

# WORK AND FAMILY CURRENT THINKING, RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines work and family issues, including the influence of work on family strength and wellbeing.

Characteristics of the workplace and society that impact on the strength and wellbeing of workers' families.

Recent workplace changes that have an impact on the strength and wellbeing of workers' families are identified as follows.

- The demise of standard working hours for full-time work and the polarisation of the workforce into underemployed part-timers who want to work more and who have inadequate earnings, and overworked full-timers who are suffering a decreased quality of working and family life. Survey data show that full-time workers were more likely to report a decline in satisfaction with work and family balance.
- The growth in part-time and casual jobs and the predominance of women in part-time work.
- Job insecurity – downsizing, contracting out and relocating have led to many organisations reducing their workforce through greater use of retrenchment and voluntary redundancies. Job insecurity is especially salient for those responsible for supporting dependants and will have a major impact on stress levels experienced in families.
- Globalisation has led to intense competition and significant changes in the job demands experienced by many employees. For example, to travel and be accessible during 24 hours of operations.
- The focus on work and family in the Workplace Relations Act 1996.

Workforce participation trends which impact on families are: increasing labour force participation of women including mothers with young children and lone parents; and the increase in dual income families with children.

The report also discusses changes and concerns about family life such as time spent with children and the differences between mothers and fathers in this regard. A major contributor to the stress reported by employed mothers is their greater overall responsibility for children. Managing work and family responsibilities can often, therefore, be very difficult for mothers in dual income families.

The effect of parental employment on families and children is also discussed. In general, there is agreement that there are no significant developmental problems for children of employed mothers. However, a study of early parental employment found that working more hours is associated with slightly lower

academic achievement in lower primary aged children. Very few studies have examined the effect of paternal employment demands on children. However, longer work hours and job stress for fathers increase the burden of child rearing on mothers. One study found that workplace variables impact directly on job related affect (job satisfaction, negative mood and job-related tension), which in turn, impacted on parenting behaviour, which in turn impacted on children's behaviour. Work experiences affect family variables such as marital satisfaction, mental health and alcohol abuse.

Some studies examining the effects of child care on children are also briefly discussed. These studies show both positive and negative effects as well as no significant differences between children who have and have not attended child care facilities. The report suggests that it is the quality of care that is more important than being in care itself.

Another change discussed in the report is the changed expectations of the contributions men make to family life. In a survey of 1,000 fathers, more than half saw barriers associated with the workplace (expectations of long working hours, inflexibility) as being the most critical factor preventing them from being the kind of father they would like to be.

The report argues that most analyses of work and family issues ignore the critical connection between the impact of workplace demands on intimate relationships and the possible reciprocal positive workplace impact of having good quality intimate relationships. The report cites a poll conducted by Relationships Australia in 1998 that shows work pressures is one of the top three relationship problems mentioned.

Coverage of Employee Assistance Programs is relatively low in Australia (estimated at 56% of large companies, compared with 97% in the USA). Informal information provided by two EAP providers and one large organisation with an EAP indicates that the majority of referrals to EAPs concern family relationship issues and that utilisation rates for EAPs are rising, especially by men.

In a recent large study conducted, work demands such as coming home from work feeling stressed and coming home late from work were reported to lead to poor quality family relationships, not having enough time for spouse and self.

A large-scale longitudinal study has found that shift work reduces the quality of marriages. Work demands that reduce the capacity of employees to establish and maintain quality intimate relationships are: extended hours of working; working at unsocial times; constant short-term travel; overseas assignments for up to 12 months; and expectations about 24 hours accessibility.

## Trends in the provision of family friendly policies

The majority of certified agreements and Australian Workplace Agreements contain at least one family-friendly measure, most commonly flexible hours provisions.

Analyses conducted in the US, the UK and Australia show that many workers lack formal access to any work-family services or programs because they work on contract, short-term or when called. This is part of an international trend of casualisation. The report notes, however, that for some employees, casual work enables them to balance their work and family commitments at certain times of the lifecycle.

In Sweden, many organisations have experimented with employees working a six hour day but being paid for seven or eight hours. Some companies have provided managers with allowances to purchase cleaning, laundry and ironing assistance as a way of helping dual career couples manage their work and family commitments.

## Innovative work/family policies and programs

The report cites examples from the UK such as a supermarket chain that enables employees to swap shifts with other workers without the involvement of management, companies tackling the long hours culture, for example, through instituting “Go Home on Time” days, a new parents’ program, a parenting consultation service, and a work/family consultation service for managers.

In Australia, examples of innovative practices include six weeks paid parental leave for the primary caregiver, expanded opportunities for part-time work, job-sharing and working from home. Some organisations such as Alcoa, NRMA and AMP have aligned their work/family strategies with others aimed at enhancing gender equity (eg. reduced hierarchical and occupational segregation, anti-harassment programs). At Mobil Oil Australia, employees are now responsible for their own rosters.

Most companies that have been innovative in implementing policies emphasise both employee and business benefits of addressing work and family issues, and recognise that better outcomes are achieved if there is a focus on work practices, leadership and organisational culture. Examples of effective ways to change organisational culture are cited.

## Social arrangements that facilitate the ability of workers to meet their family needs

The report states that in terms of dependent care (for children, the elderly or disabled) more options are needed for fee relief, 24 hour services, flexibility in utilisation, occasional care (especially for shift workers), emergency care (when children or caregivers are sick), respite care, and backup care when work

demands change unexpectedly. Extended hours for community and professional services are also needed. Service providers might also consider establishing partnerships with organisations to deliver services at the workplace, such as parenting education.

There is also a need to recognise that employees live in and are part of a wider community. Solutions for work/family balance cannot be found only in the workplace or individual homes. Employees need to live in a family friendly community where services and resources support family life. Without these resources, the report argues that the most family friendly employer will have little impact on reducing parental or family-related stress.

The report mentions a study conducted as part of the New Links Workplace. This involved completing a community scan in association with an analysis of employees work/family needs in an organisation. It found that costs of child care were a major difficulty for parents and that there was a shortage of after school and emergency care in the area. The area also lacked marriage counselling and family support services, yet more than seven in ten 10 employees wanted access to these. Schools reported problems with family breakdown and a shortage of qualified guidance personnel, and many employees needed elder care services, which were sparse in the region. The report suggests that this community scan could be a model for other work site locations to use to scan their own communities. It also suggests that any analysis of work/family balance should include a broader analysis of the impact on the strength of families and the community.

The report states that there is a growing interest in emphasising partnerships between organisations and the community as the most effective way to address the work and family needs of employers and employees.

Little is known about what workplace practices and expectations make a difference to families and little emphasis has been given to the impact of work on family life (for example, on the quality of family relationships). The report suggests that research on these issues is needed.

## 2. What is meant by balancing work and family responsibilities in terms of employers' needs with respect to productivity and workers' ability to meet family needs.

Although there is considerable discussion about work/family balance and how satisfied people are with this aspect of their lives, specific definitions are difficult to find in current writings. For the worker, balancing work and family needs can be defined succinctly as 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 (cf. Edgar, 1995, p. 10). The effort to achieve this balance can be stressful and can impact both on the worker's productivity and individual, family and community well being. It is worth noting here too that the discussion of work and family balance has recently been broadened to include personal lifestyle issues- commonly termed work/life balance. Indeed, in a recent article, Edgar (1999) argues that "the work-family policy debate has been hijacked prematurely (. . .by concerns about quality of life, workplace stress and the rights of single employees . . .) and that we need to once again focus on the complex interactions between workplace participation and performance, and the demands of future family life." Further in the article, Edgar points out:

"While there is nothing wrong with a demand for greater flexibility and encouragement of outside interests in the part of supervisors, and while better catering for such diversity will doubtless improve morale, commitment and on-the-job performance, these are not 'work-family' programs as such, because there is no inevitability about the obligations taken on. A child cannot be ignored; a parent with Alzheimer's cannot be left alone; a dissolving marriage cannot but interfere with concentration and performance; a teenager with a drug problem demands parental attention. In contrast, playing a game of golf or two may be good for one's morale, but it is not an obligation as such."

From the point of view of employees, their evaluation of how effective their work/family balance is would take into account a wide range of issues. Family commitments and responsibilities are much more diverse and complex than has been acknowledged in the work/family debate. The major focus has been on dependant care responsibilities, especially for those with pre-school aged children. In contrast, Russell (1999a), argues that there are at least six domains of family and paid work needs (potentially shared by couples or the sole responsibility of a lone caregiver) that need to be taken into account when considering the issue of balance. For each of these domains, there are two levels – 'Involvement' and 'Responsibility':

1. Employment and family financial support: (a) Involvement: Who is employed, how many hours are spent in paid work and what is the nature of the demands

of the job (e.g. travel, stress). (b) Responsibility: Continuing and longer term responsibility for family financial support and for the development of job or career skills (e.g. expectations about having a greater commitment to the development of a career).

2. Day-to-day care of and interaction with children or other dependants (e.g. older parents, family members with a disability): (a) Involvement: Physical and psychological time available to children/dependants. (b) Responsibility: Time spent caring for children/dependants, i.e. having the sole responsibility (but, there is a need to consider the context, e.g. at home alone versus other carers being present).
3. Child/dependant management and socialisation: (a) Involvement: This includes time spent and frequency of looking after: basic child/dependant care needs (e.g. bathing, dressing); child/dependant health (e.g. taking to doctor); social needs (e.g. play or leisure), emotional needs (e.g. comfort child/dependant); school needs (e.g. supervising homework, attend school functions); general cognitive development (e.g. answering child's why questions); taking to and attending child/dependant activities (e.g. sport, music). (b) Responsibility: Making decisions and setting standards e.g. for child behaviour, monitoring the child's moods and needs for support, monitoring the child's standards in school work.
4. Parental/caregiver commitment/investment (a) Involvement: Relative time spent with child/dependant in relation to paid work and personal leisure. (b) Responsibility: The extent to which a person adjusts his/her life and routines to take account of family needs, involvement in job and career.
5. Household work: (a) Involvement: Time spent and frequency of doing household tasks, e.g. fixing things, house improvements, garden and car maintenance, shopping and preparing meals, paying the bills, cleaning, washing, ironing, etc. (b) Responsibility: Organising and planning household needs and family activities, organising and monitoring family financial matters.
6. Maintaining other family relationships: (a) Involvement: Time spent with other family members, types of activities shared etc. (b) Responsibility: Initiating change or discussions about family problems, ensuring that good communication occurs between family members (e.g. exchange of information about a child/dependant), and support (e.g. cooperation and teamwork, resolving conflicts).

A worker who indicates a lack of satisfaction with their work/family balance therefore could have a wide range of issues in mind. A person might have a job with hours to suit their availability to fulfil their dependant care responsibilities, but at the same time could be under financial stress because of an inadequate income or a lack of community resources to provide respite care for a child with a disability. Or, a couple could both be in full-time employment with high

incomes, but perceive that they suffer a lack of balance because they feel they are not spending enough time with their children, or together as a couple. Work/family balance will also mean different things to different people at different stages of their lives, a factor that is often ignored in discussions as the emphasis is still very much on addressing the concerns of families with young children. However balance is defined by individual employees, findings from the comprehensive study conducted by (Morehead, Steele, Alexander, Stephen & Duffin 1997 - reported in detail below) show that 27% of workers surveyed in 1995 **perceived** that their satisfaction with their work/family balance had declined in the past 12 months.

