



JULIA GILLARD NEXT GENERATION
INTERNSHIP REPORT 2022

HOW DO WE SHARE THE CARE? IN PARLIAMENT, SOCIETY AND THE ECONOMY

By Jananie Janarthana

ABORIGINAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

EMILY's List Australia proudly acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first peoples and Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely.

We acknowledge and respect that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are steeped in traditions and customs built on an incredibly disciplined social and cultural order. This social and cultural order has sustained more than 50,000 years of existence.

We acknowledge the ongoing leadership role of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on gender equality. As First Nations People, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are best placed to determine a culturally appropriate path to gender equality in their communities.

In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

First Nations peoples in Australia have been caring for land and people since time immemorial. It would be remiss not to acknowledge there is an established understanding First Nations people have around the way in which they want to care for each country. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people draw attention to the importance of relationships with their culture and country; however, government bureaucracy and the silos between government and service agencies at times impede progress.¹ The lack of understanding of the relationship between people and their country is rarely considered in policy or service development. Within the reviewed literature, there is a scarcity of research examining specific cohorts of parents and children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents; without such data and evidence, it is impossible to properly consider the specific circumstances First Nations people face.² This report acknowledges the history of colonisation in Australia and the impact that has on the state of 'care' in Australia.

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"A robust and healthy democracy needs diverse representation, which includes fifty percent of the population - women. A major roadblock for greater participation of women in the workforce remains the disproportionate amount of responsibility women shoulder in unpaid caring roles. This has only been exacerbated by the global pandemic, with women taking on more unpaid labour in the home and leaving the paid workforce in greater numbers. A total rethink of the policies, structures and cultural attitudes toward 'care' are needed if we are ever to see any lasting change that will alleviate the burdens on women and enable them to reach, and smash through those highest glass ceilings.

"I wish Jananie all the best with her internship and look forward to the insights she can provide from her research."

Ms Julia Gillard





AUTHOR

Jananie Janarthana is an organiser with experience in policy, governance and campaigning from her career as a unionist at the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) and as a board director for ActionAid Australia. She received the Global Voices National Scholarship in 2018, representing Australia at the Y20 Argentina in the Future of Work taskforce. Jananie most recently worked at the Sydney Policy Lab at the University of Sydney, where she worked with government, civil society and academics to foster collaboration for real-world policy impact.

Jananie was a candidate in the 2021 NSW council elections and has worked and volunteered on numerous federal election campaigns, most recently for the seat of Bennelong, the area where she grew up. Jananie is currently an Advisor to the NSW Labor leader.

SUMMARY

Australia has the opportunity to meet the expectations of its citizens by building an egalitarian and caring society post-Covid, a society in which people with additional needs arising from illness, disability, or age have equal chances and increased control over their lives. Our care systems depend on women's labour. The negative impact of additional workloads and anxiety associated with the uncertainty of the pandemic disproportionately affect women, as they are both the workers on the ground and those who enact care in households.

As the onus of care within institutions and households is placed mainly on women, it is timely to now examine alternative structures in Australia and internationally to ensure greater sharing of responsibilities. This report examines how the responsibility of 'care' is shared in our parliaments and, more broadly, in our households and society and identifies opportunities for positive change.



(Source: <https://www.cesr.org/invest-care-economy-just-green-feminist-covid-19-response-and-recovery/>)



INTRODUCTION

The Australian Labor Party (ALP) went into the 2022 election campaign with a bold agenda on ‘care’. This was evident in the pledge to “fix the crisis in the aged care sector”, and the emphasis on “making early learning and care more affordable”³.

Labor went to Australian voters seeking a mandate and with their election, the Australian people have indicated they want change in the care experience across the life cycle. The Jobs and Skills Summit in September 2022, with a panel dedicated to equal opportunities and equal pay for women, demonstrated that this is still very much on the agenda. The time is now ripe to push for serious reform. This paradigm shift of centring ‘care’ couldn’t come at a better time for Australia. The Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces (The Jenkins’ review), which reviewed parliamentary workplaces conditions and culture, coupled with Australia’s systems of care being stretched to breaking point, as described in the Disability Royal Commission and the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, all demonstrate a lack of quality ‘care’ in Australian both parliamentary systems and wider society.

The Julia Gillard Next Generation Internship is an opportunity to research strategies and policies worldwide to get women elected. To understand how to get more women elected, investigating the barriers to women standing for election is tantamount to understanding how to elect more women. Thus I chose to look into how caring responsibilities have traditionally been women’s work and how this impacts on those who are elected. Understanding how ‘care’ is enacted

by parliamentarians and the challenges for those who are parents and carers is important to ensure the parliamentary workplace equally accommodates those with family and caring commitments and those who do not have these commitments. However, it is not sufficient to just look to parliament. Understanding the societal context for how 'care' is enacted in Australian communities to find policy remedies is crucial to ensuring all those with caring responsibilities can take their place equally in our society.

This report addresses how we share the responsibility of 'care' in our parliaments and, more broadly, in our households and society. A part of this research will analyse how a well-functioning 'care economy'^[1] where women are not the sole enablers, correlates to increasing women's political participation rates. The research compares various local and international examples of how different practices have been implemented to relieve the burden of care on women, and it includes recommendations for achieving a stronger 'care' economy and a more carer-friendly environment in Parliament House.

The Australian context

Australia has the most highly educated and skilled prime-age female labour force in the OECD.⁴ However, Australia also has some of the most gender-segregated occupations, as well as some of the most gendered divisions of labour, in the OECD⁵. The pandemic has shone a spotlight on many of the barriers and obstacles that limit women's ability to take part in paid work at a level that reflects their skills and aspirations. It has also provided an opportunity to experiment with new ways of working previously thought impossible.

The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women's paid and unpaid work:

- Women lost more jobs than men, 8 per cent at the peak of the crisis, compared to 4 per cent for men⁶
- Women took on an extra hour each day of unpaid work more than men⁷
- JobKeeper excluded short-term casuals who were mostly women⁸

And this most severely impacted female sole parents, women from migrant backgrounds (especially those on temporary visas), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and women with a disability⁹. The majority of Australian women work in part-time or insecure jobs, often in highly feminised and low-paid occupations¹⁰. Precarious forms of employment do not provide adequate support for workers with care responsibilities, and many women have struggled to manage the triple pandemic demands of supervising learning from home, increased care responsibilities and paid work. This has led to widespread exhaustion and other health issues.

Defining ‘care’ and the ‘care economy’

The term ‘care economy’ has been and will be used many times throughout this report. South Australian academics Jean Murray and Valerie Adams 2012 set out a contemporary understanding of the care economy in an article titled ‘[Counting the cost of Australia’s care economy](#)’¹¹. They defined the care economy as:



‘The care economy comprises paid care, unpaid care, and government investment in the care sector. The total (paid and unpaid) labour required to meet the needs of children to be cared for and educated, everybody’s physical and mental health that requires attention, and the needs of individuals who require assistance with the activities of daily living because of illness, age or disability’¹².

They went on to identify that “care work” provides assistance and support to community members suffering from mental illness, chronic ill-health, terminal illness, disability and frailty associated with ageing. The volunteer sector is a key component of the care economy. The care economy, therefore, operates in a wide range of care settings, including paid care in childcare, schools, hospitals and other health care facilities, disability and aged care facilities; and unpaid care of children, elderly people and people with disabilities in homes and community settings and by volunteers in formal health, disability and aged-care facilities¹³.

Whilst this covers many components of the vast care economy, the research methodology below will identify the specific scope of this report, which will focus on early childhood learning, disability, aged care and First Nations health.

Research framework

The research framework and structure of this report are based on understanding where the state of ‘care’ is in Australia, with a particular focus on early childhood education and care (ECEC), disability and aged care. Whilst acknowledging that all forms of care beyond these three areas are important, the scope of this research remains on these three aforementioned areas as it has occupied the current policy discourse and there are strong data sets available. However, it is acknowledged that the ‘care economy’ covers many industries and these industries are often inextricably linked to each other¹⁴.

The research is presented in three parts. Firstly, an overview of the aforementioned sectors, the ‘care’ workforce and the core issues. Secondly, insights into how parliament as an institution accommodates those with caring responsibilities and what the potential solutions and learnings are to work towards a more equitable workplace. And thirdly, exploring what a more ‘caring’ economy might look like and what examples of this exist domestically and internationally.

