Job Quality
Under Individualised Funding Models

Perspectives of in-home support workers

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Social Science

Wendy D Taylor
BA (Melb) BSW (Hons) (Monash) Grad Dip (Evaluation) (Melb) Cert. Publishing (Ryerson)

School of Global Urban and Social Studies
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University

31 July 2017
Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Wendy Taylor
31 July 2017
Acknowledgements

My deep and sincere thanks to the 18 disability support workers whom I had the privilege of interviewing as part of this research. They were generous with their time, thoughtful in their views and candid with their responses. I hope this helps more people to hear their perspective on a role they greatly value.

Thank you also to the service providers who helped with the recruitment of participants through publicising my research. They showed genuine interest in this research and gaining a deeper understanding of the workers’ perspective.

I also wish to thank my two supervisors Dr Carmel Laragy and Dr Larissa Bamberry. They showed commitment to my research, my development as an academic and my wellbeing, well beyond what I could have reasonably expected of supervisors. I cannot thank them enough and look forward to maintaining a strong collegial relationship with them in the future.

RMIT has an expanding, committed and thriving group of researchers, interested in all aspects of social support, all of whom provided valuable advice and feedback at pivotal stages in this research. I am deeply appreciative of their support and value their friendship. The same applies to my Level 5 HDR colleagues.

Thank you to the DSC GUSS team for their support, to Jenni Morris in particular. She has been efficient, professional and very kind.

Thank you to Lesley Hardcastle for proof reading this thesis with both speed and care.

Last, but never least, to my dear family. Graham, Eliza and Meg, thank you so much for your love, support and patience during my research. And special thanks to Meg who good naturedly assisted with the formatting over these past few weeks.
# Table of Contents

*Declaration* iii  
*Acknowledgements* v  
*List of Figures* ix  
*List of Tables* ix  
*Abstract* 1  
*Abbreviations* 3  
*Definitions of Terms* 4  
**Chapter 1: Introduction** 5  
  Background 5  
  Research aim, questions and rationale 7  
  New Institutionalism – The Theoretical Framework 8  
  Job Quality: A Heuristic Tool 8  
  Contribution of Research 8  
  Chapter outline 11  
**Chapter 2: Disability Reform and the Workforce** 13  
  New Institutionalism 13  
  Neoliberalism and the Deregulation 15  
  New Public Management (NPM) and Social Services 16  
  Individualised Funding Models: A Global Trend 18  
  The UK Experience: Workforce Trends 19  
  The Australian Experience: Paid Care and Markets 25  
  The Impact on Workers 31  
  The National Disability Insurance Scheme 35  
  Key Issues and Debates 38  
**Chapter 3: Good and bad jobs - A Job Quality Perspective** 46  
  Job Quality versus Job Satisfaction 46  
  Challenges and Definitions 49  
  Policy Makers and Academics — Parallel Streams 49  
  Academic Schools of Thought 52
List of Figures

FIGURE 1: RESEARCH DESIGN .................................................................................................................. 11
FIGURE 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS OF PAID CARE (ENGLAND 2005) .............................................................. 39
FIGURE 3: TWO TYPES OF JOB INSECURITY (DEVELOPED FROM GALLIE ET AL. 2016) .................................................. 60
FIGURE 4: AN INTERACTIVE MODEL OF RESEARCH DESIGN .................................................................................. 68
FIGURE 5: A MIXED METHODS RESEARCH DESIGN ......................................................................................... 70
FIGURE 6: RECRUITMENT PROCESS .......................................................................................................... 73
FIGURE 7: INTERVIEW STRUCTURE (NB: ‘JOB SECURITY’ THE SECOND LINE OF BOXES IS USED AS AN EXAMPLE) ................. 75
FIGURE 8: GROUP 4 COMMUNITY AND PERSONAL SERVICES WORKERS IN VICTORIA (SOURCE: ABS 2011 CENSUS) ............ 80
FIGURE 9: MEAN RATINGS OF ‘IMPORTANCE’ ................................................................................................. 82
FIGURE 10: PARTICIPANT WORKING PATTERNS .............................................................................................. 85
FIGURE 11: CAREER ASPIRATIONS .................................................................................................................. 86
FIGURE 12: THREE AREAS OF AN IN-HOME SUPPORT WORKER’S JOB ................................................................. 116
FIGURE 13: INSTITUTIONAL INFLUENCES ON IN-HOME SUPPORT WORKERS JOBS ..................................................... 135

List of Tables

TABLE 1: CHANGE IN ADULT DAY CARE JOBS IN ENGLAND (2012-2014) ................................................................. 21
TABLE 2: POLICIES, CONTRACTING ARRANGEMENTS AND JOBS – THE RELATIONSHIP .............................................. 23
TABLE 3: NON-PROFESSIONAL DISABILITY WORKFORCE (2009) .............................................................................. 30
TABLE 4: INDIVIDUALISED FUNDING PROGRAMS AND WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS IN AUSTRALIA ................................ 35
TABLE 5: AWARD CLAUSES IN THE SCHCADS AWARD (2010) .................................................................................... 42
TABLE 6: DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS ASSOCIATED WITH JOB QUALITY ....................................................................... 58
TABLE 7: PARTICIPANT PORTFOLIO ..................................................................................................................... 87
Abstract

The introduction of individualised funding models in an environment of consumer direction and deregulation has been transforming the disability workforce in Australia for more than a decade. With the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), the biggest social reform in Australia since Medicare, workforce restructuring and changes are accelerating. People with disabilities have long awaited the choice, control, greater independence and social inclusion the NDIS promotes. At the same time the government has needed a more financially sustainable system. Central to the success of this widely welcomed scheme is the workforce. The number of workers needed under the NDIS is predicted to be as many as double the current number once fully implemented. This workforce growth is occurring in the context of broader labour market restructuring and growing concerns about the quality of jobs.

This thesis investigates the job quality of in-home support workers employed under individualised funding models at a time when the sector is moving towards a disability market. It focuses on the experiences of in-home support workers in Victoria who support people with disabilities funded through consumer-directed, individualised funding arrangements. This includes people funded under the NDIS and Victorian Individual Support Packages (ISPs).

Drawing on new institutionalism as the theoretical framework and using job quality as a heuristic tool, this study explores two related aspects: how in-home support workers under individualised funding models define a ‘good job’; and the capacity for employers to provide these ‘good’ jobs in light of other institutional influences. Institutional influences in this context include both entities and social norms. The study used a mixed method design including 18 semi-structured interviews with in-home support workers, supplemented with quantitative data analysis.

The research found a ‘good’ job for this group of workers comprises ten dimensions that can be categorised under the three broad areas of the ‘work itself’, ‘working conditions’ and the ‘work environment’. Employers’ influence on each dimension varies. Their ability to shape
working conditions is highly constrained, being shaped by a complex interplay of institutions. Employers do, however, have greater capacity to influence aspects of the ‘work itself’, including the characteristic most highly valued by workers, the client-worker relationship. Furthermore despite evidence showing that employers focus on the safety of their workers in private homes, another key characteristic of a good job, the entrenchment of the ‘my house my rules’ social norm makes it challenging for employers to provide a safe work environment.

This study contributes to knowledge about how in-home support workers under individualised funding models experience and view their work, thereby deepening the understanding of an occupational group undergoing significant expansion. It will contribute to the development of a job quality framework for this occupation. This contribution is valuable in light of the mounting evidence that in this period of restructuring and uncertainty the job of the in-home support worker is becoming increasingly distant from the traditional Standard Employment Relationship (SER). The findings suggest that if this trend is not reversed, the job risks becoming primarily a good second job, and the skilled workers who require significant hours could be lost to the sector. This could threaten the success and sustainability of a much welcomed and long-awaited model of support for people with disabilities.
Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWPA</td>
<td>Australian Workplace and Productivity Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALD</td>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COAG</td>
<td>Council of Australian Governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Disability Reform Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSW</td>
<td>Disability Support Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFC</td>
<td>Global Financial Crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISP</td>
<td>Individual Support Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JQI</td>
<td>Job Quality Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDIA</td>
<td>National Disability Insurance Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDIS</td>
<td>National Disability Insurance Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPM</td>
<td>New Public Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAs</td>
<td>Personal Assistants (used in UK and Sweden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PICF</td>
<td>Participant Information and Consent Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPT</td>
<td>Permanent Part Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SER</td>
<td>Standard Employment Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHCADS</td>
<td>Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VicWAL JQI</td>
<td>Victorian Work and Life Job Quality Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VicWAL Survey</td>
<td>Work and Life Survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Definitions of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio Work Life</td>
<td>When a worker combines work in different roles or works for more than one employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Quality Dimensions</td>
<td>Dimensions, characteristics and attributes are used interchangeably in this thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualised funding models</td>
<td>Models that allocate funding to individuals with a disability where these people have control over how this funding is spent. Guidelines on how funding can be spent varies between models.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

Securing a sustainable workforce is central to delivering on the NDIS (Disability Reform Council, NDIA, June 2015 p. 7).

This research investigates the job quality of in-home support workers employed under individualised funding models. This group of workers, who support people with disabilities in private homes is central to the success of Australia’s National Disability Insurance Scheme, a scheme that has been widely welcomed and is bringing much needed reform to this sector. Government projections anticipate as many as double the number of workers will be required to support people under the Scheme. At the same time there is evidence from the United Kingdom and Australia that these funding models have led to deteriorating working conditions for workers. The impact of individualised funding models on workers in the Australian context is an under-researched area, with few studies focusing on the changes from the perspective of the lived experiences of the workers. This has provided the impetus for my research.

Background

Over the past thirty years neoliberal ideology, New Public Management (NPM) and strong disability advocacy have converged to transform how support for people with disabilities is provided in industrialised countries. In Australia this transformation culminated in the launch of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in July 2013. The NDIS is the largest social policy reform introduced in Australia since Medicare, Australia’s universal health care scheme, which was established in 1975 (KPMG 2014). The NDIS represents a broadly welcomed shift to more consumer directed, individually funded and flexible service model for people with disabilities. It also signifies a shift from a largely rationed, fragmented and disjointed system of disability services to a uniform national model operating within a disability market (NDIA 2015).

The NDIS is being progressively rolled out between 2013 and 2020. The National Disability Insurance Agency (2015) estimates up to 460,000 Australians could be eligible for support when the scheme is rolled out across Australia. Central to the success and sustainability of this ambitious scheme and service providers’ capacity to respond to consumer demand is the
availability of a suitable workforce (Disability Reform Council 2015; Productivity Commission 2012).

Ensuring the availability of workers is expected to be a challenge. The Disability Reform Council (NDIA 2015) has projected 162,000 workers will be needed to support participants under the NDIS. This is more than double the current workforce of approximately 73,600. At the same time that the NDIS is increasing demand for workers, the aged care industry, which is also shifting to an individualised funding model, is also requiring more workers to support elderly people to remain in their home (myagedcare.gov.au, 2016). Supporting clients in their own homes rather than more regulated workplaces will pose new challenges for the workers as well as service providers (Laragy et al. 2013; National Disability Services 2014a; Productivity Commission 2011).

My research is timely for several reasons. While research in disability has expanded in recent years, the academic literature on the in-home workforce, particularly in Australia, remains slim. In contrast, in the UK, where personalisation programs in various formats have been in place for two decades, labour force scholars have produced a large volume of research and significant evidence showing a deterioration in worker conditions (Rubery & Urwin 2011). Similarly, in Australia, evaluations of state-based ISPs and the NDIS pilots have pointed to an erosion of employment conditions for workers (Cortis et al. 2013; Macdonald & Charlesworth 2016). In related research in the Canadian context, substantial work has been done in the aged care context, which points to a strong link between quality jobs and quality care (Armstrong, Armstrong & Daly 2012) and of the care workforce more broadly (Baines & Daly 2015).

The deterioration of working conditions in disability support occupations cannot be viewed in isolation, and needs to be considered in the context of the broader Australian labour market. The shift to individualised funding models has been occurring during a time of dramatic labour force restructuring. The main drivers of these changes have included: globalisation; extensive migration; changing demographics, particularly the increased participation of women in the workforce; and increased technology and automation (Goos & Manning 2007; Campbell, Macdonald & Vosko 2009). These drivers have led to the widespread automation of routine jobs, the shift of manufacturing jobs and low skilled routine jobs to developing countries, the strong growth of the service sector and the stagnation of wages among
segments of the workforce (Campbell, Macdonald & Vosko 2009; Standing 2011). This has transformed the labour market in Australia and in other industrialised countries, and has led to a decline in the number of middle-level jobs and an increase in both higher skilled, non-routine and well-paid jobs at one end of the market, and lower skilled, routine and low paid jobs at the other end (Goos & Manning 2007). A polarisation of the labour market has resulted, with labour force scholars suggesting that the labour market is increasingly comprised of ‘lovely’ versus ‘lousy’ jobs (Goos & Manning 2007) or ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ jobs (Kalleberg 2011).

The radical workforce restructuring and widespread debate over the implications for workers’ jobs has prompted academics to ask questions such as: is job quality declining? Are men and women being affected by labour force restructuring in the same way? In addition, interest in job quality is being fuelled by the mounting evidence that poor quality jobs have damaging consequences for the health and wellbeing of workers (Quinlan & Bohle 2015) and the quality of care and wellbeing of users (Armstrong, Armstrong & Daly 2012; Cortis et al. 2013; Meagher 2006).

The transformation of the disability sector at a time of radical restructuring of the labour force more generally points to a need to investigate the point at which the two contexts intersect. This is the focus of my research.

**Research aim, questions and rationale**

My thesis is about in-home support workers supporting people with disabilities in their homes under individualised funding models. My research investigates how in-home support workers under these models experience their work with the aim of identifying the characteristics that constitute a ‘good’ job from their perspective. The second aim of my research is to determine whether employers can provide these ‘good’ jobs in the context of disability and workforce reform.

The research questions for this study are:

1. How do in-home support workers define a ‘good’ job under individualised funding models?
2. To what extent can employers shape the quality of jobs for in-home support workers under individually funded models?
New Institutionalism – The Theoretical Framework
In recent years, researchers have increasingly drawn on one of the multiple strands of institutional theory to understand the changes to employment conditions among vulnerable workers, including paid care and support workers (Charlesworth 2012; Meagher, Szebehely & Mears 2016). This research draws on one strand, neo institutionalism, as its theoretical framework. The appeal of this is that it offers a broad view of what constitutes an ‘institution’. This view extends beyond the traditional view of institutions being formal structures to one that includes predictable social patterns (Powell & DiMaggio 1991). This includes social norms. Furthermore, it emphasises the importance of understanding how various institutions interact and intersect to wield their influence rather than suggesting a linear cause-and-effect dynamic between institutions and workers. New institutionalism is described in more detail in Chapter Two.

Job Quality: A Heuristic Tool
To learn about in-home support workers’ experiences, job quality characteristics are employed as a heuristic tool. While conceptualisations of job quality are continuing to develop in Australia, this concept is established sufficiently to act as a tool to investigate workers’ experiences. Job quality, and other issues around employment for individuals, need to be analysed in a broader context, such as the workplace, industry and labour market and prevailing social norms (Green 2006; Pocock and Skinner 2012). This is in line with the approach of critical realism (Maxwell 2012).

Exploring job quality within an institutional theoretical framework is an approach supported by leading labour force scholars (Meagher, Szebehely & Mears 2016; Charlesworth 2012). Such scholars have argued that job quality cannot be viewed in isolation and that there are various institutional influences (Cruickshank 2003; Green 2006; Muñoz de Bustillo et al. 2011; Pocock & Skinner 2012).

Contribution of Research
My research contributes to three bodies of literature. First, it builds on the body of Australian disability workforce literature focusing on the lived experiences of in-home support workers under individualised funding models. Through using a multi-dimensional job quality lens
rather than the more common job satisfaction construct it contributes to a broader and deeper understanding of in-home support workers employed by service providers. (The rationale for choosing the job quality construct over the job satisfaction construct is provided at the beginning of Chapter Three) Most Australian research on the disability support workforce has focused on workers in residential units/group homes, and has not segmented workers by service type (Mitic 2013). Second, as one of a growing number of studies drawing on institutional theory in labour force research, it adds to workforce sociologists’ and paid care researchers’ understanding of the complex interplay of factors shaping the jobs of in-home support workers. Third, by including workers who have worked with a variety of employer types and funding models over many years, the findings can contribute to the broader debate around: Is job quality declining?

Importantly, my research offers a practical application, offering employers information on the aspects of their work that in-home workers value, and those over which employers can exercise some influence. The findings have potential to support attraction, recruitment and retention policies. At a more strategic level, the findings could contribute to the development of an occupation specific job quality framework.

**A critical realist approach**

My study adopted a mixed methods methodology in line with the critical realism approach advocated by Joseph Maxwell (2012). Maxwell explained the approach as:

> ...critical realists in the social sciences treat the ideas and meanings held by individuals — their concepts, beliefs, feelings, intentions, and so on—as equally real to physical objects and processes. Critical realists see these two aspects of reality not as inherently independent and separate realms, but as interacting in social life and mutually influencing each other (Joseph A. Maxwell 2012, vii-viii).

My study uses Maxwell’s ‘interactive’ model of research design, a model based on five components that are related, but also act as an interacting system. The components are: Goals, Conceptual Framework, Validity, Methods and Research Questions (Maxwell, 2012 p. 78). The interactive design requires the researcher to be continually thinking and assessing the connection between the components and implications for each other (Maxwell 2012). In a realist approach data is not seen as just the constructions of participants, but as evidence for real phenomena and processes. How the adoption of critical realism has influenced my methodology is discussed at the beginning of Chapter Four.
Language and terms

In the context of this study, ‘homes’ means the clients’ private homes, rather than group homes run by governments or other providers, or other residential facilities. A further point of clarification is the use of the job title ‘in-home support worker’. All workers in this study provided personal care and assistance with daily living tasks. For some workers their duties also involved accompanying people to the shops, medical appointments, social activities within their local community or to workplaces.