From the point of view of employers, balance is about ensuring production and service requirements are met while at the same time providing a workplace that responds to the family needs of employees by enabling flexibility in **how**, **when** and **where** work is completed. **How** work is completed is about providing flexibility in the organisation of work, the nature of tasks completed and the assignment of work (e.g. job sharing, part-time work) - providing greater flexibility within work groups as well as challenging traditional measures of performance (taking the emphasis away from hours worked and putting it much more on productivity and outputs). **When** work is completed is about providing flexibility in hours of work: starting and ending times, days of the week and weeks of work over the year. **Where** work is completed is about providing flexibility in the place of work - at home versus in the office.

Thus, work/family balance is often associated with providing a workplace that enables employees to balance their work and family commitments, and ensuring that those with family responsibilities have equal opportunities for employment, rewards, advancement and development while at the same time ensuring that personal performance and organisational productivity requirements are met.

### 3. The identification of characteristics of the workplace and the broader social forum, which impact on the strength and well being of workers' families.

There have been marked changes in the workplace and in the broader social forum which have accelerated as this century draws to a close (ABS, Cat 4102.0, ACIRRT, 1999, ACTU, 1999, Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business (DEWRSB), Work and Family Unit, 1999b). What are these changes and in what ways do they have an impact on the strength and well being of families?

#### 3.1 Workplace Changes

##### 3.1.1 The decline of the standard working week - working longer and harder or not working enough.

The norm of a 35-44 hour week has given way to either a part-time working week or longer hours in the full-time working week. The proportion of the working population working 35-44 hours a week fell from 42% in 1988 to 36% in 1998; 27.4%

worked longer than 44 hours a week in 1998 compared with 25.1% in 1988; and 36.9% worked less than 35 hours a week in 1998 compared with 32.7% in 1988 (ABS, Cat. No. 4102.0). Families which are not so threatened by the possibility of job insecurity, unemployment or underemployment might experience difficulties on another front – that of negative impacts from working intensively for longer hours. Working smarter and longer hours against a background of high unemployment, means that for many parents the need to earn an adequate income takes an overwhelming priority in their lives.

The demise of standard working hours for full time work - working harder and longer - is making inroads on family life. Many children therefore are likely to see less and less of their parents in daylight hours and the weekends. The time demands of the workplace cut across all job sectors and indeed may be most keenly felt at the highly skilled end of the job market. The pressures to take “discretionary” time extra to nominated working hours has been documented by Edgar (1995). Now as the century draws to a close, the information age is replacing the industrial age and bringing with it longer hours of work involving harder and more challenging tasks and the need to be multi-skilled. The worker is being bound ever more securely to the demands of work and the tussle between time and space for family and time and space for work is ever more entrenched. Advances in information technology while providing much needed flexibility for many employees (e.g. telecommuting) also have the potential to increase the number of hours worked (especially for managers and professionals) by enabling them to more easily conduct work from home and to be more independent of traditional support staff (e.g. e-mails and memos can be typed from home late at night). In a recent study (Duxbury, Higgins & Thomas, 1996) comparisons were made of the work, family and work-family environments of adopters and non-adopters of computer-supported supplementary work-at-home (e.g. work done at home, after regular hours, using computer technology). It was found that the adopters had higher levels of role overload, interference and stress, yet there were no differences in marital or family satisfaction.

Further, in a recent analysis, Bittman and Rice (1999) conclude that:

“The study of time-diaries provides support for those who argue that changes in working time are affecting the time available for other activities. Since the 1970s, working times have become more dispersed, with higher rates of unemployment, fewer days of work, but longer working days. Standard working hours are now less typical for both men and women workers. Work at unsociable times (outside the hours of 9 to 5 on weekdays) has also increased over the course of this period.” (p. 5).

Working longer, it can be argued, is potentially a response both to the heightened need for businesses to maintain a competitive edge and to restructuring and downsizing. The industries which have experienced the biggest shift to very long hour employment (mining and electricity, gas and water supply) are industries in which employment has been in decline (ABS, Cat. No. 4102.0).

There is concern that the workforce is polarising into underemployed part-timers who want to work more and are suffering from inadequate earnings; and overworked full-timers who are suffering a decreased quality of working and family life. Either way there is a potential for family well-being to be threatened.

Similar results are reported in a large study undertaken by Galinsky & Swanberg (1999) in the USA, which found that US mothers and fathers are working longer hours and report being under greater pressure to work harder. In the United Kingdom Brannen (1999) has termed these two groups the “work poor” and the “work rich”. In Australia, less skilled occupations were more likely to fit into the former group and more highly skilled occupations were more likely to fit into the latter group. In 1998 the latter were increasingly made up of non-managerial occupations as well as the employers and managers and administrators who have always been more likely to work a longer week (ABS, Cat. No. 4102.0).

Results from the Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey conducted nationally with employers and employees across 2001 workplaces (staffed with more than 20 people) include data about employees’ satisfaction with the balance between family in relation to the total weekly hours worked in 1995 (Morehead et al 1997). This study also computed a “work intensification index” using answers to questions about perceived increases in the effort workers put into their job, the stress they had in their job and the pace at which they worked. A decline in satisfaction with family-work balance was found to be related to longer working hours and to a high score on the work intensification index. Full-time employees were more likely than part-time employees to report a decline in satisfaction with work and family balance and males were overall more likely than females to report a decline in satisfaction.

Similar findings were reported in a national survey by the ACTU (1999) across a number of employment sectors and involving 7000 employees, in relation to employment security and working hours. Only 44% of respondents claimed to be happy with work and family balance, and this was more so for females than for males (less females (41%) than males (46%) were happy with their balance between work and family). The most common perceptions across the workplaces in the 12 months prior to the survey included an increase in the amount of work (perceived by 65% of respondents) and an increase in stress (59%) and the pace (56%) involved in work.

### 3.1.2 Increase in part-time and casual jobs

Part-time workers have increased as a percentage of the total employed from 20% in 1988 to 26% in 1998 and those employed on a casual basis from 19% to 29%. Women make up 73% of the total part-timers employed (ABS, Cat. No. 4102.0). Further, 43% of all women in the workforce are employed part-time, compared with 12% of men. Of the female part-time workforce a slightly higher than average number choose part-time work during the child-bearing years from 25-44 years of age. Of the married women in the paid workforce, 33% of those in the age category 20-24 are employed part-time, whereas the comparable figures for those aged 25-34 and 35-44 are 40% and 52% (ABS Cat 6203.0).

As stated in the document entitled *Work and Family. State of Play 1998* (DEWRSB, 1999b), there has also been a significant increase in the number of permanent part-time jobs (where the same conditions available to full-time employees are provided on a pro-rata basis), especially for women (increased from 13% to 18% from 1988 to 1997). Given that the Workplace Relations Act encourages the use of regular part-time work, the availability of this option is likely to increase even further in the future. This continuing change is also likely to be driven by the desire of many people to combine paid work with family responsibilities, especially when children are young or where a person is caring for an elderly or disabled family member. In a recent survey of part-time employees (Russell, 1998), 87% agreed that they wanted a part-time job where they can schedule their work hours to fit in with their family life. Part-time work provides obvious advantages for the parent who is trying to fit in a child care and school schedule with a working schedule. ABS data (Cat 6203.0) indicate that 85% of all married women who work part-time do not want to be working more hours. Nevertheless, of married women in the age group 20-24, 37% said they would prefer to be working longer hours. It remains to be seen whether the same views are expressed by this group when they are in the traditional childbearing years from 25-44 years.

In agreement with ABS data, 80% of respondents in a recent survey of part-time employees in a major financial institution (Russell, 1998, unpublished data) were satisfied with their hours of work and the degree of control they had over them. However, only 50% were satisfied with their career opportunities and only 15% believed they had the same career opportunities as full-time staff (see Glezer & Wolcott 1999 for similar arguments). Best practice organisations are in the process of addressing this issue by providing better career and management opportunities for both female and male part-time employees (e.g. AMP, NRMA, Westpac).

Part-time work opportunities are increasing most rapidly in the service sector. In a major finance sector organisation, the ratio of part-time to full-time staff increased from 24% in 1994 to 43% in 1997. The overwhelming majority of these positions (87%) are in lower job grades and are customer service positions.

Therefore, although women are joining the workforce in increasing numbers they are not necessarily gaining equal economic power in the process (Haas & Hwang, 1999). ABS data for full-time employees for May 1999 show that in comparison to men, women's average ordinary time earnings are 84% of men's and the figure is 80% when all earnings are considered. When both full-time and part-time employees are included, however, women earn only 66% of what men earn. This will have an impact on how dual income couples negotiate solutions to work and family conflicts (Haas et al, 1999), and could have a negative impact on the personal well-being of women and as a consequence, on the well-being of other family members (see, for example, the analysis conducted by Dempsey, 1997).

### 3.1.3 Job insecurity

Analyses of recent workplace changes consistently highlight the potential impact of downsizing, contracting out and relocation (cf. ACIRRT, 1999; Fallon, 1997; Morehead et al, 1997). The analysis conducted by Morehead et al (1997) indicated that in the year prior to 1995, 27% of organisations intentionally reduced their workforce (compared with 26% in 1990) and that the major reason (41%) for doing this was restructuring (up from 24% in 1990). Methods used to reduce the workforce changed quite substantially from 1990 to 1995. This was particularly the case for the use of 'voluntary redundancies' (1995: 37%; 1990: 19%) and 'compulsory redundancies or retrenchments' (1995: 37%; 1990: 30%). There was also a reduction in the use of 'natural wastage or attrition (1995: 51%; 1990: 60%). Further, thirty-one percent of employees said that they "felt insecure about their future" at their place of employment.

One EAP provider consulted for this paper indicated that a growing number of workers were seeking assistance because of forced changes in their employment (e.g. retrenched and now in two part-time jobs), and the precarious nature of their employment (casual and unable to find a secure full-time job). These issues are especially salient for those who are providing the financial support for family dependants, and will have a major impact on stress levels experienced in families.

### 3.1.4 The impact of globalisation.

The globalisation process has resulted in increased and intense competition for talented employees and for market share based on higher product quality and lower prices. A consequence has also been significant changes in the job demands experienced by many employees and especially managers. In particular, demands have increased for employees to travel and to be potentially accessible during 24-hours of operations (either in person, or via video links, telephone or e-mail). Globalisation has also meant that organisations have a greater need to ensure higher levels of productivity and expanded market share by having flexible workforces to enable a quick response to changing market and business demands.

To ensure competitive levels of productivity and business success, organisations have found that it is essential that work practices and policies be implemented that take account of the diversity of employees' needs and values, as well as the cultural influences in the areas in which companies operate (Russell, 1999b). Global organisations have found the need to understand the variations in work/family issues from one country or region to another, and what the key drivers of these variations are. This enables human resource staff and managers to: (i) respond appropriately to the work and family needs of ex-patriates, (ii) enable employees to make more informed decisions about relocating, and (iii) importantly, develop effective local policies to become employers of choice who attract and retain employees of choice.