This report also acknowledges that the discourse and studies about carers primarily focus on the binary of female and male, with limited data specific to LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex and Asexual) people and from communities of colour. This report acknowledges the limited available research material about aforementioned communities.



Methodology

The research involved a comparative analysis of countries with similar democratic systems and parliamentary cultures to derive insights and identify ideas replicable in the Australian context.

This included the following activities:

- Development of key lines of enquiry to structure research
- A literature review of Australian and international sources relating to the 'care economy' and parliamentary culture
- Semi-structured one-on-one interviews with current and past ALP Federal and State/Territory Members of Parliament (MPs) across Australia. The selection of parliamentarians for interview, was based on diversity of experience, gender, race and sexuality
- Interviews with representatives from political and academic organisations during a visit to the United Kingdom and Brussels as part of the Internship.

Through examining the barriers and enablers within the wider 'care economy' and for parliamentarians who are carers, this report provides recommendations for policymakers, and government institutions. It draws on the extensive work produced by many organisations, including research and recommendations from think tanks, the Jenkins Review and relevant Royal Commissions, and domestic and international academic institutions. Uniquely, this report incorporates the perspectives of newly-elected federal parliamentarians, along with former and longer serving MPs. It also considers the current context of a newly elected federal Labor Government and the recent Jobs and Skill Summit. This report offers some best practice solutions and considers mechanisms that enable change.

PART I

State of play:
Where is 'care'
in our society
and institutions



PART I

State of play: Where is 'care' in our society and institutions

It is widely accepted that our systems of care are at breaking point and the public discourse emphasises that there are deep and endemic shortcomings in the care sector. An Australian National University poll conducted during the recent federal election demonstrated that those polled considered fixing the aged care system was one of their two top priorities¹⁵ for action. Increasing wages in the aged care system was a “top priority” for 43.2% of respondents, much higher than those who said the same about wages in the childcare system (29.8%).

At its Jobs and Skills Summit, the federal Labor Government highlighted the ‘care economy’ on several occasions. This issue is now top of the reform agenda after years and decades of neglect. This section of the report provides a backdrop to the current discourse around the ‘care economy’. It also demonstrates the importance of women’s work, how it is a crucial part of the social makeup and how it must be prioritised as national infrastructure. The section below includes a brief overview of the current context of early childhood and parental leave, aged care and disability.

1.1 Current state of 'care' industries in Australia

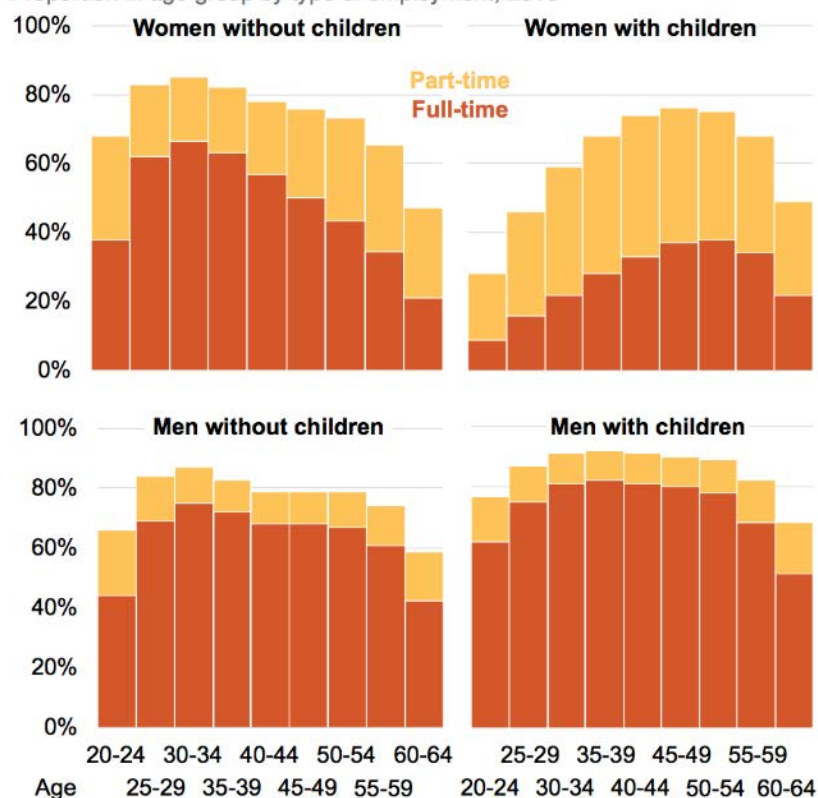
Early Childhood Learning and Care (ECEC)

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) has been a key focus of the policy dialogue for parliamentarians, think tanks and universities over the past decade and particularly so during the pandemic. Many of these institutions, including the Centre for Policy Development (CPD), The Gender Equality in Working Life Research, The Parenthood Initiative and the Grattan Institute, have recognised that increasing female workforce participation is one of the biggest economic opportunities for governments and that ensuring the availability of affordable, quality childcare available is a huge enabler.

The following data demonstrates how children factor into women's decisions around pursuing paid work, as compared with men. Even though women's participation in the workforce is on the rise in Australia, workforce participation rates dip for women in their early 30s, the most common age for women to have their first child¹⁶.

Figure 1.5: Children are a big factor for women's decisions about paid work, but less so for men

Proportion in age group by type of employment, 2016



Notes: 'With children' refers to dependent children. A person is classified as working part-time if they usually work fewer than 35 hours per week. The proportion of people unemployed or not in the labour force is not shown.

Source: Grattan analysis of ABS (2017).



While the 2022 Jobs and Skills Summit reached consensus that removing barriers to women's workforce participation, including improving child care access and affordability, is important, it was conceded that implementing these policy reforms will need more analysis, consultation and time. Investing in quality 'care' cannot be just a short-term fix, but needs to consider the long-term implications for the workforces and communities that require care.

The key criticisms surrounding the ECEC sector are that it is unaffordable, inaccessible with long waiting lists, especially in regional areas, and there is limited oversight by the

Commonwealth, thus leaving the sector to market forces. A dependency on market forces and a resultant focus of for-profit providers has led to a lack of accountability and regulation¹⁷. A report released in October 2021, *'Unsafe and non-compliant: Profits above safety in Australia's early learning sector'*, found that for-profit centres performed worse than other centres on quality and safety¹⁸. Currently, 16% of the average family income in Australia is spent on full-time net childcare costs compared to the average 10% across the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) economies¹⁹.

