Barriers to men’s uptake of their company’s family-friendly work provisions

The Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at the University of New South Wales recently completed research to identify men’s attitudes towards, and patterns of use of ‘family-friendly’ provisions in the workplace. This project is among the first to recognise men’s desire to be good fathers and to understand the barriers that prevent them from greater participation in parenting.

Michael Bittman from the SPRC presented findings from this project in Canberra on 29 August 2002.

Background

The project was commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) and developed with the Work and Family Unit of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) as part of a package of projects looking at work and family issues. The research was funded through FaCS’ Social Policy Research Services Agreement with the SPRC.

The project, Fathers’ uptake of family-friendly employment provisions, is aligned with the broader intent of the Men and Family Relationships Initiative—currently in FaCS’ Family Relationships Branch—which seeks to strengthen men’s capacity to establish and maintain quality family relationships. This initiative received funding of $44 million in the 2002–03 Budget for FaCS to allow continued operation of some 52 men’s services nationally.

FaCS’ interest in this project stemmed from women’s increased participation in the paid workforce, and a trend towards longer working hours which has resulted in increased pressure on families to balance family and work responsibilities.

Women are more likely than men to take breaks, or to commence or return to work part-time, during their working lives because of family responsibilities. They are also more likely than men to take parental leave, and be the one who stays home from work to look after a sick child or care for pre-school age children.

While men have shown an increased willingness to be more actively involved in
parenting, they have been slower to change their working patterns. They tend to work the longest hours when their children are young, and are less likely to take up family-friendly provisions.

Findings

Based on case studies of two organisations the research found that fathers did not take full advantage of the family-friendly provisions offered by their employers. The research suggests that the existence of such provisions was not encouraging fathers to substantially alter the allocation of family responsibilities at home.

The research did discover, however, the common incidence of ‘off-the-record’ bargains struck by supervisors with employees to cover ad hoc, short-term needs. Collectively, these short-term informal bargains were the major method fathers used to balance work and family obligations.

Using the case studies, Mr Bittman suggested the following barriers for men’s uptake of family-friendly provisions:

- **A flow-down effect from the attitudes of management including senior management**: male staff interpreted provisions as applying to women only, or for use by men only in emergencies, and with the minimum of disruption to workflows.

- **Lack of information and communication to staff regarding eligibility**: a high proportion of middle management struggled to recall the provisions available to cover hypothetical difficulties.

- **A workplace culture which discourages absenteeism**: more indirectly, a company’s workplace culture contributes to fathers’ low uptake of family-friendly provisions. Employees demonstrated loyalty and commitment to the company through long hours of work. One company had a program in place to reward workers who did not take leave.

- **The business environment and job security**: the two companies in the study operate in an uncertain external environment characterised by a struggle to maintain market share, and/or deal with significant staff cuts and tight resources. This insecurity is transferred to employees, who often respond by being more dedicated to outcome targets and the associated long hours of work. The issue of job security was particularly relevant for fathers in the case studies as they often saw their primary role as the family’s breadwinner.

- **Barriers inherent in employment types**: family-friendly provisions tend not to be readily available to production workers and call-centre staff, who are often paid by the hour. However, even salaried employees may be restricted when their performance is measured by outcomes. For them, flexibility usually means working long hours to achieve targets.

- **The design of family-friendly provisions in the workplace**: often, provisions are seen to be developed to make it easier for women to balance work and family and little thought has been given to men and their family roles. Few dedicated resources, especially staffing resources, were committed to improve this situation. Arrangements for men usually just distributed the burden of their work onto colleagues.

The project also discovered that some barriers to fathers’ uptake of these provisions were beyond the employers’ control. Despite

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Mr Michael Bittman at FaCS National Office on 29 August 2002 to present SPRC’s findings on men’s uptake of family-friendly provisions in the workplace.
their intentions to be good fathers, men categorised their parenting role as auxiliary to their main role as ‘breadwinner’, to provide for their family a steady income and a means to pay off the mortgage. This was reinforced by the case study findings indicating men were not main providers of care, nor shared family responsibilities equally with their partner.

Furthermore, many men expressed the concern that using family-friendly provision would imply that they put their families ahead of their loyalty to the company or their career. Men in the study reported a powerful link between earning income and having a career and their masculine identity. Loss of work—or being passed over for promotion—threatened their sense of manhood.

