

# FAMILY-FRIENDLY BENEFITS IN AUSTRALIA: TOWARDS AN ASSESSMENT

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper aims to contribute to the assessment of family-friendly benefits, ie benefits available to employees in their job for the purpose of helping them to balance work and family responsibilities. It begins with a discussion of the conceptual framework needed for such an assessment. The paper distinguishes 'family-friendly', 'family-neutral' and 'family-hostile' measures. It suggests that the adequacy of family-friendly measures can be best measured in terms of 'spread' and 'quality'. It outlines some of the pitfalls of standard measures of spread and lists the factors that can limit the take-up of specific benefits. The paper then moves on towards an assessment of the situation in Australia. It suggests that, apart from a small number of benefits such as unpaid parental leave and family/carers' leave, most family-friendly benefits in Australia are inadequate – they are available only in a patchy way to a minority of employees and they are often of doubtful quality. The argument is illustrated by examining three broad categories of benefits that are particularly important in resolving pressures around caring responsibilities – special leave and career breaks, good quality part-time work, and employee-oriented flexible working arrangements. The paper also points to the way in which family-friendly measures can be swamped by the effect of family-hostile measures such as long hours and high work demands.*

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**\*\*ROUGH DRAFT ONLY\*\***

## Family-friendly Benefits in Australia: Towards an Assessment

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‘Family-friendly benefits’ can be broadly defined as benefits available to employees in their job for the purpose of helping them to balance work and family responsibilities. Family responsibilities centre on caring responsibilities for children and for sick, elderly or disabled relatives. Family-friendly benefits include a wide variety of measures, such as leave from work for family reasons, changes to work arrangements for family reasons, practical help with child-care and eldercare and the provision of training and information (OECD, 2001, 147; see Evans 2001: 41).

Family-friendly benefits are an important element in modern employment relationships. Though by no means the only solution, they represent an essential aid in relieving problems of *work/family imbalance*. Many employees are complaining about tensions or conflicts, that is an imbalance, between their work responsibilities (or aspirations) and their family responsibilities (or aspirations). Discontent is most intense amongst women, especially those women trying to juggle motherhood, unpaid work in the household and paid work. But it is also evident amongst men, who – perhaps under the prompting of their partners – are seeking a different connection between paid work and family life. These feelings of imbalance are not transient but are anchored in deep-seated structural changes, in particular the erosion of the traditional male breadwinner/ female homemaker arrangement (Appelbaum et al., 2002). As part of the process of managing these structural changes, most national governments have increased their commitment to family-friendly benefits in employment, within the framework of a broader commitment to family-friendly social policies.

This paper is part of a broader project investigating work/ family policy in Australia, at the level of the state and the workplace (Charlesworth et al., 2002). This paper aims to assess the adequacy of ‘family-friendly benefits’ available to employees in Australian workplaces.<sup>1</sup> We argue that the spread and quality of these benefits is poor, both in relation to need and in relation to experience in other OECD countries. Australia lags badly in this field. The first section elaborates on the definition of ‘family-friendly’. The second section looks more closely at how we can measure spread and quality. The third section reviews the rather sparse evidence in Australia. The fourth section outlines the argument about the relative inadequacy of family-friendly benefits in Australia and offers some detail about provisions for special leave and career breaks, good quality part-time work, and employee-oriented flexible working arrangements. A fifth section draws

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<sup>1</sup> Much existing discussion is couched in terms of the notion of ‘family-friendly workplaces’. This is a poor starting-point for analysis, since workplaces are made up of distinct social processes and are generally divided between distinct social groups. There is a risk of obscuring these divisions in the rush towards assessment. We prefer to take the individual employee as our starting-point.

attention to the emergence of family-hostile measures in workplaces. A conclusion points the way forward to the next stage of the research.

## 1. Family-friendly benefits: an introduction

The definition of family-friendly benefits used in this paper has several nuances. First, the definition covers a range of employment benefits, irrespective of how they have come into existence and how they continue to be supported – whether as a result of statute, generalised multi-employer collective bargaining, single-employer bargaining, company policy, or more informal practices. We start from a strict employee-oriented perspective, which is interested in whether and how employees are well-served in their ongoing efforts to balance work and family responsibilities. That is, we are primarily interested in the spread and quality of the benefits, irrespective of where they originate. This broad definition needs to be distinguished from a narrower meaning that would exclude benefits established through external regulation and would confine the notion of ‘family-friendly benefits’ just to voluntary initiatives by individual firms. This narrow meaning appears in a recent OECD study, where family-friendly measures are defined as “practices, facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life, which firms introduce to complement statutory requirements...” (OECD 2001, 147). This narrow meaning is inappropriate for our purposes in this paper.<sup>2</sup>

Second, we distinguish ‘family-friendly’ measures from ‘family-hostile’ or ‘family-neutral’ measures. We reject the presumption, frequently found in officially-sponsored documents in Australia, that *all* initiatives around ‘flexible work arrangements’, including in particular increased flexibility in working-time arrangements, can be regarded as family-friendly (eg WFU, 1999). This ignores the familiar distinction between employer-oriented and employee-oriented flexibility (Campbell, 1993, 12-13). It is a blinkered view, and it has been rightly and roundly criticised. Thus Whitehouse and Zetlin (1999, 223; see also Strachan and Burgess, 1998; Bramble, 2001) note that “hours flexibility ... may assist with the combination of work and family responsibilities if based on employee autonomy over start and finish times, but be inimical to this goal if it involves irregular shifts or unpredictable hours”.<sup>3</sup> Far from being family-friendly, some employer-oriented forms of working-time flexibility are better regarded as ‘family-unfriendly’ or ‘family-hostile’, since they do not improve but rather worsen work/ family balance for employees. For example, flexible starting and finishing times that are varied at the

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<sup>2</sup> The narrow definition of family-friendly measures as practices above the statutory minimum is confusing when used in cross-national comparisons. The lack of statutory minima may act as a spur on some firms to pursue their own initiatives. This is true in the United States, where there is extensive involvement among some firms in certain family-friendly measures, though the overall spread and quality of the benefits are less and the outcomes for all employees much poorer than in other countries. Indeed, if we adhered to this narrow definition of ‘family friendly benefits’, we would be obliged to conclude that greater involvement in family-friendly measures is associated with worse overall outcomes for all employees (OECD, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Awareness of these points is beginning to creep into official documents. A recent OECD report notes that “flexibility in hours is not always in the interests of parents if it means them sometimes being required to work hours which do not fit with family responsibilities” (OECD, 2002, 182; see Gray and Tudball, 2002, 3; DFACS, 2002, 68).

discretion of the employer with little notice to the employee tend to play havoc with carefully-arranged schedules to manage other aspects of life such as childcare. As well as ‘family-friendly’ and ‘family-hostile’ measures, it is also useful to introduce a category of ‘family-neutral’ or ‘family-indifferent’ to apply to measures that do not impact at all on work/family balance.

