

**Women's Work is Never Done:
the Intersection of Work and Family**

Professorial Lecture

by

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In May 2004 the Australian Government issued a press release titled “Working Mums and Ambition Don’t Mix”. It reported on an organisational survey of workplace policies and concluded that “working mums have a better opportunity to combine work and family as long as they don’t set their sights on managerial jobs.”¹ Why don’t we hear that “Working Dads and Ambition Don’t Mix”? We live in an age when work is defined as paid work and women’s work has been defined in terms of a primary relationship with the home or at best a dual relationship with the home and paid workforce. How did this come about and where do today’s struggles to reconcile work and family fit in the historical scheme?

British settlement of Australia occurred at a time of change in Europe. For centuries most Europeans practised a family economy with all family members, including children, contributing to the household income. While men and women specialised in different areas of work, the inputs of all were valued. With the coming of the industrial revolution, work became separated from the home and new issues arose. How was childcare to be managed and who was to do the household tasks such as food and clothing production needed to keep the family going? Over the course of the nineteenth century in Britain a different division of labour emerged within the home. Each family met this ‘work-family challenge’ as best they could and by the end of the century a model of the male breadwinner with the woman at home emerged. This model was dominant for most of the twentieth century in Australia and shaped family decision-making, employer and government policy.

Changes to this thinking have been prominent in the final decades of the twentieth century. As women entered the workforce in greater numbers, policy discussions have changed. The family model is no longer one in which the mother stays at home to provide childcare and household help. Dual income families abound and the care of family and household has become a major issue for public debate. Added to this, recent discussions about the aging population and the alleged low birth rate have increased debate. The discussions about work-family integration or collision are widespread at this time in Australia and other parts of the western industrialised world. Since the early 1990s the focus of this discussion has moved from gender inequities at work to one of how to combine paid work and care of the family. In the past ten years books have appeared with titles such as *The Work-Family Challenge*.² Over the past few years the books have changed from using words like ‘balance’ and ‘challenge’ to more aggressive titles such as Pocock’s *The Work/Life Collision*.³ More recently the debate has widened to work-life balance, thus introducing the notion of personal time and leisure and the application of this ‘balance’ to all workers. There is greater public scrutiny and discussion at times when the patterns of work and family interaction are changing.

This paper reflects on three levels of decision-making and how they have influenced concepts and practices of women’s work, both by the women themselves and other social actors. It looks at three spheres of decision and activity: within the home and personal relationships; within the workplace; and at the level of the state. The paper presents snapshots across time in European Australian society, looking at the second half of the nineteenth century and the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century.

¹ Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency, “Working Mums and Ambition Don’t Mix”, press release, May 2004.

² Suzan Lewis and Jeremy Lewis (eds), *The Work-Family Challenge: Rethinking Employment*, Sage, London, 1996.

³ Barbara Pocock, *The Work/Life Collision*, Federation, Sydney, 2003.

WOMEN'S WORK IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the first half of the nineteenth century economic development in the Australian colonies was dominated by the pastoral, agricultural and ancillary industries that employed single male labour and to a lesser extent married labourers with children. The manufacturing and service sectors were insignificant until later in the century and there was a low value placed on female employment, except as domestic servants. Yet colonial authorities believed that the employment of greater numbers of married men had benefits as wives (and daughters) provided their domestic needs and married men's work habits were judged to be more stable than single men,⁴ a major problem given the periodic severe shortages of labour.⁵ The immigration of single women and families was encouraged from the 1840s not only to redress the sex imbalance and improve the tone of the colonies but also to counter the bias towards the employment of single men. Labour shortages and greater security of land tenure in the 1840s induced more families to settle in rural areas.⁶

The most common pattern of rural employment of women in the first half of the nineteenth century was as part of a family economic unit. The wives and daughters of settlers with capital undertook domestic work only when servants were unavailable.⁷ From the 1860s many settlers had little capital and toiled with very little assistance from outside the family unit while some lived in dire poverty. Indeed 'the absence of settled communities and a wider kinship network meant that many families lived and toiled in relative isolation, and that women and older children constituted a vital economic component of the family'.⁸ The evidence of emigrants' guides, travel diaries and other personal memoirs written by women in the nineteenth century led Grimshaw to conclude that 'a good, useful wife would not only be no expense - she would often earn nearly as much as her husband' and children were valuable assistants on farms, creating 'a reversion to a common family pattern reminiscent of eighteenth century society'.⁹

Family Life in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

Patterns of family and working life in the second half of the nineteenth century can be seen from civil and church registration data in the Upper Williams Valley, New South Wales. This project¹⁰ relies principally on a social reconstruction of this agricultural area. Social reconstruction is an expansion of the methodology of population reconstitution that has been used for several decades in Europe. In England population estimates, fertility and mortality trends were established using parish registers.¹¹ This analysis of a population relies on family reconstitution, that is 'the systematic assemblage and articulation of information about the life histories of families'¹² in order to describe its chief demographic characteristics of birth, marriage and death, a method which allows the community's demographic history to be

⁴ Katrina Alford, *Production or Reproduction? An economic history of women in Australia, 1788-1850*, Oxford University, Melbourne, 1984, pp. 160-161, 174-176.

⁵ Michael Quinlan, ' "Pre-arbitral" labour legislation in Australia and its implications for the introduction of compulsory arbitration' in Stuart Macintyre and Richard Mitchell (eds) *Foundations of Arbitration*, Oxford University, Melbourne, 1989, pp. 25-49.

⁶ Alford, *Production or Reproduction?* p. 161.

⁷ Alford, *Production or Reproduction?* p. 175.

⁸ Alford, *Production or Reproduction?* p. 189.

⁹ Patricia Grimshaw, 'Women and the Family in Australian History' in Elizabeth Windschuttle (ed.) *Women, Class and History*, Fontana, Melbourne, 1980, pp.41-42.

¹⁰ Australian Research Council Discovery Project 'Creating a Settler Society', Chief Investigator, G. Strachan.

¹¹ E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981; Wrigley, Davies, Oeppen and Schofield, *English Population History from Family Reconstitution 1580-1837*.

¹² Wrigley, Davies, Oeppen and Schofield, *English Population History*, p. 12.

‘examined in greater detail and with greater precision than by any other method’.¹³ Centuries of data are not available for Australia so that population reconstitution along the lines of Wrigley and Schofield is not possible but the technique of using the individual registration of demographic events to establish details of the life of a community can be used. Sources used for research on the community in the Upper Williams Valley are the records of civil registration, the baptismal, marriage and burial records of the Church of England Parish of Dungog as well as census data, agricultural records, and local newspaper reports. This begins the process of the recreation of the life histories of individuals and the economic, family and social relations between them. For this research the information on individuals is being entered into a computer database.¹⁴ The use of a range of sources moves the project into the realm of ‘social reconstruction’, rather than population reconstitution, and allows the project to address questions raised in social and labour history.

Marriage was generally a local affair in the Upper Williams Valley in the nineteenth century. Most (94 per cent) of the 107 women marrying in the Anglican Church in the Parish of Dungog between 1880 and 1894 were born in the Parish or the surrounding district, as were 80 per cent of the grooms. The average age of marriage was 21 and a half years for women and almost 26 years for men. There were 13 marriages in which the groom was more than ten years older than the bride, but most couples were close in age. However, there is evidence that some men cast their net as wide as possible within the local community. In 1893 the following advertisement appeared in the *Dungog Chronicle*: ‘A young man with good prospects wishes to correspond with young lady with view to matrimony’, signed ‘Single’. Five years later a ‘Hotelkeeper (Protestant) in a country town would like to meet domesticated young lady, with view to matrimony. One with dark eyes and complexion, and able to play piano preferred. Photos required. Genuine.’ On another occasion a ‘gentleman of great personal attractions’ desired to correspond with ‘good substantial female’ who had to be ‘above reproach and musical’.¹⁵ Marriage was the only acceptable state for a woman for without it, the *Dungog Chronicle* proclaimed, at ‘about 30 years of age, an unmarried woman feels that she has outlived her social raison d’être and the feeling is a bitter one, bringing with it almost a sense of shame, even guilt.’¹⁶

Most unmarried women were primarily committed to the family enterprise. Of the 127 women in the sample who married between 1880 and 1894, 86 per cent had their occupation recorded as ‘living with parents’. As many of their parents were farmers this meant that they were not living a life of leisure but rather that they provided the essential labour of another adult on the farm or in the home. Of the other nineteen, seventeen were domestic servants, one was a teacher, and one was described simply as a spinster. Women played a crucial role in the tasks of looking after the young and the elderly in their families and wives were needed not only to provide the comforts of life but also to produce the necessary farm hands and workers for family businesses.

