in the domestic sphere, where the female homemaker model continues to exercise a strong effect. This is particularly true for the unpaid labour of cleaning, cooking, and laundry, but it also extends to caring work. Insofar as caring work is inside the household, it still tends to be viewed as predominantly a female responsibility, leading to dissatisfaction about the ‘double shift’ for many women.

The situation in Australia:

As several studies show, the division of labour in Australian households has altered slightly in recent years but it remains highly unequal. Summarising overall, it seems that male involvement in childcare but not other unpaid work in the household has increased (Wolcott and Glezer, 1995; Bittman and Pixley, 1997; Bittman and Wajcman, 2000). This creates a dilemma for many women workers, who are obliged either to shoulder the extra unpaid work or – if sufficient household income is available – to outsource many domestic tasks.

We disagree with Buchanan and Thornthwaite (2001, 14) that this can be called the ‘classical sole breadwinner household’. Only a small minority of households are likely to fit the classical model of permanent exit for the mother.
1.15 Households have clear preferences for a dual earner model

At the most basic level, most workers share the same needs in relation to paid work. A need for a living income is absolutely central, and employment security, stable and predictable working hours, and opportunities for ‘voice’ are also important factors (Standing, 1999). At less basic levels, needs are socially structured and are likely to vary both amongst workers and over time. Needs are difficult to research.

Preferences and attitudes are more accessible, but these also present difficulties for research because of the surreptitious influence of background conditions and assumptions on respondents’ statements. For example, attitudes to paid work amongst women with children are shaped by perceptions of the extent and quality of childcare available (Fagan, Plantenga and Rubery, 1995, 146; see also Probert, 1997). As a result, it would be foolish to compare attitudes to paid work across different childcare situations, without an attempt to capture the impact of these situational factors and constraints.

In most OECD countries women’s preference to retain a life-long attachment to employment seems strong, though preferences for the specific type of employment can vary, for example with reduced or full-time hours becoming more important in particular phases of the life course. At the same time, many women want to spend time at home with their children, especially in the first years of life. Most survey data point to strong interest in part-time work amongst men and especially women. This reflects a broad interest in making more time for family and other aspects of life.

Extensive survey work on preferences and attitudes about paid work is carried out in most OECD countries. A particularly rich and recent cross-national survey is the Employment Options of the Future (EOF) survey, conducted in the 15 EU nations (plus Norway) in 1998 (discussed in OECD, 2001, 135-137; Latta and O’Conghaile, 2000; Bielenski, Bosch and Wagner, 2001; Fagan, 2001; Fagan and Warren, 2001; see also Buchanan and Thornthwaite, 2001, 36-37). The survey pointed to a significant convergence of preferences amongst different nations. The common desire was a move towards a household structure based on two income earners.

Very little support could be found for a male breadwinner model, even amongst those households that seemed to fit the model. Thus, amongst couple families with a child under six, where a large minority of women were not in the paid workforce, only ten percent stated a preference for a structure based on the man full-time and the woman not employed (OECD, 2001, 136). The stronger preferences were for the man full-time and the woman full-time (a ‘dual breadwinner’ model) or for the man full-time and the woman part-time (a ‘one-and-a-half breadwinner’ model).

More detailed questions pointed to the very strong interest in part-time employment and an interest in further reducing hours of full-time employment. This was particularly true for women, who cited reasons for this interest such as ‘more time for children’, ‘more time for yourself and own activities’ and ‘to reduce the strains resulting from full-time job’. Amongst those not in employment but intending to take up employment in the next
five years were a large group of women identified as ‘women returners’. Most of this group had children living in the household and most had left paid employment because of the birth of a child. Most were seeking a pathway back into employment based on part-time employment – primarily in the form of ‘substantial’ part-time of between 20 and 30 hours per week – or reduced hours of full-time employment (Latta and O’Conghaile, 2000).

**The situation in Australia:**

Research on preferences and attitudes regarding work and family is relatively primitive in Australia. Standard surveys, such as from the ABS, offer little on preferences. They may incorporate single questions on preferences, but the results are of little use because the questions are untheorised and fail to accommodate the situational factors and constraints that shape responses.

The best data to explore these issues come from the surveys conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (VandenHeuvel, 1993; Wolcott and Glezer, 1995). The most recent is the 1996 Australian Family Life Course Study, a study of parents aged 25 to 50 with children living with them in the household. In summarising the results for mothers, Glezer and Wolcott point to the strong preference for a dual earner model, even amongst women not currently in the paid workforce. They note that “these results are consistent with similar industrialised countries, suggesting little popular support for the male-breadwinner/wife-homemaker model” (Glezer and Wolcott, 2000, 50).

Glezer and Wolcott point to the strong preference for a dual earner model, even amongst women not currently in the paid workforce. They note that “these results are consistent with similar industrialised countries, suggesting little popular support for the male-breadwinner/wife-homemaker model”

They draw attention to the relation between the actual and preferred hours of employed women whose youngest child was under five years. Most were satisfied with their hours. Only a tiny proportion expressed a preference to not be in paid work, but there was a stronger preference for fewer hours amongst those working full-time. On the other hand, amongst not-employed women whose youngest child was under five years almost half stated a preference to be in paid employment (primarily in the form of ‘half time jobs’ between 15-29 hours a week), and the vast majority declared an intention to return to the paid workforce at some stage (Glezer and Wolcott, 1997, 3-4).

There is powerful evidence here of a strong attachment to the paid workforce amongst mothers in Australia. Where there is a gap between behaviour and preferences, it is primarily found amongst not-employed mothers who would prefer to be in the paid workforce (with a smaller gap amongst full-time mothers who would prefer fewer hours

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12 In a recent article, Evans and Kelley (2001) use a single question from the International Social Science Surveys / Australia on normative attitudes towards the ideal pattern for mothers while children are under six years of age. They contend that the results undermine the widely-held belief that mothers of young children have a ‘strong attachment to employment’. This bold conclusion flies in the face of other survey evidence (Glezer and Wolcott, 1997; Pusey, 1999; McDonald, 2001; Probert and Murphy, 2001). It is drawn from a single question that has little to do with behaviour or preferences and that includes the responses of numerous persons other than mothers of children under six!
of paid work). This spills beyond a simple commitment to the money that can be drawn from paid work. Glezer and Wolcott (1997, 4) point to the results of a question that asked: “if you had a reasonable income without having to work, would you still prefer to have a paid job?” Seventy-two percent of fathers and 64 percent of mothers answered that they would still prefer to have a paid job. They suggest that the dual earner model is the ideal household structure for couples with dependent children in Australia. However, this is a somewhat modified dual earner model, in which the strong preference of many women with dependent children is for reduced hours of paid work (Glezer and Wolcott, 2000, 50; Buchanan and Thornthwaite, 2001, 23).

We can also draw on the results of focus group and qualitative interview research that explores work and family issues (Probert and MacDonald, 1996; Probert, 2001; Probert and Murphy, 2001; Pocock, 2001a). Some detailed information from this research is reported in Appendix 2. For example, the complex attitudes to part-time work, in which women appreciate reduced weekly hours but deplore poor conditions and the cost of ‘choosing’ part-time jobs, are well captured in a recent report based on focus groups and interviews in South Australia in 2000 (Pocock, 2001a, 108-113).

### 1.16 There are widespread feelings of ‘time pressure’

Initiatives around work/family balance in most OECD countries are spurred on by a judgment that there is a widespread problem of imbalance. Survey work in some countries also points to a widespread sense of ‘time pressure’ amongst men and women (eg Schor, 2000).

**The situation in Australia:**

Most researchers accept that there is a widespread sense of work/family imbalance in Australia. Feelings of a 'time squeeze' have been reported. For example, Bittman and Rice (2002) use time-use data on the proportion of the workforce that ‘feels rushed’. They suggest that perceptions of increasing ‘time pressure’ and difficulties in balancing work and family life do have an objective basis, best situated in the experiences of the increasing number of dual earner households.

| Time-use data surveys suggest that perceptions of increasing ‘time pressure’ and difficulties in balancing work and family life do have an objective basis, best situated in the experiences of the increasing number of dual earner households. |

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13 It remains important to be careful of data on current preferences. We know that a current preference to be out of the labour force while a child is young does not mean that women want to adopt a male breadwinner model and exit permanently from the workforce. Similarly, a current preference for part-time employment should not be interpreted as a permanent preference for a particular type of household structure. Walsh’s survey (1999) of around 1000 female part-time employees in a large banking and financial organisation in Australia pointed to the large proportion who expressed an intention to move back to full-time work in the future. This underlines once again the importance of adopting a dynamic perspective based on the life course. From this perspective, employee-oriented flexibility that allows workers to adapt their work in accordance with their changing circumstances is the key to good policy. There is some evidence that workers with family responsibilities desire an increase in precisely such flexibility (Lee and Strachan, 1999; Jenson and Jacobzone, 2000).
Survey data on attitudes can be misinterpreted. Evidence points to both satisfaction with the positive impact of paid work on family as well as dissatisfaction with the negative side (Glezer and Wolcott, 1999; 2000; ABS, 1994). Data from the AWIRS 95 employee survey are often cited (eg Lee and Strachan, 1999). According to these results, almost twice as many respondents reported that their satisfaction with the balance in work and family had decreased in the previous 12 months as reported that their satisfaction with this balance had increased (Morehead et al, 1997, 289).

More recently, the Office of the Employment Advocate (OEA) published survey results of a random sample of 1,000 employees (see Appendix 2). The results were similar to those in AWIRS 95. More than twice as many respondents (41.4 percent) claimed that balancing work and life had become more difficult over the previous two years as claimed (17.6 percent) that it had become easier. Amongst those saying it had become more difficult, about half said it was because ‘work is less accommodating’ and about half that ‘family circumstances have changed’ (Gollan, 2001, 35, 39). As in the case of AWIRS, the survey also pointed to widespread perceptions of increased work effort and lengthened hours. It would be wrong to put too much weight on these data. However, they provide at least rudimentary evidence of a widespread feeling of dissatisfaction with the trend in balancing work and family responsibilities in Australia.

Individual attitudes to work are mediated by the precise situation in the workplace (and occupation or industry). Often the best information on attitudes will come from more qualitative studies in particular workplaces or industries. Recent Victorian studies in the teaching and finance sectors have revealed a significant discontent with the impact of increased work effort, including both longer hours and intensified hours, on work/family balance (see Appendix 2).

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**Employers and employees**

**1.17 Increased competitive pressures and increased interest in employer-oriented flexibility**

The approach of employers to work/family issues occurs within a broader context marked by intensified competitive pressures, changing regulatory structures and changing employee relations. In most countries, since the 1980s, individual employers have experienced intensified competitive pressures. Analogous changes can be found in the public sector, where market relations have been fostered through initiatives such as corporatisation and privatisation. How the new competitive pressures are resolved in continuing enterprises depends on varied factors such as the precise situation of the enterprise in relation to financial and product markets, the strength of the regulatory structure, and the state of labour market (Rubery and Horrell, 1992/93; Rubery and Fagan, 1994). Given the diverse situations of firms, diverse responses are likely.

One common response, however, is the pursuit of greater ‘labour flexibility’. Supported by a trend towards higher unemployment and the waning influence of trade unions, many employers are drawn to strategies that seek to realise a competitive advantage from their labour-use strategies. They seek a fuller integration of labour into central business strategies. From this point of view, employers are seeking to translate some of the risks
associated with the new competitive pressures more directly into the sphere of labour relations.  

Employer and employee pressures for ‘flexibility’ are often bracketed together. This is misleading. For employers the common theme has been a desire to increase the flexibility of the supply and cost of labour-time, to respond to the constraints of an increasingly competitive local and global environment. The precise demands are heterogeneous, corresponding to the diverse situations of individual enterprises. Summarising broadly, however, we can suggest that employers aim at a set of arrangements in which the workforce is more flexible in response to constraints associated with fluctuations in demand, that is with more employer discretion over the number and timing of work hours and over the number and timing of leave arrangements.

Employer and employee pressures for ‘flexibility’ are often bracketed together. This is misleading. For employers the common theme has been a desire to increase the flexibility of the supply and cost of labour-time, to respond to the constraints of an increasingly competitive local and global environment.

For employees on the other hand a common theme has been a desire to secure greater flexibility from the enterprise in order to respond to the constraints of the individual's other activities and responsibilities. The aim is a set of arrangements with extended entitlements to forms of leave such as sick leave, family leave and parental leave, with clear hours of work subject to variation at the initiative of the employee, and in which breaks, annual leave and rostered days off can be scheduled to fit the needs of the employee (eg annual leave during school holidays). Though at first glance employer and employee pressures entail a common claim for more ‘flexibility’, the substantive direction of the ‘flexibility’ each seeks is opposed. The former can be called ‘enterprise-oriented’ or more exactly ‘employer-oriented’ flexibility. The latter can be called ‘employee-oriented’ flexibility (Campbell, 1993). The former refers to the flexibility of employees, while the latter is flexibility for employees (Buchanan and Thornthwaite, 2001; Lee and Strachan, 1999).

Demands for increased employer-oriented flexibility point in two main directions: first towards support for neoliberal proposals to deregulate labour markets; and second towards new employer-led initiatives at the workplace. In most OECD countries, such demands have not been widely realised. On the first front, full-scale proposals for labour market deregulation have been firmly rejected, and experiments with deregulation have generally been confined to minor matters, such as liberalisation of the regulations governing fixed-term employees and temporary agency work (Delsen, 1995). On the second front, it is possible in many countries to find numerous experiments at workplace level with new initiatives in employee relations, but these experiments are generally

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14 This need not mean that risk – or indeed retrenchments and increased work effort – is shared equitably amongst all employees. Employers have experimented with versions of a division of the workforce into a ‘core’ and a ‘periphery’ (Atkinson, 1985), though rarely in any strategic way. In this approach some employees are rendered more disposable than others, who are more carefully integrated into the enterprise.

15 This is not to say that employer and employee demands for ‘flexibility’ are inevitably opposed. One of the major challenges of public policy is to explore areas of possible overlap (for example, for education and training leave) or else to broker compromises that can allow responsible demands from both sides to be met (Bosch, 1995).
carried out within the traditional framework of legislative standards and collective bargaining, and they remain partial and cautious.

**The situation in Australia:**

New competitive pressures on employers are clear in Australia, compounded by the vulnerable position of many firms in international competition. Pressures in the public sector have also been intense, stimulated by an extensive program of privatisation and by vigorous changes in public sector management (Bell, 1997; O’Donnell, Allan and Peetz, 2001).

The result is a system characterised by extensive freedom for employers to introduce new initiatives in employee relations.

Employer associations in Australia, led by the Business Council of Australia (BCA), began in the 1980s to raise demands for more employer-oriented flexibility (BCA, 1987, 1988; CAI, 1988). They criticised the constraints on labour-use strategies imposed by the award system and called for its replacement with a more decentralised alternative based on direct negotiations between a single employers and the workers in that specific enterprise (‘enterprise bargaining’). These calls for dismantling of the award system met with a surprising degree of success. As a result, Australia figures as one of a small minority of OECD countries that acceded to the demands of employer associations for increased ‘labour market flexibility’. A major program of labour market deregulation was introduced in the 1990s (Hancock, 1999; Gahan and Harcourt, 1999; Briggs and Buchanan, 1999; Campbell and Brosnan, 1999).

The result is a system characterised by extensive freedom for employers to introduce new initiatives in employee relations. Some companies have responded with full programs of human resource management, others have sought to introduce one or another form of ‘flexibility’ suited to the needs of the enterprise, and others have continued the custom and practice inherited from earlier decades.

### 1.18 Employers and work/family balance

Employer approaches to work/family issues are crucially influenced by the national regulatory framework and the dominant policy orientation at national level. It is possible to distinguish two main lines of employer approach (Evans, 2001).

First, in more regulated systems, employers and employer associations participate vigorously in the ongoing social debate on work and family and then play their part in accommodating the new amendments to the regulatory framework and new policy initiatives introduced as a result of the debate (perhaps adding a few family-friendly benefits tailored to the specific circumstances of the individual enterprise). In most countries new policy initiatives to help balance work and family primarily take the form of minimum standards, established through legislation or generalised collective bargaining. In these countries, work and family benefits at the workplace are mandatory, reasonably comprehensive and accessible to the vast majority of employees.
Second, less regulated systems provide few minimum standards and the dominant policy orientation is often passive. The responsibility for action around work and family issues is largely left up to individual employers, who enjoy extensive freedom to implement distinctive labour-use strategies. In such systems we can expect a diversity of employer responses according to the specific circumstances of the enterprise. As part of their experimentation with new labour-use strategies, some firms will participate vigorously in designing ‘family measures’ for all or some of their employees. Other firms, involved in either different types of experiments or indeed no experimentation at all, will have little to do with any family friendly measures. In these countries, work and family benefits at the workplace are voluntary, partial and accessible to only a small minority of employees.

The situation in Australia:

Australia displays a mix of mandatory and voluntary approaches in relation to work and family. But, at least in recent years – in line with the shift towards a less regulated system – it has fitted more comfortably in the second category. Work and family initiatives have been largely left up to individual enterprises.

It is possible to find examples of vigorous [employer] participation in designing ‘family-friendly’ measures … but the dominant theme is one of variability, and examples of good practice readily coexist with numerous examples of bad practice.

We consider the consequences of this shift for employees below. Here, we can simply note that it implies a diversity of employer responses. It is possible to find examples of vigorous participation in designing ‘family-friendly’ measures. Such examples enjoy support from employer associations, which endorse the notion of improving work and family balance (within the framework of a voluntary approach). The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) sponsors the annual Work and Family awards for best practice, now in their tenth year. ACCI and the BCA established the Council for Equal Opportunity in Employment (CCOE) in 1985, and this body plays a role in promoting and explaining work and family initiatives. But the dominant theme is one of variability, and examples of good practice readily coexist with numerous examples of bad practice.