'Thinking globally and acting locally', it could be argued, is even more relevant when considering work and family issues. Indeed, the long term success of a global organisation in a particular product or workforce market will depend to a large degree on the extent to which policies, practices and marketing are sensitive to local family issues. Understanding the work and family interface provides a way for an organisation to demonstrate corporate responsibility and community commitment. It can be argued that organisations need to be responsive to the family and community values that sustain a society. This understanding is also critical both (i) to ensure effective working relationships between local and ex-patriate staff and (ii) for ex-patriate managers and supervisors who need to be responsive to a different set of work and family needs. Australian-based or global work and family policies (and management skills in implementing these) might also need to be revised. Our accepted western responsiveness to work and family needs may not in fact drive loyalty and commitment in other cultures in the way we expect.

### 3.1.5 The focus on work/family in Enterprise Bargaining.

As is pointed out by Russell & Bourke (1999), while the capacity of legislative reforms to deliver workplace changes to support employees with family responsibilities (Strachan and Burgess, 1998, Pocock 1998, Bennett, 1995) can be challenged, there is general agreement that industrial law and policy *should* address work and family issues. This is the case for recent developments in Australia and particularly in relation to the *Workplace Relations Act 1996*, which has provided a strong focus on work and family balance. The emphasis in the WR Act is on providing choice for employers and employees in how they deal with their workplace relations and it is argued that it should enable "more innovative work styles and working patterns that balance work and family responsibilities more effectively" (DEWRSB, 1999b, p. 3). Characteristics of the WR Act that particularly address work and family issues include:

- Assisting employees to balance their work and family responsibilities effectively through the development of mutually beneficial work practices with employers is a principal object of the Act.

- There are provisions for minimum entitlements to parental leave and protection from dismissal on family-responsibility related grounds.
- “The two types of agreements provided for under the WR Act, certified agreements and Australian workplace agreements, enable employers and employees to tailor their working conditions to meet their work/life needs. There are safeguards for both types of agreement-making to ensure that employees are not disadvantaged.” (DEWRSB, 1999b, p. 3).
- The protection afforded to workers with family responsibilities by awards is reflected in the WR Act through the inclusion of relevant allowable award matters, notably hours of work, personal/carer’s leave, parental leave and type of employment.
- The provision of regular part-time work is encouraged. The WR Act aims to remove unnecessary constraints on regular part-time work and provide greater access to part-time work with pro-rata conditions and reasonable predictability of working hours. Overall, encouragement is given for the development of more appropriate mixes of regular part-time, casual and regular full-time employment as a way of providing employees with improved access to preferred working time arrangements.
- The Employment Advocate is required to have particular regard to assisting workers to balance their work and family responsibilities.

### 3.2 Workforce participation trends which impact on families.

#### 3.2.1 Labour market participation rates for women have increased (and are likely to continue to increase)

In line with trends in the USA and Britain, Australian women are entering the workforce in increasing numbers. Participation rates have increased from 50% in 1988 to 54% in 1999 (ABS Cat. 6203.0). 37% of women in Australia who are in the workforce have dependent children. (ABS Cat.4102.0). Given that women are also more likely to have caregiving responsibilities for elderly parents and family members with long term health needs or disabilities, this means that an increasing proportion of the workforce will have dependant care responsibilities (an argument also made by Reith, 1999).

#### 3.2.2 Mothers with young children are increasingly joining the labour market

Nearly half of the women in Australia with young children are now in the labour force. Females in the labour force with children aged 0-4 increased from 43% in 1988 to 48% in 1998 (ABS, Cat. No.4102.0). A similar trend has been recorded in the United Kingdom (Brannen, 1999).

Mothers with young children are still less likely to be in the workforce than mothers of older children. The lowest employment rates for mothers are for those

with children aged less than 4 years old. Employment rates increase for mothers when children reach school age and then again, particularly for single mothers, when children reach 15 years (ABS, Cat No. 4102.0).

### 3.2.3 Dual income families with children are increasing

When statistics for the participation of couple families in the workforce are examined it is clear that the traditional family model of one working partner is fast vanishing. In 1998, more than half of couple families in Australia with dependent children had both parents in the workforce. Between 1988 to 1998 the proportion increased from 50% to 56%. (ABS, Cat No.4102.0). When women with dependants are asked the reasons why they are participating in the paid workforce (Russell, 1998), the major factors mentioned are: to provide a second or dual income (64%), personal satisfaction (60%), desire for social contact (59%), to build a career (32%), and to support myself and dependants (23%). Many of these families with both parents employed, of course, are responding to the current economic realities in Australia. "In 1996-97, just over half (52%) of lower income working families had only one employed partner and a youngest child aged under 10 years." (ABS Cat.4102.0, p.135). Further, as is pointed out by McDonald (1999), the economic costs of having children is also having a major impact on decisions about when and whether a couple will have children.

The implication of this is that there are more households where both parents will be seeking opportunities to balance their work and family commitments, and, as has been described by Christensen and Gomory (1999), 3/2 families (**three** jobs, **two** people) are now experiencing increased stress:

"Americans feel stressed. Conventional wisdom says that longer hours cause this pressure. But the best data show that the number of hours most Americans work has changed little.

"Yet adults in many dual-earner families genuinely do feel stressed and pulled in too many directions. Work alone is usually not the reason. The reason rather is that the fundamental arithmetic of the family has changed. The traditional family operated with two jobs and two adults. The husband had a full-time paid job in the world of work, while the wife had a full-time unpaid job - bringing up children, developing ties in the community, and taking physical care of the home. In today's two-career family, there are three jobs, two paid and one unpaid, but still only two people to do them.

"This problem is usually discussed in terms of gender equity, as women typically do much more than half of the third unpaid job. But there would still be too much work if we had perfect gender equality and each person did one paid job and half of the third unpaid job. There are still three jobs and only two people." (Christensen and Gomory, 1999, p. 1)

### 3.2.4 Single mothers are increasingly joining the labour market

There is an increased participation of single mothers in the workforce. Four percent of all families employed in 1988 were single women with dependent children. In 1998 single employed women with dependants (including students up to 14 years of age) made up 6% of the population of all families employed. The proportion of lone men with dependants who were employed in 1998 has not changed since 1988 and remains at 1% (DEWRSB, 1999b). As of June 1999 (ABS, 6224), 47% of female lone parents and 63.1% of male lone parents were in paid employment.

### 3.2.5 More older women are in the workforce

As the proportion of older people in the population increases, and the transition to retirement is occurring later in life for men, the number of older people in the workforce is increasing. This is true for women as well as for men even though women are taking up retirement earlier than men (DEWRSB, Work and Family Unit, 1999a). The proportion of the population aged 65 and over has increased from 8% in 1946 to 12% in 1997. The median age of the working male and female has increased. In 1988 the median age of the female workforce was 33 and by 1998 had increased to 36. For men the median age increased from 36 to 38. (ABS Cat. No.4102.0).

The Australian Family Life Course Study, a random national telephone survey conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies in 1996, found that 17% of respondents who were in the workforce and aged 50 years and over, were the main carers of elderly ill or disabled people (Wolcott, 1999). The survey also found that for around half of all working older men and women over 50 years, flexible work arrangements were important to accommodate not only the caring for a dependant, but other family demands such as occasional care of a grandchild or increased participation in family life in general. Older carers are concerned with health problems of their dependant as the main cause of interference with work. Forty nine percent of older working men and 43% of older working women said they did not have enough time with family.

## 3.3 Changes and concerns about family life

### 3.3.1 Time spent with children

More than half the children in Australia share both parents, or their only parent in the case of single parent families, with the workplace. How families cope with the increased absence of parents from the family is the essence of much of the work and family debate.

ABS, Cat No. 4102.0 reports data on the amount of time that parents report spending with their children in the late nineties. While mothers have traditionally spent more time than fathers with children (e.g. in 1992 more than twice as much

as fathers), their increased participation in the workforce means that the time they spend with their children is decreasing. At the same time there is very little evidence that a gender redistribution of family work has occurred (Bittman & Pixley, 1997; Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). Fathers are not spending any more time than they always have on family and child activities (although, as was pointed out above, they are spending more time alone with their children). Mothers report spending, on average, 6 hrs: 46 mins a day on child care activities in 1992 and 6hrs: 7mins in 1997. Fathers report spending 2hrs: 31mins in 1992 on child care activities in 1992, and 2hrs: 24mins in 1997.

The age of the child and employment status of the mother accounts for a vast difference in the amount of time spent by mothers on child care activities. Mothers whose youngest child is between 10-14 reported spending as little as 2hrs: 11mins on child care and were twice as likely to work full time than mothers with their youngest child under 10 (ABS Cat. No. 4102.0).

While the time demands for single working parents are obvious, the time demands for parents in a dual earner couple are not so obvious. Statistics do not show that fathers are taking up where mothers leave off in relation to time spent on child care. Australian studies over the last 15 years are consistent in showing that divisions of labour for family work are very rigid indeed (Bittman, 1995; Dempsey, 1997; Russell, 1983; Russell et al, 1999; Russell & Russell, 1987; Wearing, 1984). Women perform approximately 90% of child care tasks, and 70% of all family work (measured in terms of time spent). Other research shows that only 15% of fathers are highly participant in terms of time spent on family work (Russell, 1983; Russell et al, 1999). Time fathers spent on child activities in 1997 “bore little relationship to the mothers’ hours of work. In fact, men spent slightly less time with their children, on average, when women worked full-time than when they worked part-time” (ABS Cat No. 4102.0, p. 40).

Divisions of labour for family work are particularly problematic in dual worker families. Employed mothers adjust their jobs and personal lives to accommodate family commitments more than employed fathers do. Mothers are less likely to work overtime and are more likely to take time off work to attend to children’s needs. Mothers spend less time on personal leisure activities than their partners, a factor that often leads to resentment (Dempsey, 1997; Russell, 1983). Glezer & Wolcott (1999) point out that although women are joining the workforce in greater numbers they are still largely segregated from certain industries, and particularly from administrative and managerial positions. Women are more likely to be found in the service sector and in clerical and sales jobs. It is likely that decision making about family obligations is influenced by these sex differences in earning potential and occupational opportunities.

The parental role is central to the stress and conflict reported by employed mothers, and a major contributor to such stress is their taking greater overall

responsibility for children. In one study of dual worker families, 82% reported that mothers had the overall responsibility for children, whereas only 18% reported that this was shared by mothers and fathers (Dempsey, 1997). Children's reports support these findings. For example, Ochiltree & Amato (1985) interviewed 195 primary school children and 207 secondary school children in Victoria and found that for both age groups, mother was the parent most frequently turned to with worries, mentioned most frequently as the parent with whom children liked to have good talks, and the parent with whom children spent the most time. Decisions about behaviour, house rules and discipline were also reported to be made by mother rather than father.

Managing work and family responsibilities can therefore often be very difficult for mothers in dual income families. According to statistics collected by ABS (Cat No. 4102.0), where both couples worked full-time 70% of mothers stated they always or often felt rushed or pushed for time, compared to 56% of fathers and 52% of women with no dependent children.