The department intends to publish SPRC’s findings in more detail in its Policy Research Paper series.

For further information:
Denise Ryan, Research Strategies Section, Strategic Policy & Knowledge Branch, tel (02) 6244 5486 or email denise.ryan@facs.gov.au

Departmental research updates

The General Customer Survey (GCS): an update

Wave 3, 2000 dataset release

The Wave 3, 2000 dataset is currently available to users and contains information collected from customers in receipt of Employment Payments (EP) during their third interview of the panel. This information compliments the already released Wave 1, 2000 and Wave 2, 2000 datasets currently available to researchers, tracking changes in customers’ circumstances such as their interaction with the income support system and the labour market.

The Wave 4, 2000 dataset is scheduled for release early in 2003, followed closely by the release of Wave 5, 2000 and Wave 9, 2000. The release of the first three datasets (Waves 1, 2 and 3) for the year 2001 cohort is anticipated around the middle of 2003.

Launch of the GCS intranet site

The new GCS intranet site at FaCS is a comprehensive source of information for GCS users across the department. It includes information on the GCS’:

- background
- historical development
- fieldwork schedule
- instruments for both the telephone and mail survey
- methodology reports
- relevant papers
- SAS tips and sample programs for use with GCS datasets.

There is also information on, and links to, the GCS Metadata database, GCS e-list and contact details for the GCS team.

Supporting the AWT evaluation

The GCS was selected to form part of the Australians Working Together (AWT)
evaluation and is a great example of how the survey's flexible design can meet specific and targeted research and evaluation needs.

A sample of the AWT target groups will be selected for the panel survey and first interviewed in the September quarter this year (Wave 1). This same cohort will be tracked and subsequently interviewed again in September 2003 (Wave 5) and finally in September 2004 (Wave 9). Tracking the same customers will enable the measurement of effects of specific AWT initiatives over the two-year panel, specifically shedding light on longer term outcomes for program participants.

A new questionnaire for the AWT sample is currently under development and is designed to meet the specific requirements of the evaluation, although largely based on the existing Wave 1 questionnaire. Release of the AWT Wave 1 dataset is scheduled for early 2003 and will form an integral part of the evidence base underpinning the first AWT evaluation report due in 2003.

For further information:
Longitudinal Data Section, Strategic Policy and Knowledge Branch, email helpdesk.gcs@facs.gov.au

The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Study: an update

Wave 1 data and access arrangements

As previously reported (FaCS Research News Issue 12), a moderately confidentialised unit record file (URF) of the Wave 1 HILDA data is available via the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research. Documentation on the security requirements and how to access the URF (on CD-Rom) is available on the HILDA website at http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/hilda

The Wave 1 HILDA data was launched by FaCS and the Melbourne Institute at the Institute's Public Economics Forum at Parliament House, Canberra on 15 October 2002. The data is accompanied by some technical papers, a Wave 1 Annual Report and some work-in-progress research papers. The Wave 1 Annual Report features some brief snapshots using HILDA data on a diverse range of topics.

FaCS and the Melbourne Institute will also jointly hold the first HILDA conference in March 2003. This conference will provide opportunities for researchers (both national and international) to share HILDA findings with a broad audience.

Wave 2 pilots completed, survey instruments and Wave 2 fieldwork

The Wave 2 pilot testing is completed. This pilot involved a full dress rehearsal of the instruments and procedures with the 179 households that responded in the Wave 1 Dress Rehearsal. The changes recommended in the pilots have been included in the final Wave 2 survey instruments that are now available from the HILDA website.

The Wave 2 fieldwork will run between August 2002 and April 2003.

Technical and discussion papers

Technical papers on the Wave 1 coding framework and Wave 1 survey methodology are under development. Further Wave 1 technical papers include the pilot testing outcomes; weighting, estimation and imputation; data quality; and the data access policy.

Are you interested in joining or re-joining the HILDA stakeholder group?

The HILDA-L mailing list is an electronic group that will provide you with opportunities to contribute to and obtain current information about the progress of the study. You can subscribe to this group by electronically completing and submitting the application form on the ‘HILDA-L’ sub-directory on the HILDA website.
Seminar reviews

Can this be the ‘Promised Land’?
Work and welfare and the modern woman

5 June 2002
Seminar by Professor Bob Gregory
Review by Annie O'Rourke, Strategic Policy and Knowledge Branch

Professor Bob Gregory, from the Economics Programs, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, presented this question as part of the National Institute’s public lecture series at Parliament House, Canberra, earlier this year.

