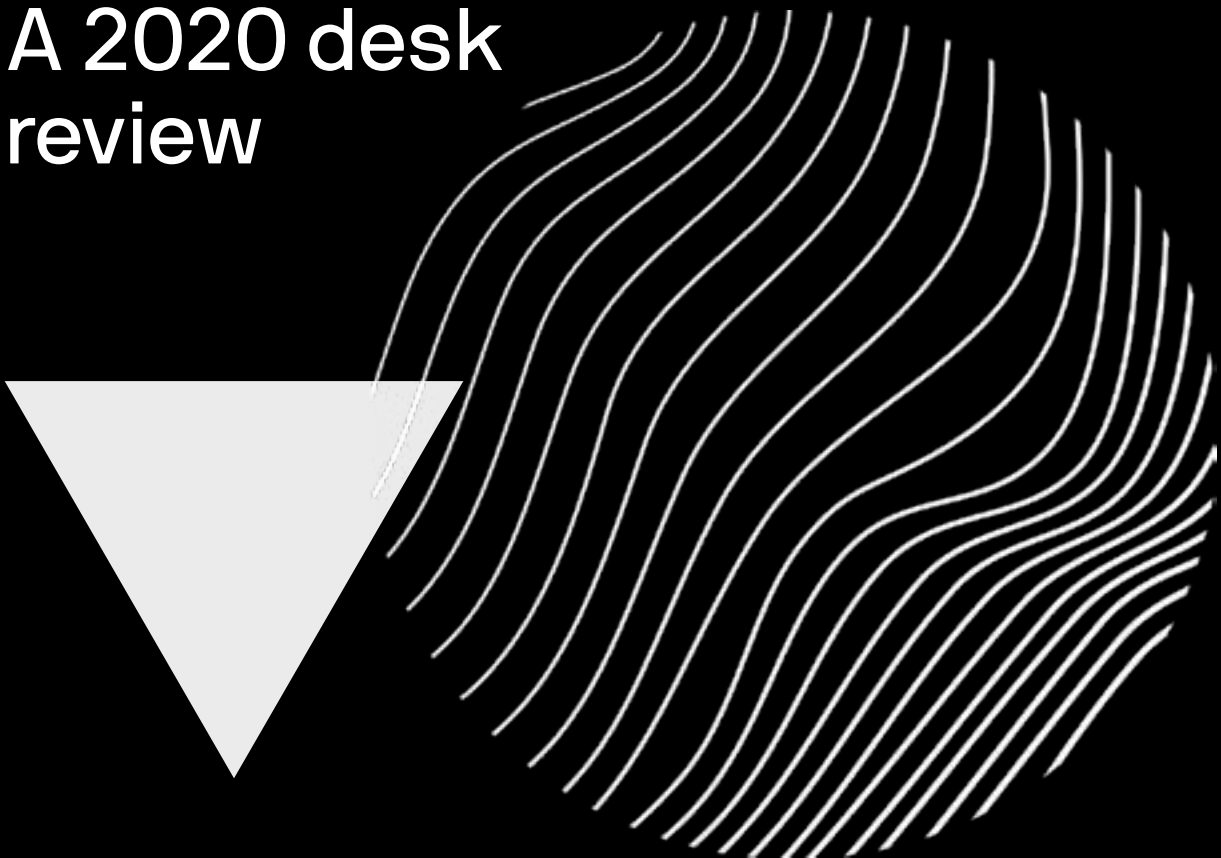




# Supporting staff carers in higher education: A 2020 desk review



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Centre for Social  
Justice & Inclusion

Centre for Carers  
Research

## **Acknowledgement of Country**

UTS acknowledges the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, the Boorooberongal People of the Dharug Nation, the Bidiagal People and the Gamaygal People upon whose ancestral lands our university stands. We would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands.

## **About this project**

This project was a collaboration between the UTS Centre for Carers Research, Institute of Public Policy and Governance and the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion, and was undertaken with funding support from the Department of Communities and Justice, Carer Investment Program.

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**Centre for Social Justice  
& Inclusion**

**Institute for Public Policy  
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# Introduction

The work of caring alongside employment is of increasing importance in a world with an ageing population facing different challenges. Carers NSW states unequivocally that organisations addressing the needs of carers in their workforces now are establishing themselves as the innovative, forward-thinking employers becoming increasingly appealing to the broader workforce (Carers NSW, 2020c). UTS is recognised as a Level 1 Accredited Carer Employer, as part of the Carers NSW Carers + Employers program (Carers NSW, 2020a). Significant work has been undertaken to ensure employees with carer responsibilities are acknowledged, supported and celebrated in the UTS community and beyond. Along with ongoing work from the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion, the establishment of the Centre for Carer's Research in 2018 has seen work undertaken to draw together a sense of the field of research, including a systematic review of the literature (Woods & McCormick, 2018). The paper developed key findings in existing research, as well as proposing several possible directions for future research. Further work from UTS includes research projects, development of student-focused resources, community engagement, the establishment of and recruitment for an industry-first Carer-in-Residence position, and procurement of information for employees as well as management working to support carers in the UTS workforce.

