

Centre for Work and Life
Hawke Research Institute for Sustainable Societies
A New National Australian Research Initiative

The Centre for Work and Life (CWL) is a national research centre that investigates work and its intersection with households, community and social life in Australia. The Centre aims to make a national and international contribution to understanding work and life in the 21st Century.

The Centre is located within the Hawke Research Institute for Sustainable Societies at the University of South Australia. Its inaugural director is Professor Barbara Pocock

The CWL draws support from a range of Australian institutions. Inaugural partners include:

- The Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Lend Lease Communities
- The Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union
- SAUnions
- Various governments.

The Centre's six goals are to:

1. Affect Australia in ways that improve the work, home and community lives of Australians especially the most disadvantaged;
2. Generate innovative thinking about work and life in Australia, making sense of experience in order to improve the well being of Australians. The Centre analyses the experiences of Australian individuals, households, workplaces, employers, governments, unions and community as they live, and make and remake work and life, in Australia;
3. Generate policy ideas based on evidence and sound reasoning, to assist the creation of better institutions, cultures and practices of work and life;
4. Form a lively intellectual community that encourages collaborative, quantitative and qualitative research, comparing patterns of work, life and care in Australia with other countries, and by gender, racial, ethnic and social differences;
5. Train new researchers to study work and life;
6. Publicly disseminate ideas and information through all kinds of publications, the web, and formal and informal consultation with workers, employers, unions, care providers and governments.

Its success is judged by the extent of its influence on public debate and activity in Australia, both in academic forums, in community debate and in affecting policy and action.

A Focused Research Community Pursing Big Issues with Practical Effect

The CWL provides a focused node of research activity around work and life. It is not a general research or social science centre. It focuses on long-term change, challenges, and policy responses, rather than short-term, instrumental or 'knee-jerk' research. It errs on the

side of larger questions, rather than smaller ones. It is internationally comparative in approach.

The CWL will regularly invite imaginative researchers and thinkers from Australia, and from around the world, to participate in its activities.

The Centre is multi-disciplinary. It pursues research that strategically responds to key Australian and international challenges around work and life. It is not primarily, therefore, a consultancy centre. However, consultancy research is undertaken where it extends the Centre's capacities to meet its first goal of 'generating innovative thinking about work and life in Australia, *making sense of* experience in order to improve the well being of Australians'.

The Centre is funded by the University of South Australia, grants from the Australian Research Council, and support from partners.

Wherever possible, the Centre utilises existing data sources (eg ABS, HILDA, Growing Up in Australia). It collects new data using multiple methods when appropriate.

Key Questions About Work and Life

Australia currently sits at a critical moment in terms of the fit between changing patterns of paid and unpaid work, and changes in Australian households. Both workplaces and households are embedded in particular institutions and cultures that facilitate, or fail to facilitate, a good fit between the preferences of individuals and their households and communities, and the needs of employers and workplaces. This fit has been characterised as more of a collision than a happy resolution, as work collides with life in the context of only slow change in critical institutions and cultures.

This has important implications for the majority of Australians. It has very significant implications for those with least power in our society: the low paid, those living in poverty, and many children, women, Indigenous Australians and immigrants.

This collision is in fact widely observed across developed countries as policy makers, employers and households attempt various accommodations of each other, in national efforts to improve well being, productivity and social health. Issues of social reproduction and social cohesion are of growing importance.

Many critical questions arise. Answering them relies on multi-disciplinary collaborations that explore the economic, health, social, legal, demographic and political ramifications of particular work and life configurations, and the ways in which policy settings on each of these terrains can or should change to create better outcomes. Ten critical questions arise:

1. What kinds of workplace practices facilitate sustainable workplaces, with highly skilled, productive workers who can also care for their dependents and sustain their communities?
2. What kinds of social, legal and economic policies can different levels of government adopt to facilitate a sustainable labour force, as well as sustainable households and communities?
3. How should children and the infirm, disabled and aged be cared for in the presence of rising levels of labour force participation and thinning private familial community?

4. How is *time* being deployed in different households, by individuals, and in workplaces, and with what outcomes for employers, workers, dependents and communities?
5. What is the relationship between early childhood education and care and changing rates of labour force participation, and how can the physical and mental health, development and welfare of children be maximised and inequality narrowed?
6. What relative roles should the market, the private family and the public sector have in sustaining the labour market, workplaces and care?
7. What are the demographic implications of the current work and care regimes in Australia and how can they be improved?
8. How is inequality (by gender, race, ethnicity, class) constructed, amplified or narrowed by particular work/life regimes?
9. What housing, transport and urban and rural infrastructure conformations will assist the easy reconciliation of work, care and life as well as contribute to sustainable growth and minimal ecological damage?
10. What arrangements facilitate the development of ‘thick’ communities, which benefit individuals, children, the aged, and underpin a healthy society and the reproduction of a healthy workforce? What are the international lessons on these issues?