Several different titles are used to describe paid workers who support people with disabilities in their own home. These include ‘disability support workers’, ‘home carers’, ‘personal carers’, ‘support workers’ and ‘in-home support workers’. In this study I use the term ‘in-home support worker’ to make clear the distinction between ‘care’ and ‘support’. The term ‘carer’ typically refers to family members and friends who provide unpaid care and support to people with disabilities.

Research design

An overview of the research design is provided here and presented in Figure 1.

Approach: My study adopts critical realism, specifically as described by Joseph Maxwell (2012).

Theoretical framework: New institutionalism has been used as the theoretical framework to guide the literature review and a nuanced analysis of the qualitative data.

Research Design: In keeping with critical realism, the study adopts a mixed methods design (see Figure 1). In line with situating the research at the nexus between workforce reform in the disability arena and the restructuring of the labour force more generally, the literature is reviewed in two separate chapters. The first chapter situates the research in the context of disability reform, the shift to individualised funding models and the resulting workforce restructuring. The second literature review chapter situates the research in the context of changes to the wider labour force restructuring and the growing interest in job quality.

Methodology: The research design comprised two data collection methods. These were 18 semi-structured interviews and scaled questions that were asked during interviews. The
interview transcriptions were analysed using thematic analysis. In line with a critical realist approach the analysis focused on explaining the diversity of responses and causation. The qualitative data were analysed with the support of NVIVO software. The responses to the questions using a Likert scale were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 22.

![Research Design](image)

**Figure 1: Research Design**

**Chapter outline**

This thesis is structured as follows.

**Chapter 2: Disability reform and the workforce**

This chapter reviews the workforce, social care and paid care literature with a focus on identifying how jobs are changing, the institutional factors shaping the jobs of in-home support workers under individualised funding models and the key debates.
Chapter 3: Good and bad jobs: A job quality perspective

This chapter reviews the job quality literature, covering the definitions, development of the conceptualisations, and the contributions of the different schools of thought and areas of debate. It includes a review of the job quality characteristics most commonly included in job quality frameworks and identifies the gaps in the literature in relation to the in-home support workforce.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology used to answer the research questions. It begins with a detailed overview of the methodology and research design. This is followed by a detailed description of the data collection method through semi-structured interviews with in-home support workers. This covers sampling, recruitment process, the interview schedule, sample profile and ethical issues and reflexivity and the development of an appropriate Likert scale.

Chapter 5: A good job - the workers' perspective

This chapter describes the main findings and draws together the analysis of the 18 semi-structured interviews. It presents the quantitative analysis of the characteristics most valued by workers. The findings are structured around the job quality characteristics that were used to guide the interviews, and concludes with a framework of 10 dimensions comprising ‘good job’ from their perspective. In this chapter the findings are discussed in relation to the literature.

Chapter 6: A good job - the employers' influence

The chapter is structured around the 10 dimensions proposed at the end of Chapter 5. The findings are re-examined to explore the extent employers can provide a ‘good job’ as defined by workers. In line with the theoretical framework, the analysis draws out the influences of different institutions and suggests how they influence the evolving jobs of in-home support workers. In this chapter the findings are discussed in relation to the literature.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter views the findings in relation to the broader contexts in which my research is situated. It highlights the implications and contributions of my research.

The conclusion is followed by the References and the Appendices.
Chapter 2: Disability Reform and the Workforce

This chapter focuses on the broad ideological, policy and social factors influencing the work of in-home support workers. It draws on the workforce, social care, and paid care literature across the social sciences. It begins by introducing new institutionalism, the theoretical framework drawn on to understand the factors shaping the work of in-home support workers. This is followed by an analysis of the impact of neoliberalism and New Public Management (NPM) on social service provision in industrialised countries, before the focus narrows to the reform of disability services. Two systems are reviewed in more detail: The UK’s personalisation program, which has evolved over the past 20 years, and Australia’s individualised funding models for people with disabilities. A brief overview of the pathway to Australia’s inaugural national program, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), is provided. This leads to an overview of key workforce issues and debates, such as the undervaluing of paid care, emotional labour, fragmented time, the transfer of risk, and the influence of human resources (HR) and service providers. This chapter concludes by summarising the institutional influences on in-home support worker jobs and how they are shaping this work. This segues into the second literature review chapter on job quality in the context of wider labour force change.

New Institutionalism
This study draws on new institutionalism as the theoretical framework to view the multiple influences shaping the work of in-home support workers. It is one strand of many that fall under the umbrella of institutional theory, a core concept in sociology (Jepperson 1991; Powell & DiMaggio 1991). In defining an ‘institution’ Jepperson (1991) considered the cultural, structural and actual objects commonly regarded as organisations, and focused on describing the commonalities that supported their grouping together. Examples of objects he regarded as institutions include marriage, sexism, insurance, the army, the corporation, voting and wage labour. He proffered the following definition of institutions and institutionalism:

Institutions represent a social order or pattern that has attained a certain state or property; institutionalisation denotes the process of such attainment. ... An institution is then a social pattern that reveals a particular reproduction process (Jepperson 1991, p. 145).

From a new institutionalist perspective, institutions operate as constraining, empowering and controlling influences ‘by providing frameworks, programs or rules establishing identities
and activity scripts for such identities’ (Jepperson 1991 p. 146). This theory varies from traditional institutional theory in several ways. First, as was demonstrated by Jepperson’s definition, new institutionalists define institutions more broadly than institutionalists in other strands. Second, new institutionalism diverges from older institutional theories in its conceptualisation of the environment. Earlier institutionalists view organisations as embedded in their local communities, ‘to which they are tied by multiple loyalties of personnel and by inter organisational treaties hammered out in face-to-face interaction’ (Powell & DiMaggio 1991, p.13). In contrast, new institutionalists suggest more subtle influences of environments, focusing instead on non-local environments, either ‘organisational sectors or fields roughly coterminal with the boundaries of industries, professions or national societies’ (Powell & DiMaggio 1991p.13). In this alternate view, environments ‘penetrate the organisation’, thereby ‘creating lenses through which actors view the world and the various categories of structure, action and thought’ (Di Maggio & Powell 1991 p.13). And finally, new institutionalism views the process of institutionalisation occurring at the sectoral or societal level, so it is therefore inter-organisational in focus (Di Maggio & Powell 1991).

More than 20 years ago, workforce scholars in the Australian context suggested the need to shift the focus of research away from the workplace to an institutional approach (Gardner 1991). Following the implementation of a decentralised wage system and enterprise bargaining, workforce researchers focused on the nature of relations between management and employees (Gardner 1991). Gardner (1991), however, was critical of industrial frameworks and conceptual models that concentrated solely on these two actors and their interactions to the neglect of other players in the industrial landscape. Such an ‘orthodox’ approach to industrial relations analysis tended ‘to overemphasise the autonomy and foundational importance of the workplace’ (Gardner 1991 p. 480). In contrast, Gardner advocated for an institutional understanding of industrial relations, though she defined institutions more narrowly than did the sociologists advocating new institutionalism described earlier (Jepperson 1991; Powell & DiMaggio 1991). From Gardner’s perspective, institutions were best understood as formal structures, such as trade unions and employer associations, unions and the rules of government and individual action i.e., labour law. While Powell and DiMaggio (1991) acknowledged institutional theory and institutionalism have been ‘vague and ambiguous’ terms, they argue that a new institutionalist approach
provides sociologists and social scientists with ‘fresh answers to old questions about how social choices are shaped, mediated and channelled by institutional arrangements’ (DiMaggio & Powell 1991 p.2). The value of this theoretical approach to my research is twofold. It encourages a broad approach to exploring the diverse and numerous institutions that shape the work of in-home workers. As a theoretical framework it encourages a broader exploration of institutional influences and analysis from a combination of viewpoints as is demonstrated by Jepperson’s argument that, ‘institutions are not just constraint structures; all institutions simultaneously empower and control (Jepperson 1991, p.146). Furthermore, the approach promotes analysis of the interactions between such institutions.

**Neoliberalism and the Deregulation**

Over the past thirty years neoliberal ideology has influenced government social policy in Anglo-western countries and other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (Cahill 2007). The embracing of neoliberal ideology by governments in English-speaking industrialised countries, including the UK, Canada, New Zealand, the United States, and Australia has led to the transformation of social services and organisations designed to support and protect people in these countries (Baines, 2010; Baines, Charlesworth, Cunningham & Dassinger, 2012; Cahill, 2007; Cunningham & James, 2009). Defining what is meant by ‘neoliberalism’ is required here, given it has become a ubiquitous concept with differing definitions (Flew, 2014; Weller & O’Neil 2014). Weller and O’Neil describe neoliberalism as ‘vague, even ambiguous, so it becomes slippery as an idea, altering even from paragraph to paragraph within one text’ (p. 107).

They argue that viewing all changes and events as manifestations of neoliberal ideology risks losing the instinct to examine more closely the socio-economic changes occurring. At the time of this current research their view appears to be overshadowed by the dominant view that neoliberalism ideology and logic have dramatically changed, and are continuing to change, the delivery of social services. This study adopts the dominant and prevalent view and defines neoliberalism as a set of political beliefs, values and practices that prioritise the free market and market deregulation, and focuses on individual rather than collective responsibility for social and individual problems (Baines 2010; Connell, Fawcett & Meagher 2009).
In line with neoliberal ideology, extensive restructuring of the social services sector has occurred across the aforementioned countries. Incrementally, governments have been extracting themselves from social service delivery and handing over this function to the not-for-profit and for-profit sectors. The contemporary roles of governments now more commonly involve setting policy, funding, co-ordinating and monitoring services as opposed to delivering services (Evans, Richmond & Shields, 2005).

In the social science literature, the consequences of outsourcing service delivery have been interpreted in a range of ways. Critics have argued that outsourcing is driving the dismantling of the welfare state, both in terms of its size and the quality of services (Baines 2015; Evans, Richmond & Shields 2005; King 2007; Rubery et al. 2015). While this appears the dominant view in the social science literature, some scholars warn that past systems are often viewed more favourably in hindsight. Evans, Richmond and Shields (2005) argued that a ‘romanticising’ of the previous welfare state model ignores the fact that funds were not always spent wisely and services were not necessarily responsive to client needs. Cahill (2007) also seeks to clarify the impact of neoliberal policies, asserting that while neoliberal policies have driven the decline of the welfare state, they have not led to a retreat of state influence. The state continues to play ‘a strong, active, interventionist and coercive role’ (2007, p.222). Similarly, Fenner and Tapper (2012) contest the view that the dismantling of the welfare state has occurred, arguing that contrary to common perceptions neoliberalism has not reduced the size of the Australian welfare state. Hence, while there is some debate over whether the ‘welfare state’ is diminishing the size and service quality in Australia and elsewhere, there is agreement within the social science literature that the execution of neoliberal ideology is transforming the management and delivery of social services programs and the workforce that delivers these programs.

**New Public Management (NPM) and Social Services**

New Public Management (NPM) is the managerial approach drawn from the corporate world which has been guiding how social services are delivered and managed in the UK, Canada and Australia (Baines, Charlesworth, Cunningham & Dassinger 2012). A growing number of scholars have focused their attention on the impact of NPM, specifically on the contracting out of services to the community sector, the subsequent relationship between community sector service providers and government funding bodies and the consequences of these
actions on the management, staffing and delivery of social services (Baines 2010; Baines & Cunningham 2016; Cunningham, Baines & Charlesworth 2014; Baines & Daly 2015; Evans, Richmond & Shields 2007; Rubery & Urwin 2011; Wright 2015). The central tenets of the NPM paradigm are: the outsourcing of service delivery and contract-based funding; privatisation; the quantification of output and results; rigorous accountability, including explicit and individual performance management systems; and individual target setting (Baines, Charlesworth, Turner & O’Neil 2014; Cunningham, Baines & Charlesworth 2014; Green-Pedersen 2002).

Scholars are divided on the benefits of NPM. Proponents of NPM have argued that this approach leads to increased efficiency, enabling the offering of the same service at a lower cost or better services at the same cost. Furthermore, competitive tendering, or the ‘marketization of services’, provides consumers with a greater choice of services. Government advocates argue that outsourcing drives innovation and continuous improvement in the public services (Entwistle & Martin 2005 cited in Rubery, Grimshaw & Hebson 2013).

A growing body of research, however, views NPM in a less favourable light, citing many negative consequences of this managerial approach. The predominant means by which governments have achieved cost savings in the social services has been through outsourcing the delivery to the community sector, which provides services at a lower cost (Baines, Charlesworth, Cunningham & Dassinger 2012). The deliberate in-built underfunding of not-for-profit organisations, whereby the allocated funds cover the program delivery costs, but fail to factor in the associated administrative costs, has become known as the “hollow core” approach (Evans, Richmond, Shields 2005). Community sector organisations have paid lower wages and offered fewer benefits compared to government employers. The lower wages have reflected the difficulties the community sector have faced in getting this type of work recognised and paid appropriately, and the government pricing models for outsourced services (Baines, Charlesworth, Cunningham & Dassinger 2012; Baines, Charlesworth, Turner & O’Neil 2014; Charlesworth, 2012; Cunningham, Baines & Charlesworth 2014).

Furthermore both single country research and comparative studies have found service providers’ priorities have changed under NPM. Organisations have increasingly focused on maintaining tight managerial control, monitoring staff, setting targets, reducing costs and minimising waste, increasing standardisation and achieving a more flexible labour force.
Community service managers have been spending increasing amounts of time trying to secure work, juggling multiple contracts and meeting complex accountability measures required by their different funders. Consequently, managers and supervisors have faced increasing spans of control which have led to increased workloads and an intensified pace of work. Their day-to-day roles have shifted from primarily program development, troubleshooting and supporting frontline staff to ‘coaching staff to meet competitive performance goals, documenting the outputs of care and community mobilisation practices that do not easily lend themselves to quantification; and enforcing policy agendas with which they did not agree’ (Baines, Charlesworth, Turner & Neil 2014, p. 438). The accountability requirements have flowed through to frontline workers with more of their time now being spent on record keeping (Cunningham, Baines & Charlesworth, 2014). However, while researchers are in general agreement that NPM has had significant impact on organisations and work, recent evidence suggests paid care workers have retained some level of autonomy in the context of NPM (Meagher, Szebehely & Mears, 2016). In a study using comparative institutional theory that compared paid carers in Australia and Sweden in the aged care context, the researchers drew the following conclusion:

Importantly, there is little evidence that Australian home care work has been Taylorised. From the 1990s, NPM affected how funding was distributed (e.g. via competitive tendering for new funds), but by that time non-profit providers were long established and highly trusted (Davidson, 2015). In general providers have been left to find their own ways of organizing home care work, without highly detailed steering. This leaves room for care managers to arrange home care work in ways that sustain care relationships (Meagher, Szebehely & Mears 2016, p. 8).

**Individualised Funding Models: A Global Trend**

Over the past 25 years a large segment within social services, the disability sector, has undergone, and continues to undergo, radical transformation in Australia and overseas (Crozier et al. 2013). This re-structuring has been driven by governments’ desire to save money and contain costs in the short term, and the need to devise sustainable systems of support in light of changing demographics and spiralling social care costs in the long term (Leece 2007; Rabiee, Moran, Glendinning 2009; Wilberforce et al. 2011). New service models have also been developed in response to people with disabilities demanding a greater say in how support is delivered.
While funding guidelines have differed between countries and programs, the broad aims of promoting self-determination, social inclusion, independent living and consumer choice have been shared (Laragy 2010). Typically, funding guidelines have provided funds to pay support workers, provide equipment, social activities and transport. In some cases recipients have been enabled to directly employ support workers or personal assistants (Laragy 2010), including under some guidelines, family, friends or neighbours (Laragy 2010).

**The UK Experience: Workforce Trends**

It is useful here to review the robust body of literature that has analysed the evolution and outcomes of personalisation models in the United Kingdom, models which began more than twenty years ago. While UK personalisation policies and programs have many structural differences to Australian individualised programs, there are enough similarities for this literature to illuminate the implications of individualisation models for the work and working conditions of in-home support workers. The most relevant studies have explored the restructuring of services that occurred as funding shifted from services to individuals, particularly in terms of the nature of services being provided, where they are delivered, the types of employers who manage the services, and changes to workers’ day-to-day work. Most studies focus on jurisdictions within the UK, most commonly England, which had a much higher take up of the direct payments options in the first decade than did other parts of the UK (Leece 2007; Priestley, et al. 2007).

A key milestone in the evolution of the personalisation programs in the UK was the 1996 Community Care (Direct Payments) Act which gave government Local Authorities (LAs) the power to offer ‘able and willing’ adults with disabilities and of working age a cash payment known as a ‘direct payment’ in lieu of services (Moran et al. 2012). For the first decade the take up rate among eligible adults was low (Priestley et al. 2007). The introduction of direct payments for working aged people with disability was followed by formal pilots of Individual Budgets (IBs) involving 13 government Local Authorities (LAs) (Jacobs et al. 2011; Wilbeforce et al. 2011). This model was based on a model developed by In Control, a social enterprise for people with learning disabilities. IBs were more flexible than direct payments and expanded the types of services IB recipients could purchase. (Leece, 2007). In 2007 the then Labour Government announced the key principles of the IBs for ‘everyone eligible for publicly funded adult social care support’ in England (Department of Health 2007:3). A
revised and rebranded version of IBs known as ‘Personal Budgets’ was later implemented under the policy of ‘personalisation’ (Manthorpe, et al. 2010a; Unison 2011). Personal budgets were later extended to elderly people, then children with special needs or requiring palliative care, as well as young adults (Moran et al. 2013). A review of how the personalisation program has evolved in the UK over the past twenty years points to the unabated government expansion of the personalisation program, regardless of the political party in office or the ensuing economic climate (Cunningham 2016; Cunningham & James, 2009; Grimshaw & Rubery 2012; Leece 2007; Moran et al. 2012; Rubery & Urwin, 2011).