Research and progress in the field of carers continues; recently, a scoping review from Larkin, Henwood and Milne (2019) considers the extensive body of work on caring and carer work. In undertaking a desk review of the literature, the focus of this paper is on existing resources at UTS, looking at current discussions of carers. In considering how best to move forward, the paper suggests future research directions as well as considering domains in the UTS Social Impact Framework to make key recommendations for the university to continue growing as an institution that supports employees doing vital carer work. Overall, supporting and empowering carers should continue as a priority for the organisation. Offering support to our carers means meeting them on individual, organisational and societal levels, underpinned by UTS' commitment to carers, family-friendly practice and workforce diversity and inclusion.

This desk review will return to the key findings of Woods and McCormick's (2018) review of the literature as a means by which to consider the impact and potential of resources developed by the Centre for Carers Research and the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion, including contributions from UTS' first Carer-in-Residence. A brief review of UTS policies and procedures as well as current enterprise agreements for academic and professional staff will consider ways to continue building recognition and support for staff carers, drawing from the research. Larkin et al.'s (2019) scoping review offers some further complexity to this consideration, which provides a sense of ways forward for a group of employees that are connected by their carer roles, but different in many ways. It is important to consider how UTS understands and knows their staff in caring roles, and how these understandings might be extended. Finally, we will briefly consider our current context from within a pandemic, looking at the impacts of COVID-19 on the carer community in a global sense.

The purpose of this desk review is to consider progress in the field of carer research, and in doing so, build a sense of UTS as an organisation that seeks not only to acknowledge the carers working with us, but to support these staff members and look for ways to invite the sort of robust collaboration that ensures we continue to grow. Ultimately, this paper notes that the way forward is a continued, sustained effort to ensure research and practice go hand in hand for the most meaningful opportunities to succeed.

# Looking to the research – framing progress

The Centre for Carers Research as a part of the Institute of Public Policy and Governance was established in 2018, co-funded by the NSW Department of Community and Justice (formerly Family and Community Services) through the Carers Investment Program, and its activities are guided by the [NSW Carers Strategy 2014-2019](#). The Centre was established to produce work that directly informs development of policy and practice. It is evident that the Centre is looking to collaborate with a broad network of stakeholders with specific expertise to offer, giving a more holistic sense of best practice. We look to Woods and McCormick's (2018) review as a means of understanding the carer research landscape, but also as a place from which to consider how the Centre has grown and matured in light of these findings. Informed by focus areas outlined in the NSW Carers Strategy 2014-2019 (Department of Community and Justice, 2014), Woods and McCormick (2018) offer a comprehensive review of the research that looks to empirically grounded work across a list of focus areas:

- 1) Carer participation in employment and education
- 2) Carer health and wellbeing
- 3) Access to information and community awareness
- 4) Carer engagement
- 5) Evidence to shape policy and programs.

The (2018) review also considers a range of future research directions, some of which are being pursued by the Centre for Carer's Research. Below, we consider literature from within and beyond UTS to provide context to progress in these 5 areas.

## Carer participation in employment and education

The increasing presence of carers in the workforce is a strong focus in the carer literature. Often, consideration of carer work is entwined with parental caring responsibilities. Findings most significant for this line of enquiry include the definition of carer work established the NSW Carers (Recognition) Act 2010, which defines a carer as someone who provides ongoing, unpaid support to people who need help because of disability, mental illness, chronic or terminal illness, dementia or frail age (NSW Government, 2020). Relatives and friends who provide such care, support and assistance are carers (Centre for Carers Research, 2019b).

It is consistently found within the research that caring alongside working is a complex balance of factors, where addressing stand-alone concerns is not effective for every staff member with caring responsibilities (Hill et al., 2016; Woods & McCormick, 2018). In place of

this approach, Hill et al.'s (2016) study with UNSW proposes a social inclusion framework, where a more holistic consideration of experiences and identities of carers within the organisation ultimately supports more meaningful inclusion of carers in the workforce. Working and caring is a balance, where employees find that carer work shapes all aspects of their career. Oldridge's (2019) paper "Hidden Care(e)rs: supporting informal carers in the workplace" takes a specific interest in caring's effect on careers and levels of support from employers, including an examination of carer's perceptions of their own roles when considering promotions and other forms of progression. Levels of organisational support, including policies in place, are directly related to decisions from working carers to take on further responsibilities, management roles and projects (Oldridge, 2019).

Considering carer employees as assets to an organisation rather than a burden to make allowances for shifts not only a carer's participation in the organisation, but also the benefits gained by the employer themselves. Ireson et al.'s (2018) paper discusses the transferable skills an employee with carer responsibilities will bring to their organisation in addition to their specific expertise, arguing that there is significant value in time management, financial skills, adaptive problem solving, health care knowledge and abilities as well as advocacy skills (Ireson et al., 2018). The Carers NSW toolkit for employers further builds this argument by 'myth busting' a list of assumptions around working carers, in particular an assumption that there is no business case for supporting carers, or that caring is a personal issue rather than a workplace one (Carers NSW, 2020c, p. 2). Research in this area (Austin & Heyes, 2020; Hill et al., 2016; Ireson et al., 2018; Woods & McCormick, 2018) argues repeatedly that as a business decision, investing time and resources into supporting carers to continue working alongside meeting carer responsibilities makes good sense. The literature indicates that increasing staff retention enables organisations to maintain corporate knowledge and reduce costs of recruitment and orientation associated with higher staff turnover, as well as lowering the reduction of hours and cases of absenteeism (Austin & Heyes, 2020). Beyond these factors, organisations increasingly motivated by building employee inclusion as a direct goal towards more robust health and wellbeing in the workforce are looking to ensure staff with caring responsibilities are supported in numerous ways.

