The lived experience of gender and the Dependent Care Support Travel Policy

Leadership Development for Women 2019

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Executive Summary

The challenges that women face in the higher education sector around career advancement have been well documented (Morley, 2013; Thomas, Thomas, & Smith, 2019). While much has been done to improve opportunities and raise awareness around the barriers that do exist for women in both professional and academic roles in higher education (David, 2015), gender equity has still not been achieved. For example, research has demonstrated that women continue to struggle to get access to and maintain careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields due to structural barriers (Science in Australia Gender Equity, 2019). This disadvantages not just the women involved but society as a whole (Broadley, 2015).

One key societal gender equity issue is women continuing to bear the burden of child caring duties. In Australia in 2016-17 women spent twice as long undertaking child-care duties each day than their male counterparts (Australian Government, 2018). Whilst this is a decrease from 2009, when women spent two and a half times more time than men caring for children (Australian Government, 2009), it is still a significant gender imbalance. Without deliberate and strategic intervention from higher education institutions and the research sector this systemic societal issue prevents women from fully engaging in their chosen careers, and restricts their valuable contribution to higher education, research and their community.

Charles Sturt University has recently been recognized with the Employer of Choice for Gender Equality Award and the Athena SWAN Bronze Institution Award for its work in gender equity within the higher education sector. The University has recognized that it is a requirement of both academic and professional staff to travel as an inherent part of the distributed campus model. Therefore, as part of the ongoing work towards gender equity and in order to acknowledge and reduce the impact of the gender imbalance of dependent care, and assist care-givers to overcome barriers to career advancement, the Charles Sturt University Dependent Care Support Travel Policy was created.

The policy

CSU Travel Policy Part P - Dependent Care Support

(94) Staff who undertake work related travel are entitled to claim dependent care expenses up to forty dollars ($40.00) per day (not per child) for care that is over and above their normal dependent care cost arrangements. This applies for dependents up to the age of 16 years. Proof of age of the dependent may be requested.

This policy aims to assist care-givers to cover additional care related costs for any child under the age of 16 years, if they are required to travel for work related reasons. This travel may include attending or presenting at conferences that are required for professional progression in a staff member's chosen field or travel that is required between campuses to meet the core duties of their chosen role.

Aims of study

As part of the Charles Sturt University Leadership Development for Women program, this project looked at the lived experience of gender through the lens of the Dependent Care Support clause in Charles Sturt's Travel Policy, a policy that is often cited when demonstrating Charles Sturt's positive approach to gender equity.

Charles Sturt University is a leader within academic institutions in the advancement of gender equity and the creation of opportunities for institutional reflection on current and better practice. This project will inform future policy development and allows for an interface between senior management and the lived experience of gender equity around a specific gendered Charles Sturt policy.

Methodology

This project adopted a mixed methods approach that draws on both institutional data and a collaborative auto-ethnography to critically explore the lived experience of gender in a university setting. The collaborative auto-ethnography (Blalock & Akehi, 2017; Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013) includes collection of self-observational data and intentional interactions with others. De-identified institutional data is also used to inform about the current uptake of the policy.

Through the examination of field notes and institutional data, the project considered how the policy is prioritized and administered within various workplaces, and uncovered factors that may impact on the understanding and/or application of the policy.

Key findings

The results from the study (presented in Appendix 2) indicate that

- The dependent care allowance clause was introduced in the late 1990s in recognition of the increasing participation of women in the workplace, and the distributed campus model of CSU.
- In 2018-19 **19,000** travel plans were approved across the whole of CSU. **13** of these included a successful claim for dependent care allowance. The total amount paid by CSU for dependent care in this period was $1,645, and the allowance was only claimed by women.
- The fact that the policy is unfunded has serious consequences for how is it used. This also severely limits its great capacity to assist those with caring responsibilities to care better and do their job well.
- The policy is underutilized, with a complicated application process, requiring multiple actions, with no clear pathway outlined anywhere. The variable success of applications are dependent on the language used in applying and how the policy is administered by CSU Travel, and the interactions required to claim the allowance have resulted in feelings of guilt, anxiety and being mistrusted.
- There is no data about unsuccessful applications for the travel support, which creates a huge gap in understanding the strengths and weakness of the policy.

