

The Centre for Work and Life (CWL) is a national research centre, within the Hawke Research Institute at the University of South Australia, led by Professor Barbara Pocock.

The Centre seeks to make a national and international contribution to understanding work and life in the 21st Century.

The Centre has five goals, to:

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

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

A Focused Research Community Pursuing Big Issues with Practical Effect

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

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

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

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

The Centre has established a national index, The Australian Work and Life Index, based on an annual national survey of Australian workers. The Centre utilises existing data sources (e.g. ABS, HILDA, Growing Up in Australia) and collects other new data using multiple methods when appropriate.

Key Questions about Work and Life

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

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

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

Ten critical questions arise:

1. What kinds of workplace practices facilitate sustainable workplaces, with highly skilled, productive workers who can also care for their dependents and sustain their communities?
2. What kinds of social, legal and economic policies can different levels of government adopt to facilitate a sustainable labour force, as well as sustainable households and communities?
3. How should children and people who are infirm, have disabilities and/or are aged be cared for in the presence of rising levels of labour force participation and thinning private familial community?
4. How is *time* being deployed in different households, by individuals, and in workplaces, and with what outcomes for employers, workers, dependents and communities?
5. What is the relationship between early childhood education and care and changing rates of labour force participation, and how can the physical and mental health, development and welfare of children be maximised and inequality narrowed?
6. What relative roles should the market, the private family and the public sector have in sustaining the labour market, workplaces and care?
7. What are the demographic implications of the current work and care regimes in Australia and how can they be improved?

8. How is inequality (by gender, race, ethnicity, class) constructed, amplified or narrowed by particular work/life regimes?
9. What housing, transport and urban and rural infrastructure conformation will assist the easy reconciliation of work, care and life as well as contribute to sustainable growth and minimal ecological damage?
10. What arrangements facilitate the development of 'thick' communities, which benefit individuals, children, the aged, and underpin a healthy society and the reproduction of a healthy workforce? What are the international lessons on these issues?

Leadership and Advisory Structures

The CWL is led by Professor Barbara Pocock who has been analysing work in Australia and internationally for over twenty years. The CWL is advised by an Advisory Committee comprised of CWL partners and stakeholders, including representatives of the international and national research community, community organisations, unions, business and government. This committee meets bi-annually to advise on the strategic directions and activities of the CWL. The Centre is regularly evaluated.

Activities

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

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

Building on Strength through Partnerships

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

The CWL draws support from a range of Australian institutions. Partners have included:

- The Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Lend Lease Communities
- The Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union
- SA Unions
- SafeWork SA
- WA Department of Health
- Industrial Relations Victoria
- WA Department of Health
- NCVET

Large and small employers are increasingly concerned about these issues, exemplified by the Centre's partnership with Lend Lease Communities to study the connections between work, home and community. Community organisations like the Brotherhood of St Lawrence have long

pursued analysis of Australian society, especially issues affecting Australians who live on low incomes. Australian unions have a strong interest in changes at work, the ways in which they affect working people and their families; partners have included the Liquour Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union and SA Unions.

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