

Future of Work

Work and Family

Background Paper

ACTU Congress 2003

Quick Fact:

Mothers are returning to work after parental leave with younger babies and infants. In 1976 only 16.6% of mothers with children under 1 were in the labour force. By 2001 that figure was 35.5%, and 54% of mothers with children under 2 are in the labour force.

CONGRESS 2000

1. The policy at Congress 2000 committed the ACTU to pursue new award standards, namely:
 - increasing paid personal/carer's leave and improving access to accrued leave for family purposes;
 - extending access to paid maternity/parental leave; and
 - extending unpaid maternity/parental leave to regular casuals.
2. The Women and Unions policy called on the ACTU to develop guidelines for bargaining over a range of work and family issues.
3. Finally, at ACTU Congress 2000 it was resolved that:

The ACTU will continue to campaign in the Australian community on issues of concern to women. The key issues following Congress 2000 will be:

Paid maternity leave, to be funded by employers, government or a combination of both;...

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE CONGRESS 2000 (AND IN RECENT TIMES)

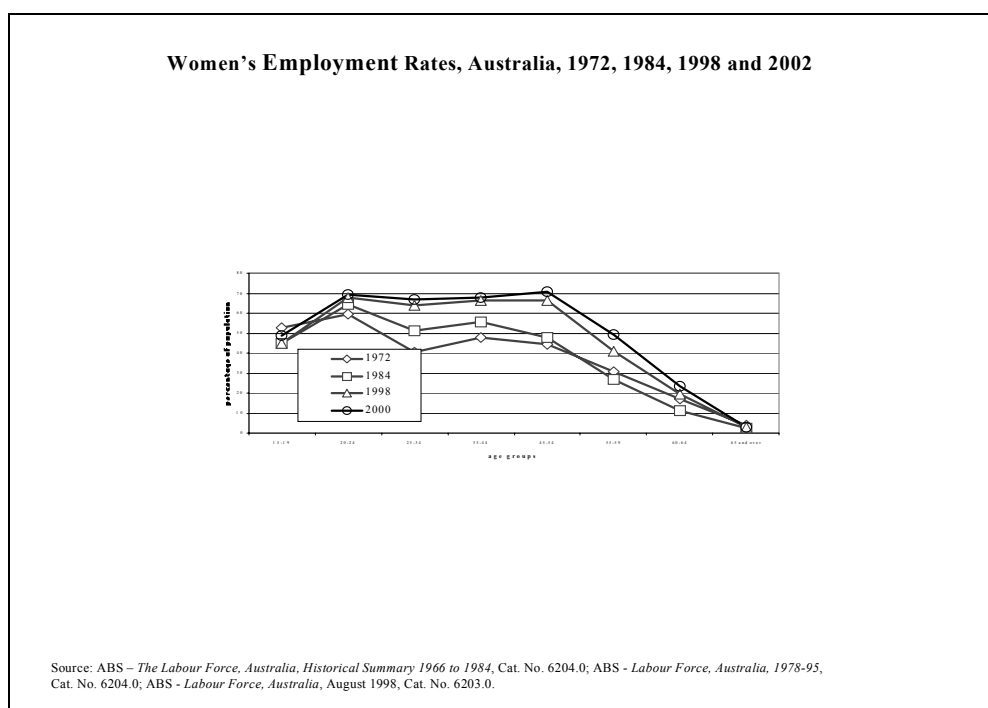
4. In Australia, as throughout the OECD, the issue of work and family balance has become a focus of political, community and workplace debate. Reasons for this include:
 - Changes in family formation, living arrangements, marital separation and labour force participation (especially maternal labour force participation) mean that in the majority of families with dependants, all adults are in paid employment. Only one third of dependant children in couple families and half of those in lone parent families have a “stay at home” parent.
 - At the same time, the proportion of the population requiring care has increased, and is predicted to continue to do so. This has been accompanied by a reduced reliance on institutional care, and increasing reliance on community care.
 - These changes in family life have been accompanied by changes in the way work is organised. In response to competitive pressure there has been an extension of long hours of work and the introduction of employer initiated flexibility over working time.

Changing Nature of Families and Their Relationship to the Workforce

5. There have been profound changes in family formation, family living arrangements and labour force participation, which all affect how work and family intersects.
6. There have been declining marriage rates and increasing divorce rates which, between 1986 and 2001, saw the number of sole parent families increase by 53%. This has contributed to the increasing number of people living alone, which has also reduced the availability of spousal support for sick or disabled adults.
7. There has been a drift to the cities which has diminished support for older people as young people move away from country towns.
8. Families now form later, children are born later and family sizes are smaller. An increasing number of women will not bear children.
9. Increased labour force participation means that there are fewer full-time at home carers, for either children or older and disabled people.
10. Since 1980 labour force participation has risen from 65% to 69% of adults. This has been the case despite a declining proportion of men in

employment (due to longer pre-employment education, early voluntary and involuntary retirement, and unemployment). Male participation has moved from 82% in 1980 down to 77% in 2000.