Recommendations

- Develop a consistent, transparent application process to facilitate use of the policy.
- Improve communication about the policy and how to use it.
- Review the Dependent Care Support Travel Policy, including application process, the administration of the policy, the amount paid and the definition of a dependent.
- Fund the policy and remove the barriers that exist within professional and academic budgets to implement this support for those with caring responsibilities.
- Establish an embedded professional development program that addresses unconscious bias and how to facilitate inclusive and constructive conversations when implementing the policy.
- Build on the foundation work done through this project and undertake a comprehensive study of the lived experience of gender at CSU in order to inform implementation of the Athena SWAN Bronze award action plan, and build towards the Silver award.

Contents

Reflections on the Leadership Development for Women program

This research project was undertaken as part of the Leadership Development for Women program. Whilst part of the output will be the presentation, written report and publication, the participants (research team) consider themselves as the most significant output, intrinsically involved in data collection and analysis, self-reflection and deep listening. As part of the program and research process, the participants have gained the following.

- An opportunity for professional and personal reflection and consideration of different perspectives
- An ability to use different ideas in leadership and management.
- An opportunity for further discussion and prioritizing of the discussion of intersectionality.
- An understanding of the lived experience of gender equity at Charles Sturt University, including opportunities for advocacy and any changes that might enhance gender equity opportunities.

Individual reflections

The Leadership Development for Women Program has enabled me to reflect upon my role as a leader at Charles Sturt and in society. It has enabled me to view leadership as something which can be separate from management or supervisor roles; instead our project has reinforced my perspective that regardless of a person's role in an organization a leader is someone who can assist in identifying and actively creating change for the better. In the case of our project, the focus has consistently been maintained on how we assist our organization to further implement its values and provide a fully inclusive workforce. *Katie Murrell-Orgill*

For a young woman in leadership there can be tension and pressure to conform to dominant norms. The LDW program has confirmed my values of leadership and introduced me to the benefit of leading mindfully. Our project group demonstrated the value of hearing and reflecting on another's perspective in a balanced way. Learning from listening has been instrumental for us as leaders to create an informed report and actionable recommendations. I've learned about myself as a leader in our aim to acknowledge our community and respect the diversity of individual contributions to it. Our project group showed incredible support for each other throughout our work and I feel privileged to have worked with these passionate and strong women. *Geraldine Rurenga*

Participating in the Leadership Development for Women program in 2019 has been a productive and challenging experience for me, and extended my own professional and personal leadership skills. In particular, participating in the project has developed my ability to reflect on my role within working relationships – whether at a team, campus or organization level. I recognize the strengths in an ongoing reflective practice in leadership roles. The program has also opened up opportunities to develop relationships and networks at CSU that I otherwise wouldn't have access to, which In turn has had an impact on how effectively I work within this large organisation. *Jessie Lymn*

This program has challenged the way I think about research as well as leadership. The academic research space is largely output driven, with limited opportunities for self-reflection as a researcher and as a leader. The Leadership Development for Women program has given me the time and space to consider how to lead through and in spite of this output driven environment. I have learnt that I can lead well by considering my people and myself as part of the output, and create a team environment where we can be our boldest, bravest, most creative thinkers. *Jennifer Manyweathers*

I have found the Leadership Development for Women program to be immensely valuable. Over the past 6 months in the LDW program I have built relationships and networks throughout the university. I have greatly valued working in my project group and am very proud of what we have achieved. Through the program I have grown my understanding of my own and others leadership and collaborative practices. I was confronted by the many ways in which women still don't have equity in the workforce and at CSU, but also greatly encouraged by the amazing work that many women at CSU are doing. *Shara Cameron*

1. Background

The challenges that women face in the higher education sector around career advancement have been well documented (Morley, 2013; Thomas et al., 2019). While much has been done to improve opportunities and raise awareness around the barriers that do exist for women in both professional and academic roles in higher education (David, 2015), gender equity has still not been achieved. For example, research has demonstrated that women continue to struggle to get access to and maintain careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields due to structural barriers (Science in Australia Gender Equity, 2019). This disadvantages not just the women involved but society as a whole (Broadley, 2015).

One key societal gender equity issue is women continuing to bear the burden of child caring duties. In Australia in 2016-17 women spent twice as long undertaking child-care duties each day than their male counterparts (Australian Government, 2018). Whilst this is a decrease from 2009, when women spent two and a half times more time than men caring for children (Australian Government, 2009), it is still a significant gender imbalance. Without deliberate and strategic intervention from higher education institutions and the research sector this systemic societal issue prevents women from fully engaging in their chosen careers, and restricts their valuable contribution to higher education, research and their community.