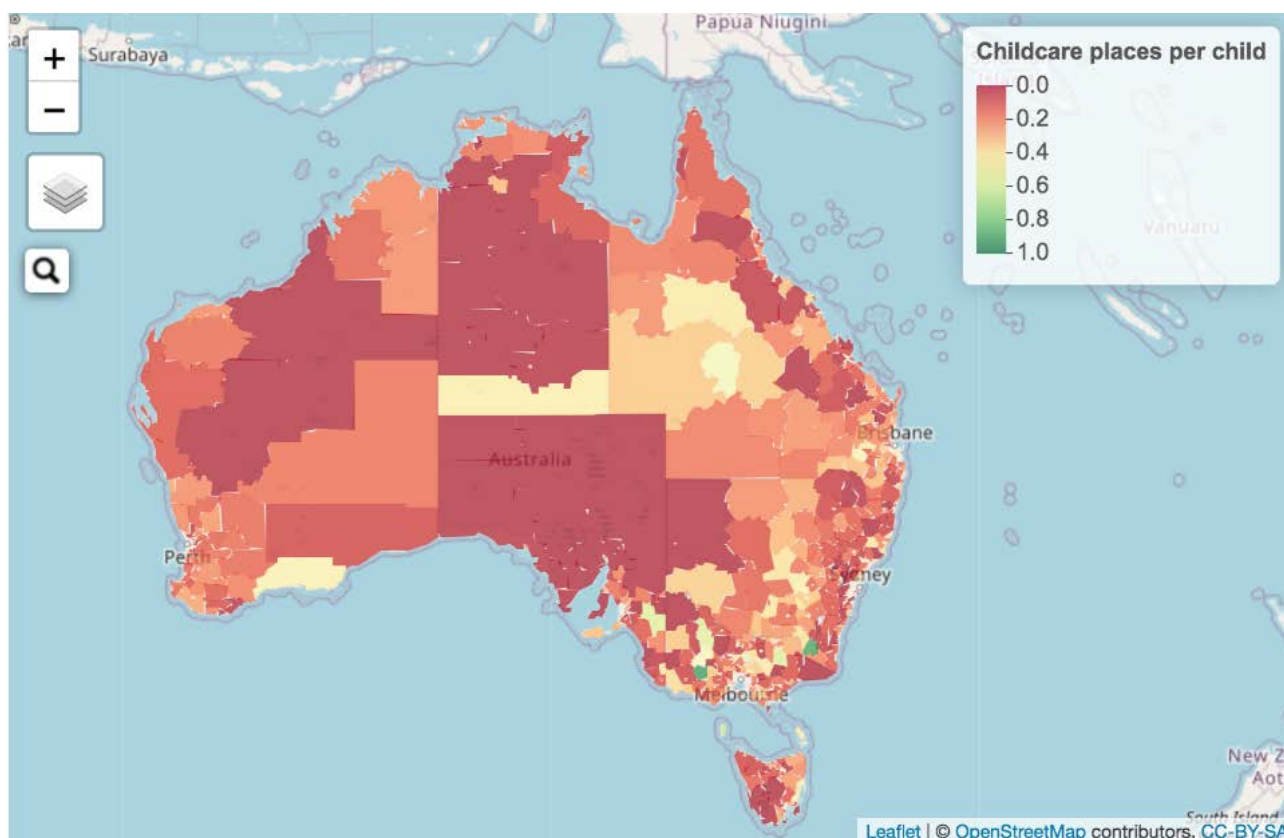
The reliance on 'grandmother care' because of the lack of suitable, affordable childcare may also be a barrier to older women's workforce participation²⁰. If women in their 50s and 60s who are currently undertaking care duties but want to participate in more paid work have the freedom to choose, this would allow for not just wider economic benefits for communities but assist in closing the superannuation gap'. The superannuation gap refers to the large gap between the superannuation savings of Australian men and women²¹. The limited access to culturally safe services and a lack of trust in existing settings has also resulted in Aboriginal children accessing formal early learning and care far less than non-Aboriginal children²².

The Parenthood's report, *'Making Australia the best place in the world to be a parent'*, also acknowledged the lack of data and evidence for many communities, including First Nations communities, families including people with disabilities, families from migrant and refugee backgrounds, sole parent families, families simultaneously caring for children and their parents, adoptive parents, foster parents and families with other relatives as the main caregiver²³. However, it is acknowledged that if the unique circumstances for many of these communities were catered for through a multi-serviced approach and culturally appropriate services with flexible work, these cohorts would have greater opportunity to manage their unique caring responsibilities.

The Commonwealth Government can play a much greater role in ensuring an improvement in ECED availability and quality. Sarah Fernandes, Policy Lead from the Centre for Policy Development noted that the Commonwealth Government could play the role of a 'system steward'²⁴. As a 'system steward', the Albanese Government has committed five billion dollars to make child care cheaper.

Investment in quality data

Recommendation 1 outlined below focusses on the importance of data collection for well-informed public policy. A well-researched and useful example of data collection is the 'Childcare Desert' by the Mitchell Institute for Education and Health Policy. 'Desert' in this context meaning 'a place where more than three children aged four and under are vying for each childcare spot within a 20-minute drive'²⁵. While anecdotally, it was evident Australian families were having difficulty finding appropriate childcare services, there was limited research exploring the extent of the problem in Australia. The Institute examined access to childcare in over 50,000 neighbourhoods across the country, building upon ABS data by drawing on approaches in the [international early learning research literature to create an interactive map](#) showing the spatial accessibility of childcare across Australia.



Location	State	Number of children per place	% of pop. in a desert
Queanbeyan	New South Wales	2.92	41
Snowy Mountains	New South Wales	2.01	36.2
South Coast	New South Wales	2.93	50.9
Gosford	New South Wales	2.44	30
Wyong	New South Wales	2.96	45.1
Bathurst	New South Wales	2.46	21.3
Lachlan Valley	New South Wales	3.04	51.7
Lithgow - Mudgee	New South Wales	3.45	50.4
Orange	New South Wales	3.02	30.3
Clarence Valley	New South Wales	3.75	66.6
Coffs Harbour	New South Wales	2.79	39
Bourke - Cobar - Coonamble	New South Wales	4.41	73.2
Broken Hill and Far West	New South Wales	7.91	100
Dubbo	New South Wales	3.27	43.7
Lower Hunter	New South Wales	3.15	52.7

Guardian graphic | Source: Mitchell Institute for Education and Health Policy

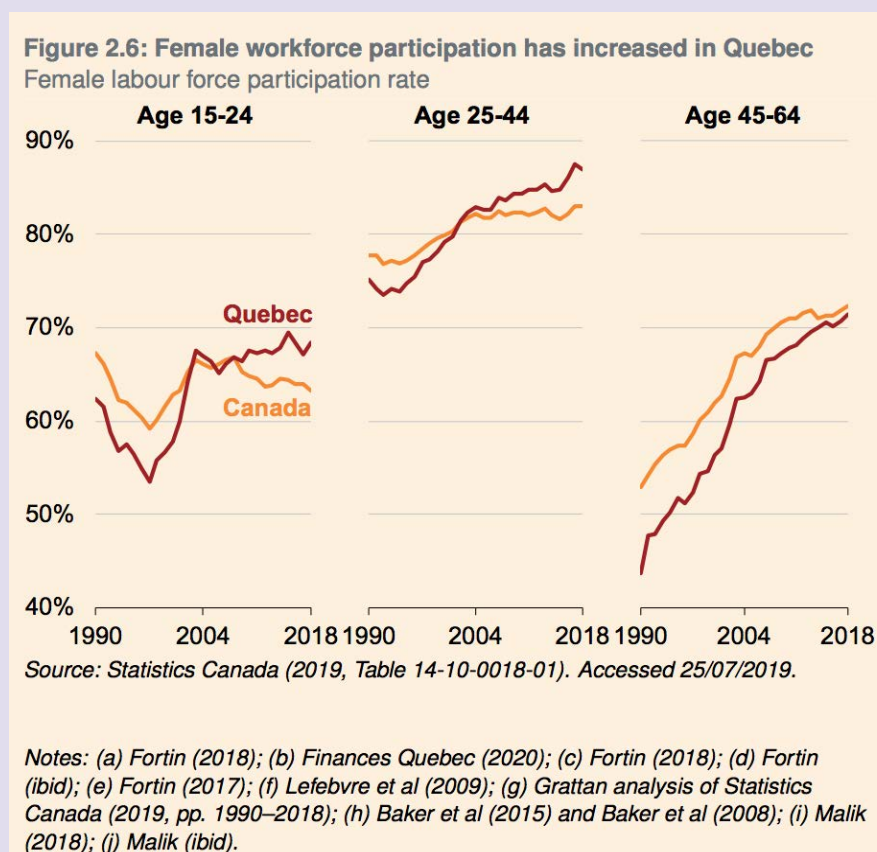
The research, conducted by the Mitchell Institute at Victoria University, found that 35.2% of the Australian population lives in one of these “deserts”, with a distinct correlation between wealth and childcare availability and cost. The investment in this type of public policy analysis and data would be beneficial for ongoing planning and funding decisions and also for those utilising the services. This could either be a government initiative or be through government funding for research institutions such as the Mitchell Institute to conduct this research on an ongoing basis to track improvements.

Case Study – Quebec

Quebec's childcare policies were often mentioned, when interview participants were asked about good international models for bringing about an improvement in the female labour participation rate.

Quebec has implemented nonprofit low-fee child care centres, which charge less than C\$9 (the equivalent \$10 AUD) a day²⁶. Availability of these centres resulted in significant gains in women's workforce participation, including for those without young children who increased their participation rates by more than five percentage points. Women's labour force participation rates remained flat in other Canadian provinces over the same time period. This suggests the Quebec program successfully boosted longer-term labour force attachment and participation. Greater female participation in Quebec did not come at the expense of men – men's participation barely changed over the same period.