Third, the notion of family-friendly may appear clear-cut. However, it is worth stressing that it is somewhat blurred at the edges. Efforts to include family-hostile measures in the definition are easily rebuffed. But measures with more ambiguous implications for employees can still sneak in. How, for example, should we interpret measures with the general aim and effect of facilitating longer working hours amongst full-time employees? Measures such as assistance with finding domestic help and provision of a laptop computer (and teleworking connections from home) can serve the purpose of making it easier for employees to meet intensified expectations around workloads. The overall result may be long or perhaps even longer working hours, often at unsocial times and on an unpaid basis. The specific measures may appear family friendly, in that they relieve some of the direct clash between family and paid work, but this is achieved by altering just the family side of the equation. In this case, the parameters of paid work are regarded as more-or-less fixed, and the scope of family-friendly measures is limited to forestalling any interference from the demands of family life. These are of course the sorts of measures that firms favour, rather than measures that might ease the pressures of paid work. The consequences for family life can be variable. In our opinion, it is necessary to be cautious in applying the label ‘family friendly’ to such measures. Indeed, when such measures simply make it easier for already-high workloads to increase further the outcomes are much closer to ‘family-hostile’ than ‘family friendly’.<sup>4</sup>

Another example of fuzziness concerns measures that are widely regarded as family friendly but that are sometimes introduced with family-hostile components or perhaps under family-hostile conditions. The classic example here is part-time employment, which can be valuable to employees by virtue of its reduced hours of paid work but can be associated in practice with all sorts of unattractive or even onerous conditions, eg irregular schedules, that lessen its contribution to improving work/ family balance.

## **2. How do we assess adequacy?**

We aim to assess the adequacy of family-friendly benefits in Australia, drawing on a comparison with the experience in other OECD countries. Such an assessment is by no means easy. The most direct approach would be to take individual benefits that are widely regarded as family friendly and to measure the extent to which and the way in which they are available to employees in Australia. However, such benefits are best *considered in context*. They should be considered in relation to broad labour market

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<sup>4</sup> It may be useful to develop a distinction between efforts to make paid work more flexible in response to family demands and the converse – efforts to make family life more flexible in response to the (increasing) demands of paid work. We are reluctant to exclude everything in this second category from a notion of ‘family-friendly’. However, it is clear that to *include* everything would be equally wrong.

patterns and processes, including the level of demand among employees for such benefits. Similarly, they should be considered in terms of whether such benefits (or some functional alternative) are available in other ways. This is true of childcare, which need not be provided as a family-friendly benefit through employment but can be supported in numerous other ways. Another aspect of context concerns the workplace itself. As we note more fully below, family-friendly measures may be formally available but contextual factors such as supervisory prejudice or organisational cultures may reduce the take-up of such measures. Similarly, it is important to consider the extent to which family-friendly measures may be counter-balanced by what we call ‘family-hostile’ measures within the workplace. On the other hand, it may be useful to consider how family-friendly benefits work together to provide a level of support for employees that is greater than the sum of the individual effects.

These points suggest that assessing individual family-friendly benefits in an isolated manner is only a starting-point and that they are better seen as a package that operates in specific ways for individual workers according to the precise context.

When we consider benefits individually, the two main measures are spread and quality. The *spread* (‘degree of penetration’) of the benefit concerns the proportion of the workforce that has the potential to take up that benefit (if they qualified by fitting the particular family circumstance and if they wished to take up the benefit). Measurement of *quality* is likely to vary according to the specific benefit. For example, in the case of paid maternity/ parental leave a measure of quality might comprise the number of weeks of payment, the level of payment, and perhaps some measure of the ease of re-integration into the job after the completion of the period of leave. In this perspective, individual benefits would be regarded as adequate if they were widespread and of good quality.

Measurement of spread is hazardous. It is often poorly done, generating exaggerated estimates of the coverage of particular benefits. It is worth emphasising that there are two distinct steps in the assessment of spread, based on the elementary distinction between policy and practice. First is the assessment of what can be called *formal availability* (or formal entitlement). This refers to the proportion of the population that is formally entitled to the benefit. Second is the assessment of *practical availability*. This is the proportion of the population that is not just formally entitled but is also *able in practice to claim that entitlement*.

These two steps in the measurement of spread are sometimes discussed in terms of eligibility and take-up. However, with many of the benefits we are interested in, the issue is not take-up as such. For example, in the case of maternity leave it makes sense to start with an estimate the proportion of employed women who have a formal entitlement to maternity leave. The actual take-up rate from amongst this population will be limited by numerous factors, the most immediate of which is the fact that only a small minority of employed women give birth in any particular year. However, this limitation is not as relevant in this paper as other limitations that impede take up, such as particular organisational cultures and informal social processes at the workplace.

The need to be careful in estimating spread applies in all circumstances, even in the case of provisions that appear widely available because they are defined through statute. However, it is particularly imperative in cases such as Australia, where most benefits are provided through the patchwork of awards, workplace agreements or informal work practices and are often accompanied by all sorts of overt and covert restrictions.

It is possible to identify five main factors that can reduce spread. The first factor concerns the initial step of defining formal entitlements. The other four concern the second step of establishing practical availability.

- 1) First, it is necessary to take into account *limits in the extent of formal entitlement*. This is partly an issue of the method of provision (eg awards miss out non-award employees). And it is also a question of looking carefully in the text of definitions of entitlement for the presence of thresholds (eg length of service, weekly hours) and any exclusions or exemptions of certain categories of employees. Such thresholds and exclusions can dramatically narrow the extent of formal entitlement to benefits.
- 2) In order to receive a benefit, workers generally have to claim or take delivery of a benefit. There can be *limits associated with this technical process of take up*. At the most basic level, awareness of the existence of the benefit is a prerequisite to making a claim. However, there are often other preconditions. One rather basic precondition is that the company should still be in existence and should have enough resources to pay out the monetary component of the benefit. Other limits are often to do with the fine-print of entitlement. For example in the entitlement to unpaid parental leave, conditions include prior notice, provision of documentary evidence of pregnancy, and application to the employer in writing. This technical process should be examined in order to see what barriers it poses for take-up. In some cases ignorance of the provision and ignorance or uncertainty about the details of the technical process for claiming the benefit act as a powerful barrier for many employees.
- 3) In many cases there are *limits as a result of management discretion* in granting or refusing a claim. Benefits are not always available automatically, ie when an employee meets the formal criteria for entitlement and has successfully mounted a claim. Instead, they are often subject to conditions applied by supervisors and managers. If there is space for management discretion we have to factor a rate of rejection in to any estimates of spread. Rejection of a claim may be justified by business conditions, or attitude towards the individual employee (or class of employee). This will be most important in cases where there are informal rather than formal processes for granting a benefit.
- 4) It is important to consider *limits as a result of employee discouragement*. Several factors may discourage employees from making a claim (or pursuing a claim). Some of the above points already gesture towards such factors. For example, awareness of high rates of rejection may inhibit employees from making a claim.