In setting the scene, Professor Gregory described some of the changes that have occurred in public policy and emergence of new social trends with regard to women in education and employment over the last four decades. He discussed key decisions on equal pay, the new Family Law Act, the introduction of the Supporting Mothers Benefit, and changing views in the community of women’s role within society and the economy. Despite these developments, Professor Gregory argued that women’s participation in full-time employment and their dependence on welfare suggests that they have not reached ‘the promised land’.

Women’s participation in education and employment in the full-time labour market

Over the last 35 years there have been large increases in the educational attainment of women. The female retention rate to Year 12 has increased from 28 to 80 per cent and has been above that of males in each year since the mid 1970s. Similar changes have occurred in attendance at higher education institutions where enrolment of women has exceeded that of men since 1977.

As education levels have increased so has the aggregate labour market involvement of women (in both full-time and part-time employment). Between 1966 and 2001 the
proportion of women employed increased from 35.3 to 51.5 per cent and continues to increase, although there has been some slowing during the 1990s.

These increases in the level of educational attainment and involvement in employment for women have not translated into growth in the rate of full-time employment. The proportion of women 15 to 59 years employed full-time today is much the same as it was 35 years ago (around 35 per cent). Professor Gregory concludes from this that the average level of educational attainment for women and the ratio of aggregate full-time employment-to-population are independent of each other.

Although it has been noted that lower rates of marriage for women could be in response to greater involvement for them in the labour market, Professor Gregory believes otherwise, suggesting that full-time employment is not preventing women from marrying. He points to evidence suggesting that married women are finding more success than single women in the full-time employment market, namely:
- an increased rate of full-time employment among married women
- a declining rate of full-time employment among single women.

Professor Gregory found that young women today are working less and older women are working more than they were 25 years ago. The full-time employment-to-population ratio for women 15 to 19 years is now 35 per cent of its 1976 level and the ratio for the 20 to 24 year age group has fallen to 86 per cent of its 1976 level. For the older age groups full-time employment-to-population ratios have increased, and in some age groups it has increased by almost 50 per cent.

The rewards from full-time employment for women increased at an aggregate level until the beginning of the 1990s. Professor Gregory found that pay increases have been concentrated among the older age groups, the very groups that are achieving higher levels of full-time employment. For both older and younger generations, women's full-time earnings have increased relative to men, and at all levels of the earnings distribution.

Professor Gregory suggests that women who work full-time have probably become more career conscious and are likely to be staying longer in the labour market, while rewards for staying in the labour market longer are increasing. When this is placed against the relatively unchanged full-time employment-to-population ratio Professor Gregory concludes that more women are being crowded out of the full-time labour market. Professor Gregory suggests that these women are likely to be the young and those who are staying on in educational institutions. The other substantial group in this situation is women on welfare.

Women and full-time income support from the welfare state

Since 1966, the proportion of women aged from 15 to 59 on welfare has increased from 5 to 20 percentage points.

Professor Gregory’s analysis here focused on mothers receiving Parenting Payment (single) (PPs). He used the FaCS Longitudinal Data Set (LDS) to develop a picture of PPs recipients’ income support patterns over a five and a half year period.

Single spell analysis of lone parent duration on income support has tended to focus on the length of time of a single episode on PPs. This approach found that the average individual receiving PPs does so for relatively short periods of two to three years.

Professor Gregory’s research, rather than focusing on single spells on PPs, examined how long PPs customers receive income support from all income support payments. He found that most PPs recipients are dependent on income support for long periods. The average length of time on income support was 3.6 years over the five and a half year study period. Professor Gregory estimates that the average duration of income support dependence is likely to be at least 12 years.

Professor Gregory also found that over a five and a half year period:
- around 20 per cent of lone parents left PPs and did not return to income support
nearly 25 per cent stayed on the payment continuously
the remaining recipients churned back and forth between PPs and other income support payments, in particular Parenting Payment (partnered) (PPp).