1.1.   Charles Sturt University

Charles Sturt is a relatively young university, but has a solid history of innovation around gender equity policies and operating procedures. Charles Sturt University has recently been recognized with the Employer of Choice for Gender Equality Award and the Athena SWAN Bronze Institution Award for its work in gender equity within the higher education sector. The University has recognized that it is a requirement of both academic and professional staff to travel as an inherent part of the distributed campus model. Therefore, as part of the ongoing work towards gender equity and in order to acknowledge and reduce the impact of the gender imbalance of dependent care, and assist care-givers to overcome barriers to career advancement, the Charles Sturt University Dependent Care Support Travel Policy was created.

> *CSU Travel Policy Part P - Dependent Care Support*
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This policy aims to assist Charles Sturt professional and academic staff required to travel for work, with caring responsibilities, to cover additional care related costs for any child under the age of 16 years. This travel may include attending or presenting at conferences that are required to progress professionally in a staff members chosen field or even travel that is required to meet the core duties of their chosen role.

2. Aims of study

As part of the Charles Sturt University Leadership Development for Women program, this project looked at the lived experience of gender through the lens of the Dependent Care Support clause in Charles Sturt's Travel Policy, a policy that is often cited when demonstrating Charles Sturt's positive approach to gender equity.

Charles Sturt University is a leader within academic institutions in the advancement of gender equity and the creation of opportunities for institutional reflection on current and better practice. This project will inform future policy development and allows for an interface between senior management and the lived experience of gender equity around a specific gendered Charles Sturt policy.

2.1.   Research objectives

Using collaborative auto-ethnography (Blalock & Akehi, 2017; Chang et al., 2013) and narrative theory from a standpoint perspective (Carless & Douglas, 2017), this study aims to explore:

1. The lived experience of a specific gender policy at Charles Sturt, reflecting on the dominant frameworks that may privilege heteronormativity and the nuclear family/extended family and community.

2. The systemic values influencing budget decisions and KPIs through the application of the policy, and consider the influence of communication and information sharing models on how the policy is used.

3. The history behind the establishment of the policy, and the current usage. This will include consideration of how applications are dealt with, who approves the applications and success and otherwise of applications.

2.2.   Expected outcomes from the project

Outcomes will include opportunities for personal and professional reflection by the research team in their capacity as employees and also as leaders and managers.

The research team will present their findings to senior management at the completion of the project, including recommendations for policy review, development and communication based on their findings. The research team also intend to publish their de-identified findings in order to contribute to the growing body of knowledge around gender equity in the higher education sector.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a mixed methods approach that draws on both institutional data and a collaborative auto-ethnography to critically explore the lived experience of gender in a university setting. All research activities involving collection and analysis of data were approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Charles Sturt University (H19310).

A collaborative auto-ethnographical approach was used in order to reflect the lived experience and standpoints of the research team as a group of women employed by Charles Sturt University in a range of academic and professional roles. Collaborative auto-ethnography provides a unique approach that enables policy and the participants themselves to be impacted by understanding and analysis of real life experiences (Blalock & Akehi, 2017). De-identified institutional data about the use of the policy entitlements (a $40 per day payment) was obtained from the CSU Travel office. In order to establish a denominator/baseline, de-identified data regarding actual travel plan numbers was also collected.

3.1.   Data collection

The methodological tools of writing, conversation and group analysis were used to share experiences and collaborate on building an understanding of the lived experience of the policy. Like auto-ethnography, collaborative auto-ethnography 'still focuses on self-interrogation but does so collectively and cooperatively' (Chang et al., 2013, p. P. 21). This methodology was selected for its appropriateness to the framework the research project is investigating - the lived experience of gender in a university setting. Lapadat argues that 'auto-ethnography offers fertile ground for interrogating dominant theoretical stances and hegemonic paradigms, and furthering social justice aims' (2017, p. 589).

The research team used online and hard copy journaling as an initial method to record their interactions, observations and reflections on their engagement with the policy (including inability to engage). When talking about ethnography, and the writing of culture and lived experience, Clifford and Marcus argue that:

> *to recognize the poetic dimension of ethnography does not require one gives up facts and accurate accounting for the supposed free play of poetry. Poetry is not limited to romantic or modernist subjectivism; it can be historical, precise, objective … Ethnography is a hybrid textual activity; it traverses genres and disciplines. (1986, p.26)*

The research team met weekly and twice face to face to discuss and reflect on their journal entries and experiences, including interactions with other participants. Notes from these collaborative analysis sessions were taken, and, along with the journal entries, formed the data analysed in this study.

A risk associated with this method is researcher vulnerability (Lapadat, 2017, p.597). As Lapadat argues, 'collaborative auto-ethnography is a powerful method of team building as it enhances trusting relationships among co-researchers, provides for deep listening or witnessing, promotes creativity, and offers collegial

feedback and mentorship' (2017, p.598), all of which are intended outcomes of the Leadership Development for Women Program.