Other more diffuse factors such as fear of attracting the hostility of supervisors and fear of the consequences for promotion can also play a role. More elusive but just as important is the impact of organisational cultures that contain hidden assumptions about the conditions of the job – such as long hours and total commitment. As a result the benefit can come to appear as a perk rather than an entitlement. Conversely, it may come be seen as a symptom of an inability to cope with high work demands, and workers may be reluctant to draw attention to the fact they are falling short of the demands of the ‘ideal worker’. Heavy work demands can of course also be a practical barrier to access, when claims for benefits are seen as displacing work on to the shoulders of colleagues or short-changing clients and customers. In some cases, for example where there is a provision for unpaid leave, employees may also be discouraged because they see little advantage in a period of unpaid leave.

- 5) There are *limits as a result of management evasion* of formal requirements. Evasion can occur in varied ways. As well as direct evasion, management can avoid responsibilities by erecting technical barriers to take up, by exploiting the grey areas at the edges of any zone of management discretion, and by subtly discouraging workers from making claims. In this way, evasion overlaps with the other limits cited above. However, direct evasion is also important, especially in the case of smaller enterprises. If there is space for evasion, we have to factor a rate of evasion in to any estimates of spread.

Beyond these five factors, take-up might also be limited for other reasons. Some people may not wish to claim family-friendly benefits for more opaque reasons, which spill over from the factors associated with discouragement.

It is useful to note that these five limits are compounding. For example, systems with highly selective eligibility requirements tend to have poor take-up rates. They tend to lose transparency and leave a large space for the other limits to come into play. For example, where coverage is only patchy, employees are often unaware of their rights and there is ample room for problems such as evasion or discouragement. This is analogous to the dilemma in social security benefits, whereby high levels of targeting and selectivity lead to losses of ‘horizontal efficiency’ (Standing 2002, 96-99).

### **3. How do we find out about family-friendly benefits in Australia?**

Most family-friendly benefits are present, at least in some form, in Australia. The primary issues in any assessment do not concern their existence but rather their spread and quality.

Family-friendly benefits are provided through varied mechanisms. There are few statutory minima in Australia, either at federal or state level. The main path for introducing minimum standards/ basic rights has been through trade union action, primarily by means of test cases before the federal Industrial Relations Commission,

which aim to insert a standard clause in federal awards. Such test cases often build on successful collective bargaining initiatives in individual industries, and they can be seen as part of a distinctive Australian ‘mechanism of generalisation’ (Campbell and Brosnan, 1999). When successful, these test cases provide a platform of reasonably general coverage. A succession of test cases has established a small number of family-friendly benefits. For example, two test cases led to the provision of 12 months unpaid maternity/parental leave (subsequently incorporated into legislation and then broadened to include some previously excluded employees) and family/ carers leave, which provides a limited right to access existing forms of paid leave to care for family members (Ministerial Taskforce on Work and Family, 2002). The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) is about to follow up this tradition, with a significant Work and Family Test Case that is scheduled to begin in 2003.

Family-friendly benefits can also be provided in other ways. They can be defined in individual awards, for example industry or occupational awards. Beneath this level, it comes down to methods of provision oriented to individual workplaces. Thus family-friendly benefits can appear in registered single-employer collective agreements (union or non-union) and registered individual agreements. They may appear as part of company policy, either codified in some sort of document or uncodified. Where company policy is uncodified, it begins to overlap with more informal methods of provision such as custom and practice, informal individual agreement and management whim. Since the early 1990s government policy has been heavily influenced by neoliberalism and has withdrawn from involvement in work and family issues, relegating the responsibility for initiatives to the level of the individual enterprise or workplace. This inaction has been justified by an appeal to a narrow version of the business case, which alleges that capitalist self-interest will eventually help to spread family-friendly benefits from leading firms to all sections of the workforce (Reith, 1999).

The difficulties in assessing spread and quality are formidable enough in the case of the few provisions delivered by legislation and test cases.<sup>5</sup> They are even more forbidding when – as is usually the case in Australia – the family-friendly benefit in question is only delivered through workplace initiatives, whether formalised or informal.

Unfortunately, we know very little about the spread and quality of family-friendly benefits. Some research seeks to use the WAD and ADAM databases, which code provisions found in the text of registered collective agreements. Similarly, it is possible to use the database of Australian Workplace Agreements developed by the Office of Employment Advocate (OEA) (eg Whitehouse, 2001b). Provisions in awards are harder to analyse, though occasional surveys look at samples of awards. In this research, certain codes in the database are taken up as indices of the existence of family-friendly benefits.

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<sup>5</sup> We suggest that test cases that lead to insertion of a standard clause in federal awards provide ‘reasonably general coverage’. However, this coverage is far from comprehensive. Award coverage slowly declined in the 1970s and 1980s and then was radically reshaped and fell again in the course of the labour market deregulation that began in the early 1990s. Moreover, the extent of coverage in the wake of test cases depends on trade unions applying to insert the clause in their awards and on state jurisdictions following the federal lead. In addition, as we note above, it is important to read the standard clauses closely for the many exemptions and exclusions, eg for casual workers, that they generally contain.

The number of agreements (and the number of employees covered by the agreements) that display these codes is then used to generate an estimate of the spread of family-friendly benefits. This approach is clearly limited by the fact that it works from codes of clauses (and catch phrases) rather than inspection of the full text of the clause. Moreover, as the discussion of the WFU report (1999) indicates, this approach often runs into disagreements on just what should be counted as family-friendly. In addition, apart from such issues of conceptualisation, we have doubts about the value of using such databases to make estimates of spread. The governing assumption is usually that presence of a provision is equivalent to presence of a practice (covering all employees). This looks plausible at first glance, but it does not follow. On the one hand, the absence of a provision does not signal the absence of a corresponding practice. Thus the agreement may be an add-on agreement and the provision that establishes practice at the workplace may be in the parent award rather than the agreement. More fundamentally, practice may be a product of informal arrangements/ managerial discretion and not be codified in formal agreements. On the other hand, the converse is also true. The presence of a provision does not signal the presence of a practice (and certainly not the presence of a practice covering all employees). Often the presence of a provision can mean quite different things, none of which is necessarily to do with practice at the workplace.<sup>6</sup>

In short, the presence of a provision cannot be taken as the basis for any estimate of spread. Indeed in our opinion the presence of a provision cannot be taken – in the absence of other evidence – as the basis for any conclusion.