## **Carer health and wellbeing**

Woods and McCormick's (2018) review of the literature showed a direct relationship between retention of employees with caring responsibilities and the awareness and availability of support available to them. This included resources to empower staff in discussing flexible work options, the ease of access to additional services, and an appreciation for the value of multi-component interventions as the most effective means of addressing challenges unique to each individual carer at work. The recent report, "Supporting working carers" from University of Sheffield (Austin & Heyes, 2020) builds a clear understanding of the particular challenges for working carers in maintaining a day to day balance of responsibilities. This is framed in terms of looking to understand both how caring affects work and how working will affect care, which is an invaluable emphasis and key contribution to the body of research, building a more holistic appreciation for maintaining

this balance. The report takes focus on the United Kingdom (UK) but offers globally relevant findings from survey-based data, making clear the specific steps that working carers take to manage their caring responsibilities in balance with their work lives. Depending on benefits, staff may have access to a list of options to undertake this management: use of annual leave, informal work arrangements, working evenings, working weekends, use of unpaid leave, use of sick leave, working on annual leave days, formally established work arrangements (Austin & Heyes, 2020, p. 16). The report found that overall, it was good information and resources as well as the simple access to a telephone and the ability to make and receive personal calls during work hours (2020, p. 5). Burnout is a significant concern for working carers, and such flexibility served to alleviate stress and anxiety, support mental wellbeing, and facilitate addressing some practicalities of caring work. The research expands upon these findings across a list of areas, tending to offer a wide range of interventions to support carer wellbeing (Woods & McCormick, 2018).

The access offered by UTS to the Carers NSW toolkit – available via institutional login that is accessible by all UTS staff – equips staff with resources developed with a specific understanding of the complexities of being a working carer. Employers, including line managers and more senior management teams, are able to consider the most appropriate way to support their staff through informal and formal channels (Carers NSW, 2020c). Employees are empowered with suggested approaches to negotiate flexible work hours, adjustments to duties and responsibilities, specific leave periods and more (Carers NSW, 2020b).

## **Access to information and community awareness**

The literature unequivocally indicates that access to information is vital for working carers. The range of information required includes their rights and responsibilities as an employee, options for flexible hours and other support to do their best work, how to access resources for their own wellbeing as well as support for the person they are caring for and more. Existing research indicates that in many cases, specific needs of carers are not widely understood (Woods & McCormick, 2018). Larkin et al.'s (2019) scoping review found that overall, existing research is extensive, but often fragmented. They seek to consolidate these fragments from across industry, academia and government; online, in-person and in journals; as reports, articles, data sets and statistics (Larkin et al., 2019, p. 56). They argue that the field might be better understood as 'emerging' in terms of the maturity of findings and empirical research, possibly due to an ageing population increasingly in need of caregivers (Larkin et al., 2019, p. 55). While their review brings together significant knowledge across the industry, the paper reveals the ways in which caregiving is complex; that outcomes and progress for carers as well as for the field of carer research are not linear. Flexibility, both formal and informal, is key to working carers as well as to researchers and organisations like UTS looking to support their staff. While the range of information needed by employees with caring responsibilities is significant, organisations working to establish a centralised location, accessible to all employees have the best opportunity to meet this need.



The Centre for Carer Research is found online as part of UTS' Institute of Public Policy and Governance webpages. The site demonstrates a consolidation of resources existing prior to the establishment of the Centre in 2018, as well as a series of initiatives undertaken by the Centre. We consider the role of this site in both provision of information as well as community awareness, as outlined in Woods and McCormick's (2018) findings. As the Centre is research focused, detail around past and current projects as well as offering a significant list of data sources for further research. Work from Cathy Duncan proposes a framework for carer recognition in the Home Care Packages Program (Duncan et al., 2019), looking at ways to address what is acknowledged as a lack of carer recognition. Critique of the program as individualised specific to a market, taking a neoliberal understanding of care rather than focus on the carers making use of the program in a community-based way is also taken up in work from Ivanchera, Lynch and Keating (2019). This paper considers the university as a site of neoliberalism, where individualisation and market focus are argued to be antithetical to the notion of care. Initial research from the Centre works to advocate for working carers as part of a contribution to the field. A community-based focus for ongoing research as well as sustained progress on policy and practices that resist these neoliberal notions of care will allow the Centre to continue centring needs of carers. Establishment of channels of communication such as the Centre's Community of Practice mailing list make connections prioritising the sharing of information, a reminder of collective experience, and ultimately an ongoing source of solidarity, advocacy, and informed support. The Centre's web page indicates connectivity with external resources such as Head to Health, a government initiative concerned with carer wellbeing.

In addition to the suite of webpages dedicate to the Centre for Carers Research, information for and about carers is included on the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion site, both externally and as SharePoint resources in UTS's intranet, Staff Connect. Staff Connect site operates as a resource for staff carers and their managers which includes key information around leave options and processes. Announcements relating to carers in the UTS workforce are also returned as part of this listing. A key resource provided from Carers NSW (2020c, 2020b) is offered with means to access through UTS.

