



T R U S T

success through diversity
Ahakoa whakaaro kē, ka puta a ihu

Work & Life

Vol.5 No.5
June 2004
ISSN 1176-5984

B U L L E T I N

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He Pānui mō ngā Take Mahi me ngā Take Oranga

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Findings of the work-life balance project

The Government's Work-Life Balance Project has found that work-life balance is an issue that most people can relate to, and many people feel strongly about but there is a great diversity of views on what the right balance is, how much of a problem it is, and how best to go about achieving it.

The Government established the project in August 2003 to identify and promote policies and practices to achieve work-life balance. It has worked with the EEO Trust to collect information from a wide range of sources, including employers.

The project's vision is that "New Zealand is a great place to live and work". The intention is that people are able to more fully participate in the things that matter to them (including paid work), and that workplaces are more productive as a result of reduced absenteeism and turnover and higher employee morale.

The project is overseen by a steering group which includes Trudie McNaughton, formerly Executive Director of the EEO Trust. The steering group's ultimate task is to advise the Government on how the Government can best contribute to achieving work-life balance.

A key part of the project has been finding out what New Zealanders think about work-life balance, with this information coming from a number of different sources:

- The EEO Trust's two surveys on what fathers want from work-life balance and on work-life balance and relationships.



Entrant in last year's EEO Trust Work & Life Awards, Carter Holt Harvey Futurebuild, puts a lot of emphasis on staff health and wellbeing.

Eighty percent of the nearly 1,200 fathers who completed the fathers survey wished they could spend more time with their children. Eighty-one percent of respondents to the relationship survey said they are more productive at work if they have good relationships, and 71% said that emotional support from

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Date: 2nd September 2004 Venue: Hyatt Regency Auckland

This presentation dinner is the main event in New Zealand's work-life calendar and is an opportunity to learn about how some of New Zealand's leading organisations prioritise work-life balance.

More details at www.eeotrust.org.nz or admin@eeotrust.org.nz

relationships helps them to cope when work isn't going well.

- UMR Research carried out focus group research last September on understanding of, and attitudes towards, work-life balance. The research comprised eight focus groups, three mini groups and five in-depth interviews with larger employers.
- The Department of Labour commissioned case study research into non-standard employment in four industries (cleaning, call centres, fish processing, construction labour hire).
- Around 20 partner organisations provided their views on the subject, and have held workshops and discussion forums with their members.
- Around 700 individuals and groups made formal detailed submissions based on the project response form.

Several key themes have been emerging from these sources:

- Access to affordable, good quality childcare for children of all ages is a significant factor in achieving work-life balance for working parents. Many working parents of young children have to combine several types of childcare to cover all their working hours. Parents of older children find it difficult to find adequate out-of-school care, with school holidays being a particularly challenging time.
- There has been an increase in the number of families with two working parents. In many households, both parents need to work so that the household has sufficient income, even though, in some cases, one parent (generally the mother) would prefer not to be in paid work. The financial difficulties that households face if one partner is not in paid work has led some people to claim that, as a society, we undervalue parenting.
- Work intensity seems to be an issue for

many people, whether it is long hours or physically or mentally tiring work. This can have flow-on effects into stress-related disorders, sleep difficulties, or a general lack of time and energy to devote to other activities. Many people have noted that they spent less "me time", less time on study or career development, got less involved in community and voluntary work, and spent less time on sport or physical exercise.

- Many employers have adopted various work-life balance policies in their workplaces. In general, employers have a more positive view of how well work-life balance issues are being addressed in workplaces than employees do.
- Even where there are written policies in place, the workplace culture may not support the use of these policies. The immediate manager has a significant role in "setting the tone" – if they do not convey the message that it is OK to use work-life balance provisions, employees will not take them up.
- Many people have questioned whose role it is to address work-life balance issues. Employers especially are wary of government regulating this area, and view it as a matter for negotiation between employers and employees.
- However, it is also clear that some workers are not in a strong position to successfully negotiate solutions with their employers, and many employees do not even feel that they can raise these issues with their employers.

A report summarising the views of New Zealanders on work-life balance should be published within the next month. It will be available via the Project website, www.worklife.govt.nz. The Government will make an initial response to the issues raised shortly after.

Drilling below the stats

By Mervyl McPherson, EEO Trust Research & Information Manager

A recent news release from Statistics New Zealand tells us that over 50% of births are now to mothers over the age of 30, compared to 39% as recently as 1994.

What does this mean for employers and work-life balance?

Previously family friendly policies and initiatives, such as flexible hours, working from home, part-time work, job sharing and childcare were targeted at an earlier stage of the career cycle, at women in their twenties, setting out on their careers. The increasing

age of women giving birth suggests that such initiatives need to be available to women, and men, who are mid-career or at a senior level.

In many professional areas the number of women now exceeds that of men at entry level, or is at least equal, but women are still not reaching senior management/partnership levels in the same numbers as men. Many of the work-life benefits offered to those lower in the hierarchy are not available to those at more senior positions. The result is women leaving mid-career to become self-employed or join smaller, more flexible organisations.