### 3.3.2 Concern about the effect of parental employment on families and children

Considerable research has focused on the effects of maternal employment on children and there appears to be general agreement that there are no significant developmental problems for children of employed mothers. Despite the fact that employed mothers typically retain primary responsibility for child and home care, their children tend to have less traditionally stereotyped attitudes about gender roles than children of unemployed mothers (Gottfried, Gottfried, Bathurst & Killian, 1999). While the most significant predictor of children's cognitive achievement is parental education, Parcel, Nickoll and Dufur (1996) found that both paternal and maternal work hours had a negative effect on maths achievement and reading ability. Maternal employment has no effect on child health practices (e.g. immunisations) however children with mothers at home full-time actually watch more TV than those with mothers working part-time (Bianchi & Robinson, 1997). For single mothers, employment appears to result in a more enriching home environment and more positive mother-child relationships (Youngblut, Singer, Madigan, Stewart, & Rodgers, 1998).

Studies examining early parental employment have shown that employed mothers are more sensitive to their young babies (Broom, 1998), have less stress and less child externalizing (acting out) behaviour problems (Symons, 1998) and there is no difference in their children's self-esteem. However working more hours is associated with slightly lower academic achievement in lower primary aged children (Harvey, 1999).

Very few studies have examined the effect of paternal employment demands on children. It would appear that work hours and job stress may have an indirect effect on children by increasing the burden of child raising onto the mother

(Harvey, 1998) and decreasing the father's perception of being a nurturant parent which is related to children's depression but not to aggressive behaviour. (Curtner, Smith, Bennett. & O'Rear, 1995). In a more comprehensive study with a random sample of 189 fathers, Stewart & Barling (1996), found significant indirect effects of father's employment experiences, namely job decision latitude, inter-role conflict, job insecurity and job demands, on teachers' ratings of children's acting-out behaviours, shyness and school competencies in a sample of 102 boys and 85 girls. The study found that workplace variables impacted directly on job related affect (job satisfaction, negative mood and job-related tension) which in turn impacted on parenting behaviour (authoritative parenting, punishing behaviours and rejecting behaviours) which in turn impacted on children's behaviour (school competencies, acting out and shyness).

Another demonstration of the indirect impact of father's workplace experiences on children's behaviour involved the marital relationship. Amato & Booth (1997) provide a comprehensive analysis of variables operating in fathers' participation in family life over time and the outcomes for children of that participation, which includes an analysis of indirect effects. They interviewed a large sample of white middle class families by telephone and mail in North America over a period of twelve years. Variables which were considered in this study included: economic resources, educational level of parents, gender non-traditionalism including mothers' and fathers' share of household tasks as distinct from child care tasks, mothers' and fathers' hours of employment and their gender role attitudes, parents marital quality, gender and age of offspring, and the parenting styles of support and control. Dependent measures encompassing the successful transition to adulthood included development of intimacy, marriage, relationship quality with parents as well as others, social integration, socio-economic status and psychological well-being.

The broad picture which emerges in relation to the influence of fathers on personal development and well-being is a positive one. Results show that fathers' share of child rearing (as distinct from household tasks) is associated with high affection between fathers and young adults, greater social integration as defined by more close kin, friends in support networks, more organisational memberships and stronger feelings of community attachment.

In relation to children's achievement however, the results are more complex. When children were younger their achievement was associated with fathers' income and not with fathers' involvement in child rearing. When children reached adolescence fathers had the most influence on achievement through provision of help and emotional support. Overall marital harmony and quality was a key variable in children's achievement, along with income of father (but not mother) and parents' educational level. The authors conclude that while fathers do not exercise important direct effects on children's socioeconomic success they have important indirect influence through the quality of the marital relationship.

There is a paucity of data on more specific outcomes within the family domain which can be related directly or indirectly to problems in balancing work and family demands. To date there is no investigation of the role work and family conflict plays in the rise of other social indicators, e.g. escalating juvenile crime, divorce rates and custody and access issues; community breakdown and the availability of people to participate in volunteer work.

Most research literature in the family domain centres on inter-role conflict. Argument on the effects of work and family conflict differentiates between work and family conflict that arises from aspects of work interfering with the performance of family related tasks and conflict arising from aspects of the family that interfere with the performance of work related tasks, and finds that the former is more common than the latter. (e.g. Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992; Glezer & Wolcott, 1999; Netemeyer, R., Boles, J. & McMurrin, R., 1996). While this perspective on worker stress predicts that negative effects from work and family conflict would be more likely to be felt in the family, there has been nevertheless, more debate about how stress from work and family conflict effects the workplace than how it effects the family. Such workplace "losses" are more easily quantifiable (e.g. job performance measures, career satisfaction (Aryee & Luk, 1996); implications for personnel selection techniques (Hart & Wearing, 1995)). Negative family outcomes are less well understood in terms of family functioning measures. It is not surprising that complex outcomes of family functioning have complex answers (cf. Adams, King, & King 1996) and that work experiences are likely to have indirect mediating and sequential effects on family variables such as marital satisfaction (Barling & MacEwen, 1991; MacEwen, Barling & Kelloway, 1993), mental health (Brannen, 1999, Kelloway & Barling, 1991) and abuse of alcohol (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1995).

Job experiences as a result of higher status (e.g. Glezer & Wolcott, 1999), the presence of children, age of children and working status of partner (e.g. Eagle, Icenogle, Maes & Miles, 1997) are demographic variables important for understanding experiences of work-family inter-role conflicts. In a more comprehensive study, Parasuraman, Purohit & Godshalk, (1996) demonstrate that time commitment to work and time commitment to family play an important role in mediating the effects of gender, work and family characteristics, and role demands on work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict. In turn, these two types of conflict mediate the effects of time commitment and spouse support on family satisfaction and life stress. This study also found that there is a crossover of effects between partners which must be taken into account in couple families. This finding was endorsed by Hammer, Allen, & Grigsby, (1997) in a study with 399 dual-earner couples where partners' work and family variables (ie work salience, perceived work schedule flexibility and family involvement) was just as important in determining level of work and family conflict as was individuals' variables.

### 3.3.3 The child care debate.

Recent studies on child care in infancy and preschool years have shown positive and negative effects as well as no significant differences between children who have and have not attended day care facilities. Outcome measures which have revealed no significant differences between day care and home-reared preschoolers include cooperative behaviour and peer competence (Matlock & Green, 1989), developmental trajectories (Wessels, Lamb, Hwang, & Broberg, 1997), and long-term impact (Scarr, 1998). Conversely, DiLalla (1998) found that children who experienced little or no day care were more likely to behave prosocially and day care appears to affect children's perception of their same sex parent's nurturing (Mills & Stevens, 1985).

While infants at 9 months brought up in home care have been found to have better developmental outcomes than those in day care, this difference is no longer significant by age 3.5 years (Balleyguier, 1988). Some negative outcomes appear to be more dependent on the quality of child care rather than just the fact of child care, for example quality of parent-child attachment (Kim, 1997) and cognitive abilities (Brober, Wessels, Lamb & Hwang, 1997). Markowsky and Pence (1997) questioned adolescents about their memories of day care and found that remembered emotions were generally negative, remembered episodes were of accidents and the most remembered activity was nap time!

Positive outcomes for early entry into child care include increased interest-participation (Hausfather, Toharia, LaRoche & Engelsmann, 1997), fewer socio-emotional problems (Kim, 1997) and reduced behaviour problems for insecurely attached children (Pierrehumbert, Ramstein, Karmaniola, & Halfon, 1996) however these benefits are mediated by the quality of care provided, again suggesting that quality of day care may be of more importance than day care in itself.

When questioned about day care, infant mental health professionals consistently endorsed home care by mothers, individual care rather than group care and family care over purchased care. Fathers were generally disregarded as possible principal caregivers (Leach, 1997; Cook, 1999). Parents themselves tend to rate care by relatives or nannies as preferable to center-based care and mothers are more satisfied with child care arrangements than fathers (Erdwins, Casper, & Buffardi, 1998) even though mothers collect children from care more regularly than fathers and are more communicative with professional caregivers (Fagan, 1997). Better perceptions of child care are obtained from parents who use child care compared to those whose children are home-cared (Erwin & Kontos, 1998). The choice of child care is dependent on a combination of funding levels, availability, income and pattern of working hours (Lee & Strachan, 1998).

When organizations provide day care facilities there can be negative attitudes to this from childless workers or those who do not use the benefit. Negative attitudes

do not extend to other work and family initiatives however (Rothausen, Gonzalez, Clarke, & O'Dell, 1998). Murray (1997) argues that government standards for day care fall below overseas benchmarks (e.g. staffing, resources). Family day care and after school care is an under-researched area and quality and outcomes are more variable (Goelman & Pence, 1988).

### 3.3.4 More single mothers

The rising entry of lone mothers into the workforce is accompanied by high rates of divorce and rising rates of single parenthood. In 1987, 18% of all births occurred outside marriage. By 1997, births outside of marriage (including those in defacto relationships) had increased to 28% of all births (ABS Cat No. 4102.0).

Many mothers are raising children without a partner or are divorced and have remained single. In 1989, lone mothers with a child under 15 years of age made up 13% of the population of total households. By 1997 the proportion of lone mothers with a child under 15 had increased to 20% of total households (ABS Cat. No.41020.0). A high proportion of these are not in the paid workforce (53%) and are clearly identified as low income families.

### 3.3.5 Changed expectations of the contributions men make to family life.

Although (as is indicated below) most analyses indicate that men are not as actively involved in day-to-day family life as women are (see also Russell, Barclay, Edgecombe, Donovan, Habib, Callaghan & Pawson, 1999), there has been a substantial shift in expectations about this involvement. Fathers themselves, their spouses, children, family workers and the broader community have raised their expectations about the degree to which fathers are involved in family life. Russell et al (1999) in their national random sample of 1000 men who are parents found that compared with 15 years ago, fathers of today spend more time alone with their children and are closer to their children. The overwhelming majority of fathers also considered that they are highly influential in their children's lives and that the most important aspect of their role as a father in terms of the impact they have on their children's well-being and adjustment is being accessible to their children. Most wanted to be more involved (68% felt that they did not spend enough time with their children) and saw barriers associated with the workplace (expectations of long working hours, inflexibility) as being the most critical factor in preventing them from being the kind of father they would like to be (57%). Fifty-three percent felt that their job and family lives interfered with each other and 33% percent said they found it hard to take time off during the day to care for family matters. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many men are reluctant to access work/family benefits because of a fear that this will be interpreted as an indicator of a lack of commitment. A recent study conducted in the US provides some support for this suggestion. It was found that men who take up the family-friendly workplace provision of leave of absence are less likely to be

recommended for rewards than men who had not taken up leave of absence (Allen & Russell, 1999).

### 3.3.6 Potential impact on intimate or close relationships

A highly critical aspect of personal and family life that is missing from most analyses (see, for example, Bond, Galinsky & Swanberg, 1998) of work and family issues is the potential impact workplace demands have on intimate relationships, and the possible reciprocal positive workplace impact of having quality/satisfying intimate relationships. Yet, the number of divorces each year in Australia has increased significantly (from 39,700 in 1987 to 51,300 in 1997; and the number of children under 18 affected by divorces has increased from 44,100 in 1987 to 51,700 in 1997). In a national phone poll conducted by Relationships Australia in 1998 (done by AC Nielson) 75% of the participants admitted to major relationship problems and the top three problems mentioned were: financial, work pressures and children (Personal communication: Anne Hollands, CEO, Relationships Australia, NSW).