There was very little social mobility in the district. Most men recorded the same occupation as their father. Fifty-one grooms or 48 per cent (of 106 men for whom occupation is given) had exactly the same occupation as their father and many more had a closely allied occupation. A mother’s occupation is given only once on these marriage certificates, that of

¹³ P. Laslett, D. Eversley and W. Armstrong, *An Introduction to English Historical Demography*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1966, p. 96.

¹⁴ So far, the following sources are included in the database: Civil Registration Certificates of Birth, Death and Marriage, 1856 to 1910 (births 1856-1905); Anglican Parish Register of Baptism, Burial and Marriage, 1854 to 1894; Infectious Disease register for Dungog 1897-1902; Land and stock holders around Dungog, 1886 (the only year this was compiled); Education files for Schools of the area from 1850s. To date the records number 12,159 Events and 62,294 persons.

¹⁵ *Dungog Chronicle*, 28 Feb. 1893, 15 Feb. and 29 Sep. 1898.

¹⁶ *Dungog Chronicle*, 8 Jan. 1907.

washerwoman, when her nineteen year old daughter, living with her mother, married a thirty year old labourer. Of the 104 brides for whom there is information on the occupation of their father, 28 per cent married a man with exactly the same occupation as their father. Many more, however, married men of similar status. For example, daughters of farmers married blacksmiths, a brickmaker, carpenter, carrier, horse dealer, miner, saddler, squarer (trims logs) and tailor. A few married labourers and one married a school teacher. Of course the designation 'farmer' covered differences in the size and productivity of the land but the designation 'farmer/grazier', or 'grazier' clearly showed a wealthier individual. Daughters of these men married an accountant, solicitor, clerk of petty sessions, customs officer, farmers, farmer/grazier, and carrier. It is clear that the educated elite of the town married daughters of wealthy men: the accountant, clerk of petty sessions, customs officer and solicitor married daughters of graziers or grazier/farmers, and the bank manager married the daughter of a gentleman.¹⁷

Following marriage, most women could expect to give birth to a child within twelve months.¹⁸ Women gave birth to their first child in their early 20s and this age declines a little over the decades. The most popular spacing between first and second child, and second and third child, was approximately 18 months. The average completed family size for Australia as a whole is shown in table 1. Table 2 shows the average size of family for the Dungog civil registration district using information on death certificates. It is possible to compare the two sets of data for women born in the 1830s and this shows a larger completed family size of 8 in the Upper Williams Valley compared to the national average of 7.

Table 1: Average issue of married women in Australia by generation

Generation	Average number of live births to a married woman surviving to 1911 census (children born to all marriages)
1831-1836	6.98
1836-1841	7.02
1841-1846	7.03
1846-1851	6.75
1851-1856	6.44
1856-1861	5.92
1861-1866	5.25

Source: Lado T. Ruzicka and John C. Caldwell, *The End of Demographic Transition in Australia*, Australian Family formation Project Monograph 5, Australian National University, Canberra, 1977, p. 153.

Much of the spirit of community in Dungog and its surrounding area was created by its female inhabitants. Their unpaid community work was a major factor in the creation of Dungog's quality infrastructure of school and convent, hospital, churches, Masonic Hall, School of Arts and its extensive range of educational, sporting and spiritual organisations and activities, including the annual show. The women of Dungog were on hand to rally around in the event of any special disaster befalling a particular family and money was raised for families in dire need because of illness. The great floods of 1893 touched the hearts of the people and the 'ladies of Dungog' organised themselves into a series of committees which made warm clothing for the victims.¹⁹ In the course of their community work, women created much of the region's entertainment through the balls, picnics and other functions. Yet not all

¹⁷Church of England Register of Marriages, 1880-94.

¹⁸Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-rate and on the Mortality of Infants in New South Wales, *Report*, vol. 1, Government Printer, Sydney, 1904.

¹⁹*Dungog Chronicle*, Mar. and Apr. 1893.

women were involved in these public charitable events. Women like Mrs Susanna Redman, who looked after a small dairy farm while her husband worked as a carpenter, had little time for recreation and although religious, could not even find the time to attend her church because of the amount of labour she performed.²⁰

Table 2: Size of completed family in Upper Williams Valley

Mother's birthdate	Number of children
1801-1810	1 to 17 average 7
1811-1820	1 to 18 average 9
1821-1830	1 to 14 average 10
1831-1840	2 to 14 average 8

Source: Civil registration of deaths.

Only women who married before the age of 40 are included.

Women and the State

The demographic data outlined suggests that very few women were perceived officially as having a specific occupation of their own. The occupations of women are mentioned only on rare occasions in the civil registration of demographic events.²¹ The great majority were differentiated by the occupation of a father or a husband. This form of categorisation suggests that the work they did was seen as work that was defined by their situations as wives and daughters, and not, as was the case with men, work that was defined by its relationship to the wider economy. The division of labour within a family was not incorporated into the design of official records. Only the relation of the household to the economy through its male head was recorded.

The principles on which women's work was categorised by the censuses of the second half of the nineteenth century in the Australian colonies shows the transition of official categorisation of women's work towards one which recognised individual paid work as valuable and did not recognise the contribution of women's work within the home or in the family enterprise. A model that saw women's work in the home as unproductive was accepted 'with the result that women were regarded as naturally dependent on their husbands, who were the sole legitimate breadwinners.'²² In New South Wales in 1861 and Victoria in 1861 and 1871, for instance, apparently only the adult daughters of farmers were automatically recorded as farmers. Under the direction of T. A. Coghlan, the statist of New South Wales, the population in that colony was divided unequivocally into the two categories of breadwinners and dependents,²³ and in his statistical survey of the colony Coghlan used it as the primary division within the chapter on employment.²⁴ He argued that 'a high standard of living and good-quality workmen were found...where men had to support families'.²⁵ He

²⁰ Jean Michaelides, 'Growing up in Dungog: The Story of Daisy May Poppleton', typescript, Sydney, 1980.

²¹ Even when women act regularly as midwives this occupation is noted on civil registration forms only on rare occasions. See Strachan, 'Present at the Birth: Midwives'.

²² Desley Deacon, 'Political Arithmetic: The Nineteenth-Century Australian Census and the Construction of the Dependent Woman', *Signs*, 11, 1, 1985, pp. 29-30.

²³ Deacon, 'Political Arithmetic', pp. 33, 39.

²⁴ T. A. Coghlan, *A Statistical Survey of New South Wales, 1893-4*, Sydney, Charles Potter, 1895, p. 185.

²⁵ Deacon, 'Political Arithmetic', p. 39.

concluded that ‘the large employment of women in gainful pursuits is not a matter of gratulation.’ It may ‘with some degree of certitude, be asserted that the condition of a country can in some measure be gauged by the number of such women as are compelled to seek occupations other than in their domestic sphere.’²⁶

Women as Workers²⁷

Women in the Family Economy

One characteristic that is seen as distinguishing the industrial period from preceding ages is the predominance of the wage-earner, the person who made a living not by selling goods and services to the consumer, but by selling time and labour to an employer, who then resold the product of that labour to the public at a profit.²⁸ This change in the economic basis of life was accompanied by changes in social life, in particular the separation of work and home and the assumption that the married couple consisted of a male breadwinner who worked in a productive cash economy and a housewife who attended to the reproduction of the worker through housework and childcare. This is usually seen as a reversal of an earlier pattern of family life when husband and wife worked together at a joint enterprise that earned an income for the household.²⁹ Yet Bradbury has detailed the combinations of waged work and household production of food for sale and consumption in which working class women were engaged in Montreal in the second half of the nineteenth century,³⁰ a pattern which may have been followed by low-income families in the Upper Williams Valley.

The Dungog of the period 1850 to 1900 conformed more to the pre-industrial pattern in that the primary determinant of the kind of work a woman did was her relationship to others in the household in which she lived. In the population sample in the Anglican parish registers, 31 per cent of the men marrying were farmers and 49 per cent were farmers’ daughters. Farming in the Dungog area in this period was not highly capitalised, and was just beginning to be mechanised, and seems to have been a joint enterprise of husband and wife. At his golden wedding celebration in 1918, a local farmer, Joseph Atkins, recalled that ‘when I got the farm, I thought the best thing was to get married. I always think that is an important thing in farming’.³¹ Dairy farming, in particular, was a family enterprise, with women’s and children’s labour integral to the project to such an extent that before the mechanisation of dairying in the 1890s ‘the financial success of male farmers...depended substantially on the butter-making skills of their wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters’.³²

There is evidence that women possessed the knowledge and skills needed in farming, and that a minority of married women engaged in farming enterprises in their own names.³³ Fourteen women (four per cent of landholders) are identified as holding land in their own names in 1886. Six held less than 70 acres, seven held between 70 and 250 acres and one held more than this.³⁴ Further details of four of these women have been obtained using the Anglican parish registers. All were widows with adult children. Three held between 28 and 36 acres and possessed enough livestock for a limited cash income but the properties would

²⁶ T. A. Coghlan, quoted in Deacon, ‘Political Arithmetic’, p. 39.

