

# Work and Family

## IT'S ABOUT TIME

Parents who work tell us that balancing work and family is their number one employment concern.

People say they want time – time to look after sick kids, time to get to childcare, time to cover school holidays, and time to spend with children and partners.

But long working hours and the unrelenting pressure of work are placing an increasing strain on families.

Childcare is also an important issue with rising fees, long waiting lists and poor wages for childcare staff.

Many workplaces don't allow people enough flexibility so they can balance their working hours with their family needs.

The election is an opportunity to put work and family issues on the political agenda. Workplaces need to be brought into the 21<sup>st</sup> century so they meet the needs of today's families.

## What union members say about balancing work and family responsibilities



**KATH EDWARDS, LECTURER  
MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL TERTIARY  
EDUCATION UNION**

Because I wish to provide care and assistance to my elderly parents I am placed in the situation of having to 'choose' between undertaking the caring or having a holiday. My job is very demanding and I feel the need for leave for rest and recreation in order to refresh myself and to return to the workplace

with renewed energy and enthusiasm. Leave for the purposes of caring, although it can be enjoyable, is not a holiday.

**BETH FRERE, TAFE TEACHER  
MEMBER OF THE AUSTRALIAN  
EDUCATION UNION**

I am good at my job and I want to do it well. I also want to be able to properly care for my daughters and not have them distressed by me going to work. Employers should not be able to unreasonably refuse requests for the organisation of my hours of work where this would enable me to better balance my work and family.



**LEONIE GRANT, LIBRARY TECHNICIAN  
MEMBER OF THE ASU**

My daughter and her husband were hurt in a car accident in Darwin while travelling with their children. I took 13 days off work to be with them which used up all my available paid leave. I would have preferred to take unpaid leave to deal with the emergency because I could have saved some leave for my own health and well-being.

## The Work Life Collision.

- In a recent Newspoll 87% of full time workers identified flexible working hours, the right to time off work for family emergencies, a choice for part time work, and more help for child care as more useful than an increase in Government family payments.
- Up to 175,000 children are currently on childcare waiting lists and childcare fees have risen by 30% over the past 2 years.
- 2.3 million Australians care for someone because of their disability or age.
- 28% of Australian workers are employed as casuals. Half of all casuals have been in the same job for more than year but have no access to paid sick or holiday leave.



## A more family friendly future at work?

- The ACTU is running a Work and Family Test Case in the Industrial Relations Commission to gain flexible choices for employees at different stages of family life.
- The Labor Party has committed to paid maternity leave through a fully funded Baby Care Payment.
- Labor has also flagged that it will require the Industrial Relations Commission to ensure awards contain provisions that help workers combine work with family responsibilities.
- The Coalition opposes obligations on employers to provide family friendly workplaces and has failed to fix the family payment debt crisis.

# WHAT YOU CAN DO

### Find out more

about work and family issues and the policies of political parties by visiting the ACTU website at [www.actu.asn.au](http://www.actu.asn.au)

### Talk to your family,

friends and workmates. Make sure they are enrolled to vote, and encourage them to use their vote to put work and family issues on the political agenda.

### Ask the candidates

in your electorate about their commitment to promoting a better balance between work and family.

### For more information

contact the ACTU Election Hotline on 1300 362 223 or visit the ACTU website – [www.actu.asn.au](http://www.actu.asn.au)

**Make sure you are enrolled to vote in this year's Federal Election, by calling 13 23 36 or by visiting the website: [www.aec.gov.au](http://www.aec.gov.au)**