As part of the data collection, the history of the policy was traced, from its establishment and included tracking changes to the wording of the policy in subsequent versions (See Appendix 1). Staff members who were instrumental in the establishment of the policy were interviewed to inform the research team's understanding of the context around the development of the policy.

Accidental and intentional interactions with other university staff who had engaged with the policy in various ways were captured in de-identified conversations, interviews and email exchanges.

3.2.   Data analysis

Through the examination of field notes and the institutional data, the study considered how the policy is prioritized and administered within various workplaces.

These field notes (auto-ethnographies) were shared with the research team and analyzed collaboratively through the lens of gender equity and experiences of the travel support policy. In-depth discussions were undertaken to dissect and make meanings of the auto-ethnographies. From the data analysis, themes were identified that inform how the policy and communication/application and understanding around it is impacting Charles Sturt University employees.

4. Results

Institutional data

Period	Number of travel plans processed	Number of travel plans that included a dependent care allowance claim	Percent of total
Jan 2018 – August 2019	18,959	13	0.068%

Table 1: Successful applications for dependent care travel support as a percent of total travel plans, Jan 2018-Aug 2019.

De-identified data was received from the CSU Travel office, indicating the total number of approved travel plans across the university from January 2018, until August 2019 was 18959.

The number of successful applications for the dependent care travel policy for 2018 – August 2019 can be found in Table 2, for a total of $1645.36.

Date	Gender	Amount
6/04	F	120
10/05	F	80
11/12	F	200
23/03	F	40
23/07	F	200
12/12	F	200
7/03	F	45.36
29/06	F	80
29/08	F	120
8/08	F	120
25/02	F	120
12/02	F	200
20/05	F	40
1/08	F	80

Table 2: Successful applications for dependent care travel support at Charles Sturt University, Jan 2018 – August 2019.

Collective auto-ethnography

Narratives from the research team and other participants, all employees of the University, provided reflections on how the dependent care travel policy impacted their capacity to travel for work, both in positive and negative ways. From this study, four main themes were developed, including potential administration and organizational barriers to uptake of the policy, and how this policy can enhance gender equity understanding and actions within the University.

The keeping of the gate

Participants experienced variations of control and decision making around the application of the policy. These experiences were considered as part of the gatekeeping theme, and included the following examples.

- Rejection of an application for reimbursement (after travel was completed), even though the initial dependent care support had been approved.

  "What I would like to point out- is that the form includes provisions/conditions that are not part of the actual policy. I'm going to assume the policy was approved by a governance level process but that the form was created at the local CSU Travel level.

  This is not the first time in a University I've been exposed to "extra conditions" made up by people at lower levels to governance on how a policy should be implemented.

  What I found at my previous University – was that this creates equity issues when rules are made up at local level on how to implement policies. In this case for the travel policy the form appears in direct conflict with the actual policy that only states proof of age is required – not any proof of additional costs "…for care that is over and above their normal dependent care cost arrangements. This applies for dependants up to the age of 16 years. Proof of age of the dependent may be requested." P7

- Multiple iterations around what documentation was actually required to apply for the travel support, as illustrated in the email excerpt below.

  March 2019, email from CSU Travel.
  *"We no longer require the form **(Dependent Care Claim Form – see Appendix 3)** to be completed. Staff need to include the request for the allowance in their on-line booking form. This is then included in the travel plan which is then approved by the Delegated Approver for that area. You may like to add the allowance is not paid in advance. Staff need to contact CSU Travel after the travel and request for the allowance to be paid."*

  7th November 2019, email from CSU Travel
  "the form was reinstated on the 27th of September this year as there were some issues with staff questioning their ability to claim Dependent Care Allowance and additionally approvers willing to approve the expense."

  14th November 2019, email from CSU Travel
  "We have made a decision to not require the form to be completed effective immediately."

- Inconsistency about what is covered by the policy and what is not. There were examples of staff applying for the policy and their success or otherwise appeared to depend on what sort of information they provided, and the language they used. The following interaction occurred earlier this year.

Email from participant to CSU Travel (25 July)
"Also, I remembered the Dependent Care Part in the Travel Policy covers $40 per day for care for my child while I'm away – can you let me know how I claim this for the rollaway bed (my partner and son are travelling to stay with family while I'm away, so it's a cost over and above my usual care arrangement). I can't see anywhere on the travel form to include it."