The regulatory and policy framework

1.19 Most OECD governments adopt an active and integrated approach to work/family issues

Corresponding to the two approaches distinguished in the previous section, we can distinguish two broad approaches by OECD governments to work/family issues. Most governments adopt an active and integrated approach, which seeks to foster an open and informed discussion, to respond to and reconcile different interests, and to design and implement policies that produce net benefits for the society (while distributing gains and losses fairly).

Public policies aim at equitable outcomes, and they are generally guided by principles of quality of work, family and community life, gender equality and labour market efficiency.
Policies for taxation and social security and the public provision of caring services such as elder care and childcare seek to support citizens in their work and family choices. At the workplace, governments seek to develop policies that reconcile the demands of employees for more employee-oriented flexibility and security and the interests of employers in maintaining a stable and prosperous enterprise.

The mix of regulation and policy initiatives varies from one country to the next, but common principles and common approaches can be detected, especially amongst the European countries that typify this mainstream approach. In developing policy initiatives aimed at the workplace, most European countries work from a platform of mandatory measures, aimed at minimum labour standards, though often with efforts to encourage provision above the standard, eg through management initiative or collective bargaining.

This reflects the conviction that all employees have a right to support in pursuing a better balance between paid work and family responsibilities. Innovative policies in relation to special leave and career breaks, reduced hours, and employee-oriented flexible work arrangements are being developed, and indeed it is possible to see a strong momentum in many countries for extension of leave schemes to broader groups of workers, for further development of good quality part-time work, and generalisation of flexibility experiments such as employee-choice rostering and time accounts.

It is increasingly recognised that full-time employment is an important area for intervention, and that more needs to be done to encourage ‘family friendly’ forms of full-time work. In the European Union countries, policy in each of these areas enjoys support at the pan-European level, for example through sponsored research and pilot programs, policy development, and regulatory initiatives. Relevant directives at EU level include the 1993 Working Time Directive, the 1997 agreement and Directive on part-time work (see also ILO Convention 175), and the recent agreement and Directive on ‘parental leave’.

In a smaller group of (mainly Anglophone) countries, led by the US, the approach has been more passive. Though there may be in-principle commitment to improving work/family balance, a strategic framework for policy tends to be lacking. The regulatory framework is often weak. Direct policy initiatives tend to be ad hoc and partial, and there is little scrutiny of the indirect impacts of policies guided by other objectives.

Policy initiatives aimed solely at the workplace are particularly limited, as governments are unable to assist in reconciling the different interests of employees and employers. Indeed, the orientation of these countries is often highly inequitable, defined in terms of serving the needs of the employer. There is little attention to developing a platform of mandatory measures, and work and family initiatives are largely left to voluntary efforts at the individual enterprise, in effect the voluntary efforts of the individual employer. Government action is confined to information dissemination and gentle encouragement.
The situation in Australia:

Australia fits in with the US as one of the small group of countries with a largely passive approach to work/family balance. It is out of step with the OECD mainstream. The regulatory framework in Australia is weak, and indeed it has been further weakened as a result of the program of labour market deregulation in the 1990s. This is true at both federal and state levels. But there is a particular problem with labour regulation in Victoria, as a result of the handover of industrial relations powers to the federal level in 1996 as outlined in chapter 3. While most Victorian workplaces operate under the federal Workplace Relations Act 1996 (WRA), approximately a third of employees are covered under Schedule 1A of the WRA. These Victorian employees have minimal protection, largely limited to common law rights and the inadequate protections offered by Schedule 1A, which provides fewer and lower minimum standards than those covering other employees covered by federal awards and agreements. (see Victorian Industrial Relations Taskforce, 2000; Watson, 2000b; Zeitz, 2000).

A strategic policy framework appears to be lacking in Australia. At federal level, work/family policy is remarkably contradictory and inconsistent. Probert and Murphy (2001) point out that the government follows a conventional conservative approach in some of its policies, for example by reducing operating subsidies to childcare centres, introducing the family tax initiative, and promising a Baby Bonus to mothers who stay at home. At the same time, in pursuit of reductions in welfare dependency, it is vigorously encouraging supporting parents into the paid workforce.

At federal level, policies have been heavily influenced by neoliberalism, a predominantly prescriptive political philosophy concerned to effect a transfer of economic responsibilities from the state to civil society. In accordance with this philosophy, the responsibility for initiatives on work/family balance at the workplace is seen as best left up to the individual enterprise (Reith, 1999). In this approach, there is little room for the voices of any other than employers to be heard. The voice of employees, conventionally expressed at the workplace through trade unions, is clearly muted. But we can also note that there is no voice allowed for other stakeholders in work/family issues. Thus there is no mechanism for the interests of families and communities to be expressed. This has been aptly described as the ‘enterprise as island’ mindset (Buchanan and Thornthwaite, 2001, 9). It seems out of kilter with broad public attitudes, which are concerned to see a strong government role in better supporting families (Pusey, 1999, 225).

Until the late 1980’s, the determination and enforcement of wages and workplace entitlements in Australia were regulated by industry-based awards within a centralised framework of compulsory conciliation and arbitration. Since that time, the influence of both federal and state-based awards on workplace conditions and entitlements has decreased with most awards offering only a limited minimum safety net. This has occurred through labour market deregulation, legislative change and the waning role of

16 The other members of this group are slipping away. Until recently, the United Kingdom could also have been included as an example of this approach. However, under the present Labour government, its approach is now more clearly in the European mainstream.
unions. Today, the Workplace Relations Act 1996 (WRA) and federal government industrial relations policy more generally, emphasise an enterprise or individual negotiation of wages and workplace conditions, with a more limited role for the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC).

To some extent, anti-discrimination provisions both in the WRA and in federal and State-based anti-discrimination legislation have provided an alternative avenue of redress for workers with parental and carer responsibilities. In a number of cases, the AIRC and Federal Court has found that an employee has been unfairly dismissed or replaced because of family responsibilities (Johnston v Kew Aged Care (1998) (AIRC, Print Q9544), Laz v Downer Group (2000) EOC 93-111). In other cases, an employee have been found to be discriminated against on the ground of pregnancy or because she wanted to work on a part-time basis to manage family responsibilities (Hickie v Hunt (1998) EOC 92-910; Bogle v Metropolitan Health Service Board (2000) EOC 93-069).

The growing use of anti-discrimination provisions to protect individual workers against discrimination on the grounds of family responsibilities highlights the very real difficulties faced by workers trying to balance their work/family responsibilities. It also points to the failure of current industrial relations regulation to adequately provide for minimum standards that can support work/family balance.

1.20 A passive approach produces worse outcomes for workers

The US offers an instructive example of the outcomes of a deregulated system and a passive policy orientation to work/family issues. On most measures, work/family policies in the US consistently and clearly fall short in cross-national comparisons (Gornick, Meyers and Ross, 1998). At workplace level, the range of outcomes is wide. There is a busy industry of work and family consultancy in the US, an imposing mountain of literature on the topic, and enormous volume of discussion and debate around particular family-friendly initiatives. Some firms participate vigorously and are actively involved in programs of ‘family-friendly’ initiatives. They constitute what are sometimes called ‘islands of excellence’. But such initiatives are selective.

The overall result is the provision of only those benefits that best suit employers and the restriction of access to only a minority of employees, and even for these employees the benefits are frequently swamped by other labour market trends, such as the trend towards long hours, which run in the opposite direction. Moreover, the vast majority of enterprises lack even these selective initiatives. As a result, cross-national comparisons of work/family balance outcomes for employees usually rank the US at the bottom (Applebaum et al, 2002).
The situation in Australia:

The outcomes of a deregulated system and a passive policy orientation to work/family issues in Australia are also poor. There have been clear shifts in work/family policies according to the complexion of the governing party, and the current policy blockage at federal level can be attributed to the neoliberal complexion of the governing Coalition parties. Nevertheless, assessment of policies over a lengthy period consistently places Australia next to the US, at the bottom of the OECD (Gornick, Meyers and Ross, 1998). The policy developments that have placed Australia there span several headings, such as public provision of caring services, taxation, social security, and policies aimed at the workplace (see also Hancock, 2002). Below, we briefly allude to some of the broader outcomes, before examining in more detail the outcomes for employees at the workplace.

Care for the elderly and disabled is a patchwork of different provisions. Jenson and Jacobzone (2000, 34) argue that in Australia adequate provisions and services enabling those providing elder care to balance work and family life are not yet available. A reasonably wide provision of good quality and affordable childcare was set up with government support in the 1980s. The proportion of children aged under 12 who received some type of formal and/or informal child care increased from 38 percent in 1984 to about half throughout the 1990s. Over this period, work-related reasons for using childcare have increased (ABS, 2001a, 41-45).

However, federal government support has dwindled in the late 1990s, as the government has increased the effective cost, changed the composition of care, altered the manner in which service is delivered. Demand continues to exceed supply, with significant unmet demand in areas such as before and after school care. For those using childcare in order to help combine paid work and parenting, the major problems appear to be cost and the inflexibility of services (Lee and Strachan, 1998; Brennan, 1999; Buchanan and Thornthwaite, 2001, 27-29; McDonald, P., 2002).

The impact of social security and taxation policies on work/family balance is highly complex and has become more complex as governments have added and amended elements in response to pressure for better support for caring responsibilities. For example federal government payments to families currently include the maternity allowance, the maternity immunisation allowance, family tax benefit part A, family tax benefit Part B, parenting payment, child care benefit, and – as recently announced – a proposed baby bonus (HREOC, 2002, 24-25). Many of these payments are general payments, the general effect of which is to favour families with full-time carers. Several commentators suggest that current policy in effect discriminates against the preferences of the vast majority of women to combine paid work and family responsibilities (McDonald, 2001, 20; see also Lee and Strachan, 1999).

A decisive site for work/family policy initiatives is the workplace. As noted above, Australian governments rely on a mix of mandatory and voluntary initiatives. The mandatory elements are relatively few, mainly derived from test cases sponsored by the trade union movement. For example, an ACTU test case in 1990 (Parental Leave Test Case) established unpaid parental leave as an entitlement for some employees, and this was subsequently taken up in legislation. Similarly, a test case in 1994 (Special Family Leave Test Case) allowed personal/carer’s or family leave clauses to be inserted into
Australia ratified ILO Convention 156 on workers with family responsibilities in 1990, and this provided a platform for subsequent legislation by the federal Labor government (1983-1996).

Australian governments rely heavily on voluntary work/family initiatives by individual employers. This passive policy orientation came most strongly to the fore with the advent of the present Coalition federal government (1996-), which has been primarily concerned with furthering the process of labour market deregulation, for example through its Workplace Relations Act 1996, the award simplification process, and interventions in industrial disputes. It is true, as set out in chapter 3, that a commitment to work and family is incorporated in the Workplace Relations Act 1996. In addition, the Act requires awards to include provision for ‘regular part-time work’. The award simplification test case subsequently developed a model for following the requirement in simplified awards, and the federal government has often pointed to this ‘regular part-time work’ provision as a sign of its initiative (Reith, 1999). However, the conditions that define ‘regularity’ are modest. And the mere existence of an award provision does not imply that employers will use it. There is no evidence that employers have used ‘regular part-time work’ to improve conditions for part-time employees.

In accordance with its commitment to deregulation, the main thrust of federal government policy aimed at the workplace has been to encourage voluntary employer initiatives to introduce ‘family-friendly’ measures, either unilaterally or through ‘enterprise bargaining’ (through formal collective or individual agreements). This is supplemented by some dissemination of information, efforts at promoting the benefits of ‘family-friendly’ measures to employers, and celebration of good practice.

The extent of employer-initiated ‘family-friendly’ measures can be taken as a useful test of the success of current policies of deregulation and reliance on voluntary employer initiatives. This is the subject of an ongoing debate, partly focused on what qualifies as ‘family-friendly’ (WFU, 1999; Whitehouse and Zetlin, 1999; Strachan and Burgess, 1998; Bramble, 2001). Most attention is focused on the presence or absence of a provision in the text of an award or agreement (or set of work rules), within a policy framework that is concerned to assess the relative merits of awards, collective agreements or individual agreements. Most studies conclude that agreements have a low incidence of genuine ‘family-friendly’ provisions (Whitehouse and Zetlin, 1999; Whitehouse, 2001b; ACIRRT, 2001).

In addition, however, it is important to go further and judge the practical accessibility of any benefit. It is necessary to take into account formal restrictions on access, such as the exclusion of casual employees. A recent analysis of AWIRS 95 data (Gray and Tudball, 2002) has demonstrated that within-enterprise differences in access to particular family-friendly provisions are more significant than between-enterprise differences. Similarly, Gray (2001, 36-38) uses data from the 1997 Negotiating the Lifecourse survey to draw attention to the paradoxical fact that employed women with a child under five, that is, the group of employees who are most likely to need workplace entitlements such as paid leave, are precisely those who are least likely to have access to such entitlements. It is also important to take into account the practical barriers to taking up the entitlement. As

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17 This has been succeeded by a new model clause that emerged from the award simplification test case in 1997. The clause establishes a form of leave called ‘personal leave’, which includes sick leave, carer’s leave and bereavement/ compassionate leave.
numerous case-studies suggest, lack of awareness of the entitlement and – more powerful – the attitude of the immediate supervisor and the impact of the organisational culture can be powerful barriers to the take-up of family-friendly benefits (Lewis, 1997; Whitehouse and Zetlin, 1999; Probert, Whiting and Ewer, 2000a; Office of Women’s Policy, 2000a).

It seems clear that employees in Australia have less access to work/family benefits than employees in most other OECD countries. Paid maternity leave is one example (Earle, 1999; HREOC, 2002). In contrast to almost all other OECD countries, the provision of paid maternity leave in Australia has been largely left to the voluntary actions of individual employers. This has had the predictable result that paid maternity leave has remained a benefit available to only a minority of employed women. We do not know the exact size of this minority, but it is likely to be small. It is not clear whether the minority is increasing or decreasing. Recent enterprise agreements, such as that at the Australian Catholic University, have introduced paid maternity leave and this gives the impression of diffusion. But such agreements range from good to (extremely) bad (Baird 2002), and they can in any case be ranged against other agreements in which workers lost their entitlement to paid maternity leave (Baird, 1999).

Data on the duration of the benefit is similarly poor, but we do know that in many cases the entitlement is short. In some cases, even in the public sector, the small minority of women that have access to paid maternity enjoy a limited entitlement of two weeks paid leave. In addition, there are fears that management attitudes or organisational culture may restrict the take-up of the benefit, even for this small minority of women. This is an extremely poor record, compared both with the ILO standard and with the generous entitlements to paid maternity leave available to employed women in most OECD countries.

In addition to family-friendly measures, it is also important to consider ‘family-hostile’ measures. Regulatory gaps and a passive policy of reliance on the voluntary efforts of employers have facilitated the emergence of several ‘family-hostile’ measures.

In addition to family-friendly measures, it is also important to consider ‘family-hostile’ measures. Regulatory gaps and a passive policy of reliance on the voluntary efforts of employers have facilitated the emergence of several ‘family-hostile’ measures. For example, many flexible work arrangements introduced into individual workplaces under enterprise bargaining (or directly through employer initiative) have had the effect of increasing managerial discretion. That is, they offer employer-oriented flexibility. Recent

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18 Federal public servants are entitled to 12 weeks paid maternity leave under legislation - the Maternity Leave (Commonwealth Employees) Act 1973. Victorian public servants are entitled to 12 weeks under their award/agreement (see chapter 3).

19 AWIRS 95 figures are often quoted, for example, 36 percent of employees (or 34 percent of workplaces) (eg OECD, 2001, 149). These figures are grossly inflated (though even these inflated figures confirm the basic point that only a minority of women are covered). The relevant AWIRS 95 question to managers (in workplaces with 20 or more employees) asks: “Is there any paid maternity leave here?”. The figure of 36 percent is simply the proportion of employees (in workplaces with 20 or more employees) who work in firms where the manager has answered ‘yes’ to this question (Morehead et al, 1997, 451, 115-116). It is not a measure of the proportion that has access to paid maternity leave. The proportion with access to the benefit – even in these larger workplaces – will be substantially less because of the frequency of conditions that restrict access, for example a permanent contract, minimum level of continuous service, or membership of a specific occupational groups (Gray and Tudball, 2002).
Balancing work and family responsibilities

Reports (ACIRRT, 2001) isolate some of the most common working-time provisions in registered enterprise agreements. Provisions associated with widening the span (spread) of ordinary hours are common. A variety of mechanisms are deployed to achieve this - for example, decreasing the time compensation for overtime (by reducing time-in-lieu provisions, increasing the span of ordinary hours, increasing the ordinary weekdays to include Saturdays and Sundays). All of these provisions can allow management to schedule workers’ hours within this widened span without incurring penalty payments for work outside standard hours. Such provisions may be associated directly or indirectly with increased management discretion in the allocation of daily and weekly hours.

Also common are provisions for averaging working hours, most frequently over four weeks but often up to a year. These directly increase management discretion in varying daily and weekly hours, and they allow variations above the nominal standard, eight hours per day or 38 hours per week, to be made without incurring premium rates of pay for overtime. Also emerging are provisions for eliminating or reducing allowances and traditional penalty payments (especially overtime), eg by absorbing them into the base salary, by annualising the salary, directly reducing overtime rates, or by converting overtime payment to time-off-in-lieu (perhaps at reduced rates). This has the primary effect of increasing management discretion in the scheduling of daily and weekly hours. None of these measures can be seen as family-friendly. They are either ambiguous in their implications or family hostile.

