

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Transformation of Care

Associate Professor Jane Mears from the School of Social Sciences and Ms Eva Garcia from Social Justice Social Change are researching ways to increase knowledge and understanding of formal home care provision for older people and those with disabilities and to identify promising care practices and policies. This project is being supported by Ageing, Disability and Home Care in the NSW Department of Human Services.

'Australia's population is ageing, by 2051 it is estimated 28% of the population will be aged 65 and over – a figure double that of just a few years ago', says Associate Professor Mears. 'In tandem with this increase has been a large expansion of community care services providing home care not only for older people, but also for people with disabilities. In Australia, we have little in-depth knowledge about formal care providers, the conditions they work under, how these are changing, how they manage their care work and how they view this work.'

'In recent years', Associate Professor Mears continues, 'the push towards "efficiency and homogeneity" of care services has placed a strain on care workers who try to tailor their unique care for their clients' diverse needs. It is not uncommon for care-workers to be over-qualified, highly experienced, underpaid and undervalued. Many juggle informal care with formal, paid care work. In order to identify promising care practices and policies, it is vital to ask the carers themselves what they think works and what doesn't and to examine the day-to-day reality of the delivery of home and community care in Australia.'

This study will use both qualitative and quantitative methods, including a questionnaire to be sent to approximately 1200 care workers. Interviews will be conducted with over 70 care workers and their managers.



Also, a number of care-recipients and informal carers will be interviewed in-depth and several observational studies will be conducted. For these studies, care workers will be accompanied by a researcher to examine a "typical" working day.

The findings from this research will be compared with similar studies done in Sweden and Canada. This study will provide crucial knowledge about the environments in which paid care workers provide care services, and will feed in to policy and practice to ensure improved conditions for home care workers in Australia and the best possible care and support for older people in receipt of this care.

Project Title: Transformations of Care: Living the consequences of changing public policies in Australia.

Funding has been set at: \$89,430

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