²⁷ This section relies mainly on Glenda Strachan, Ellen Jordan and Hilary Carey, ‘Women’s Work in a Rural Community: Dungog and the Upper Williams Valley, 1880-1900’, *Labour History*, no. 78, May 2000.

²⁸ Belinda Probert, *Working Life*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1989.

²⁹ Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850*, Cass, London, 1969.

³⁰ Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1993.

³¹ *Dungog Chronicle*, 3 Sep. 1918.

³² W. Frost, ‘Farmers, Government, and the Environment: The Settlement of Australia’s “Wet Frontier”, 1870-1920’, *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 37, no. 1, 1997, p. 28.

³³ See for example Post Office Directories.

³⁴ *NSWPP*, vol. 5, 1886, pp. 227-255.

not have been economically viable. One woman's husband, who died in 1883, gave his occupation as carrier and her daughter was a domestic servant. These women would have played a vital part not only in household production but also in earning a cash income, even during their husband's lives. The farms would have added to the family income but not been sufficient to sustain a family and this group would have been among the poorest in the valley. In contrast, the farm of 560 acres was a desirable holding and one of the son's, aged 26, was living on the farm in 1886 when he married a grazier's daughter. It is likely that he took over the farm as another son who married in 1892 classified himself as a teamster living in Clarence Town. The *Dungog Chronicle* provides further evidence of women's farming activities as reports of stockyard sales included names of women selling cattle³⁵ and after the registration of dairies was required in the early 1890s, women applied for licenses. It is clear that women were actively involved in farm work and this further suggests that though only a few are named in the public record, many more were engaged in such work both as daughters and wives.

Farming was not the only enterprise that conformed to the pre-industrial pattern of husband and wife as co-workers with unmarried daughters as subsidiary labour. Wives worked with or in support of their husbands across the whole spectrum of self-employment, a common occurrence in pre-nineteenth century Europe.³⁶ The Dungog region had a floating population of single men and boarding houses and hotels catered for them and for the influx of visitors to the town at times of local importance, and let rooms for business purposes to the itinerant providers of services like dentists, hairdressers and dressmakers. Hotel-keepers relied on wives for the housekeeping and catering and a typical newspaper comment of 1888 noted that Mrs Robson, wife of the licensee of the Settlers Arms, provided an excellent luncheon at the 'settling up of the Oddfellows sports'.³⁷ Even as employees, the husband and wife were considered a team. In the 1890s, *Chronicle* advertisements for male agricultural workers frequently took the following form: 'Wanted. A married couple without encumbrances, man as general useful on farm, and wife as cook and housekeeper'.³⁸

Women as Entrepreneurs

Historians of the small farming areas of Europe have noted that female family members, particularly when their labour was not needed on the farm or other family enterprise, seized opportunities to earn money, usually to shore up family finances rather than for the sake of independence.³⁹ Wives whose husbands had no need of their services had for centuries operated independent enterprises from the family home. Young women from large families had worked as domestic or farm servants in more affluent households where board and lodging were provided and where their cash wages could be sent to their parents.⁴⁰ The evidence suggests that throughout this period women in Dungog continued these customary practices. The contemporary definition of femininity, which legitimated the non-productive housewife of the typical household of industrialism,⁴¹ pervaded the reports and advertisements in the *Dungog Chronicle* and constrained the kinds of work that women were prepared or allowed to undertake independently. Thus most of the work women did,

³⁵ For example *Dungog Chronicle*, 14 and 17 Feb., 28 Apr., 23 May, 11 and 25 Jul., 12 Sep. 1893.

³⁶ K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985, p. 301.

³⁷ *Dungog Chronicle*, 9 Oct. 1888.

³⁸ *Dungog Chronicle*, 2 May 1893.

³⁹ M. Cohen, *Workshop to Office: Two Generations of Italian Women in New York City, 1900-1950*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1992; Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work and Family*.

⁴⁰ Pinchbeck, *Women Workers*.

⁴¹ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1750-1850*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987.

especially the work for wages, relied on the skills and tasks defined as feminine by this discourse and was an extension of household labour into the market. The choice of work, however, was severely constrained by social or class origins and family wealth with the skills each could bring to the market determined by their individual education.

Apart from the women who ran farms in their own names, the women who moved furthest from the ideal were those who operated shops in their own names. On the other hand there was a tradition of female shop-keepers that pre-dated industrialism, and it seems that though the new feminine ideal could inhibit new spheres opening to women, it did little to curtail already existing practices.⁴² Women operated shops in Dungog and in 1888, for example, Mrs Kelly set up a shop in the main street selling 'toys, stationery, pictures, confectionery, fruit, etc, at lowest rates', and ten years later Mrs Collins of Dungog Cash Stores advertised 'groceries, drapery, millinery' and offered 'highest cash prices' for poultry and eggs.⁴³ The other work done by entrepreneurial married women and widows called more directly on the feminine skills acquired through home training and education. Throughout the period boarding houses and hotels were run by women. Mrs Errington was proprietor of the Temperance Hotel, Mrs Redman's boarding house provided a room in which the visiting dentist saw patients in 1898 and Mrs Callaghan conducted 'that favourite boarding house, known as Burton's, at the northern end of Dungog'.⁴⁴

These active entrepreneurial women whose enterprises demanded capital investment and could be expected to return a living income were, of course, only a tiny minority, but there is evidence that other women did more intermittent income producing work. A fluctuating demand was not likely to be a problem for services that utilised equipment like stoves, sewing machines and pianos, that formed part of the household stock and so required little capital investment. The *Dungog Chronicle* frequently mentioned women who catered for public events and social occasions. There were also a number of women who earned an income by nursing, their activities revealed by notices in the *Dungog Chronicle* where they were thanked for their services in cases of illness and death.⁴⁵ Many women had nursed family and friends and some had done this frequently enough that it was likely to be an income-earning activity. The evidence from Dungog and the Upper Williams Valley for the period 1856 to 1880 shows that women who acted regularly as midwives (more than 40 cases in their lifetime) were present at 45 per cent of the births.⁴⁶ At a lower social level washing must have been a resource for many.⁴⁷ The only name that has surfaced, however, is that of the washerwoman who appears in the demographic sample as the mother of a bride in 1881.

Women as Wage-Earners

There were other women, particularly those who were single, who conformed to the growing pattern of industrial societies and were wage-earners. In Europe and the United States domestic service and work as a dressmaker's apprentice were the traditional waged occupations for women and dated from pre-industrial times, and most of the sponsored immigration of young women to New South Wales in the early decades of settlement assumed they would work as servants.⁴⁸ With the coming of mass production of goods,

⁴²Ellen Jordan, 'The exclusion of women from industry in nineteenth century Britain', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, no. 31, 1989, pp. 273-296; Pinchbeck, *Women Workers*.

⁴³*Dungog Chronicle*, numerous dates in 1888 and 1898.

⁴⁴*Dungog Chronicle*, 12 Jun. 1888, 7 Jan. and 5 Apr. 1898.

⁴⁵For example *Dungog Chronicle*, 7 Jan. and 21 Nov. 1893.

⁴⁶Glenda Strachan, 'Present at the Birth: Midwives, "Handywomen" and Neighbours in Rural New South Wales, 1850-1900', *Labour History*, 81, Nov. 2001, 13-28.

⁴⁷*Dungog Chronicle*, 22 Apr. 1898.

⁴⁸Marian Aveling and Joy Damousi, *Stepping Out of History: Documents of Women at Work in Australia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1991; Pinchbeck, *Women Workers*.

factory and workshop employment for women emerged, with women engaged in much the same narrow range of industries and processes in all the English-speaking countries. This work was confined to specific manufacturing areas, largely the capital cities in Australia.⁴⁹ Industrialism in Britain and the United States created a range of new 'feminine' waged occupations for unmarried women which were needed in almost every centre of population: shop assistant and elementary school teacher in the first part of the century, and hospital nurse, hairdresser and clerk in the second half. Furthermore, in the final quarter of the century, the Women's Movement in these countries mounted a major campaign to persuade middle class parents that their daughters should not sit at home in idleness waiting for marriage, but should train for an occupation, and a number of occupations, new and old, were suggested as suitable: nursing, teaching, clerical work.⁵⁰ Work for women developed in a similar manner in Australian cities.