Employees of UTS, both academic and professional, are beholden to the university's Enterprise Agreements (FairWork Commission, 2018a, 2018b) which outline in detail the rights and responsibilities of working carers at UTS. The specifically relevant clauses have been collated in Appendix A, and concern personal leave benefits, requirements around flexible work arrangements and provision of personal information. These rights and responsibilities are the focus of the Staff and Students with Carers' Responsibilities Vice-Chancellor's Directive (University of Technology Sydney, 2011), now overdue for review. Additional relevant documentation includes the Equality, Inclusion and Respect Policy (University of Technology Sydney, 2019b), part of a larger focus for the Equity and Diversity Unit, part of the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion. These pages highlight carers as one of a larger group of staff and students for whom the university offers support in the form of education, assistance, training, awareness building, and specialist advice (University of Technology Sydney, 2020a).

While the primary purpose of this desk review is to consider UTS' progress in acknowledging, supporting and celebrating working carers, it is relevant to note that provision and accessibility of information for staff carers can be difficult to find at a glance, located between the Centre web pages, Equity and Diversity Unit pages, Staff Connect and additional, password-protected resources. While consolidation of all governance may not be possible, simplified guidance may improve staff carer confidence in accessing information about their rights and responsibilities as UTS staff and working carers. We find this to be a consistent recommendation across the literature for all organisations (Austin & Heyes, 2020; Carers NSW, 2020c; Oldridge, 2019; Woods & McCormick, 2018). Woods and McCormick's (2018) review suggests the impact of research upon the daily lives of carers will require significant work to synthesis research evidence – which is reflected in the more recent review from Larkin et al. (2019). An online database is suggested, built specifically with carers in focus as the end users. In particular, practical guidance for both carers working at UTS and their managers relating to the application of specific clauses in the Enterprise Agreement will be invaluable.

Encouraging ease of access to information leads this paper to work on building community awareness. Considering UTS' history of engagement with carers, there are a number of initiatives that were underway prior to the establishment of the Centre for Carers' Research. The Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion implemented the Research Equity Initiative (REI) in 2012, with the implementation of university wide initiatives to provide support for academic staff, and some research students, with carer responsibilities at key career stages (University of Technology Sydney, 2020c). Funding and support programs include conference attendance funds and research re-establishment grants in an acknowledgement of barriers to career progression for staff with previous or ongoing carer responsibilities. Broader approaches include awareness raising and professional development of managers to be better equipped to support working carers, regular news from the REI and mentorship programs. The Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion continues to support staff with equity complaints, offering a very clear means of understanding rights as a student or member of staff as well as sharing avenues to seek support (University of Technology Sydney, 2020a). A dedication to awareness-raising through education and information has been provided for National Carer's Week in an ongoing capacity – this is discussed below in terms of carer engagement. Work on the REI directly connects with the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion's Athena Swan program (University of Technology Sydney, 2020c), where a motivation for equity in the workforce has yielded changes to core meeting hours policies as a practical way to support carers.

The university's progress in prioritising diversity and inclusion are reflected in yearly social justice reports that highlight outcomes informed in significant part by UTS' Social Impact Framework (University of Technology Sydney, 2019c). The framework, laid out visually in the 2019 Social Justice Report (Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion, 2019, pp. 22–23) is a clear model by which the university maintains focus on delivering outcomes in the six domains identified. UTS' commitment to being “an agent for social change, transforming communities through research, education and practice” (University of Technology Sydney, 2019c) is a way in which the intention to acknowledge, support and celebrate working carers can be informed through key recommendations from this review.

Considering outcomes achieved since the establishment of the Centre for Carers Research, we understand one of the key achievements of the Centre is the recruitment and placement of a Carer-in-Residence, a position developed to rotate on an annual basis and centred around an expert who brings lived experience of carer work to ground meaningful research for the Centre. This is an experimental role (Centre for Carers Research, 2019a) which enables UTS to work towards key aspects identified in Woods and McCormick's review (2018). The establishment of this role demonstrates leadership in the field, modelling this appointment for other organisations in the higher education sector. UTS continues to prioritise connected research, with industry and practice-based research to be a key strength in transforming society (University of Technology Sydney, 2020b). Previous Carer-in-Residence, Tania Teague, has contributed to a blog hosted on the Centre for Carer's Research webpages (Teague, 2019) that has taken focus on the hidden nature of carer work, the role of carers in emergency planning, the experience of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) carers as well as current discussions around caregiving roles in the time of COVID-19. These blog posts offer a means of access to understanding the lived experiences of caring among UTS staff, including by managers and supervisors, that encourages points of commonality and connection from which caring work might be understood in context of broader global concerns. The narrative, non-academic writing style encourages empathetic understandings of day to day as well as more overarching aspects of caring work. The blog functions as a resource that shares commonality with conversations across the university as an organisation – for example, the impacts of an extreme 2019/2020 bushfire season was discussed across all faculties, as well as being address directly for professional and academic staff. The inclusion of carer concerns and reflections in the current global pandemic crisis affords key opportunities for carers to both contribute to broader conversation as well as offer expertise and more holistic observations informed by years of carer experience. Woods and McCormick's (2018) review found that information provision works more effectively when it is integrated with more holistic approaches to health and wellbeing, broader discussions of access to leave and flexible working arrangements. It is also argued that stronger acceptance and understanding of the experiences of working carers by the general staff population encourages higher levels of confidence from carers to access resources, propose more suitable working arrangements and engage with each other as well as other staff members for support, amongst many other positive developments (Carers NSW, 2020c; Hill et al., 2016). Holistically, this supportive work environment will deliver positive outcomes far beyond activities directly related to caring responsibilities (Austin & Heyes, 2020).