This indicates that for many recipients exiting PPs is either temporary, or a pathway to another income support payment. PPs recipients either move off Parenting Payment but transfer back on to another income support payment, or exit the welfare system only to return to PPs within a short period of time.

The most common reason for exiting PPs is where the recipient re-partners—either with a new or previous partner. However, this does not necessarily mean exiting income support. Half of those exiting PPs transfer to PPp. The research further showed that these recipients tend to reconcile or re-partner with other income support recipients, usually Newstart customers.

Policy implications
Professor Gregory made the following concluding comments and conjectures.

Adjustments to welfare policy are narrowly defined
Professor Gregory recommended that policy needs to look beyond ‘longstayers’—people who experience long continuous spells on welfare—and focus on the history of welfare spells for recipients who ‘recycle’ through programs. He pointed to the regularity of which women moved from one welfare program to another to suggest that programs are actually linked, and should be considered as ‘interrelated’. He suggested that policy should consider these linkages with a view to simplifying payment programs.

Professor Gregory also demonstrated that lone mothers often experience spells on income support before and after their PPs spell. As a result, he suggested that any reform designed to move women off PPs should also be evaluated in terms of its impact to spells on other income support.

Professor Gregory also suggested that more work could be done on policy aimed at lengthening time between spells, pointing to the common occurrence of lone mothers returning to PPs after only a short period out of the system.

Welfare policy and the labour market
Professor Gregory argued that general increases in the level of education have had little or no effect in increasing the number of full-time jobs or reducing dependency on welfare. He felt that the answer lay in the dispersion of education quality.

He found that the increase in the proportion of women on welfare has been fairly steady for the last three decades and that for two of these decades, including the 1990s, the growth of welfare recipients has exceeded the growth of full-time jobs. Given this established trend, he pointed out that any reform is unlikely to generate a quick turnaround, and it would be naïve to expect such reform to create any major impact on full-time employment and welfare dependency. He did, however, propose that time-limited welfare, as used in the United States, may have a ‘major impact’ with a five-year limit, albeit a few years after that limit of five years had expired.

Men and welfare reform for women
Professor Gregory suggested that there are similarities here between both genders, with a ‘considerable proportion of the lack of job growth’ for women generated by the same factors inhibiting job growth for men. He went on to suggest that it was problematic then that PPs recipients often partnered with other welfare recipients because they might find it difficult to find a male partner with stable employment. The result, he believed, would be a low level of income in the relationships, and hence, a ‘substantial degree of tension in a relationship’ possibly leading to breakup.

What then, Professor Gregory asked, should be the policy imperatives for lone parents: encouraging and supporting relationships, or fostering full-time employment?
Measuring hardship is a key concern for social policy makers and analysts, and one that has been approached from a variety of angles, mostly involving income analysis. In his presentation, Rob Bray used his analysis of the 1998–99 Household Expenditure Survey (HES) to demonstrate a different angle, focusing on reported outcomes.

The first part of the presentation focused on some of the more common measures used to identify hardship, ranging from normative poverty and relative poverty through to poverty from lack of capabilities, with each example being shown to have strengths, but also weaknesses. The second part of the presentation then moved on to the HES and its potential for helping explore new measures.

The HES in 1998–99 included a new set of questions specifically designed to measure financial stress. Mr Bray used the results of these questions to categorise poverty into three types of experiences:

- **missing out**: being unable to do a certain activity because of lack of money
- **cash-flow problems**: being unable to pay bills on time or having to borrow money from family and friends
- **hardship**: being unable to afford heating or meals, having to seek help from community organisations, or having to pawn or sell something.

Of particular interest were households reporting multiple experiences of hardship.

According to Mr Bray, 43.7 per cent of households reported at least one incidence of financial stress. This is not surprising as few families are able to afford all the things they want to do. However, only 3.1 per cent
(or 222,700 households) reported multiple incidences in the ‘hardship’ category. As the focus of the analysis was on particularly poor outcomes, Mr Bray studied respondents in this group to see whether particular characteristics were shared or common. His findings showed that, overwhelmingly, people with the most profound experience of various types of hardship were young single people and/or sole parents. Those with the lowest reported experience of hardship were elderly couples. The risk of experiencing hardship was also higher if the person had:

- a low level of education
- a disability
- lived in Tasmania
- had four or more children
- came from North Africa, the Middle East, Oceania or the Americas
- spent money on tobacco or debt repayment.