However, there was a downside as there were not enough places for children in the nonprofit centres to ensure universal access. The Canadian Government also reimbursed families with children who attended private centres. This led to uneven quality and greater expense for some. Despite these shortcomings, the Canadian Government announced “a significant, long-term, sustained investment to create a Canada-wide early learning and child care system” and that they would “learn from the model that already exists in Quebec.”²⁷



RECOMMENDATIONS: ECEC

- The federal government to invest in improved data collection and a coordinated approach to ensure better and more transparent data, not just for ECEC, but in the aged care and the disability sectors and more broadly across all care sectors.
- Federal government to work closely with state and local governments to develop targeted solutions where problems endure - around workforce, cost and availability of quality ECEC.
- All ECEC provided for children from migrant backgrounds and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to be culturally safe and appropriate with a focus on self-determination and understanding of cultural values that empower parents.

1.2 Parental leave in Australia

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, at the Jobs and Skills Summit said extending paid parental leave to 26 weeks is “worthy of consideration” after the Australian Council of Trade Unions and businesses called for the scheme to be expanded²⁸. This was a welcome announcement, as the current Australian Government’s paid parental leave scheme only offers up to 18 weeks of leave at minimum wage, falling well short of the OECD average of 50+ weeks of leave.

Australia also ranks fourth among OECD nations for childcare costs paid by consumers²⁹. UNICEF research notes that policies on parental support are “relatively under-researched, especially in a global setting” with research gaps and an absence of consideration of broad range of outcomes³⁰. The previous section outlined the importance of women’s increased workforce participation. Low participation rates have meant that the gender pay gap worsens, with the full-time average weekly ordinary earnings for women at 13.8% less than for men³¹. This also impacts the median superannuation balances, which for women at retirement (aged 60-64) are 23.4% lower than those of men³². To enable women to increase their participation in the workforce requires males in heterosexual couples to share the responsibility of care, something many new fathers say they want to do. To enable the sharing of parental responsibility, flexible work and policies that encourage men to take on the role of primary carer early in the child’s life³³ are required. A national paid parental leave scheme that encourages gender-equal paid parental leave is worthy of consideration.

‘Use it or lose’ paid parental leave

Interviewees often referred to Scandinavian countries as places that had the most progressive leave schemes. Norway was cited as an example, with an effective ‘use it or lose it’ policy³⁴. In Norway, both parents have access to a share of 49 weeks paid at 100 percent of their income at time of birth, or 59 weeks at 80 percent of income. Prior to the introduction of a four-week, “use-it-or-lose it” paternal quota in 1993, under 3% of men took paternity leave.

In the years following this reform, the share of eligible fathers taking leave soared to over 70% by 1997, up from 2.4% in 1992. And as the amount of non-transferable leave grew, so did the amount of leave taken by fathers.

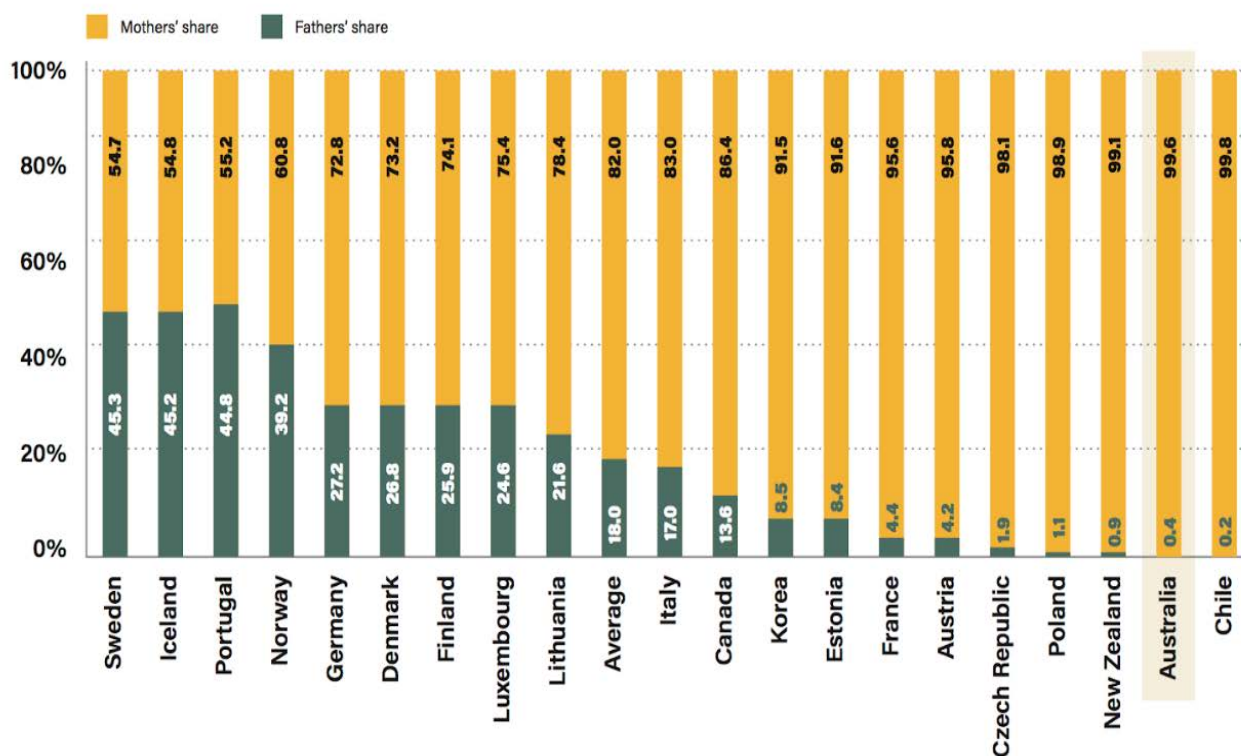
The Ministry of Finance has calculated that increased tax revenue from the retention of women in the labour force has contributed as much to Norway’s national wealth as the massive sovereign wealth fund built off its oil resources.

Benefits of gender neutral paid-parental leave

The Parenthood is a not-for-profit advocacy organisation representing 68,000 parents, carers and supporters across Australia. In their report ‘Making Australia the best place in the world to be a parent’, they provide a blueprint for a national parenting strategy³⁵. They argue that better leave, childcare and gender policies would increase GDP by 8.7% by 2050³⁶. The report recommends universal health and wellbeing support for parents from pregnancy onwards, a paid parental leave (PPL) scheme of up to a year shared between both parents, free childcare and early education and flexible work arrangements as the priorities³⁷.

Chart 4

Gender distribution of recipients/users of publicly administered parental leave/benefits^[22]



Source: The Parenthood ‘Making Australia the best place in the world to be a parent’ (2020)

RECOMMENDATION:

The Federal Government to introduce a more equal paid parental leave scheme that encourages more equal sharing of the responsibility for taking time away from the workplace to care for children. And sole parents to be entitled to the full 26 weeks of paid leave.

1.3 The state of 'care' in Australia

The establishment of both the Disability Royal Commission in April 2019, and the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety in 2018, responded to what the community saw as a crisis in 'care' in Australia. This crisis in care, coupled with the COVID pandemic and the impact this had on communities, resulted in major impacts on carers, both in a paid and unpaid capacity, who were predominantly women.

By 2020, it was estimated that there was almost 2.8 million informal carers, comprising around 906,000 primary carers in Australia and 1.9 million non-primary carers. This represented a 5.5% increase in the number of carers since 2018 due to population growth³⁸. It was estimated that the demand for informal carers would grow from around 1.25 million in 2020 to 1.54 million in 2030, representing a 23% total increase. In contrast, the supply of informal carers would rise from 674,000 to 780,000, a total growth of 16%.

Unions, think tanks, academics and members of the community have all called for a plan to meet the demand for carers in the economy, and have emphasised the need for well-paid, well-resourced 'care' jobs. This section of the report will examine who does the caring in the ECEC, disability and aged care sectors and who does the unpaid care and labour, and what the unique and universal issues are to the workforce in these industries and for carers more broadly.

Who does the caring?



71.8%

Most carers are women - seven in ten (71.8%) primary carers were women.



37.4%

Many carers have additional needs - over one-third (37.4%) of primary carers had disabilities, twice the rate of non-carers (15.3%).



50.2%

Half (50.2%) of all carers lived in a household in the lowest two equivalised gross income quintiles, twice that of non-carers (25.6%).