11. Labour force participation is compressed into a band of years between education and retirement. These years correspond with the prime ages for family formation and child-rearing. It is a case of all the work and family arising at the same time.
12. Female participation has increased and its pattern has changed. Women of child-bearing age now participate at almost the same levels as other women.



13. There has been a transformation in the way families organise their participation in work. The key trend is away from single-earner to dual-earner families, and continued growth in sole parent families. Households have shown a preference for the dual income model.
14. While the key growth has been in the "one plus model", (from 23.9% in 1982 to 32.5% of couple families with dependants in 2000) there has also been growth in the "two full-time model" (from 17.6% of couples with dependant children in 1981 to 23.9% in 2000).

Employment status, by type of work, of couples with children, 1981-2000

	1981	1990	2000
	%	%	%
One employed: full-time	51.1	35.2	30.5
Both employed: one full-time, one part-time	23.9	31.6	32.5
Both employed: both full-time	17.6	23.4	23.9
Neither employed	5.2	6.8	7.5
Other ^a	2.2	3.0	5.6
Total couples with children ('000)	1860.4	1976.2	2019.8

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

15. Maternal labour force participation has increased, and women are returning to work with younger children.
16. At any one time around a third of mothers are outside the labour force. However, these are not necessarily the same women who have permanently exited paid employment. Queensland data suggests that only 17% of mothers with children under 6 have not returned to work, with 15% still on leave, while the remainder (67.6%) have returned to some form of paid employment.
17. Maternal labour force participation varies with the age of the child. At June 2000 in 46% of families with children under 4 the mother was employed, rising to 58% of families with children aged 5-9, and 65% of families with children aged 10-14 years.
18. Mothers are returning to work after parental leave with younger babies and infants. In 1976 only 16.6% of mothers with children under 1 were in the labour force. By 2001 that figure was 35.5%, and 54% of mothers with children under 2 are in the labour force. The trend towards earlier return to work is true for sole parents as well.
19. A recent ABS survey of Queensland mothers found that of mothers who had taken maternity leave over the past 6 years, over one third took less than 26 weeks leave.

More People Need Care and More Workers Provide Care

20. There has been growth in the proportion of the workforce who have caring responsibilities outside their paid employment.

21. In 1998 there were 2.3 million Australians or just over 15% of people who provided ongoing care (longer than 6 months) for another person because of their disability or age.
22. In 2001 the AIHW suggested 11% of full-time employees and 16% of part-time employees provide care for a disabled or elderly person. 56% of carers were women. In addition over a third (37.9%) of employed women have responsibility for a dependant child.
23. In 2002 the ABS Queensland survey found almost half (47%) of all people aged over 18 had provided unpaid care for another adult or child, most of which (68%) was provided on an ongoing basis. Nearly half of the carers in the community were in employment, overwhelmingly permanent employment.
24. The fact that people have multiple care responsibilities is highlighted by the fact that only a third of caring activity is concerned with care of the person's own children.

The Number of People Requiring Care is Increasing

25. There are more older and disabled people in the community. There are 3.6 million disabled people in our community. A further 3.1 million have some impairment which does not affect everyday functioning. The underlying disability rate increased from 15% in 1981 to 19% in 1998. The number of people with a severe or profound disability has doubled between 1981 and 1998.
26. Most of these people live with family members. In 1998 there were 3.4 million people with a disability living in households, of whom 57% required assistance to move about, shower or dress, prepare meals, do housework, perform light property maintenance or paperwork, or communicate.
27. The main, but not sole, cause is an aging population.
28. Looking forward the proportion of the population over 65 is expected to increase from 12% in 1997 to 18% in 2021 and up to 26% by 2051.
29. In 1998, most people who needed assistance received it from relatives and friends, partners, parents and children. 97% of those with a profound disability and 80% with moderate restrictions relied on informal assistance, that is, unpaid assistance from family or friends.