With the appointment of new Carer-in-Residence in July, UTS continue the work of building accessible lines of communication, extending community and organisational awareness, and leading through example with this unique, research and practice integrated position. UTS can be commended in undertaking the work required to establish ourselves as a carer-friendly workplace, and demonstrating leadership as an employer committed to developing social inclusion. The UTS Social Impact Framework allows us to consider with work from a variety of angles, including how we understand UTS as a place of employment.

## Carer engagement

Woods and McCormick (2018) note that community awareness as well as carer engagement are amongst key interests of current research. Aligning and contextualising lived experiences of carers in blog posts that are interconnected with larger world events and experiences offers a means by which awareness can be built in the UTS community. In a space where organisations such as UTS rely on self-identification and the disclosure of caring responsibilities from staff, blog posts offer an additional resource that invites and encourages the group of staff identified as 'hidden' carers (Oldridge, 2019; Woods & McCormick, 2018). After UTS achieved a Level 1 Carer + Employer Accreditation, collaborative work from the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion and the Centre for Carers Research saw the production of case studies of staff carers across a range of roles and levels within the organisation. This approach humanises carers, normalising staff having unpaid caring work at home and make visible the work of carers to the broader staff collective (University of Technology Sydney, 2019a). As an organisation, the commitment to developing these resources offers evidence of collaborate approaches to understanding carers and delivering on support implicit in the achievement the accreditation.

Carer engagement also includes opportunities to build professional and social networks at UTS. The Centre for Carers Research has worked collaboratively with the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion to offer organisation-based events in acknowledgement and celebration of Carers' Week, held in October. In 2019, a series of events were held to bring together working carers from across the organisation, including student carers. This week also saw the launch of the Centre's report "*Carers, we see you*" (Gleeson et al., 2019), developed from extensive consultation with students in carer roles at the university. The work undertaken to achieve Level 1 Care + Employer Accreditation was also acknowledged during Carers Week in 2019 by the NSW Government, featuring UTS as an exemplary employer in a feature on carers (NSW Government, 2019).

In addition to a focus on the working carer community at UTS, the Centre has also continued building work in the carer research field, offering an invitation in December 2019 to social researchers and practitioners, policymakers and carer advocates to take part in a day-long workshop. The event was supported by the Carers Investment Program, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, and provided a platform for participants to share work with a strong focus on practicalities of carer work and research. Papers took focus on the gendered nature of care work, the impact of precarity on care work, developing a family-focused service models of care, and discussion around carer's rights and resilience. A significant outcome of the event was the establishment of a community of practice across the carer research community.

Researchers working in the carer field are mostly self-identified carers as a matter of practicality. It is worth noting that while events for working carers and student carers build community awareness, they are also a key means of carer engagement that encourages self-identification. The research shows that self-identification as a working carer is key to developing interventions that support carers (Hill et al., 2016). Establishing an environment that encourages disclosure by communicating understanding and acceptance of carer work

is key to the goal of supporting staff with carer responsibilities (Austin & Heyes, 2020). Research gives us the opportunity to understand motivations not to disclose carer responsibilities at home – staff often hold concerns for their job security and opportunities for promotion, professional development and career success in light of revealing carer roles (Austin & Heyes, 2020; Oldridge, 2019). Moreau and Robertson's (2019) work on supporting academic staff with carer responsibilities also highlights the ways in which notions of the 'ideal academic' – also discussed by Ivanchera et al. (2019) – discourage disclosures of any piece of personal life which might further other an academic staff member. This othering has a direct and significant effect on how staff access resources and benefits (Moreau & Robertson, 2019). Extending this othering to consider experiences of minority identity groups in an organisational setting, Oldridge (2019) also highlights different cultural understandings of caregiving that may lead a caregiver to understand their work as a familial responsibility, rather than identify specifically as a carer. Larkin et al. (2019) identify the hidden work of those they name 'sandwich carers', where a working carer will be responsible for children as well as ageing familiar members while employed. Such understandings may be external to the organisation but are often perpetuated within an organisational culture that encourages individual practices and negotiations over institutional policy development. Disclosure of carer responsibilities is overwhelmingly agreed in the research to be key to developing support needed by working carers. Actively encouraging carer engagement in workplaces may look like a push in discussions around diversity and inclusion more broadly (Ireson et al., 2018); evaluating workplace culture and the core values of the organisation includes considering how these are expressed within departments, disciplines and teams.

We can connect an increasing call for disclosure back to an interest of the research in carer participation in employment and education – Woods and McCormick's (2018) review offers some essential clarity around the importance of a social inclusion framework, showing that carer participation in the research at multiple levels makes a more holistic understanding of carers' lives possible (Hill et al., 2016). Beyond research that involves carers, working carers should be considered key stakeholders in the development of policy and strategic planning within an organisation. Carers themselves are a key resource for shifting organisational culture on a formal level (Hill et al., 2016).