The nature of employment available in the Dungog district was primarily agricultural or with small businesses. The data allows an examination of the extent and manner in which rural Australia adapted to international developments. The sample of marriage certificates suggests that domestic service was the major resource for locally-born young women whose families did not need, or could not afford, their services at home. However, nursing and teaching were increasingly available to young women in the region. The new occupation of clerical work, however, which began employing young women in the cities from the 1880s onwards, offered little work in the Dungog region. Teaching was not, of course, new as a female occupation. What was new about teaching in the second half of the nineteenth century was the emphasis on training that came with the creation of a system of public education. Whereas in the early days of government-funded education the teachers had often been men and women who turned to the work because of age or disability, the demand for training transformed it into an occupation largely staffed by clever girls and boys, many of whom saw a period as a teacher as a prelude to marriage or going into business. Young men and women began as pupil-teachers, working in schools as apprentices to experienced teachers. To gain a qualification to teach alone, they sat for written examinations and had their practical skills assessed by the school inspectors.⁵¹

By 1889 the Dungog Public School had over 200 pupils and three staff members. The women teachers in the public schools were young, unmarried and on the move from school to school. Some of these young women came from leading commercial families in the town and Miss Lizzie Skillen, daughter of a leading businessman who supported her in her career, began as a pupil teacher at Clarence Town in 1895 and became a lecturer at Sydney Teacher's College in 1904.⁵² But many teachers' lives in rural areas were circumscribed. Miss Elizabeth Carter, born in 1870, trained as a pupil teacher and began her teaching career in 1889 at a provisional school.⁵³ Her experience was typical of the life of hardship and limited personal and professional choices. Unmarried, aged about 22, she was assigned to

⁴⁹Raelene Frances, *The Politics of Work: Gender and Labour in Victoria, 1880-1939*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993; Jordan, 'The exclusion of women from industry'.

⁵⁰Ellen Jordan, ' "Making good wives and mothers"? The transformation of middle class girls', *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 4, 1991, pp. 439-462; Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism 1850-1900*, Hutchinson, London, 1987; Elizabeth K. Helsinger, Robin Lauterbach Sheets and William Veeder, *The Woman Question: Society and Literature in Britain and America 1837-1883*, Garland, New York, 1983.

⁵¹Marjorie R. Theobald, *Knowing Women: Origins of Women's Education in Nineteenth-Century Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.

⁵²J. Gately, *125 Years of Education in Dungog 1851-1976*, np., 1976; Glenda Strachan, Ellen Jordan. and Hilary Carey, *Women and Work in the Hunter Valley, 1880-1920: A Case Study of the Dungog Region*, Report for the Hunter Bicentennial Historical Research Project, Newcastle, 1996.

⁵³Details of the life of Miss Carter come from File 5/15774.3, Dusodie School, Education Department, NSW Archives.

Dusodie provisional school in the Upper Williams Valley. The Inspector reported that she could lodge with Mr and Mrs Boorer, one third of a mile from the school. Over the years attempts to improve her teaching skills, be promoted and be relocated were thwarted. At the age of 26 Miss Carter married Mr David Boorer (a member of the family with whom she had been boarding). The following year Mrs Boorer again applied for confirmation of her Classification 3 C. Married and unable to move location, the classification was approved at last. In 1897 Mrs Elizabeth Boorer gave birth to a son. She was granted three weeks paid leave that she took from the date of the birth. A relieving officer would not be sent to a provisional school but she could employ a competent person such as an ex-pupil teacher and pay the employee from her salary. In the late nineteenth century it was not unusual for married women to continue teaching even after the birth of their children and contribute to the family income.⁵⁴ The Boorer family were small landholders who would not have produced sufficient income to adequately support family members so additional income was needed. Mrs Elizabeth Boorer kept working through her pregnancies and when her children were very young. The fragments of her life that we are able to glimpse in these archival files show a life of hard work and dedication and a thwarted ambition to become a more talented teacher and gain promotion. Her life was not unusual. Unable to gain a transfer from the small bush school she married a member of the local community. There was little distinction between the public world of paid work and the private world of home and family in such a small community.

Nursing gradually changed from being an occupation for older, usually married, women in financial need to one that recruited young, educated women. By 1890 there was wide community acceptance that nursing was a woman's occupation and most hospitals in the Australian colonies employed female nurses. Specific training courses lasting several years were offered in large hospitals by the early 1890s and, on graduation, most nurses went to work in private practice. It was not unusual, however, for small country hospitals to employ an older married woman or widow, and this was the case in Dungog. The public debates over nurse training and the employment of trained nurses that had erupted in capital cities⁵⁵ reached Dungog when the cottage hospital was established. When the first matron, Mrs Whitehouse was chosen from a large field of applicants the honorary secretary resigned 'giving as his reason that a trained nurse had not been engaged as matron'.⁵⁶

It would seem that some prosperous families in Dungog had accepted the arguments first promoted by the Women's Movement in the 1860s that they should encourage daughters to train for a profession, and that the clearest deviation from the pre-industrial, family economy, pattern of life can be seen in the individualist career-making of young single women from prosperous families.

Workplace Regulation

Where women did engage in paid employment they performed work deemed suitable for women. When new occupations opened to women they were deemed suitable on the basis of women's innate caring abilities, their deftness and agility and their capacity to withstand boredom to a greater degree than men. And of course there was always domestic work.

Nursing is a classic example of the transition to suitable women's work. Between 1860 and 1900 the occupation of nurse was transformed and the public perception of what a nurse should be changed dramatically. Three overlapping phases are discernible in the transition from the form of nursing existing in 1800 to that which was common by 1900.

⁵⁴Theobald, *Knowing Women*, ch. 6.

⁵⁵Glenda Strachan, *Labour of Love: The History of the Queensland Nurses' Association in Queensland 1860-1950*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1996, ch. 1.

⁵⁶*Dungog Chronicle*, 4 Jul. 1893.

Prior to the 1860s, formally untrained women and men worked as nurses in institutions in what was regarded as a lowly occupation. Following changes to the occupation of nursing in Britain, nursing in Australia changed in the three decades from 1860 to become an almost exclusively female occupation for women of education. By the 1890s the predominant public view was that training was necessary for nurses. Witnesses before the Victorian Royal Commission in the 1890s readily accepted the 'naturalness' of women being employed as nurses. Dr Walter Balls-Headley from the Medical Society of Victoria, elaborated why women were better nurses:

they sit up better and endure better, and I think they are apt to be kinder. Their hands are more delicate; they understand the feeding of people better than men, and they do not, as a rule, drink....Then they do not go out and smoke, and loaf; they very often like their work. I think it is natural to every woman to be, to some extent, a nurse.

His final comment reflects the belief that it was in every woman's nature to be a nurse, a belief that included the idea that women were superior to men in this work. Rev. Mervyn Whitton, a hospital chaplain, endorsed female nursing, saying that 'females are more patient, enter more into details, are more sympathetic, and in nearly every way are better qualified than men for sick nursing'. Dr Robert Duncan, a surgeon working at Kyneton Hospital, believed that 'male nurses, except in very exceptional instances, are out of place as attendants on the sick, and it is astonishing how such a barbarous custom could have survived for the length of time it did'.⁵⁷

In the twentieth century the ethic of the male breadwinner has been of major importance in determining the wages and conditions of workers and the nature of the welfare system. In fact, it could be seen as the major factor in the determination of these systems until the 1970s when increasing numbers of women in the workforce and equal pay cases began to change this ideal. In a landmark case in the industrial court in Australia in 1912 the eminent Justice Henry Bournes Higgins asserted that 'fortunately for society...the greater number of breadwinners still are men. The women are not all dragged from the homes to work while the men loaf at home'.⁵⁸ In the case before him he was struggling with the problem of women's wages which averaged 50 to 60 per cent of men's wages, a potential substantial saving on labour costs for an employer. If women and men were judged as equally able to do the work in question, then the result might indeed be that men loafed at home while women worked in the public sphere for wages, a situation clearly unacceptable for Higgins. In this case the workers in question were fruit pickers and fruit packers. Higgins concluded that

if blacksmiths are the class of workers, the minimum rate must be such as recognises that blacksmiths are usually men. If fruit-pickers are the class of workers, the minimum rate must be such as recognises that, up to the present at least, most of the pickers are men (although women have been paid usually less), and that men and women are fairly in competition as to that class of work. If milliners are the class of workers, the minimum rate must, I think, be such as recognises that all or nearly all milliners are women, and that men are not usually in competition with them.

Higgins awarded male and female pickers the same wage.

While this case is remembered usually for the wage equality awarded to fruit pickers, fruit packers suffered a different fate:

⁵⁷ Minutes of Evidence, Royal Commission on Charitable Institutions, *VPP*, 1892, questions 2451, 19517, 20497. See also Strachan, *Labour of Love*.

⁵⁸ *Commonwealth Arbitration Reports*, 1912.