Response from CSU Travel
"The Dependant Care Allowance is only available for staff where they have to make an alternative arrangement to their 'normal' care for a dependant i.e. extra day care, a relative to look after them etc.

In your case this would not apply as you and your husband will still be with your child and the additional cost for a rollaway is a personal cost to you."

"Should one person be more successful than another because of the language they use? Equality would suggest that it should be a tick box, not have to argue your case with correct nuance in the language." P5

One common theme is the emotional energy required to manage issues arising from the application process, highlighted in the comment below.

"How did this made me feel? I felt like I had to defend something that should not need defending! I feel like there should be a section in the approval form that asks 'do you intend to claim for dependent care support? And a tick box with yes or no. Just like we tick whether we are of good health, fit to travel, also maybe (considering that not everyone might want/need to claim for it for each day they are away) a second box that lets you add in for how many days you are claiming this for?" P6

The study also uncovered that there is also no way of tracking unsuccessful applications. This means that there can be no clear view of how this policy is being administered. One excerpt from CSU travel email highlighted the need to better understand how this support policy is being used and increase the capacity of the CSU travel team to administer this.

November 2019, email from CSU Travel
"Unfortunately we had some staff seeking the allowance when they weren't eligible and we will manage these internally if and when they arise."

Organisational culture

The dependent care travel support policy is an unfunded policy. This means that money needs to be provided from research or professional budgets or divisional funds when employees apply for this. Many grant application processes explicitly exclude caring cost from the application process. Participants' comments below illustrate the challenges that arise due to the fact that there is no clear pathway for funding of this policy.

"We are both on the same project, it is externally funded (…) and subcontracted through another University. (…) We both know that in the initial budget there was no such cost budgeted for." P6

"So how does this make me feel? Unsatisfied. Still feeling a bit like fraud. I know I am doing the right thing, I know I was 'lucky' to have this approved, however, I also know that there is no way it should have been approved the way it was because these funds are now coming from something else that they were allocated to." P6

"We are already tight on funding in so many areas. $40 might not sound like much but if you have an entire team eligible and these extra payments with their travel wasn't accounted in to the budget for at the start of the year it could impact the bottom line. On one hand you want to tell everyone to apply, on the other hand you really want to hide it because where would the money come from if they did all ask for it multiple times a year?" P4

"Was successful in getting dependent care (…). Why do I feel the need to not actually follow through and claim the money when I return? I know how my supervisor feels about this policy and that the money comes from our research budget and so I should not claim it. What would make this feel normal and ok about this?" P3

"P6 stated this is an unfunded policy. This makes me so cranky. What is the point of the policy? Service areas simply don't have the money to fund it. It feels like lip-service from the uni with no backing. What do we do when we literally don't have the money to pay but the uni states there is a policy so we have to pay? How is this equitable?" P4

"I was so rushed filling out the form I didn't have the time to worry about the money and where it was coming from, but now I starting to worry it will be questioned, as the Acting HoS actually questioned someone else's travel plan in that meeting, saying they had over claimed lunch (when in fact they had claimed a Sunday lunch correctly) - it all felt a bit intensely interrogated and public." P2

As part of Charles Sturt University policy, travel is a condition of employment, given the distributed campus model that the university is based on. The travel policy says

"It is the University's policy to reimburse employees for ordinary, necessary and reasonable travel expenses that are directly connected with or pertaining to the conduct of CSU business.

Employees are expected to exercise prudent business judgment regarding expenses covered by this policy. They are expected neither to gain nor lose financially when travelling on CSU business."

However, without a funded dependent support travel policy, it does seem likely that travel for work will continue to come at a financial and opportunity cost to Charles Sturt University employees with dependents, and this disadvantage will be mainly felt by women.

Policy administration

In the years since its establishment, the CSU Travel Policy has been revised six times, with two major changes to the Dependent Care Allowance. This has resulted in the original intended outcomes of the policy not being achieved.

- When first introduced, the Policy simply reference to 'dependent care', without defining who dependents were.
- In 2012 the Policy was revised to say that the support applies to "dependents up to the age of 16 years, or where the dependent is in receipt of a disability support". This had the potential to have a substantial positive impact on a diverse range of care-givers.
- However, in 2019 the policy was been amended so that caring responsibilities for children under the age of 16 are the only responsibilities eligible for the support payment, removing any eligibility for support for dependent care of people over the age of 16 in receipt of a disability payment.