Leadership and Advisory Structures

The CWL is led by Professor Barbara Pocock who has been analysing work in Australia and internationally for over twenty years. She has held a diversity of jobs both inside and outside universities – working on farms, banks, in government, for unions and community organisations and, from 1988, in South Australian universities (www.barbarapocock.com.au).

The CWL is advised by an Advisory Committee comprised of CWL supporters, including representatives of the international and national research community, community organisations, unions, business and government. This committee meets bi-annually to advise on the strategic directions and activities of the CWL. The Centre will be regularly externally evaluated.

Activities

The primary activity of the Centre is undertaking new research and analysis and encouraging policy and public debate about them. Other activities include:

- Developing new projects and collaborations;
- Promulgating analysis, through roundtables, website, seminars and publication;
- Training new researchers;
- Public engagement with research partners, community organisations, employers, media and policy makers.

Building on Strength Through Partnership

The CWL exists amidst mounting national and international interest in the tension between work and life. A significant expansion in research is underway, both in Australia and internationally. The CWL builds on this evidence and aims to expand it, link it to public effect, and create new research partnerships around significant issues.

Large and small employers are increasingly concerned about these issues, exemplified the Centre's partnership with Lend Lease Communities to study the connections between work, home and community. Community organisations like the Brotherhood of St Laurence have long pursued analysis of Australian society, especially issues affecting Australians who live on low incomes. Australian unions have a strong interest in changes at work, the ways in which they affect working people and their families; partners include the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union and SAUnions.

Cross-institutional research relationships mean that the CWL exists amongst a national network of research centres including those at University of Sydney (ACIRRT) and RMIT (CASM) with which it has links and shares activities.

Current Research

In 2005-2008, the Australian Research Council is funding four research projects at the CWL in partnership with these organisations. These include:

Theoretical and policy implications of changing work/life patterns and preferences of Australian women, men and children, households and communities (2003-2005)

Through a Research Fellowship for 2003-2007 Barbara Pocock is analyzing and investigating the relationship of changing patterns of work and the changing nature of Australian households, communities and workplaces. The study explores the effects of work on households, along with individual preferences and household and community structures (and their interaction), drawing out implications for social theory and policy. The project has resulted in two books: *The Work/Life Collision: What Work is Doing to Australian and What to do About it* (Federation Press, 2003) and *"The Labour Market Ate My Babies!" The Implications of Work for Social Reproduction and Cohesion in Australia* (Federation Press, 2006 forthcoming). ARC Funds: \$257k. Project Code

Low Paid Services Employment in Australia: Dimensions, Causes, Effects and Responses (2004-2007)

This project investigates the effects of low pay on Australian workers in the childcare, cleaning and hospitality industries. The project looks beyond the effects on workers to consider the effects on the families of low paid workers, their households and the community. It is based in three states and analyses both ABS and HILDA quantitative data and newly collected qualitative data. Partners LHMU, SAUnions, Unions NSW, UnionsVictoria, Brotherhood of St Lawrence; total funds: \$500k. *Investigators:* Dr Barbara Pocock, Dr John Buchanan, Dr Iain Campbell, Dr Susan Oakley, Dr Ian Watson.

Re-conceptualising citizenship and the commodification of labour: the experiences of young casual workers in the South Australian labour market

This qualitative study establishes a Phd Scholarship which will analyse the nature and strength of workplace voice and agency of young casual workers in South Australia at a time when industrial regulation is changing in Australia and casual employment is growing and reviving the notion that human labour is returning to commodity status.

The study considers the implications for skill and training, gendered aspects of labour market regulation, and potential forms of effective advocacy to assist young casual workers to workplace citizenship and long-term employment from their perspective. *Investigators:* Barbara Pocock, Dr Susan Oakley. (2005-2008) (With SAUnions, \$73k)

The Work, Home and Community Study (2006-2008)

Australian cities are bursting at their seams. Major new housing developments are being undertaken to meet housing demand. These new developments sit alongside existing developments and raise issues about socio-spatial integration. New developments attempt to meet changing work, housing, services and community needs. This project examines how they are succeeding, how workers and residents see the relationship between work, home, services, and the community they want to live amidst, and what kinds of spatial alignments they seek. The project will assist urban planners, workplaces, service providers and the developer community, potentially improving the well being of men, women and children. This project studies how changes at work and in households are reconfiguring relationships between work, home, services, and community. Lend Lease Communities, one of Australia's largest urban project companies, joins CWL staff to investigate how Australians live, work and create community now; how work, housing and community are changing and fit together; the ways in which their intersections are being reconfigured to create changing workplaces, housing, services and community demands; and which configurations and policies create sustainable households, workplaces and communities. The study compares a set of four 'paired' high and low socio-economic urban sites in four states, and studies men, women and children. *Investigators:* Barbara Pocock, Mr Kelvin Trimper, Dr Susan Oakley. (2006-2008) With Lend Lease Communities. \$500k.