If the responses of organisations to the work and family needs of employees is any indication, it would seem that the “intimate relationship issue” has a relatively low priority. The emphasis tends to be much more on addressing the work/family needs of employees through “Flexible Work Options” and “Dependant care Arrangements” (cf. Bankert & Litchfield, 1998; DEWRSB, 1999b). Many organisations, of course, would argue that they are addressing relationship issues by providing Employee Assistance Programs (EAP). Data presented below indicate that 56% of Australian companies offer EAPs (whereas 97% of US companies reported that they did). EAPs are by their very nature confidential and therefore there are limited opportunities for any data from the analyses of problems or services provided to contribute to changes in workplace practices and expectations. Informal data provided as part of consultations conducted for this review (two EAP providers and one large organisation with an EAP) indicates: (i) between 60 and 75% of referrals to EAPs concern family relationship issues and (ii) the utilisation rates for EAPs are increasing (especially by men).

- *Having quality intimate relationships is critical for personal well-being.*

Research evidence indicates that the quality of intimate relationships does matter to individuals, to families and to the community and therefore, they should be included in the work and family debate. A focus on providing better opportunities for people to both establish and maintain intimate relationships would be expected to have a positive impact on personal and family well-being and on a person’s effectiveness at the workplace.

Cramer (1998, p. 1) in a recent comprehensive review points out that close or intimate relationships (involving passion, mutual trust and commitment) are a major part of the lives of most people. He reports findings from a UK study

(sample size - 1416 adults) by Jowell, Wotherspoon and Brook (1987) which show that 77% of people either live with a spouse/partner or have a continuing close relationship with someone they don't live with. Critically, after reviewing the available research Cramer concludes that: "There is growing evidence from longitudinal studies that the presence of supportiveness of a close relationship is related to living longer and being less psychologically distressed." (p. 58). Further, Barnett (1994) has found that for full-time employed men and women in dual-earner couples, having higher quality marital relationships can "buffer" the negative effects of job demands on psychological distress.

Research shows that intimacy - being sensitive to the other's needs and getting to know one another - grows from spending time together, talking to each other and listening. Intimacy develops from the everydayness of life and from comparing experiences at the end of the day. This leads to an involvement of each in the life of the other and a sense of being important and heard. It does not depend on sessions of soul-searching but feeling free enough to speak about the little things that hurt or excite, and knowing there is a receptive ear at the other end of the conversation.

Generally, research shows that there are four key indicators of the quality of close/spousal relationships (Spanier, 1976): (i) the extent to which there is consensus on key relationship issues (e.g. philosophy of life, recreation, friends); (ii) the level of satisfaction with the relationship; (iii) the level of relationship cohesiveness (e.g. how often something is calmly discussed, how often there is a stimulating exchange of ideas, how often there is shared laughter); and (iv) agreement and satisfaction with the expression of affection. Findings from many studies conducted over the past 30 years tend to support this conceptualisation. For example, Cramer reviews evidence concerning views about factors that either "wreck a marriage" or "make for a happy marriage". The five most commonly mentioned factors for each question for both women and men were:

- *Wreck a marriage*: "neglect and bad communication"; "selfishness and intolerance"; "infidelity and jealousy"; "poverty, money disagreements"; and "conflicting personalities, no common interests".
- *Make a happy marriage*: "give and take, consideration"; "comradeship, doing things together"; "discussing things, understanding"; "mutual trust and help"; and "love and affection".

Cramer concludes (p. 74) that research consistently shows that the following factors predict marital compatibility: being loving, sexually satisfied, communicative and emotionally stable. In one of the more comprehensive studies it was found that those who were maritally satisfied had more problem-solving communication, more and better leisure time together, more affective communication, less conflict over childrearing, less sexual dissatisfaction and

fewer financial disagreements. (pp. 71-72). These are all factors that are likely to be linked to workplace demands and expectations.

- *Workplace demands have an impact on the quality of intimate relationships*

In a recent study (Russell, unpublished data) conducted in a large organisation (sample size 3977) employees were asked both what family demands have an impact on their work and what work demands have an impact on their family life (and what the specific impact is). The five most commonly mentioned family demands were: time pressures (47%); lack of time for social and recreational activities (33%); financial difficulties (23%); problems juggling work/family commitments with spouse (17%); and difficulties in their relationship with their spouse (15%). The five most commonly mentioned work demands were: coming home from work feeling stressed (53%); having to change work hours at short notice (34%); difficulties in relationships with co-workers (33%); coming home late from work (27%); and pressures from work deadlines (25%). These work demands were reported to have a significant impact on the following aspects of family life: generally poor quality family relationships (45%), not being able to plan family life (19%), not enough time for spouse (17%), not enough time for self (7%) and a high level of conflict with spouse (6%).

Findings also indicated that relationship issues are even more critical for senior managers. Forty percent of this group regularly reported going home stressed; forty-two percent said that their work had a negative impact on their partner relationship; and forty-eight percent said it had a negative impact on their family life. The spouses of senior male managers had very different views about the work and family priorities of the manager, and about the impact his work had on family life and on their relationship. Nearly eighty percent of partners compared with only 50% of male managers agreed that: "Work demands of employees frequently mean they spend less time together than they would like." Intimacy in relationships was also a key issue, and partners were much more concerned about this than the managers were. In this study 45% of the female spouses compared with 30% of the senior male managers agreed that the demands of the management job made it difficult for them to spend time talking and relaxing together.

One of the groups being given increased attention are younger males (under 35) who have young children (usually below school age) and who also have partners in the paid workforce who are pursuing careers. It is estimated that that dual worker/career couples constitute up to 40% of the workforce now and this number is likely to grow in the future (Catalyst, 1998). Survey findings indicate that men in these relationships are feeling more stress and are keener to change the corporate world to enable them to have a better balance between their work and family/personal life. In a recent survey (Russell, 1999, unpublished data), sixty-three percent of this group of young men said that they would refuse a job

or promotion if it had a negative impact on their family life or on their partner's career, or they would refuse a transfer for those same reasons.

Academic research has also shown that work/family conflict and job stress are associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction for women (MacEwen & Barling, 1988) and men (Kinnunen, Gerris & Vermulst, 1996), and withdrawal from marital interactions by both women and men (MacEwen & Barling, 1994). Bedeian, Mossholder & Touliatos (1987) have found that the impact of job factors on home and family life is lower when higher levels of emotional support are provided by partners in dual-career relationships. Adams, King and King (1996) have also found that higher levels of family emotional and instrumental support are associated with lower levels of work/family interference. Working unsociable hours in shift work has also been found to have an impact on intimate relationships. In a large-scale longitudinal study (White and Keith 1990) shift work was found to reduce marital quality and increase the probability of divorce (while the effects are significant, they are relatively small). Moreover, findings indicated that shift work has an impact on all aspects of marital quality: marital happiness, marital interaction, disagreements, marital problems and sexual problems.

Similar kinds of outcomes would be expected in relation to some of the current workplace demands and reduce the capacity of employees (both women and men) to either establish or maintain quality intimate relationships. Two work demands that are especially likely to have this impact are: extended hours of work and working at unsocial times. Other work demands (especially for those who work in global or national organisations) that could have a negative impact on intimate relationships include:

- *Constant short-term travel.* For some employees this means being away for short periods of time - between 5 and 10 days on a reasonably constant basis, e.g. every three to four weeks. Many corporations require employees to travel on personal time (e.g. on weekends, early morning, during evenings) to ensure they are available during regular business hours at their destination.
- *Overseas assignments for up to 12 months.* Corporations usually have policies that enable family members to relocate with employees if the assignment is to be over 12 months. Yet some continue to design assignments that make it difficult for the maintenance of intimate relationships (e.g. assignments of 11 months, assignments to foreign countries that also involve considerable short-term travel).
- *Expectations about 24 hour accessibility.* For many employees this means staying back at the office to participate in global video-conferences (that are often based on US time frames, e.g. 9 am East Coast US would be 9 pm Perth, Australia time). Expectations about availability for telephone conferences and to respond to e-mails from home have also increased.

Each of these work demands has a potential to have a negative impact on all aspects of relationships noted above: consensus, satisfaction with the relationship, relationship cohesiveness (spending time together in a relaxed environment) and agreement and satisfaction with the expression of affection. It also makes it less likely that those in dual career relationships are able to provide the continuing day to day personal support that people find beneficial in ensuring their well-being. Effective communication and resolution of conflicts and differences are also made much more difficult. As Gottman (1997, p. 28) argues: “If there is one lesson I have learned from my years of research it is that *a lasting marriage results from a couple’s ability to resolve the conflicts that are inevitable in any relationship.*”

#### 4. Organisational Policies and Programs - the identification of trends in the provision of family friendly policies

It is well recognised that the debate on balancing work and family has its roots in the entry of women into the workforce in increasing numbers (e.g. Bankert & Gogins, 1996). In order for women to meet family needs, child care had to be provided and maternity leave formalised. At the same time the notion of alleviating stress arising from the family sphere and spilling into the work sphere was seen to have reciprocal benefits for the employer by way of improving the worker’s contribution to productivity. Men as well as women were included - most obviously in terms of absenteeism, retention and turnover rates as well as less obviously in terms of morale and discretionary effort. The concept of family needs in relation to the workplace has since broadened to include the diverse nature of family life. Carers of the elderly, childless couples and singles are acknowledged to have family demands which overlap with workplace demands. Workplace family friendly practices are increasingly broadly based to accommodate demands from families with older children and aged dependants as well as those with younger children.

In the beginning, the work and family debate both in Australia and overseas, was largely a “scattergun” approach as contingencies arose (Edgar, 1994). An example of a piecemeal approach can be found in the fact that child care is accessed only a few times if at all in a worker’s life and, while being a valuable and important family friendly initiative, especially in the ground-breaking days of early workplace reform, it does not stand alone to promote a family-friendly workplace. It has become clear that when work-family initiatives are offered in a piecemeal way they are seen as fringe benefits (Cooper & Lewis, 1995, Haas & Hwang, 1995; Lewis, 1996; Russell, James & Watson, 1988). As such they can be offered and then taken away, as economic circumstances change. Individuals may feel that taking benefits marks them as less committed to the workplace. The emphasis on individual solutions to work-family conflict also keeps work organisations from considering how work-family issues should receive more attention as part of strategic business concerns.

The current debate urges a broad based philosophy of flexibility including flexible hours such as control over start and finish times, flextime, regular part-time work, allowing workers to work preferred total weekly hours and creative solutions to ad hoc family needs like the carers' room at Cole Dental at Strathpine in Queensland where sick children can spend the day if child care falls through (The Australian Financial Review, September 17, 1999). It may incorporate simple but important changes like ensuring accessibility to a phone to call home (Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business Work and Family Unit, 1999b).

The Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business (DEWRSB), Work and Family Unit (1999b) has undertaken a large-scale audit of the family friendly policies and practices that are in place in the private and public sector in Australia. In particular, this audit covers provisions implemented between 1997-1998 using the framework provided by the Workplace Relations Act 1996. This framework provides for policies to be negotiated and agreed upon by both employers and employees, and therefore it is expected that policies will be tailored to meet the needs of both employers and workers (to balance their work and family responsibilities). However, as is acknowledged in this report and by Reith (1999) "the existence of such arrangements is not necessarily an automatic indicator of family friendliness in agreements" (p. 6), and neither will they necessarily ensure that employees and families are able to achieve their desired work/family balance.