I have had the advantage of seeing the women performing the lighter operations of packing at a factory; and I have no doubt that the work is essentially adapted for women with their superior deftness and suppleness of fingers. The best test is, I suppose, that if the employers had to employ the same wages to women as to men, they would always, or nearly always, employ the women; and in such work as this, even if the wages for men and for women were the same, women would be employed in preference....I must, therefore, endeavour to find a fair minimum wage for these women, assuming that they have to find their own food, shelter, and clothing.⁵⁹

In this and subsequent decisions Higgins declared that the basic or minimum wage for a man was sacrosanct and had to be able to provide for the needs of a man, his wife and three children. He presented the unskilled worker as 'a human being in a civilised community' entitled to marry and raise a family. Indeed, 'it was not that Higgins disapproved of women working, but he assumed that within the marriage relationship it was desirable, from both male and female points of view, for the man to work and the woman to care for home and children'.⁶⁰ When women worked at women's work they were paid a woman's wage.⁶¹ But as Rickard notes, 'there were few feminists ready to take Higgins to task, particularly as his awards, in raising wages for men (and, indeed, women) appeared to benefit all concerned'.⁶² The principles outlined in this case remained the same until 1969 when the first equal pay case was conducted.

Higgins was reflecting the reality and social expectations of his day. For example, an editorial in a major newspaper could pontificate that

nature fashioned and destined man to be a breadwinner. He has no other *raison d'être*. Unless he works as a breadwinner there is nothing whatever for him to do, and the inevitable penalty of masculine idleness is degeneration. On the other hand, Nature fashioned and destined woman to be a mother....When a man works, he does what Nature commands, and the only thing that he can do. When a woman works (as a breadwinner, of course), she has to put aside the things that she can do best, and the only things she ought to be concerned with, and in defiance of Nature she undertakes the things which she was never intended to perform, and for the performance of which she is least qualified. The displacement of male workers by female workers....threatens man with moral and physical degradation. It threatens woman with disease and decay. But, above all it menaces the rising generation, for what sort of children can we hope will spring from the union of idle and degenerate males with females who have run counter to Nature.⁶³

WOMEN'S WORK IN THE LATE TWENTIETH AND EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

For most of the twentieth century the ideal of the male breadwinner with the wife at home prevailed. Women's wages were set at about 54 per cent of the male rate, rising to 75 per cent following the Second World War. Childcare was rarely provided or subsidised by the state and the 'work family challenge' was managed by the wife at home looking after family

⁵⁹ *Commonwealth Arbitration Reports*, 1912.

⁶⁰ John Rickard, *H. B. Higgins: The Rebel as Judge*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1984, pp. 176-177.

⁶¹ Edna Ryan and Anne Conlon, *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work*, 2nd edn, Penguin, Melbourne, 1989, ch. 3.

⁶² Rickard, *H. B. Higgins*, p. 177.

⁶³ Editorial, *The Age*, 12 Sep. 1911 quoted in Raelene Frances and Bruce Scates, *Women at Work in Australia*, Cambridge University, Melbourne, 1993, p. 9.

and children and the husband earning the family income. When women did work, except in areas like nursing that were only open to single women, their income was seen as a secondary wage for buying luxuries. Changes occurred from the 1960s as more women entered the workforce, the majority of the growth being married women. From the 1960s some of the overt discrimination against women in the paid workforce was gradually changed. The marriage bar went,⁶⁴ equal pay was introduced in cases from 1969 although the major changes for Australian women were implemented in the 1970s.

Family Life

At the beginning of the twenty-first century the birth rate (total fertility rate) is 1.75. While future trends are difficult to predict, the Australian Government's *Intergenerational Report* estimates that this will be 1.6 by 2042.⁶⁵ Demographic changes have been highlighted and came to public attention in May 2004 when the Treasurer, Peter Costello, spoke about Australians possibly having three children, 'one for their wife, one for their husband and one for the country'.⁶⁶ Indeed, the Treasurer said that 'from the national point of view it would be helpful if the birth rate was higher'.⁶⁷ Part of the rationale of the 2004 budget is that 'Mum's will be assisted as they come out of the workforce to have children and they will be assisted as they get back into the workforce....we are re-vamping the whole work and family area and helping Mum's who are trying to juggle work and family.'⁶⁸

While the aging of the Australian population is one area of concern in the *Intergenerational Report*, the other area of concern is to increase labour force participation rates. A government discussion paper, *Australia's Demographic Challenges*, issued in 2004, speaks about three broad ways of increasing capacity and productivity. 'Improving capacity for work' relates to education and skill levels, 'better incentives' relates to pay and other forms of income support, and 'supporting more flexible work options' deals with flexibility in the workplace and further deregulation of the industrial relations system. Yet there is little detail on these flexible work options except to say that there is likely to be a strong demand for part-time and flexible working hours, 'especially from those with caring responsibilities'. The discussion centres on increasing the labour force participation of older workers. While there is the occasional reference to women in the context of returning to work after having children, this report, like the *Intergenerational Report* before it, is essentially gender blind. It presents no discussion of women's and men's working lives and retirement incomes, despite dramatic patterns of difference.⁶⁹

Women are having fewer children and doing so later in their lives. The number of children born to women aged 30-39 is increasing but this does not compensate the decline in the number of children born to women aged 20 to 29.⁷⁰ The predominant family pattern (44 per cent of families) is two parents with two incomes while about 23 per cent of families have a single parent. The proportion of couple families with both partners employed has increased from 49 per cent in 1990 to 51 per cent in 2000. The husband is employed in 89 per cent of

⁶⁴ The marriage bar had operated for most of the twentieth century in public services and some private employers and meant that, once a woman married, she could no longer remain a permanent employee.

⁶⁵ Australian Government, *Intergenerational Report 2002-03*, 2002-03 Budget Paper No. 5, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2002.

⁶⁶ Transcript of interview between Peter Costello and Catherine McGrath, ABC, 11 May 2004, <http://www.treasurer.gov.au/tsr/content/transcripts/2004/040.asp?pf=1>.

⁶⁷ Transcript of interview between Peter Costello and Ross Stevenson and John Burns, 3AW, 11 May 2004, <http://www.treasurer.gov.au/tsr/content/transcripts/2004/040.asp?pf=1>.

⁶⁸ Transcript of interview between Peter Costello and Mark Riley, Channel 7, 11 May 2004, <http://www.treasurer.gov.au/tsr/content/transcripts/2004/040.asp?pf=1>.

⁶⁹ Australian Government, *Australia's Demographic Challenges*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2004.

⁷⁰ Australian Government, *Intergenerational Report 2002-03*, p. 19.

all couple families with dependants with 95 per cent working full time. The wife is employed in 61 per cent of couple families with dependants, 26 per cent on a full time basis, a rise from 20 per cent in the early 1980s. The majority of one parent families with dependants (86 per cent) are headed by women. Fifty-one per cent of sole parents with dependants are employed, 49 per cent of women and 64 per cent of men.⁷¹ At the beginning of the twenty-first century there is a more generalised expectation that both women and men will be in the paid workforce. This time work for most people is external to the home.

Women and the State

As women entered the workforce in greater numbers in Australia and other industrialised countries, the civil rights and women's movement called for greater equality. From the 1970s Australian governments enacted anti-discrimination legislation. The *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* recognises structural or indirect discrimination that 'arises from the fact that organisational norms, rules and procedures, used to determine the allocation of positions and benefits, have generally been designed...around the behaviour patterns of the historically dominant group in public life (Anglo-Australian, able-bodied, heterosexual males)'.⁷² Individuals and groups of women have been able to pursue remedies after an alleged case of discrimination and a number of major cases have been conducted by trade unions. While important in resolving some instances of discrimination, framing a case that meets the terms of the legislation can be difficult.⁷³ Nevertheless, the legislation marked government recognition of the equal rights of women in society and it established public acknowledgement that society would no longer accept women as second class citizens thereby denying them access to many benefits only available to men.⁷⁴

One study of employment complaints concerning the banking industry provides evidence of the issues still causing concern. From 1987-97 a total of 74 complaints were made against 14 banks in the area of employment by individual complainants and by the Finance Sector Union. Three main grounds for complaint were sex discrimination (14 complaints), sexual harassment (31 complaints), and pregnancy or family responsibility related or 'motherhood' complaints (29 complaints). 'Motherhood' complaints included matters such as accessing maternity leave, treatment while pregnant, return after maternity leave to a comparable position or access to redundancy. In 1995 'motherhood' complaints accounted for well over half of all complaints lodged.⁷⁵

Affirmative Action Legislation

Legislation designed to promote equal employment opportunity (EEO) was introduced in the 1980s. The *Affirmative Action (Equal Opportunity for Women) Act 1986* (replaced by *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999*) related to women and is unique to Australia. In the Australian context, Affirmative Action (AA) 'is about achieving equal employment opportunity for women...[and] to achieve this goal, the barriers in the workplace which restrict employment and promotion opportunities for women have to be systematically eliminated'.⁷⁶ The focus of the acts is towards individual enterprise responsibility as opposed

⁷¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 'Labour Force Status and Other characteristics of Families', Catalogue No. 6224.0, Jun. 2000.