These findings, although not prescriptive, highlight some important issues for consideration by policy-makers. For instance, the analysis indicated that there may be a behavioural element to experiences of hardship, with young single people reporting the second highest (after sole parents) incidence in the ‘cash-flow problems’ category, but relatively low levels of ‘missing-out’.

Also, employment and housing seemed to play a role, with higher levels of hardship experienced by those who had no employment, or who spent a greater amount of their income on housing, especially rent.

The special value of this analysis lies in its disaggregation of hardship into various types and intensities, and the classification of key groups involved.

More information on these findings is available in the department’s Occasional Paper 4, ‘Hardship in Australia’.

From enterprise protection to social protection: pension reform in China

19 July 2002
Seminar by Peter Whiteford, OECD, and Timothy Murton, FaCS
Review by Karen Keast, Strategic Policy and Knowledge Branch

Many countries are struggling to satisfy the conflicting priorities of adequate social protection and the means by which this goal can be funded. China, as the largest society in the world, is no exception. The particular issues affecting China’s ability to resolve this conflict provide the basis of recent research by Peter Whiteford from the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). His research paper, From Enterprise Protection to Social Protection: Pension Reform in China, was presented at FaCS National Office. While his research broadly covers all forms of social protection, particular attention is given to the aged pension and its development over the past 25 years. Co-presenter, Timothy Murton, and discussant, Dr Xin Meng, provided further insights into the specific economic and socio-political arrangements.

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Through the window of pension reform it is possible to examine some wider tensions affecting contemporary China. These tensions include:

- **international influences**: investigation of China by the OECD as a condition of joining the World Trade Organisation
- **economic change**: from a centrally planned to market economy thus increasing the need for enterprises to be highly efficient and competitive
- **social change**: from a predominately rural to urban society with rising standards of living
- **demographic change**: a significantly higher proportion of older people in the population, expected to reach just under 25 per cent by 2040.

The history of pension funding in China can be seen as a progression of ideology as much as a condition of pragmatic response to circumstance. From the 1950s until the 1970s, social protection had been the sole responsibility of State and Collectively Owned Enterprises to both fund (as a proportion of wages bill into pooled communal funds) and administer. This gave coverage to urban workers employed in such enterprises, but neglected rural workers. Because the workforce, compared to the rest of the population, was relatively young, a significant revenue surplus accumulated. Following the end of the Cultural Revolution in the mid 1970s when rural workers flowed into the cities, the State initiated incentives for older urban workers to retire early thus enabling employment for the younger new arrivals. Pension allowances, and the number of people accessing them, increased dramatically, and accrued revenue was depleted.

To fund the growing demand, a second tier of pension funding was introduced in the mid 1980s. All new employees of individual enterprises were obliged to contribute a percentage of their wage. By 1991 this was further developed into a three tier collective system in which a basic pension was funded by the State (in the form of government employees’ pensions and as a subsidy to enterprises that were unable to fund pensions), individual enterprises and worker contributions. Additional protection was funded by enterprises based on a proportion of trading surplus and extra voluntary contributions made by workers which could be deposited into their individual accounts.

Overall, Mr Whiteford found the experience in China over the past decade has been impressive both in economic and administrative terms. A major strength has been the diversity of approaches taken by various provinces in adopting central directives, in effect resulting in the development and testing of many pilot programs. However, he raises concerns about the lack of equity of the system, there is no marked change in the redistribution of income and most notably urban workers have greater coverage than rural workers. Finally, despite the current three-tiered system, he questioned the ability of China to adequately fund the measures currently in place.

With these concerns in mind, he suggested possible future directions:

- increase the current retirement age of 60 for males and 50 to 55 for females, which is low by international and life expectancy standards
- increase the amount of time workers are required to contribute to a pension fund prior to full pension eligibility, this currently stands at 15 years
- gain greater understanding of the adequacy of pension payments, variations by regions, administrative inconsistencies, their effect on household income, work patterns, expenditure and redistribution through robust data collection thereby establishing a clearer basis from which to make policy and program changes.