Appendix 1 details the changes in policy since the CSU Travel Policy was introduced in 2009, and they are summarised in Figure 1 below.
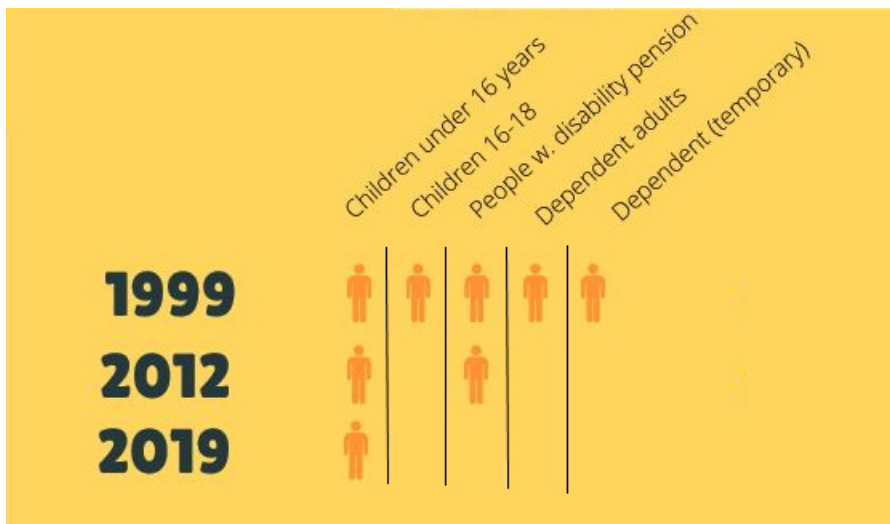

Figure 1: Change in Dependent Care Policy over time

There seems to be very limited awareness of the existence of the policy and/or how to apply for it. Given that the travel forms part of employment conditions for Charles Sturt University staff, it is surprising that the travel policy is not better publicized, with a clearer application process accessible to all.

> *"How are employees supposed to find out about this policy? When we asked the room of 25 LDW* ***(Leadership development for Women)*** *participants, none of them had heard of the policy. This is 25 female employees, the majority of whom have children, all of whom have had to travel for the LDW program. In my first few months at CSU I had to travel to a conference. I was still breastfeeding my youngest child and had to make arrangements to bring him with me as well as my mother to care for him. Both my supervisor and the CSU Travel office obviously knew I was arranging care for my dependent child but no one mentioned this policy to me. This trip cost my around $500 in travel and car hire costs." P1*

> *"I had two senior staff members tell me they only just learnt about the policy either this year or last and they wish they had known when their kids where young as it would have really helped." P4*

> *It's still not clear what makes you eligible to claim the allowance and for what, so this will be very interesting to see how it goes. I still have never been asked to prove my child's age, which is actually the only thing the policy says they can do!" P2*

> *"I also tried to touch on the subject with my current supervisors, who is part time on the same project as well as someone who has dependents and does frequent travel. Non response so far to my e-mail on this, which makes me feel like it's a topic that's been avoided, or too complex to debate or tried to analyze. I am sure there are many more staff in this same position of uncertainty, whether they are staff or managers." P6*

> *"Is it appropriate to claim the entitlement for a partner to care for the child? The partner may be taking leave without pay to care for dependent." P5*

> *"One of my children has autism which makes the demands of parenting even harder. It is not a simple situation of just finding someone or somewhere to provide care when I am away. The energy it would require for her to be cared for out of her usual routine would be considerable and*

would impact her for several days. From talking to other parents and managers throughout this project, I don't think managers often consider the many complex aspects of caring for dependents that can be involved and how it is not just as simple as getting a babysitter." P1

Towards the end of this project is was discovered that the allowance is liable for Fringe Benefits Tax after $2000 (50 days), which will have significant impact on some staff member's taxable income and family allowances including Child Care Subsidy entitlement, especially given child care is not an allowable tax deduction. It is important that these wider contexts be taken into account when considering the impact work-related travel has on families.

Gender equity

The study has shown that the successful uptake of this policy is low and it is being used solely by women. Given that this policy has been highlighted in the Athena SWAN application process and forms part of the Workplace Gender Equity strategy, understanding how this policy is being successfully taken up and also unsuccessfully applied for is important. We know that gender stereotypes are pervasive in our society and that the role of caregiving more often than not falls to women. This includes caregiving responsibilities not just for children but for adult dependents with a disability and aging parents (ABS 2018). This directly impacts women's ability and choice to travel for work. Consequently women are being required to make a choice between their caring responsibilities and their career development.

This study found examples of people unable to travel because of the cost involved and this may have ramifications for promotion and future employment opportunities.