While research has focused heavily on the experiences of the recipients, in the last decade research on the impact of individualised funding on the workers has steadily grown. In particular, studies on ‘domiciliary home care workers’ have noticeably increased (Atkinson & Lucas 2013a; Atkinson & Lucas 2013b; Moran et al. 2012; Rabiee et al. 2009; Stainton, Boyce & Philips 2009). The research on the experiences of users and service providers illuminates potential issues for workers.

Research on the experiences of service providers suggested that providers found managing a more flexible service enjoyed by the users was challenging (Wilberforce et al. 2011). Commonly, the challenges were associated with workers needing to work more flexibly and service providers experiencing increased costs (Wilberforce et al. 2011). Particularly challenging was managing the increased requests for same-day service and organising support during peak hours. The demand for short-notice unplanned care was particularly problematic, requiring considerable changes to staffing arrangements (Wilberforce et al. 2011). Service providers also faced potential higher costs associated with new IT systems, new processes for invoicing and chasing non-payments and higher worker turnover (Wilberforce et al. 2011).

**Workforce restructuring**

Government policy makers and academics predicted that the shift to individualised funding models would significantly increase the number of people required to support people with disabilities, reduce the proportion of the workforce employed in the public sector and increase the proportion of the workforce delivering services in the home (Hussein and Manthorpe 2010; Unison 2011). A Skills for Care report in 2016 on the adult care workforce in England estimated that 1.55 million people worked in adult social care in England, a
growth of 18 per cent since 2009. It also found that, as anticipated, the adoption of individualised funding had resulted in a significant transfer of service provision from government-run to independent providers (Skills for Care, 2016). Since 2009 the total number of social care jobs in the Local Authorities (LAs) has decreased by 33 per cent, a total of 60,000 jobs (Skills for Care, 2016). At the time of writing, LAs employed only nine per cent of the total adult social care workforce. The majority of adult care workers, 78 per cent, were employed in the ‘independent sector’, and worked in organisations with fewer than 20 staff. The Skills for Care report did not split independent employers between ‘private’ and the voluntary (not-for-profit sector), but estimated three quarters (75%) of these jobs were in the private sector. Furthermore, many of these workers held more than one job.

Accompanying the changes in worker numbers and the ratio between public sector and independent employers of these workers has been shifts in the demand for different service types. This has had a direct impact on the nature of the work available in the sector (Cunningham & Nickson 2010). This is best demonstrated in domiciliary home care jobs. Between 2009 and 2014, the number of jobs in domiciliary care jumped by 170,000 workers, or 36 per cent (Skills for Care, 2016). In contrast, the number of jobs in the smallest segment, adult day service, has nearly halved (Woolham & Benton 2009, cited in Hussein & Manthorpe 2010). (See Table 1)

Table 1: Change in Adult Day Care Jobs in England (2012-2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult Day Service (England)</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Adult Day Service Job jobs*</td>
<td>66,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Adult Day Centre jobs of total</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Social Care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Skills for Care 2013; Skills for Care 2016

NB: The number of jobs is different to the number of staff because people work in more than one job

The changes in employment patterns between the various segments reflects differences in the worker profile between segments, as well as variances in their pay and working conditions. Hussein and Manthorpe (2010) analysed the adult day care workforce profile using the National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC). They found the adult day care workforce was older, less ethnically diverse, more qualified and comprised a higher proportion of male workers than either the domiciliary care or residential care workforce. Significantly, the adult day care staff enjoyed better working conditions than staff in other
segments. They were significantly more likely to be permanent and full time, had more opportunities to work as managers or supervisors and were less likely to work for an agency. Adult day centre providers had fewer problems recruiting and retaining staff compared to other segments. Hence, the decline in adult day service roles reduced the number of roles offering regular and predictable hours and the opportunity to work full time in the sector.

Outsourcing and home carers’ working conditions

The government outsourcing of core functions has given rise to new and complex organizational forms (Rubery et al. 2002). In the adult social care sector the new organisational forms stem from the contractual arrangements between the Local Authorities (LAs) and the independent providers delivering the services (Leece 2007; Rubery & Urwin, 2011; Rubery, Grimshaw & Hebson 2013). In turn these new organisational forms are reshaping the traditional employment arrangement known as the Standard Employment Relationship (SER) (Rubery et al. 2012). The SER is one in which the employee has one employer, undertakes work at the employer’s site and has regular full-time, permanent work with access to workplace rights and employment entitlements such as leave, allowances and penalty rates (Rubery et al. 2012; Kalleberg 2011). Throughout the twentieth century the SER, also known as the ‘male breadwinner model’, was the normative model of employment (Murray & Stewart 2015). The SER has also offered stability for workers as is demonstrated by Rubery and Urwin (2011):

The employment relationship is an institution which involves mutual obligations between employers and employees which extend into the future and protect both sides from onerous renegotiations of task and rewards as external and internal conditions change (Rubery & Urwin 2011, p.125)

Rubery and colleagues (2013) argue that under an outsourced model the relationship is a triangular one between care workers, their own/direct employer and the local authorities. Of particular concern to labour force scholars has been the deterioration in working conditions that have accompanied these new triangular relationships, particularly for domiciliary workers (Rubery & Urwin, 2011; Rubery, Grimshaw & Hebson 2013).

Evidence pointing to poorer employment conditions among UK domiciliary workers under low-cost outsourcing models is steadily growing (Cunningham 2016; Hussein 2017; Rubery & Urwin 2011; Rubery et al. 2015). The contracts have provided insufficient funds to cover the full costs of employment beyond the direct client contact hours. This includes the costs of
staff training, sick leave, recruitment and retention, and the increased costs associated with
providing services outside standard working times (Rubery & Urwin 2011). Workers have
experienced a rise in zero hours contracts (i.e. contracts that do not include a guaranteed
minimum number of hours per week) and a contraction of the minimum number of hours per
shift, while at the same time dealing with rising expectations regarding workers’ availability
to work and their flexibility to work split shifts and unsocial hours. Furthermore, payments
for travel time between service users have been limited and options to move out of direct care
roles have been restricted (Baines & Cunningham 2015; Cunningham 2016; Rubery,
contracts have failed to provide legislation for health and safety measures for staff working in
isolation in clients’ homes (Unison 2011). Table 2 summarises the relationship between
government policies, LA contracting arrangements and the work and working conditions of

Table 2: Policies, Contracting Arrangements and Jobs – The Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LA Contracting Arrangements</th>
<th>Domiciliary care workers – Work and Workload (labour process)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Local Authorities are reducing the price they are prepared to pay for care</td>
<td>↑ record keeping, including electronic monitoring of working time at visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• LAs increasingly fixing a maximum price they will pay for domiciliary care</td>
<td>↑ complex needs of clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>↑ pace and intensity (more ‘call cramming’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>↑ standardization of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>↑ fragmented and irregular hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>↑ work at meal times and evenings (‘hour-glass’ time schedules)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Policy and Programs</th>
<th>Working Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Direct payments</td>
<td>↓ minimum number of hours for which workers can be employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individual budgets</td>
<td>↓ enhanced payments for shorter visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal budgets</td>
<td>↓ notification time for shift changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personalisation</td>
<td>↓ acknowledgement for OH&amp;S issues including lone workers doing night shifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>↑ asking new recruits to pay for statutory recruitment costs in first instance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>↑ % of workers paid below the National Minimum Wage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>↑% of workers on ‘zero hours contracts’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>↑ % of workers paid for ‘contact time only’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Rubery & Urwin 2011: Rubery et al. 2015)
More recent research provides further support for claims that marketization and outsourcing policies in England have contributed to low wages and ‘weak contractual arrangements’ for home care workers, but it also emphasises other contributing factors. Hussein (2017), in her research on long term care workers in England, concluded low wages were maintained by workers valuing the non-monetary rewards of the work while believing the wages were ‘never likely to be sufficient to make ends meet’. This finding is consistent with the ‘prisoners of love’ framework put forward by England (2005) discussed later in the chapter under ‘Social norms and the undervaluing of paid care’.

**Austerity and gender equality**

While the UK literature points to a marked decline in working conditions for domiciliary workers under adult social care policies, the economic context in which these policies have evolved in the UK must be considered. In 2008, the year after the direct payments program was expanded and personal budgets were introduced, the economic context in which personalisation was operating changed suddenly and dramatically as a result of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). In response to the GFC, the new Labour Government at the time initially increased public expenditure, but later cut social service expenditure (Cunningham, 2015; Rubery 2015; Rubery, Grimshaw & Hebson 2013). This period of austerity featuring successive budget cuts was continuing at the time of this research. There remains some debate, however, over whether the shrinking of the state’s role in social service provision will undergo a correction or whether the decline in the state’s role will become more permanent (Rubery & Rafferty 2013; Rubery 2015).

The erosion of employment conditions for the predominantly female social care domiciliary workforce under the personalisation policies in a climate of austerity must also be viewed in the broader context of gender equality in the workplace. In the past decade some of the significant gains women had made have diminished as a result of austerity measures (Rubery 2015). The gains included higher labour force participation rates, earnings and university enrolments amongst women as well as women’s increased contribution to household income (Rubery 2015).

However, the picture is much more complex and multilayered than these trends suggest. While the numbers of women in the workforce and entering tertiary education have remained strong during this period of austerity, the conditions under which they work have
deteriorated. The deterioration in employment conditions for women has been attributed to several factors. The one most relevant to this research, and raised previously, is the reduction of direct employment by the Local Authorities. These government bodies not only offered better salaries and working conditions, but workers benefited from better work-life policies and practices (Rubery 2015).

Disability advocates have argued that the benefits of personalisation for consumers may have been overstated and that personalisation is falling short of its promise to deliver effective and efficient services that meet individual needs (Morris, 2011; Slasberg, Beresford & Schofield 2012; Spicker 2013). Further discussion of these concerns is beyond the scope of this research, but the omission of further discussion is not to undervalue the importance of these emerging debates.

The Australian Experience: Paid Care and Markets

In Australia, the move to develop a national and competitive market in disability services follows the marketization of other areas of paid care such as child care and, to a much lesser extent, aged care. Central to the operations of these markets has been the concept of contestability. Increasing competition between service providers for client funding has been seen as a way to improve the quality, efficiency and responsiveness of these services (Davidson, 2009). Government policy supporting the establishment of markets in the delivery of community services has paved the way for profit providers to enter the market (Davidson 2009). In aged care the number of for-profit organisations has been growing. In 2017 they accounted for 45 per cent of the larger sized residential facilities (100+ hundred residents) and 30 per cent of the total number of residential facilities, although their influence on the sector ‘is disproportionately higher’ (IBISWorld 2017a, p. 7). This is worth noting given many aged care providers are also delivering services to people with disabilities.

In light of these changes, labour force and gender scholars have focused their attention on the level of government funding to non-government service providers, how service providers organise paid work, and the changes in workers’ employment conditions across the paid care workforce.
From disability sector to disability market

Over the past 30 years disability support services have undergone a much-needed overhaul in Australia. During this time disability policy has shifted from medical care in large institutions, to social support in community facilities, to the current approach of social inclusion and independent living. This long evolution in service provision has been marked by the introduction of significant and overarching agreements, legislation and regulatory frameworks. These include the first Commonwealth State and Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA) in 1992, which streamlined funding and services and tied funding to client need (Green and Mears 2014). This agreement opened the way for individualised funding packages. That said, Western Australia’s (WA) individual funding supported by Local Area Coordination (LAC) for people with intellectual disabilities was the earliest example of flexible funding packages introduced in 1988. The WA program was introduced before the CSTDA in 1992 (Bartnik & Chalmers 2007).

Other states and territories embraced the opportunity to test different types of flexible funding packages to individuals with disabilities aged up to 65, rather than directing all funding to organisations. Examples included NSW’s ‘Stronger Together’ in 2010 and Queensland’s ‘Your Life Your Choice: Self-directed support framework’ (The State of Queensland 2012). By 2010 individual funding constituted 25 per cent of the funding allocated by the Commonwealth Government under the CSTDA (Green & Mears 2014).

There are significant disparities between the programs across the country (Dickinson, Needham & Sullivan 2015). The State of Victoria has been considered a leader in the development of individualised funding for people with disabilities (Victorian Auditor General 2011). The Victorian Disability Services Plan 2002-2012 and the Victorian Disability Services Act 2006 guided the sector reforms. In terms of individualised funding, the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) offered ‘Futures for Young Adults’, a program supporting all secondary students to transition from secondary schools from the mid-1990s. This was followed by ‘Support and Choice’ packages, which provided individualised funding for adults with a disability (under 65). The ‘Support and Choice’ and ‘Home First’ programs then combined into the Individualised Support Program (ISP) (Fisher et al. 2009; Auditor General 2011; David 2016). By 2011 more than 7,800 Victorians with disabilities received Individual Support Packages (ISPs) (Auditor General 2011). Over the past decade, as the number of ISPs has grown, a disability market has evolved in Victoria with evidence of
mergers, closures and new providers entering the market (Auditor General 2011; Fisher et al. 2009).

**Individualised funding and clients**

Various research studies have explored the impact and outcomes of the differently configured individualised funding programs operating across Australia over the past decade. The bulk of the research has focused on the outcomes from the perspective of the individual users and implications for service providers. In terms of how people with disabilities have experienced individualised funding programs, researchers broadly agree that due to the complexity of these arrangements, users’ experiences are varied, and influenced by multiple factors (David 2016; Fisher et al. 2009; Laragy 2010). These studies have found that the institutional factors influencing users’ experiences include the level of funding, services available, geographical location, access to a range of supporting organisations, and direct involvement in planning and decision-making.

Australian research on individualised funding programs has also documented many benefits of these programs for service users (Auditor General 2011; Crozier et al. 2013; Fisher et al. 2009). The benefits have included greater opportunities for social participation (Laragy 2010), improved quality of life and satisfaction with services and greater progress toward goals and positive health outcomes (Crozier et al. 2013). Fisher and colleagues (2009) noted their potential to provide consumers with opportunities to access a wider range of support, including non-traditional services.

However, studies have also emphasised that for different categories of clients the achievement of positive outcomes and improvement in quality of life is not universal, and sufficient funding is important in shaping this experience. People with complex needs, particularly those with severe cognitive disabilities, and those with small informal support networks were vulnerable if their funding was insufficient (David 2016; Fisher et al. 2009). One early Queensland study found ‘no particular benefits’ were achieved through individualised funding (Spall, McDonald & Zetlin 2005, p. 56). They concluded:

*The experience of service users is that the notion of choice is fictitious because the quasi-market does not address the existing inadequate supply of services* (p. 62).
Such a negative finding has been the exception rather than the rule, with the bulk of research findings documenting a mix of benefits as well as concerns. The reported downside of individual funding has included long waiting times (Auditor General 2011), and inadequate funding limiting opportunities (Laragy 2010). Studies have also found that caregivers are underprepared to organise the supports needed, if they are required to self-manage, and this may result in increased isolation among carers or recipients (Crozier et al. 2013; David 2016).

**Individualised funding and the workforce**

The relationship between the quality of working conditions and the quality of the care or support provided to clients is acknowledged among academics and service providers. In the context of aged care in Canada, Armstrong and her colleagues (2012) described ‘the conditions of work are the conditions of care’ (Armstrong, Armstrong & Daly 2012 p. 3). Similarly, in the Australian disability context, in prefacing their meta-analysis of research on service quality, workforce and individualised funding arrangements, Cortis and colleagues (2013 p. 6) asserted that the ‘… workforce is central to the way in which services are provided [and] are the main determinant of the quality of care and the major cost of service delivery’. Service providers have also acknowledged the link between job quality and support, with the main body representing Australian disability service providers stating: ‘There is a direct nexus between good jobs and good quality support’ (NDS 2014a, p.11).

Acknowledgement of this association has prompted a small but growing number of studies on the impact of individualised funding models on front line workers. This Australian research falls into four broad categories. The first group, mainly grey literature in the form of commissioned reports, focuses on understanding the workforce profile and undertaking workforce planning and workforce projections (Martin & Healy 2010; Precision Consultancy 2011). There was a flurry of reports of this nature leading to the announcement of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) (NDIA 2015; NDS 2014a; NDS 2014b). The second group comprises reviews and evaluations of the various programs (Fisher et al 2009; Mavromaras, Moskos & Mahuteau 2016). The third is the research designed to inform and prepare for the NDIS pilots, often in the form of non-peer-reviewed literature reviews Donnelly et. al. 2013). The last is the academic literature (Dowse, Wiese & Smith 2016; Green & Mears 2014; Laragy 2010; Macdonald & Charlesworth 2016; Mears 2009; Windsor 2016). This makes the smallest contribution in terms of number of publications, though it is expanding. The supply of peer reviewed academic journal articles on how workers fare
under these funding arrangements is slim, but slowly expanding (Crozier et al. 2013; Dowse, Wiese & Smith 2016; Macdonald & Charlesworth 2016).