Most hours of informal care are provided by primary carers. These individuals are estimated to spend an average of 35.2 hours per week providing care compared with an assumed 5 hours of weekly care for non-primary carers. For primary carers, 28% spend more than 60 hours per week, while 25% spend between one and nine hours per week. These caring requirements place a significant burden on carers, forcing many to either reduce their hours in paid work or withdraw from the labour force altogether. The estimated age-standardised full-time employment rate for primary carers was 23.7% in 2020, in comparison to the population average of 43.1%. In contrast, 23.6% of primary carers were employed part-time (age-standardised), compared with 21.9% for the general population.

Table i: Opportunity cost of informal care, primary and non-primary, Australia 2020

Component	Primary carers	Non-primary carers	All carers
Difference in employment from Australian average (%)	17.7	2.9	7.5
No. persons not employed due to caring responsibilities (000s)	160.9	53.0	209.3
Average weekly earnings (\$)	1,361.5	1,361.5	1,361.5
Lost earnings from lower workforce participation (\$ millions)	11,416.7	3,758.9	15,175.7

Source: Deloitte Access Economics analysis with ABS SDAC (2018), ABS population projections (2018) and ABS Employee Earnings and Hours (2018) and Average Weekly Earnings (2019).

Establishing a valued workforce



“My biggest bugbear is that we are so disrespected, and as care workers, we get a lot of disrespect from the media and people who should know better. The good thing is, though, that by having this Royal Commission, people out in the community are actually listening to us now. Maybe now we will see some real changes. We’ve never really had a voice, so I’m just looking forward to the future’ - UWU member & aged care worker.³⁹

Child care workers

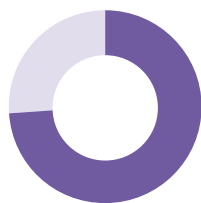
Section 2.1 spoke to the wider ECEC issues, and policy remedies. This section attempts to cover the very distinct and important workforce issues. Dr Cumming, an expert in early childhood education from Macquarie University, agrees Australia must ensure educators’ well-being and the quality of their work environment is at a standard where there is retention of the workforce⁴⁰.

The United Workers Union (UWU), which represents early educators, in their report ‘The Crisis in Early Education’ cites 3800 educators who participated in a nationwide survey. This survey is the largest of its kind in Australia. The findings were unsurprising, but demonstrated how unsustainable the ECEC workforce is in Australia:



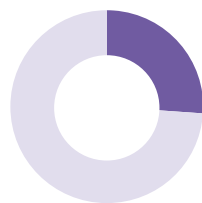
37%

of educators said they don't intend to stay in the sector long-term, and of this group.



74%

intend to leave within the next three years.



26%

Over a quarter (26%) said they would be leaving in the next 12 months.⁴¹



46%

of the educators who do plan to stay in the sector long-term still think about leaving 'all of the time or 'most of the time'.⁴²

The three main issues impacting on the workers who were surveyed were high turnover, staff shortages and recruitment, and low pay. UWU has suggested the states follow Victoria's lead, where the State Government recently established 50 state-run childcare centres to tackle major placement shortages where for-profit centres were not viable.

Early Childhood Australia's Chief Executive Sam Page said a wage subsidy model similar to JobKeeper would be a way to immediately increase wages⁴³. The extensive data collection undertaken by the UWU was the first of its kind, and filled a void, as the National Workforce Census conducted by the Commonwealth has become increasingly limited with its data collection since 2010⁴⁴.

Victorian ECEC reform

As noted above, the Victorian government has committed to establishing 50 childcare centres across the state to tackle major placement shortages in "childcare deserts"⁴⁵. The centres will be established in the outer suburbs of Melbourne and parts of regional Victoria where demand is highest. In acknowledging that establishing a workforce is no easy feat, the government will also undertake an employment drive to meet the staffing requirements of the new program.⁴⁶

Whilst this is a new initiative, and we are yet to see the efficacy of such programs, a task force has been established to oversee the rollout. The move from for-profit to publicly owned services signals a significant policy shift. As Premier Dan Andrews said, "*rather than paying subsidies — that's a choice others have made — we are going to get into this market with a high quality, low fee option*"⁴⁷.

As per the Recommendation above, the need for culturally relevant services and appropriate services for those with a disability was also included in the initiative, with the Victorian government committing to "spending \$5.4 million to support Koorie parents and children with culturally relevant services"⁴⁸. In addition, they announced \$5 million "so that more children with a disability can attend and fully participate in kinder each year, including children with severe and complex disabilities who could not attend without support"⁴⁹.

Aged care workers

The aged care sector is characterised by an ageing workforce, attraction and retention issues and jobs with low pay, insecure hours and limited career opportunities. This combination of factors hinders the ability to ensure a sustainable workforce with the necessary capacity to provide quality aged care into the future. These workforce issues are underpinned by chronic underfunding of the sector. Unless funding issues are addressed on a systematic basis, older Australians will never receive the quality care they deserve. The current federal Parliament has passed the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Response) Bill 2022 (Royal Commission Response Bill). This is a welcome step in the right direction⁵⁰ as it implements recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care. However as Chief Executive Officer of the Aged & Community Care Providers Association, Paul Sadler expressed there needs to be more detail on the nursing exemptions⁵¹ as there are current staff shortages, especially in rural areas⁵².

Disability workers



‘Disabled and sick people are often seen as passive objects of care work, rather than having a central role in what that care work should look and feel like, let alone have a say about how that care work is delivered’ – El Gibbs⁵³

The National Disability Insurance Service (NDIS) was established in 2013. It was intended that the Scheme would enable *‘people with disability to gain more time with family and friends, greater independence, access to new skills, jobs, or volunteering in their community, and an improved quality of life’*⁵⁴. However implementation has seen some participants not receive adequate assistance. The core tenet of disability rights, ‘nothing about us without us’ has been eroded as participants have struggled to navigate the Scheme⁵⁵. The privatisation of the Scheme’s administration, and poor public policy choices have slowly eroded the core ideas of the NDIS and this has meant that advocates are still required to campaign for many of the same rights that they campaigned for originally⁵⁶.

Carers Australia notes that up to one third of primary carers have a disability themselves, disrupting the notion that people with disability are passive participants⁵⁷ in care. The Carers NSW 2020 National Carer Survey found that carers of people with a disability who responded were more likely to be younger, care for more hours per week and have been caring for longer than other carers⁵⁸. Similar to those working in the aged care and ECDC workforces, a difficulty in finding staff was evident as 70% of providers reported problems recruiting suitable disability support workers⁵⁹.

The intersection of racism and ableism experienced for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability entrenches existing inequalities⁶⁰. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 13.3% had a physical disability, with physical disability being the most commonly reported disability⁶¹. Those aged 55 years and over were more likely to have a physical disability (39.2%) than other age groups⁶², while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were more likely to have a physical disability (15.2%) than were males (10.6%)⁶³.

RECOMMENDATIONS: CARERS

- State governments to encourage potential students by incentivising them to take up qualifications in ECEC, nursing, disability support work and social work
- In order to ensure ‘nothing about us without us, all NDIS funded services to ensure at least 15% of their staff are people with a disability, including those at senior levels and members of their Boards⁶⁴.
- The NDIS Workforce Strategy and the Australian Disability Strategy Employment Action Plan to be amended to include targeted measures to encourage people with disabilities to work across the NDIS, including as support workers⁶⁵.
- Researchers and policy makers to capture experiences and data specific to the LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex and Asexual) people

PART 2

Parliament as a model institution of 'care'



Change lives. For good.

Set the Standard

PART 2

Parliament as a model institution of 'care'



'This is Parliament. It should set the standard for workplace culture, not the floor of what culture should be' - Participant in the Jenkins review⁶⁶

Australian parliaments are institutions that the community looks to as the model for what Australian society, workplaces, and communities can be proud of. Ideally parliament is an institution that holds accountability, transparency and has public interest at its core. Thus, when parliaments let the public down, eroding public trust, this has ramifications for wider public discourse and policy outcomes. The Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces (The Jenkins review) by the Australian Human Rights Commission (the Commission) was an important moment in national discourse that encouraged reflection on federal parliamentary practices and structures.