## **Evidence to shape policy and programs**

A key question for UTS as an organisation working to acknowledge, support, and celebrate employees with carer responsibilities is: what makes an employer carer-friendly to staff? Research across the field consistently argues that the most effective way to develop policy and programs to meet this goal is carer consultation (Ireson et al., 2018; Larkin et al., 2019; Oldridge, 2019; Woods & McCormick, 2018). Policy and programs have direct impact upon experiences of working carers – such impact is clear through staff retention and well-being outcomes for employees. The research calls for working carers to be active in policy development; as a key stakeholder group, these employees should be consulted (Oldridge, 2019).

The literature finds overwhelmingly that positive measures for working carers include flexible work arrangements (formal and informal), available resources and ease of access to these, and clearly communicated commitment to building community awareness within and beyond the organisation (Austin & Heyes, 2020; Carers NSW, 2020c; Larkin et al., 2019; Woods & McCormick, 2018). As interventions to support carers are multidimensional, so are suggested approaches to developing these interventions. Considerations of challenges and barriers on individual, organisational and societal levels should be informed by collaborative approaches that centre actual needs of working carers.

Resources from Carer NSW make clear that in some cases, support for working carers should be integrated into existing policy; extension of applicable groups for which leave might apply, cause for development of flexible working arrangements, opportunity to access additional resources or equitable consideration of application for promotion are some examples (Carers NSW, 2020c). In other cases, Carer NSW argues that the development of individual policy is needed to directly acknowledge carer work specifically. Community and organisational understandings of carer work often blur the lines between parental carers and other kinds of familiar carer support; while overlap often occurs, this is not always the case. The differences of parental responsibilities and carer responsibilities are complex, but need to be articulated in official policy as a means of organisational acknowledgement and support for working carers (Carers NSW, 2020c).

In continuing as a Level 1 Accredited Carer Employer, UTS are looking to involve carers as key stakeholders in active work to support and celebrate this work. We understand from the literature there is both unofficial and official means of integrating carer responsibilities with work (Austin & Heyes, 2020). Moreau and Robertson's (2019) paper considers this balance of the formal and informal in context of organisational culture in higher education specifically, observing that while support for carers is enacted and negotiated through policies and practices of care, working carers often have an ambivalent relationship to these official channels (2019, p. 164). The paper observes a difference between policies at an institutional level, and practices as the level of the individual staff carer. It becomes clear that accessing support through official channels is avoided due to concerns from staff on the impact to their career, with working carers unsure about the position of management and senior members of the organisation on support for care work (Moreau & Robertson, 2019). Attentions from organisations looking to acknowledge, support and celebrate the work of carers need to be directed in multiple ways; resources such as the guides from Carer NSW can inform managers and encourage working carers towards informal arrangements of support, alongside empirically-driven work from bodies such as the Centre for Carer Research motivating for more robust policy and programming within an institution like UTS.

Ultimately, organisations motivated to improve inclusion are building policy that allows official access to interventions proven empirically to be both wanted by working carers and, when available, used for desirable outcomes in the workplace. Austin and Heyes' powerful (2020) report "Supporting Working Carers" for the CIPD advises a way forward with the simple directive to offer autonomy, and offer information (Austin & Heyes, 2020, p. 17).

## Current context and call for pandemic-specific research

This desk review of contributions from UTS and beyond would be remiss not to consider the role our current global context has in shaping work being undertaken in the field in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While emphatically an emerging stream of literature, leading scholars in the field have wasted no time in calling for work that brings to light key learnings around the work of carers (Fine & Tronto, 2020; Policy Press, 2020). Fine and Tronto's (2020) editorial to accompany a call for papers for the special issue addressing care in the time of COVID-19 argues that the pandemic brings understandings of care and caring firmly into the spotlight in a way that holds significant potential for building awareness and progressing community- and industry-based goals. Looking at the pandemic as a unique opportunity for society more broadly to understand the inner workings of how care and caregiving functions leads Fine and Tronto to assert that 'care is out of the shadows' (2020, p. 2). Their editorial encourages researchers to look to ways in which long-discussed understandings of care might be mainstreamed, an opportunity to pursue the integration of information about caring and for carers with community considerations of health, home, and work. The subsequent call for papers for the *International Journal of Care and Caring* (2020) asserts that "the pandemic is revealing strengths and weaknesses in arrangements for care around the world" (Policy Press, 2020, p. 1). Possible avenues for research noted in the call extend those acknowledged by Woods and McCormick (2018) as well as Larkin et al. (2019) and include effects on care and care workers; implications for quality and sufficiency of care; how different care organisations were affected; how the pandemic affected public attitudes to care; and the actions of government and policy makers (Policy Press, 2020).

Fine and Tronto's (2020) editorial acknowledged that such possible research should be considered in balance with undeniable realities of care and caring in a pandemic context; while care from essential services is highly visible, celebrated and valued, their paper observes that non-visible care remains significantly under or unacknowledged. At a macro level, care is front and centre, but on a micro level for carers continuing to work day to day, care continues to be hidden. Additional challenges for carers working from home and the impact on a carer's ability to meeting employer's expectations alongside the changing needs of their loved one are unknown and so far, undiscussed. The paper's discussion of critical care theory, including the consideration of care and caring in context of minority and marginalised carers, encourages possible contributions that consider the ways in which structural inequalities shape the experiences of working carers. In keeping with critical work in the care field, Fine and Tronto (2020) remind us of the gendered nature of care giving, likely to be further impacted by working from home. Ivanchera et al.'s (2019) paper acknowledges the material demands on women to be primary carers (2019, p.450). The gendered nature of care giving has held sustained interest throughout research in this field, with an acknowledgement across the literature that it is a significant aspect that should be considered in critical discussions of care (Austin & Heyes, 2020; Moreau & Robertson, 2019; Woods & McCormick, 2018).