Regulatory gaps and a passive policy of reliance on the voluntary efforts of employers are also at the heart of the general trends referred to in previous sub-sections - longer hours, intensification, degraded part-time work, and casualisation. For example, it is evident that the distinctive problem in Australia of lengthening average hours for full-time employees is related to the lack of conventional regulatory controls such as maximum overtime hours and maximum daily and weekly hours, as well as the familiar gaps in coverage and enforcement (Heiler, 2001; Campbell, 2001b, 19-21).

Recent studies of teachers and finance sector workers suggest that, in spite of the presence of an apparent array of family-friendly provisions, these employees are experiencing “a deterioration in their ability to balance work and life on a daily basis”

The detrimental impact of these general trends is clear enough when there are no family-friendly provisions in place. But even where family-friendly measures are in existence, these trends can swamp the effect of the formal presence of such entitlements. Recent studies of teachers and finance sector workers suggest that, in spite of the presence of an apparent array of family-friendly provisions, these employees are experiencing “a deterioration in their ability to balance work and life on a daily basis” (Probert, Whiting and Ewer, 2000a, 43; see also Probert, Whiting and Ewer, 1999, 2000b). The authors point to three main problems for these workers: coverage of provisions is still patchy; employees face continuing difficulties in gaining access to these provisions, and then – most important – such provisions are unequal to the challenge of countering the effects of increased pressure to work long hours and intensification.

The Australian approach to work/family balance at the workplace means that the majority of employees fail to enjoy access to ‘family-friendly’ measures but are instead exposed to numerous ‘family-hostile’ measures. This is clearly an inferior approach, at least in
comparison with the majority of OECD countries. Relying on the voluntary actions of employers alone does not serve the interests of employees well. It fails to produce outcomes compatible with principles of quality of life and gender equality. It could also be argued that government inaction around work/family initiatives is unfair to employers, particularly small business, which is wrestling with intense competitive pressures and cannot be expected to bear the sole responsibility for taking on the provision of all the work and family initiatives needed to support their employees and their business. The interests of most employers would be better served by strong government leadership, which – as in other countries – establishes an acceptable framework of minimum standards in the area of work/family balance.

As the foregoing suggests, the challenge of work/family policy at the workplace goes beyond just providing a supplement to private initiative, in order to pick up those who may not be effectively catered for by employer initiatives. The challenge is to provide a base level of rights and entitlements that – in addition to meeting the needs of a broad set of workers – can also act as an effective framework for subsequent employer initiatives.

2. THE IMPACT OF THESE KEY TRENDS

Many workers in Australia combine paid work with caring responsibilities. The major pressures fall on mothers and fathers of dependent children, and we have therefore concentrated on this group, together with the (sometimes overlapping) group engaged in caring for ill, disabled or elderly relatives. But this does not mean that concern with work/family balance is confined to these groups. Many other workers can nevertheless expect to be engaged in caring for children and/or ill, disabled or elderly relatives at a subsequent point in their life course. In addition, it is important to keep in mind persons who are currently out of the paid workforce, perhaps as a result of the failure to sustain participation in paid work in conjunction with their caring responsibilities. Both additional groups also have a strong interest in good work/family policies.

Workers with family responsibilities are seeking ways to make it easier to balance paid work and family responsibilities. They do not want to sacrifice participation in either sphere but want to ease the associated pressures and to minimise the risks and costs. This is clearest for women, who do not want to sacrifice the achievements associated with their increased participation in education and paid work but who want to be able to devote time and energy to other aspects of life, including parenthood and other caring work. But it is also true of many men, who are seeking a better balance of work and other aspects of life. This is a novel situation, which presents substantial challenges to workplaces, families, communities and governments. The key is helping workers to manage the changing circumstances and multiple labour market transitions that go with family responsibilities. In particular, it is to do with providing tools for women and men to adapt their paid work to fit changing circumstances and changing needs and preferences.

Are Australian employers ahead or behind employers in other countries in offering rights and benefits to help employees in balancing work and family? They may be similar to US employers (Russell and Bourke, 1999), but they clearly lag behind employers in most other OECD countries, where compliance with mandatory measures provides employees with a substantial platform of rights and benefits.
We review the efforts of governments throughout the OECD to grapple with parallel trends and challenges. These challenges seem to be managed more effectively elsewhere. We contend that the record in Australia is poor and that the result is a set of needless pressures and costs. It is true that some of the trends identified for Australia are common to all OECD countries, are largely immutable, and indeed are to be welcomed. For example, the fundamental starting-point of our discussion is the increased participation of women in paid work. This is a common trend that is unlikely to disappear and is indeed to be welcomed from the point of view of quality of life, gender equality and labour market efficiency.

On the other hand, we suggest that Australia is more distinctive in its lack of mechanisms to assist the new and more complicated patterns of participation in paid work (special leave and sabbaticals, quality part-time work, and flexible work schedules). In particular, it appears highly distinctive in its experience of general trends such as lengthening hours for full-time employees, casualisation, and the degradation of part-time work. These overlap with and exacerbate the effects of more familiar labour market problems such as unemployment and increasing income inequality. Linda Hancock (2002) argues that the interaction of these trends with the changes in families and households is producing a distinctive ‘care crunch’ in Australia.

In the preceding sections, we have painted these trends with a broad brush, concentrating on an aggregated picture. But of course the problems do not apply evenly to all workers. Fragmentation is a major feature of labour market restructuring in Australia, as explored in several recent accounts (ACIRRT, 1999; Hancock 2001; Borland, Gregory and Sheehan, 2001).

The problems we identify affect different groups in different ways. A disaggregated analysis is hampered by the severe lack of adequate data. However, we can make a few points. The trends operate in a similar way in the different states of Australia (though there are some differences according to the structure of the economy, levels of economic growth and unemployment, and the implications of different state government policies). However, within Victoria – as within Australia as a whole – it is important to keep in mind differences according to factors such as gender, occupation, employment status, family structure, and location (rural and regional or metropolitan).

In the preceding sections we emphasise the differences between women and men. We stress that the gender differences in forms of participation continue expose women to greater risks and penalties. It is of course important to keep in mind the increasing differentiation in the situations of employed women, not only according to the extent and type of family responsibilities but also according to occupation, education, and income. In a situation of diverse access to family-friendly measures and family hostile measures, occupation can be the key to acquiring sufficient resources to manage paid work and family conflicts. In principle, managerial and professional women have greater access to such resources (though they may also be exposed to greater demands, for example for long hours in their jobs).

In the preceding sections, we refer to the development of diverse forms of employment in Australia, including varied types of part-time employment, casual employment, fixed-term employment, and marginal self-employment (Campbell and Brosnan, 1999). These are generally associated with conditions inferior to full-time permanent employment – in
many cases markedly inferior. The shortfall in wages and conditions exposes workers to added pressures and tensions in balancing paid work and family responsibilities. Yet workers with family responsibilities are in fact more likely to be employed in these forms of employment!

The ability to manage work/family imbalance depends in part on the robustness of family structures and strategies. The diversification in family structures that we allude to above produces more smaller and more fragmented households, often geographically dispersed. As Linda Hancock notes, this lessens the ability of these households to “support and cushion individual members through labour market and life course transitions – unemployment, underemployment, parenting responsibilities, education, ill health…” (Hancock, 2002, 126). In particular lone parents, the majority of whom are women, face formidable difficulties in maintaining work/family balance.

The inadequacy of data is particularly severe in considering differences in geographical location. However, there is good reason to conclude that the relative lack of public and private infrastructure in rural and regional areas, together with looser labour markets, compounds problems of work/family imbalance. Similarly, it is like that the specific situation of Indigenous people also compounds the difficulties of combining paid work and family life. There is much research needed in order to uncover the significance of these differences and how they interact in practice.

The problems we identify for Australia lead to poor quality of work, family and community life, increased gender inequalities, and labour market inefficiencies. The starting point is quality of life. It is clear that general problems in Australia such as lengthening hours for many full-time employees, casualisation, degradation of part-time work, work intensification, and increasing wage inequality (and emergence of working poor) directly impair the quality of life. Also troublesome is the fact that possibilities for improving the quality of life in Australia are not being seized. Employees want more choice and more employee-oriented flexibility, but the majority of employees are not achieving these preferences. A lucky few can use financial power to buy an enhancement of choice, for example by contracting out domestic tasks, purchasing quality leave, choosing their job or form of employment, choosing a house close to work and care facilities. But this is not an effective solution for all problems.

Market-based solutions may improve the quality of individual and family life but at the cost of the quality of community life. As the experience in other countries demonstrates, the best path to expanding choice for the majority of employees is to preserve full-time permanent employment as the central pivot of labour regulation and to add on guaranteed options such as special leave and sabbaticals, quality part-time work, and flexible working-time schedules.

Though their origins often date back to the early 1980s, the problems appear to have spread and become more severe in the course of labour market deregulation in the 1990s. Advocates of labour market deregulation suggested that a move away from the award straightjacket would lead to a broader range of work arrangements in workplaces and that employees would be able to more freely choose a work arrangement to suit their diverse circumstances and preferences. Certainly, labour market deregulation helps to produce a proliferation of work arrangements. But these are work arrangements designed by the employer to meet their needs for employer-oriented flexibility and then allocated to job applicants according to power relations in labour markets. From the point of view of employees, the degree of choice in many cases, for example in part-time employment, has been narrowed not expanded.
The increased participation of women in paid work holds out the promise of increased gender equality. It signals a break with the rigid gender division of labour characteristic of the male breadwinner model. We argue however that major barriers remain. This is partly to do with the persistence of a gendered division of labour in the unpaid work of the household. But it is also partly to do with failures in the wider sphere of workplace and community to ease the inevitable tensions and pressures associated with increased female participation. The latter failure is particularly stark in Australia, and it helps to reproduce severe gender inequalities. It generates familiar problems at the workplace such as poor wages and conditions, a lack of pay equity, occupational segregation, discrimination and limitations in training and career development. We draw attention in particular to the problems associated with part-time work, predominantly taken up by women with family responsibilities, and to the deterioration in the quality of much part-time work in recent years. Also important are the trends in full-time work such as lengthening average hours and work intensification, which present additional barriers to gender equality. Some women are able to sidestep some of the effects of these trends. For example, women in high skill, high paid jobs may choose to remain childless or – if they have children – to take advantage of privileged access to ‘family friendly’ measures or to reorganise their domestic arrangements (for example, by contracting out much unpaid work). However, for the majority of women in Australia, disruptions and withdrawals associated with caring responsibilities tend to become the platform for an accumulation of disadvantage. In the absence of good work/family policy, choices for most women narrow dramatically.

We suggest in the previous sections that good work/family policy also incorporates men. Lessening gender inequalities requires policies aimed at men’s patterns of participation in paid work. It is important for example, as in Norway, to increase men’s take-up of paternity leave. It is important to combat the trend to lengthening hours and increased work intensity, which affects full-time men in particular. It is important to combat the effects of organisational cultures that privilege the ‘ideal worker’ with no domestic responsibilities.

Many of the trends identified in the preceding sections are associated with greater freedom for individual employers to realise their short-term interests. However, this is not the same as labour market efficiency, which incorporates the medium and long-term interests of individual employers as well as a broader interest in sustaining a dynamic, prosperous economy. The business case is useful in identifying some of the medium and long-term interests of individual employers, for example the need to retain valued skills and to improve recruitment. But it is also necessary to go beyond the individual enterprise to consider the medium and long-term interests of the economy in sustaining family incomes, in lessening friction associated with labour market transitions, in eliminating the risk of waste of valuable education and skills, and in ensuring the smooth progression of generations. Many of the trends in Australia that worsen work/family balance also worsen labour market efficiency. For example, lengthening hours for full-time employees, especially when taking the form of unpaid overtime, are often a chaotic and unplanned process, which lessens hourly productivity and impedes the chances of improving work organisation and dynamic efficiency.
Chapter 3: Policy Options

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we respond to the key trends outlined in Chapter 2 that make work/family balance so difficult for many Victorians to achieve. We outline a series of options the Victorian Government the Victorian Government could pursue in partnership with the community, including business and unions to improve work/family, and more broadly work/life balance, for a wide range of Victorians. These options could be used as the basis of broad community consultation around policy details and courses of action to encourage and enable all Victorians to better balance their work and family responsibilities and their ability to participate in community life.

To that end, this chapter sets out the basis for government intervention, identifying the legislative and policy frameworks and policy principles that could provide a context for Victorian government action. Mindful of the federal power sharing arrangements in the Australian system, the chapter outlines five key areas for Victorian government intervention. These are: developing a whole of government strategic approach to work/family balance; setting minimum standards to support work/family balance; piloting innovative work/family practice in the public and private sector; enhancing workplace responses to work/family balance, and working with communities to enhance work/family balance. In each area a number of effective and viable options for government policy and action are highlighted. Proposed initiatives are drawn from a review of innovative policy options initiated by governments overseas and elsewhere in Australia.

1.1 What can governments do to support work/family balance?

As highlighted in chapter 1, an accord is emerging that governments, particularly national governments, have a critical role in setting the policy agenda around work/family balance, in partnership with employers, unions and local communities. Work/family imbalance spills beyond the workplace into communities and it is governments that can provide the necessary policy action and integration to effectively respond to the many aspects of this imbalance. Governments can be proactive in influencing sustainable change around work/family balance and in managing the complex interaction of factors that impact on the experiences of different groups in the community. The key trends outlined in chapter 2 point to the need for the integration of social, industrial relations and taxation policies.

Key areas identified for government policy intervention in a number of recent international and Australia reviews include paid maternity leave and parental leave policies, the provision of formal childcare, establishing minimum workplace standards as well as sponsoring research and providing advice to business in developing and implementing work/family policies (OECD, 2001; Duxbury and Higgins, 2001; Bailyn, Drago and Kochan, 2002; DTI, 2000a; Buchanan and Thornthwaite, 2001).

In Australia, it is the federal government, rather than State governments, that has direct responsibility for social security provision and taxation policy. These are two of the main policy levers that would contribute to supporting work/family balance if used
imaginatively, particularly in relation to income support for families and the labour force participation of women with dependent children. In addition, most community based and private childcare provision is subsidised by the federal government via a means tested childcare benefit paid to parents or centres. Aged care is funded by the Commonwealth and administered by the States. Industrial relations regulation, especially in the case of Victoria, lies predominantly in the federal jurisdiction.

However, State level governments can and do play a significant role in encouraging and enabling employers, families, workers and those seeking access to paid work to better balance their work and life responsibilities as well as enhance their ability to participate in community life. This action takes place in a number of ways that reflect both the different roles of a State government, and competing policy aims. State government roles range from responsibility for: whole-of-government policy development and strategic direction; legislation and regulation; public service employment; direct service provision; supporting industry and business; tendering for or purchasing services; infrastructure provision; and inter-government liaison with federal, local and other state governments.

The price for government inaction in response to the ‘care crunch’ and the ‘time squeeze’ that characterises an increasing work/family imbalance is a high one. Without significant intervention by government, this imbalance will intensify, as public policy and employer strategy on the one hand and men’s and women’s working time preferences on the other, become increasingly out of step (Buchanan and Thornthwaite, 2001, 61-62). This has direct ramifications, as highlighted in chapter 2, for the quality of work, family and community life, for gender equality and for labour market efficiency.

1.2 What has the Victorian Government done?

Over the last decade, there has been a growing awareness in Victoria, as in other Australian jurisdictions, of the importance of responding to some of the key trends outlined in chapter 2. Today, the Victoria government administers a wide range of policies, programs and regulation that have the potential to support families, businesses and employees to better combine work and family life and other commitments. These include for example:

- encouragement of improved workplace relations and business through the recently announced pilot Partnership Program and Premier’s Partnership Awards;
- targeted policies and programs around parenting support and early childhood development such as BestStart;
- programs to support parents and carers of people with disabilities including respite care;
- subsidies for pre-school services, occasional care provision and regulation of long day care and out of school hours childcare services;
- prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of parental and carer status under the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 1995;
- paid maternity leave, and other ‘family-friendly’ arrangements in a number of Victorian government departments and agencies;
- community building initiatives in both rural and metropolitan local government areas;
• the TravelSMART Community Pilot being undertaken by the Department of Infrastructure which seeks to facilitate more sustainable travel choices for communities, schools and workplaces;
• transition to employment initiatives in education and training, including those that target particular groups such as those from language backgrounds other than English and Indigenous employment initiatives.

However such initiatives are fragmented. There is not yet a ‘whole-of-government’ approach across program areas or in policy making which could provide a strategic framework for the integration of policies and initiatives to effectively respond to the trends outlined in chapter 2 and the resultant work/family imbalance many Victorians experience. Victoria has fallen behind other states such as NSW and Queensland where action has been taken to implement whole-of-government work and family strategies.

2. THE FRAMEWORK FOR VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT ACTION

In this section, the main regulatory and policy frameworks for any Victorian intervention to enhance work/family balance are outlined. Key policy principles that underpin the proposed options for government policy development and action are also addressed.

2.1 The legislative framework for Victorian action

The major legislative frameworks that set out key rights and obligations of Victorian employees and employers in respect of work and family issues include the federal industrial relations framework and the federal and state anti-discrimination legislative frameworks. Victorian also has legislation covering long service leave and occupational health and safety. While the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1995 regulates health and safety in Victorian workplaces, it does not currently offer a framework for Victorian government action. It is performance based rather than prescriptive regulation (see Heiler, 2001), and the effects of work/family imbalance are not yet widely accepted as a workplace health and safety issue.

