



EEO TRUST
Work & Life Bulletin
March 2008

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Vol.9 No.1

Caring for the carers – an employer opportunity

In this issue of the Work & Life Bulletin, we look at ways employers are assisting employees who combine paid work with caring for an adult friend or relative. The challenges they face and support they need can be very different from those facing parents caring for children. This report coincides with the final stages in the development of a new Carers Strategy which is due to be launched at the end of April.

The 2006 Census reveals that one in seven New Zealanders in paid work look after someone who is ill or has a disability. The older age groups are more likely to be caring for an ill or disabled person, particularly women aged from 45-64, but two in five of the carers are men. These men are also more likely to be aged from 45-64. These figures compare with the one in three working people who have caring responsibilities for a child in their own home.

With 22% of businesses citing labour shortages as their main constraint to expansion¹, there is a further challenge here for employers to retain the skills of people with caring responsibilities, particularly with the number of carers set to grow as our population ages.

So what is the impact of this issue on a workplace – on the carers and their colleagues? And how are employers meeting the challenge?

EEO Employers Group members talked about including support for carers within their family-friendly or flexible working provisions. For example, Liz Thompson from Waitakere City Council says the Council's family friendly policy recognises any family member, not just children. In addition, the Council can grant extra discretionary sick leave to carers.

Telecom's General Manager Employment Solutions, Jo Copeland, says that while Telecom's flexible working policy is not aimed specifically at people who care for adults, it caters for a range

"Our philosophy is that if you treat people right when they need flexibility, they will remain loyal to the organisation and ultimately stay around."

of situations, for example, people who work flexibly to beat the traffic, to care for sick or dying relatives, to help at their children's school or to allow them to train for major sporting events.

Currently, 547 of Telecom's 7000 New Zealand staff have some type of flexible work arrangement and work less than full-time.

"Our philosophy is that if you treat people right when they need flexibility, they will remain loyal to the organisation and ultimately stay around. They are more likely to be engaged and feel valued as a whole person," says Jo. "It is a signal that we recognise there is more to people's lives than work. We respect that and try to accommodate it where we can.

"Flexiworking always involves some give and take from not just the manager and employee, but also from the rest of the team. We try to factor the team views in to decision making to reduce any concerns that may arise."

In November of last year, Telecom revised its flexible working policy so that it provided more guidance to employees and managers on how to implement flexible working. It also includes templates, for example, flexible working arrangements proposals for managers and employees to complete. "In the past, we simply had a policy saying we supported flexiworking but nothing as helpful as this," says Jo.

One Telecom employee told her story to the *Work & Life Bulletin*.

Kirsty Hegan has worked as an HR Manager at Telecom for the past two years, during which time she also cared for father who was dying of cancer. While not a permanent employee, she and Telecom came to an arrangement which gave her the support and flexibility she needed during a very challenging time.

When Kirsty accepted the role at Telecom she insisted on working on contract so she could take time between contracts to help her parents. Jo Copeland says Telecom would very much liked to have employed Kirsty on a permanent basis but she preferred to contract for a four-day working week. Kirsty travelled north to spend time with her parents most weekends and also occasionally worked flexible hours during the week to attend appointments with her father in Auckland.

She says Telecom was "absolutely fantastic" in the way it responded to her needs. "They were really understanding and empathetic and gave me so much flexibility. At the end of each contract they did their best to keep the role open for me even though I took up to five months off between contracts," she says. "They told

"I've been told that my main job is caring for Luci and if I can squeeze in any work for the NZNO that's great."

me to just do what I needed to do and they would work around it."

Kirsty cared for her father at his home for several months until he died in July last year and has since rejoined Telecom on a full-time contract. She is currently negotiating a permanent position.

An employee at the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO), Rob Haultain, also speaks highly of the support provided by her employer during a very difficult time. Since Rob's partner Luci was diagnosed with a massive brain tumour last March, Rob has relied on the on-going support of the NZNO, during the months of uncertainty and crisis.

As Industrial Advisor at the NZNO, Rob has a high level responsibility in the aged care and primary health sectors. Aspects of her role have been picked up by her colleagues so she can dedicate herself virtually full-time to caring for Luci.

"My employer has been absolutely amazing, more than I could have ever

hoped for," she says. "My employer did not put pressure on me to complete work tasks and actively supported me to prioritise caring for Luci."

Luci has needed company and care around the clock for most of the time since her diagnosis as the tumour and subsequent surgery mean she is no longer safe on her own. The two women's children are almost grown-up and have been able to provide some help but the main load has fallen on Rob's shoulders.

Rob says that although she was able to continue to do some work for the NZNO, she became very unreliable as Luci's condition could deteriorate very quickly resulting in frequent, unpredictable visits to the hospital emergency department.

