The Tyranny of Distance? Women, Work and Care in Regional Victoria* 

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Women, Work and Care Forum

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Project overview

• ARC Linkage Project: A Regional Perspective on Work/Family Balance and Changes in Employment Regulation
  – 2008-2010

• Industry Partners:
  – Workforce Victoria
  – Regional Development Victoria

• Research Team
  – Sara Charlesworth
  – Iain Campbell
  – Marian Baird
  – Kerry Haynes
  – Larissa Bamberry
Overview of presentation

• Draws on the *Regional Perspective on Work and Family Balance and Changes in Employment Regulation* Project
  – Initial findings of the Victorian Work and Life (*Vic WAL*) CATI employee survey
  – Initial themes emerging from 2 regional industry studies

• Focus on:
  – Gender differences *between* metro and regional employees and *within* regional areas around care
  – Experiences and understandings of *distance* and *location difference* in:
    – paid work
    – access to care services
Victoria
The Vic WAL Survey

CATI survey administered to 3007 employed persons* in August/September 2009 (by Social Research Centre)

- 972 in Melbourne
- 2035 in regional Victoria

Oversampling in regional Vic to allow detailed analysis of differences between:

- Metro/regional
- *Within* regions (3 biggest regional cities/the rest)

Weighted to reflect sex/age composition of metro/regional employed persons
### Vic WAL: Selected Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metro</th>
<th>Regional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men n=343</td>
<td>Women n=308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
<td>73.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fixed Term</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dependent children*</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other caring responsibilities*</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work*</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Measuring Work/Life Conflict

5 Item measure drawing on AWALI index (Pocock et al. 2009):

1. How often, if at all, would you say your work interferes with your responsibilities or activities outside of work? (Almost always → Never)

2. How often, if at all, does your work keep you from spending the amount of time you would like with family or friends? (Almost always → Never)

3. How often, if at all, does your work interfere with your ability to develop or maintain connections and friendships in your community? (Almost always → Never)

4. Thinking about your life in general, not just at work, how often do you feel rushed or pressed for time? (Almost always → Never)

5. Thinking about your life right now, how satisfied are you with the balance between your work and the rest of your life? (Very satisfied → Not at all satisfied)

Scale 1-100: higher scores indicate higher work/life conflict
Caring responsibilities and work/life conflict

Those with caring responsibilities (dependent children and/or others) experience:

- Significantly* higher work/life conflict than those without these responsibilities
  - WL conflict means:  
    - carers = 43.47
    - others = 38.14

Male carers experience significantly* higher work/life conflict than female carers

- WL conflict means:  
  - male carers = 44.43
  - female carers = 43.10

There are no significant differences between carers in regional Victoria and in Melbourne in terms of work/life conflict *but*:

- In regional Victoria male carers have experience significantly* higher work/life conflict than female carers
- WL conflict means:  
  - male carers = 44.40;
  - female carers = 41.60
Rushed and pressed for time*

Carers are significantly more likely to be rushed and pressed for time than those without caring responsibilities

- 60.0% of employees with care responsibilities ‘almost always/often’ compared to 46.1% other employees

Female carers significantly more likely to be rushed and pressed for time than male carers

- 66.7% of female carers ‘almost always/often’ compared to 54.2% male carers

In regional Victoria female carers (64.9%) significantly more likely to be ‘almost always/often’ rushed and pressed for time than male carers (52.9%)

In Melbourne female carers (71.5%) significantly more likely to be ‘almost always/often’ rushed and pressed for time than male carers (56.8%)

*Thinking about your life in general, not just at work, how often do you feel rushed or pressed for time?
Industry Studies

Case study approach

- Focus on selected workplaces *within* local and industry context, including other employment and other regulatory context
- Draw on data snapshots, other industry data, in-depth interviews in each location with more than 20-25 industry employees, managers, others working in a wide range of government and community organizations, relevant businesses, unions and employer groups.

To date:

1. Home care service in 2 very different regional areas (almost exclusively female)
   – Both delivered under HACC program
     - Local government
     - Large national not for profit agency (Victorian headquarters in Melbourne)

2. Banking in large regional city
   – Three banks - 2 retail branches (almost exclusively female) and one lending centre (mixed)
     – Re-emphasis on local service/responsiveness in all banks
     – Victorian headquarters of all banks in Melbourne
Tyranny of distance?

• Geographically very large service areas in both banking and home care
  – Distances travelled to work
  – Shapes organisation of work → ‘stretching’ of employees

• Headquarters in Melbourne
  – Pros: ‘they’re not breathing down your neck’
  – Cons: ‘out of sight out of mind’

• Distanced from/ too close to the workplace?
  – Home care workers jobs - ‘outside’ the workplace separated from other employees
  – Retail bank employees: ‘stuck’ in the workplace

• Access to care services
  – Different views: ‘newcomers’ vs long time locals
  – Shaping of expectations around availability?
  – Trade off for a better quality of life?