The literature most relevant to the current study is that which explores the profile of this workforce and the industrial framework covering the disability support occupations. In keeping with an institutional theoretical perspective, the research that illuminates the complex relationships between the various institutions and employers is most relevant. This builds on the analysis of UK programs discussed earlier, which highlighted the relationship between government funding models, contractual arrangements, service providers’ priorities and workers’ employment conditions as well as the work itself. Research covering the workforce profile and the workforce implications from a service provider perspective is discussed below.

The most comprehensive Australian data on the disability support workforce is that produced by the National Institute of Labour Studies (NILS) (Martin & Healy 2010) as part of their ‘Who Works in Community Services?’ study. Two studies conducted at a similar time on the Victorian disability workforce provided a Victorian perspective, but provided few details on the breakdown of the workforce by the job type (Precision Consultancy 2011; Rimfire Resources 2010). The NILS study estimated that in Australia 68,700 people are employed either to provide disability services or to manage people providing disabilities services. Nearly 85 per cent, or 58,200 workers, provided direct services to people with disabilities. The majority of these worked as disability support workers or home care community care workers. Eighty per cent were female, born in Australia, UK or New Zealand and concentrated in the more mature aged groups, that is 30 plus. They are more likely to work part time or casual than hold permanent full time employment. The majority are employed by not-for-profit community organisations. Compared to other Australian workers, disability support workers are more likely to hold more than one job (Martin & Healy 2010, p.121). Table 3 summarises the characteristics of the disability support workforce.
Table 3: Non-Professional Disability Workforce (2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Breakdown</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total disability services employees</td>
<td>68,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status</td>
<td>Permanent full time</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Permanent part time</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birthplace</td>
<td>Australian born</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australian, UK, NZ born</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer type</td>
<td>Employed by NFP</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employed by for profit</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employed by government</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment experience</td>
<td>Two or more jobs (concurrent)</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid hours</td>
<td>Working unpaid hours each week</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desired Hours</td>
<td>Wanting more hours</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working no unpaid hours each week</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earnings</td>
<td>$1 to $399</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$400 to $799</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$800 to $1199</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$1200 to $1599</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$1600</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>Post school qualifications</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Martin and Healy (2010 pp. 109-121)

A 2011 Victorian study showed that community service organisations employed 8,400 workers supporting people with disabilities, slightly more than the Victorian state government through the Department of Human Services, which employed 7,584 workers (Precision Consultancy 2011). More than half the workers in both employer types were aged over 45 years. A notable difference is in the percentage of male and females. A third of the Department’s disability workforce were men, while in the community sector less than a quarter (21 per cent) were men.

One of the challenges in summarising the literature has been to separate the anticipated workforce issues from encountered workforce issues. In the lead up to the NDIS some
literature reviews combined UK literature, where programs were in place, with Australian literature, where programs were in the trial phase (e.g. Cortis et al 2013). For this reason the research on ISP programs is discussed first before the literature on the NDIS programs.

The ISP literature review focuses on workers employed by service providers rather than directly by people with disabilities. The likely impact of individualised funding programs on these workers is discussed in terms of demand and supply, their pay and working conditions and risks. Key findings from Australian research are summarised in Table 3.

The Impact on Workers

Employment regulation in the Australian context

In Australia, the Fair Work Act 2009, Fair Work Regulations 2009, National Employment Standards, Modern Awards and enterprise agreements have shown a dual influence on workers’ wages and conditions. On the one hand, they have served to protect workers’ wages and conditions. A case in point is Australia’s relatively low proportion of low-paid workers compared to other OECD countries, reflecting a ‘relatively robust minimum wage system’ (Pocock & Skinner 2012, p. 65). On the other hand, these institutions have promoted a two-tiered system where regulatory forces have offered much greater protection for permanent workers than for casual workers.

Studies on employment status have shown full-time or part-time permanent employees, whether covered by a collective agreement or Modern Awards, typically enjoy better working conditions and protection than do casual employees (Pocock & Skinner, 2012; Pocock & Charlesworth 2015; Murray & Stewart 2015). This stronger protection relates to their entitlements in relation to sick leave, holiday pay, job security, minimum hours and redundancy (Pocock & Charlesworth 2015). The National Employment Standards (NES) have also influenced modern awards’ details including the penalty rates, minimum and maximum hours of engagement, duration of shifts on-call and stand-by duty. Employment regulation has also influenced the practices of individual workplaces and employers through regulations around workplace safety, unfair dismissal and dispute resolutions processes (Murray & Stewart 2015).

Since the early 1990s dramatic restructuring of the Australian labour market has led to a rise in the number of workers in ‘casual’ employment (Campbell & Burgess 2001). This has
corresponded with a reduction in the number of workers employed under a standard employment relationships (SER). Nearly 25 per cent of Australians are employed as casual workers. In contrast to permanent employees, casual employees are ineligible for annual leave and sick leave (Campbell & Burgess 2001) and are used flexibly by employers as is described below:

They are seen as employees who are used ‘as and when required’, with each engagement being seen as a separate engagement. Whereas permanent employees have a period of notice (of at least a week), casual employees can be dismissed – or perhaps more exactly fail to be re-engaged – at any time (Campbell & Burgess 2001, p. 176).

In the Australian context, under the Fair Work Act 2009, enterprise agreements may vary awards entitlements, but only in a way that leaves each affected employee better off overall. Enterprise agreements have influenced the working time of workers and their ability to juggle work demands with their personal lives. Regulatory influences on different segments of the workforce are fluid and evolving. Murray and Stewart (2015) suggest that

[The Australian working time regulatory regime is multi-level and dynamic, [with] change occurring almost constantly. The Act permits employers and/or unions to vary the terms of awards at any time, and provides for a formal process of review (Murray & Stewart 2015, p. 55).

Many of the regulatory changes have enabled employers to expect greater flexibility from their staff and have supported the increased scheduling of work in unsocial hours.

There has been ongoing debate about the nature and extent of skill shortages in the disability field both in the current context and projected into the future following the full implementation of the NDIS. One of the most comprehensive national reviews on the effectiveness of individualised approaches to disability support found service providers had mixed views on whether individualised funding improved the availability of workers and their working conditions (Fisher et al. 2009). A third of service providers indicated individualised funding models improved the availability of qualified support workers by ‘a lot’ or ‘very much’. The largest group at nearly 40 per cent indicated they had ‘mixed’ experiences (Fisher et al. 2009). This finding is congruent with the 2011 Productivity Commission’s landmark Disability Care and Support Report which stated there was ‘mixed evidence about the current severity of shortages in support workers’ (p. 693). In agreement
with other views, it noted the potential for severe shortages with the growing demand in the disability sector (Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council 2014).

The various studies on the impact of individualised funding models on the pay and working conditions point to the major role institutions have played in shaping these factors. The low wages of disability support workers, particularly when compared to workers outside the community services sector, has been well documented (Productivity Commission 2011, p. 699). The discrepancies in wages are attributed to several factors including government funding being insufficient to cover the full cost of service provision, the poor bargaining power of workers reflecting low union membership, and a heavy reliance on award rates of pay (Productivity Commission 2011). The Productivity Commission anticipated further wage increases in line with average weekly earnings over time and even higher ones in response to demand for workers exceeding supply. However the Commission also suggested that

> [t]here is a danger that a rapid increase in demand for support staff will result in staff shortages as well as wage inflation. A staged implementation and the process through which the NDIA sets the prices of vouchers will help to manage these problems (Productivity Commission 2011, p. 693).

This assessment is interesting in light of the experience of personalisation programs in the UK discussed earlier. In the UK, allocation of individualised funding in a managed market has put downward pressure on wages and conditions. Labour force scholars have attributed this pressure to insufficient funding from the local government funding body and changes in the mix of service type and size providing the services (Cunningham & James 2009). That is, a reduction in large government providers has led to a reduction in wages and conditions. Low pay is discussed in more detail in the section on ‘Issues and Debates’.

The Productivity Commission’s 2011 report also made another a significant contribution to debates on the disability workforce under individualised funding arrangements by identifying additional institutional factors it anticipated would influence worker demand and supply, wages and employment conditions. These included: the availability of family members to provide support for people with disabilities; OH&S regulations which could prevent certain workers from supplying services; changes to award wages by Fair Work Australia; and the funding and price controls by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) (2011). In describing these factors, they noted ‘union bargaining in non-government providers appears to be weak’ (Productivity Commission 2011 p. 711). However, while the Productivity
Commission made this observation, it was notable that they did not make recommendations that took worker’s low bargaining power into account.

The working conditions of Australian disability support workers under individual funding programs have come under scrutiny and the evidence is mixed. On the one hand these programs have benefited workers. Workers have enjoyed enhanced relationships with their clients (Fisher et al. 2009) and individualised funding has resulted in the provision of additional equipment for some clients, increasing their mobility and reducing the occupational health and safety risks for the workers (Bryant 2009). Survey responses conducted by Fisher et al. (2009, p. 37) revealed 78 per cent of service providers perceived ‘support workers’ conditions had been protected; either ‘a lot’ or ‘very much’ under individualised funding models’.

Since this study, however, evidence has been mounting that the replacement of block funding with individualised funding is leading to a deterioration of working conditions for support workers. Australian studies have mirrored aspects of the overseas research, finding that short shifts, unpaid breaks between shifts, and a concentration of shifts at the start and end of the day are characteristic of in-home disability support roles (MacDonald & Charlesworth 2016; Productivity Commission, 2011). Evidence suggest the funding models and pricing agreements are threatening workers’ pay and conditions due to the loss of payments for non-direct client time. This has included workers’ attendance at meetings and travel time, and the loss of income if clients are hospitalised or pass away (Cortis et al. 2013). The inadequate reimbursement of expenses has also been raised. These researchers concluded that individualised funding can have negative consequences for workers. However, it must be highlighted that due to the low number of studies in the Australian context this conclusion was largely based on the experiences of UK workers. Cortis and colleagues concluded that

[i]n general the evidence indicates that individualised funding schemes create a number of risks and uncertainties for workers. For those who are employed by organisations, there is evidence that organisations have passed many of the risks associated with increased flexibility onto workers, responding, for example to increases in short notice requests with a casualised, on-call workforce, for whom there appear few offsetting benefits (Cortis et al. 2013, p. 33).

This significant contribution to the comparatively slim Australian body of workforce research also illuminates the reduction in training opportunities and the negative impact on career
structures. Cortis and colleagues (2013) pointed to individualised funding models leading to occupational restructuring, particularly the growth in lower-skilled roles, as well as the reduction in access to non-mandatory training and a lack of professional supervision.

While still slim, the body of literature illuminating potential occupational health and safety risks for workers is also growing. The research so far highlights the challenges of workplaces that are clients’ homes and therefore controlled by the clients receiving the service, rather than the employer of the workers delivering services (Bryant 2009). For example, a study on home care workers’ manual handling skills concluded that multiple factors influenced how care workers practised safe techniques, a skill fundamental to their work:

In summary, environmental aspects, such as space, obstacles, equipment, and the pace at which the work proceeded, appeared to affect home care workers’ proficiency in performing manual handling tasks (Palesy 2016, p.222).

Table 4 summarises the findings on the workforce discussed above. It is restricted to research that has focused on existing programs, not predictions on what may happen in the future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supply and Demand</th>
<th>Pay and working conditions</th>
<th>Risks</th>
<th>OH&amp;S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Number needed unclear but projected to double</td>
<td>• Low pay concentrated in not-for-profit sector</td>
<td>• Potential for exploitation of workers</td>
<td>• Physically and emotionally demanding work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Insufficient workers reported by some service providers</td>
<td>• Increasingly fragmented hours</td>
<td>• Unregulated industrial conditions</td>
<td>• Availability of equipment e.g. hoists in the home improves worker safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Many existing workers want more hours</td>
<td>• Short shift length</td>
<td>• Service providers reported success in protecting worker conditions under ISP</td>
<td>• Worker isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improves availability of workers</td>
<td>• Unpredictable hours</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Ageing workforce</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Individualised Funding Programs and Workforce Implications in Australia

Sources: Cortis et al. 2013; Macdonald & Charlesworth 2016; Quinlan, Bohle & Rawlings-Way 2014;

The National Disability Insurance Scheme

Following the enactment of the NDIS Act 2013, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) was launched in four pilot sites around Australia. The NDIS is the first national scheme for Australia and signals a shift to an insurance-based system, one of only a handful in the world. The NDIS is based on an ‘efficient, ‘sustainable and competitive market’ where
individuals with disabilities receive individual funding and exercise ‘choice and control’ over how their allocated individual funding is spent to support them to live independently in the community (Crozier et al. 2013; Mader, 2014; Laragy 2010; Williams & Smith, 2014). In contrast to the ‘rationed funding’ approaches of state based systems, the NDIS is a demand-driven approach within budget limitations. This approach is expected to result in more stable long-term costs and a financially sustainable scheme (Mader 2014). The NDIS resulted from the 2011 Productivity Commission’s Disability Care and Support Report, which documented the inadequacies and inequities of state-based systems and recommended the structure of the national scheme (Productivity Commission 2011).

The Productivity Commission (2011) estimated that more than 411,000 people could be eligible for support under a national scheme. Stage one of the program commenced in regions across four states, including in the Barwon region of Victoria, in July 2013. Under the scheme workers provided personal care and help in connecting clients with their community and fostering ‘social inclusion’ through supporting their involvement in shopping, recreation and work pursuits. The impact of the NDIS on clients, service providers and workers is still emerging.

However, while self-directed models have been gaining increasing support and the NDIS has been widely welcomed, the scheme is not without its critics. Academics have criticised aspects of its design. One of the harshest critics has been Simon Duffy, the director of The Centre for Welfare Reform in the UK (Duffy 2012; Duffy & Williams 2012). Duffy (2012) questioned the financial sustainability of the scheme and suggested that it may undermine the human rights of the people it has been designed to support. He argued that the scheme’s design flaws stem from the concentration of fiscal control with the Commonwealth Government, and the emphasis on replacing existing structures with new systems, programs and roles rather than on building on successful programs and the experiences of existing state-based services providers (Duffy 2012). The implications of replacing existing structures for the workforce is absent from his critiques.

At the time of writing, the NDIS was still in a pilot phase and the fourth year of a staged implementation. Early research focusing on the workforce implications of the transition from state-based block funding models to individualised funding models under the NDIS have, however, primarily been based on small scale studies (NDS 2014a; NDS 2014b). The NDIS
pilots point to service providers dealing with multiple tensions and facing significant challenges as they adapt to a disability market (NDS 2014b; NDS 2015). At the same time, widespread support for the principles remains (Macdonald & Charlesworth 2016).

Many of the emerging challenges mirror those that service providers faced when delivering state-based individual funded programs, and those faced by service providers delivering domiciliary care in the UK. These challenges include: finding sufficient staff, particularly in rural areas and for short shifts (NDS 2015); ensuring staff have the necessary skill set (Dowse, Wiese & Smith 2016); the lengthening and variability of operating hours (NDS 2015); and a pricing model for the hourly funding of assistance with self-care and accessing the community that is insufficient. The importance of Commonwealth government’s role in pricing in a disability market was highlighted in the NDS (2015) submission to the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) in December 2015, (p. 6):

Adequacy of NDIS prices in relation to personal and community support: The scheme will not succeed if the market fails because prices are too low. In the longer-term, centralised price fixing is not feasible, and NDS believes that price deregulation should be tested during the NDIS’s trial phase. However, even with deregulated prices, the NDIA will set participant budgets based on cost assumptions – and these need to be fair and reasonable.

The implementation of the NDIS is far from complete, and while the peer-reviewed literature is slowly building there are many gaps in the knowledge base. Windsor (2016) described the extent of these gaps in relation to the scheme’s readiness to support people with intellectual disabilities who have complex needs. She argues that in addition to analysis on workforce development and the qualification needs of staff, further research and analysis needs to focus on the environment in which workers deliver effective support to people with disabilities, particularly those with complex needs:

While competence is essential, in itself it is not enough. Workplace context is equally critical and encompasses the approach to delivering supports, organisational culture, job design, work practices, opportunities for peer interaction, and staff mentoring (Windsor 2016, p. 69).

At the same time, as well as employment regulation, there is a range of legislation influencing employers that in turn shapes the jobs of all workers. These include health and safety legislation and anti-discrimination legislation aimed at protecting workers and clients (Burgess, Connell & Dockery 2013). Appendix 1 gives examples of how Australian legislation is directly and indirectly shaping the roles of workers. Space does not permit
further discussion of these elements, but this table serves to highlight the range of regulatory influences on this group of workers.

Key Issues and Debates
The sweeping reforms to disability policy and service delivery in Australia and overseas presented so far in this literature review have given rise to many debates. The debates most relevant to this study focus on the role of social norms; the undervaluing of paid care; emotional labour; the transfer of risk; regulating for fragmented time; client choice versus worker balance; and the influence of employers. These debates are discussed drawing on research in both the Australian and overseas contexts.

Social norms and the undervaluing of paid care
The undervaluing of paid care work has been well documented in Australia and overseas (Charlesworth 2012; Charlesworth & Baines 2015; England 2005; England, Budig & Folbre 2002; Folbre 2001; Folbre 2012; Productivity Commission 2011; Rubery 2014). Since the 1980s scholars have put forward theories to explain why women in paid care work receive relatively low pay and why this pay inequality persists. Scholars have drawn on a combination of economic, sociological, feminist and institutional theories to explain the undervaluing of paid care work. The debates centre on two aspects, why paid care work is undervalued and by how much. Institutional influences have been considered key in both these debates.

