

Gender Institute 2017 Grant. Advancing parental leave for fathers in Australia: Supporting access to family friendly working arrangements to enable gender equity

November 2018 Report (Liana Leach & Lyndall Strazdins)

On the 9th of August 2018, with the support of the Gender Institute (ANU) and the Judith Lumley Centre (La Trobe University) we hosted the multisector forum 'Why Fathers' Care Matters: Enabling Gender Equity in Care and Work' at University House (ANU). Participants were researchers and scholars; industry representatives; policy-makers; those working in both government and non-government sectors; fathers, mothers and the general community.

The aims of the forum were to:

- Share our knowledge of why fathers' care matters;
- Identify barriers that limit fathers' participation in combining work and care;
- Derive a consensus statement about key issues, actions and priorities to promote organisations', fathers' and the broader community's support of gender equity and fathers' involvement in work and care.

The forum was intentionally structured in three sessions to hear equally from researchers, industry, policy-makers and fathers themselves. The first session was a short research symposium with leading Australian fatherhood researchers. The second session was an industry and policy panel who brought examples of flexible work practices recently implemented in their organisations. The final session included a panel and Q&A session with three fathers who brought a range of experiences negotiating their work and family responsibilities.

Impact and Outcomes

The forum was attended by ~50 participants from a range of institutions and organisations including The ANU, Department of Social Services, Prime Minister and Cabinet, Westpac, Deloitte, Parents at Work, The Australian Institute of Family Studies, Australian Bureau of Statistics, University of Newcastle, Dads Group and Families Australia. The registration list for the forum included others from a range of additional organisations who could not attend on the day, but who have been provided feedback outlining the discussion at the forum and the key outcomes achieved.

The forum was an excellent vehicle for sharing recent research demonstrating the importance of flexible work arrangements as well as emerging employer practices. The range of disciplines and sectors represented on the day enabled the development of new cross-sector collaborations. A series of priorities to guide the future research and policy agenda were discussed on the day. This discussion resulted in a Summary and Consensus Statement, which has been circulated to all participants and other interested parties.

Media relevant to the forum included an ABC radio interview given by Prof Lyndall Strazdins on Wednesday 8th of August (the day prior to the forum) and Twitter feeds/discussions hosted by The Australian Fatherhood Research Consortium (AFRC) and La Trobe University. In addition, a relevant media article about Dr Liana Leach's research investigating fathers' participation in work and care was published the ANU College of Medicine's News Forum - <https://science.anu.edu.au/research/research-stories/mother-all-childcare-problems-fathers-aren-t-taking-parental-leave>

Forum Event Outline

MORNING SESSION 9-10:30AM

Welcome and introduction to the day

Dr Liana Leach (Senior Research Fellow, Research School of Population Health, The ANU)

Dr Amanda Cooklin (Senior Research Fellow, Judith Lumley Centre, La Trobe University)

Research Symposium

Chair: Prof Jan Nicholson (Director Judith Lumley Centre, La Trobe University)

Why dad's care matters. A/Prof Richard Fletcher (Family Action Centre, Uni Newcastle)

Gender, work, care, time. Prof Lyndall Strazdins (Research School of Population Health, ANU).

Fathers at work: statistical overview. Dr Jenny Baxter (Australian Institute of Family Studies).

MID-MORNING SESSION 11-12:30AM

Industry and Policy Panel

Chair: Emma Walsh, CEO, Parents at Work

Helen Karatasas (Education Delivery Manager, Workplace Gender Equity Agency)

Gina De George (Director, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing, Deloitte Australia)

Rachel Ranton (Inclusion and Diversity Consultant, Westpac Banking Corporation)

Jane Dickenson (Policy Strategy and Investment Branch, Department of Social Services)

Geoffrey Tattam (Assoc. Director Culture and Development, The ANU)

Cate Leyland (Senior Consultant, Employee Relations, Human Resources Division, The ANU).

AFTERNOON SESSION 1:30-3:30/4PM

Fathers' Perspectives Panel

Chairs: Dr Amanda Cooklin (La Trobe University) and Dr Liana Leach (The ANU)

Robert Sturrock (father)

Justin Barker (father)

Thomas Docking (father)

Next steps Round Table Discussion and Final wrap-up

Dr Liana Leach (Senior Research Fellow, Research School of Population Health, The ANU)

Dr Amanda Cooklin (Senior Research Fellow, Judith Lumley Centre, La Trobe University)

Next Steps

The research priorities developed at the Forum are now being used to advance research in a number of ways. For example, Dr Liana Leach (one of the forum convenors) will submit an ARC Future Fellowship in the 2018 round to investigate questions raised in the forum about the barriers/enablers fathers are encountering around caring for children. Dr Liana Leach and Dr Amanda Cooklin (forum convenors) are working with a team of participants from the forum (including Emma Walsh from Parents at Work, Janin Bredehoeft from WGEA, Gina De George from Deloitte and Rachel Ranton from Westpac) to develop a national survey on Fathers' Work and Care – with the intention of developing an ARC Linkage Grant application.