**Timothy Murton**

Mr Murton’s research into the funding of pension reform in China shows justification for Mr Whiteford’s concerns and concludes that, despite a phenomenal period of
economic growth in the past decade, the ability to fund pension reform appears inadequate. Of particular concern is the practice of using current employees’ individual contribution accounts to pay for present pension requirements. Another issue compounding the problem of inadequate funds, identified by Mr Murton, is the evasion of payments by some enterprises. This is thought to be possibly due to the terminology of pension ‘contributions’ rather than ‘taxes’, in effect leading some enterprises to not acknowledge the mandatory nature of the payments. Mr Murton considers this problem could be curbed with the introduction of adequate regulation and monitoring. A number of schemes have been introduced to attempt to raise revenue and avoid the central government’s need to fund any shortfalls. Among these is the development of a National Social Security Fund—higher rates of return investment for individual employee accounts, and a welfare lottery. Consideration is also being given to the selling of State Bonds, a Social Security Tax applied to industry, and a Land Use Tax applied to users of state land for commercial ventures. Fundamentally however, notwithstanding the diversity of the schemes and multiple funding sources, they continue to appear to be inadequate to meet the long-term needs of China’s social protection.

Dr Xin Meng

For Dr Meng the discourse of social protection cannot be separated from the discourse of social and political values. She suggested proposals for the extension of individual contributions to a fully self-funded program will not succeed in an environment which she considers embodies both political and administrative corruption. Raising the age of retirement, she believes, has to be a choice for each individual worker as a trade off that will be made between leisure time and wealth accumulation. Further, possible solutions may lie in the promotion of Eastern family values, such as the practice of intra-family money transfers. Beyond this, there is no doubt that any form of social protection must be universal and include rural workers. Despite the complexity of social protection in China, key issues emerge. Universality of coverage and sustainability are essential. It would appear that diversity of both funding and programs, short and long-term planning and confidence in the financial management of individual funds is paramount in achieving these goals. Finally, informed decisions about policies and programs cannot successfully occur without robust and dependable social, economic, administrative and demographic data.
Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) seminar series

Linkages between housing and support: what is important from the perspective of people living with a mental illness?

3 July 2002
Presentation by Ann O’Brien, AHURI
Review by Annette Laurie, Housing Support Branch

The project follows on from the published AHURI report entitled *Improving housing and support service coordination for people living with mental illness*.

The project explores the needs of people with a mental illness to access and maintain housing and successfully manage the risks that threaten their housing sustainability. A series of 50 interviews were conducted in Victoria with people aged between 25 and 50 years living independently with a psychiatric disability. The methodology included a literature review, input from housing and support providers, and key housing policy commentators. A reference group was established for this project, consisting of representatives from Commonwealth and State Governments, service providers, mental health consumer representatives and researchers. Of the 50 participants, 96 per cent were in receipt of a Disability Support Pension, a third had dual diagnosis and half were in crisis at the time they entered their current housing.

The project identified four interrelated elements that appear critical in accessing and maintaining independent housing:

- the housing secured was acceptable and did not aggravate individual disabilities or manifestations arising from their mental illness
- both formal and informal supports, medications and treatments were accepted, trusted and seen as positive influences on individual lives
- individuals themselves accepted the ongoing difficulties and challenges with a willingness to resolve
- a housing risk analysis was completed and addressed throughout the tenancy.

These conclusions raise a number of issues for housing policy and service provision. Issues range from housing supply and management, acknowledging and accommodating risks when allocating appropriate housing, and the diversity of housing needed to meet individual needs and preferences. The research also highlighted the opportunities for collaboration between housing and mental health providers particularly concerning housing design, management and individual support.

A microsimulation model of the Australian housing market with applications to Commonwealth and State policy initiatives

3 July 2002
Presentation by Gavin Wood, AHURI
Review by Annette Laurie, Housing Support Branch

The project by Gavin Wood and his colleagues was designed to create a microsimulation model to evaluate housing policies and assistance programs. The model seeks to predict budgetary costing of housing policy and programs while allowing the interaction between pension and benefit programs to be captured and analysed.

The model aims to directly measure the impact that Commonwealth and State Government fiscal measures and housing programs have on the prices that households pay for housing (and the subsidies they receive). It also measures the costs accruing to providers of
housing. To illustrate the effectiveness of the microsimulation modelling technique, the project analysed the impact of Commonwealth tax policies on the incentives or otherwise for investment in low-cost affordable housing.

