

MEDIA RELEASE

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Research shows value of paid and unpaid care outstrips all other industries

Economic Security4Women (eS4W) recently engaged the AECgroup to study the role of the Australian care economy, and develop a comprehensive measure of the economic value of paid and unpaid care work as well as government investment in the care sector in Australia.

According to the Draft Report, women contributed to the majority of paid and unpaid work in the 2009-10 period. In the paid care sector, women are three times more prominent in both interactive care and support care roles than men. This is across all sectors, including Education, Health Care, Social Assistance and Personal Services. In terms of unpaid care work, women, on average, spend twice as much time looking after children, undertaking voluntary care and performing domestic duties, than men.

The total value of wages and salaries earned by paid care workers in the 2009-10 year are more than twice that earned in the mining and manufacturing sectors together.

“The imputed value of unpaid care work in Australia is extraordinary as the figures shortly to be released will demonstrate. The entire Care industry commands our immediate attention if we are to ensure we have willing and able Carers available into the future” says Lorraine Gordon, Executive Director of eS4W.

“To replace our unpaid Carers would cost the country billions of dollars; therefore we need to be thinking seriously about looking after our Carers and increasing the financial attractiveness of the paid care industry. There is a generation of young people that will simply not accept low-paid working conditions and already we are seeing skill shortages in this sector” commented Ms Gordon.

The care sector is extremely important to the Australian economy. It not only provides a foundation for human infrastructure, but also creates positive spill-over effects for the wider Australian community by assisting in the maintenance of social capital and contributing to human development. The sector provides nearly 20% of all paid employment and the combination of paid and unpaid care work provides care, support and assistance to all Australians.

The findings of the *Counting on Care Work* project will clearly highlight the importance of the care sector and the significant role Australian women play in providing both paid and unpaid care. The analysis of the care sector presents a range of multi-faceted issues with both financial and social implications.

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