The lack of 'care' was evident in the evidence put before this Commission. This section examines how the Federal parliament as an institution views parliamentarians and staff, including how it values the caring responsibilities and caring needs of the staff who work there. If workplaces accommodate such needs they attract talent and women are encouraged to work there.

However, serving in public office requires unpredictable demands such as lengthy sitting hours, quick responses and last-minute travel which may be at odds with caring responsibilities. Acknowledging the distinctive workplace that parliaments are, this section hopes to provide viable recommendations for ensuring that caring responsibilities are not a barrier to serving the Australian public as a parliamentarian or as a staff member in a parliament house (staffer).

This section will draw upon recommendations and data from the following domestic and international reports:

- The Jenkins review (Aus)
- Representing Care: Toward a More Family-Friendly Parliament — Rosalind Dixon, Kate Jackson, Matthew McLeod (Aus)
- Parents in Parliament: ‘Where’s Mum?’ - Rosie Campbell, Sarah Childs (UK)
- Good Parliament report, Sarah Childs (UK)

The interviews that were conducted as part of this research project also allowed for the inclusion of lived experience and the perspectives of new and more experienced federal and state parliamentarians. While the recommendations outlined in this section are orientated towards the Commonwealth Parliament of Australia, many will also have resonance for State and Territory governments.

The Jenkins review aptly stated that the Commonwealth Parliament of Australia, as an “active member of the international parliamentary community, should strive to meet the standards to which it has agreed and has often played a role in establishing”⁶⁷. Wider reform of the care sector and economy requires an examination of the ‘caring’ culture of parliament.

2.1 Conditions for staffers and parliamentarians as ‘carers’



‘I’ve worked in some of the most high-pressure environments in the private sector. The culture of politics, the total lack of concern for family boundaries, is unlike anything I have ever seen anywhere else that I’ve worked’ – Claire O’Neil, Minister for Home Affairs, Minister for Cyber Security⁶⁸

The federal parliament has evolved to meet particular concerns of parents with the establishment of a childcare centre, family rooms and breastfeeding rooms. Staff have access to parental and carer’s leave, as well as travel allowances for family members to accompany parliamentarians while on duty. There are also measures for parliamentarians to balance their chamber duties, including voting, with caring responsibilities. These measures include proxy voting, pairing, and permission for infants/ children to accompany their parents into chamber⁶⁹.



‘There’s a cot in my office provided by Parliamentary Services. A colleague of mine gave me a highchair that he used when his son was young, you know, so there are all these formal arrangements that you can tap into’

– Australian MP⁷⁰

However, in order to be a model of a caring workplace there are improvements to be made to ensure that these conditions are consistent and that they also extend to those who have disabilities and those who are carers of people with disability or are carers of those who are elderly. The following outlines some of the key obstacles that interviewees faced when balancing their caring and their duties.

Geography

Every interviewee mentioned geography as crucial in determining how much time they could spend on their caring responsibilities⁷¹. Parliamentarians in the UK emphasised that if they were a London-based MP, where the parliament is based, it made their role as a carer and parliamentarian much easier to manage, however their Scottish colleagues or more regional colleagues had a much harder time managing⁷². In Australia, this was no different. New South Wales parliamentarians noted it was much easier to manage the Sydney to Canberra commute, in comparison to their WA, NT or regional colleagues who took much more time to travel to Parliament House in Canberra⁷³.

Geography also weighed on people’s decision to choose different levels of government to run for, opting to run for State or local government rather than federal parliament in order to be geographically closer to family and friends⁷⁴. The Jenkins review echoed similar sentiments from participants who were interviewed, that significant travel commitments meant they missed out on downtime and weekends⁷⁵. Several participants noted the pressure on personal relationships and the difficulty of being away from children.

Case study - The commute

Geography plays a significant role in the lives of parliamentarians and their staff. For women, this often has a negative impact on their ability to balance work with family responsibilities. The following three examples demonstrate the strain travel can play in a parliamentarian's life.

- Kirsten Livermore, the previous federal Member for Capricornia was a mother of two young children while she was a parliamentarian. She would regularly bring her children to Canberra, but even with her husband's support it was no easy feat. She commuted from her huge electorate based in Rockhampton in North Queensland. Her job required travel within the electorate and to and from Canberra. Ms Livermore, was torn by her decision to leave politics:

"I can't stop asking myself why I haven't been able to figure out how to be the Member of Parliament I want to be and to be the mother I want to be" - Kirsten Livermore⁷⁶

- Jackie Kelly, previous federal Member for Lindsay, spoke about the time she was pregnant and "in the midst of the last election campaign... found myself on a long charter flight between Broome and Adelaide on an aircraft that had no toilet nor any scheduled stopovers"⁷⁷. She described this experience as a particular "torture for a pregnant woman". Ms Kelly stated that if she carried on as a politician, she "would have been judged very harshly, there were already signs of that happening"⁷⁸. The media discourse and lack of support by party structures meant women would make decisions on how harshly they were going to be judged, and this was also echoed by politicians such as UK Member of Parliament Stella Creasy⁷⁹.
- Marion Scrymgour, federal Member for Lingiari spoke about the travel involved, previously as a Member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and now as a Member of federal parliament. Ms Scrymgour highlighted the sheer effort it takes to travel within the Northern Territory: *"a lot of time flying in small planes, driving to places where airstrips were inaccessible, wet seasons which made visiting a lot of those communities challenging to get in and out without dramas of being stranded"*. Ms Scrymgour now travels to and from Canberra during sitting weeks, as well as travel around her electorate which is geographically the largest electorate in Australia.

Working Hours

The long hours that are required of as a parliamentarian was acknowledged by almost all interview participants as a constraint to effectively managing caring and professional duties⁸⁰. The Jenkins Review acknowledged that addressing this issue “requires a combination of cultural, structural and practical changes, including to the sitting calendar and hours”⁸¹. Interview participants, as well as participants in the Jenkins Review acknowledged that these long hours were necessary to ensure parliamentarians had the opportunity to represent their constituents, participate in debate and pass legislation⁸². However, the Jenkins Review also heard that sometimes the hours were unproductive and inefficient, particularly in the Senate, which had a detrimental effect on safety and wellbeing⁸³.

Increasing predictability in the parliamentary work schedule and aligning the sitting day to ‘regular working hours’ (for example, 9am-6pm), has worked well to alleviate the stress of long hours in some international parliaments. For example, ensuring all votes are taken at fixed times as occurs in Norway, with voting on Tuesdays at 3pm and Thursdays at 2pm, or in Denmark, where no votes are held after 7pm⁸⁴.

The Commission has suggested a review be undertaken of the Australian Parliament’s sitting calendar and the order/routine of business in each House to support the personal wellbeing of people across these workplaces and effectively deliver the work of government. The following key principles are suggested to guide the review⁸⁵.

Key principles to guide the review

- **Predictability:** While there is a need for political spontaneity in the chamber, parliamentarians, Members of Parliament (Staff) Act (MOP(S) Act) employees and employees of the parliamentary departments require more certainty in their work schedules, so that they can meet commitments outside of work, including caring responsibilities.
- **Agency:** People should be entitled and empowered to choose working arrangements that best suit their personal circumstances, where possible.
- **Flexibility:** Where possible, people should have the opportunity to work flexibly, including through the use of remote work.
- **Effectiveness:** Work arrangements, sitting hours and patterns and chamber processes should support effective work at an individual level, as well as the effective delivery of the business of government.
- **Compassionate leadership:** Leaders within Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces (CPW) should model compassionate leadership and be empowered to support their employees or party members in balancing work with other commitments.

Power differentials

It would be remiss to examine parliament as an institution without discussing the power structures that play a role in how parliamentarians or staffers manage the responsibilities of their paid and unpaid duties.

Staffer vs. Parliamentarian

Interviewees who had been staffers as well as parliamentarians acknowledged that they were generally much younger when they were in staffing roles, and may not have had the same caring duties then as they later did as parliamentarians⁸⁶. However, they noted as a parliamentarian there was a lot more autonomy in selecting which events were crucial and needed attendance and thus the predictability of when alternative caring arrangements were required.

The Jenkins review noted how the culture around staffers and their caring responsibilities varied from office to office:



“While it’s really positive to see MPs being able to bring their children into the Parliament, the same courtesy is not often offered to staff. Not being available or able to stay at work beyond the time childcare centres closed would make it almost impossible to undertake advisory roles – especially in sitting weeks”⁸⁷.