> *"It just won't help. What's the point in applying for that amount? I just can't afford to travel do the [work]. I feel guilty that others in my team have to do it instead but I can't cover the cost of childcare." P8*
>
> *"I feel there is no recognition given to the fact that travel, or any work required outside of standard hours, has a large impact on the lives of employees. People use this time to spend with family and care for others but also be part of communities, for exercise and self-care, volunteer, look after their animals and properties. By not recognising that when travelling or working evenings, employees commit 16+ hours to work, the university is not recognising the important roles of their employees outside of CSU. I feel that this attitude comes from a culture of when men worked and women stayed home, to care for children but also care for the elderly, sick and disabled, volunteer in the community, do the housework and bear the mental load of running a household. For gender equity to be achieved we need to recognise the value of the roles of everyone outside of their paid employment. By requiring men and women to be available to travel without addressing the additional hours as well as financial burden of this, gender equity for women is not going to be achieved as women still bear the majority of these roles. By not supporting men in this way it makes it difficult for their partners to work. There is an assumption that there is a primary care giver rather than two parents raising children together." P1*

5. Recommendations

The project developed four recommendations based on the themes from the study data analysis, aimed at enhancing the capacity of the policy specifically and the University generally to enhance gender equity at Charles Sturt.

Consistent, transparent application process

This study has highlighted the need for a clear, transparent process for the administration of and application for the dependent care support policy. The CSU Travel department need to be fully supported in their capacity to administer this policy in a way that is clear to them, and also to the applicants. This transparency also needs to include a mechanism for tracking and monitoring unsuccessful applications, as well as a process for dispute resolution.

Improved Communication

The study identified one major weakness of the policy is the lack of communication about its existence and how to apply for it. It is recommended that the University consider how best to inform their professional and academic staff about the existence of the policy and how to access it.

Policy review

The changes in the policy since its creation need to be reexamined, along with consideration of the real needs for those with dependents. It is recommended that the University undertakes a full review of their professional and academic staff and the specifics of their caring responsibilities, including children, aging relatives and those with disabilities.

The review should also include quantification of unsuccessful application for the travel support policy. This information will also inform the review of the application and administration review.

Fund the policy

This policy is a major contributor towards gender equity and supporting those in the University with caring responsibilities. It is one of the only policies of its kind within Australian universities and Charles Sturt University should be proud of the lead it is taking toward gender equity. The future success of this policy to support gender equity lies in it becoming a funded policy.

All the recommendations from this study align with Charles Sturt University's Workplace Gender equity Strategy (Charles Sturt University, 2018b) and the Athena SWAN Action Plan (Charles Sturt University, 2018a), as highlighted in Table 3.

LDW Gender equity recommendations	Charles Sturt's Values	Workplace Gender Equity strategy	Athena SWAN Action Plan
Clear application process	Inclusive	Where practical, ensure all managers entrench flexible working for their employees	
Improved communication	Inclusive	Communicate flexible working conditions to all staff on a regular basis	Athena Swan Action Plan 5.1
	Impactful	Regular newsletters from HR, containing case studies, research findings and updates on the progress of various initiatives relating to gender equity	Athena Swan Action Plan 6.5/7.3/7.5
Policy review	Inclusive	Analyse current number of staff undertaking formal flexible working arrangements	
	Inclusive	Conduct focus groups with staff regarding the personal value placed on flexible work arrangements	Athena Swan Action Plan 3.1
	Inclusive	Review current policy 'Balancing Work and Study with Family and Caring Responsibilities Policy' to ensure relevance	
Fund the policy	Inspiring	Explore updating relevant policies and procedures to ensure gender representation across the University	

Table 3: Alignment of LDW gender Equity project and Charles Sturt's values, gender equity strategy and Athena SWAN action plan

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Appendix 1. Changes in Travel Policy