2.1.1 Industrial relations law

Victorian workplaces effectively operate under the federal Workplace Relations Act 1996 (WRA). In 1996, most of the Victorian-based industrial relations powers were referred to the Commonwealth. Two different industrial systems are consequently operating for Victorian employees and employers. The first system covers those employees employed under federal awards, enterprise and individual agreements. The second system applies to those Victorian employees not covered by a federal award or agreement, who are now covered by Part XV and Schedule 1A of the WRA.
In relation to supporting work/family balance, a principal object of the WRA is to:

provide a framework for cooperative workplace relations … by assisting employees to balance their work and family responsibilities effectively through the development of mutually beneficial work practices with employers.

The Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) is required to take account of ILO Convention 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities 1981, in its determinations. In addition, the termination of employment on discriminatory grounds, including family responsibilities and absence for work during parental leave, is proscribed under the WRA.

As highlighted in chapter 2, the WRA provides some basic safety net provisions such as unpaid parental and adoption leave for permanent employees who have worked for the same employer for a continuous period of 12 months. Other supportive arrangements for workers with family responsibilities, such as personal and carer’s leave, conditions governing part-time work and rostering arrangements are covered in federal awards, and in some cases in enterprise and individual agreements. Such arrangements may also be established in test cases in particular industries, which may then be picked up in other awards on a case-by-case basis. One such example is the recent decision of the AIRC to extend unpaid parental leave to casual employees who work on a regular or systematic basis for at least 12 months and have an expectation of on-going employment (AIRC, Print 904631).

Schedule 1A of the WRA covers around a third of Victorian employees, who are not covered by federal awards or agreements. The minimum conditions covering Schedule 1A employees are less than those covering most federal award employees. For example, while Schedule 1A employees are covered by the unpaid parental and adoption leave set out under the WRA, they have no statutory or award right to personal/carer’s leave or bereavement leave. Minimum standards for annual and sick leave are also prescribed at lower levels in Schedule 1A than in many federal awards (Victorian Industrial Relations Taskforce, 2000, 94).

The Victorian government is seeking amendments to the WRA that would give the AIRC power to make federal awards with common rule application throughout Victoria and has introduced the Commonwealth Powers (Industrial Relations Amendment Bill 2001 to the Victorian Parliament to refer the required powers to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Government has instead introduced the Workplace Relations Amendment (Improved Protection for Victorian Workers) Bill 2002, to provide bereavement and carer’s leave to Schedule 1A workers, among other things. However it is unclear if the proposed legislation will redress other disadvantages suffered by Schedule 1A workers in comparison with those covered by federal awards.

The limitations of the federal industrial relations framework in supporting employee-oriented flexibility have been outlined in chapter 2, particularly in the inadequate coverage of employees by formal provisions and the priority given to the negotiation of supportive arrangements at the enterprise level or between individual employees and employers.
2.1.2 Anti-discrimination law

Most Victorian employees and workplaces are covered by both federal and Victorian anti-discrimination legislation. Under the federal *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (SDA), direct and indirect discrimination against employees on the grounds of sex, marital status and pregnancy or potential pregnancy is proscribed, as is termination of employment on the grounds of family responsibilities. The federal *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the federal *Race Discrimination Act 1975* also prohibit discrimination in employment.

Under the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 1995* (EOA), direct and indirect discrimination against employees on the grounds of pregnancy, parental or carer status is proscribed. Discrimination against a woman who breastfeeds was added to the list of personal characteristics protected by the EOA in May 2000. Direct discrimination occurs where a person is treated less favourably because they are a parent or a carer. Indirect discrimination occurs when a person cannot comply with an unreasonable requirement, condition or practice because of their parental or carer status.

There is a growing case law in Victoria and Australia that suggests that anti-discrimination provisions in both industrial relations and specific anti-discrimination legislation provide important protection to individual workers against discrimination on the grounds of family and caring responsibilities. At a more symbolic level, the publicity that often accompanies such cases highlights the importance of accommodating family and carer responsibilities in the workplace.

2.2 The policy framework for Victorian action

The framework of the Victorian Government’s *Growing Victoria Together* policy document and its women’s strategy *Valuing Victoria’s Women* offer a policy context within which a coherent work/family balance strategy could be developed. Such a strategy could articulate integrated policy objectives to emphasise the partnership role of government, business, unions and communities. *Growing Victoria Together* sets out the Victorian government’s policy framework for the next decade. It places equal emphasis on economic, social and environmental goals and actions, emphasising community consultation. Under the strategic area of ‘building cohesive communities and reducing inequalities’ the Victorian government is specifically committed to encouraging employers, workers and families to better balance their work and family responsibilities and their ability to participate in community life.

More specifically, the *Valuing Victoria’s Women* strategy designates work and family responsibilities, including children’s services, as a priority area under one of its major themes, ‘education, work and economic independence’. The Victorian government is committed to improving access to flexible work options and family friendly practices so that women and men can maintain their involvement in the workforce while also meeting their caring responsibilities. The government formally recognises that it is often women who are, or who become primary carers in families and support measures need to be put in place to assist in this role. To this end it is committed to supporting women’s access to appropriate, affordable and flexible childcare options. Other related themes in the government’s women’s policy as set out in *Valuing Victoria’s Women* are around representation and equity and health, well being and community strengthening.
The options for government policy and action outlined in this chapter are guided by three key policy principles, consistent with the *Growing Victoria Together* and *Valuing Victoria’s Women* policy frameworks. These are:

- improving the quality of work, family and community life
- promoting gender equality
- enhancing labour market efficiency

### 2.2.1 Improving the quality of work, family and community life

Balancing work and family is essentially about the quality of work, family and community relationships. The quality of these relationships is related to what has been termed ‘time sovereignty’ (Doyle and Reeves, 2001), which is about reducing excessive hours of work and regaining control over working hours. As discussed in chapter 2, control over working time is about meeting individual worker preferences and being able to make choices over the life course, for example to move in and out of part-time and full-time work and to undertake phased reduction of working time into retirement.

This is more than a workplace issue. The ability to exercise control (and choice) within and beyond the home is equally relevant to efforts to balance work, family and community (Canadian Council on Social Development, 1999). And those efforts are shaped to a large extent by the availability and quality of community supports, such as childcare and other dependent care services as well as transport and infrastructure provision. As O’Connor, Orloff and Shaver (1999, 230) put it:

> We need to recognise the linkages between citizen’s diverse positions in the labour market and their varying caring responsibilities in ways which allow men and women, parents and those without children, and people with different sorts of ties to friends, relatives and neighbours to participate equally in both spheres.

The options outlined in this chapter are based on the principle that government intervention needs to support the choices men and women make about balancing their work, family and community lives, with action based on a recognition of the complexity of the interrelationships between work, family and community and on the importance of enhancing the quality of those relationships over the life course.

### 2.2.2 Promoting gender equality

Work/family balance and gender equality are inextricably linked. In Australia as elsewhere, women continue to undertake primary responsibility for unpaid family and caring work. This responsibility constrains their labour market participation and reduces their life-time earnings and career opportunities, directly affecting the choices they and their partners make. Policy intervention to assist men and women to better balance their family responsibilities is consistent with principles of promoting gender equality (Fagan and Rubery, 1996, 349).

In promoting gender equality, government policy needs to support women’s choices about maintaining their labour market attachment, and respond to systemic discrimination.
against women which constrains those choices. However intervention needs to move beyond the framework of policy debates that construct women as in need of ‘special’ workplace measures, to policies and workplace changes that shape the labour force experiences of women (Probert, 1999). An important aspect of gender equality in facilitating the balance between work and family life is encouraging men to share more in caring work. One way of achieving this is by facilitating men’s access to paid parental leave and other family-friendly workplace provisions and by encouraging a workplace culture that recognises the importance of caring responsibilities.

The options outlined in this chapter for government policy and action are based on the principle that gender equality in both the workplace and the home is fundamental to enhancing work/family balance. The key to achieving greater gender equality in both spheres is the recognition by government that mothers and fathers both need support in their family and paid work roles (Gornick and Meyers, 2001, 3).

2.2.3 Enhancing labour market efficiency

The policy principle of labour market efficiency is linked with that of gender equality and, as outlined in chapter 1, includes the medium and long terms interests of individual employees and employers as well as the broader economic benefits to society. The difficulties parents and carers face in juggling work and family responsibilities in the Australian labour market are linked with inefficiencies in labour market supply. The capacity of organisations to respond to the challenges of work/family balance issues and more broadly, the capacity of the labour market to support women’s participation in paid employment on an equitable basis are critical (Buchanan and Thorne, 2001, 54).

The options outlined in this chapter are based on the principle that government intervention can ensure labour markets provide the right mix of incentives to work, opportunities for skill development and flexibility, and support for employers who competently manage the challenges of work/family balance (DTI, 2000, 8). In particular, allowing women to make real choices about their participation in the labour market also assists labour market efficiency. More broadly, labour market efficiency is about the sustainability of the economy, and governments have critical role in creating a regulatory framework and policy context that supports women’s participation in paid employment on social, equity and efficiency grounds.

3. OPTIONS FOR VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

The five key areas of proposed Victorian Government intervention are a mix of policy development and specific action. These include:

1. Providing a strategic framework for, and coordination of, public and private sector activity around work/family balance;
2. Setting minimum workplace standards to support work/family balance;
3. Leading the way by piloting innovative public and private sector initiatives;
4. Working in partnership with industry to improve work/family balance;
5. Working in partnership with the community to improve work/family balance in local communities.
Proposed Victorian Government Policy options in these key areas are set out below. These options have been developed in response to the trends outlined in chapter 2 and draw on a wide range of innovative policy responses and action by government both internationally and in Australia. Specific options are put forward within the context of a number of existing Victorian programs and policies as well as taking into account the opportunities for State-level government intervention.

Emphasis is placed on practical options, including those that would require legislative change as well as options that are essentially ‘add-ons’ to existing State government provision. This includes action that the Victorian government might take in collaboration with other levels of government, business, unions or community organisations. While the options are developed within the broad framework of a work/life perspective, they focus in particular on measures designed to support work/family balance. As highlighted in chapter 2, supports for the transitions between work, parenting and caring are particularly critical to maintaining ‘the balance’.

The proposed options are a first step in responding to the tensions and difficulties experienced by many Victorians. In the development and implementation of any of the proposed options, it will be critical that the specific needs of a wide range of Victorians are addressed through a comprehensive consultation process. Indeed we note the wide-ranging community and industry consultation that canvassed the process and details of the significant policy measures implemented in the UK, as discussed in chapter 1, section 4.

### 3.1 Providing Strategic Direction and Coordination

The Victorian government has the capacity to establish a strategic framework for action around work-life balance across government and to develop partnerships with employers, unions, workers, families and communities to enhance the quality of work/family balance. This section sets out a number of key elements in state government leadership and coordination of public and private sector activity around work/family balance. These elements include:

- developing a whole of government strategic approach for government action around work/family balance, leading public debate, informing that debate, and resourcing research and policy development;
- implementing best practice as an employer, including reviewing and improving public sector standards, informing government employees about rights and entitlements and trialing innovative initiatives; and
- lobbying, along with other State government, for integrated early childhood education and care services at state and federal level, and for statutory paid maternity leave.

#### 3.1.1 Developing the Strategic Framework

Both internationally and in a number of Australian states, governments have developed a clearly articulated strategy around work/family balance issues. *Growing Victoria Together* and *Valuing Victoria’s Women* offer the policy context within which the Victorian government could develop such a strategy. A comprehensive strategy needs to recognise and address the complexity and the cross cutting nature of the work, family and community balance issue (CAALL, 2002).
In the UK, the Green Paper, *Work and Parents: Competitiveness and Choice* (DTI, 2001a, 5) set out the government’s policy aims to improve choice for parents and enhance competitiveness for business by:

- keeping women’s skills and knowledge in the economy and maintaining their attachment to the labour market even when they are not working outside the home;
- enabling business to benefit from a greater contribution from the workforce;
- maximising the contribution that working parents are able to make to their employers;
- safeguarding the health and welfare of the mother and child before and after birth;
- improving the quality of family life;
- “thinking small first” in the design of solutions, to simplify systems so that everyone understands their rights and responsibilities; and
- introducing any changes in the best way for all.

The wide-ranging consultation that followed the Green Paper led to the government’s work-life balance strategy. This strategy combines maternity and parental leave provision, legislating to allow parents with young children to request flexible working hours and a government partnership with businesses, the voluntary sector and employee organisations to promote a better balance between work and other aspects of life.

As outlined in chapter 2, experience across the OECD suggests that a robust framework for work-family policies and practices is needed. Such strategies have at their core a set of statutory minimum rights, which address the difficulties individuals face balancing work and other life commitments. This core must also reflect the needs of dependants and the need for men as well as women to benefit from support for work/family balance (Harker and Lewis, 2001, 134). The leadership role for government will thus be to move beyond a simplistic ‘business case’ argument and address the provision of a stronger regulatory framework, with targeted support for employers and employees, particularly those most at risk including sole parents, carers, people with disabilities and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

By developing a whole-of-government strategy around work/family balance, the Victorian government could provide a framework for integrating policy and government action, underpinned by minimum standards to facilitate employee-oriented flexibility and to protect the interests of employers in running efficient and productive businesses. Such a whole-of-government strategy can effectively mobilise government activity across portfolios and provide the basis for review and refinement of policy and action.

In the UK, while government activity around the Work Life Balance agenda is coordinated by Department of Trade and Industry, a whole-of-government approach has placed work/life balance issues into the education and further education arena coordinated within the Department for Education and Skills.
In 1999, the NSW government reviewed its work and family strategy. This led to a refocusing of the strategy to a government partnership with business and the community sector and a renewed focus on increasing compliance and usage of work and family entitlements. The objectives of the NSW *Making it Work: Work and Family Strategy 2001-2003* are now more tightly focused on enforcement of existing minimum standards that support work/family balance. They also emphasise the development of practical and affordable ways for specific industries and organisations to combine work and family commitments to meet the needs of both employers and employees.

A whole-of-government strategy around work/family balance would allow the Victorian government to clearly articulate its policy objectives in supporting work/family balance, focus government action across a range of government department and provide the framework for ongoing review of government policy and action.

**Option 1**

The Victorian government could develop a work-family balance strategic framework for government policy and action across the public, community and private sectors though consultation with key stakeholders. Such a strategy could articulate integrated policy objectives that emphasise enhancing the quality of work, family and community life, gender equality, labour market efficiency and the partnership role of government, business, unions and the community in supporting work/family balance.

### 3.1.2. Providing Leadership and Coordination

Developing and articulating a whole-of-government strategy around work/family balance is in itself a statement of government commitment. This commitment assumes that all arms of government will focus on addressing work/family balance issues. This will be important to ensure the effective delivery and coordination of disparate policies and programs, and also to inform and influence government, industry and community debates about work/family balance.

There are a number of mechanisms that have been used by governments both in Australia and overseas to put work/family balance on the mainstream agenda and coordinate public and private sector activity. These mechanisms can be summarised as:

**Harnessing the input of key stakeholders and experts**

A number of governments have used advisory committees or taskforces to provide coordination and ongoing review of work/family and work/life balance strategies and approaches as well as to promote awareness of the issues. The success of these initiatives depends on the involvement of and ownership by the various stakeholders across the public, private and community sectors.
In Queensland, a Ministerial Work and Family Taskforce has been established to assess industrial legislation and ways to assist workers with family responsibilities. The Taskforce has representation from unions, employer associations, the community sector, academics and the state government.

In Ireland, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment chairs a National Framework Committee for the Development of Family Friendly Policies under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, with representatives from a range of other government departments.

In the UK, the Ministerial Committee on Work-Life Balance has been established to advise the government on how best to promote awareness of voluntary practices in employment in both the public and private sector. The members of this Committee include employer, union, community, government and experts.

One option for the Victorian government would be to convene a specific Work/Family Advisory Committee to provide a mechanism for high-level consultation between government and key stakeholders and to promote awareness of the work/family balance issues. Membership of such an Advisory Committee could include representatives from employer groups, unions, community, key state government agencies and experts.

**A designated Work and Family Unit**

Another aspect of the strategic framework is organisation. A number of governments have established work/family or work/life balance at secretariat level, to implement government strategy and undertake coordination of government activity, to implement specific programs and to undertake or auspice relevant research.

In Australia, the federal government has a Work and Family Unit within the Department of Employee Relations and Business.

In Queensland, the Work and Family Unit within the Queensland Department of Industrial Relations undertakes this role.

In NSW a similar role is fulfilled by the Women’s Equity Bureau within the NSW Department of Industrial Relations.

One option to provide focus for the government’s work/family balance strategy would be to establish a designated central Work and Family Unit. In Victoria such a role could be undertaken either within the Department of Premier and Cabinet or Industrial Relations Victoria within the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development.
Only limited information on work/family balance is currently available on a number of Victorian government websites including Industrial Relations Victoria and the Office of Women’s Policy. Most of the Work and Family and Work/Life Balance units both in Australia and overseas have a website presence with links to other relevant government departments and public and private sector organisations and policies.

In the UK, the DTI Work-Life Balance website provides information about and links to relevant government policies and programs, research and industry case studies. This provides both a central point for information dissemination and a focus for government to promote particular initiatives.

The Victorian government is committed to improving awareness of rights and promoting equal opportunity. Access to information is crucial in promoting rights as well as access to available services. For example, the 1998 ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers revealed that the most common reason for carers not receiving formal respite care when they needed it was that they had either no knowledge of, or insufficient information about, the service (ABS, 2000b, 50). Publication and dissemination of relevant research is important in informing community debates about work/family balance as well as promoting specific initiatives. A dedicated website, managed by the proposed Work and Family Unit, would assist this aim.

