



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMY AND GENDER AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY
Mr James Milligan MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),
Ms Laura Nuttall MLA

Submission Cover sheet

Inquiry into Unpaid Work

Submission number: 2

Date authorised for publication: 1K 2024

Mr James Milligan MLA
Chair - Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020
Canberra City, ACT 2601

LACommitteeEGEE@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Mr Milligan,

**Submission to the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality
Inquiry into Unpaid Work**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into Unpaid Work.

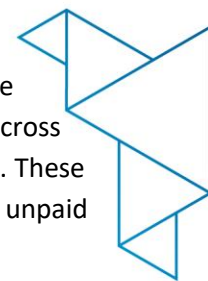
The Australian Government released [Working Future: The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities](#) in September 2023, outlining its vision for a dynamic and inclusive labour market. The White Paper process identified gaps in labour market data that, if addressed, would strengthen evidence-based policy decision making and support evaluation of labour market policies.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) received funding in the 2023-24 Mid-year Economic and Financial Outlook (MYEFO) to address some priority data gaps over the next four years, commencing in January 2024. The investment includes funding to improve statistics on the total amount of hours of unpaid care in Australia and their estimated monetary value. This enhancement will be achieved through an expansion of the [Labour Account](#), ensuring that the contribution of unpaid care to society and the economy is more visible alongside paid work.

Improved estimates of the amount and value of unpaid care were recommended by the Senate Select Committee into Work and Care to better inform policy development around the availability and affordability of care services, and support for unpaid carers.¹ In the White Paper, the Commonwealth Treasury provided a high-level estimate of the replacement value of unpaid care work in 2020-21 of around \$165.1 billion, equivalent to 7.9 per cent of measured Gross Domestic Profit (GDP).²

¹ [Working Future: The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities](#), September 2023, pg 238 (accessed 31 May 2024).

² [Working Future: The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities](#), September 2023, pg 65 (accessed 31 May 2024).



The ABS is currently in the early stages of developing a method for estimating the economic value of unpaid care on an annual basis. Given unpaid care responsibilities are not distributed evenly across the population, new estimates by sex and age will also be added to existing Labour Account data. These additional breakdowns will be critical for understanding the relationship between paid work and unpaid care.

The new estimates will build upon previous ABS exploratory work in [1992](#), [1997](#) and [2016](#) and reference principles included in the [2020-21 Australian System of National Accounts](#). The underpinning methodology will also draw on a range of international standards and frameworks, as well as emerging measurement approaches used by other comparable national statistical organisations.

While the starting point will be estimates of unpaid care, current development work will establish a framework for further expansion to measure other forms of unpaid work through the Labour Account in the future. The ABS has been funded to produce estimates at the national level, but state and territory breakdowns are another potential avenue for future expansion.

Regular and contemporary [Time Use Survey](#) data is an important enabler to accurately estimating the social and economic contribution of unpaid care through the Labour Account, alongside well-established ABS earnings estimates. The Time Use Survey collects data on the activities Australians take part in each day, including the amount of time people spend on unpaid work such as caring for children and older people. The survey was last conducted in 2020-21 following a 16-year hiatus. In the 2023-24 Budget, the Australian Government funded the ABS to conduct the Time Use Survey on a regular basis from 2024.

The ABS expects to release an information paper in late 2024 outlining the initial scope of unpaid care activities it intends to measure and a proposed methodology, prior to the release of preliminary experimental estimates in mid-2025. As an emerging area of measurement, the ABS is keen to consult with experts and interested stakeholders, to support these initial estimates and to further mature the approach over time.

The ABS would be willing to update the Committee on further progress in late 2024 to coincide with the release of its information paper. For further information, please contact the ABS Labour Statistics Program (labour.statistics@abs.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

Brenton Goldsworthy
Deputy Australian Statistician
Insights and Statistics Group

14 June 2024