Institutional influences linked to the undervaluing of paid care work include employment regulation, funding markets and models, social norms, trade unions and the size of a country’s public sector and economic and employment systems (Budig & Misra 2010; Charlesworth 2012; Meagher, Szebehely & Mears 2016). Charlesworth (2012) draws on institutional theory to argue that in the Australian context three institutions directly influence the working conditions and provision of ‘decent work’ among paid care workers. The following conclusion captures the interplay between these three institutions:

*The gendered undervaluing of care work in labour regulation has been reinforced and structured by a funding market in which the price for labour is set not by the value of care work but through funding allocation decisions made by governments, which are in turn made possible by social norms about care (Charlesworth 2012, p. 10).*
Gender scholars also show that there is danger of in-home work being seen as a natural extension of the work women do at home rather than work involving a set of skills and knowledge (Charlesworth & Baines 2015; Rubery & Urwin 2011). Without skills and knowledge being valued, higher status or pay are unlikely. Baines and Daly (2015) argue that paid carers’ tendencies to put the needs of others ahead of their own stems from gendered social norms:

*While laudable these values and choices are socially conditioned, socially constructed, highly gendered as are the expectation of both workers and managers that the predominately female staff will undertake unpaid work to extend and expand services to clients and communities regardless of wages and working conditions (Baines & Daly 2015, p. 143).*

England (2005) contributed to this debate in her analysis of five frameworks used to conceptualise paid care work (See Figure Two). The frameworks offer different explanations for why paid carers earn less than people employed in jobs of a similar skill level. Her analysis illuminates the importance of social norms in the conceptualisation of paid care work. These social norms influence how other institutions view and value women in paid care roles. England (2005) does not argue for any one framework but highlights the need for further research to understand the mechanisms that lead to the devaluation of care work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Devaluation Perspective</th>
<th>Love and Money</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Care work is poorly paid because jobs are done by women and associated with gendered role of mothering.</td>
<td>True care can only be provided by families, communities, non-profits and states, and not by markets, is invalid.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Good</th>
<th>Commodification of Emotion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Care work provides benefits beyond those to the direct recipient.</td>
<td>Someone is always harmed when care is sold as a service.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prisoner of Love</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carers are motivated by genuine care motives so are open to exploitation by employers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Conceptual Frameworks of Paid Care (England 2005)
Budig and Misra (2010) focused on gendered differences, highlighting the influence of a country's level of income inequality on the pay level of paid carers. They also emphasised the role of trade unions and public sector employment. Women in countries with higher level of union density were more likely to receive wage bonuses for care work (Budig & Misra 2010). Budig and Misra (2010, p. 455) concluded that labour market and social policies ‘mattered a great deal’ and considered institutional factors were important to closing the wage gap. However, while this research is important to understanding global trends in paid care, the findings are not transferable to the Australian context. In Australia, union-negotiated pay rises and bonuses are delivered to all workers rather than only those who are union members, as is the case in the countries focused on in Budig and Misra’s (2010) research.

Researchers have also analysed the extent of this undervaluation of paid care roles. One US study concluded that paid care workers faced a 5-6 per cent pay penalty for undertaking care work (England, Budig & Folbre 2002). In 2013, Fair Work Australia, in the context of the Equal Remuneration Test case for Social and Community Services (SACs) workers, accepted the arguments of unions and the Federal Government that the undervaluation of pay was significant. Fair Work Australia awarded pay increases of 19 to 41 per cent plus an additional 4 per cent loading (Cortis & Meagher 2013; FWA 2012). This ruling did not apply to in-home support workers.

Other research suggests the picture is more complicated and mixed, pointing to variations between genders and countries. In the context of the Australian disability workforce in 2010, the hourly rate for disability support workers was an estimated 13 per cent less that the average hourly rate for all female workers (Martin & Healy 2010). However, this did not apply across the board. Sixty-five per cent of workers in government run services earned more than $25 an hour compared with 35 per cent of those working in the non-government sectors (2010).

Combined, the research suggests marketisation, individualised funding and the government outsourcing of services is placing further pressure on wages in a sector that has a long history of poor pay stemming from an undervaluation of the work.

*Emotional labour*

Hochschild, author of *The Managed Heart* (1983), suggested the rise of service industries was creating a ‘market for emotional labour’. She argued organisations set ‘feeling rules’ on
how workers were to feel and express those feelings in the workplace (Hochschild 1983). ‘Feeling rules’ described the societal norms about the appropriate type and amount of feelings that should be experienced in a particular situation, and how workers manage their emotions to reflect these norms. The process whereby workers had to align privately-felt emotions with these expected norms was a process she described as ‘deep acting’.

Similarly, research by Mears (2009) emphasised the emotional and relational work involved in paid in-home care roles. She found their work involved a constant negotiation of boundaries between personal and work relationships and the workers’ perspective of this relationship could be at odds with the managers’ perspectives. Managers were concerned that workers risked burning out if they became too involved with clients, however workers considered caring about their clients made them good carers. Mears’ study concluded that, rather than advising workers to remove any emotions or personal relationships in their care work, care managers should acknowledge the centrality of relationships in care provision. Furthermore, care managers should set in place mechanisms to enable these relationships to flourish (Mears 2009). Similarly, King (2007) acknowledged the centrality of relationships for paid carers, arguing that when personal care tasks are routinised and managed to maximise outputs, the emotional and relationships aspects of the role that care workers value are jeopardised.

**Regulating for fragmented time**

Fragmented schedules are increasingly common in in-home support worker roles, and in Australia have been embedded in employment regulation administered under the Fair Work Act 2009 (Heron & Charlesworth 2012). The Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services (SCHCADS Award 2010) supports the fragmentation of work schedules through the expansion of the hours considered ‘ordinary hours’, the reduction in the minimum hours for which a worker can be employed, the lack of payment for breaks between shifts, and changes to client cancellation clauses. Key sections of the Award are presented in Table 5. The most significant contributor to the higher number of in-home support workers employed for short hours has been the addition of the ‘home care workers’ category (Schedule E) to the SCHCADS Award. This category allows for a lower minimum working time compared to disability support officers employed in other settings and workers classified as social and community services’ employees employed in other settings. It is set at one hour.
Table 5: Award Clauses in the SCHCADS Industry Award (2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casual employment (min hours)</td>
<td>10.5 C(ii)</td>
<td>Casual employees will be paid the following minimum number of hours, at the appropriate rate, for each engagement: SACs employees except when undertaking disability work – 3 hours; Home care employees – 1 hour; or All other employees – 2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Span of hours</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>The ordinary hours of work for a day worker will be worked between 6.00am and 8.00pm Monday to Sunday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consecutive Rostered days off</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>Employees other than a casual employee will be free from duty for not less than two full days in each week or four full days in each fortnight or eight full days in each 28 day cycle. Where practicable, days off will be consecutive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client Cancellation</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>When a client cancels or changes the rostered home care service, an employee will be provided with notice of a change in roster by 5.00pm the day prior and in such circumstances no payment will be made to the employee. If a full-time or part-time employee does not receive such notice, the employee will be entitled to receive payment for their minimum specified hours on that day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The low minimum hours have been part of a broader trend in Australian employment regulation responding to employers’ demands for increased staffing flexibility. However, gender scholars have argued that a bigger picture view of the implications of such change is required. ‘More inclusive minimum working time standards and protection for both standard and non-standard workers’ is considered important for the advancement of gender equality in the labour market (Heron & Charlesworth 2012 p.217).

The impact of changing employment regulations relating to this group of workers is an under-researched area. It is evident that researchers face major challenges in trying to compare present and past working conditions for in-home support workers because of the large number of enterprise bargaining agreements and different awards that have stipulated these conditions. The 2010 SCHCADS Modern Award replaced more than 20 awards in the community services sector, including the Attendant Care – Victoria 2004 Award (a pre-modern award) (Fair Work Ombudsman 2013). At the time of writing, it was possible that workers were still covered by expired enterprise bargaining agreements. Some workers who
had moved over to the SCHCADS Awards saw a deterioration of conditions, while in other cases individual clauses within the Award may have represented an improvement in their conditions. There was little literature in this area that compared the large number of clauses relating to employment conditions under the SCHCADS Awards with employment conditions under the Attendant Care – Victoria Award or other awards.

**Client choice versus worker balance**

The need for service providers to respond flexibly to clients’ service preferences and requests is making it increasingly difficult for workers to maintain and meet their own family or personal demands. As demand for services shifts to the start and end of the day and meal times, evidence is mounting that suggests workers’ ability to juggle work and family responsibilities is diminishing. A UK study of domiciliary workers supporting elderly clients found that a key reason workers were leaving home care jobs was the unsociable hours and the clash of these with their own childcare responsibilities (Rubery, Grimshaw, Hebson & Ugarte 2015). This study also illuminated the poor capacity of social care organisations to compensate for this unattractive feature of the work:

*Extended schedules mean working at unsocial times and extra hours after work, and frequently over more than five days a week, yet 27 per cent of IDPs paid no weekend premium, 67 per cent no night premium, and 29 per cent no overtime premium* (Rubery, Grimshaw, Hebson & Ugarte 2015, p. 10).

**The transference of risk**

One of the most significant outcomes of the shift from a disability sector to a disability market has been the transference of risk from service providers to individual workers. In new models that offer improved flexibility and responsiveness to clients, individual workers increasingly carry the risk when a client cancels or changes their shift time. The worker loses hours, and therefore pay, when clients are hospitalised, rather than the organisation absorbing the loss of revenue. This transference of risk has been institutionally supported through changes to employment regulations (Charlesworth 2012). As an example of the transfer of risk to workers under the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010, employers are only required to inform workers by 5pm the previous day of a cancellation of a shift for the following day.

Furthermore, job security for workers is reducing as a result of the rise in the number of workers employed as casuals or on flexible part-time contracts. Under pressure from tighter
funding models, service providers are trying to minimise their risk if they lose contracts. The loss of clients has become increasingly likely in a disability market where clients’ funds are portable and clients can move between service providers (Cunningham, Baines & Charlesworth, 2014).

**The influence of managers, supervisors and HR**

Evidence suggests that the capacity of service providers to ameliorate the pay and employment conditions of all disability support workers and other direct care workers is reducing due to external institutional forces (Charlesworth 2012; Cunningham, 2016; Dill, Craft, Morgan & Kalleberg 2012). In the Australian context, service providers’ influence on working conditions is considered greatly constrained (Charlesworth 2012). In the Scottish context, Cunningham and James (2009) have reached a similar conclusion. Some UK voluntary organisations tried to maintain the pay of frontline workers when these staff joined from Local Authorities, but they had found continuing these conditions difficult (Cunningham & James 2009). The annual funding increase to these services was insufficient to cover the full cost of LA pay increases, which resulted in voluntary service employers drawing on donations and reserves to cover annual pay rises (Cunningham & James 2009).

As highlighted earlier in the chapter, researchers broadly agree that service providers have less influence over pay and some working conditions than do other institutions. In the UK context, the capacity of employers to offer innovative people management roles has been reduced by the small size of providers. More than 87 per cent of organisations delivering home support services to budget holders have fewer than 50 staff, and so have few, if any, HR staff to devise staffing and retention strategies (Cunningham 2016).

Regardless of their size, an organisation’s policies and people management programs reflect how managers and HR view their frontline workers (Kalleberg 2011), and this view can shape other aspects of how workers experience their work. At one end of the spectrum are advocates of ‘soft HR’ who see the workforce as a critical resource to be nurtured. At the opposite end sit advocates of ‘hard HR’, who see frontline workers as a resource, like any other resource, requiring efficient deployment (Kalleberg 2011). Soft HR advocates look beyond pay and working conditions regulated by institutions to ways that employers can improve career opportunities through career mapping and career ladders. This has helped to ensure these jobs are not ‘dead end’ (Dill, Craft Morgan & Kalleberg 2012). Dill and colleagues suggest organisations can shape the subjective job quality, day-to-day experience
of direct care workers and their satisfaction, but have less capacity to influence the objective job quality aspects such as pay and conditions.

Concluding comments

Reform in the disability sector and the accompanying expansion of individualised funding models is resulting in a dramatic restructuring of jobs in the sector. Viewing reform in the sector through the lens of new institutionalism highlights the range of institutions influencing worker and how these institutions influence the nature of these jobs and working conditions. Institutions include the employers, political philosophy of governments, the funding market, contract and pricing arrangements, the funding model philosophy (e.g. consumer choice), NPM approach to management, employment regulations, legislations such as OH&S legislations, trade unions, the labour market, gendered social norms and expectations of women as carers, and individual employers.

The literature suggests that myriad factors are leading to a decline in working conditions as well as changing the nature of the work. This deterioration points to the need to further understand the work and working conditions of these employees to determine if the quality of their work is declining and the role employers can play in improving the quality of their work. Job quality is a concept that can address these questions and is the focus of Chapter 3.
Chapter 3: Good and bad jobs - A Job Quality Perspective

The previous chapter highlighted the changing nature of in-home support workers’ jobs under individualised funding models implemented in the context of neoliberalism and deregulation in the disability sector. It concluded that mounting evidence points to a decline in the working conditions of in-home support workers. ‘Job quality’ is a construct that provides a lens for exploring how jobs are changing and the specific characteristics that comprise good or bad jobs.

This chapter provides an overview of the job quality literature including definitions, disciplinary approaches, frameworks and characteristics that contribute to job quality. It begins by comparing job quality conceptualisation with the more common job satisfaction. It then reviews the job quality literature in Europe before covering the wider academic literature. The emphasis here is on the conceptualisation of job quality rather than the measurement of job quality. This logically leads to the debate on the characteristics that comprise job quality and the various frameworks proposed by labour scholars. The literature on the experiences of paid care and in-home support workers is reviewed through a job quality lens. The final section summarises the literature highlighting the identified gaps.

Job Quality versus Job Satisfaction

The concept of job satisfaction is more prevalent in the scholarly literature than any other term relating to the quality of work (Burchell, Sehnbruch, Piasna & Agloni 2014). It is also the focus of much debate and considered to have many shortcomings (Brown, Charlwood & Spencer 2012; Burchell et al. 2014; Green 2006; Kalleberg & Vaisey, 2005; Wright 2015). The three debates most relevant to this research centre on the relationship between job quality and job satisfaction; why people report high job satisfaction when their job quality is poor; and the value of job satisfaction as a construct. These are discussed in turn.

Perspectives on the relationship between job quality and job satisfaction are wide ranging. One school of thought, particularly prominent within the organisational psychology and management literature, is that it is a causal and linear relationship (Kalleberg 2011; Sivapragasam & Ray 2014; van Dunn, Bloemer & Henseler, 2012; Warhurst & Knox 2015). In line with this argument an improvement in a job quality characteristic, such as autonomy or job security, leads to an increase in worker job satisfaction. This in turn leads to
improvements in turnover, absenteeism, productivity engagement and clients’ service delivery (van Dunn, Bloemer & Henseler, 2012). Many job quality researchers, particularly outside psychology, possess alternative views.

Prominent scholars in the job quality debates have viewed job satisfaction and job quality as distinct, with different purposes and conceptualisation. These researchers draw a clear distinction between the concepts rather than viewing them as related. Osterman and Schulman (2011) argue that linking job characteristics with satisfied workers is not the aim of job quality research. Similarly, Muñoz de Bustillo and colleagues (2011) view the concepts as separate constructions, describing the job satisfaction construct as ‘ill-suited as an output or ‘catch-all’ measure of job quality. The main criticism of studies correlating job quality and job satisfaction has focused on the validity of these studies. The vast majority of job satisfaction studies has been small scale and have used job quality indicators based on the subjective self-evaluations made by the workers (Brown, Charlwood & Spencer 2012).

One of the main reasons job quality researchers separate job quality from job satisfaction concepts relate to the perceived flaw in job satisfaction studies. Commonly, workers report high rates of job satisfaction on surveys and other research tools when their jobs are considered poor quality on other measures (Atkinson & Lucas 2013a; Atkinson & Lucas 2013b; Brown, Charlwood & Spencer 2012; Fagan 2001; Green 2006; Hebson, Rubery & Grimshaw 2015). A study of particular relevance to this current study is by Gallie and colleagues (2016b) who explored the relationship between intrinsic job quality and job satisfaction for female part-time workers across four countries. They found the following:

*Despite the lower quality of work, the level of job satisfaction of part-time working women is not lower than the job satisfaction of full-time workers. On the contrary, the analyses indicate that job satisfaction of marginal part-time workers in Britain and Germany is somewhat higher than the job satisfaction of full–time employees even after accounting for a number of individual, job and firm characteristics (Gallie et al. 2016, p. 16).*

In this study the researchers proposed that better work life balance explains the high satisfaction among women workers who worked part time (Gallie et al. 2016b).

High job satisfaction levels should not be taken at face value because when respondents are probed, more considered responses reveal higher levels of job dissatisfaction than their initial self-evaluation suggest (Brown, Charlwood & Spencer 2012; Burchell, Ladipo & Wilkinson 2002). The reason that workers report higher satisfaction than they may experience is open to
debate and multiple explanations have been put forward to explain this high job satisfaction / low job quality paradox. One explanation is that workers assess their job satisfaction on the basis of what they expect from the job and the associated working conditions (Burchell et al. 2014). This argument proposes that men and women evaluate poor working conditions differently (Gallie et al. 2016). Along similar lines, others argue that workers might be conditioned to expect a lot or a little from particular jobs (Muñoz de DeBustillo 2011; Green 2006). Unrelated to gender differences, Ehrenreich (2009) suggests the positive thinking movement is contributing to workers inflating their job satisfaction responses.