To improve the coordination and consistency of policy development across government, the government could initiate ‘work/family audits’ of proposed government policies, initiatives and/or infrastructure projects to ensure that government action enhances rather than diminishes the work/family balance of Victorians. Such an approach has been used extensively within governments in the UK and Ireland as well as by the European Commission as a means of assessing the probable impact of policy initiatives on women and gender equality. ‘Work/family balance’ auditing could be used in a similar manner.

Enhancing the profile for work/family balance issues

A number of governments have established annual awards to encourage and reward good practice in both the public and private sectors.

The Australian government through the Department of Employment Workplace Relations supports the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) National Work and Family Awards, which recognise sound work and personal life policies and their implementation in small, medium and large business.

The Queensland government held its inaugural work and family awards in 2001, which were sponsored by a number of public and private sector organisations. The awards recognise good practice in a range of small and larger public and private sector organisations.
Publicly recognised awards offer one mechanism to promote awareness of work and family balance issues. There are now several such awards relevant to Victorian workplaces, including the ACCI Work and Family Awards, the federal Equal Opportunity in the Workplace Agency’s Business Achievements Awards and the Victorian Office of Public Employment’s People Management Awards. Annual awards, however, have a tendency to focus attention on discrete policies rather than sustained change.

Government can also increase the profile of work/family balance issues by demonstrating leadership and taking the issue up at the highest levels of government. Governments can promote work/family balance issues by modelling employer best practice as discussed below and by publicly discussing changes to the machinery of government, such as more ‘family friendly’ parliamentary sitting times. Other mechanisms include designating a time or event in the government calendar to focus on work/family issues.

In the UK, the Prime Minster launched the Work-Life Balance Campaign at 10 Downing Street and in Scotland, ministerial press releases have been regularly disseminated on issues of work life balance.

In Ireland, a Family Friendly Workplace Day was held on 1 March 2002.

The annual Premier’s Victorian Women’s Summit and other forums could provide an opportunity for the Victorian government to focus attention on work/family issues for the Premier to announce an intention to launch a Victorian Work/Family Balance Strategy.

**Ongoing monitoring and research**
Enhancing knowledge is also important to developing a strategic framework. Increasingly the emphasis in Australia and elsewhere is on evidence-based policy development. Many of the policy initiatives undertaken by Australian and other governments have been based on the findings of government-sponsored research.

In the Netherlands, research on men and women’s working time preferences has provided the basis for quality part-time work initiatives by the government (Plantenga and Remery, 1999).

In the UK, initiatives canvassed in the Green Paper *Parents and Work: Competitiveness and Choice* were informed by wide ranging research into the impact of minimum workplace standards and entitlements on the labour force participation of parents as well as international comparisons of parental leave provisions and part-time work (DTI, 2000a). Evidence that the level of pay and the level and length of paid maternity leave is linked to the decision of mothers to return to their jobs provided impetus for the government’s decision to enhance the level of paid maternity leave and to explicitly assert the benefits of supporting women’s attachment to the labour market (DTI, 2000a).
To ensure collection of better data and to monitor the impact of policies and programs, the State governments in both NSW and Tasmania have worked with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to undertake state specific surveys dealing with managing paid work and caring responsibilities (ABS, 1999; ABS, 2000a). The Queensland government has also worked with the ABS to undertake a similar survey. This is currently underway.

Industrial Relations Victoria, within the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, has recently commissioned ACCIRT to conduct the State of Working Victoria Survey. The survey has two components and it is anticipated that these will form the most comprehensive view of labour market issues in Victoria since 1995. In addition to analysis of a survey of employment practices by firms, an employee survey will be conducted, with the aim of assessing the diverse nature of working arrangements in Victoria, including work-family balance, employment conditions and entitlements.

The results of the State of Working Victoria Survey will provide a valuable benchmark for Victorian government intervention around work/family balance. They may also provide a framework for further research on the work/family balance needs of particular groups in the Victorian community including the Indigenous population, carers, those living in rural and regional communities, those from culturally and linguistic diverse backgrounds and people with disabilities.

A Victorian government commitment to on-going research would provide the basis for future policy development to better respond to the needs of all Victorians. Research activities could include widely disseminating the results of the State of Working Victoria Survey and preparing a joint bid with the Australian Bureau of Statistics to undertake a Victorian-based survey around managing paid work and caring responsibilities to identify the specific needs of a wide range of Victorians. On-going monitoring and research not only provides government with a basis for strategic and appropriate policy responses but also provides the information necessary to contribute to debates within the community on work/family issues, such as around paid maternity leave.

**Option 2**

To provide leadership and coordination of public and private sector work/family balance activity, the Victorian government could establish a Work and Family Advisory Committee. The Committee could provide a mechanism for high level consultation between government and key stakeholders to review Victorian government work/family balance strategies and to promote awareness of work/family balance issues. Membership of such an Advisory Committee could include representatives from employer groups, unions, community, key state government agencies and experts.
Option 3
To coordinate and review public and private sector work/family balance activity, promote relevant government initiatives and raise community awareness of work/family balance, the Victorian government could establish a whole-of-government Work and Family Unit within a central government agency. The Unit could also be responsible for the conduct of ‘work/family audits’ of proposed government policy.

Option 4
To provide a centralised contact point for the collection of information, provide information and links to relevant government policies, programs and research and promotion of particular initiatives, the Victorian government could establish a dedicated website, managed by the proposed Work and Family Unit.

Option 5
To increase the profile of work/family balance, the Premier and other Ministers could encourage discussion of the issue in public forums and media statements as well as publicly launch any policy initiatives in respect of work/family balance.

Option 6
To provide the basis for future policy development to better respond to the work/family balance needs of all Victorians, the Victorian government could commission further research. This could build on the results of the State of Working Victoria Survey, and investigate the work/family needs of particular groups in the Victorian community. The Victorian government could also consider preparing a joint bid with the Australian Bureau of Statistics to undertake a Victorian-based survey around managing paid work and caring responsibilities to identify the specific needs of a wide range of Victorians.

3.1.3 Government as Employer

Most Victorian government departments and agencies have a range of flexible work policies in place which build on the entitlements set out in the Public Service (Non-Executive Staff-Victoria) (Section 170MX) Award 2000, the Victorian Public Service (Non Executive Staff-Victoria) Agreement 2000 and specific agency agreements. These provisions include access to part-time work, carer’s leave, maternity and paternity leave, time in lieu of overtime as well as access to additional unpaid annual leave through 48/52 arrangements.
Over the last 10 years, there has been considerable work undertaken in individual agencies and departments to address the issues of implementation and uptake. Many have undertaken work/family needs assessments and audited their existing policies, putting in place a range of strategies to increase the flexible work options available and to increase the effective implementation of work/family or work/life policies. For example, the Department of Education and Training has been promoting access to and implementation of flexible working options in school and non-school locations since 1998 through its flexible work package (see Education Victoria, 1998). Many government agencies and departments have made information about flexible work options available to staff via booklets and departmental intranets.

A number of Victorian government departments have been commended for their efforts in developing work/family policies, such as Parks Victoria and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (both ACCI Work and Family Award 2000 finalists) and the Department of Education and Training (Office of Public Employment Managing Diversity Awards 1999). As noted above, the Office of Public Employment also recognises public sector good practice in supporting work/family balance in its People Management Awards.

In both the 2000 and 2001 VPS enterprise bargaining negotiations, the government endorsed a number of family friendly policies for insertion into the agreements. However there are some important gaps in the coverage and implementation of work/family policies highlighted in a number of internal work/family or work/life balance reviews within individual departments. These include:

- the exclusion of certain employees. For example, public servants classified above VPS 4 level do not have access to time in lieu arrangements. Executive Officers are not formally entitled to any paid paternity leave and their use of sick leave as carers leave is in accordance with their employers’ policy.

- limited effective access to and uptake of award and agreement provisions.

Internal work/family audits suggest that this may be due to range of factors, including some unevenness in employee and manager knowledge about entitlements within and across organisations and an inconsistent implementation of work/family policies within departments and agencies. For example, while most government agencies have defined policies and procedures for part-time work, the usage and uptake of part-time work is mainly limited to those at a more junior level. There also appears to be a poorer uptake of ‘family friendly’ policies by men. The long hours culture in a number of work units within agencies and departments makes it difficult for those in more senior positions to access flexible work arrangements and can also lead to the those who do being marginalised.

Some agency agreements provide for better work and family entitlements than others. For example, in the recently negotiated Victorian Superannuation Board enterprise agreement, the provision of paid maternity leave of 12 weeks can now be extended as paid parental leave to the primary carer. This is a significant initiative, particularly in encouraging men’s uptake of work and family entitlements, yet there is little sharing of knowledge about such good practice across the State government sector.
A whole-of-government approach

In considering work/family balance issues, a number of governments both in Australia and overseas have taken a whole-of-government approach to their role as direct employers, with endorsement by the head of government.

As part of its ‘Delivering Better Government’ Action Plan, the National Assembly for Wales undertook a Flexible Working Review in 2000, examining working time arrangements for Welsh public servants. The Review audited the Assembly’s available flexible working policies and benchmarked provision against other public and private sector organisations. After widespread consultation, the major outcome of the Review was a relaunch of the Assembly’s flexible working policies under the banner of “WorkChoices”, incorporating a new statement of commitment by the Permanent Secretary. In addition to existing flexible work policies, eligibility for career breaks was extended for all staff, and the internal job advertising system was changed to include the assumption that all posts are amendable to part-time/jobshare working unless a business case can be made to prove otherwise. The core time of the flexible hours system was reduced and a commitment made to incorporate the benefits of flexible working in relevant training programmes for managers. In addition a dedicated intranet has been established for all Assembly staff.

The ACT Chief Minister recently released the policy ‘Work-Life Balance in the ACT Public Service’. This policy establishes a whole-of-government framework that tackles specific family-friendly initiatives and the particular needs of families, although its main emphasis is on whole of life balance for all employees. All agencies are required to develop work/life balance plans to address the needs of employees and create a more effective and productive public service. As part of the policy, larger agencies are required to establish and maintain a room for nursing mothers and a carer’s room.

A ‘whole-of-government’ approach to work/family balance, publicly endorsed by the Premier, would allow the government in its role as employer to build on the significant initiatives currently in place across the public sector and adopt sector-wide the best practice of individual departments and agencies. Such an approach could allow issues of access, implementation and uptake, as highlighted above, to be comprehensively examined. It would need to be coordinated within the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC), which is now responsible for the human resources function of Victorian government employment. Individual departments and agencies could, for example, be required to develop work-family balance plans that conformed to a set of minimum public sector standards.

In many of the internal work/family and flexible work audits undertaken within Victorian government departments, knowledge about entitlements to flexible work emerges as a significant barrier to the uptake of flexible work or family friendly work options. While a number of departments now have an information strategy including intranet access, booklets, forums and networks, there is little consistency of information and little ‘sharing’ across State government departments and agencies.

To provide for consistency of information and facilitate access to information on family friendly work options, DPC could be responsible for providing the coordination point for
information dissemination both through publications and through the government-sector wide intranet. To maximise the efficiency of a whole-of-government work/family balance strategy across the public and private sector, the area of DPC responsible for work/family balance in public service employment could be linked with the proposed Work and Family Unit.

**Targeting specific issues**

Once a whole-of-government approach to work/family balance in the Victorian public service is established, standards and gaps in the coverage of work/family policies can be identified and particular issues targeted. Targeted issues could include establishing a set of minimum standards in the next enterprise agreement and building on the minimum part-time work standards in the recently endorsed VPS Agreement, to ensure that part-time work offered in government is quality part-time employment. This is explored in more detail below.

Other initiatives could include promoting the uptake of flexible work arrangements by men and senior managers as well as women and more junior employees, which could both enhance the quality of the work and family lives of employees and address systemic discrimination against women. One way to address this would to ensure that staff beyond VPS 4 could access and were encouraged to use time in lieu arrangements and that executive officers had entitlement to and were encouraged to use paid paternity leave. Other options could include developing creative solutions to meet the needs of rural and regional employees such as through telecommuting, as has been undertaken by the NSW Road Transport Authority.

By taking an integrated approach to work/family balance in government employment, the Victorian government can enhance the efficiency of its workforce through improved employee morale and commitment as well as retaining and attracting the skills of parents and carers in government employment. As an employer, the State government is also able to demonstrate the viability of a range of work/family balance initiatives and thus offer a “laboratory” for trialing ideas that may then be implemented in the private sector. Being a model employer would provide some moral high ground in expecting and requesting changes around work/family balance in the private sector (Canadian Council on Social Development, 1999).
### Option 7

To build on current initiatives within a number of individual government departments and agencies, the Victorian government could consider taking an integrated approach to work/family balance within government employment. Responsibility for the coordination and management of a public sector work/family approach could be located in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Possible areas of government action could include:

- developing a comprehensive and inclusive public service work/family policy with a statement of commitment from the Premier;
- reviewing and improving public sector standards and addressing gaps in coverage of work and family provisions in enterprise agreements, executive employment contracts and in departmental and agency policies;
- requiring individual departments and agencies to develop work/family balance plans which conform with a set of minimum public service standards;
- providing information across the public service in respect to entitlements and policies though the government wide intranet;
- sharing and promoting good practice across the public service; and
- undertaking and coordinating government research and pilot programs to trial innovative work/family initiatives in the public service.

### 3.1.4 Intergovernmental liaison with federal, local and other State governments

Within a federal system of government, State governments do not have an unfettered role in policy formation. However, all Australian states and territories are currently led by Labor governments. This provides a unique opportunity for the Victorian government - in conjunction with the other state and territory governments - to play a larger role in key areas of national policy and, in some instances, to set the agenda in areas where the federal government lags behind.

COAG meetings, the Leaders Forum and other major intergovernmental meetings all provide forums within which key issues that shape the work/family balance could be taken up. These issues range from labour market policy and regulation through to the provision of paid maternity leave and quality childcare. In addition, joint action by State and Territory governments provides another mechanism to address these issues in tandem with other States. For, example, state and territory Labor Governments have made a joint submission in the 2002 Living Wage Case and several Labor governments have also made a joint submission to the ACTU Reasonable Hours Test case, still before the A IRC.

Two areas where the Victorian government could take action in collaboration with other state and territory governments are achieving improved childcare provision and service integration, and achieving a national system of paid maternity leave. These areas are particularly crucial because the provision of formal childcare services and paid maternity leave both correlate with higher employment rates for women in their thirties, when their employment is most likely to be affected by child rearing and childcare (OECD, 2001, 153).
Another related issue is that of gender pay equity, which - while it is beyond the scope of this report - will need to be addressed at both the national and State level if a better work/family balance, particularly for women, is to be achieved and men are to be encouraged to share responsibility for caring work within the family. The lack of pay equity in Victoria and in the rest of Australia is linked with the choices women and their partners make about work, and with the financial rewards for women who return to the paid workforce over their life course. It is also linked with the shortage of qualified childcare workers. Indeed ensuring the remuneration of childcare workers reflects the value of the work they undertake would help to meet the demand for qualified childcare staff, as well as contribute to the proper valuing of children within the community (Wannan, 2002).

**Childcare provision**

In Victoria as in the rest of Australia, the demand for formal childcare outstrips supply preventing many mothers from entering the labour force or working more hours (McDonald, P., 2002, 7). Issues relating to children are a State responsibility under the Australian Constitution. However the policy separation of care and education for children, particularly those under school age, has led to the federal government subsidising community and private childcare provision through payments to parents or centres, while the Victorian government undertakes the regulation of childcare services and subside the provision of pre-school education. This policy separation, reflecting what has been seen as the competing interests of mothers who work and mothers who stay at home, is increasingly out of touch with the realities and needs of parents who move in and out of the labour force, and who require integrated childcare services. It is also indifferent to the best interests of their children (Wannan, 2001).

Recently there have been calls for a coordinated policy framework at both the federal and State level for the development and delivery of universal, integrated early childhood education and care services (McDonald, P., 2002) as well as improved work-related flexibility of services (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001). Such proposals go beyond the targeted limits of the Victorian BestStart program. The Victorian government could play an important role in advocating the redevelopment of a national integrated system of early child education and care services in appropriate forums. Another related initiative for the Victorian government could be to trial the establishment of integrated childcare networks which link mainstream services to specialist services at the local community level (Wannan, 2002). Indeed such pilot projects could form part of the ‘times in the city’ approach suggested later in this chapter.

**Paid maternity leave**

Paid maternity leave is a vital minimum standard in supporting families to better manage work/family balance. As highlighted in chapter 2, it is positively associated with maintaining women’s labour market participation and redressing gender inequality. By supporting the decisions now made by an increasing number of Australian families to combine work and family, a national and comprehensive scheme of paid maternity leave would ensure significant social benefits, and would contribute to the viability and social cohesion of communities (HREOC, 2002, 60) However, Australia lags far behind in failing to make this provision, being one of only two industrialised countries that do not provide some form of paid leave.
In April 2002, the federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner released a discussion paper to canvass a number of options for paid maternity leave (HREOC, 2002). Together with other state and territory governments, the Victorian government has a key role to play in advocating for a comprehensive paid maternity leave scheme. It can do this by promoting discussion of the funding options and ensuring that the option which meets ILO minimum standards and best facilitates the labour market participation of women is pursued in appropriate Commonwealth, State and Territory forums. Together with other state and territory governments, the Victorian government could also pressure the federal government to ratify the ILO Maternity Leave Convention. State governments also have a significant role in leading the paid maternity leave debate and achieving the broad community consensus necessary to support a national scheme of paid maternity leave.