Rob says that being a carer can be an almost invisible role and support, acknowledgement and encouragement are very important. "The people at work have been great at keeping in touch and keeping me in the loop around my projects."

She is very aware of her good fortune in having a supportive employer as she has learnt from experience that the unpredictably and extra expenses associated with long-term, serious illness or disability put a great deal of pressure on families. Rob also says that some health conditions such as mental illness still carry some stigma putting families under even more pressure.

While these two examples show that people of any age can be faced with caring responsibilities, the older someone is the more likely they are to be in this position. By 2012 half the population is projected to be older than 42 and, based on current patterns, more than 44% of them will combine work with caring for an ill or disabled person.

The following graph² shows how New Zealand compares with other OECD nations in the participation in paid work of people aged over 55. Although we are doing better than many other countries, there is still potential to better tap into the skills and experience of older people. Providing more support and flexibility to carers may be one way of doing this.

The 2006 Census found that 13% of full-time workers and 17% of part-time workers care for an ill or disabled person. This may be in their own home



or at another location, perhaps the ill or disabled person's house or a rest home or other residential facility.

New Zealand research on working carers was published by the Department of Labour (DoL) in 2004 and focussed on people caring for older people, mainly parents or other older relatives. DoL and the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women published a study entitled *Decisions about caring and working* in 2006. This study included people caring for children.

Both research projects found that workplace flexibility was critically important to people combining paid work and care responsibilities. For example, the latter study says:

"Where participants had high levels of flexibility within their employment, they were more satisfied and found it easier to manage their caring and paid work responsibilities. Some participants in paid work felt their lives would be easier if employers took a more active and lateral approach to workplace flexibility."

The earlier study was undertaken amongst employees of Wellington and Christchurch City Councils and found that social and emotional care was the most frequently given type of care and it was usually long-term. Eight per cent of respondents provided more than 20 hours care per week, with 84% providing less than 10 hours and 52% providing less than three hours.

Most respondents reported that their employers and colleagues were supportive, and most coped with eldercare by taking annual leave but flexible working arrangements were also important.

The study found clear differences between the methods used by men and women to manage their work and caring responsibilities. Women were more likely to use annual leave, sick leave and leave without pay than men and men were more likely to take leave in lieu or use flexitime.

Most of the carers had had to deal with crisis situations like illness or accidents at least once in the previous six months and 10 of the 134 respondents had dealt with four or more crises during that period. More than a third of the respondents needed time off to deal with crises.

The study found that working carers want better access to information relating to the care and support of older people and it suggested that employer groups might consider developing resources that working carers can easily access. It also suggested that leave provisions should be more relevant to working carers. These could include annual hours of work packages, caregiving sabbaticals or support from employers for day care for elderly people.

² OECD Factbook 2007

Research and resources

Combining work and eldercare: a neglected work-life balance issue

This Department of Labour study by Judith Davey and Sally Keeling looks at the relationship between paid work and eldercare responsibilities. It discusses the workforce implications of eldercare for employees at Wellington and Christchurch City Councils. The main focus is on how they balance work and eldercare. The study explores ways to assist in the development of efficient policies for workers who have eldercare responsibilities and help them achieve better work-life balance.

www.dol.govt.nz/PDFs/Eldercare.pdf

Decisions about caring and working: A qualitative study

This publication from the Department of Labour and the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women looks at the decisions people make regarding working and caring responsibilities.

The research found a number of factors that influenced decisions and patterns of participation in paid work, including beliefs about parental and family care of children, attitudes towards childcare; and paid work factors such as money, personal satisfaction, intellectual stimulation and feeling valued.

www.dol.govt.nz/pdfs/decisions-about-caring.pdf

Managing caring and employment

This UK report explores the difficulties carers face when trying to combine paid work and care. It considers the situation of carers who have had to give up work in order to care, or who are trying to return to paid work after or during a period of caring. The report draws on evidence from the new CES survey which included 812 carers aged 16-64 who were employees and 56 carers who were self-employed.

www.acecarers.org.uk/Resources/PracticalResources/CarersEmploymentandServicesReportSeries/2648-carersukreport2.pdf

Supporting working carers: A managers guide

This managers' guide has been developed by Carers UK to raise awareness among line managers and HR staff of the needs of working carers. It is designed to be explored in a workshop situation and includes facilitator's notes, a Powerpoint presentation and handout notes.

www.acecarers.org.uk/Resources/PracticalResources/SupportingWorkingCarers-aManagersGuide

Supporting working carers: A carers guide

This guide has been developed to support carers who also do paid work. It is designed to be explored in a workshop situation and includes facilitator's notes, a Powerpoint presentation and handout notes.

www.acecarers.org.uk/Resources/PracticalResources/SupportingWorkingCarers-aCarersGuide

