

Work And Family: Issues and Facts

Quick Facts:

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%, with 54% of mothers with children under 2 are in the labour force. In 1998 there were 3.4 million people with a disability living in households, of whom 57% required assistance.

Issues For Policy At Congress 2003

- 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 the adults have responsibilities to paid employment.
- Changes in family life have been accompanied by changes in the way work is organised. There has been an extension of long hours of work and greater casualisation
- At the same time the proportion of the population requiring care has increased, and is predicted to continue to do so
- Workplaces must provide employees with sufficiently flexible work practices which support the choices they make about family formation; the care of infants and young children; transitions out of and back into work; and to manage caring responsibilities

ACTU Draft Policy

- The ACTU has developed a work and family pathway which takes account of different needs of different workers, particularly women, over their life course. These workers will require extended periods of time out of employment to undertake care, together with assistance in making a series of transitions back to work.
- The Work and Family Test Case is currently before the Commission. It seeks to: extend unpaid parental leave; provide a right to return to part-time employment; oblige employers to give proper consideration to employee requests for flexibility around when and where work is performed; give all employees access to family emergency leave; and facilitate short periods of leave throughout the working year for family care.
- Future applications will seek to provide paid leave in relation to pregnancy, birth, bonding and breastfeeding, and to improve and extend paid personal leave.

More information on Work and Family is available on the ACTU Website

- a comprehensive Congress background paper and
- the full draft policy

www.actu.asn.au/congress2003

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