## Research gaps and future directions

The (2018) review of systematic review of literature from Woods and McCormick provided a significant list of possible future directions for research, reflected clearly on the Centre for Carers Research webpages as a series of questions address each of the 5 areas the review covers. It is clearly established in the work already undertaken by the Centre that collaboration across academia, government, industry and with working carers who bring the lived experience of daily caring that research in this field has significant potential for direct and meaningful impact. Understanding the potential momentum for mainstreaming understandings and discussions of caring in context of the current global pandemic (Fine & Tronto, 2020) gives the field an opportunity to build awareness, develop specific structural support, and importantly to engage carers in this work.

Looking forward where we take specific interest of the experiences of carers working in a university context, a strong argument is made in Ivanchera et al.'s (2019) article on precarity and neoliberalism in the academy. The paper observes the gendered dynamics that place working carers who are mostly women in a uniquely challenging position; the tension between expectations of feminised primary care roles in the home against the masculine 'academic ideal' at work (Ivancheva et al., 2019, p. 450). The paper argues for a rethinking of care as a central activity in human production, suggesting that critical work in the field explores the ways that paid work at a university and the unpaid work of caregiving overlap and interconnect, rather than being separate entities. This echoes consistent findings in both research (Austin & Heyes, 2020; Henderson et al., 2018; Larkin et al., 2019; Woods & McCormick, 2018) and resources (Carers NSW, 2020c) – an understanding of care and caring work as multidimensional, complex and unique to each caregiver is required in developing multicomponent interventions to address the level of support needed.

We address this need by grounding future research in empirical studies of working carers. Understanding a range of approaches and resources needed to support carers at work and in their homes will come from the capacity to learn from data gathered with both quantitative and qualitative methods. There is a wide range of data-gathering tools at the disposal of researchers working in the carer field, many of which have been carefully and clearly identified and discussed in the invaluable report from Woods and McCormick (2018). The work from UNSW (Hill et al., 2016) brings to life the social inclusion framework that brings a holistic focus to working carer participation in education and training, health and wellbeing, awareness and access of information, and the development of policy and programs that centre the needs of working carers. This report also highlights the important of longitudinal studies informing carer research; this will be useful to generate a stronger understanding of the carer experience over time (Hill et al., 2016).

Future research also needs to consider the complexity of the carers it works to support. We understand that carers come from a broad range of backgrounds; UTS has already begun discussing experiences of working carers from CALD backgrounds, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers, of younger carers who are also students at UTS. Ivanchera et al. (2019) observe that care and employment intersect through gendered, cultural, racial, and classed power relations. Moreau and Robertson's (2019) work highlights hierarchies and intersecting identities of carers, questioning underlying power relations that shape the ways carers access support at work. With the recent addition of current Carer-in-Residence Leila Frijat, UTS continues to establish opportunities for future research that will allow for this complexity in considering more effective ways forward.



# Carers continuing to thrive: key recommendations

Alongside future research directions, this review finds that the literature offers a range of recommendations that UTS can look to in the ongoing commitment to acknowledging, supporting and celebrating carers. In undertaking empirical research with working carers, there is a necessary connection to be made between findings that offer specific insight into approaches by UTS to engage in establishing further support. Means of building upon work motivated and shaped by the UTS Social Impact Framework allows us to understand key recommendations as they specifically relate to domains 3, 4, 5 and 6 (University of Technology Sydney, 2019c).

Key recommendations presented throughout this review include:

- The mainstreaming and promotion of the Carers NSW toolkit for employees and employers (*domains 3,4 and 6*)
- The centralised location of information for working carers in the form of an online database (*domains 3, 4 and 6*)
- Continued efforts to support and develop flexible working arrangements at both informal and formal levels, acknowledging effective interventions are multidimensional (*domains 3 and 6*)
- Actively encourage carer engagement to critically evaluate workplace culture and our core values, considering how these are expressed within departments, disciplines, and teams (*domains 3, 5 and 6*)
- Establish working carers as key stakeholders in the development of policy and strategic planning (*domains 5 and 6*)
- Clear communication of UTS' ongoing commitment to building community awareness within and beyond our organisation (*domain 5*)
- Considerations of challenges and barriers on individual, organisational and societal levels informed by collaborative approaches that centre needs of working carers (*domains 3, 4, 5 and 6*)
- The differences of parental responsibilities and carer responsibilities to be clearly articulated in official policy (*domain 6*)
- Attentions to the impact of COVID-19 on working carers daily responsibilities, including considerations of challenges around working from home and changed access to support (*domains 3,4,5, and 6*).