Employer surveys such as AWIRS 95 or indeed the Affirmative Action Agency (AAA) returns appear more robust. They generally centre on questions to a manager about the presence (or absence) of a particular benefit, and they therefore seem to come closer to a practice (Whitehouse and Zetlin, 1999, 227). But again it would be dangerous to simply count up the positive responses, as the basis for estimates of the spread of a particular practice amongst workplaces (and amongst employees). Even assuming that management responses are accurate, they only state that the benefit is offered but not *how* it is offered. In particular, it would be quite wrong to infer that it is offered to all employees. Gray and Tudball (2002) use a match of responses in the AWIRS workplace survey and in the AWIRS employee survey in connection with four family-friendly work practices – control over start and finish times, access to a telephone for family reasons, availability of permanent part-time work, and type of leave used for the care of a sick family member. They conclude that for these four measures the within-firm variance is greater than between-firm variance.

Employee surveys would seem to offer the most secure path to estimates of the spread of family-friendly measures. The AWIRS95 employee survey is usefully deployed by Gray and Tudball (2002). Data from a survey in 2000, the Survey of Employment

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<sup>6</sup> The problem is clearest when the agreement refers to something that is already provided through statute or a test case standard clause. For example, one of the most common ‘family-friendly’ clauses in federal collective agreements is ‘family/ carer’s leave’ (WFU, 1999, 26). What does its presence mean? Does it mean simply a reproduction of the standard award clause in stand-alone agreements or is it indicative of a new provision that builds on and improves the standard or is it a sign of something else? Conversely what does its absence mean? It seems impossible to make any sense of such raw data.

Arrangements and Superannuation (SEAS), have been used to generate estimates of the spread of paid maternity leave (HREOC, 2002). Some regular ABS employee surveys include relevant questions, eg on leave arrangements, and the regular ABS survey on employment benefits now includes data on paid maternity leave. Longitudinal surveys such as Negotiating the Life Course (NLC) and HILDA may generate valuable information. But it would be risky to assume that employee responses are always reliable. Often researchers must rely on the responses to single questions, which are incidental parts of surveys primarily devoted to other topics. Only occasionally, for example in some union-sponsored studies in particular industries, is there a broader range of questions that allows more nuanced conclusions about the availability of family-friendly measures and the barriers to take up (Probert, Whiting and Ewer, 1999, 2000; Probert, Ewer and Whiting, 2000). Moreover, it is possible to wonder whether employees are in fact well-informed about the practical availability of a benefit that they have not yet claimed.<sup>7</sup>

Case studies are vital for uncovering the workplace context. As noted earlier, the workplace context is associated with numerous factors that can limit take-up potential. As a result, estimates of the spread and quality of family-friendly benefits need to incorporate some awareness of the workplace context. Case studies devoted to other issues often point to the large gap that separates policy and practice in many workplaces (Charlesworth, 1996). Unfortunately, case studies specifically devoted to family-friendly benefits appear rare. Whitehouse and Zetlin (1999) include evidence from interviews and focus groups within six organisations. They note that even where there was formal provision, it was possible to detect “some sense that these were less than entitlements, and that risks might be attached to their utilisation” (Whitehouse and Zetlin, 1999, 236).

We think we know more than we actually do about the spread and quality of family-friendly benefits in Australia. We know astonishingly little. There is clearly a big research challenge here (see also Russell and Bowman, 2000).

#### **4. How adequate are family-friendly benefits?**

In spite of the paucity of good evidence, it is possible to offer some tentative conclusions. Certainly, the verdict on the spread of family-friendly benefits is pretty clear. As the OECD politely notes in a recent review of policy in Australia, Denmark and the Netherlands – there is only a ‘low penetration’ of family-friendly work practices in Australia (OECD, 2002, 17, see 200). Only a few family-friendly benefits are available to a majority of employees in Australia. The checklist is meagre compared to what is generally available to employees (and sometimes the self-employed) in other OECD countries. Even in these cases, the majority in question is often just a bare one and the

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<sup>7</sup> Questions about entitlement to paid maternity leave can generate markedly different estimates. A survey in 2000 (ABS 2000c; see HREOC, 2002, 101-103) suggested that 38 percent of female employees felt that they were entitled to paid maternity leave. Later ABS (ABS 2002) data suggested that only 30 percent of female employees felt that they were entitled to paid maternity leave. Even this latter number is likely to be too high, perhaps reflecting a (mistaken) belief amongst women in workplaces with high levels of management discretion that they would be granted paid maternity leave if they happened to need it.

quality of the provision is often poor. A longer list of family-friendly benefits is available through less general mechanisms, primarily as a result of initiatives at enterprise level. However, if it is not in statute and not a test-case standard, provision is undoubtedly confined to a minority – often only a tiny minority – of employees. The quality of these benefits is variable, but in some cases the quality is still poor.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, it seems likely that the small proportion who have access to such benefits are likely to be those who need them least. Conversely, the workers who need family-friendly measures the most are least likely to have practical access (see also Gray, 2001).

We can illustrate the argument by looking in more detail at family-friendly benefits aimed at easing pressures associated with caring responsibilities within families. This is a core category of family-friendly benefits. Interruptions associated with caring responsibilities can involve a sharp shift for the individual worker from full-time employment to exit from the paid workforce. This can entail significant pressures and costs. However, interruptions need not always take this form. There are at least three ways to soften this stark alternative. One is to use *special leave and career breaks*, such as maternity and paternity leave, parental leave, family/ carer's leave and sabbaticals, all of which allow periods of temporary withdrawal for caring responsibilities while still retaining attachment to the employing organization (and ideally attachment to the original job). A second is to use *part-time work*, which frees up more time for regular caring responsibilities. A third is through *flexible work schedules that allow employee-initiated variations* in the duration or timing of work in response to more modest fluctuations in caring responsibilities.

These three mechanisms allow interruptions without the worker losing attachment to the paid workforce. They entail partial but not complete withdrawal. In this way they minimise the costs of withdrawal for the employee (and the family and the broader society). The common theme in all these mechanisms is the enhanced capacity of the employee to respond to the constraints in their life by means of variations in their work arrangements. Employees acquire more options at work that can be implemented in response to their needs and preferences. They acquire more and better ways of combining work and family. These three mechanisms can be seen as rights and benefits attached to the standard full-time continuing ('permanent') employment contract. In effect they introduce more variation and more employee-oriented flexibility into this standard employment relationship. In most OECD countries, the standard employment relationship has been extensively modernised in this way, though still in a patchwork fashion that leaves significant gaps (Supiot, 2001).