Other theories put forward focus specifically on women in paid care and paid support roles (Atkinson & Lucas 2013; Hebson, Rubery & Grimshaw 2015). These theories predominantly focus on the role of gender and cultural norms. Folbre (2012) argues that gendered norms and expectations of women as carers combine with altruism to dissuade women from raising issues around negative aspects of their work. Similarly, Atkinson & Lucas (2013) suggest that social norms are the reason care workers often value altruism over remuneration. Hebson and colleagues (2015) offer an alternative perspective. Drawing on research on job satisfaction, women’s orientation towards paid work and Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and capital (economic, social and cultural) they explored female paid carers’ experiences. They focused on the broader economic and cultural conditions that give rise to the norms and values commonly voiced by these workers. They concluded that:

... many women in need of local job opportunities, but with few formal qualifications (that is, limited cultural capital), were influenced by their access to feminine cultural capital and social capital to take care sector jobs in the expectations they would be more meaningful than the alternatives available. Specific economic, family and labour market circumstances combined to shape women’s acceptance of the poor quality aspects of care jobs (Hebson, Rubery & Grimshaw 2015, p. 14).

This recent theory, which diverges from the dominant theories focusing on cultural and gendered norms, suggests the debates are far from over.

Job satisfaction is criticised for being more subjective in contrast to the more objective approach of job quality, although a number of job quality scholars advocate they can be used together (Charlwood & Spencer et al. 2012; Gaillie et al. 2016b; Green 2006; Kalleberg 2011). Job satisfaction data is valuable and predictive in terms of worker behaviour including job mobility (Green 2011), but has limitations when used on its own, particularly in relation
to care workers. For the reasons discussed above job quality has been selected as the lens for this research rather than job satisfaction. The remainder of this chapter explores the job quality construct focusing on the dimensions or characteristics that comprise job quality.

**Challenges and Definitions**

Researchers face many challenges when reviewing the job quality literature because multiple conceptualisations have developed in parallel over the past fifty years and no conceptualisation or definition is dominant (Munoz de Bustillo, Fernández-Macías, Antón & Esteve 2011; Green 2006; Kalleberg 2011; Pocock & Skinner 2012; Warhurst & Knox 2015). The construct is often used interchangeably with the terms ‘quality of work’, ‘quality of work life’ or ‘quality of employment’, and has similarities with ‘decent work’, but is distinct from the subjective measure of job satisfaction, as was emphasised in the last section (Burchell, Sehnburch, Piasna & Agloni 2013). Academics and the European institutions driving this interest broadly agree on the value of the concept, that it is multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary, and that job quality should be considered from the perspective of the worker (Burgess, Connell & Dockery, 2013; Green 2006; Munoz de Bustillo, Fernandez-Macías, Antón & Esteve, 2011; Kalleberg 2011; Warhurst, Cárre, Findley & Tilly 2012; Warhurst & Knox 2015). In developing comparative job quality indicators to be used to analyse job quality across European countries, Muñoz de Bustillo and colleagues (2011, p150) define job quality as ‘the characteristics of jobs that have a direct impact on the wellbeing of workers’.

In the Australian context, Burgess and colleagues (2013) similarly defined job quality in relation to the wellbeing of workers as ‘…the extent to which a set of job attributes contributes to, or detracts from, workers’ wellbeing in their work and non-work domains’ (Burgess et al. 2013, p. 2). However, the diversity of perspectives among researchers has led other Australian researchers to conclude: ‘Job quality means different things in different places at different times’ (Pocock & Charlesworth 2015 p.103). These differences have acted as barriers to the operationalisation of the concept (Wright 2015), and led to job quality being described as an ‘elusive’ concept by some (Frenkel 2015, p.168).

**Policy Makers and Academics — Parallel Streams**

The job quality literature has been developing from two distinct, but overlapping sources. The first group comprises supranational policy-making institutions in Europe whose
influence transcends national boundaries and the academic literature (Green 2006; Green & Mostafa 2012). Such European institutions include the European Union (EU); the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) and the European Trade Union Institute for Research, Education and Health and Safety (ETUI-REHS). Other supranational organisations include the United Nation’s International Labour Office (ILO) and the Organisation for Economic Development (OECD). These organisations share a common goal of improving the quality of jobs within their respective regions of influence. They have all attempted to define and operationalise the concept of job quality with the goal of comparing employment conditions across countries, using primarily large-scale social surveys. Space precludes a detailed examination of each of these approaches. This review focuses on the ILOs ‘decent work’ concept used by the EU and the OECD but which has also been used in the Australian context, primarily in relation to aged care and gender equality (Burgess 2002; Bletsas & Charlesworth 2015).

The ILO and ‘decent work’

The ILOs ‘decent work agenda’ arose from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the ILO is the only institution to try and establish a systematic definition of the quality of work (Burchell et al. 2014). The ILO’s conceptualisation of ‘decent work’ has been an iterative one, but was originally formulated to denote satisfactory working and employment conditions (Ghai 2006). The ILO has defined Decent Work as follows:

*The goal of decent work is best expressed through the eyes of people. It is about your job and future prospects; about your working conditions; about balancing work and family life, putting your kids through school or getting them out of child labour. It is about gender equality, equal recognition, and enabling women to make choices and take control of their lives. It is about personal abilities to compete in the marketplace, keep up with new technological skills, about receiving a fair share of the wealth that you have helped to create and not being discriminated against; it is about having a voice in your workplace and your community…. For everybody, decent work is about securing human dignity (ILO 2001 p.7-8).*

There have been four separate approaches to operationalising this definition, reflecting the complexity of the concept (Munoz de Bustillo et al. 2011). The initial conceptualisations were based on a worker-centred definition, but publications since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) have pointed to a shift in direction. The ILO’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development linked decent jobs with higher economic growth, a link the ILO’s CEO described as a ‘simple equation but one that has been largely neglected in international policy
making both before and after the 2008 financial crisis’ (p.2). While acknowledged as a ‘laudable’ conceptualisation (Green 2006, p.19), the decent work concept has had minimal adoption outside the ILO and Europe (Burchell 2013).

**The EU — A comparative approach**

Developed in parallel to the ILO’s work has been the Economic Union’s conceptualisation of job quality. At the 2000 Lisbon Summit of the European Commission, the Council of the European Union made improving job quality in member countries an explicit policy objective. The ‘More and Better jobs’ motto of the European Employment Strategy (EES) signalled the elevation of the concept to a political priority (Green 2006). Subsequently the European Commission developed a framework which assigned dimensions that considered the ‘objective characteristics of job’, ‘worker characteristics’ and the ‘match between the worker and job’ (Green 2006, p. 20). The framework lists attributes under two dimensions: ‘Characteristics of the Job’ and ‘The Work and Wider Labour Market Context’ (2006, pp. 20-21). However, this conceptualisation shows an ambiguity in that it attempts to accommodate the interests of employers as well as workers. For example, it includes ‘overall work performance’ as an indicator of quality of work (Green 2006, p. 22). This move to encompass the employers’ perspective is not dissimilar to the shift in the decent work concept discussed in the previous section. More recently, with funding from the European Parliament, Muñoz de Bustillo and colleagues (2011), have proposed an alternative worker-centred framework for the EU adopting an institutionalist approach:

> Employment is embedded within an institutional and economic context: the characteristics of employment interact with the features of social systems in ways that can make similar employment characteristics have very different implications for the wellbeing of the worker in different countries (Muñoz de Bustilla et al.2011, p.69).

**The OECD — three objectives**

The focus of a third supranational policy making organisation, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), has been on developing a framework to measure job quality based on three objectives and measurable dimensions: earnings, labour market security, and the working environment (Cazes, Hijzen & Saint-Martin 2015). Their work has focused on comparing how OECD and developing nations are rated on these three measures. Australia is among the best performers using this measure. Similar to the ILO, the OECD is concerned with the progress of emerging countries (Cazes, Hijzen & Saint-Martin, 2015). Space does not permit an examination of other comparative models, but it must be
acknowledged that the European institutions have made a significant contribution to the knowledge base defining job quality, developing job quality frameworks, debating the characteristics of job quality and ways to measure job quality.

**Academic Schools of Thought**

In contrast to the European institutions that have focused on job quality at the macro level, most academic researchers have focused on job quality at the micro level, and mainly on jobs in developed countries (Wright 2015). Many academics have also contributed to developing frameworks for the institutions mentioned previously (Muñoz Bustilla et al. 2011; Green & Mostafa 2012). However, in the main, researchers focus on debating job quality characteristics, developing frameworks, and proposing theories to understand job quality in relation to particular industries, sectors, occupations or other segments of the labour market.

At the beginning of this chapter it was highlighted that job quality lacked a uniform definition. This lack of consensus is partly attributable to the diverse backgrounds of scholars contributing to the literature (Wright 2015). Economists, sociologists, social scientists, geographers, psychologists, industrial relations academics and others have contributed to the conceptualisation and advancement of job quality. To attribute a researcher’s approach solely to their discipline is to oversimplify the various contributions by individual scholars, because most take a multidisciplinary approach. At the same time it is valuable to understand the starting points of the different disciplines and to highlight the characteristics of jobs that each perspective associates with job quality.

**Economics**

The traditional economic approach to job quality, now known as the theory of ‘compensating differentials’ has its roots in arguments proposed by the founding father of economics Adam Smith in the eighteenth century (Muñoz de Bustilla et al. 2011; Green 2006). This theory’s underlying assumption is that in a competitive labour market workers will be compensated for working in ‘bad jobs’ or jobs with ‘disamenities’. That is, workers with the same skill and same qualifications will ‘prefer’ and ‘choose’ different job characteristics, and, in response, firms will offer different working and employment conditions. Employers will pay a ‘compensating differential’ to workers who prefer and choose work offering low level amenities in exchange for higher pay. As an example, with two service jobs requiring equal qualifications, but differing in terms of their ‘pleasantness’, such as garbage collectors and
hotel porters, employers will pay a higher salary to the workers doing the more unpleasant job to attract and retain them. However, the evidence fails to support this theory in a contemporary labour market, and ‘compensating differentials are far from being a general phenomenon’ (Muñoz de Bustillo et al. 2011, p. 45). Others extend this argument suggesting that ‘the quality of work and pay are positively rather than inversely related’ (Spencer 2013, p. 583).

Despite widespread agreement among economists that this theory is inadequate to explain earning differences in a contemporary labour market (Bryan and Rafferty 2015), some scholars focus on pay as the main indicator of job quality (Holzer, Lane, Rosenblum & Andersson 2011; Osterman 2012). Osterman (2012) argues wages are seen as the most important feature of work. One of the weaknesses of relying exclusively on wages to assess job quality is that numerous studies have shown pay is not the top priority for workers (Antón et al. 2012). For example, women have been shown to accept lower pay when their income is the supplementary rather than primary income in a household. This is particularly the case when they view their drop in income as temporary to fit in with raising children (Pocock & Skinner 2012).

Most economists now adopt a multidisciplinary approach to job quality. A notable example is Frances Green, who in his seminal text Demanding Work: The paradox of job quality in the 21 Century, stated that he ‘used economic tools but drew on the wisdom of sociology and psychology’ (Green 2006, p.15). He argued that job quality needs to reflect the major institutional and politico-economic changes that are features of a ‘modern era’, and associated job quality with the dimensions of ‘skill’ and ‘skill utilisation’, ‘work effort’, ‘personal discretion’, ‘pay’ and ‘security’ (Green 2006).

*Sociology*

Central to sociologists’ definitions of high quality work has been the non-pecuniary aspects of jobs. They have placed particular importance on the interrelated aspects of ‘job control’, ‘autonomy’ and ‘discretion’, ‘participation in decision making’, and similar to institutional economists, ‘skills’ and ‘job security’ (Kalleberg 2011, p.132). Job control describes the extent to which workers can influence their duties, requirements and organisation. Sociologists link these characteristics with the intrinsic rewards workers derive from their jobs, such as enhanced wellbeing (Kalleberg 2011). Interest in job control has a long history in sociology. It stems in part from sociologists’ analyses of the decline of the comparative
freedom traditionally afforded to craft workers and in part from its origins in the works of Marx and Weber (Green 2006). Marx argued that workers needed to control both the conception and execution of ‘their job tasks in order to develop fully their ‘essence’ and ‘humanness’ by cultivating their own particular competencies and skills’ (Green 2006 p.97).

The extent to which workers became alienated, or separated from the human subject, was fundamental in the analysis of job quality in any occupation (Friedmann 1946, cited in Green 2006). Providing workers with ‘autonomy’, so they participate in decision making, is another aspect commonly regarded by sociologists as important to job quality (Kalleberg 2011). The type of work one does affects the extent to which one can exercise control over work schedules, thus worker control is distributed unequally across occupations (Kalleberg 2011). The perceived impact on low job control is captured in this quote below.

Workers who have little control over how much effort they expend or the number and timing of hours that they work are likely to suffer from stress and other negative consequences (Kalleberg 2011 p. 7).

Related to ‘job autonomy’ and ‘job control’ are the concepts of ‘work intensity’ and ‘working time’, both of which are influenced by a combination of institutional and cultural factors (Green 2006). Work intensity refers to the amount of work a person does in a given time (Kalleberg 2011). The institutional factors influencing these dimensions include employment regulation regarding minimum annual leave and limits on the number of hours people can work (Kalleberg 2011). The evidence for changes to work intensity has been largely anecdotal and there is only weak evidence that a polarisation of job intensity has occurred. The level of work intensification in various jobs has been associated with technological innovation, new forms of work organisation and the implementation of ‘high commitment human resource policies’ (Green 2004, p.737)

The rise of interest in ‘work life balance as a dimension of job quality has also increased researchers interest in ‘work intensity’, ‘working time’ and ‘scheduling’ (Burchell et al. 2014; Kalleberg 2011; Pocock & Skinner 2012). These are discussed further later in this chapter.

Psychology

Interest in job quality within the psychology discipline is more recent than within economics and sociology (Burgess, Connell & Dockery 2013; Burchell et al 2013). The focus of occupational, industrial and social psychologists have primarily been on the content of jobs at
the individual organisation level and the intrinsic rewards derived from performing the work. In contrast to economists and sociologists, who have preferred large scale studies, psychologists’ studies have been small scale using surveys and psychometric techniques (Burgess, Connell & Dockery 2013; Burchell et al. 2014). Most commonly the focus is on the determinants of job satisfaction and the impact of jobs on worker wellbeing (Kalleberg 2011). The characteristics they associate with job quality include ‘worker autonomy’, ‘discretion’ (the latitude afforded workers to make decisions), ‘job control’ and ‘task variety’ (Burchell et al. 2013).

**Geography**

While the disciplines of economics, sociology and psychology have the longest history and have contributed the most research on job quality, geographers are among the new disciplines bringing fresh perspectives to the area and broadening the debates. Geographers are in the early stages of researching job quality, but are offering a new, and much wider lens to view jobs (Warhurst & Knox 2015). Being interested in how people live and seek to live in society, geographers have tended towards ‘a relational view of labour market processes in which job quality is one aspect of the wider social relations of labour exchange’ (Weller & Campbell, 2015 p. 84). Geographers’ interests lie in the external factors that are the influencers of job quality, ‘the multiple and inherently spatialised structures and processes at work in labour markets’ (Weller & Campbell 2015 p. 86). Geographers view labour markets as a ‘largely localised phenomenon’ (Weller & Campbell 2015, p. 87).

Geographers have shown less interest in justifying the inclusion of job attributes in job quality framework than other disciplines, and more interest in exploring the relationship between worker attributes, the jobs they do, and the employers who offer these jobs. Their exploration and analysis of the pathways into precarious work by vulnerable labour market segments such as migrants, students, sole parents or the unemployed, has been significant. Their research on employment status, such as casual employees and part time employees in relation to ‘precarious work’ has also made a significant contribution (Campbell, Whitehouse & Baxter 2009; Vosko, MacDonald & Campbell 2008). Sharing some similarities with the sociology perspective, geographers have viewed the segregation of workers by employment status as indicative of a more fundamental shift in the relationship between capital and labour (Weller & Campbell, 2015). Unsurprisingly, geographers have advocated a concept of job quality more in line with the sociological perspective than the psychological perspective. In
common with many of the other disciplines discussed so far, they associate job quality with ‘skills development’, ‘employment security’, ‘work intensification’, ‘flexibility’ and ‘work life reconciliation’.

This brief review of the disciplinary approaches to job quality reveals different interests, but also considerable overlap between the disciplinary approaches. Many researchers in the field take a cross-disciplinary approach, combining economic and sociological and geographical approaches. It is also worth acknowledging here that scholars from other fields such as industrial relations, human resource management (HRM), management, law and public policy are also contributing to the expansion of the job quality literature, but space precludes an analysis of all these contributions.

**Multidisciplinary Approaches and Frameworks**

Researchers have developed a variety of job quality frameworks based on the characteristics they argue are fundamental to job quality. These frameworks have been developed with different objectives in mind but share a number of characteristics (Burgess, 2002; Green, 2006; Muñoz de Bustillo et al. 2011; Kalleberg, 2011; Holzer, Lane, Rosenblum & Andersson, 2011; Pocock & Skinner, 2012).