# Conclusion

This desk review has looked to understand how UTS has worked to implement means of support and information for our employees in carer roles, considering how work from the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion as well as research produced by the Centre for Carers Research and contributions from UTS' first Carer-in-Residence are operating to connect with a community of carers at work, professionals in the carer industry and researchers. This paper examines progress under each of the 5 focus areas highlighted in Woods and McCormick's (2018) review, looking to the UTS Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion's achievement in gaining UTS's recognition as a Level 1 Accredited Carer Employer, as part of the Carers NSW Carers + Employers program. The review includes consideration of progress in the field of carer research, the integration of resources from Carers NSW available to UTS staff, and looks to understand how a holistic, multidimensional approach is underway. This paper has contextualised current work in the field against the unique impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, considering the potential of this opportunity to bring less visible caring work into focus as part of a larger discussion of individual, organisational and societal understandings of care.

As always, there are many potential directions that future research in the field will take. Alongside this work, it is vital for UTS to maintain a focus on the key recommendations that will ensure the organisation continues to develop, sustaining a meaningful ongoing contribution to the university's Social Impact Framework. A review of the literature across the academy, outputs from the Centres for Social Justice and Inclusion and the Centre for Carers Research, resources developed by Carer NSW and industry-focused survey-based reports show us a way forward that enables the continued acknowledgement, support and celebration of carers working at UTS.

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# Appendix A: Relevant clauses from UTS Collective Agreements - Professional and Academic

## Collective Agreement – Academic

**27.3. [Personal leave]** A staff member may be granted up to seven days personal leave with pay per calendar year, on a pro-rata basis, under circumstances including the following:

- a. to provide care or support to relatives or members of their household who are ill or injured

## **38.8 [Workload allocation]**

- i) the personal and family and carer's responsibilities of staff where these have been disclosed to the supervisor will, wherever possible, be taken into consideration in determining workload schedules.

## **49 PROVISION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION**

49.1. A staff member may wish to access leave or tailored workload arrangements (refer to sub-clause 38.8) in order to accommodate their personal, family and carer's circumstances in accordance with the procedures provided in this Agreement. The staff member must disclose sufficient information relevant to these circumstances to enable the University to determine whether there are good and sufficient reasons for the University to approve access to leave and tailored workload arrangements.

49.2. Staff are normally expected to discuss their relevant personal circumstances with their supervisor, however, staff may choose to discuss such matters with the Director, HRU instead.

49.3. Where the staff member chooses to discuss personal information with the Director, HRU instead of their supervisor, the Director, HRU will only disclose general information about the staff member's situation to the staff member's supervisor sufficient to allow the supervisor to fulfil their decision-making responsibilities.

## **Collective Agreement – Professional staff**

**31.3. [Personal Leave]** A staff member may be granted up to seven days personal leave (pro rata for part-time and part-year staff) with pay per calendar year under circumstances including the following:

- a. to provide care or support to relatives or members of their household who are ill or injured

### **Established pattern of hours**

38.6. The established pattern of hours is the pattern of hours within the span of hours worked by a staff member consistent with the custom and practice of the work unit. Where a supervisor proposes to temporarily or permanently change the established pattern of hours of a staff member within the span of hours set out in this agreement, the supervisor will give the staff member one month's notice (or less if mutually agreed between the staff member and the supervisor) of the proposed change.

38.7. In an emergency situation supervisors will endeavour to give a minimum of 48 hours' notice (or less if mutually agreed between the staff member and the supervisor) for a proposed temporary hours change.

38.8. supervisor is satisfied that there is good and sufficient reasons as to why a staff member cannot work the changed hours then the staff member shall not be required to work the changed hours. Such good and sufficient reasons may include (but are not limited to) the personal, family and carer's commitments of the staff member.

### **Alternative hours arrangements**

38.9. Supervisors and staff members, including shift staff, may negotiate alternative working arrangements within the following parameters:

- a. nine hours per day
- b. 45 hours per week
- c. 140 hours per four weeks.

Alternative hours arrangements must be worked within the ordinary span of hours for the staff member/s concerned.

38.10. Hours worked in excess of any of the limits in sub-clause 38.9 shall be treated as overtime. Alternative hours arrangements are not to be used as a mechanism for avoiding the payment of overtime.

38.11. Alternative working arrangements will take effect after they have been agreed in writing between the staff member and their supervisor, supported by the Dean or Director of the work unit and approved by the Director, Human Resources. A copy of the arrangements is to be kept on the staff member's personal file.

### **Part-time staff may vary average weekly hours over work cycle**

38.14. Part-time staff may, by mutual agreement with their supervisor, work more or less than the average weekly hours, provided that, at the end of the four week cycle, the total hours worked equates to the appropriate fraction.

38.15. A part-time staff member's fortnightly payment arrangements will not change as a result of a mutually agreed variation to average weekly hours as per sub-clause 38.14, and the staff member will continue to receive the normal fortnightly salary. Except that on termination any adjustment to hours/pay will be made.

## **54 PROVISION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION**

54.1. A staff member may wish to access leave or other flexible working arrangements in order to accommodate their personal, family and carer's circumstances in accordance with the procedures provided in this Agreement. The staff member must disclose sufficient information relevant to these circumstances to enable the University to determine whether there are good and sufficient reasons for the University to approve access to leave and flexible work arrangements.

54.2. Staff are expected to normally discuss their relevant personal circumstances with their supervisor, however, staff may choose to discuss such matters with the Director, Human Resources instead.

54.3. Where the staff member chooses to discuss personal information with the Director, Human Resources instead of their supervisor, the Director, Human Resources will only disclose general information about the staff member's situation to the staff member's supervisor sufficient to allow the supervisor to fulfil their decision making responsibilities.