Participants also acknowledged that some people worked for supportive parliamentarians who created an inclusive office culture for people with children. This varied from office to office, depending on who the parliamentarian was. Those with flexible working arrangements described this as “unusual”, and described themselves as “lucky” to have leaders who afforded them this flexibility⁸⁸. The flexibility and acceptance for staffers was highly dependent on the parliamentarian they worked for or a chief of staff who facilitated work flexibility and “encouraged some level of balance in our lives”⁸⁹.

One interviewee spoke of the difference in being in Opposition versus Government, with the Ministerial responsibilities that may come with government making it much harder to take on caring responsibilities⁹⁰.

EXAMPLE: The ‘Good Parliament’ Report Evaluation

The Jenkins Review recommends evaluation and review of hours, along with remote participation. A tool like that in the ‘Good Parliament’ Report allows for public transparency and a tracking of progress, which would be consistent with the Jenkins Review recommendation.

Table 1: ‘RAG’ Analysis of the UK House of Commons: Representation and Inclusion

Dimension	Measure	Red	Amber	Green
Equality of Participation	Diversity of MPs ³²	●		
	Women’s House leadership positions ³³	●		
	Women’s participation (internal structures; committees)		●	
Infrastructure	Standing Orders ³⁴		●	
	Calendar & sitting hours	●		
	Equalities & diversity body (policy) ³⁵			●
	Equalities & diversity body (institutional)	●		
	Parliamentary buildings & spaces		●	
	Childcare & child-friendly provisions		●	
	Maternity & parental leave	●		
Culture	House commitment & action plan	●		
	Chamber culture (PMQs & ‘set pieces’) ³⁶	●		



Remote working opportunities



“Flexibility means women are not forced to make a choice between having a good family life and having a good career” - Professor Rae Cooper⁹¹.

Flexible working arrangements for both men and women can result in increased gender equality in the workplace⁹². They are also incredibly important for retaining and attracting talent⁹³. The pandemic saw most workers, including parliamentarians working remotely. During the 46th Parliament, 125 or 53.6%* of Australian federal parliamentarians (MPs/Senators) participated via video link in the Chambers. Of these:

- All four parliamentarians from the Northern Territory participated remotely (see Figure 1)
- NSW and Victoria — with the first and second highest number of representatives respectively — had the equal highest representation of remote work, with 32 parliamentarians participating remotely
- 68 or 54.4% of those working remotely were men and 57 or 45.6% were women
- The political distribution of those working remotely comprised 68 Opposition, 38 Government and 19 crossbench members⁹⁴.

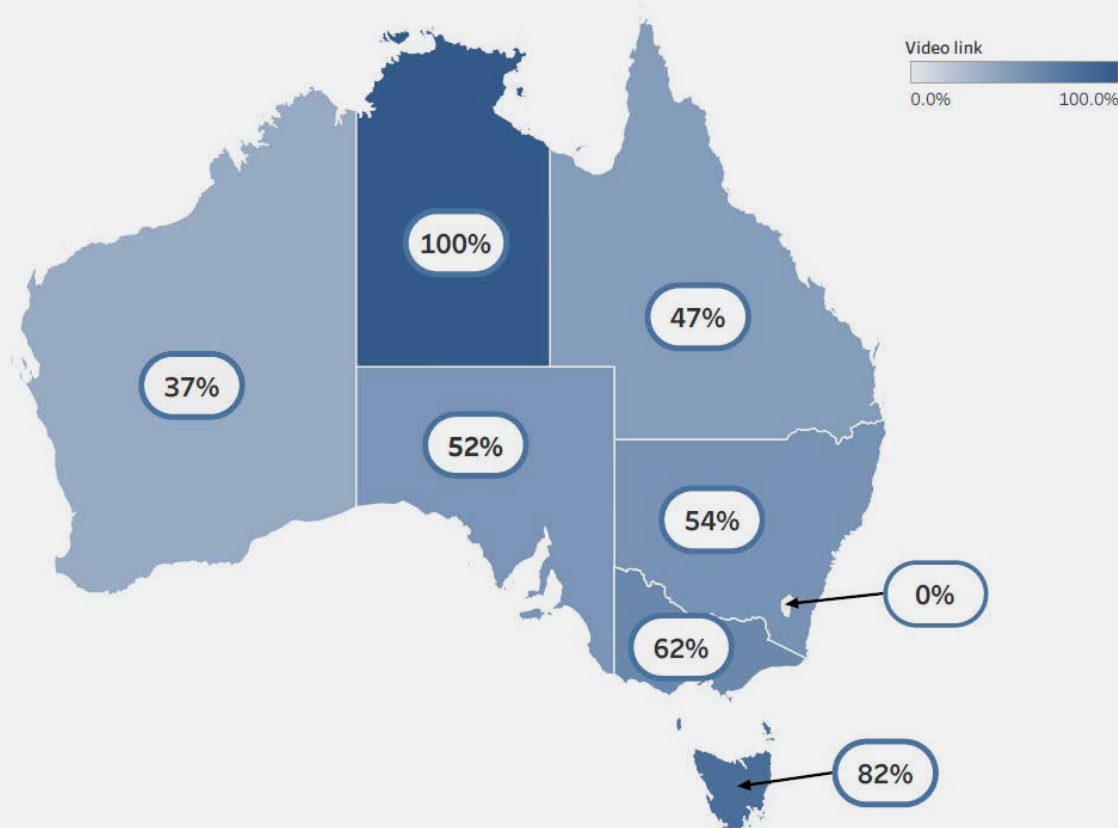
Whilst many Australian workplaces have maintained hybrid work arrangements, with staff working away from the workplace at least one day of the week, parliament has reverted back to parliamentary proceedings taking place in person. Whilst the Australian parliament has an immense public responsibility to constituents and having government affairs handled in in-person settings recognises this, the need for flexibility should be considered. A new report by the Centre for Public Integrity says the arrangements compare unfavourably to remote voting mechanisms in parliaments in the UK, Spain, and Europe⁹⁵.

MPs like [Kate Thwaites](#), federal Member for Jaga Jaga and [Lisa Chester](#)s, federal Member for Bendigo have expressed support for remote participation, seeing it as a backup option for other matters including caring responsibilities⁹⁶.

Those interviewed as part of the Jenkins Review also highlighted the positive impacts associated with more regular hours and with the implementation of one of the recommendations of the Jenkins Review there is now no voting on the floor after 6:30pm and debate only until 10pm⁹⁷. The Parliamentary Whips also roster on MPs to ensure there is equity and that no MP is taking on more than what is required⁹⁸. This demonstrates the federal parliament's ability to be agile and respond to some of the challenges of balancing work with caring responsibilities.

The case for remote parliamentary options

The following map demonstrates the use of Videolink for Australian parliamentarians⁹⁹ during the pandemic:



In the United Kingdom electronic voting has been proven to work at Westminster; “technical and security concerns have been assuaged”¹⁰⁰. According to a survey of Parliamentarians, remote (electronic) voting was also the preferred form of voting when caring responsibilities arose as demonstrated by BOX 9 below.

BOX 9: In the future, if you were unable to attend Parliament for any reason aside from baby leave e.g. other caring responsibilities or illness, which of the following would be your preferred method for voting? (Select one).

N=54

Proxy



27.7%

Remote (electronic) voting



68.5%

Pair



3.7%

Canada successfully introduced a [hybrid voting process](#) whereby members can vote by standing in the Chamber or via an app¹⁰¹.

Parental leave and carers leave

Parliamentarians are elected directly by their constituents and thus their employment status is unique. Currently in Australia there is no clear system wide entitlement for Members to receive parental leave. Instead, any leave sought must be approved on individual basis by the House of Representatives or the Senate¹⁰². Members submit a “motion after notice, stating the cause and period of absence”. There are also no guidelines for the amount of time which Members are permitted or suggested to take¹⁰³. Since there are no guidelines, there is no understanding about whether there is a difference between primary or secondary parental leave. For example, the House of Representatives approved parental leave for both Tanya Plibersek, Member for Sydney and Chris Bowen Member for McMahon on the same day in 2005, the former for five weeks, the latter for one¹⁰⁴.