Particular emphasis is given in the DEWRSB (1999) analysis to practices that provide flexibility and choice for employees over the lifespan, and are low cost for employers to implement: control over start and finish times, influence over the pace of work, access to a telephone at work to use for family reasons and flexibility in the number of hours worked per week. It is also argued (p. 6) that being able to access flexible working hours is associated with higher job satisfaction, lower levels of stress and better balance between work and family responsibilities. The results of this study reveal that the majority of certified agreements provide at least one family friendly agreement. Employers are also using the newer form of agreement - the Australian workplace agreement - to provide family friendly provisions. This suggests that work and family provisions are getting on to the bargaining table. Flexible hours initiatives are the most common family-friendly provision amongst certified agreements. Flexible hours measures are also one of the two most common family-friendly provisions amongst Australian workplace agreements. In summary, key findings were:

In Certified Agreements:

- 67% of all certified agreements made since the introduction of the WR Act included one or more family-friendly measure.
- 52% (of all agreements) included flexible working hours
- 18% (of all agreements) included regular part-time work.

*In Australian Workplace Agreements*

- 71% (of all agreements) had at least one family friendly measure
- 56% (of all agreements) had at least one flexible hours provision
- 44% (of all agreements) had provisions for regular part-time work.

Family-friendly policies listed in advocacy documents (e.g. Wolcott, 1994; 1996) include relocation assistance, child care (centres and referral, emergency), family support (youth clubs, family leave, parenting seminars, respite care for people who have family members with disabilities), care for dependent adults (elder care resource and referral services), flexible work and leave arrangements (flexible hours, flexible working year, career breaks, job-sharing, permanent part-time work, home based work), other family-friendly measures (flexible salary packages, work and family information).

Two recent studies provide indicative data concerning the extent to which Australian organisations currently offer these types of services and programs (Morehead et al 1997, Mulvena, 1998). Data relating to what family-friendly practices and policies are in place, was obtained from the 1995 Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey conducted with funding from the Department of Industrial Relations. This large-scale study involved questionnaires completed by management and employees across 2001 workplaces (Morehead et al 1997). Questions about work and family practices involved the type of leave available to employees to enable them to look after family members, the incidence of paid maternity leave, whether any assistance for child care is provided and the ease of contacting family from work.

When managers were asked what types of leave could be used by most employees to take time off to care for dependants, the most common response involved holiday leave, sick leave and unpaid leave. (Annual Leave: 78%; Long Service Leave: 63%, Unpaid Leave: 72% or Sick Leave: 59%). More flexible provisions for leave to look after dependants were less common. (Special Leave: 47%, Flex leave or make up time later: 37%, Family leave: 22% and Carer's Leave: 7%). In surveys conducted with employees, holiday leave (43%), own paid sick leave (43%) and leave without pay (36%) were most commonly cited as leave available when taking time off to care for dependants. As with manager's responses, flexible provisions were less in evidence (family leave: 15%; take time off / make up later: 16%).

There was a difference between managers' and employees' perceptions of when no leave at all was available (in 1% of workplaces managers said no leave was available while in 4% of workplaces employees said no leave was available). Seven percent of workplaces offered some sort of assistance to employees relating to child care, either financially or by providing work-based facilities. While nearly all managers believed that their workplaces allowed employees to phone home,

26% of employees felt they did not have access to a phone to use for family reasons. Thirty four percent of workplaces offered paid maternity leave (23% private and 59% public sector) and 18% offered paid paternity leave (13% private and 31% public sector).

Findings reported by Morehead et al (1997) for paid parental leave in the private sector are very consistent with those from another recent Australian study (Mulvena, 1998). This study included survey responses from Human Resource Managers in 154 corporations selected (to comprise a representative distribution of industry types) at random from the extensive data base of Cullen Egan Dell. The survey was also constructed to be consistent (where possible) with a study of 35 companies from the Standard and Poors List conducted by Boston College and Business Week (Bankert & Litchfield, 1998). Comparable data (in percentages of organisations offering a particular initiative) are shown in the table below:

	Australia	US
<b>Flexible work options</b>		
Flexible hours	56	74
Part-time work	92	69
Job sharing	56	57
Telecommuting/working from home	51	43
Compressed work week	17	54
Paid maternity leave	25	26
Paid paternity leave	14	26
Paid leave for adoptive parents	23	29
Career breaks	16	17
Use of employee sick days to attend to family commitments	81	57
<b>Dependant care arrangements</b>		
On-site or near-site child care facility	3	17
School holiday care	3	9
After school care	1	9
Child care information and referral services	25	83
Elder care information and referral services	15	74
Emergency, back-up or sick child care	6	17
Nursing mother rooms	4	26
<b>Work and family services/benefits</b>		
Employee Assistance Program	56	97
Relocation services	74	83
Support groups for employees with family issues	23	43
Seminars for employees with family issues	7	63

In their national survey of employed parents in the U.S., Bond, Galinsky & Swanberg (1998) report that a majority of parents say they can easily take time off during the day to attend to family matters and that they have the flexibility to take time off for sick children. Most report access to maternity leave and paternity leave. While about two-fifths say they have access to flex-time, only about one-fifth, however, receive help with child care or elder care referrals, and fewer still get any financial assistance with these needs. Only services for elder care had increased significantly over time.

In contrast to the findings for the U.S., Brannen & Lewis (1999) indicate that while the prevalence of 'family-friendly' practices is increasing in the UK, they are not currently widespread and are more likely to be offered by public sector and large organisations. Three types of initiatives were reported to be relatively common (but were usually provided on a discretionary basis): enhanced maternity leave (offered by 23% of employers), leave to care for sick children (approximately 25%), and paternity leave (69%). Much less common were: career breaks, child care, flexible hours and job sharing.

Analyses conducted in the U.S., U.K. and Australia (Haas, et al, 1999) show that many workers lack formal access to any work-family services or programs because they are part of a growing portion of the contingent labour force which lacks job security; these individuals work on contract, short-term, or when called. This is part of an international trend referred to as 'casualisation.' In Australia, casual employees usually have a loading included in their pay as part compensation for the lack of benefits. It should also be noted that for some employees, the option of casual employment allows them (for a period of time in the life span) to balance their work and family commitments (e.g. enabling them to work in school holidays or to work when their spouse has reduced work demands - as often occurs for spouses of shift workers).

Haas & Hwang (1999) discuss the broader policies and programs available and mandated in Sweden, e.g. child care and parental leave, as well as a policy that has been advocated for over twenty years - a six-hour work day for all employees while being paid for seven or eight hours. While this practice is not yet widespread, findings show that many organisations have experimented with this policy, resulting in positive outcomes for organisations, employees and their families. Haas & Hwang also report that a very small number of companies have provided managers with allowances to purchase cleaning, laundry and ironing assistance as a way of helping dual-career couples manage their work and family commitments.

Although parental leave is mandated in Sweden and there is a strong emphasis on advocating that both women and men take leave, there is still a significant gender gap in take-up rates. Haas & Hwang (1999) argue that a major reason for this

outcome is the failure of organisations to adopt ‘active measures’ to encourage men to use their parental leave rights, despite this being enshrined in the equality law. In two separate studies (both with approximately 200 companies) reported by Haas & Hwang (1999) it was found that: (i) only 14% tried to make it easier for fathers to take parental leave; and (ii) only 3% were actively helping male employees to balance work and family.

Haas & Hwang (1999) conclude that Swedish companies have been slow to initiate their own policies and programs to reduce work/family conflicts and to enhance gender equity. Companies still base their policies on the traditional gender contract that reinforces male dominance in all spheres of public and private life. It is clear from all research reviewed in this section that the most significant challenges and opportunities for change are at the level of the organisation, whether this be private or public sector.

## **5. Organisations with innovative policies and programs - the identification of what workplace arrangements can facilitate workers’ ability to meet family needs, whilst continuing to meet employers’ needs for productivity**

One of the major gaps in the work/family area (cf. Russell, 1999a) is the lack of high quality evaluation data, and therefore, statements about effectiveness are somewhat limited. Nevertheless, many countries have various award systems (e.g. the Work and Family Awards in Australia) or surveys aimed at identifying those organisations performing well in providing work-family policies and programs. Bowen (1999) reviews U.S. findings showing that only 5% of organisations in the US offer ‘cutting edge’ work-family strategies. He suggests that cutting edge strategies include child care and elder care assistance, reimbursement accounts, alternative work schedules, information and referral services, paid personal days for child and family responsibilities, fitness centres, stress management and family life education programs, and extending benefits to partners of employees in cohabiting and same-sex couples.

- *Innovative policies and practices*

Brannen & Lewis (1999) provided examples of ‘principles of good practice’ in U.K. organisations. In the area of child care and other care, they identified several public and private sector organisations - particularly those with a high number of female employees - who provided extensive child care facilities and career breaks of up to five years to enable employees to care for children. Brannen and Lewis argue that good practice in regard to flexibility calls for policies and practices that either “enhance employee autonomy or normalise ways of working,” enabling employees to have control over balancing their work and family commitments, with mutual benefits to employees and employers. The example they provide is

a supermarket chain which enables employees to swap shifts with other workers from the same or different departments without the involvement of management. This is to overcome the common practice of flexibility options being offered only at the discretion of managers.

Some U.K. companies have challenged the view that work-family integration is solely a women's issue and have tackled the long hours culture (with the emphasis on presence at work). In one organisation, flexible work options were promoted to a broader group of employees and there was an emphasis on the value for individuals and the organisation of achieving a healthy balance between work and life (beyond family). In another organisation, a number of innovative initiatives were put in place (e.g. a new parents' program for staff and their partners, a parenting consultation service, and a work/family consultation service for managers) that challenge the idea that family matters should not be of a concern to the workplace and recognise that men have work-family integration concerns as well.

In the final example provided by Brannen & Lewis (1999), an organisation conducted a campaign to challenge the belief that it is necessary to work long hours to show commitment. This included 'Go Home on Time Days', encouraging employees to work smarter, not harder (with tips about how to achieve this, e.g. evaluation of the need for meetings), as well as a series of management training programs to encourage a better work/life balance.

Squirchuk & Bourke (1999) have highlighted innovative policies and programs in the Australian company AMP. Based on a survey of employee needs and an analysis of associated business opportunities (e.g. to be an Employer of Choice), AMP implemented a range of family-friendly leave policies, including six weeks paid parental leave for the primary caregiver and expanded opportunities for part-time work, job-sharing and working from home. An evaluation of the impact of these policies has revealed positive outcomes for employees and for the business. These include high take-up of parental leave by both women and men (more than 70 men and 350 women took parental leave between 1996-1998) an increase in return to work after maternity leave and higher retention rates.

Like several other Australian organisations (e.g. NRMA, Alcoa), AMP has aligned their work/family strategies with others aimed at enhancing gender equity (e.g. reduced hierarchical and occupational segregation and improved pay equity, management awareness programs, anti-harassment and affirmative action programs). As a result, the number of women in management positions have increased significantly, more women have moved into traditionally male sales and service positions and there has been an increase in the number of managers in part-time positions. This is an important case study because it shows that with a combined focus on equity in work/family (e.g. paid parental leave) and gender

equity in employment, changes are possible in both domains. It should be noted, however, that there are still major gaps in gender equity in several areas of employment and especially in management positions.