The Victorian government's relationship with local government provides a means to tackle issues of work/family balance at the local community level, including in respect to local government employment. Currently provision of maternity leave differs from shire to shire and council to council, with some local authorities not providing any paid leave and others providing varying amounts. If the Commonwealth government does not announce an intention in the short to medium term to introduce a comprehensive national scheme of paid maternity leave, the Victorian government could actively encourage local councils and shires to introduce paid maternity leave to meet ILO minimum standards.

<table>
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<th>Option 8</th>
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<tr>
<td>In appropriate federal, state and territory forums, the Victorian government could take up the following issues as a matter of priority:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• developing a coordinated policy framework both at the federal and State level for the development and delivery of universal, integrated and affordable early child education and care services</td>
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<tr>
<td>• advocating for the implementation of a comprehensive national system of paid maternity leave that meets minimum ILO standards</td>
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<th>Option 9</th>
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<td>In the event that the Commonwealth government does not announce an intention in the short to medium term to introduce a comprehensive national scheme of paid maternity leave, the Victorian government could consider encouraging local government to provide paid maternity leave to its employees, consistent with ILO minimum standards.</td>
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3.2. Setting minimum standards to support work/family balance

In addition to providing strategic leadership, international experience demonstrates that a clear regulatory framework, establishing and generalising working time and parental and other leave arrangements, is a crucial basis for effective government intervention to assist work/family balance. Despite the referral of many of Victoria’s industrial powers to the Commonwealth, there is a clear opportunity for the Victorian government to make a serious contribution in several areas, which will provide practical and symbolic outcomes. Given the regulatory policy vacuum at the federal level in Australia, it is vital that the Victorian government take action to establish some baseline standards and protections for Victorian workplaces in both the public and private sector. In particular this would include ensuring that any federal government amendments to the WRA provide Schedule 1A workers with access to the same basic entitlements as workers covered by federal awards.

In our view, the Victorian government could play a significant role in assisting workers to balance work and family responsibilities while maintaining their attachment to the paid workforce. In particular, the government could address the main mechanisms - special leave and career breaks, part-time work and flexible work schedules – outlined in chapter 2, to support those with caring and parenting responsibilities. Specific options explored in relation to setting minimum standards are:

- promoting provision of paid maternity and parental leave;
- extending workplace rights of parent and carers;
- extending the protection of part-time workers;
- ensuring contracts which cover government purchase of services comply with minimum work/family standards.

3.2.1 Promoting paid maternity and parental leave

The preferred option for the Victorian government to pursue in relation to paid maternity leave would be advocating for a comprehensive national scheme. In practical terms, however, discussion and negotiation of a national or state based scheme will be lengthy. In the interim, it is important for the Victorian government to demonstrate leadership, particularly in its role in public service employment.

One option the government could pursue is reviewing its current provision of paid maternity leave and parental leave and ensuring this complies with minimum international standards both in terms of coverage and length of leave. While longer than that provided to public servants by some other State governments, the current provision of 12 weeks paid maternity leave to Victorian public servants does not meet the ILO minimum standard of 14 weeks. It may also be possible to extend the entitlement to paid maternity leave as paid parental leave to the primary carer as recently negotiated in the Victorian Superannuation Board Enterprise Agreement. Another option for encouraging the uptake of paid maternity leave in the private sector could be to require businesses tendering for

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1 For example, eligible public servants in NSW are entitled to nine weeks paid maternity leave with eligible public servants in South Australia having had access to only two weeks paid maternity leave.
government business to provide for paid maternity leave. This issue of contract compliance is explored below.

**Option 10**

To demonstrate leadership in providing for workers with parenting responsibilities, the Victorian Government, in its role as employer, could consider:

- extending the public service provision of maternity leave to a minimum of 14 weeks;
- extending public service paid maternity leave entitlements to the primary carer as paid parental leave.

### 3.2.2 Extending rights for carers and parents

While the previous Victorian government referred the government’s powers to arbitrate and conciliate in respect of state awards to the Commonwealth, the Victorian government still maintains a range of industrial powers. These include the setting of public holidays, and the provision of long service leave. There is no Constitutional impediment to the Victorian government legislating to ensure work/family balance in Victorian workplaces, if such legislation is not inconsistent with Commonwealth provisions such as in the WRA, awards or agreements. In that case, Commonwealth legislation prevails to the extent of the inconsistency. In addition, as noted above, the Victorian *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* (EOA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, marital status pregnancy, breastfeeding and carer and parental status.

There are two legislative initiatives the Victorian government could investigate to provide tangible assistance to carers and parents and to signal the government’s commitment to supporting the choices employees make about their work/family balance. These are legislating for the right for carers and parents to request flexible work arrangements and extending anti-discrimination provisions to further protect parents and carers.

**A right to request flexible work**

In its joint submission with the states of Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia and Tasmania to the ACTU Reasonable Hours Test Case before the AIRC, the Victorian government argued that the current federal regulatory framework was inadequate to deal with the issue of working time. Further it argued that there was a need for broad, common standards to provide a safety net to control excessive work hours while still allowing for flexibility in workplaces. However, the quality of work, family and community relationships is not only related to controlling excessive hours but to employee control over the times and days those hours are worked.
In the UK, the government has recently introduced legislative amendments, due to come into force in April 2003, that provide a statutory right for parents of children under six years of age or of children with disabilities up to 18 years old, to request, in writing, working time changes in relation to the hours, times and location of their work. Under the proposed legislation an employer is bound to consider the request and can only refuse it, in writing, on certain grounds. Parents will have a right to go to an employment tribunal if employers turn down their request (UK Employment Bill 2001). The purpose of the legislation is that employers should give serious consideration to requests for flexible working from employees who are parents of young children. The UK Government is committed to the legislation because it believes that it will ‘contribute to better decision-making within companies and encourage dialogue between employers and employees about how the demands of family life can be accommodated without damaging business performance’ (DTI 2000b).

To complement any award provisions coming out of the Reasonable Hours Test Case, the Victorian government could consider legislating for a similar right to request and a duty to consider flexible working time and location arrangements on similar terms to the UK provisions. In our view, coverage should be extended to carers and parents with dependent children rather than solely to parents of young children.

Carers also need to be able to adjust their working schedules to accommodate both their caring roles and paid work. As indicated above, there is no legislative impediment to a Victorian right to request/duty to consider being enacted. If such legislation was found to be inconsistent with provisions in particular federal awards or agreements, that award or agreement clause will prevail over the State legislation to the extent of the inconsistency. In any event, Schedule 1A workers would be provided with some direct protection and in practical terms such legislation would cover most Victorian workplaces.

By legislating a right to request flexible work, the Victorian government could demonstrate it was serious about enhancing and supporting the choices made by parents and carers in balancing their work and family responsibilities. Ensuring employee requests for flexible arrangements were reasonably accommodated could enable some parents to remain in employment and would have benefits in terms of reduced turnover and increased skills retention. Potentially such regulation can contribute to better decision making within enterprises and encourage dialogue between employers and employees about how the demands of family life can be accommodated without damaging business performance (DTI, 2000b).

The UK legislation has been introduced after considerable research and consultation with the community and with business. This has included a regulatory impact assessment of the proposed legislation, which provided a detailed analysis of the benefits and costs (DTI, 2000b). A similar commitment to consultation and detailed analysis of the regulatory impact of any Victorian legislative change would be critical to facilitating its acceptance across the community, business, unions and the political parties.
Extending protection for parents and carers against discrimination
Currently discrimination against carers and parents is prohibited in Victoria. This provision, similar to that in a number of other Australian state jurisdictions is an important one. In 2000/01, 108 complaints on the grounds of parental status and 45 complaints on the grounds of carer status were made to the Equal Opportunity Commission (Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria, 2001a, 29).

In March 2001, the NSW government legislated to introduce carers’ responsibilities as a ground of discrimination under the *NSW Anti-Discrimination Act*. This provision goes further than that provided in Victoria and positively implements an obligation on an employer to ‘reasonably accommodate’ an employee’s or job applicant’s needs in relation to their carer responsibilities. This shifts the obligation on to the employer to justify a refusal to accommodate a person with carer responsibilities. The employer thus has to demonstrate that the accommodation required would impose an ‘unreasonable hardship’ on the employer. Between March and June 2001, there were 455 inquiries and 20 complaints on the grounds of carer responsibilities lodged with the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board (NSW Anti-Discrimination Board, 2001).

Amendments to the EOA to extend the current prohibition on discrimination on both parental and carer status would make pursuing complaints, particularly those that raise indirect discrimination under the current provisions, far more straightforward. This is because indirect discrimination claims must establish that the complainant is ‘unable to comply’ with the requirements imposed and that there is the lack of ‘reasonableness’ on the part of the employer. Extending the Victorian prohibition on discrimination on the grounds of carer and parental status by obliging employers to reasonably accommodate carers and parents in the workplace would also make a clear statement that it is not acceptable to either exclude an employee on the basis of their caring responsibilities or to treat them less favourably than other employees.

Option 11
To establish minimum standards in relation to working time and ensure adequate protection for parents and carers in the workplace, the Victorian Government could investigate:

- legislating to provide for an employee right to request flexible work on the grounds of carer and parental status and an employer duty to reasonably consider such requests;
- amending the Victorian *Equal Opportunity Act* in respect to discrimination on the grounds of parental and carer status to provide for the reasonable accommodation by employers of employees’ family responsibilities.
3.2.3 Extending rights for part-time workers

The option to work less than full-time hours may not be open to those who want to do so, either because part-time work is unavailable in many occupations, particularly at more senior levels, or because there is a lack of knowledge that part-time options may exist. Penalties in the tax transfer system - particularly through Tax Benefit Part B - also discourage transition into part-time work, and constrain the choices parents have in making the transition into paid employment (McDonald, 2001). As discussed in chapter 2, much part-time work in Australia is of poor quality and is typically associated with little or no access to training, job-sharing or career progression and limited access to other workplace benefits, particularly for those working on a temporary basis or shorter hours. There are also difficulties in transferring in and out of full-time work.

A new deal for part-time workers is required, to improve the quality of their jobs and ensure access to quality part-time work for those who need or want it (Buchanan and Thornthwaite, 2001, 3). Raising the status of part-time work and creating the condition where more people are willing and able to work on a part-time basis, can work to support women’s choices about maintaining their labour market attachment and is one mechanism to redress systemic discrimination against women. This is because quality part-time work has the potential to offer a ‘bridge’ allowing women to enter/re-enter paid employment or to maintain continuous participation, albeit on reduced hours. Part-time work also allows men to take on caring work (Fagan and O’Reilly, 1998, 8).


In Germany, where discrimination against part-time workers has been prohibited for some time, the national government has recently introduced new part-time laws that cover enterprises with 15 or more employees. This new law provides that:

- employers must honour employee requests to move from full-time to part-time;
- part-time workers who want to return to full-time work must be given preference where full-time jobs are available;
- employees have the right to request a reduction in their working hours with the onus on employers to demonstrate that such a request is not possible.

The importance of regulation is underscored in the difference in the quality of part-time work in the Netherlands and in the UK. In the Netherlands part-time work is of better quality and less associated with the significant gender inequality that has typically characterised part-time work in the UK and elsewhere. Men make up a larger than average proportion of part-timers and there has been some integration of part-time working in the career structure in the Netherlands (Plantenga and Remery, 1999).

Dutch policy has focused on actively promoting the quantity and quality of part-time work as being integral to enhancing the economic independence of women through facilitating a redistribution of paid and unpaid work between the sexes (Fagan, Plantenga and Rubery, 1995, 131-132). The Dutch government, with the support of the trade unions, has deliberately pursued a policy of redistributing the existing volume of work through
reducing normal working hours for full timers and encouraging part-time work, in conjunction with an extension of part-time parental leave. Today almost a third of the workforce has a part-time job.

In the UK the government is now seeking to address the issue of part-time work. As part of its response to the EU Directive on Part-time Work, the UK introduced the *Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations* after a public consultation process (DTI, 2000b) to ensure part-timers are not treated less favourably than comparable full-timers in their terms and conditions, unless it is objectively justified.

Most Victorian workers covered under federal awards have some minimum standards established in awards and agreements in relation to part-time work. In the latest enterprise agreement Victorian workers in the public service will be able to work on a part-time basis until their child starts school. Some limited protection of ‘regular’ part-time workers in respect to predictable hours of work came out of the 1997 *Award Simplification Case* (AIRC, Print P7500). However few simplified awards with part-time provisions have followed this standard (see WFU, 1998, 37-8). Part-time provisions in most federal awards and agreements provide inadequate standards for part-time work and in many instances they are not observed in the workplace. Part-time Schedule 1A workers also have little protection. Nor are part-time workers directly protected by federal or Victorian anti-discrimination legislation.

Options for the Victorian government to pursue which would extend rights to part-time workers include inserting part-time status as a ground of discrimination in the EOA and establishing clear criteria for quality part-time work, which could be trialed in a public sector pilot as proposed in 3.3 below.

**Protecting part-time workers against discrimination**

In both federal and State anti-discrimination jurisdictions, there have been a number of cases, which have been brought because of discrimination against workers who work or want to work on a part-time basis. In federal and State jurisdictions such cases are brought as complaints of indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex, because it is women who overwhelmingly work part-time. In most cases it is easily established that refusal to provide part-time work or to treat someone less favourably because they work part time, raises the issue of discrimination on the grounds of sex. However there are difficulties in establishing indirect discrimination and the concept of indirect discrimination is poorly understood by employers and by some tribunals and courts.

One option for the Victorian government would be to clarify the legal position in relation to discriminatory treatment of part-time staff, including casual workers working less than full-time and Schedule 1A workers. It is important to ensure the law clearly provides that it is discriminatory to treat part-timers less favourably than comparable full-timers, as provided for in the UK. It would also be useful to explore amendments to the EOA to provide, in similar terms to the recent German part-time laws, for the ‘reasonable accommodation’ by employers of employee requests to reduce their working hours and to move from part-time to full-time work or vice versa. In the event that any amending provisions were inconsistent with a particular federal award or agreement provision, the
federal provision would prevail. Extending the current protection of the EOA to part-time workers would be particularly advantageous for part-time Schedule 1A workers and other part-time workers who do not have adequate agreement or award coverage.

Option 12

To ensure adequate protection for part-time workers and those who wish to work part-time, the Victorian Government could clarify the current legal position of part-time workers, and if necessary, strengthen the EOA to expressly prohibit discrimination on the grounds of part-time status in the area of employment and provide for the ‘reasonable accommodation’ of part-time workers.

3.2.5 Contract Compliance

The Victorian government currently requires businesses that supply services to the government to conform to a range of requirements. These include requirements to comply with relevant Commonwealth and State legislation in respect of the conditions of employment for employees and subcontractors. Such conditions include anti-discrimination provisions and award rates of pay. Recently the Government announced a tender for the provision of legal services to the government. Those legal firms tendering to undertake this work were required to comply with additional requirements including providing details of compliance with equal employment opportunity obligations.

One option for the Victorian government to consider in demonstrating its commitment to work/family balance is to require those businesses tendering to supply government services to comply with a number of provisions that support the work and family balance of their employees and sub-contractors. Where those employees and sub-contractors are covered under Schedule 1A of the WRA, requirements could work to effectively provide those employees with some support for work/family balance.

Matters with which tenders could be required to comply include:

- the presence of a work and family or work/life policy in the tendering organisation;
- rights to carer’s leave for its employees and sub contractors;
- paid maternity leave.

Option 13

To encourage businesses to support the work/family balance of their employees and sub-contractors, the Victorian government could consider requiring companies tendering for government business to meet certain minimum requirements.
3.3 Leading the Way: Work/Family Industry Pilots

Another important role of government is in setting standards and supporting innovative work/family balance practice across the public and private sectors.

The Queensland government has recently established a partnership arrangement between the Department of Industrial Relations and the University of Queensland to progress workplace pilots across a broad cross section of public and private organisations throughout the state as part of an Australian Research Council grant. This action research was part of an election commitment at the most recent State election. One such project is the Reducing Stress at Home through a Worksite Parenting and Family Support Initiative.

There is an important opportunity for the Victorian government to pilot innovative work/family practice in both the public and private sectors in collaboration with unions and employers. As highlighted in chapter 2, two of the most important mechanisms that can support employees through their life course transitions are quality part-time work and employee control over working hours. Public and private sector pilots could be used to build on minimum standards frameworks in these two areas. These pilots would show how employees can be supported through a variety of life course transitions in ways that benefit both employees and employers, and provide the basis for extension to other industry sectors.

3.3.1 Quality part-time work

As highlighted in chapter 2, part-time work is not necessarily ‘family-friendly’. However along with entitlements to paid maternity leave, parental leave, carers leave and the public provision of childcare, access to quality part-time work plays a key role in encouraging and maintaining the labour force participation of women. Quality part-time work that is open to and taken up by men also provides a way of tackling the care divide by improving men’s capacity for involvement in the family sphere (Latta and O’Conghaile, 2000). Increasing the quality of part-time work not only has the potential to addresses gender equality but also is to increase the flexibility of the labour market, making it easier for the unemployed to find jobs and benefiting both employees and businesses (DTI, 2000c).