In developing these frameworks many job quality researchers draw distinctions between objective and subjective job characteristics (Muñoz de Bustillo et al. 2011; Green 2006). Researchers who separate these two types of characteristics argue that only objective characteristics, or those that at least avail themselves to objective measurement, typically by large scale surveys, should be included in frameworks (Muñoz de Bustillo et al. 2011; Green 2006). The job characteristics commonly viewed as objective are ‘wages’, ‘fringe benefits’, ‘job security’,’ employment status’, and ‘working time’, many of which are influenced by employment regulation. Other characteristics such as ‘skills’, ‘autonomy’, and ‘work life balance’ are usually viewed as subjective. Subjective characteristics are less open to quantifiable measurement. There is some disagreement, however, over which characteristics fall into these two categories, suggesting the two categories are blurred rather than distinct. Other researchers argue all job quality characteristics are subjective (Burgess 2002).
Researchers also draw a distinction between extrinsic job quality and intrinsic job quality (Burgess, Connell & Dockery 2013; Kalleberg 2011). Intrinsic rewards are benefits and utilities that people obtain, from task performance, as opposed to extrinsic rewards such as money or fringe benefits (Kalleberg 2011). Table 6 contains six frameworks, or groups of characteristics that researchers have associated with job quality. There is a large degree of consistency between them the characteristics put forward by the different researchers.

Two frameworks, the ones developed by Pocock and Skinner (2012) and by Burgess and colleagues (2013) have been developed in the Australian context. Burgess and colleagues (2013) undertook a comprehensive review of the job quality literature in both Australia and overseas before developing a framework with 12 characteristics. They used this framework to investigate job quality in organisations across a broad range of industries. Their framework differs from that developed by Pocock and Skinner (2012) in its level of detail and inclusion of characteristics that have not been associated with job quality by other researchers. These characteristics are ‘recognition’, ‘direct supervision’, ‘consultation’ and ‘organisational support’ (Burgess, Connell & Dockery 2013, p. 77). Taking a different approach, Pocock and Skinner (2012) developed a list of 12 job features that distinguish bad jobs from good jobs (See Table 6). Like Burgess and colleagues (2013) they include workers having ‘opportunities for learning and career progression’, and ‘a voice’.

Australian researchers have also developed a job quality index to measure job quality. The VicWAL Job Quality Index (JQI) used items (survey questions) and data drawn from the 2009 Victorian Work and Life (VicWAL) Survey. The items in the VicWAL survey were largely sourced from other established Australian and international surveys (Haynes et al. 2010). This large scale study surveyed 3007 workers and explored working conditions and work-family-community balance of people in Victoria. The VicWAL JQI, one of a small number of job quality instruments developed by Australian researchers, is based on six variables. These are: ‘working time autonomy’, ‘job security’, ‘job control’, ‘workload’, ‘skill development’ and ‘access to work-life provisions if needed’ (Charlesworth et al. 2014). They explored dimensions influenced by regulatory and other institutional influences.

Compared to Europe, Australia’s body of knowledge on job quality is slim, though expanding (Wright 2015). It has shown a different emphasis from other industrialised countries focusing
on single characteristics or specific segments of the labour market such as employment status, working hours and work-life (Warhurst & Knox 2015).

Table 6: Different Dimensions Associated with Job Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>Wages</td>
<td>Earnings and fringe benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic quality of work</td>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>Job security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>Working time</td>
<td>Health and safety</td>
<td>Opportunities for advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— autonomy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Arrangements</td>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>Control over work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment quality</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conditions</td>
<td>Personal discretion over</td>
<td>Interesting and meaningful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— job security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>job tasks and</td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— development opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>participation in</td>
<td>time at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and safety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>decisions</td>
<td>Control over work schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-Life balance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunities for learning and progression</td>
<td>Effort (work intensity)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— working time</td>
<td></td>
<td>Little voice</td>
<td>Skill utilisation and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— scheduling</td>
<td></td>
<td>Job control</td>
<td>development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— flexibility</td>
<td></td>
<td>Social relations at work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— intensity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this section, four characteristics that are important in the context of the Australian labour market, or in relation to how in-home support work is evolving under individualised funding models are discussed in more detail.

**Job security**

Job security is the most widely agreed attribute of a good job and is included in most job quality frameworks (Muñoz de Bustillo et al. 2011). It has also been consistently rated the most valued attribute by workers (Wright 2015). At the same time, the meaning of job security is evolving in the literature because of the labour market pressures/restructuring.
identified in the previous chapter. Given the deterioration in job security faced by in-home support workers, this characteristic warrants particular attention.

As with other conceptualisations in the job quality literature, the meaning of job security is the subject of debate. Traditionally, and still commonly, it refers to workers’ fear of losing their jobs’ (Fuller 2009). But in light of the contemporary workforce being more affected by organisational restructuring and advanced technological change, some labour force scholars have tendered broader conceptual definitions (Gallie et al. 2016; Green 2007; Standing 2011). Green (2007) argues job or employment insecurity also relates to workers who retain their jobs, but fear ‘mean losses’ through the deterioration of working conditions, such as wage cuts. He also puts forward a third element of security where workers feel insecurities about potential losses associated with redeployment.

Gallie and colleagues (2016a) argued for a more comprehensive conceptualisation of job insecurity, which proposes two distinct elements of job insecurity. The first, ‘job tenure insecurity’, relates to ‘anxiety about the loss of employment’ (Gallie et al. 2016, p. 2). The second, ‘job status insecurity’, relates to workers experiencing anxieties ‘about the threat or loss of valued features of the job’ (Gallie et al. 2016a, p. 2). (See Figure 3 below.) Their research makes a significant contribution by revealing differences in perceived job tenure insecurity by age and contract status. They found that workers aged more than 35 were more worried about losing their jobs than younger workers. They also demonstrated the influence of another institution on workers’ perceptions of job insecurity: the labour market. This is highlighted in their conclusion that:

\[
\text{those who had had a recent spell of unemployment or who were in industries that had seen particularly sharp employment losses since the recession were particularly likely to feel that their jobs were at risk (Gallie et al. 2016a, p.14).}
\]

Another key finding contradicts the common view that public sector employment offers good job security. Their research found that by 2012, public sector employees in the UK had ‘significantly higher levels of job tenure insecurity than private sector employees’ (Gallie et al. 2016a, p. 15). They attributed this change to the austerity measures introduced following the GFC.
Standing (2011) also proposes a broader conceptualisation of job security, and has led the development of expanding literature around the ‘precarious worker’. He argues that the rise of neoliberalism and globalisation has fragmented traditional class structures and a new class, ‘the precariat’ has emerged. This group lacks seven forms of labour-related security. These are: labour market security; employment security; job security; work security; skill reproduction security income security and representation security (See Appendix Two for Standing's Forms of Labour Security Under Industrial Citizenship). As well as sharing a lack of security they also share a ‘lack of a secure work-based identity’ (Standing 2011, p.16).

In the Australian context job security is closely related to workers’ employment status. The common categories of employees in the Australian workforce are permanent full time permanent part time (PPT) and casual workers (casual workers may also be employed on a part-time or full-time basis). Full-time or part-time permanent employees, whether covered by a collective agreement or Modern Awards, typically enjoy better working conditions and protection than do casual employees (Pocock & Skinner, 2012; Pocock & Charlesworth 2015; Murray & Stewart 2015). Stronger protection is provided through permanent workers’ entitlements in relation to sick leave, holiday pay, job security, minimum hours and redundancy (Pocock & Charlesworth 2015). As noted above, the incidence of casual work has been increasing over the past 25 years with almost 25 per cent of workers now employed on this basis.
Working time

Working time is associated with the number of hours worked, the span over which the hours are worked and the time of the day and week in which hours are worked. In the context of the workforce restructuring occurring as a result of neoliberalism, working time has been the subject of intense debate among scholars and policy makers for some time (Green 2013; Fagan 2001; Kalleberg 2011). As was highlighted in Chapter two, as support for people with disabilities has moved increasingly towards individualised funding models, researchers are increasingly interested in the implications for the working time of in-home support workers. In the UK context, Fagan (2001) summarises the complexity of the issues and differences that have emerged between different segments of the workforce in regards to working time:

*The working-time regime in Britain is highly polarized between very long hours for full-timers and very short hours for part-timers. This is out of step with many people’s preferences, for large numbers of full-timers want to work shorter hours and may part timers want to increase their hours* (p. 260).

She labels the above situation for part time workers as the ‘short hours trap’. She concluded: the under-employment of part timers indicates that many short part-time jobs are designed to meet employers’ requirements rather than labour supply preferences (Fagan 2001, p. 253).

Studies in the Australian context have explored job quality in relation to employment status, particularly casual work; working time arrangements, notably part-time work; work life balance exploring the availability of flexible working hours; and skills utilisation. The casualisation of the workforce has been accompanied by a trend for employers to demand employees work at unsocial times, such as weekends and evenings (Rafferty 2015). Such research has given rise to a body of work in relation to ‘precarious work’ and the in-home support workforce.

In the Australian context, research has focused on job quality in relation to part time workers and the implications for women (Campbell, Charlesworth & Malone 2011; Charlesworth, Strazdins, Obrien & Sims 2011). The study by Charlesworth and colleagues (2011) explored the gendered polarisation of work hours between working mothers and fathers in Australia, focusing on the job quality characteristics put forward by Green (2006): ‘wages’, ‘work intensity’, ‘task control’, input into workplace decision making’, ‘job security’ and ‘career progression’. Among their findings they concluded that jobs with moderate full time hours
were much more likely to offer better conditions to both mothers and fathers, and that these jobs were less likely to be contingent or casual. Pocock and Skinner (2012) argue that a ‘good job’ entails reasonable hours, a good match between their preferred hours and their actual hours.

**Work life**

The focus on working time has led to a number of Australian studies that explore work-life balance, particularly the gender differences and experiences of women who combine work with family or caring responsibilities (Vosko, MacDonald & Campbell 2009). For example, Pocock and Charlesworth (2015) found working unsocial hours and insecure employment terms had negative consequences for workers’ work life balance. Furthermore, Pocock and Charlesworth (2015), focusing on the female dominated and highly casualised retail sector, found ‘a strong and consistently negative relationship’ between workers whose usual rostered hours included working weekends or evenings and their work life outcomes (Pocock & Charlesworth 2015, p. 10). They concluded that ‘there is no work life advantage associated with being casual’ (Pocock & Charlesworth 2015, p.115).

An important contribution to debates on job quality and work life has been research showing the different values workers place on various job quality characteristics and how these change across time. They are influenced by age, life stage, health and household circumstances (Considine & Callus 2001; Pocock & Skinner 2012).

**Skills and discretion**

An area of research of interest to the Australian government has been the area of skill utilisation. Australia, like other developed countries, has seen the rapid expansion of higher education over the past 20 years, which has resulted in an increasing number of workers being over qualified for the jobs they are performing (Warhurst & Knox 2015). A 2010 Australian Government report suggested that nearly a third of the workforce were over qualified for the work they were doing (Skills Australia 2010). This prompted Skills Australia to develop a model to understand skill utilisation: the triggers, levers, deliverers and outcomes (Warhurst & Knox 2015, p. 10). The research found that many of the characteristics associated with job quality were also instrumental in employers utilising the skills of their workers. There was a positive association between skill utilisation and job quality.
Occupations and Job Quality

This chapter has shown that European policy making institutions and academic researchers have developed job quality frameworks for comparative purposes. In the Australian context researchers have developed broader frameworks for investigative purposes (Burgess, Connell & Dockery 2013) or for definitional purposes (Pocock & Skinner 2012). The latter have identified the characteristics associated with good or bad quality jobs. In recent years researchers, some heavily influenced by organisational psychology, have attempted to develop job characteristics and frameworks for single occupations in the service sector.

Rejecting the available job quality frameworks as being too broad and failing to acknowledge the uniqueness of the contact centre environment, van Dunn, Bloemer and Henseler (2012) developed a job quality framework for customer contact centre (CCC) workers. Their mixed methods study concluded there was some overlap as well as ‘some significant differences’ between job quality in a generic service setting and job quality in a customer contact centre setting (van Dun et al. 2012, p.188). Their study showed that job characteristics associated with the work rather than the working conditions can be among those most valued by workers, but are usually omitted from job quality frameworks. In their study, workers valued highly ‘role clarity’ and ‘information exchange between employees’.

Job quality and paid care and support

Australian researchers are showing increasing interest in using job quality or decent work concepts to explore the quality of work in community service occupations. The decent work concept has been used in the analysis of changes to the working conditions of community sector workers in conjunction with an institutionalist approach (Charlesworth 2012; Macdonald & Charlesworth 2016).

Meagher, Szehely and Mears (2016) used job quality characteristics in a study comparing government-funded in-home workers supporting older people in Australia with those in Sweden. They adopted a comparative institutionalist approach and compared worker profiles, work tasks and their job quality. The job quality characteristics they used were ‘working hours’, ‘pay’, ‘work scheduling’, ‘work life balance’, ‘intensity’, ‘workload’, ‘autonomy’, ‘supervision’, and ‘the physical and psychological impact’ of the work. As well as finding in-home workers ‘got a lot out of working with their clients’, they found their jobs varied significantly in relation to their tasks, workload, and the organisation of the work. They found
that Australian in-home workers considered were ‘better able to meet their clients’ needs; that
their workplaces are ‘less pressed, and that their work is less burdensome and more
compatible with their family and social commitments’ (Meagher, Szebehely & Mears 2016,
p. 1). Among the many important contributions this study makes is confirming that job
quality characteristics are valuable in providing rich detailed data about in-home support jobs
and comparative institutional analysis. The study supported the findings of other studies that
found institutional factors external to a workplace play a significant role in shaping the jobs
of workers (Charlesworth 2012).

Home care jobs — The worker perspective

In addition to the contributions of labour force scholars, there is a further body of literature
on how in-home workers experience their work. Studies have explored the profile of workers
and employment conditions (Nugent 2007), the factors that attract workers to this work (Sim-
Gould et al. 2010), why they leave (Stone et al. 2014), and factors relating to worker health
and safety. Studies have also identified the aspects of their work associated with job
satisfaction (Banijamali, Jacoby & Hagopian 2014; Butler et al. 2010; Delp et al. 2010;
Kietzman, Benjamin & Mattias 2008).

Studies have confirmed the desire for improved wages, more worker-friendly scheduling and
better skills development (Brooks, Gibson & de Matteo 2008; Butler et al. 2010; Sims-Gould
et al. 2010; Banijamali, Jacoby & Hagopian 2014; Nugent 2007). A study of home care
workers in the United States (US) highlighted the lack of pay parity between in-home
workers and carers in other segments concluding that: ‘it is remarkable that home care
workers earn less than hospital aides or nursing home aides, though their work is more
autonomous, less closely supervised, and likely requires more judgement (Banijamali, Jacoby

The difficulties in-home support workers face trying to reconcile their own personal and
family lives due to fragmented shifts has also been explored (Tremblay & Llama 2015).
Others have highlighted the challenge for workers to ‘leave their work behind’ following
their shifts and to not assume responsibility beyond what is required of them (Benjamin &
Matthias 2004).
The home as a work environment has been an under researched area (Faucett et al. 2013). Job security, clients’ resistance to change, and a lack of resources have been identified as factors prohibiting workers from raising OH&S issues (Butler 2013). Studies have also found a low level of contact with supervisors and a high degree of work isolation among in-home workers Butler 2013; Stone et al. 2013). At the same time workers have reported a high level of job satisfaction despite the poor work conditions (Butler 2013), a phenomenon raised earlier in this chapter.

Other studies point to several job characteristics these workers value that are not usually associated with job quality. These include clearly defined job descriptions (Nugent 2007; Stone et al. 2013) better supervision (Nugent 2007) and more information about clients (Nugent 2007; Stone et al. 2013). Adequate training and client formation has been associated with less stress (Benjamin & Matthias 2004). A large telephone survey found the combination of adequate training and client information was related to workers ‘feeling prepared for the work’ which was a predictor of job satisfaction (Kietzman, Benjamin & Matthias 2008).

Large studies in North America have highlighted the central role of the client/worker relationships (Kietzman, Benjamin & Matthias 2008; Matthias & Benjamin 2005) on both satisfaction and intention of workers to stay in their job. Another Canadian study, based on 57 interviews highlights the central role the client/worker relationship plays in the retention of staff. This is demonstrated in the following conclusion:

*We know from our previous research on home support ... that one of the biggest issues for workers currently employed in home support are threats to a worker’s ability to form and maintain relationships with clients (e.g. increasing workloads, constantly change case loads, variable work schedules, etc.). The very reason that workers choose to work in home support, if violated, will likely be the dominant reason they choose to leave’ (Sims-Gould et al. 2010, p.186).*

In another US study, researchers confirmed the centrality of the client/worker relationship for this group of workers and the need for employers to prioritise this aspect of their jobs. Delp and colleagues et al. (2010) concluded that ‘policies that enhance the relational component of care may improve workers’ ability to transform the demands of their job into dignified and satisfying labour’ (p.922).
Gaps in the Literature

This chapter has reviewed the job quality literature, finding that job quality is a valuable concept for understanding jobs, although it is a highly contested one. Researchers propose a variety of different characteristics associated with job quality. These include job security, scheduling, working time, work life balance, earnings, job control, employment status, work intensity, the physical environment, OH&S earnings, skills development, career opportunities, job control, skill utilisation and discretion, task variety, recognition and union representation. The literature on in-home workers has highlighted additional characteristics including: recognition, client and work relationship, OH&S in home care, the adequacy of information and role clarity.

The review of the literature in Chapter 2 found in-home workers employed under individualised funding models have undergone significant changes to their work with a deterioration of employment conditions. This chapter has shown job quality provides a way of examining these jobs. It has identified characteristics that are likely to be associated with job quality drawing on the job quality and the in-home literature.