Mobil Oil Australia, the winner of the Gold Award for highest overall achievement in the 1999 Corporate Work and Family Awards (The Australian Financial Review Special Report Work and Family, September 17, 1999), has implemented a diversity and inclusion program to formalise home-based work and include flexible working hours, special leave, job-sharing, and retirement planning among other changes. The company undertook a survey of its employees about the program and in particular about the flexible working hours. Nearly half (48%) of respondents who used the new program said they took advantage of the flexible working hours on offer. Of those, 65% said they could use it on an ad hoc basis rather than a planned time off. Of the other employees who had not used the flexible hours provisions, many said that it was good to know they were there and that there was an option if needed.

The changes at Mobil are part of an overhaul of company culture. Employees are now responsible for decisions at the plant and responsible for their own rosters. Benefits to the company are measured in the survival of the company through tough times. Reliability at the plant is running at 99.8%.

Data on the effectiveness of the implementation of government mandated parental leave for Swedish men are provided by Haas & Hwang (1999). They argue that there are three stages in Swedish companies' response to men's interest in taking parental leave. Only about 3% of companies provide active support, while about one-third passively oppose men's leavetaking, and the rest provide support conditional on the circumstances. In the most supportive organisations, the corporate culture actively facilitated men to participate more in child care and it had become the company's responsibility (not the employee's) to work out ways for men to take out parental leave. Importantly too, it is argued by the authors that in these more advanced companies leadership came from the top (e.g. from young managers who were themselves fathers and from older men concerned to make sure that younger men have more contact with their children than they had), and this was based both on ideological concerns (e.g. valuing the welfare of families) and business concerns (e.g. companies recognised that there were productivity gains in having men take parental leave). These companies were also more likely to institute other workplace changes that are critical to ensure effective outcomes. These included: cross-training and job rotation, flattened hierarchies, autonomous work teams, job autonomy, measuring productivity by outputs (performance) rather than inputs (work hours), and alternative career paths for specialists and managers.

Common to most examples of companies that have been innovative in implementing policies are two themes. First, there is an emphasis on both

employee and business benefits of addressing work and family issues and, second, there is a recognition that better outcomes are achieved if there is a focus on work practices, leadership and organisational culture.

Yet there is less evidence of organisations adopting strategic approaches that are aligned with mainstream business processes. In both the recent Australian (Mulvena, 1998) and US surveys data are provided on the extent to which this has happened. Findings are summarised in the table below. As can be seen, there are quite substantial differences between the approaches of US and Australian corporations and these differences are much more pronounced than those noted above for the types of initiatives offered.

	Australia	US
Issued a statement about the importance of work/family issues	17	74
Appointed a work/family coordinator	8	80
Created a work/family task force or committee	5	83
Offered training to managers on work and family	10	66
Offered training to employees on work/family	6	77
Developed a communications strategy	12	79
Developed a written strategic plan for work/family	9	63
Evaluated the impact on employees	13	66
Evaluated the impact on the organisation	14	60

Other arguments current in the literature also challenge the extent to which organisations have become family-friendly and point to the broader systemic and organisational issues that need to be addressed for this to be achieved. It should be noted, however, that this argument needs to be differentiated from another that is also current in the literature - that is the need for organisations to evaluate the impact of 'family-friendly' policies and programs on the bottom line. Rather, this argument is about integrating work/family issues into strategic thinking within organisations. This parallels arguments made earlier by Friedman (1991) and Friedman and Galinsky (1991) about the need for a focus on business benefits, integration and culture change. Friedman and Galinsky argued that organisations tend to go through three stages in their responses to family needs: (i) a programmatic approach: identifying needs and developing programs (especially with a focus on dependant care needs); (ii) an integrated approach: family needs are seen as business issues and there is an attempt to integrate a range of work/family policies (especially flexible work arrangements); (iii) changing the corporate culture: the emphasis here is on developing a supportive, family-friendly organisational culture.

A major theme running through a *Business Week* article based on US data (Hammonds, 1996) is a view that addressing work/family issues has limited value unless there is a strategic business focus. It is argued that strategic solutions involve building the ‘...consideration of family issues into job design, work processes and organizational structures - just as one would consider marketing concerns, say, or engineering input.’ (p. 76). Another major theme in this article is the need to develop a supportive internal culture and especially one that demonstrates support from senior management. In their survey of 8000 employees, ‘54% indicated their top brass do, in fact demonstrate support for family balance.’ But, they go on to raise further issues: ‘But the question remains: How can you turn that glowing CEO speech into something more than lip service?’

‘This is the jugular issue being treated in a marginal way,’ says Fran Rogers, CEO of Work/Family Directions. Most companies, experts say, have limited their efforts to child care and elder-care referral services. At a cost of \$2 to \$3 per employee per year, they’re a cheap fix. Instituting flextime, likewise, is literally as easy as inserting a paragraph in the employee handbook, and by 1995, 73% of large companies had done so. Such programs don’t work unless managers let them.’ (Hammonds, 1996, p. 80).

And, in one of the most critical arguments, Hammonds (1996, p. 80) indicates that: “Companies that recognize the need and adapt work to peoples’ lives will win workers’ loyalty—and, with that, a competitive edge.” and that “. . . successful solutions involve rethinking work processes rather than finding ways to make people’s lives fit the work.”

These themes are also taken up by Bankert and Googins (1996). They argue that there is a growing list of policies and programs (on paper) that appear to indicate corporate commitment to work/family balance, however, that the cultures have not changed at all. Bankert and Googins (1996, p. 46) argue that success with work/family “depends on a combination of top-management support, buy-in to the business case, ownership throughout the organisation, and a willingness to go after the necessary culture change.”

- *Changing the organisational culture.*

Analyses of effective ways in which to change organisational culture are provided by Bailyn, Rapoport and Fletcher (1999) and Russell & Edgar (1999). Bailyn et al (1999) see work-family as a driver for organizational change to improve gender equity. They maintain that “family-friendly benefits” can be useful for women with young children, but they also can lead to an increase in inequities between employees. Like others, they argue that for effective change to occur, the need for integration of work and family for women and men has to be incorporated into organisations as a strategic business issue. It is necessary to “change the

structure and culture of the workplace, paying attention to both men's and women's roles."

The broad aims of Bailyn et al's research project at a large manufacturing and service corporation were to (1) explore interconnections between work-family policies and practices and work practices and culture, (2) identify barriers to implementing work-family policies in a gender equitable way and (3) develop new business-focussed practices that overcome identified barriers. They found that work-family policies were not being applied in a gender equitable way (e.g. using various policies had different career implications for women and men), and that assumptions about gender (and what is appropriate for women and men) were "embedded in work structures and cultures" to an extent that is not currently recognised. Their work involved challenging organisations about their work practices based on the assumptions that work and family are separate spheres and that success (individual, organisational and societal) depends on ensuring that work and family are kept separate and distinct. As they point out, "integrated" employees can be more effective in their jobs through the use of a combined set of skills, including those more usually associated with domestic life (e.g. nurturing, addressing emotions) and those traditionally valued by workplaces (e.g. autonomy, linear thinking).

Strategies they report as being effective included moving away from seeing work and family as adversarial towards "the notion that it is possible to create a culture that used work-family issues as a way of making work practices more productive, while at the same time being more gender equitable" and involving employees directly in analysing work-related problems to develop more effective work practices. The focus was clearly on developing creative solutions to work-related problems based on an acceptance of the legitimacy of taking account of employees' family lives. The fundamental issue addressed was "What is it about the way work gets done around here that makes it difficult (or easy) for you to integrate your work and personal life?" Positive outcomes associated with their interventions were also reported, e.g. reduction in absenteeism and stress, improvements in worker autonomy and perceived fairness.

A further example of organisational change, in a vastly different industry sector (a male-dominated mining company) is presented by Russell & Edgar (1999). They reviewed a wide range of factors found to facilitate the change process. The first factor was endorsement from the highest level, or **leadership**. The CEO in their study had high expectations for project leaders, focused on work/life balance issues for senior managers, insisted on management accountability and incorporated work/family and gender equity issues into leadership skill development. The second factor was **integration with business**; this granted operational credibility for those leading the process of change and encouraged integration of work-family issues into business strategies and other corporate

policies. The third factor involved **addressing barriers to change**; this meant identifying and addressing the major workplace and attitudinal barriers, challenging traditional assumptions about gender roles and accepting that many men as well as women are seeking a better balance. The fourth factor related to an **emphasis on research**; data collection was used a way to inform and educate employees as well as management, and findings were shared with different worksites. The fifth factor was **employee involvement** at every stage - from problem solving to identifying key issues and developing solutions based on effective business and employee/family outcomes. These solutions were designed to be based on mutual trust and to have the potential to increase creativity and employee effectiveness. The last factor was insistence on **including the full range of issues**; this meant acknowledging that work and family are not separate spheres, but it also involved taking up the full range of work and family/lifestyle and equal employment issues, adopting a broader approach that included employees' partners and their local communities, acknowledging the links between work/family and gender equity issues and the need to provide gender equity in work practices and expectations and work and family commitments.

## 6. The identification of what social arrangements can facilitate workers' ability to meet family needs

To quote from Christensen and Gomory (1999) again:

“What can we do? Different groups have different answers. Traditionalists argue that women should return home, restoring the traditional ratio of two-jobs, two adults. Others push for government-supported child care and attempt to outsource part of the home job and facilitate both parents working outside the home.

“We believe that we need better opportunities both at home and at work, so that families can chart their own directions. Some “3/2 families” will want to spend more of their time on work. For women in many of these families, professional status and separate earnings streams are important. These families need ways to simplify or outsource many aspects of their home jobs. Others will want to spend more of their time on family, and will need to have part-time careers to facilitate the roles they want to play at home. This is especially likely for some of the most stressed families, those with young children. Many 3/2 families will want one thing at one time in their life and something else at another.

“Real improvement is possible, because while the arithmetic of the family has changed fundamentally, the institutions of the workplace, home and neighbourhood have not. Workplaces mainly have the structure they had when all employees were full-time males. They are intolerant of part-time

employees, who often function without benefits and without reasonable career paths.

“Home and neighbourhood have also failed to adapt. Repair services and ... continue to assume full-time homemakers who can wait at home for repairs, run the house, buy groceries and chauffeur the children. Child care is still (largely) personal, unorganized, and catch as catch can (particularly for pre-school and teenage children).

“As a society we can do better. At minimum, better part-time careers need to be made available. Rather than talking of simply full-time versus part-time jobs, we need variable careers. And these careers must allow a work load that might change from year to year depending on the nature of the work and the nature of one’s life.

“There is much more that can be done. We strongly believe that America needs to adapt, and can adapt, both in the workplace and at home. Doing this will create a better life for all hard working families of two people and three jobs.” (Christensen and Gomory (1999), pp. 1-2)

In terms of dependant care (for children, the elderly or disabled), it is clear that what is needed are increased options for: fee relief; 24-hour services; flexibility in utilisation (not having to always lock into a particular pattern); occasional care (especially for shift workers); emergency care (when children or caregivers are sick); respite care; and backup care when work demands might change unexpectedly.

Extended hours for community and professional services are also needed. Service providers might also consider establishing partnerships with organisations to deliver services at the workplace (e.g. parent education, childbirth education, advice on caring for elderly parents).