⁷² Rosemary Hunter, *Indirect Discrimination in the Workplace*, Federation, Sydney, 1992, p. 5.

⁷³ Jocelyn Scutt, *Women and the Law*, Law Book, Sydney, 1990, p. 76.

⁷⁴ Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Affirmative Action for Women*, vol. 1, AGPS, Canberra, 1984, p. 13.

⁷⁵ Sara Charlesworth, 'Working Mums: The construction of women workers in the banking industry', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1999, pp. 12-28.

⁷⁶ Affirmative Action Agency, *Taking Steps: Employers' Progress in Affirmative Action*, AGPS, Canberra, 1990, p. 1.

to legislative and economy wide standards. The Act compelled organisations with more than one hundred employees to implement an AA program. The legislation spelt out the eight steps that organisations were to complete for this purpose. From this analysis the company was required to devise a program that addressed some of the problems identified and set targets against which future progress could be judged.⁷⁷ AA in Australia has been characterised as an inclusionary or incorporation model as it relies on the underlying principle of bringing women up to equality with men.⁷⁸

The implementation of EEO principles presumes good corporate citizenship as there are no explicit national standards and the penalties for non-compliance are weak: non-submission of a report meant that the company might be named in parliament. With the election of a Coalition (conservative) federal government in 1996 the legislation was reviewed and changes initiated on 1 January 2000. In the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999* the guidance given to employers on how to implement a program was reduced and the previous eight steps of an affirmative action program were deleted, removing the emphasis on senior management support, allocation of resources, consultation with women and trade unions and setting specific targets. To comply with the new Act, organisations have to take actions on the priority issues identified when undertaking an organisational analysis. Reporting is still required on an annual basis (although this can be waived under certain circumstances) but the reporting form is no longer prescriptive. Changes to EEO legislation in Australia have seen a shift in emphasis away from top management. The step of setting objectives and forward estimates that enabled organisations to focus on a range of actions to increase the opportunities of women has also been eliminated from the new legislation.

Not all women are included in affirmative action legislation. The most vulnerable group of workers, casual employees, account for approximately one third of all women workers and it is estimated that only a minority of these workers (approximately one third) are covered by the Act because of the concentration of casual employment in the small, private business sector.⁷⁹ In addition, other women workers are likely to be ignored and excluded from the operation of a company's AA program if they work in part-time, temporary or low paid positions. In effect there may be a program that covers some women workers in an organisation and excludes others. In a study of clerical workers Strachan and Winter found that there could be different policies within an organisation for different groups of women workers, with professional women having greater access to training and policies designed to retain women after they have had children.⁸⁰

While the majority of the 2,500 organisations who have been identified as being covered by the Act submit their reports on a regular basis, the grading of reports in the 1990s showed that companies found the level of compliance with which they were happy. It may be that a proportion of organisations, about one quarter, are satisfied to meet the letter of the law by supplying a report but in reality do little or nothing to advance equal employment opportunity. There has been no great movement for organisations to gain a higher rating, and

⁷⁷ Glenda Strachan, 'Equal Employment Opportunity and Industrial Relations: The Path to Equality', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 29, no. 2, 1987, pp. 190-206.

⁷⁸ Carol Bacchi, *The Politics of Affirmative Action*, Sage, London, 1996, p. 84.

⁷⁹ Iain Campbell, 'Casual Employment, Labour Market Deregulation and Australian Trade Unions', in G. Griffin (ed.), *Contemporary Research on Unions: Theory, Membership, Organisation & Non Standard Employment*, National Key Centre in Industrial Relations, Monograph no. 7, Melbourne, 1996, pp.157-172.

⁸⁰ Glenda Strachan and Maryanne Winter, 'Overcoming Barriers to Women's Employment and Advancement in Information Technology Intensive Industries in Queensland', Department of Business, Industry and Regional Development. Brisbane, 1995.

the proportion of firms located within these three levels of assessment remains relatively stable.⁸¹

Women as Workers

Female labour force participation rates have expanded from 37 per cent in 1967 to 53 per cent in 1997. Over the same period male participation rates have declined from 83 per cent to 72 per cent. A large component of the growth in female employment is part-time work that has doubled since 1984 and forms 39 per cent of all female employment. More than half of this part-time employment is undertaken on a temporary (casual) basis. Casual workers do not receive any leave entitlements. Forty-four per cent of women workers work on a full-time permanent basis.⁸²

An increased presence by women in the labour market has not necessarily been associated with reduction in occupational segregation. For the first seventy years of the twentieth century between 55 per cent and 75 per cent of women were employed in occupations where more than half of the workers were women.⁸³ Although the most common women's occupations have changed, a high level of segregation remains and has encompassed new industries such as computing.⁸⁴ In the 1990s two-thirds of all women workers were employed in clerical or sales and service positions. Australia's report to the OECD Conference on the Employment of Women in 1981 noted that there was 'no evidence to suggest that segregation is diminishing' and concluded that there were 'signs that some occupations are becoming increasingly segregated'.⁸⁵ While women are represented increasingly in the non-scientific professions, the proportion of women workers who are managers has declined since 1986 (from 6.3 per cent to 4.3 per cent).⁸⁶

Segregation of the labour market facilitated wage discrimination by gender. Until the 1970s the consequence of the family or living wages was to entrench a lower wage rate for the overwhelming majority of women workers. Despite the essential case by case implementation of equal pay 'big changes in award rates and earnings' occurred from 1969 to 1976 as a result of unions applying for equal pay in combination with minimum wage changes. Short demonstrates that female wage rates and earnings as a percentage of male wage rates rose from 71 in 1966 to 92 in 1976 (weekly rate).⁸⁷

Key trends in the labour market today are a decline in the standard working week with longer hours, dispersion of working times, longer days, more work at unsociable hours and work intensification. Job insecurity has increased with more casual workers.⁸⁸ In recent years full time worker hours have increased to 39.3 for women and 43.4 for men.⁸⁹ Conditions of work vary for women and men. For instance, 37 per cent of the labour force work overtime

⁸¹ Glenda Strachan and John Burgess, 'W(h)ither affirmative action legislation in Australia?', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies*, vol. 5, no.2, 2000, pp.46-63.

⁸² John Burgess and Glenda Strachan, 'Winding Back the Clock: Equal Employment Opportunity in Australia into the 21st Century', paper presented at 13th Annual Employment Research Unit Conference, Cardiff Business School, Wales, 1998.

⁸³ Margaret Power, 'Women's Work is Never Done by Men: A Socio-economic Model of Sex Typing in Occupations', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol.17, no.2, 1975, pp. 225-239.

⁸⁴ Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle, *Gender and Work*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983.

⁸⁵ Women's Bureau, Department of Employment and Youth Affairs, *The Role of Women in the Economy: Position Paper: Australia*, AGPS, Canberra, 1981, p. 24.

⁸⁶ Philippa Hall, 'Work and Family Issues – Trends and Projections', NSW Department for Women, http://www.women.nsw.gov.au/family/familyissues_text.html, 2003.

⁸⁷ Christine Short, 'Equal Pay - What Happened?', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol.28, no.3, 1986, pp.315-335.

⁸⁸ ACTU, 'Work and Family Test Case 2004: ACTU Outline of Contentions', 30 Apr. 2004, <http://www.actu.asn/public/campaigns/workandfamily.html>, p. 10.