How do working carers balance their responsibilities?

A study of working carers has been completed by Associate Professor Judith Davey of the Institute for Research on Ageing and Dr Sally Keeling from Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Studies. The researchers say that as far as they know this is the first study of working carers in New Zealand.

The study involved employees at Wellington and Christchurch City Councils (3,809 people in total) in a range of occupational roles. Those who provide informal care to older people were identified by a screening questionnaire. They were then asked to complete a questionnaire and participate in discussion groups.

The study found that:

- Nearly 10% of the combined workforce has informal caring responsibilities. They are predominantly female, Pakeha, well educated, and employed full-time in professional, technical and clerical roles. Their average length of service with the councils was nine years.
- The care recipients are mainly female (71%) and 65% are aged over 80. The majority (70%) live in their own homes, with 17% living in a residential care setting and 11% in the same household as the working carer. The majority are close family members of the working carers.
- The most commonly provided type of care is social and emotional support (provided by 92% of the working carers), household assistance (87%), administrative support (72%) and personal care (47%).
- Women provide higher levels of care, over longer hours and on a more frequent basis than do men.
- Few working carers are involved in very long periods of care - 84% provide less than 10 hours per week.
- Three-quarters of the working carers say they have help with eldercare from other family members and/or from health professionals and community services. Only 21% describe the responsibility for eldercare as shared.
- Most working carers find their employers sympathetic to their situation and willing to be flexible with respect to leave provisions. However, some managers or workmates do not appreciate their situation, and not all working carers find they can easily disclose their situation.
- The predominant method of juggling work and eldercare, beyond making occasional phone calls from work, is to use annual leave
- Eldercare has a considerable impact on the carers in reducing their opportunities for rest and relaxation outside working hours. Where weekends and holidays are devoted to eldercare (especially where considerable travel is involved), employees may return to work unrefreshed, affecting their productivity.
- Sixty three per cent of the working carers had to deal with a crisis in their eldercare situation in the previous six months, and half of them dealt with more than one crisis. More than a third report having had time off work to deal with crises. The older the care recipient, the more likely the working carer is to have taken time off work.
- Many working carers found participation in the group discussions useful, suggesting that workplace-based support groups would be helpful.
- The carers indicate that improved access to information about eldercare options in their community would assist them in managing the balance between work and care. The strategies suggested for managing eldercare in the future tend to be community and family based, rather than related to their workplace or working conditions.

The researchers say that their findings point to measures which might assist working carers to manage and sustain a balance between informal care and their paid work roles. For example, according to the researchers, employers could usefully consider developing policies on eldercare responsibilities among their staff.

The full research report will be available at www.dol.govt.nz.

Budget 2004: Working parents to benefit

Working parents were a focus of the Government's budget this year. The "Working for families" package will cost \$1.1 billion from 2007. It includes a new payment for working parents and increased assistance with childcare costs.

The "in-work payment" will increase payments to two-parent families who are working at least 30 hours a week between them and not receiving a benefit, and to sole parents working at least 20 hours per

week and not receiving a benefit.

Increased childcare subsidies apply to pre-school children and school-age children attending Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) programmes. The amount of subsidy families receive will depend on the number of children and the parents' incomes. From 2007 the Government will also pay for 20 hours free education per week for three and four-year-olds.

World Wide

Australia lags on work-family balance

Evidence lodged by Australia's national union federation, the ACTU, in its work and family test case shows the country is second to last among the western OECD nations on work and family balance.

ACTU president Sharan Burrow said: "Australia is ranked very low in terms of the employment rates for mothers with young children. This is a key indicator of work and family balance that shows we are lagging behind most European nations and the US."

Speaking as the union body submitted its evidence to an Australian Industrial Relations Commission work and family test case, she said fewer than half (45%) of Australian mothers with children under six years old are in work.

The key workplace reforms sought by the

ACTU case are:

- the option to work part-time after the birth of a child
- flexible working hours, school-friendly holiday times and more workplace choice
- an option to take up to two years unpaid parental leave
- a new entitlement of five days paid leave to care for a child or relative
- access to unpaid family emergency leave for all employees, including casuals.

The ACTU says the work and family test case is an historic opportunity to bring our workplaces into line with the needs of Australian families in the 21st Century.

The Industrial Relations Court of Australia is scheduled to hear the case from 30 August 2004.

Research Forum

Job autonomy critical to balance

A UK report published in *Sociological Perspectives*, Spring 2004 issue, shows that the amount of autonomy people have in their jobs is a key predictor of the degree of balance they achieve in their personal lives.

The researchers, Jennifer Reid Keene and Jill Quandagno, say that "granting greater job autonomy is one of the most beneficial arrangements for workers' sense of balance".

They say that other family-friendly workplace arrangements like on-site childcare do increase job satisfaction, productivity and perceived work-family balance so "it is in employers' best interests to institute workplace policies that relieve women (and men) of their concerns about families".