Not having a clear process or any formal policy may inadvertently prevent people from running for election¹⁰⁵. There is also no formal leave process for carers leave, and this may also discourage people with caring responsibilities from running for election or parliamentarians from taking leave to look after children or other dependents.



Stella Creasy campaign for parental leave

Stella Creasy, a UK MP for Walthamstow who was interviewed as part of this research, has been a strong advocate for parental leave and better conditions for women in Parliament. In November 2019, Stella Creasy became the first MP to appoint a locum for her maternity cover¹⁰⁷.

On her return from leave she continued to campaign for MPs on parental leave to have all their duties in parliament covered during their absence. Ms Creasy has also supported more mothers entering politics via a campaign called 'This Mum Votes' and has argued for mothers to be allowed to bring their babies into the House of Commons. Ms Creasy commended the Australian Parliament's 2016 provisions for allowing infants and nursing mothers in Parliament. One of the campaigns of 'This Mum Votes' advocated for the UK government to make it illegal to photograph or film someone breastfeeding without their consent¹⁰⁸.

The fact that Stella Creasy appointed a locum during her parental leave raises the idea that there can be more than one representative temporarily, or even permanently if required. The idea of job-sharing in parliament is one that is novel but nonetheless one that would allow for more flexibility for those who need it. It would require careful consideration and reform to electoral laws but it would enable retiring members and those who are carers the flexibility to share the load. In relation to retiring members, it would enable them to consider succession planning, training new, younger prospective MPs. This might enable future leaders to learn the ropes as opposed to being elected and then having to learn the parliamentary procedures, rules and what it means to be a parliamentarian. The recommendation of job-sharing comes from the work of Dr Rosie Campbell and Professor Sarah Childs who surveyed UK MPs, identifying key features of parents' presence at Westminster and how political institutions can be carer friendly¹⁰⁹.



2.2 International comparisons: A gender-sensitive parliament

The UK passed the Ministerial and other Maternity Allowances Act 2021 which allows Ministers and paid opposition figures to take up to six months maternity leave at full pay. It was passed as introduced, except that the gender neutral “person” was replaced with “mother” or “expectant mother”. The Act was recognised as a step in the right direction, however it was criticised for the precedent it set of a two-tier system of maternity and paternity rights.

Disability

This report focuses for the most part on the needs of able bodied parliamentarians, however it is important to acknowledge the ableist policy making settings of parliament as an institution. The access those with a disability have to being a parliamentarian or staffer is limited. Participants in the Jenkins review noted that they were excluded or seen only through “the lens of their identity”. Participants noted the general lack of accessibility of Parliament House, particularly for people with a disability. This not only excludes people with disability from physically accessing the building and its spaces, but also sends a message about who belongs and is entitled to work in that workplaces¹¹¹.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) facilitated several important initiatives with Parliamentary Committees in Zambia. This has resulted in pledging to do all they can to ensure the full rights of people with disabilities. In the outcome statement of an intensive UN workshop on disability equality training, 18 members of the Zambian Parliament agreed to:

- work towards raising awareness of disability equality among all parliamentarians;
- move a private Member’s motion in parliament to sensitise MPs, the executive branch and society as a whole on the rights of the disabled;
- move motions in local councils to sensitise people in their constituencies;
- persuade Government to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
- do their best as parliamentarians to sensitise the rights of people with living with disabilities whenever called upon to speak in public.
- work towards raising awareness of disability equality among all parliamentarians;
- move a private member’s motion in parliament to sensitise MPs, the executive branch and society as a whole on the rights of the disabled;
- move motions in local councils to sensitise people in their constituencies;
- persuade Government to ratify the UNCRPD;
- do their best as parliamentarians to sensitise the rights of people with living with disabilities whenever called upon to speak in public¹¹².

The MPs further agreed to organise a one-day seminar for all parliamentarians on the topic of disability equality.

The commitment to educating all parliamentarians on disability rights and initiatives is a great step to ensure this is part of their policy decisions and grows their understanding for what is needed to make parliament accessible.

Evaluating the gender sensitivity of parliaments: A self-assessment toolkit¹¹³

The report of the Jenkins Review included evaluation tools and reviews to determine the efficacy of commitments and implementation. Internal party mechanisms should also include evaluation tools to ensure transparency with party members and staff. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (the global organisation of national parliaments) has a self-evaluation tool that provides an example of how to conduct a best practice evaluation on the gender sensitivity of parties and governments, which could be utilised by the Australian Labor Party.

The section of the self-assessment toolkit that is particularly relevant to the research is Question 5:

Question 5 – Sharing responsibility with men

- 5.1 Is gender equality understood to also concern men and to be part of their responsibility?
- 5.2 Do male parliamentarians take public stances on gender equality and, if so, what particular issues do they tend to publicly champion?
- 5.3 How receptive are women to men's involvement in, and contribution to, gender equality issues?
- 5.4 Could, and should, men and women MPs share the leadership of parliamentary committees dealing with gender equality?
- 5.5 Are there professional development or training opportunities provided to men and women parliamentarians? Do these include seminars on gender equality issues?
- 5.6 Are men included on study tours or international delegations dealing with gender equality or gender mainstreaming?
- 5.7 Can the parliament be considered a role model for gender partnership? If so, why has the partnership succeeded? If not, how could the partnership be strengthened?

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Australian Federal Parliament to ensure there is a base entitlement of parental and carers leave available to all parliamentarians, amending the standing orders to accommodate such entitlements.
- The federal government to explore what it would look like to have the option of job-sharing for parliamentarians when required. This could include exploring whether this would be on a locum basis, as with the UK Parliament and whether this would require reform to electoral laws.
- The federal government to review the extension of remote work opportunities, the parliamentary sitting calendar and order/routine of business in relation to both Houses of Parliament. This would also include a review into remote parliament functions such as voting, especially for those who have caring and geographical constraints.
- The Jenkins Review implementation tracker to review the recommended changes to hours, including understanding how this has impacted those who have caring responsibilities.
- Parliamentary commitment to educating all parliamentarians on disability rights and initiatives to ensure this is part of their policy decisions and grows their understanding for what is needed to make parliament accessible.
- The Australian Labor Party to develop a tool such as the Internal Party Union's (IPU) *Evaluating the gender sensitivity of parliaments: A self-assessment toolkit*¹¹⁴.



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- The federal government to invest in improved data collection and a coordinated approach to ensure better and more transparent data, not just for ECEC, but in the aged care and the disability sectors and more broadly across all care sectors.
- Federal government to work closely with state and local governments to develop targeted solutions where problems endure - around workforce, cost and availability of quality ECEC.
- All ECEC provided for children from migrant backgrounds and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to be culturally safe and appropriate with a focus on self-determination and understanding of cultural values that empower parents.
- State governments to encourage potential students by incentivising them to take up qualifications in ECEC, nursing, disability support work and social work
- In order to ensure ‘nothing about us without us, all NDIS funded services to ensure at least 15% of their staff are people with a disability, including those at senior levels and members of their Boards.¹¹⁵
- The NDIS Workforce Strategy and the Australian Disability Strategy Employment Action Plan to be amended to include targeted measures to encourage people with disabilities to work across the NDIS, including as support workers¹¹⁶.
- Researchers and policy makers to capture experiences and data specific to the LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex and Asexual) people
- The Australian Federal Parliament to ensure there is a base entitlement of parental and carers leave available to all parliamentarians, amending the standing orders to accommodate such entitlements.
- The federal government to explore what it would look like to have the option of job-sharing for parliamentarians when required. This could include exploring whether this would be on a locum basis, as with the UK Parliament and whether this would require reform to electoral laws.
- The federal government to review the extension of remote work opportunities, the parliamentary sitting calendar and order/routine of business in relation to both Houses of Parliament. This would also include a review into remote parliament functions such as voting, especially for those who have caring and geographical constraints.
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- Parliamentary commitment to educating all parliamentarians on disability rights and initiatives to ensure this is part of their policy decisions and grows their understanding for what is needed to make parliament accessible.
- The Australian Labor Party to develop a tool such as the Internal Party Union’s (IPU) *Evaluating the gender sensitivity of parliaments: A self-assessment toolkit*¹¹⁷.

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EMILY's List Australia

210 Lonsdale Street,
Melbourne, VIC 3000
(03) 8668 8120
ceo@emilyslist.org.au

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