

MEDIA RELEASE

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National Carers Week, 14-22 October

To celebrate Carer's Week economic Security4Women acknowledges the huge number of hours of unpaid care work undertaken every day in Australia.

This work is estimated at 21.4 billion hours per year (2009-2010 figures), equivalent to 11.1 million full time positions, 1.2 times the total Australian workforce, with an imputed value of \$650.1 billion, equivalent to 50.6 per cent of GDP, greater than the property sector¹.

"Today Australia relies on significant amounts of unpaid care provided primarily by women. As the population ages and women's participation in paid work increases, we, as a community, will need to rely more on paid care and on men to share the care of their family" Ms Kimberly James of eS4W said to day.

"If men will be required to assist in providing un-paid care they will need more flexible work options. If we are going to rely on more paid care then we will need to increase the numbers of people in the work force – and retain them – both men and women. To do this we need to offer a career path commensurate with other careers'.

"Australia needs to begin planning for this social change as soon as possible".

economic Security4Women calls for the provision of flexible work arrangements for both men and women to allow them to attend to their unpaid care work. However, this flexible work needs to be permanent and secure.

We also applaud the findings of the Equal Pay Case which will go some way towards encouraging people into care work and keeping them there.

Finally we call for a review of eligibility criteria for carers' payments to support the provision of unpaid care and women's economic security.

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¹ These figures come from "Counting on care work", a report recently published by eS4W. For a copy of the report visit: <http://www.security4women.org.au/projects/the-australian-care-economy/counting-on-care-work-in-australia>