What is the situation in Australia? Interruptions to paid employment due to caring responsibilities appear to be more poorly managed in Australia than in most other OECD

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<sup>8</sup> One good example is paid maternity leave. Even employees within the leading large companies in Australia seem to have access to only poor quality paid maternity leave. Provision of a meagre six weeks paid maternity leave to (some) employees has been highlighted as an achievement by firms that have been recent winners of Work and Family awards (DEWR, 2002). This is markedly inferior to the minimum provision found in most firms – big or small – throughout the rest of the developed world. What is celebrated as 'best practice' in Australia clearly falls in international comparison.

countries (Charlesworth et al., 2002). They are less likely to be the subject of rights and benefits. This is clearly the case for the large minority of casual employees.<sup>9</sup> But it is also true for permanent employees. As a result of the scarcity of these rights and benefits, interruptions due to caring responsibilities in Australia are often associated with severe pressures and costs. Either the caring is neglected or work is sacrificed by a shift out of the workforce. Because women are the group most liable to participate in interrupted patterns of participation, they are the group that have to shoulder the major burden of these pressures and costs. The problem is most severe in connection with interruptions for mothers in the varied phases of childbirth and childrearing.<sup>10</sup>

### *a) Special leave and career breaks*

Special leave and career breaks have diffused throughout most OECD countries and are now widespread. For example, paid maternity leave is almost universally available to employed mothers in almost all OECD countries, often for lengthy periods beyond three months (HREOC, 2002). The paid period can readily be extended through entitlements to unpaid maternity leave. Moreover, maternity leave is often supplemented with paternity leave, and both readily extend into entitlements to parental leave. One (advanced) example is Norway, where paid maternity leave starts at nine weeks, paid paternity leave is six weeks, entitlements to paid parental leave can reach 39 weeks (at 80 percent of the parental benefit, or 29 weeks at 100 percent), and then there is up to two years of unpaid parental leave (Brandth and Kvande, 2001, 255-256). Career breaks and sabbaticals are still areas of experimentation, but there is extensive experience with these forms of leave in countries such as Denmark, Finland and Belgium (Nätti, 1999; Madsen, 1998).

Special leave and career breaks are relatively rare in Australia. Bereavement leave is a rare example of a standard award entitlement to paid leave for caring purposes, and long service leave, established in state legislation, is an isolated example of a career break entitlement (Burgess, Sullivan and Strachan, 2002). As noted above, there is a reasonably widespread entitlement – initially established in a test case but now enshrined in

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<sup>9</sup> Casual employees lack most rights and benefits, even the most basic entitlements such as paid sick leave and paid annual leave. Around one quarter of all employees are classified by the ABS as ‘casual’, that is lacking entitlements to paid sick leave and paid annual leave (Campbell and Burgess, 2001). The lack of rights and benefits has particular implications for female employees (around one third of whom are casual – see Table 2 below), including female employees with children under 12 (40 percent of whom are casual – ABS 2000b). It is occasionally suggested that casual employment is beneficial for workers with family responsibilities, in that they can alter their hours to suit their family responsibilities and can even leave at will (for example to be at home during school holidays). In reality, most casual employees feel that the flexibility of their employment is employer-oriented flexibility, and many complain about the harsh impact of unpredictable and short-term variations in hours on their family life (Smith and Ewer, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> In Australia, as in most countries, women follow new patterns of temporary withdrawal and re-entry. But in Australia, more than in most other countries, this seems to be associated with substantial problems and barriers that make the process more difficult than it should be. Employed women are missing many of the rights and benefits that would soften the pressures of caring responsibilities for children. This lack begins right from childbirth, with the result that the female pattern of participation around childbirth in Australia tends to be marked by complete withdrawal and then re-entry into a different job (often of poor quality, with inferior wages and conditions). A substantial literature points to the large direct and indirect costs to mothers in terms of reduced lifetime earnings (eg Gray and Chapman, 2001).

legislation – to unpaid maternity leave of 12 months duration for women with 12 months or more continuous service.<sup>11</sup> More recently, another test case has established limited standard award rights to access paid sick leave as family/ carer's leave. Other special leave and career breaks exist, eg purchased leave schemes or 48/52 arrangements. Such schemes are reasonably widespread in industries such as banking, education and the public service. However, they are not general rights and entitlements. Even in industries where they appear widespread, access may be restricted and onerous conditions may be applied. For example, employees taking advantage of special leave may lose their substantive position and may only be able to return to the organization on inferior wages and conditions.

The gap between Australia and other OECD countries is highlighted in the current discussion around paid maternity leave (HREOC, 2002; Baird, Brennan and Cutcher, 2002). Paid maternity leave is only available to a minority of employed women. There is legislative provision for many state employees, but women in the private sector have to rely on the favour of the employer or the results of single-employer bargaining. Australia is one of only two OECD countries – the other is the US – where there is no national scheme for paid maternity leave. The fact that maternity leave for most employed women is unpaid limits its impact, and it is not clear how often this entitlement is used (ABS, 2000a; see OECD, 2002, 58, 129-130). Adequate maternity leave is very important, since in its absence women are unlikely to be able to return to their previous job and instead are obliged to find a different job – maybe with different skill demands and wages and conditions – on re-entry. As such, the absence of adequate maternity leave limits choice and can have a deleterious effect on the entire subsequent pattern of participation (including lifetime earnings).

### ***b) Good quality part-time employment***

Reduced (part-time) hours are widely available in OECD countries. The proportion of the workforce (or the population) that participates in part-time work has grown rapidly and is now very significant in most societies (Table 1).<sup>12</sup> The Nordic countries were early leaders in providing part-time jobs, especially in the public sector. More recently, the Netherlands has strongly promoted part-time employment (Plantenga, 2002). In most countries, part-time jobs are primarily taken up by women. The quality of such part-time jobs has been extensively debated, and the danger of problems such as low wages and lack of career prospects and training have been identified (Rubery, 1998; Fagan and Burchell, 2002). In response, many countries have developed policies to ensure that part-time employment is 'integrated' and not 'marginalised' (Smith, Fagan and Rubery, 1998; Fagan, 1999).

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<sup>11</sup> Initially, casual employees were excluded. However, in the wake of legislative initiatives in Queensland and New South Wales, a recent test case allowed unpaid maternity to be extended to casual employees with 12 months continuous service (Watts, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> It is increasingly important to distinguish different forms of part-time work. One central dimension concerns the duration of part-time hours. Hakim (1997, 23-32) suggests a useful division between 'marginal' part-time (1-14 hours a week); 'half-time' (15-29 hours a week); and 'reduced full-time' (30-34 hours a week).

## TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Part-time employment is widely available in Australia. In cross-national comparisons Australia has a very high part-time share in total employment. As Table 1 indicates, Australia currently ranks second to the Netherlands in the incidence of part-time employment (first for men and fourth for women).<sup>13</sup> Many women with family responsibilities take up this option. Indeed, the data indicate that the major employment effect of the presence of dependent children is not on participation in paid work as such but rather on the form of participation (with mothers more likely to take up part-time employment).

Reduced hours can be a good platform for combining paid work and other responsibilities. But if we are to assess the extent of its contribution to work/ family balance, it is necessary to probe deeper (Pocock, 2003, chapter 7). The existence of part-time jobs in Australia is a welcome development. But the evidence points to the fact that most of these jobs in Australia are of poor quality. As such they are not as beneficial as they might be if they were good quality part-time jobs, as in countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands.