Preliminary research highlights that current building write-off provisions only marginally increase the incentive to invest in rental accommodation. However, the model indicates that a targeted tax credit scheme would sharply increase the incentive to invest in low-cost rental accommodation. The researchers argue that the incentives and disincentives created by taxation settings require significant policy attention to encourage private sector involvement in the provision of low-cost rental housing.

As this project progresses, researchers will explore the policy questions of whether regional characteristics influence employment outcomes and whether housing policy should emphasise locating job seekers in areas of high employment.

Housing, location and employment

3 July 2002
Presentation by Dr Bruce Bradbury, AHURI
Review by Annette Laurie, Housing Support Branch

The project by Dr Bruce Bradbury and colleagues explores the impact of housing markets and policies on location and employment outcomes. The researchers use data from the FaCS Longitudinal Data Set (LDS) to explore the influences on geographical mobility. Data used is during the period between January 1995 and June 2001. The project poses two questions:

- does location drive labour market outcomes?

or

- do the housing market and current Government policies create locations of poor labour market prospects?

Preliminary findings include the relatively short distances moved by recipients receiving unemployment payments, with over 50 per cent moving only 30 kilometres or less.
New publications

Occasional Paper 4


J Rob Bray, Strategic Policy and Knowledge Branch, FaCS

Reports on research undertaken using the financial stress questions in the Household Expenditure Survey to develop measures of disadvantage.

The analysis highlighted three key indicators:

- **missing out**: where households’ social and other activities are constrained
- **cashflow problems**: difficulties in paying bills on time
- **hardship**: missing meals, heating or seeking charitable assistance or selling items.

The paper focuses on households with particularly poor outcomes, paying close attention to the 3.1 per cent which reported ‘multiple hardship’, that is two or more incidences under the ‘hardship’ category.

FaCS Sheet 14

Taxation, social security and family assistance for 2001–02

Modelling and Indexation Section, Budget Development Branch, FaCS

This FaCS Sheet provides a guide to the taxation treatment of social security and family assistance payments. It includes:

- a list of taxable and non-taxable social security payments
- income tax rates for 2001–02 (excluding Medicare levy)
- a brief outline of the Family Tax Benefit and the two options for claiming the benefit
- a brief outline of the Beneficiary tax offset, Senior Australians tax offset, Pensioner tax offset and Personal tax offset, including eligibility criteria, offset amounts and relevant formulas
- a brief description of the Medicare levy, including a table detailing levy thresholds.

To order publications:

Hardcopies are available from the FaCS publications order line tel 1800 050 009. Electronic versions are available from the FaCS website at www.facs.gov.au (follow the links ‘publications’ then ‘research’).
Forthcoming conferences (a selection)

**Steps forward for families: research, practice and policy**

12–14 February 2003
Melbourne, Victoria

Further information: Australian Institute of Family Studies

**Helping families change conference**

19–21 February 2003
Sydney, New South Wales

Further information: Parenting and Family Support Centre
web http://www.triplep.net/04_training/training.htm#HFC

**National Council of Single Mothers and their Children (NCSMC) annual conference**

20–21 February 2003
Adelaide, South Australia

Further information: NCSMC
eemail ncsmc@ncsmc.org.au

**Community engagement in policy development**

5–6 March 2003
Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

Further information: International Quality and Productivity Centre
web http://www.iqpc.com.au

**3rd National homelessness conference**

6–8 April 2003
Brisbane, Queensland
Papers are invited

Further information: Australian Federation of Homelessness Organisations
tel (02) 6292 9000 or web http://afho.org.au

**4th International research conference on social security**

5–7 May 2003
Brussels, Belgium

Further information: International Social Security Association (ISSA)
email: issaRC@ilo.org

**Country Children’s Services Association of NSW conference**

20–22 June 2003
Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

Further information: Country Children’s Services Association of NSW
web http://www.ccsa-nsw.asn.au

**Joined up services: linking together for children and families**

26–28 June 2003
Dunedin, New Zealand

Further information:
web http://www.otago.ac.nz/CIC/CIC.html

Disclaimer: Readers should confirm details with the contact organisation listed. FaCS assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of dates, venues or other information presented in this selection.

To submit details of upcoming seminars or conferences, please email publications.research@facs.gov.au
Next issue

**Kids’ money: better outcomes for Indigenous children**

**Evaluation report**

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