They used data from the 1996 General

Social Survey and the 1992 National Study of the Changing Workforce to examine how work type, family type and work-family spillover affected perceptions of work-family balance. They also explored gender issues around work and family responsibilities.

On the latter theme, they found that women not only respond to competing workplace and domestic demands differently, they also interpret the meaning of the demands differently. They say that both men and women make more adjustments at home to oblige work requirements than at work due to family demands, but that men and women interpret these intrusions in "gendered" ways.

Predictors of perceived work & family balance: gender difference or gender similarity?

Women in local authorities

In research undertaken by Top Drawer Consultants for the New Zealand Society of Local Government Managers last year, the majority of respondents said enabling work-life balance was the best way to minimise the barriers to women being appointed to management positions in local government.

“Having access to flexible work hours and a simultaneous discouragement of the ‘long hours’ culture is seen as very important

– with several people commenting that it was also an issue for male managers,” says the research report. “Some commented that managers need to actively advocate for work life policies and programmes and provide visible leadership from the top in terms of their own practice.”

Barriers to Women available from www.localgovt.co.nz.

How part-time work affects professional women

US research published earlier this year investigates how part-time work helps mothers manage their lives and maintain their careers.

The women surveyed had pre-school children and worked in professional jobs. They worked 47% fewer hours than their full-time counterparts and earned a 41% lower income. The researchers describe the part-time professional jobs as “new concept” meaning they are permanent, have career potential and the women are paid salaries comparable to full-time workers, pro-rated according to hours worked.

The data for the research came from a work and life issues survey administered online by IBM in the US in 1996.

Compared to their counterparts working in full-time jobs, these mothers reported significantly greater work-family balance and did not report significantly less career opportunity.

Beyond the Mommy Track: The influence of new-concept part-time work for professional women on work and family.

Published: Journal of Family and Economic Issues, Vol. 25(1), Spring 2004.

Please Read On...

Woman 2 Woman New Zealand women share their experiences of career and business

This book by Amanda Ellis and June McCabe is intended to be a guide book for New Zealand women, particularly those who want financial independence. It is very accessible, comprising advice from the authors and a host of brief case studies charting the careers of successful New Zealand women.

The chapter on work-life balance explores the challenges of juggling responsibilities, how to manage personal finances, how to manage transitions in life, how to stay true to one’s dream and where one can find help.

Published by Random House ISBN 1-86941-573-6



Work-life balance in Canada

Research undertaken last year looked at how Canadians feel about the activities in their lives and whether they achieve a balance.

The research involved telephone interviews with 2,018 adult Canadians. About half of them said they had not struck the right balance between work and other activities. The most cited reasons for this were general work-related reasons around not having enough time, inflexible working conditions and finances or income.

Of those who said they had achieved a good balance, the most cited reason for their success was good time management, with only eight per cent citing their work situation as the main factor.

For the research report go to <http://erg.environics.net/news/default.asp?aID=527>.

Fathers and Mothers: Dilemmas of the Work-Life Balance

This book, published in September 2003, explores the attitudes and experiences of working parents with young children in France, Italy, Denmark and Ireland. It aims to develop understanding of “the barriers to greater reconciliation of work and family life” and to develop new social indicators to measure work-life balance issues.

According to the preface by Gosta Esping-Andersen, “The great contribution of *Fathers and Mothers* is that it forces us to reconsider the merits of the basic mother-friendly policy package. This excellent cross-national study unambiguously shows that a truly workable and positive social equilibrium needs more than public support for mothers.

“It needs, somehow or other, to equalize the employment and caring roles of men and women alike...we need policies that will make it more attractive and possible for men to dedicate themselves to their families.”

Authors: Margaret Fine-Davis, Jeanne Fagnani, Dion Giovannini, Lis Hojgaard and Hilary Clarke.

Published in 2004 by Kluwer Academic Publishers, PO Box 332, 3300 AH Dordrecht, The Netherlands.

ISBN 1-4020-1807-X

Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia

For research summaries on work-family balance issues try the *Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia*. This is an online, peer-reviewed academic encyclopedia, designed primarily as an education resource. To find it enter *Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia* in your search engine.

One of the entries, entitled *Dual-Earner Couples*, summarises recent research on the challenges and benefits of being part of a dual-earner couple, concluding that the disadvantages are particularly intense for couples with children.

It says employers need to be aware of the benefits that can accrue to them when they are aware of workers’ work-family needs. “For example, employees who have flexibility in scheduling their work hours are more loyal to their employer, have lower rates of turnover and absenteeism, and are less likely to sue their employer.”

Other subjects included in the *Encyclopedia* include recruitment, organisational barriers, and discrimination against employees who are also caregivers.

Upcoming Events

Work-life balance seminar: Why work-life balance is getting harder and what to do about it

Wednesday 20 June 9.45am-11.30am at Level 16, PricewaterhouseCoopers Tower, 113-119 The Terrace, Wellington. Organised by the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women.

RSVP to Labour Market Policy Group, Department of Labour by 17 June. mailbox@lmpg.dol.govt.nz or phone Marie Kelly 04 915 4409.