Year	Policy text	Changes
2009	12. DEPENDENT CARE EXPENSES WHILST TRAVELLING It is the policy of the University that staff who undertake work related travel are entitled to claim up to forty dollars ($40.00) per day (not per child) for care that is over and above their normal dependent care arrangements. This applies to both single day and overnight travel and is not subject to accommodation and meal allowance limits. Receipts are requested but not compulsory. 12.1 Claiming dependent care expenses All dependent care expense claims must be included as a separate amount on the staff member's travel authority/order and approved by the appropriate Budget Manager. Completing the Dependent Care Claim Form can claim expenses and submitting it with the travel authority/order and tax invoice (if applicable) to the CSU Travel Office, where reimbursement by EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer) or cheque will be issued to the staff member.	
2012	13. DEPENDENT CARE EXPENSES WHILST TRAVELLING It is the policy of the University that staff who undertake work related travel are entitled to claim up to forty dollars ($40.00) per day (not per child) for care that is over and above their normal dependent care arrangements. **This applies for dependants up to the age of 16 years, or where the dependant is in receipt of a disability support**. This applies to both single day and overnight travel and is not subject to accommodation and meal allowance limits. 13.1 Claiming Dependent Care Expenses This may be included as part of an Online Travel Plan. The allowance can then be claimed once your travel has been completed and matched to the Online Travel Plan. For staff claiming on a Travel Authority/Order, all dependent care expense claims must be included as a separate amount on the staff member's travel authority/order and approved by the appropriate Budget Manager.	Introduction of "This applies for dependants up to the age of 16 years, or where the dependant is in receipt of a disability support."
2019	Part P - Dependent Care Support (94)Staff who undertake work related travel are entitled to claim dependent care expenses up to forty dollars ($40.00) per day (not per child) for care that is over and above their normal dependent care cost arrangements. **This applies for dependants up to the age of 16 years. Proof of age of the dependent may be requested.**	Removal of "where the dependant is in receipt of a disability support" Introduction of "Proof of age of the dependent may be requested."

Appendix 2. Infographic from final LDW presentation

CSU TRAVEL POLICY
Part P – Dependent Care Support

(94) Staff who undertake work related travel are entitled to claim dependent care expenses up to forty dollars ($40.00) per day (not per child) for care that is over and above their normal dependent care cost arrangements. This applies for dependents up to the age of 16 years. Proof of age of the dependent may be requested.

TRAVEL AT CSU 2018 –2019

19000
TRAVEL PLANS ACROSS CSU IN 2018–2019

13
SUCCESSFUL CLAIMS FOR DEPENDENT CARE ALLOWANCE

POLICY HISTORY

	Children 0-16	Children 16-18	Disability pensioners	Dependent adults	Temporary dependents	CSU Dependent care allowance maximum rate	Long daycare average cost per child
1999	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	$40/day	$42/day
2012	✓		✓			$40/day	$86/day
2019	✓					$40/day	$122/day

THEMES

COMMUNICATION
CAREER OPPORTUNITIES
PROCEDURE
GENDER NORMS
GATEKEEPING
MENTAL LOAD & EMOTIONAL COST
ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE
COST OF CARE
GENDER EQUITY
FUNDING

ACTUAL DEPENDENT CARE COSTS

Legend: Lost income | Amount spent | Allowance paid

Categories: 4 day travel, Single day travel, 5 day conference, Conference, 2 day travel

Values shown: 40, -98; 40, -126, -186; -660; -500; 80, -150

IS THIS POLICY IMPROVING GENDER EQUITY AT CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY?

RECOMMENDATIONS

- central funding
- consistent and transparent application process
- communication and awareness
- policy review

HOW DOES CHARLES STURT CHANGE THIS PICTURE MOVING FORWARD

- Review of policy to reflect dependent care needs of staff
- Evaluation of experience of equity issues and policies, and consideration of the implication for the wider organisation transformation
- Implementation of Gender Equity Strategy

"For gender equity to be achieved we need to recognise the value of the roles of everyone outside of their paid employment. By requiring men and women to be available to travel without addressing the additional hours as well as financial burden of this, gender equity for women is not going to be achieved as women still bear the majority of these roles."

Appendix 3. Dependent care claim form

Charles Sturt University

DEPENDANT CARE CLAIM FORM

It is the policy of the University that staff who undertake work related travel are entitled to claim up to forty dollars ($40.00) per day (not per child) for care that is over or above their normal dependant care arrangements. This applies to both single day and overnight travel and is not subject to accommodation and meal allowance limits. Please refer to the Travel Policy for full details.

This allowance does not cover situations where care is provided through normal domestic arrangements (for example: by a partner/ spouse who is a joint carer)

DECLARATION OF EXTRAORDINARY DEPENDANT CARE EXPENSES

I _____(please print) (Staff ID :_____) hereby declare that I will incur additional expenses totalling $_____, relating to dependant care whilst conducting University business.

Name of Carer: _____Relationship to dependant: _____

Please detail what alternative care arrangements were made and how the expense was incurred (Note: the allowance does not cover situations where care is provided in your home by a joint carer).

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Applicant signature: _____   Date: _____

To ensure your travel plan is approved this form must be completed and returned to CSU Travel prior to your departure. Upon completion of your travel please contact CSU Travel to facilitate the payment of your allowance.