⁸⁹ ABS, 'The Labour Force Australia', Catalogue No. 6203.0, 2000.

and one third of this overtime is unpaid. While 29 per cent of women reported that they worked overtime on a regular basis compared with 44 per cent of men, 45 per cent of these women worked this as unpaid overtime, compared with 27 per cent of men. Fewer women than men report that their hours are flexible as 30 per cent of women and 37 per cent of men have variable start/finish times. Two-thirds (65 per cent) of women with children under 12 years worked part time compared with 37 per cent of women without children in this age group.⁹⁰

Women are more likely than men to make adjustments to their work pattern because of caring and family responsibilities and their working lives are more discontinuous than men's. In 2002 almost four times as many women as men took a career break of six months or more from their current employer. Two-thirds of the women were on paid or unpaid parental leave while only a minority of men took this leave. Eight per cent of workers ceased work when their youngest child was born and 96 per cent of these were women.⁹¹ In taking leave from work, women carers were more likely access temporarily reduced hours and unpaid leave while men carers were more likely to use paid leave, however differences were not marked for government employees. Employees wanted to make more use of were flex-time, rostered days off or time in lieu, paid leave and working from home, and the main reason (42 per cent) they did not do this was a lack of access to such arrangements.⁹²

Work and Family Policies⁹³

There are several philosophies that underpin policies and legislation designed to promote gender equity. In the majority of cases the underlying principle is to make women in the workforce equal to men and this applies to both anti-discrimination and AA legislation. A major criticism of this type of legislation has been that it tries to make women equal to men. Indeed, AA in Australia 'is theoretically victim-centred rather than perpetrator centred in that it is designed to take account of the structural factors which constitute barriers for women and minorities'.⁹⁴ It does not try to change the *status quo* which is a European male working life pattern of the post World War II era. Under this model the world of work does not change. As Thornton notes 'the legislative endeavours carefully cordon off the domestic sphere from scrutiny'.⁹⁵ More recent debate has questioned this public private divide and the importance of altering the world of work to accommodate the demands of the home. Writers such as Bacchi and Cockburn argue that this entrenches women's disadvantaged position in the labour market and they assert that the model of work and caring patterns as shared between women and men must undergo profound changes.⁹⁶

In Australia in the 1990s a new raft of policies have been discussed under the term of 'work and family'. This term is used to cover policies that assist male and female workers to combine their paid work with home and family duties. In the 1990s in Australia the work and

⁹⁰ ABS, 'Working Arrangements Australia', Catalogue No. 6342.0, Nov. 2003.

⁹¹ ABS, 'Career Experience Australia', Catalogue No. 6254.0, Nov. 2002.

⁹² ABS, 'Managing Paid Employment and Unpaid Caring Responsibilities Queensland', Catalogue No. 4903.4, Oct. 2002.

⁹³ This section is based largely on Glenda Strachan and John Burgess, 'The "family friendly" workplace: Origins, meaning and application at Australian workplaces', *International Journal of Manpower*, vol.19, no. 4, 1998, pp. 250-265.

⁹⁴ Margaret Thornton, *The Liberal Promise: Anti-Discrimination Legislation in Australia*, Oxford University, Melbourne, 1990, p. 242.

⁹⁵ Margaret Thornton, 'The Cartography of Public and Private' in Thornton, M. (ed.) *Public and Private: Feminist Legal Debates*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995, p. 8.

⁹⁶ Bacchi, *The Politics of Affirmative Action*; Cynthia Cockburn, *In the Way of Women: Men's Resistance to Sex Equality in Organisations*, Macmillan, London, 1991.

family rhetoric has been taken up by government, business and trade unions.⁹⁷ Gary Johns, as Assistant Minister for Industrial Relations in 1994 identified ‘policies such as flexible working arrangements, permanent part-time work, job-sharing, career break schemes, paid or unpaid family leave, and assistance with childcare and elder care responsibilities, can help workers balance their work and family responsibilities’.⁹⁸ The Minister for Industrial Relations, Peter Reith, asserted that the government had focused on work and family considerations in developing the 1996 Workplace Relations Bill because, ‘apart from a genuine concern for the family, by implementing initiatives to assist workers with family responsibilities you will get increased productivity’.⁹⁹ As noted above, the current push for work and family policies in many economies is being driven in large part by demographic changes in western societies.

In the Australian context, ‘work and family’ has been used frequently to justify significant workplace changes that may or may not promote sharing of responsibilities or make the combination of responsibilities easier to bear. In the context of a deregulated industrial relations system and longer working hours, are work and family policies effective? What are the characteristics of family friendly working arrangements? The emphasis in the family friendly work (FFW) literature is on leave and working-time arrangements. Family friendly is largely represented in terms of employees being able to more flexibly allocate time so as to fulfil both work and family obligations. It has almost become a single dimensional analysis. To a certain extent this is not surprising since the emphasis upon intertemporal flexibility just happens to coincide with the major issue that is driving enterprise bargaining.

Table 3 Family Friendly Work Arrangements: A Tentative List

Type of Arrangement	Comment
Income security	Achieving at least minimum pay rates; having a regular and predictable income.
Employment security	Predictable hours and ongoing employment; ability to take career breaks, ability to undertake financial commitments
Access to care arrangements	Child care, in some cases elderly/disabled care; subsidisation, employer provision, complementary to working time arrangements
Access to flexible leave arrangements	Access to standard leave entitlements; ability to switch between different types of leave; access to paid and unpaid maternity and paternity and family leave
Flexible working-time arrangements	Ability to vary hours around family commitments; flexi-time; job sharing;
Access to training and career path	Generates income and employment security; enhances ability to qualify for benefits
Innovative work arrangements	Study leave; home work; telecommuting – these can allow for flexible deployment of time

Source: Strachan and Burgess, ‘The “family friendly” workplace’, p. 252.

Table 3 presents an ad hoc and judgmental list of those potential clauses in enterprise agreements that could facilitate a closer integration between work and family responsibilities. Why include income and employment security? Employment that cannot generate a sufficient

⁹⁷ Strachan and Burgess, ‘The “family friendly” workplace’.

⁹⁸ ‘Government Perspective’, *Work & Family*, no. 6, Jun. 1994, insert 2.

⁹⁹ ‘The Workplace Relations Bill: Supporting Work and Family’, *Work & Family*, no.12, 1996, pp. 6-9.

income to support a family is hardly family friendly. Likewise, insecure employment reduces the opportunity for planning and financial commitment, and often may be associated with benefit exclusion. In particular, casual employees are denied access to paid holidays, sickness benefits and maternity leave. This hardly constitutes family friendly working arrangements.¹⁰⁰ Employer provision of or subsidisation of childcare arrangements is an obvious type of arrangement that can benefit families. Yet, it is something that has not been generally incorporated into enterprise agreements.¹⁰¹ As childcare access becomes more difficult and expensive, it is surprising that childcare arrangements are the exception rather than the norm. Likewise, caring provisions for the aged and the disabled are another way the enterprise can consider the individual care responsibilities of their employees. Leave arrangements and working time arrangements are the items that dominate the FFW agenda. These are important workplace conditions that can affect significantly the impact of work upon family life, however, these are not the only FFW arrangements and they need not be necessarily family friendly.

Training and career path access are important in contributing to employment and income security and in facilitating access to a range of non work benefits, such as holiday and parenting leave, that are family friendly. If workers remain outside of internal labour markets in forms of temporary and insecure employment, there is a good chance that they will also be outside of the FFW arrangements. In terms of career paths, full time workers are twice as likely to be promoted as part-time workers and full timers are one third more likely to be given more responsibility and new, different or extra duties than part-time workers.¹⁰² Table 3 should not be seen as a list of exclusive conditions; there is interdependence between the conditions and in general they are cumulative. Finally, innovative work arrangements can also assist families. Study leave and homework may assist in career development and in the management of work and family responsibilities.¹⁰³

There are two cautionary points that should be remembered when assessing workplace arrangements for their 'family friendliness.' First, not all types of arrangements covered in table 3 are necessarily family friendly. For example, the extension of normal working hours or the introduction of split working shifts can be very family unfriendly in their consequences.¹⁰⁴ Second, care needs to be exercised in determining who has access to FFW arrangements and on what basis. Often casual and probationary workers may be excluded, or for workers on low pay rates the FFW arrangement may not be operational (for example unpaid leave). Finally, the nature of family responsibilities will not be uniform, caring responsibilities will differ for children of different ages, with aged and sick relatives and with the household division of labour.

The introduction of 'work and family' policies came at the time of, and was indeed hastened by, the decentralisation of the industrial relations system. Discussion of flexible work patterns has been transformed in the 1990s so that it frequently equates to deregulated working hours and conditions. These flexible conditions can include longer working days, longer working week, increased numbers of part-time and casual workers who have little access to full-time or permanent work, employment benefits or career path. A critical determinant of this 'innovation' which would allow sharing of public and private roles is the

¹⁰⁰ Iain Campbell and John Burgess, 'National Patterns of Employment: The Distinctive Case of Temporary Employment in Australia', National Key Centre in Industrial Relations, Working Paper no. 53, Melbourne, 1997.

¹⁰¹ Julie Lee and Glenda Strachan, 'Who's Minding the Baby Now? Child Care Under the Howard Government', *Labour and Industry*, vol.9, no.2, 1998, pp. 81-101.

¹⁰² ABS, 'Career Experience Australia', Catalogue No. 6254.0, Nov. 2002.

¹⁰³ Strachan and Burgess, 'The "family friendly" workplace'.