So what are the characteristics of quality part-time work? Both Australian and overseas research suggest that indicators of quality include substantial hours of at least 20-25 hours per week (Latta and O’Conghaile, 2000; McDonald, P., 2001). However quality part-time work is more than a matter of hours. It also includes:

- effective access to part-time work at all occupational and seniority levels and for both men and women;
- the same protections as full-time work in respect to job protection, predictability of hours, working beyond contracted hours and discrimination;
- pro-rata wages and access to benefits;
- equal access to training; and
- being able to transfer either way between full-time and part-time work.
The key issue to promote part-time work as an option to assist in life course transitions is to ensure that part-time work is an integrated rather than a marginalised form of employment (Fagan, 1999, 58). Dutch experience suggests that mechanisms to achieve quality part-time work involve special protection through the establishment and promotion of minimum standards, the facilitation of transitions between part-time to full-time work through education and training and in particular promoting the opportunities for men. This can be achieved through incentives to reduce overtime, enhancing part-time work opportunities for men and addressing the negative image of part-time work and damaging effects of part-time work on career prospects (Latta and O’Conghaile, 2000).

In its role as employer, the Victorian government could consider an explicit declaration, in similar terms to the Welsh National Assembly, that all internally advertised public service jobs advertised as being able to be worked on a part-time or job share basis unless a business case can be made to prove otherwise. Because of the significant cultural barriers to part-time work at senior levels, a more feasible option for the Victorian government in the short term may be to undertake a pilot project in a public sector agency to investigate and trial the implementation of quality part-time work.

The methodology for undertaking such action research could be modelled on a project undertaken in 1999 in the NSW Attorney General’s Department with the Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Employment. This project was designed to develop strategies based on good practice within the Department in implementing flexible work practices (ODEOPE, 1999). Based on an initial audit of current practice, a number of key interventions were taken to address the challenges to implementing flexible work practices. The pilot programs were then evaluated to determine the impact of the interventions and further changes made, which were found to have led to a positive shift in attitudes of both managers and employees.

Given the support for part-time work in Victoria Police, as publicly articulated by the Chief Commissioner of Police, and supported by the Police Association, it may be worth investigating such a pilot project in the Victoria Police. The Department of Education Employment and Training may also provide an opportunity for such a trial given its current commitment to task-focussed, time limited working groups. Such a pilot could provide for quality part-time work provision to be part of negotiations in the next Victorian public sector enterprise agreement and could also provide a model for extension into the private sector.

**Option 14**

To enhance part-time work opportunities for men and women and to address the barriers to the integration of part-time work across occupations and seniority levels, the Victorian government could undertake a pilot initiative in a central government agency, which would investigate and trial the implementation of quality part-time work.
3.3.2 Employee choice rostering

An industry focus would also provide the opportunity to pilot an employee choice rostering initiative. Employee choice rostering schemes provide for employees to choose their own working time arrangements within the constraints of the business. This provides many employees with a greater capacity to balance their work and family lives. Employee choice rostering has advantages for employers as well as employees. Apart from high levels of staff morale and productivity, firms can better align staff levels to production requirements (Buchanan and Thornthwaite, 2001, 59). Clearly employee choice rostering needs to be supported by legislative protections such as the right to request flexible work as proposed above as well as by union/management negotiation of specific industry or workplace provisions. To support work/family balance, workers need more than legal entitlements; they need a supportive workplace culture that values and benefits from enhancing employee choice.

Under the NSW Government 2001-2003 Work and Family Strategy, a number of projects that focus on innovative ways of improving business responses to work/family balance have been undertaken. One of these is developing an industry generic model of effective rostering and work/family balance practices in residential care. Developed from the experiences of management, nursing staff and ancillary staff at seven residential care facilities in metropolitan and regional centres of NSW, this model aims to highlight the strategies that worked for these organisations in ways which are both cost effective and enable employees to balance their family responsibilities. The project is funded by the NSW government and is oversighted by a working group of government, union, employer and aged services association representatives. Evaluation of the program has not yet been completed, but initial feedback indicates considerable support for meeting employee preferences for working time flexibility among employers. Anticipated benefits of doing so include attracting and retaining skilled staff, particularly in rural and regional areas, and an enhanced quality of patient care.

The Victorian Government could consider establishing government/business/union partnerships to investigate the viability of employee choice rostering across a number of industries. In particular, it would be valuable to build on the significant work undertaken in NSW in the residential care sector, by undertaking a similar pilot project in the Victorian residential care sector.

**Option 15**

To encourage workplace standards that support employee choice, the Victorian Government could undertake an industry pilot in the residential care industry to trial and evaluate the implementation of employee choice rostering initiatives, which could build on an evaluation of similar initiatives in NSW.
In Australia and in Victoria, the predominant focus of industrial policy around work/family balance has been on encouraging the negotiation of ‘family friendly’ policies at the workplace level. However, OECD experience shows that the enterprise approach to supporting work/family balance is most effective when used in tandem with public provision of services and a framework of minimum standards and entitlements. As noted in chapter 1, the recent UK government strategy emphasises this approach, with the government’s commitment to work with and support business in the implementation of work/family initiatives building on a strengthened platform of minimum standards.

How can governments encourage employers to adopt workplace policies and practices that extend existing minimum standards and respond to the specific needs of their employees and their businesses? One mechanism outlined in the previous section is to pilot innovative industry initiatives in collaboration with unions and employers to ensure formal rights and entitlements are supported by a productive and accommodating work environment. Another mechanism is to provide practical support and advice to business, particularly for small business, easing the costs of change and ensuring compliance with minimum standards. A third mechanism is to establish consultation structures in partnership with business to ensure the development of effective information advice strategies to support business and provide a focus for consultation.

While a number of Australian employers may have adopted workplaces policies and practices around work/family initiatives, there is little evidence of strategic implementation within organisations (Russell and Bourke, 1999). However this does not mean that there is no employer support for flexible workplace policies and provisions that are responsive to individual employee preferences. A recent representative survey of over 2500 employers in the UK highlights the underlying level of support for the idea of work-life balance from employers. Most employers agreed that people work best when they can strike a better balance between work and the rest of their lives. They also agreed that everyone should be able to balance their work and home lives in the way they want (Hogarth, Hasluck and Pierre, 2001). Work/family balance is important for employers as well. A recent survey by VECCI found that lifestyle and family considerations were the top two factors influencing the decision to locate a business in regional Victoria (VECCI, 2001).

However, employers may overstate the limitations imposed by the nature of the business on supporting work/family balance or may be unsure about how to provide support to employees. OECD research also suggests that many organisations are unaware of the benefits of appropriate kinds of flexibility to assist employees balance their work and family responsibilities (OECD, 2001). Despite increasing awareness that responding to employee needs for increased flexibility to manage work/family balance can improve productivity, there are prejudices and stereotypes about the type of employee likely to work flexibly also continue to hinder the widespread adoption of flexible working policies (Work and Parents Taskforce, 2001). One important role for government is to sponsor research that shows where benefits are most likely to be obtained, as well as to offer technical industry-specific advice on how to ease any costs in introducing family-friendly arrangements successfully.
There is however a considerable diversity of views among employers about work/family balance and workplace culture mediates effective access to working time and leave arrangements that can support work/family balance. Negotiating work-family balance at the workplace level requires a change in organisational culture and the organisation of work through the development of trust, partnership approaches and joint problem solving (Pillinger, 2001). In the Australian context, this requires a new emphasis on employee choice around working time arrangements and partnerships between government, employers and unions. In particular, it will be important to promote the importance of including these issues in collective bargaining, ensuring that work/family benefits are not traded off or made effectively inaccessible by other negotiated working time changes.

The Victorian Government’s commitments to building cohesive communities, reducing inequalities and building thriving innovative industries in Growing Victoria Together provides a useful framework within which government/industry partnerships, including those with small business, can develop innovative partnership approaches to work/family balance for employees.

In this section we explore three possible options for Victorian government intervention. These are:

- supporting workplace partnerships;
- providing support and providing advice to small business;
- encouraging the promotion of work/family balance by business.

### 3.4.1 Supporting partnerships at the workplace

Governments have a role in sponsoring research to show where the benefits are most likely to be gained, as well as in offering technical advice on how to introduce family friendly arrangements successfully, and the ways to create a supportive workplace culture (OECD, 2001, 153). One way to provide such advice is in financial support and specialist guidance on the implementation of work/family balance policies at the workplace level. Government partnerships with unions and employers provide an important mechanism to support good practice in the private sector around organisational cultural change and the ‘perceived useability’ of family-friendly initiatives (Eaton, 2001, 17)

The Partners at Work Program and the Premiers Partnership Awards, recently announced by the Victorian government, recognise and support organisations that create a partnership approach to improving workplace practices. Modelled on similar initiatives in the UK and Canada, the pilot Partners at Work Program aims to encourage cooperation and partnership between employers, employees and unions through support and funding for organisations that are developing cooperative practices in the workplace. Partners at Work is a competitive grants program that will fund partnership initiatives to improve workplace practices, improve stakeholder relationships and solve business problems. The guidelines for the pilot Partners at Work support initiatives that lead to workplace change to improve workplace performance and the quality of working life for employees, including those around improving work/family and work/life balance. The program will consider funding proposals for up to 50 per cent of eligible costs of individual projects to a maximum of $50,000.
The Work-Life Challenge Fund was established in 2000 as part of the UK government’s work-life balance campaign. The Challenge Fund is a grants program, which provides free consultancy advice to businesses on how to introduce innovative working arrangements to benefit their business, their employees and their customers. Successful applicants receive free advice from specialist consultants who support them in developing and implementing work-life balance policies and practices. The size of each consultancy project is determined by the needs of those employers chosen to receive assistance. The average funding per project is about £37,000 and to date almost 200 employers have been provided with assistance.

One option for the Victorian government to consider would be to explicitly promote work/family balance as a feature of Partners at Work Program, along the lines of the UK Work-Life Challenge Fund, or to designate part of the program as a Partners in Work/Family Balance category. As with the main program this could facilitate joint applications from unions and business around work/family balance and the trialing of specific workplace initiatives such as employee choice rostering or quality part-time work. Program funds could be used for partnership initiatives that examine innovative ways of implementing workplace change, particularly via workplace consultation, and minimising any costs of compliance with additional workplace statutory rights.

**Option 16**

The Victorian Government could consider explicitly promoting work/family balance as a feature of the pilot Partners in Work Program to encourage innovative union/business workplace partnerships that both provide support for employee work/family balance and deliver business benefits.

### 3.4.2 Targeting support to small business

Many employers, particularly those with small businesses, are unaware of the potential benefits of paying attention to the work/family balance of employees. In Australia, as elsewhere, the major focus in encouraging employers to support family friendly policies has been on the business case approach developed in large enterprises. It is often assumed that small business lacks the capacity to support employee choice. However, recent research in the UK and Australia shows that in most cases employee preferences for flexible working are made within the context of the practical and business constraints of their particular workplace (Hogarth, Hasluck and Pierre, 2001; Buchanan and van Wanrooy, 2001). Governments have a role in developing business awareness and compliance with regulatory obligations regarding work/family balance that arise from obligations ranging from anti-discrimination legislation to occupational health and safety regulations. And they have a role in easing the costs of compliance particularly for small business.
An important task for government is to provide information and guidance about how to successfully implement flexible working time and leave arrangements at the workplace level. Part of this task is focusing on the links between improved access to flexible work and organisational workforce planning issues; for example, in addressing skills shortages in the labour market and the need to compete with overseas organisations recruiting for Australian talent, be they teachers, nurses, managers or other knowledge and skilled workers. Small business, in particular, may not be aware of the relevant regulation or business benefits in providing flexible working time and leave arrangements for their employees.

In 1996, Business Victoria published a range of brochures in the Work and Family series, which gave practical examples on how small business might address the issue of work/family balance for Victorian workers. While used at the time to promote the then Victorian government emphasis on individual employment contracts, these brochures did raise the issue of work and family as a matter for small business. As far as we are aware, this information series has not been updated.

A number of Australian State governments have recently produced guides for small business. For example, as part of its Work and Family Strategy, the NSW government has developed a Work and Family Guidebook for small business employers in partnership with the State Chamber of Commerce NSW. In Queensland, the government has produced an information sheet for small business owners as a guide to work and family issues. This simple fact sheet also provides contact details for elder and childcare services.

A practical option for the Victorian government to consider would be the production of a small business guide around work/family balance in consultation with the Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI). The guide could draw on the extensive material available, both in Australia and internationally, about the specific needs of small business and detail innovative initiatives that can be implemented that build on minimum regulatory standards.

The proposed Work and Family Unit could also provide a central point for information dissemination to small business, including for material already produced by other government and non-government organisations. Examples here include the Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria’s Parents and Carers at Work: A guide to employer rights and responsibilities under the Equal Opportunity Act 1995, the Victorian Carer Resource Centre, and appropriate fact sheets from the Carer’s Support Kit (available in English and 10 community languages) produced by Carers Victoria. Seniors Information Victoria, the information and advisory service funded by the Department of Human Services and provided by the Council on the Ageing (Vic), provides information on services available to older people. This service could be redesigned to more specifically include material relevant to carers and older people in the workplace.
Option 17

To provide information and guidance about how to successfully implement flexible working time and leave arrangements, the Victorian Government could, in consultation with small business, develop a practical guide around work/family balance for Victorian small business. Further the proposed Work and Family Unit could be used to provide a central point for information dissemination to small business.

3.4.3 Encouraging the promotion of work/family balance by business

In Australia government policy approaches to work/family balance have placed great reliance on the implementation of flexible work at the enterprise level. However, at least in Victoria, business has been slow to give priority to work/family balance issues, or to consult directly with government around these issues. Publicly recognised awards offer one mechanism to raise awareness and promote business support for work/family balance. However, as noted above, given the number of relevant award programs in Australia, it may be more effective for the Victorian government to consider other options to encourage business support for work/family balance and encourage the integration of work/family balance into business strategies.

In 2000, the UK government launched its Work-Life Balance Campaign to encourage employers to introduce flexible working practices, which enable their employees to achieve a better balance between work and the rest of their lives. One of the major elements of this campaign was the establishment of Employers for Work-Life Balance, an independent alliance of 22 leading employers committed to working in partnership with the government to promote good practice in the business community. Supported by the Prime Minister, the alliance aims to share best practice and establish a one-stop shop for employers, including small business, for information on work-life issues. There are also a number of partner organisations that support the Employers for Work-Life Balance alliance with practical advice for employers on work-life balance issues. The organisations include diverse government and non-government agencies such as the Carers National Association, the Daycare Trust (a national childcare charity that promotes quality childcare), the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Federation of Small Businesses, Parents at Work and the Trade Union Congress.

The proposed Work and Family Advisory Committee would provide a mechanism for high level consultation between government and key stakeholders, including business representatives, and unions. Experience both in Australia and internationally suggests that businesses may learn best from each other. In Victoria, both the Work/Life Association and the EEO Practitioners Network provide opportunities for discussion of work/family balance among representatives from predominantly private sector companies. However neither have a direct mandate to provide advice or to consult with government.
One option the Victorian government could consider is supporting the establishment of a Victorian Employers for Work/Family Balance Forum to promote awareness of the issues, particularly within small business. Membership of the forum could include a range of businesses that were committed to promoting work/family balance within their own workplaces and industry sectors. This Forum could also be involved in the development of effective information advice strategies to support business and provide a focus for consultation with business on work/family balance issues in partnership with government, unions and other community organisations.

Option 18

To promote employer awareness of work/family balance issues and provide a structured focus for consultation with business around work/family balance, the Victorian government could consider the establishment of a Victorian Employers for Work/Family Balance Forum.

3.5 Working in partnership with the community to enhance work/family balance

Workers, those seeking paid work, families and employers all depend on the communities in which they live, work and operate. Yet for many, the capacity to participate in the community is constrained to a large extent by the lack of work/family balance (Pocock et al, 2001). Changes in the operating hours of paid work are increasingly mismatched with school hours, childcare, public transport, and other services. The opening hours of many public and private services from health and human services to post offices and banks are still scheduled around standard working hours and the breadwinner model of the family, with its assumption of a full-time homemaker who is always available during working hours. Kagan, Lewis and Heaton (1998) also refer to the widespread assumption of hospitals, other health care providers, social services and schools, that mothers of children with disabilities do not work and are available at any time.

This separation of the spheres of work and community is more than just an issue of time scheduling. Services and policy structures that provide support for maternal and child health are separated from government and workplace policies that provide support for working parents. And yet for individual mothers, the overwhelming majority of whom undertake paid work at some stage, the issues of workplace entitlements and maternal and child health are closely related. A similar policy divide occurs with structures aimed at supporting carers. Policies both at the federal and State level tend to be based on an assumption that carers of dependent adults do not undertake paid work or are not seeking to do so. Yet as highlighted in chapter 2, many carers are in the paid workforce.

Working realities and preferences and choices for work/family balance need to be integrated and reflected in our local communities. Government support is required to assist communities develop local responses to enhance work/family balance in ways which enhance the quality of work, family and community relationships over the life course. This is consistent with the Victorian government’s commitments in *Growing Victoria Together* to build cohesive communities and reduce inequalities and
commitments to health, wellbeing and community strengthening in *Valuing Victoria’s Women*.

### 3.5.1 The ‘Times in the City’ approach

In Italy, the ‘tempi della citta’ model developed in the mid 1990s in response to the mismatch of working and community time. ‘Times in the city’ projects focus on the reorganisation and reduction of working hours through local union and management negotiation together with changes in the operating hours of services such as kindergartens, public transport and local government services that respond to the needs of community members (Bonfiglioli, 1997). The ‘times in the city’ model has been taken up in a variety of different ways across Europe and includes projects initiated by central governments and those initiated at the community level.

In Hamburg, the focus of the ‘times in the city’ project was the improvement of the everyday life of working mothers and children. The project resulted in changes to the consultation hours of doctors, improved accessibility of childcare and public services as well as the extension in opening times of services such as banks (Boulin and Muckenberger, 1999).

A recent ‘times in the city’ project in the UK involved the Bristol City Council. This project successfully linked improving the quality of council services with improving employees’ choices for work-life balance (Pillinger, 2001).