The hidden face of care: Combining work and caring responsibilities for the aged and people with a disability

This report from the Taskforce on Care Costs and Families Australia found that carers often feel undervalued and their experiences are often misunderstood by employers and co-workers. This is reflected in the minimal level of service provision, as well as financial and workplace support. More than a third of respondents felt that their job or career had suffered due to the competing demands of their caring responsibilities and paid work. The report provides insights on creating more inclusive, flexible workplaces.

www.tocc.org.au/media/Final_TOCC_2007_Report_The_Hidden_Face_of_Care_16_Nov_2007.pdf

Women in the Middle – 2nd edition

This 2004 US publication by Elaine M. Brody offers an insight into the constant and increasing demands on women's

time. Women are generally the main caregivers for their elderly and disabled parents and consequently are stuck in the middle of the burden of conflicting commitments. Case studies and women's perspectives are used to provide a view of a female caregiver's feelings, lifestyles, family interaction as well as how the burden of care-giving affects their own success in life and at work.

Springer Publishing Company. ISBN 0826163823 (Available from [EEO Trust library](#).)

What is the Carers' Strategy?

In order to improve support for informal carers, the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and the Carers Alliance have been working together to develop a Carers' Strategy. This involved developing a consultation document and then undertaking an eight-week consultation process in the middle of last year to seek feedback from a range of stakeholders including employers.

The strategy is due to be released at the end of April.

The Carers' Strategy is being developed to improve support for informal carers in order to:

- develop strong healthy families
- offer carers more choices in employment and education to help address skills shortages in the economy
- address future challenges associated with an ageing population and a shift to community care.

It is also part of a wider government process to improve the choices of parents and other informal carers so they can better balance their paid work, their caring responsibilities and other aspects of their lives.

The Carers Alliance is a network of 45 non-governmental organisations that support carers. For more information on issues facing carers go to the Carers New Zealand website www.carers.net.nz.

Diversity focus for EEO Trust Work & Life Awards

Effective management of a diverse workforce is a major focus of this year's EEO Trust Work & Life Awards.

"Taking into account the success of last year's Diversity Award and after 10 years of the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards, we've reviewed the focus of the Awards," says EEO Trust Chief Executive Dr Philippa Reed. "We want to recognise employers who take advantage of our diverse population by encouraging and supporting diversity, either through a single initiative or an organisation-wide approach."

Last year's new Diversity Award attracted 16 entries from a range of large and small workplaces which were taking innovative approaches to maximising the potential of their workforces.

"All the signs are that New Zealand's skills shortage will continue to deepen this year and recruiting, retaining and motivating the very best people continues to be a challenge facing all employers," says Dr Reed. "Last year's entries

focused on new migrants, women, young people and a range of ethnicities. They were inspiring stories which demonstrate the Kiwi attitudes of tolerance, innovation and inclusion. We share these stories with other employers needing new employment strategies for an evolving labour market."

As well as the new diversity focus, the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards will continue to recognise work-life programmes and initiatives says Dr Reed. "Support for work-life balance is a key part of any employer's branding as it enables the increasing number of people with commitments and interests outside work to contribute fully at work."

Individuals who are leading the way in championing diversity or work-life balance are also invited to enter this year's EEO Trust Work & Life Awards through the Walk the Talk Award. Dr Reed says that senior leadership commitment is critical to creating a culture of support and inclusion for

anyone who has the appropriate skills and motivation, regardless of their background or responsibilities outside work.

"We've broadened the Walk the Talk Award this year so it includes all aspects of effective diversity management while maintaining a strong focus on the importance of senior leaders walking the talk."

The deadline for entries for the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards is Thursday July 24 and the Entry Guidelines are available from the EEO Trust website (www.eeotrust.org.nz). The Awards will be presented at a gala dinner at the Auckland Museum on October 30.

The EEO Trust Work & Life Awards have recognised some of New Zealand's leading employers since 1998 and have helped ensure support for work-life balance is standard employment practice for many employers. Go to www.eeotrust.org.nz/awards/leaders.cfm for details of previous winners.

BNZ celebrates International Women's Day

The Bank of New Zealand held a breakfast function for staff on March 7 to celebrate International Women's Day. The function was designed to emphasise the role of women in business, the event also underlined BNZ's commitment to supporting career opportunities for women at the bank. The event also featured Chairperson of Preventing Violence in the Home, Louise Binns, who told attendees about her personal leadership journey. Around 80 female employees attended the function.



From left to right: Bridget O'Shannessey, BNZ General Manager People & Corporate Relations; Louise Binns and Jane Drumm of Preventing Violence in the Home; Dr Susan Macken, Director of BNZ; and BNZ CEO Cameron Clyne.