¹⁰⁴ Belinda Probert, *Part-time Employment and Managerial Strategy*, Department of Education, Employment and Training, Canberra, 1995.

question of choice and power in the employment relationship. How much choice does an employee have, for instance, to choose the hours they wish to work? To what extent can choice be employee initiated in the context of high rates of unemployment and declining workforce collectivisation? This is even more pertinent for women workers who are often not organised and occupy non-standard employment arrangements. 'Flexible' working arrangements often mean working over a longer time span of what constitutes the 'standard' day and the 'standard' week while at the same time being denied access to penalty rates for working unsociable hours. Furthermore, casual employment conditions exclude an important component of 'family friendly' conditions from many women employees, namely access to holiday, sick leave, parental and long-service leave benefits.¹⁰⁵

There has been little underpinning of these policies by legislation hence access to them varies widely. Unpaid parental leave has been inserted into industrial legislation and some enterprise agreements provide some paid leave. Carer's leave, which provides a few days leave each year for family care and/or access to an employee's own sick leave for this purpose, is present in most awards and agreements. Home based employment, job sharing and assistance with or access to childcare remain scarce. The major item in enterprise agreements has been the deregulation of working time (increased spread of normal hours, loss of penalty rates, work at call and unpredictable hours) often extending employer discretion over working hours.¹⁰⁶ Hall concludes that 'employment arrangements and conditions supporting women's participation and progression in the paid workforce are still quite limited and fragmented.'¹⁰⁷

Many of these policies exist in internal organisational documents alone and not in other agreements and therefore access to them is discretionary. Who has access to these arrangements? It depends on the organisation. Hall notes that 'flexible work arrangements are positively associated with higher earnings, professional and paraprofessional and clerical/sales...occupations, structured human resources management in organisations, written EEO policies, public sector organisations, and number of employees.'¹⁰⁸ While organisations may have written policies we do not know how many people use them. Managers have less access to some policies than other employees but their access to policies increased by nearly one third as the representation of female managers increased to more than 60 per cent. Access to childcare remains low at less than ten per cent of organisations.¹⁰⁹

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) has lodged a test case requesting further intervention in awards and agreements. These conditions include extension of unpaid parental leave to casual workers (some legislative entitlement already exists) and other carers at the time of a child's birth, extended parental leave and an option to return to work on a part time basis, flexible hours or place of work for parents of young children, up to six weeks leave per annum with pay averaged over the year, unpaid emergency care leave.¹¹⁰ This approach can define minimum practice across a wide range of the workforce.

EEO legislation has prompted a small number of organisations to pursue work and

¹⁰⁵ Strachan and Burgess, 'The "family friendly" workplace'.

¹⁰⁶ John Burgess and Glenda Strachan, 'the Family Friendly Workplace in Australia: Myth or Reality?' in R. Morris, D. Mortimer and P. Leece (eds) *Workplace Reform and Enterprise Bargaining*, Harcourt Brace, Sydney, 1999, pp. 289-306.

¹⁰⁷ Philippa Hall, 'Work and Family Issues – Trends and Projections', NSW Department for `Women, http://www.women.nsw.gov.au/family/familyissues_text.html, 2003.

¹⁰⁸ Philippa Hall, 'Work and Family Issues – Trends and Projections', NSW Department for `Women, http://www.women.nsw.gov.au/family/familyissues_text.html, 2003.

¹⁰⁹ Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency, 'Work/Life Flexibility Survey 2003', 2004, http://www.eeo.gov.au/Information_Centres/Media_Centre/Media_Release/Mother's_Day2004.asp.

¹¹⁰ ACTU, 'Work and Family Test Case 2004: ACTU Outline of Contentions', 30 Apr. 2004, <http://www.actu.asn/public/campaigns/workandfamily.html>.

family policies in an extensive way. There are currently 114 organisations that have been granted the 'EOWA Employer of Choice' accolade by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency because of their active EEO programs. The list is skewed towards certain industries, with 25 per cent in education (including Griffith University) and 12 per cent in community services. There are no retailing organisations present, a site of major female employment. For instance, in the community services group are a number of organisations in the aged care industry. This industry is heavily reliant on female labour, exhibits an extreme casualisation of employment, a high proportion of part-time work and a lack of career paths. Those organisations that are in the 'employer of choice' category display a variety of programs usually including 'friendly' rostering, carers' leave, some have paid parental leave and flexible return from this leave, some have additional leave provisions and display a variety of retention strategies for nurses. Most are driven by shortages of quality staff and wanting reduction in employment costs through greater staff retention:

To ensure that we can attract and retain the best staff we have put in place strategies that allow us to provide career paths and training path ways as well as flexible and family friendly working conditions to enable women with family responsibilities to participate fully in the workplace and also be able to fulfil their family role.¹¹¹

This organisation of 736 employees reported increased retention, decreased absenteeism, improved morale and reduced employment costs. In a current Australian Research Council Grant we are going into organisations that have identified as having considerable EEO policies and interviewing staff about the impact of these policies.

To what extent can a regime based on individualism and relative bargaining power deliver better outcomes via FFW arrangements than collective and enforceable agreements that apply across all workplaces? Can low skilled workers without job security and low trade union density gain FFW arrangements in a deregulated industrial environment? The debates are widespread and the rhetoric about the combination of work and family is strong in human resource management journals, which is not surprising given the individual organisational nature of these policies. Analysis of enterprise bargaining in the 1990s showed that few policies were incorporated into agreements and the impression from the enterprise bargaining experience is that FFW has more to do with cost reduction and improved inter-temporal workforce deployment than it has to do with genuine FFW arrangements.¹¹² Reflecting on the Swedish experience, Leijon commented that without strong workforce collectivisation and protection, it was too easy for family friendly arrangements, especially with respect to working time, to reflect employer, not employee, working-time preferences.¹¹³ Other concerns about work and family policies are that they reside mainly in organisational policies so are vulnerable to change and different interpretation throughout an organisation depending on local management. Organisational culture is also critical for uptake of these policies for, if using FFW policies is deemed to have a negative impact on career or work security, then they will not be used. On the other hand, early case study evidence from 'best practice' organisations shows that at least some workplaces have extensive suites of FFW policies that are utilised by employees.

The move to family friendly policies has taken the focus from women's historical systemic discrimination in the workplace and there is a danger that the different working patterns of women can be lost in the current debate. Usually the accommodation of work and

¹¹¹ Churches of Christ Homes and Community Services, '“EOWA Employer of Choice for Women” 2003 List', EOWA 2004, http://www.eeo.gov.au/EOWA_Employer_of_Choice_for_Women/List_by_Industry.asp.

¹¹² Strachan and Burgess, 'The “family friendly” workplace’.

¹¹³ A. Leijon, 'The Origins, Progress and Future of the Swedish Family Policy' in S. Hewlett, A. Ilchman and J. Sweeney (eds), *Family and Work: Bridging the Gap*, Ballinger, Cambridge, Mass., 1986, pp. 31-38.

family demands has been made by women who have looked to broken working patterns, part-time work and refusal of promotion to fit these two sets of demands.

Conclusion

Can we predict anything about the future from this discussion of women's work? While history helps us understand the present there are unpredictable factors in human society that make the future unpredictable. At the moment in Australia the importance of demography has been emphasised and the immediate future may hold more work and family policies driven by these demographic demands. There will be a slow movement of some industrial underpinnings of minimum conditions through the industrial commissions, an historical trend that shows no sign of change. Organisations will look to policies that are wanted by their employees when there are skill shortages or labour competition, a driver that is always there. Will the birth rate of Australian citizens increase? Probably not unless substantial state support through childcare and return to work provisions are put in place. Will men do more of the caring work? Yes, but this will be a very slow change. The role of the state and workplace policies and regulation have a profound influence on family decision-making.

We have seen a change from pre-industrial work and family patterns to those of the industrial era that were premised on men operating in the public sphere of work and women performing the reproductive and caring tasks within the home, a place that was now separated from the workplace. At the end of the twentieth century we are seeing another profound change in work and family patterns. Dual income earning across the lifetime is the most common pattern and is performed in the public sphere of paid work. It is once again a pattern of the family economy where the ideal is that the tasks of income earning and family care are posited on being shared between husband and wife. The public discussion of these policies reflects this ideal. Many women and families are choosing to conform to this pattern in increasing numbers. Like all previous patterns it is not and never will be a pattern practised by all families.

The public ideal of shared paid work and parenting over the family life course is clear. Some industrial regulation and some workplace policies are responding to these changes, often driven by competition for qualified staff. Is this the third profound change in family structures in the past three hundred years? Does it follow the pre-industrial pattern and the pattern of work that the industrial revolution spawned? While I am loath to give this any name such as post-industrial, it does deserve a new name. Will this new pattern of work last for the next one hundred years or so? There is a good chance that it will.

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