

Aged care overhaul must consider informal carers

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Productivity Commission recommendations to keep Australia's ageing population at home instead of in aged care facilities will put further pressure on informal, unpaid and mostly female carers, a University of Sydney professor in employment relations says.

Professor Marian Baird from the University's Discipline of Work and Organizational Studies says the success of [government policy](#) aimed at reducing the proportion of elderly Australians in aged care facilities will increase society's dependence on informal, unpaid care in the home from the likes of relatives and friends.

"Tasks such as performing household duties, managing healthcare issues and providing social support are often undertaken by those who are themselves older and in paid employment as advocated by the government's policy of encouraging workers to stay in employment in their 60s and beyond," she says. "Many of these working carers are women too.

"A [policy shift](#) towards keeping people at home, particularly if not combined with an increase in at-home support services, will increase the pressure on informal carers.

"In parallel with developing policies encouraging the elderly to stay in their homes, the government needs to design [workplace policies](#) to facilitate their dual role, which is invaluable to the community. Policy makers should consider extending the right to request flexible working to

carers of adults as exists in the United Kingdom and New Zealand."

Professor Baird and research associate Alexandra Heron have recently undertaken preliminary research of mature age workers with responsibilities for the elderly and anticipates an ongoing rise in employees caring for elderly adults as the population ages.

Provided by University of Sydney

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