The poor quality of part-time jobs in Australia is evident in several ways. First, many part-time jobs are associated with very short hours. Almost eight percent of employed persons in Australia (12.5 percent of female employed persons) are working in jobs of less than ten hours per week (ILO, 1999, 157; see also OECD 1999, 39). Similarly, a substantial part of part-time employment is under-employment. The proportion of part-time workers wanting more hours rose rapidly in the recession of the early 1990s, reaching 29.2 percent in 1993 before receding back to more modest levels (ABS, 2001a). There is some evidence that it is once again increasing (it rose to 26.2 percent in 2001 – ABS, 2001b; see also Cully and Ngo, 2002). Underemployment is in fact very high in Australia, in comparison with other OECD countries (ILO, 1999, 285-300; see ABS 2001c). It particularly affects male part-time workers, but the level of underemployment amongst female part-time employees is also high (22 percent). Another sign of the inadequate duration of some part-time jobs is the trend towards multiple job-holding, in which workers put together two or three part-time jobs in pursuit of satisfactory hours and income (ABS, 1997).

Second, part-time jobs tend to be segregated from full-time jobs. There is little evidence in Australia of more advanced forms of part-time employment such as genuine job-sharing or rights to reduce hours in a full-time job (often associated in other countries with return from maternity leave). Instead part-time employment is largely confined to a separate part of the employment structure. Some jobs are regarded as unavoidably full-

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<sup>13</sup> The relatively high proportion of males who take up part-time work in Australia is primarily the result of the high levels of part-time casual work amongst young males, many of whom are students. It seems to be a different phenomenon in the Netherlands, where many 'prime-age' males have taken up the option of part-time work (Plantenga, 2002).

time, or indeed more-than-full-time, and others are treated as just part-time. As a result, part-time employment is sheered off from a career structure and offers few attractions to employees concerned to advance their careers. Much part-time employment constitutes a ghetto of low status occupations and jobs.

Third, many part-time jobs are associated with poor conditions that are inimical to interests of workers. This goes beyond the issue of very short hours. The distinctive mark of poor conditions is casual status. Around two thirds of all part-time employee jobs are casual. In other words, they lack most rights and entitlements, starting from the basic entitlements to paid sick leave and paid annual leave. Table 2 shows the changing distribution of female and male employees amongst the different employment arrangements. It indicates that almost half of all female employees are part-time, but this part-time employment is predominantly casual (in contrast to full-time employment, which is predominantly permanent – though with a fast rising casual component).

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

The poor conditions of part-time casual employees include a wide range of dimensions. Part-time casual employees lack employment security. They often lack control over their basic conditions. Many work on a regular roster with steady hours (and pay), but others are subject to irregular, unpredictable hours, where only short notice of variations is provided (Smith and Ewer, 1999). They may lack any guarantee of minimum hours to underpin their irregular hours and earnings. Some part-time employees are vulnerable to high work demands, leading to extra hours of unpaid overtime. They are more likely to be engaged for night work or weekend work. And casual employees enjoy little access to training or career progression (VandenHeuvel and Wooden, 1999; Hall, Bretherton and Buchanan, 2000; Campbell, 2001). Even with the somewhat misleading boost provided by a casual loading, the hourly wages of casual part-time employees are well below those of full-time employees. Moreover, the gap has widened markedly in the 1990s (Whitehouse, 2001a, 68-70; Preston, 2001, 170-171; see Mitchell, 1999).

Part-time employment that is not formally casual can also be poor quality in Australia. Marginal self-employment, often part-time, has been increasing in recent years. Permanent part-time employment has traditionally served as a good quality option for women in certain sectors of the economy such as the finance sector, retail, and the public sector. But there is substantial case-study evidence of degradation in the recent period (Junor, Barlow and Patterson, 1993; Deery and Mahony, 1994; Probert 1995; Charlesworth, 1996; Whitehouse, Lafferty and Boreham, 1997; Junor, 1998, 2000). As in the case of casual part-time employees, the ratio of hourly wages of permanent part-time employees to the hourly wages of full-time employees is below one and has fallen sharply in the 1990s (Whitehouse, 2001a, 69).

Our analysis points to a complicated assessment of part-time employment. In effect, part-time employment represents a trade-off for many women, whereby in return for the

opportunity to work reduced hours, they tolerate poor conditions. This appears as an extra cost of trying to balance work and family responsibilities. When part-time work is predominantly poor quality, it imposes costs such as low employment security, low wages and short, unpredictable hours. From this point of view, part-time work cannot be regarded as unambiguously 'family-friendly'. Indeed, in at least some cases, part-time employment can be family-hostile. Any assessment must depend on measuring not only the duration but also the wages and conditions. In short, it is necessary to assess the quality of part-time employment (Commission of the European Communities, 2001). Only good quality part-time employment deserves to be considered as 'family-friendly'.

### *c) Employee-oriented flexible working arrangements*

Work schedules that offer employee-oriented flexibility come in many forms, and many are still in an experimental phase of development. However, flexitime systems are familiar in most countries. They have a long history, and they have recently been extended via measures such as employee-choice rostering systems and 'working time accounts' (Schulzen, 1998; Freyssinet, 1998).

Not all flexible working arrangements are family friendly. On the contrary, some can be family-hostile. The crucial criterion in ensuring that they contribute to a good work/family balance is that their flexibility is under the control of the individual worker. Flexible working arrangements in this sense are hard to find in Australia. There is some interest in 'employee-choice' or 'request-driven' rostering in areas such as health, where poor conditions have produced shortages of trained staff such as nurses. However, close inspection of many of these arrangements reveals extensive room for management or supervisory discretion, which limits their usefulness to employees.

Moreover, what has been in existence in the past appears to be slowly disappearing. Flexitime was a familiar element in the public sector, but it seems to have slowly declined in line with changes in the public sector as a result of privatisation and the introduction of new public sector management techniques. Where it survives, work intensification and changes in workplace culture can impede effective access. Rostered days off (RDOs) were an important achievement of the shorter hours campaigns of the early 1980s, and in some instances they allowed employees to choose when to take a day off. Recent evidence suggests that entitlement to RDOs is shrinking (ABS, 2000b; Buchanan and Thornthwaite, 2001, 12).

## **5. Family-hostile measures at the workplace**

We argue above that workplace context is important in any assessment of the impact of family-friendly benefits. One aspect of workplace context, often neglected in research, is the presence of family-hostile measures. This section considers some of the evidence that family-hostile measures are increasing in significance in Australian workplaces. The argument could be applied to all forms of employment, including part-time employment. However, we concentrate on the case of full-time employment.