More generally, however, as has been argued by Edgar (1995; see also Russell & Edgar (1999)) there is a need to recognise that employees live in and are part of a wider community, not just moving between home and work. It follows that the solutions for work-family balance cannot be found only in the workplace, or in individual homes. Employees need to live in a “family-friendly” community, where services and resources support family life. Even the most family-friendly employer will have little impact on reducing parental or other family-related stress if the local community has few child care or elder care resources, if schools do not involve parents or offer after-school programs or counselling for problem students, and if there are few activities for teenagers or local support services for abuse victims, drug addicts and alcoholics.

In a study conducted as part of the New Links Workplace Project (Russell & Edgar, 1999) a community scan was completed in association with an analysis of

employee work/family needs in an organisation. First, local data on existing family support services in the region were collated from official statistics and contacts with government departments. Second, a series of discussions was held with key service providers in the region, involved in child care, elder care, social welfare, health and education. Their subjective assessments of family problems in the region and perceived gaps in family support were then checked by a comprehensive, but brief survey of every service organisation in the region. Each one was asked to list their numbers of clients/places handled, fees, waiting list numbers, and then to write comments on their perceptions of unmet needs and current difficulties faced by families in the area. No mention was made of the company's involvement in the New Links Workplace Project, so that false expectations about future action would not be raised. The results of this community scan were then compiled in a report for the company.

The Community Scan revealed a lack of certain key family support services which could be checked against what the company employees said they "needed." It also revealed what professional service providers, local government officials, school teachers and other community people believed to be common family problems in the area, from the point of view of professional service providers, local government, school teachers, etc that might resonate with the company findings.

Below are some examples of how information from the Community Scan corresponded with Employment Survey results:

- Community agencies and workers alike reported that costs of child care were a major difficulty for parents and that there was a shortage of emergency and after-school care in the area.
- The area lacked marriage counselling and family support services, yet almost three-fourths of employees (72%) wanted access to family counselling and two-fifths (42%) did not feel comfortable confiding family problems to their supervisor.
- The Survey revealed that employees had problems which might be resolved with such services; one-third (33%) of employees were not satisfied with their relationships because of work demands and over half (53%) frequently came home from work feeling stressed.
- The schools reported overwhelming problems with family breakdown, stress, "acting out behaviour," along with a shortage of qualified guidance personnel. Company employees' children made up a large part of the area's school population. One-third (33%) of employed parents said the job damaged their relationship with their children; 62% felt family education and parenting advice were important; all agreed after-school care was badly needed in the area.

- Elder care services were sparse in the region. Of the company's employees, 16% already had and 50% expected to soon have elder care responsibilities; 62% of this latter group wanted advice and information on how to deal with this new need.

It became apparent that local community resources would vary in each work site location, and this would change the character of "New Links" cooperative arrangements that could be established. The initial Community Scan became a model for other work site locations to use to "scan" their own communities.

## 7. The identification of the basis for any lack of consensus among reputable experts

As has been indicated above, there seems little disagreement in the view that enabling people to achieve an effective balance between their work and family responsibilities "should" matter to governments, employers and the community in the same way that this issue matters to families. Indeed, there is ample evidence that there has been a strong focus on work and family in Australia in the last 15 years, and that significant changes have occurred. What is more at issue are: (i) what makes a difference to families (e.g. job security, flexibility in hours, increased hours and work intensification) and (ii) what are the most effective work/family strategies and who should have responsibility for implementing them.

This difference of perspective in relation to the nature of work and community support available to different family groups is well captured in a recent newspaper column. (Horin, Sydney Morning Herald, October 2, 1999, p.47). In discussing approaches to enabling sole parents to be in paid employment (thus achieving an effective balance between paid work and family commitments), Horin argues:

"It takes money to raise kids and give them a fair start in the global rat race. If parents rely solely on a Government benefit, poverty is their assured lot, and their children's chances are diminished. The aim of moving sole parents and other women from poor families into work - well before their children turn 16 - is a good one. The problem is how to do it without adding to stress and damaging children."

Horin goes on to argue that in order to achieve an effective work/family outcome for such families a combination of policies is needed that are similar to those offered in many European countries (e.g. a network of support, training and cheap child care as well as paid maternity leave and a right to part-time work).

In terms of the different perspectives on how "family friendly" current workplaces are, it is widely acknowledged that having a policy in place does not necessarily mean that it is widely used and nor does it ensure that the workplace culture has

changed to enable people to achieve an effective work/family balance. Best practice organisations are currently addressing this important issue by placing greater emphasis on integrating work/family into mainstream business issues and by encouraging senior managers to provide more appropriate role models of work/life balance. What is not at dispute is the need to continue to emphasise workplace changes that enable employees to have greater control over how, when and where they work. Much of the emphasis up to now has been on providing flexibility in when (hours of work) and where (at the workplace or at home) work is completed. Greater emphasis needs to be given to conducting research to identify how the processes of work redesign might facilitate increased worker control and more effective work and family outcomes.

Views also differ on the ability of legislation and policy to deliver more effective outcomes for workers with family responsibilities. An involvement by governments provides a strong message of commitment to businesses and the community and enables the government to provide leadership and help shape the debate. This has certainly been the case in the Australian environment. International research, however, shows that there are limitations to the amount of change that will occur through this process. Notably, the current emphasis in Sweden has a much greater focus on achieving cultural change in organisations as a way of enabling a broader range of employees to achieve an effective balance between work and family commitments (particularly men).

An exclusive emphasis on organisational change and business benefits, however, is also not likely to provide effective support for families to achieve work and family balance. There is now a growing interest (see above, and Work and Family Unit, Boston University) in emphasising partnerships between organisations and the community as the most effective way to address the work and family needs of employers and employees.

Despite the continuing emphasis on work and family issues, we still know very little about what workplace practices and expectations make a difference to families. As was pointed out at the beginning, discussions have tended to focus on the need to reduce the impact of family demands on the workplace (e.g. by providing leave or flexibility) whereas much less emphasis has been given to the impact of work on family life. What is especially missing are details about what specific aspects of work practices and expectations impact on families and what the nature of this impact is (e.g. on the ability of someone to provide dependant care, on the quality of the care provided, on the quality of family relationships etc). Research that addresses these issues is especially needed.

It is evident that developing and implementing work and family strategies in a rapidly changing work and social environment is challenging to say the least. What is required is a set of work and family principles - a statement of intention

to measure the extent to which organisations and workers are achieving the balance they are both seeking.

An example of a set of work and family principles is:

- To provide a work environment which values work/family balance and actively assists employees to achieve balance.
- To provide flexibility in leave arrangements to enable employees to handle important family, personal or community issues.
- To maintain an environment where work and family conflict and stress are minimised and dealt with openly.
- To provide flexibility in how, when and where work is done to support family requirements.
- To provide flexibility in career options to address the varying needs of those with family responsibilities.
- To facilitate close interaction with local community resources that cater for employees' dependant care and other work and family needs.
- To recognise the needs of spouses/partners, children and other family members in work and family relationships.

The expected outcomes of these principles might be:

- **Employees are able to manage their work and family commitments.**  
Employees can manage their work and family commitments in a way that satisfies their own individual and family values/needs (this includes all aspects of family life, time, care, relationships and financial support). There should also be an absence of guilt in relation to using flexibility options.
- **Workplace support for work/family balance.**  
The organisation is characterised by work practices/design that are supportive of employees in relation to balancing work and family and in establishing and maintaining family relationships. Work is organised in such a way that it facilitates flexibility options - emphasis on productivity as opposed to hours etc. There is also clear evidence of management and supervisor support and a lack of formal and informal penalties for those who have family commitments.
- **Reasons for turnover are unrelated to work/family conflict.**  
Reasons for exiting the company do not relate to family/work conflicts.
- **Public recognition.**  
The organisation receives public recognition/has an accepted reputation for enabling employees to meet their work and family commitments. Employees who apply to the company do so because of a perceived support

for work and family balance. Conversely, another measure would be that potential recruits are not dissuaded from applying for jobs in the company based on their perception of a lack of emphasis on work and family.

- **There is a diverse employee profile.**

The employee profile reflects the diversity of gender and family responsibilities — especially in management positions. A related measure here would be whether or not employees do not apply for promotions or developmental opportunities based on their perception that they would find it difficult to balance their work and family commitments in the other position.

- **Improved quality of family life and stronger communities.**

This would require that any analysis of work/family balance conducted as part of a workplace process should also include a broader analysis of the impact on the strength of families and the community (a possible approach is the model proposed by NewLinks).

## 8. Conclusions

It is evident that analyses conducted in several countries reveal a common pattern in the recent shifts in approaches to work and family. First, there has been a shift from a narrow focus on work and family to an acceptance that work, family, personal and community commitments all need to be considered.

Second, there is now much more emphasis given to dependant care issues beyond regular daily care for pre-school aged children. This includes concern for the care of elderly and disabled relatives and for the need to recognize the need for emergency or back-up child care (e.g. for school aged children).

Third, more organisations are now recognising that work/family is an issue for men as well as women. Analyses presented elsewhere (Haas, et al, 1999), however, indicate that it is still problematic for organisations and senior managers to accept that more men are seeking to be active fathers and welcome initiatives that will facilitate this change.

Fourth, there is a clear move away from work and family being seen only as an issue of social justice and/or a benefit for employees. The fundamental driver for organisations is now the impact work/family initiatives and strategies have on business outcomes. Cost/benefit analyses and research into the evaluation of the impact of work/family initiatives are becoming more common, as are arguments about the positive impact skills learned in the domestic sphere can have on workplaces.

Fifth, there is a shift from policies and programs to a focus on changing work practices and job design to enable employees to have control over how, when

and where they work. Changing the culture as well as work practices and expectations of managers are now seen as being much more critical than having a raft of 'family-friendly' policies and practices.

Sixth, the initial focus on the impact family demands have on work (e.g. attendance) has been extended to include the consideration of the impact work has on individual stress, and on relationship and family well-being. The fundamental argument now concerns the extent to which initiatives address the underlying causes of the tension between work and family and whether indeed, the approaches add value to businesses and are strategic in their focus.

Seventh, rather than work and family and gender equity being seen as separate, many organisations are actively addressing the links between the two. Of particular interest to many employers too is the extent to which values and attitudes about gender equity and work/life balance might be different in the younger generation of workers. The current thinking is that this generation places greater value on these two issues (and that indeed, there is greater gender equity in their personal relationships) and that this will be reflected in their employment decisions.

To an extent these broader shifts in the work/family debate have been manifested in national and international legal reforms to support family-friendly work practices. Irrespective of whether such reforms have arisen from developments in discrimination law, affirmative action, gender mainstreaming or industrial law and practice, work and family issues are clearly on the legal agenda in a diverse range of countries. The differences between countries revolve around the degree to which legal supports are constructed as entitlements, and the sympathy between legal developments and workplace changes. (Russell & Bourke, 1999).

Future **organisational** approaches need to develop responses to work and family issues from a strategic business perspective and to take account of the increasing globalisation of organisations. They need to be based on the premise that unless employees can relate the business advantages of such programs to their day to day work experiences, utilisation rates and improvements in individual and organisational effectiveness will not occur. Yet there is very little discussion in the literature about the process of identifying problems and in developing solutions that both enhance individual, family, community and organisational well-being. A process is needed to analyse the potential impact of work/family issues on employment behaviour and business outcomes. The process needs to be based on the assumption that employees are both capable and motivated to develop solutions that can result in mutual benefits to families and organisations.

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