Walking School Bus volunteers need flexible bosses

Employers are being encouraged to support Walking School Buses by giving parents flexibility one day a week to walk a group of children to or from school.

In Auckland, the Auckland Regional Transport Authority (ARTA) and local councils work together to support Walking School Buses.

The Auckland Regional Council says that Walking School Buses are very popular in the Auckland region which has 235 routes for 4,200 primary school children. They reduce the environmental impact of transport and help children exercise and socialise.

More than 1800 volunteers support the Auckland Walking School Buses. A recent survey by the University of Auckland found that volunteers rate the community and social aspects of Walking School Buses highly, along with exercise, friendships their children develop and safety.

Parents say: "I think we do it for fitness and to get the kids healthy and walking." And: "You can get on with your day, and know that your kids are safe getting to school"

Walking School Buses rely on the availability of volunteer parents and caregivers. It is always hard to find volunteers, especially men. Work commitments are the most common reason given for not being able to support a Walking School Bus.

Like a real bus, Walking School Buses travels at a set time and children join or leave the bus at designated stops.

While Walking School Buses are extremely popular in Auckland, they are operating all over New Zealand. The average journey time is 20 minutes, and the hours they operate are decided by the volunteers themselves. They need to arrive at school in good time for the school day and depart school shortly after the final bell.



Volunteers often use a roster system so they walk one day a week and have the remainder of the week free from the school run.

As they are set up by volunteers, Walking School Buses can be flexible to suit the needs of the families using them, operating every day or just some days of the week.

For more information on Walking School Buses see www.travelwise.org.nz.

Celebrating family

The Families Commission is encouraging people to celebrate family on May 15, joining with others around the world to mark the United Nations International Day of the Family.

Families Commission Chief Executive Paul Curry says he hopes organisations and communities will hold activities in the week leading up to May 15 to focus on everything that is positive about being part of a family.

"By championing Families Day we want to raise awareness of flexibility and other family-friendly employment practices to

ensure that as many people as possible have the chance to have good work-life balance," he says.

Many Rotary clubs are planning family events where the focus will be on having fun and enjoying being together and the Families Commission hopes that workplaces will hold their own events promoting the day.

"We are challenging other employers, service providers, transport operators, in fact anyone who touches the life of a New Zealand family, to consider how they could better support parents. This might



be as simple as encouraging staff to make the most of flexible work options," says Paul Curry.

Go to the Families Commission website www.familiescommission.govt.nz for ideas and resources on supporting Families Day.

Employers battling domestic violence

A number of employers are using a domestic violence prevention programme to help employees who experience domestic violence and to improve business results.

DVFREETM is a workplace programme which helps employers develop workplace policy and procedures to support employees who are being affected by violence at home. A support and referral system is set up to ensure victims of domestic violence can get the help they need.

The programme raises awareness amongst management and staff about domestic violence through a targeted campaign and also by proactively addressing the issue.

Hubbards Food Limited implemented

DVFREETM in April last year. CEO Doug Paulin summarises its value: "It is crucial that domestic abuse be seen as a serious, recognisable and preventable problem like many other workplace health and safety issues that affect a business and its bottom line."

Senior Trainer at DVFREETM, Linda Guirey, says that 97% of domestic violence victims experience problems with their work including poor concentration, lateness, extra sick days and being harassed at work via the phone.

"Domestic violence can also affect co-workers," she says. "They may have to fill in at short notice for absent or non-productive colleagues or use up work time trying to 'help solve the problem' for the victim."

Linda says that by proactively addressing this issue employers can:

- Increase employee productivity and morale
- Reduce employee absenteeism and turnover
- Reduce the impact on the bottom line

Auckland City piloted the DVFREETM in 2002, and in 2003 won an EEO Trust Work & Life Award for the programme. Then CEO Bryan Taylor provided strong support for DVFREETM. "A good employer should be concerned if an employee is a victim of domestic violence at home. This programme enables our organisation to better respond to people who need help," he said.

Find out more about the programme at www.preventingviolence.org.nz.

Events

Forum on pay and employment equity – progress made and next steps 3 April, Wellington

This Department of Labour Pay and Employment Equity Unit forum will include:

- Progress report on the Pay and Employment Equity Plan of Action
- Three organisations talking about their review experiences
- Demonstrations of the pay and employment equity tools, review process and resources

For more information contact [Victoria Gregory](mailto:Victoria.Gregory@dol.govt.nz) (Victoria.Gregory@dol.govt.nz).

Flexible working arrangements workshop 4 April, Christchurch

This two-hour workshop is designed by the Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce to help employers work through the new flexible working legislation in a practical way. They will look at the employers' responsibilities and provide practical tools, including templates to use in the workplace and exercises to help with practical application. More details at www.cecc.org.nz/main/eventList/index.cfm/?fuseAction=detail&eventID=461.