New flexible working arrangements oriented to employer needs can often be family-hostile. According to recent reports (eg Buchanan et al., 2001) provisions associated with widening the span (spread) of ordinary hours are increasingly common in agreements. A variety of mechanisms are deployed to achieve this - for example, decreasing the time compensation for overtime (by reducing time-in-lieu provisions, increasing the span of ordinary hours, increasing the ordinary weekdays to include Saturdays and Sundays). All of these provisions can allow management to schedule workers' hours within this widened span without incurring penalty payments for work outside standard hours. Such provisions may be associated directly or indirectly with increased management discretion in the allocation of daily and weekly hours. Also common are provisions for averaging working hours, most frequently over four weeks but often up to a year. These directly increase management discretion in varying daily and weekly hours, and they allow variations above the nominal standard, eight hours per day or 38 hours per week, to be made without incurring premium rates of pay for overtime. Also emerging are provisions for eliminating or reducing allowances and traditional penalty payments (especially overtime), eg by absorbing them into the base salary, by annualising the salary, directly reducing overtime rates, or by converting overtime payment to time-off-in-lieu (perhaps at reduced rates). This has the primary effect of increasing management discretion in the scheduling of daily and weekly hours. None of these measures can be seen as family-friendly. They are either ambiguous in their implications or family hostile.

In addition, full-time employment is less and less likely to be offered in the form of permanent work. Casual full-time jobs are expanding rapidly, at the same time that permanent full-time employment is stagnating (Borland, Gregory and Sheehan, 2001).

The most startling example of family-hostile measures concerns the hours of full-time work (Pocock, 2003, Chapter 6). Reduced working hours make an important contribution to work/ family balance. However, average weekly hours for full-time employees in Australia are long and are currently lengthening (Campbell, 2002a). As Figure 1 indicates, they jumped from 38.2 in 1982 to 41.1 in 2002. This represented an increase of 2.9 hours (3.4 hours for males and 2.3 hours for females). This is a peculiar trend, given that declining full-time working hours were the long-term historical experience in Australia up until the early 1980s (and given that decline continues in most other OECD countries). Australia is one of only a handful of countries experiencing this peculiar trend towards lengthening full-time working hours. The other members of this small group are the United Kingdom and the United States (and probably New Zealand). However, the trends in Australia appear much stronger than the trends in these other countries. Moreover, there appears to be a major difference amongst these countries in the composition of the extra hours undertaken by full-time employees. Whereas the extra hours in the US appear to be largely in the form of increased paid overtime and the extra hours in the UK appear to be made up of increases in both paid and unpaid overtime, the much more substantial growth in extended hours in Australia seems to be almost entirely composed of increases in unpaid overtime (Dawkins and Simpson, 1993, 7-13; Campbell, 2002b).

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Lengthening average hours are anchored in the experience of a growing minority of full-time employees who are working very long hours (Table 3). It is true that several countries exhibit an increase in the proportion of full-time workers who work extended hours, predominantly in the form of unpaid overtime (OECD, 1998). However, in most of these countries the increases are slight and confined to a small proportion of workers, generally high-level managerial workers. In Australia, by contrast, this trend is very strong, spreading well beyond the ranks of managers and based on patterns of not just extended but often very extended hours.

Long working hours are bad for family relationships, children and the community fabric (Pocock 2001, 30; Pocock et al, 2001; Pocock, 2003). They have direct effects on full-time employees across several dimensions of life, including health (Dawson et al, 2001). These direct effects of long hours often have more impact on work/ family balance than the presence or absence of a particular family-friendly measure within the workplace (Probert, Ewer and Whiting, 2000). In addition, there are important indirect effects, for example in erecting a barrier to female entry into full-time jobs and acting as a constraint on household strategies for more equitably combining male and female participation in paid work.

As the reference to unpaid overtime suggests, the problem here does not concern just duration. The problem of long hours is linked with other changes. There is some evidence that full-time employment is becoming more irregular in Australia. There is more work in unsociable hours (Bittman and Rice, 2002). Increased hours are often linked with intensification (Allan, O'Donnell and Peetz, 1999) as two sides of the same coin of increased work effort. This signals a deteriorating situation for many – though by no means all – full-time employees.

The detrimental impact of general trends such as lengthening hours, intensification and casualisation is clear enough when there are no family-friendly provisions in place. But even where family-friendly measures are in existence, these trends can swamp the effect of the formal presence of such entitlements (Lewis, 1997). Recent studies of teachers and finance sector workers in Australia suggest that, in spite of the presence of an apparent array of family-friendly provisions, these employees are experiencing “a deterioration in their ability to balance work and life on a daily basis” (Probert, Ewer and Whiting, 2000, 43; see also Probert, Whiting and Ewer, 1999, 2000). The authors point to three main problems for these workers: coverage of provisions is still patchy; employees face continuing difficulties in gaining access to these provisions, and then – most important – such provisions are unequal to the challenge of countering the effects of increased pressure to work long hours and intensification.

## **6. Conclusion**

Developing a comprehensive assessment of family-friendly benefits in Australia will depend on filling the gaps in existing research. Both spread and quality need more attention. In particular, we need more information on practical accessibility and on the varied dimensions of quality. There is a strong case for a dedicated employee survey to explore these topics. In addition, it is important to develop case-studies that can uncover the social context of the workplace...

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**Table 1: Part-time employment <sup>a</sup> as a proportion of employment in selected OECD countries, 2000**

	Men	Women	Total employment
<i>Australia</i> <sup>b c</sup>	14.8 (1)	40.7 (4)	26.2 (2)
Austria	2.6	24.4	12.2
Belgium	7.1	34.5	19.0
Canada	10.3	27.3	18.1
Czech Republic	1.6	5.6	3.3
Denmark	8.9	23.5	15.7
Finland <sup>b</sup>	7.1	13.9	10.4
France	5.3	24.3	14.2
Germany	4.8	33.9	17.6
Greece	3.0	9.4	5.4
Hungary	1.7	4.8	3.2
Iceland <sup>d</sup>	8.8	33.7	20.4
Ireland	7.7	32.2	18.4
Italy	5.7	23.4	12.2
Japan <sup>b e</sup>	11.8	39.4	23.1
Korea <sup>b</sup>	5.2	9.9	7.1
Luxembourg	2.1	28.9	13.0
Mexico	7.1	25.6	13.5
Netherlands	13.4	57.2 (1)	32.1 (1)
New Zealand	11.2	36.5	22.6
Norway	8.7	33.6	20.3
Poland <sup>b</sup>	8.8	17.9	12.8
Portugal	4.8	14.7	9.2
Slovak Republic	1.0	3.0	1.9
Spain	2.7	16.5	7.8
Sweden	7.3	21.4	14.0
Switzerland <sup>c d</sup>	8.4	44.7 (2)	24.4
Turkey	5.3	19.4	9.0
United Kingdom	8.4	40.8 (3)	23.0
United States <sup>f</sup>	7.9	18.2	12.8
Total OECD <sup>g</sup>	7.6	25.7	15.3

<sup>a</sup> Part-time employment refers to persons who usually work less than 30 hours per week in their main job. Data includes only persons declaring usual hours. <sup>b</sup> Data are based on actual hours worked. <sup>c</sup> Part-time employment based on hours worked at all jobs. <sup>d</sup> 1990 refers to 1991. <sup>e</sup> Less than 30 hours a week <sup>f</sup> Estimates are for wage and salary workers only.