These Changes in Family Life Have Been Accompanied by Changes in the Way Work is Organised

30. In response to competitive pressures, there has been an extension of long hours of work and the introduction of employer initiated flexibility over working time.
31. There is evidence that workers are experiencing more "time pressure" and workers report declining satisfaction in balancing work and family.
32. Time pressure results from both long hours and atypical hours. In August 2002 around 1.7 million people worked more than 50 hours per week, double the number in 1982. Although long hours of work is more common among men (35% of full-time men work more than 50 hours per week compared to 19% of full-time women) female workers are rapidly catching up, with the proportion of females working long hours almost doubling from 10% in 1982 to 19% today.
33. There is evidence that men with dependent children work longer hours than men of the same age without children.
34. The growth in casual employment (to 27% of the workforce) not only reduces job security. Atypical and casual employment means that many workers with caring responsibilities have no leave sick and annual leave entitlements (and thus no carers leave). AIFS suggests 40% of employed mothers have no leave entitlements.

Paid Maternity Leave

35. The Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, has been a strong advocate of a national scheme of maternity leave, paid by the taxpayer for 14 weeks and payable to all women who have been in the workforce for 40 of the previous 52 weeks.

ISSUES FOR POLICY AT CONGRESS 2003

36. The ACTU has developed a work and family pathway which takes account of different needs of different workers over their life course.
37. The outcomes identified recognise that workers, particularly women, will require extended periods of time out of employment to undertake care, together with assistance in making a series of transitions back to work. They recognise that family needs vary by the age of their youngest child, and their other caring responsibilities.
38. There are five key initiatives that the ACTU has identified, namely to:

- pursue improvements to the award safety net to enhance the capacity of employees to manage their work and family commitments;
- assist affiliates in bargaining for improved provisions at the workplace level;
- continue to campaign in the community for paid maternity leave;
- lobby for improved childcare funding, to ensure families have access to high quality childcare, which is accessible and affordable; and
- lobby for legislative rights to employee initiated flexibility in working arrangements.

Paid Maternity Leave

39. Both the ILO Maternity Protection Convention (ILO C No 183) and the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women note that the purpose of paid maternity leave is to protect the health and the economic security of mothers and their new-born children.
40. Australia and the United States are alone in the developed world in not offering paid maternity leave.
41. Paid maternity leave is available to 38% of Australian mothers through awards, Certified Agreements, AWAs and company policies. Since 1995 the proportion of women eligible for paid maternity leave has risen only 2%.
42. Women are more likely to be eligible for paid leave if they are:
 - In higher paying jobs - 65% of women in the \$50,000-\$69,000 group have access to paid maternity leave compared with only 30% in the \$20,000-\$29,000 category.
 - In higher status occupations - Managers and Administrators (64.6%) and Professionals (54.2%), are more likely to have access to paid leave than Intermediate Production and Transport Workers (25.6%), Elementary Clerical, Sales and Service Workers (17.9%) and Labourers and Related Workers (20.5%).
 - Employed by large organisations - the chances of having paid maternity leave almost double if an employee works for an organisation employing more than 1000 employees.

- Employed in certain industries - 68.1% of employees in Government Administration and Defence, 57.0% in Education, 59.1% in Communication Services, and 59.0% in Finance and Insurance have access to paid leave, compared to only 20.2% in Retail Trade, and 13.4% in Accommodation Cafes and Restaurants who enjoy the same benefit. In Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry only 4.5% of women have access to paid leave.
 - Employed in the public sector - two thirds of employees in the public sector say they have paid maternity leave whereas just one-third in the private sector has paid maternity leave.
 - Employed full-time - only 21% of women employed part-time have access to paid leave, compared to 51% of full-time women. Less than one in 200 casual employees receive paid leave.
43. The average length of time available falls considerably short of the ILO recommendation of a minimum of 14 weeks paid maternity leave. Of those EBAs providing for paid leave, 39% provide for two weeks leave, and another 21% provide for six weeks leave.
 44. Paid maternity leave addresses the disadvantage that women in paid employment face due to their child-bearing role, although it will not be sufficient support for all families.
 45. Paid maternity leave removes economic pressure for women to return to work before fully recovering from the physiological impact of birth and the establishment of breastfeeding.
 46. It assists to maintain family living standards, given that nearly 40% of family income is sourced from the woman's earnings in couples without children.
 47. Paid maternity leave can also assist mothers to return to work, expanding the pool of labour, and ensuring a return on skills investment. A 2001 OECD survey of mothers' labour market participation found that Australia had the lowest employment rates of mothers with children under six and the lowest employment rates for employment of lone parents. Australia ranked 15th in participation by mothers in couple families.
 48. There is a strong correlation between family income and maternal employment - only 9% of low income families have a mother in the paid workforce, compared to 88% of medium income families and 80% of high income families.