Evaluations of these ‘times in the city’ projects have underscored the importance of a broad partnership between local and central governments, unions, employers, health and community services and local communities (European Foundation, 1999).

Recent developments in Victoria suggest that similar approaches to work/family balance at the community level may be possible. In 2001, the Victorian government, as part of its Community Building Initiative, announced a commitment to ten demonstration Community Building Projects that will provide funding for communities to work together to address issues of shared concern. The demonstration projects are to be established in three metropolitan areas, three regional areas, four rural areas and one specifically focusing on the Indigenous community. While the focus is on local community members identifying issues of concern, the Victorian government provides information and advice to identify opportunities and priorities in the relevant communities.

These demonstration projects provide a valuable opportunity for a wide range of issues around work/family balance to be placed on the agenda and for local communities to be involved and consulted about the specific work/family balance needs of different groups in the community. The Community Building Projects could be an ideal vehicle for the Victorian government to consider a number of pilot ‘time in the city’ projects in the designated communities in rural and regional areas.
One such project could be focused on the integration of childcare services within a local community to ensure available childcare provision supported choices made by parents who work or may wish to return to work, study or further training. There is currently poor co-ordination between the array of children's and family services at the local level. However research shows that early childhood services which are linked together at the local level, properly supported and resourced, foster child development, break down the isolation of families and contribute to community building (Wannan, 2002). Access to quality childcare provision is also critical for supporting the transitions from the home into work and further education. More responsive opening times and integration of children’s services and facilities- including family day care, long day care, occasional care, vacation care and before and after school care - could be integrated with the services offered by maternal and child health services through to local government services.

Another ‘time in the city’ project could extend the current Department of Infrastructure TravelSMART initiatives around more sustainable travel choices for communities, schools and workplaces at the community level, to include responsive public transport time scheduling.

### Option 19

To support communities to develop local responses to enhance the work/family balance choices available to parents, the Victorian government could pilot the ‘times in the city’ approach in one of the rural or regional Community Building Projects, by focusing on investigating the integration of local childcare and other services.

### 3.5.2 Promoting rights and access to services

Increasing the proportion of Victorians aware of their legal and civil rights is one of the progress measures for promoting rights and respecting diversity in the Growing Victoria Together framework. Information provision about childcare options available in local areas is integral to meeting the policy objective of supporting women’s access to appropriate, affordable and flexible childcare options under the Valuing Victoria’s Women strategy. Indeed, a British study on working parents of children with disabilities points to the importance of not only improved provision of accessible childcare, but also improved communication about benefits, greater recognition by health, welfare and education professionals of parents’ employment commitments, greater support from employers, and greater coordination between employers and service providers (Kagan, Lewis and Heaton, 1998).

The WA Department of Consumer and Employment Protection has recently released a booklet, Creating Carer Friendly Workplaces, prepared in association with the Carer’s Association of WA and the Department for Community Developments. This booklet is aimed at employers, to support employees who are balancing paid employment with the responsibility of being a carer.

The employment focus of publications which set out the employment rights and entitlements of particular groups of workers may mean that they are only distributed to business and unions and not widely available through other government and non-government services that support parents and carers. It is important, however, for carers and the agencies and community groups who provide support for them to also have access to knowledge about their rights and entitlements in the paid workforce.

The Queensland Council of Unions is currently considering an initiative to provide information on working rights and entitlements on return to work in the ‘baby bounty’ bags distributed to women in hospitals after the birth of a child. These bags typically contain information about Centrelink entitlements, early childhood development, breastfeeding and other advice as well as baby care products.

Including an information sheet on workplace rights and entitlements, as well as on the government or community agencies that can provide support and information, (for example, Council on the Ageing (Victoria) and Carers’ Association Victoria), is a practical means of promoting rights and promoting choices for women and others with caring responsibilities who may not currently be in the paid workforce. It may also be possible to use the extensive maternal and child health network to disseminate such information. A further option may be to include information on working rights and entitlements of parents in the ‘parenting tips’ sheets distributed by the Department of Human Services (DHS). The DHS also provides support for carers of people with disabilities and could ensure that information on the workplace rights and other related entitlements of carers was distributed through its respite care programs.

The Centre for Maternal and Child Health at La Trobe University is currently undertaking an evaluation of a project across a number of Victorian municipalities, which provides a program of resources, information and support for mothers (PRISM). This evaluation is investigating the impact of the program on the physical and emotional health of mothers in the first 12 months after the birth of their child. While the PRISM project is not directly concerned with the transitions of mothers into paid work or study, the outcomes of the evaluation will be valuable in determining the most effective mechanisms to provide support to mothers, including those who return to work.
### Option 20

To ensure information about work/family rights and entitlements is available generally to parents and carers, whatever their current labour force status, the Victorian government could disseminate appropriate information through:

- inclusion in ‘baby bounty bags’ distributed in hospitals after the birth of a child;
- through the maternal and child health network;
- inclusion in the ‘parenting tips’ sheets distributed by the Department of Human Services;
- through Department of Human Services support programs and networks for carers of people with disabilities.
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Appendix 1

OECD AND AUSTRALIAN DATA

Figure 1: Male employment rates, Australia, 1972, 1984 and 1998

Figure 2: Female employment rates, Australia, 1972, 1984 and 1998

Table 1: Employment rates for persons aged 15-64 years in selected OECD countries, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Women 25-54</th>
<th>Mothers (^c)</th>
<th>Mothers with child under 6 (^c)</th>
<th>Total employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>69.1</td>
</tr>
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<td>Austria</td>
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<td>73.5</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>67.9</td>
</tr>
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<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
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<td>61.1</td>
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<td>48.4</td>
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<td>55.9</td>
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<td>66.9</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>56.4</td>
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<td>84.6</td>
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<td>64.1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Refers to persons aged 16 to 64
\(^b\) For above countries only
\(^c\) 1997 for Ireland; 1998 for Finland; 1999 for Canada, United States, Norway, Greece, Italy, Portugal, United Kingdom, Austria, Spain, Poland, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, France, and Luxembourg.

### Table 2: The distribution of the adult population in household types, Australia, 1979-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Type</th>
<th>1979 %</th>
<th>1990 %</th>
<th>2000 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband or wife with dependants</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sole parent (with dependants)</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband or wife no dependants</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others living with relatives</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People not living with relatives</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total ('000)</strong></td>
<td>10 501.0</td>
<td>12 828.0</td>
<td>15 208.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table 3: Employment rates of women with employed partners, Australia, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group (years)</th>
<th>15-24 %</th>
<th>25-44 %</th>
<th>45-64 %</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No dependent children present</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>83</strong></td>
<td><strong>89</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>76</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent children present</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>62</strong></td>
<td><strong>73</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Part-time employment \(^a\) as a proportion of employment in selected OECD countries, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia (^b)</td>
<td>14.8 (1)</td>
<td>40.7 (4)</td>
<td>26.2 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland (^b)</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland (^d)</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan (^b) (^e)</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea (^b)</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>57.2 (1)</td>
<td>32.1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland (^b)</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovak Republic</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland (^c) (^d)</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>44.7 (2)</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>40.8 (3)</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States (^f)</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total OECD (^g)</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Part-time employment refers to persons who usually work less than 30 hours per week in their main job. Data includes only persons declaring usual hours.
\(^b\) Data are based on actual hours worked.
\(^c\) Part-time employment based on hours worked at all jobs.
\(^d\) 1990 refers to 1991.
\(^e\) Less than 30 hours a week
\(^f\) Estimates are for wage and salary workers only.
\(^g\) For above countries only.

Table 5: Distribution of female and male employees according to employment arrangement, Australia, 1984, 1991, 1997, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female employees</th>
<th></th>
<th>Male employees</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>49.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total part-time (%)</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total employees (‘000)</td>
<td>2117.8</td>
<td>2823.7</td>
<td>3134.4</td>
<td>3587.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) From August 2000, the terms ‘permanent’ and ‘casual’ were replaced with new terms: ‘with leave entitlements’ and ‘without leave entitlements’ respectively (see ABS, Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, August 2000, Cat. No. 6310.0, 48).

Source: Campbell 2001; ABS, Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, Australia, Cat. No. 6310.0.
### Table 6: Average actual weekly hours, employees, Australia, selected years 1982-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Average weekly hours – employees</th>
<th>Average weekly hours – full-time employees</th>
<th>Average weekly hours – part-time employees</th>
<th>Part-time employees/ all employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>43.4</td>
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<td>.125</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1982 Females
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average weekly hours – employees</th>
<th>Average weekly hours – full-time employees</th>
<th>Average weekly hours – part-time employees</th>
<th>Part-time employees/ all employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>.335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>.370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>.423</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
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<td>17.1</td>
<td>.429</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>.426</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1982 Persons
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average weekly hours – employees</th>
<th>Average weekly hours – full-time employees</th>
<th>Average weekly hours – part-time employees</th>
<th>Part-time employees/ all employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>.162</td>
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<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>.192</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>.255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>.260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>.263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*August figures for all years

Table 7: Distribution of actual weekly hours worked, employees, Australia, 1985, 1988, 1998, 1999, 2000

### MALE EMPLOYEES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1-15</th>
<th>16-29</th>
<th>30-34</th>
<th>35-39</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>41-44</th>
<th>45-49</th>
<th>50+</th>
<th>Total ('000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>14.7</td>
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<td>23.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>18.6</td>
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<td>18.8</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
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<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>15.9</td>
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<td>6.0</td>
<td>10.7</td>
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<td>10.9</td>
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### FEMALE EMPLOYEES

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<th>50+</th>
<th>Total ('000)</th>
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<td>%</td>
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<td>17.4</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>19.5</td>
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### ALL EMPLOYEES

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<th>45-49</th>
<th>50+</th>
<th>Total ('000)</th>
</tr>
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<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
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<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>8.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>5582.5</td>
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<td>9.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>19.4</td>
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<td>5.9</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>12.9</td>
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<td>16.1</td>
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Source: Unpublished data from ABS Cat. No. 6203.0 (Labour Force Australia, August issue).
### Table 8: Employment status, by type of work, of couples with children, 1981-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
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<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One employed: full-time</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both employed: one full-time, one part-time</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both employed: both full-time</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither employed</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other *</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total couples with children ('000)</td>
<td>1860.4</td>
<td>1976.2</td>
<td>2019.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This category includes two household types; both spouses employed on a part-time basis and one spouse employed on a part-time basis.

Source: Derived from Burbidge and Sheehan, 2001, 128.
Appendix 2:

WORK/FAMILY AND WORK/LIFE BALANCE IN VICTORIAN AND AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY SECTORS

This appendix sets out selected published and unpublished data from a number of Victorian based and Australia-wide industry surveys and studies. This data documents the experiences of workers in a variety of industries in managing the balance between work family and work/life. Data sources are identified and details provided about the survey or study population.


Primary caregiver of children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caregiver</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Other States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Myself</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My partner</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Equally</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>1074</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you have caring responsibilities for aged family members?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Other States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>78.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>2043</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do work responsibilities impact on family life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Other States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>84.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>2025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Aspects of family life that suffer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of family life</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Other States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time spent with spouse/children</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness/tired</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housekeeping duties</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on relations with family</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking work home</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less time for leisure activities/exercise</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less time with aged parents</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>1650</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Greatest change in work in recent years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Other States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater career opportunities</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced career opportunities</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues of behaviour management</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>56.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting and accountability</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased class sizes</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking up specialist roles</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in modes of delivery</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuts to school support</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum changes</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced job security</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Main activity which led to increased workload

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Other States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom teaching</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special responsibilities</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional/marketing activities</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty of care</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student welfare</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Liaison</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>79.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correction</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Development</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>1896</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Impact of changes in work on stress at work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Other States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significantly decreased</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly decreased</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly increased</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significantly increased</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>2026</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Impact of changes in work on family life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Other States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significantly damaged</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly damaged</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly improved</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significantly improved</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Original survey sent to 7807 union members across Australia, a 5% random sample of members. There were a total of 2865 responses (a 33% response rate), of which 464 (383 women and 81 men) were from Victoria.

Stress and Diminished Quality of Life Beyond Work: Victorian Nurses (1999)

- Workloads have increased as a direct result of staffing shortages.
- Understaffing is directly linked with a significant level of unpaid overtime. Less than a fifth of respondents were always paid for overtime worked.
- A key consequence of the increase in nurses’ workload is a high incidence of work related stress reported by 87 per cent of survey respondents.
- More than a third of respondents were dissatisfied with their ability to spend time with family members.
- Over half were dissatisfied with their ability to spend time on social and community activities.

Data based on a random survey of the 22,000 members of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Nursing Federation. There was a 50 percent response of those sampled of 2161 members.

Work and Lifestyle: Chartered Accountants in Victoria and Tasmania (2001)

- Two thirds of the female respondents had no children compared to 38% of the male respondents.

- A balanced professional/private life was the top career consideration for women and the second top career consideration for men.

- This varied for both men and women depending on age. For example balanced life was the most important careers consideration for women aged under 40 years of age, with job satisfaction assuming more importance for men over 40 years of age. A balanced life was more highly ranked by men aged 30-39 years than younger or older age cohorts.

- Requirements for long working hours were cited as a barrier to advancing careers 41% of the female respondents and 24% of the male respondents.

- Little allowance for family commitments was cited as a career barrier by 22% of the female respondents and 17% of the male respondents.

Data based on sample comprising all female chartered accountants and an equivalent number of male chartered accountants in Victoria and Tasmania, randomly selected from Institute of Chartered Accountant membership list at time of mailing. A total of 1337 valid responses were received, representing an overall response rate of 39%.

RMIT Business for the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia with the Waite Group Work and Lifestyle Study 2001, Melbourne, Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia.


- 14 out of the 19 male barristers who were fathers had wives or partners who had primarily cared for the children on a full-time basis; the others had wives or partners who worked and combined paid childcare/sharing caring arrangements.

- None of the 15 women barristers who were mothers had partners or husbands who took primary responsibility for care of the household and children.

- Particular characteristics of the Bar appear to exacerbate the problems of taking time off for childbirth and of on-going multiple role-playing as spouses, primary parents and barristers), including the need to maintain solicitor contacts, the importance placed on experience and continuous practice, the requirements of fitting around court timetables, and the fact that optimal years for childbearing and being involved with small children coincide when barristers ‘should’ be putting in maximum effort to establish their practices.

- Prevailing attitudes around mothering and part-time work amongst member of the profession associates these with lack of commitment or even incompetence, creating an environment that is particularly unsupportive of pregnant women and women attempting to maintain her careers at the Bar.
• Competing family responsibilities and attitudes at the bar towards them appear to be the largest contributing factors to women leaving the Bar.

Qualitative study based on interviewees selected via stratified random sample. Sample interviewed included 50 barristers (25 men and 25 women), 10 former barristers (5 men and 5 women), 40 solicitors responsible for briefing, 5 barristers clerks and 20 judicial officers.


**Primary Care-giver of Children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who has primary responsibility for caring for children?</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Financial Institutions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myself</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My partner</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared equally</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2040</td>
<td>1171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Financial Institutions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myself</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My partner</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared equally</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Insurance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myself</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My partner</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared equally</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reasons for Not Using Flexible Work Arrangements by Sex and Sector (Column percent*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Major Fin. Instns</th>
<th>Oth. Fin. Instns</th>
<th>Insurance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff shortages/not enough staff to cover</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management opposition</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too detrimental to career</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive workgroup</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not entitled to/not in workplace agreement</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job insecurity</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments about letting down team</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>1113</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentages may add to more than 100 as respondents could give more than one answer.

Problems with Using Leave Arrangements by Sex and Sector*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Major Fin. Instns</th>
<th>Oth. Fin. Instns</th>
<th>Insurance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient pay</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of relief/work piles up</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced to justify leave/lack of trust</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management opposition</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No problems</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>1351</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentages may add to more than 100 as respondents could give more than one answer.

Attitudes of Management Towards Family Leave by Sex and Sector (Column percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Major Fin. Instns</th>
<th>Oth. Fin. Instns</th>
<th>Insurance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very supportive</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very unsupportive</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>3717</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Attitudes of Management Towards Flexible Working Hours by Sex and Sector (Column percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Major Fin. Instns</th>
<th>Oth. Fin. Instns</th>
<th>Insurance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very supportive</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very unsupportive</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>3710</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Attitudes of Management Towards RDO’s/Leaving work on time/Declining overtime by Sex and Sector (Column percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Major Fin. Instns</th>
<th>Oth. Fin. Instns</th>
<th>Insurance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very supportive</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very unsupportive</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>3697</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data based on random sample of 22,800 FSU members and 1800 non FSU members in the banking and insurance industries. 6514 responses (a response rate of 31 percent) were received from banking employees and 779 (a response rate of 24 percent) from insurance employees.

Balancing Work/Life: Office of Employment Advocate Survey (2001)

Has balancing work and life become

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Easier %</th>
<th>More difficult %</th>
<th>Has stayed the same</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Casual

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work < 35 hrs pw

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Satisfaction with hours worked

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer less hours</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>64.9</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer more hours</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why balancing work and life is ‘easier’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work is more accommodating %</th>
<th>Family circumstances have changed %</th>
<th>Other %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why balancing work and life is ‘more difficult’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work is less accommodating %</th>
<th>Family circumstances have changed %</th>
<th>Both reasons %</th>
<th>I am studying/study workload has increased %</th>
<th>Other %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey data from random sample of 1000 wage and salary earners (48 percent male and 52 percent female) randomly selected from Australian White Pages Directory.