<sup>g</sup> For above countries only.

Source: OECD 2001, 224.

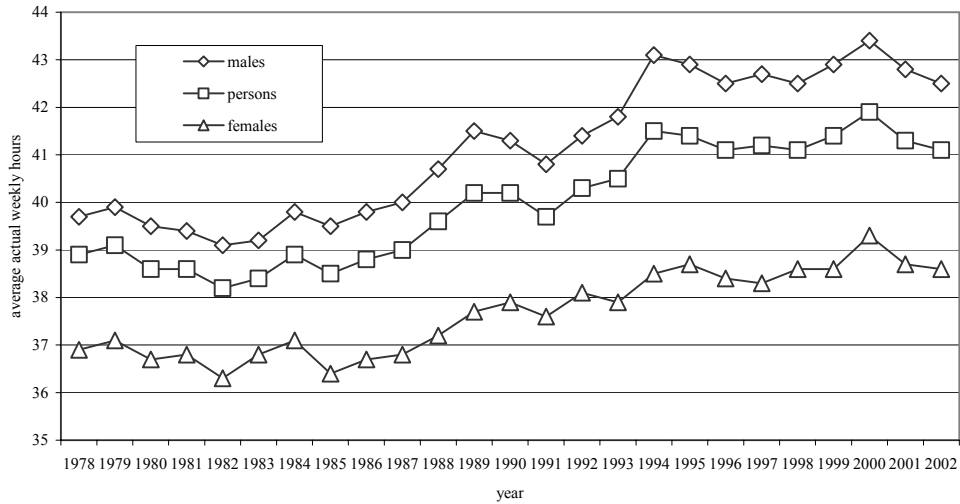
**Table 2: Distribution of female and male employees according to employment arrangement, Australia, 1984, 1990, 1997, 2002**

	Female employees				Male employees			
	1984	1990	1997	2002	1984	1990	1997	2002
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Permanent<sup>a</sup></b>								
Full-time	60.7	57.2	50.0	47.6	88.9	85.8	76.9	72.4
Part-time	13.5	14.6	18.3	20.8	1.8	1.5	2.2	4.1
<b>Casual<sup>a</sup></b>								
Full-time	4.4	4.2	4.9	5.8	5.7	6.9	10.0	12.2
Part-time	21.3	24.0	26.8	25.7	3.7	5.9	10.9	11.3
<b>Total part-time (%)</b>	34.9	38.6	45.1	46.5	5.4	7.3	13.1	15.4
<b>Total employees ('000)</b>	2117.8	2823.7	3134.4	3659.9	3240.4	3741.9	3837.8	4267.1

<sup>a</sup> From August 2000, the terms 'permanent' and 'casual' were replaced with new terms: 'with leave entitlements' and 'without leave entitlements' respectively (see ABS, *Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership*, August 2000, Cat. No. 6310.0, 48).

Source: Campbell 2001; ABS, *Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, Australia*, Cat. No. 6310.0.

**Figure 1: Average actual weekly hours of full-time employees by sex, Australia, August 1978-2002**



Source: 1978-1984 figures are from ABS, *The Labour Force Australia: Historical Summary 1966 to 1984*, ABS Cat. No. 6204.0; 1985-2001 figures are unpublished data from ABS, *Labour Force Survey, Australia*, ABS Cat. No. 6203.0 (see Commonwealth Government, 2002, 39); 2002 figure is from ABS supercube.

**Table 3: Distribution of actual weekly hours worked, employees, Australia, 1978-2002 (selected years)**

**MALE EMPLOYEES**

	0	1-15	16-29	30-34	35-39	40	41-44	45+	Total
Year a)	%	%	%	%	%	%	%		('000)
1978	4.6	3.0	4.8	5.6	13.9	39.2	7.8	21.3	3173.9
1982	5.4	3.2	5.3	8.1	17.5	32.0	6.8	21.7	3301.2
1988	5.3	4.0	5.2	6.8	18.8	23.5	6.8	29.6	3583.7
1992	4.6	5.6	5.9	7.4	18.9	21.2	6.1	30.3	3542.4
1998	4.5	6.5	6.7	6.3	16.4	18.8	5.9	34.8	3991.8
2000	4.0	6.3	7.3	5.4	16.1	18.6	6.0	36.2	4189.8
2001	4.4	6.7	7.9	6.8	15.7	17.6	6.0	34.9	4228.6
2002	4.5	7.0	8.1	6.4	16.4	17.5	6.3	33.7	4307.5

**FEMALE EMPLOYEES**

	0	1-15	16-29	30-34	35-39	40	41-44	45+	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%		('000)
1978	4.2	15.3	14.6	8.6	18.0	29.7	4.0	5.6	1882.9
1982	5.4	15.8	16.0	9.3	18.3	25.2	3.9	6.2	2053.0
1988	5.1	16.4	17.9	9.1	20.2	17.4	4.5	9.4	2578.1
1992	4.6	18.9	18.4	9.8	19.0	15.0	4.0	10.4	2803.2
1998	4.7	17.9	19.6	9.8	17.6	13.1	4.1	13.1	3308.9
2000	4.4	17.7	19.8	9.0	17.4	13.0	4.4	14.1	3557.2
2001	5.4	17.2	20.7	10.4	16.7	12.1	4.2	13.4	3617.0
2002	5.1	17.2	21.1	10.8	17.0	11.9	4.1	12.9	3690.4

**ALL EMPLOYEES**

	0	1-15	16-29	30-34	35-39	40	41-44	45+	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%		('000)
1978	4.4	7.5	8.4	6.7	15.4	35.6	6.4	15.5	5056.8
1982	5.4	8.0	9.4	8.6	17.8	29.4	5.7	15.7	5354.3
1988	5.2	9.2	10.5	7.8	19.4	20.9	5.9	21.1	6161.8
1992	4.6	11.5	11.5	8.4	18.9	18.5	5.2	21.5	6345.5
1998	4.6	11.7	12.6	7.9	17.0	16.2	5.1	25.0	7300.7
2000	4.2	11.5	13.1	7.1	16.7	16.1	5.3	26.1	7746.9
2001	4.9	11.5	13.8	8.5	16.1	15.1	5.1	25.0	7845.6
2002	4.7	11.7	14.1	8.4	16.7	14.9	5.3	24.1	7997.9

a) all years are August

Source: ABS Cat. No. 6291.0.40.001 (*Labour Force (WS) Wage and Salary Earners, Australia, Quarterly*), Time Series Spreadsheet, Table 10.