

Abstract submitted to Track IV. Building and renewing institutions: A social contract for the 21st Century

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'Regularising' home and community aged care work: a case study of New Zealand regulatory changes

Home and community aged care is usually performed by women who work in isolation visiting clients in their homes to provide personal care and household management. Many of the features of this work label it as precarious: variable hours and low wages (Doniol-Shaw & Lada, 2011), little contact with supervisors (Hansell, Knaster & Phillips, 2018), health and safety risks (Ravenswood, Douglas & Haar, 2018), split shifts amongst other factors (Andersen & Westgaard, 2015). New Zealand provides a unique setting to examine regulation and employment conditions in home and community care because in the space of two years, separate legislation was introduced to regulate 1) in-between travel time and payments; and 2) hourly wages, setting rates above the statutory minimum wage to rectify historic gender discrimination. However, while this may enforce improved statutory minima, does this type of regulation change the informal norms that have long maintained this type of work as low value and low status?

This paper presents findings from both managers and care and support workers in home and community care. Qualitative data was collected from 22 participants (managers and care workers) in small focus groups and interviews. It formed part of a larger project investigating the impact of the Care and Support Workers (Pay Equity) Act 2017. This paper examines the question 'what is the effect of regulatory changes on gendered precarious work?' It does this through a feminist lens, examining the effect of the macro environment on both organisational and individual responses – building on arguments (Ravenswood & Harris, 2016; Ravenswood & Markey, 2018) that gender norms are a significant influence on regulation and work conditions in carework. It argues that while regulation improves core standards, it has not changed the influence of gendered job role expectations. These changes have taken place within the context of a persistent neoliberal paradigm which has driven many of these managerial approaches to the organisation of work. This results in negative workplace experiences for home and community care aged care workers.

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