The body of literature exploring in-home jobs under individualised funding, particularly in Australia is still slim, though expanding. The studies that have used job quality to examine these jobs is even slimmer. Furthermore, many studies have identified ‘bad’ aspects of their in-home support workers’ jobs, but they have not asked workers about what a ‘good job’ looks like, or the extent to which employers can shape these jobs. This is the gap my current research investigates.
Chapter 4: Methodology

My research adopted a critical realist approach and used a mixed methods design. This chapter provides an overview of Joseph Maxwell’s critical realist approach before outlining the research design and the data collection methods used. This overview is followed by a detailed description of the structure and recruitment process for the semi-structured interviews with 18 in-home workers and the quantitative analysis of Likert scale ratings used in the interviews. Towards the end of this chapter I include a description of how I explored analysing a secondary data source as an additional form of data.

A Critical Realist Approach

I adopted a critical realist philosophical perspective. Different philosophical paradigms are linked with different methodological paradigms, which are based on assumptions about how this knowledge can be uncovered and interpreted. For example, positivism and post positivism are associated with quantitative methods, and constructivism with qualitative research methods (Hughes & Sharrock 1990; Mason 2002; Maxwell 2010, 2012). Maxwell (2010) argues against researchers locking themselves into a single paradigm or worldview. Furthermore he warns against synthesising different philosophical approaches or assumptions into ‘a single logically consistent paradigm to underpin a mixed methods approach’ (Maxwell 2012, p. 29). Alternatively, he considers philosophical stances are ‘lenses through which we view the world that are essential for understanding’ (Maxwell 2012, p.29).

Critical realists differ from constructivists in their ontology. In contrast to constructivists, critical realists believe a real world exists independently of our beliefs, perceptions, theories and constructions (Maxwell 2012). Critical realism adopts a constructivist epistemology, believing our knowledge of the world is inevitably our own construction, created from a specific vantage point, and achieving a purely objective account. He argues that it is not possible to attain independence of all perspectives (Maxwell 2012). In critical realism, mental and physical entities are interacting parts of a single world and both are treated as real. This perspective sees mental phenomena as inextricably involved in the causal processes that produce behaviour and social phenomena, and thus context plays a central role in causal explanations. This is compatible with the current study’s adoption of a new institutionalist lens as the theoretical framework. New institutionalists emphasise that unobservable
institutions, such as social norms and economic philosophies, impact on behaviour as much as the observable institutions (DiMaggio & Powell 1991).

My current study is influenced by Maxwell’s ‘interactive’ model of research design. This model is based in five components that relate to each other and act as an interacting system (See Figure 4). This interactive design requires the researcher to be continually thinking and assessing the connection between the components and implications for each other (Maxwell 2012).

![An Interactive Model of Research Design](Figure 4)
(Source: Maxwell 2005, Qualitative Research design: An Interactive Approach)

The adoption of critical realism is congruent with a study focusing on workforce issues. In this case the researcher seeks to understand and respect the perspectives, values and experiences of individuals within the broader social context. As Green (2006, p.5) argues ‘…individuals know a great deal about what happens in their own jobs …Whose story is more accurate than theirs?’ However, the interview data is considered in the context of other real phenomena. Using a new institutionalist theoretical framework, this includes both observable and unobservable institutions. Job quality, and other employment phenomena, needs to be analysed in a broader context, such as the workplace, industry and labour market and prevailing social norms (Cruickshank 2003; Green 2006; Pocock & Skinner 2012).

Critical realism has influenced the data collection and data analysis stages in this study in several ways. Both quantitative and qualitative data has been included. Quantitative analysis
in the form of descriptive statistics was included to add an additional data source as is advocated by critical realists (Maxwell, 2012). The qualitative collection of in-depth interview data provided a detailed understanding of the diversity of participants’ views and the reasons for this diversity. Critical realism accepts diversity as a fundamental part of our world. This influences the data analysis and discussion sections of the research project (Maxwell 2012). The combination of data collection methods has led to an in-depth exploration of all aspects of the phenomena under investigation (Maxwell, 2012).

**Research Design: A Mixed Methods Approach**

My study had two research questions. They were:

1. How do in-home support workers define a ‘good job’ under individualised funding models?
2. To what extent can employers shape the quality of jobs for in-home support workers under individually funded models?

The research design comprised two data collection methods. One comprised 18 semi structured interviews with in-home support workers. The second data collection method involved worker ratings on scaled questions. I also explored using a source of secondary data, the 2009 Victorian Work and Life (VicWAL) Survey data, which was used in the construction of the VicWAL Job Quality Index (VicWAL JQI) (Charlesworth et al. 2014). This is discussed later in the chapter. An overview of the mixed methods research design is presented in Figure 5.
A Mixed Methods Research Design

Literature review

Data Collection

Data Analysis

**Literature Review**
- Disability Reform
- Job Quality

**16 Job Quality characteristics selected from literature**
- To guide the in-home worker interviews

**Primary data**
- 18 semi-structured interviews with in-home support workers
- *Included a Likert scale for participants to rate the importance of each of the 16 job quality characteristics*

**Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis**
- Qualitative analysis of interviews using NVIVO
- Quantitative analysis of Likert Scale ratings of importance using descriptive statistics in SPSS

Figure 5: A Mixed Methods Research Design
**Ethics**

My project received approval from RMIT’s College Human Ethics Advisory Network (CHEAN 0000018740 – 06/14). Interview data and respondent information have been kept in accordance with RMIT University’s policies. Any identifying information including the names of organisations was deleted from the transcripts. Before the interviews a copy of a Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF) and a copy of the Burgess and Colleagues (2013) quality framework were emailed to participants. In two cases, where interviews were scheduled at short notice, a PICF was provided at the interview (Refer to Appendix Four). In these cases, a detailed telephone conversation occurred about the project prior to the interview. No PICF form was signed until after it was discussed in person. Participants were asked at the end of the interview if they agreed that a professional transcription service could be used if necessary.

**Primary Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews**

This section explains the rationale for choosing to use semi-structured interviews with 18 in-home support workers. It outlines the interview structure and process and provides the rationale for the inclusion of a scaled question. It also describes the pilot process. A description of the sampling methodology follows, covering the selection criteria, the recruitment process and the sample profile. The section concludes with a review of the ethical issues that were encountered and how these were addressed, the researcher’s reflection on her influence in these interviews, and the limitations of the chosen methodology.

**The rationale**

Semi-structured interviews were considered the most suitable primary data collection tool for several reasons. They are less formal and more conversational than a survey and so were considered more likely to generate the in-depth and granular data needed to answer the research questions. Interviews enabled the researcher to establish rapport with participants, encouraging honest and candid answers. The semi-structured interview format provided the flexibility to pursue anecdotes and comments that emerged during the interview, and allowed participants to respond in their own words. The collection of participant narratives in their own words is a strength of semi-structured interviews (Boeije, 2010). The semi-structured interview also afforded the opportunity to explain and clarify the job quality concepts as needed. Finally, many studies of disability support workers, in-home and in other settings,
have used interviews as a source of data because of their utility (Ahlstrom & Wadensten 2012; Brooks, Gibson & DeMatteo 2008; NDIS, 2014a; Mitic, 2013; Precision Consultancy 2011; Sims-Gould et al. 2010).

Sample methodology
The sample for my study was in-home workers with experience working with clients one-on-one, either in their own homes or supporting people to access services in their local community. All workers had experience supporting clients who were funded under consumer-directed individualised funding arrangements. This included clients funded under the National Disability Insurance Scheme trial and Individualised Support Programs (ISPs) under the Victorian Department of Human Services.

In qualitative studies researchers typically aim to select participants who will best reflect the phenomenon or characteristics of interest in a process known as purposive sampling (Boeije, 2010). One challenge in selecting a sample that reflected the wider profile on gender and age was sourcing accurate demographic data on this group. While many different sources of disability workforce data exist (Rimfire Resources 2010; Precision Consultancy, 2011; Martin and Healy 2010), the data does not distinguish between workers supporting people in the clients’ own home and workers supporting people in a formal workplace, such as a residential unit, respite house or day activity centre. Trying to match the sample profile with the disability support workforce data from the ABS 2011 Census was similarly challenging. Disability Support Workers fall under two occupational categories: the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) including ‘Aged and Disabled Carers” (ANZSCO occupational group 423111) and ‘Personal Care Assistants’ (ANZSCO occupational group 423313).

Recruitment process
The three step recruitment process is described in Figure 6. The recruitment method also contained a snowball component, although this was unplanned. Four in-home support workers were recruited after they were emailed the invitation or were told about the research by one of their former colleagues who was participating. This helped broaden the experience of the participant sample and the total number of different organisations by which participants were, or had been employed.
The initial aim was to achieve a sample of 15 disability support workers. When 12 interviews had been completed, it became evident that data saturation would not be achieved following 15 interviews. Data saturation or redundancy occurs when no new information of significance is surfacing in data collection and assumes some thematic analysis and theorising is happening simultaneously with the data collection (Tuckett 2004; Ezzy 2002). As saturation had not been reached, the researcher increased the sample size. A total of 18 participants were recruited. Data saturation had not been achieved at this number, but it was beyond the scope of this study to increase the number of participants further.

By going through disability service providers, steps had to be taken to reduce ‘gate keeper bias’ in the recruitment process (Groger & Mayberry 1999; Tuckett, 2004). Gate keeper bias occurs when organisations select participants who they expect will give information favourable to the organisation or present some other bias. For this study, the researcher emphasised the importance of managers and team leaders in the disability service providers not selecting or talking to prospective participants to encourage them to participate. The researcher did not disclose to managers within organisations how many workers had responded to the invitation from their organisations or provide their names.

The managers/team leaders emailed the invitation to participate to workers, put a copy of the invitation in their newsletter or posted a copy of the invitation on a notice board at their sites.

Figure 6: Recruitment Process

- Step One
  - An invitation was emailed to five organisations known to offer consumer-directed individually funded programs
  - Interested workers were asked to contact the researcher directly

- Step Two
  - A paragraph was included in a disability association e-newsletter that was distributed to member organisations.
  - Organisations were asked to contact the researcher directly for more information

- Step Three
  - A second invitation was emailed to organisations targeting males; however this did not increase the number of males recruited
The invitation prompted workers to contact the researcher directly by email or telephone. Eighteen interviews were scheduled following this first invitation. Near the completion of the 18 interviews a second invitation was distributed aimed at recruiting more male in-home support workers. The combined recruitment strategy only attracted one male who had in-home experience.

**Profile of the sample**

The interview participants were diverse in terms of their age, type of experience and years of experience within the disability sector. The interview sample consisted of 17 females and 1 male ranging in age from late twenties to mid-sixties. Further details are provided in the Chapter 5.

**Semi-structured interview schedule**

The semi-structured interviews generated both quantitative and qualitative data. Appendix Five outlines the interview questions. The interview structure consisted of the following.

1. Closed questions to gather demographic data.
2. Prompts accompanying the description of 16 job quality characteristics
3. A scaled question asking participants to rate the level of importance of each characteristic
4. Open-ended questions on what ‘good’ would look like for each characteristic.

![Diagram of interview schedule](attachment:diagram.png)
Participants were asked to rate importance of each job characteristic using the following scale.

| 1. Very important | 2. Important | 3. Somewhat important | 4. Not very important | 5. Not at all important |

Figure 7: Interview Structure (NB: ‘Job security’ the second line of boxes is used as an example)

Incorporating a scaled question in the interview process was consistent with a critical realistic approach which favours multiple methods of data collection (Maxwell 2010)

The Pilot

Pilots of the interview schedule were conducted with two participants. The pilots focussed on assessing both the structure of the interview, and the validity and reliability of the questions. The researcher assessed whether the structure of the interviews led to a relaxed and fluid interview, whether there was sufficient time to cover all questions, whether the order of the questions elicited required information and whether the inclusion of a Likert scale for each job quality factor disrupted the flow of the interview. The pilot interviews were used to assess whether the researcher explained the job quality concepts clearly, whether they were understood by the participants, and whether any areas, for example ‘earnings’, caused discomfort. The two pilot interviews were transcribed and reviewed. The review showed that all these requirements were met and the same method was used in the remaining 16 interviews with minor modifications.

The interview was shortened by combining three characteristics under ‘organisation support’. The order of two questions was changed. The pilot interviews also indicated the need to emphasise to participants the importance of talking about their own experiences, rather than what they had heard from others, or saying what they would do if they were faced with a situation.

In a quantitative study, data generated in pilots is usually left out of the main study, but the ‘contamination’ of data is less of a concern for qualitative researchers who often include it in their main study (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). The researcher included the pilot data with the subsequent interview data.
Job quality characteristics

The semi-structured interview asked participants about the following 16 job quality characteristics derived from the literature. The job quality framework developed by Burgess and colleagues (2013) in their work investigating job quality for the Quality of Work Research Project was the main source. This was because it was developed from an in-depth literature review that incorporated most of the characteristics associated with job quality put forward by labour force scholars discussed in the previous chapter. Also these characteristics had been chosen to investigate jobs, the purpose in this study, rather than to compare jobs, the aim of many other frameworks (Green 2006). Other characteristics that were included were influenced by the disability workforce literature. These were ‘client/worker relationship’, ‘role clarity’ and ‘adequacy of knowledge’.

1. **Job Security** (worry about job loss, getting the amount of work you want)
2. **Recognition** (credit for good work or taking initiative, being thanked)
3. **Career development and progression** (ability to move around the organisation and have promotional opportunities)
4. **Work scheduling** (number of weeks’ notice, ability to change shifts/ impact of cancelation of shifts at short notice, ability to pick up shifts following cancellations, minimum hours)
5. **Workload** (enough time to get the job done, pace of work, intensity, emotional demands)
6. **Job control** (ability to influence when you do your work, how, and in what order)
7. **Earnings** (rate and access to benefits/ items that are not covered e.g. travel between clients/minimum hours, salary sacrificing)
8. **Good physical environment** (physical demands, access to equipment, concerns re personal safety, contact with harmful substances)
9. **Client/worker relationship** (matching of clients to worker, mutual respect, worker/family relationship)
10. **Role clarity** (clear expectations from employer and clients, cleaning versus support tasks)
11. **Adequacy of knowledge (to do Job)** (Knowledge of clients’ conditions, disability equipment, procedures, medications, behaviour management)
12. **Direct supervision** (Access to supervisor when needed e.g. night shifts)
13. **Work itself** (meaningfulness, interesting/boring, importance)
14. **Skills and discretion** (ability to use skills initiative, apply ideas, influence ideas)

15. **Organisational support** (positive work environment/effective grievance/complaints process, participation in decision making, consultation, social environment, relationship with colleagues)

16. **Work life balance** (flexible work arrangements, ability to cut off)

(Sources: Brooks, Gibson and De Matteo 2008; Burgess, Connell & Dockery 2013; Charlesworth et al. 2014; Green 2006; Matthias & Benjamin 2004; Muñoz de Bustillo et al. 2011; Pocock & Skinner 2012.)

**Likert scale**

I used a question using a Likert scale for three reasons. First, the scaled question directly related to the first research question: How do in-home support workers define a ‘good’ job under individualised funding models? The scale would indicate the characteristics participants most valued. Second, scaled questions are commonly used when a construct cannot be measure directly (DeVellis 2012). ‘Importance’ was such a construct. Third, the inclusion of a quantitative question to supplement other data was in line with a critical realist approach that advocates using more than one data collection method to gain a deeper understanding of a subject.

Typically when a Likert scale is used, the scale is preceded by a declarative statement (DeVellis, 2012) rather than a question. However, a question rather than a declarative statement was used in this study to maintain the flow and fluidity of the interview, a key ingredient of effective interviewing (Mason, 2002). Participants were shown the Likert scale on the paper interview schedule to help them rate the level of the factor’s importance. (See Figure 7) This was done to minimise any confusion between ‘somewhat important’ and ‘not very important’.

**Interview process**

The interview process was consistent across all participants. After people who had responded to the invitation were screened to ensure they met the selection criteria, the researcher confirmed the aims of the study and timelines, size of the sample and length of the interview. Participants provided their informed consent before the interviews were conducted in line with national ethical research standards. Interviews were scheduled at a time and venue convenient to the participant. Four interviews were conducted in the participant’s home because this was their preference, seven in cafes, one in an office and six in public libraries.
The aim was to find venues that were quiet and private as well as convenient to the participant. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 90 minutes, most were one hour. In line with the national code of conduct for ethical research, I gave a $30 voucher to participants who were interviewed in their own time and outside their employer’s workplace.

**Reflexivity**

Researchers are part of the social world they study and their personal characteristics, beliefs, values and quality all influence how they conceptualise and engage in the study of their world (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). From a critical realist’s perspective each of the steps negotiated by the researcher to acquire data and make sense of it are real phenomena that influence the data collection and conclusions drawn. The relationships the researcher develops with the participants are real phenomena so could potentially influence participants’ responses. I was concerned that participants might give answers they thought might be expected of them or that the researcher wanted to hear, a phenomenon described as ‘the self-esteem effect’ by Green (2006). To reduce the likelihood that the $30 voucher provided in recognition of their time would influence their responses, I reiterated several times the importance of candid perspectives from the workers about their work and their experiences.

**Qualitative analysis of interview**

The qualitative data were subject to thematic analysis using Nvivo 10. This involved creating matrices containing dialogue by each respondent under each of the 16 job quality characteristics. Responses were then colour coded to determine if institutional factors, such as employment status, funding model or government employment, or demographic factors, such as length of employment and qualifications, could explain any differences or themes that emerged. The outcome of this analysis is described in the next chapter.

To synthesise the key characteristics of a good job additional tables were developed. These tables described the elements of a good job put forward by each participant. The number of participants who included each element in their descriptions of a good job was recorded.

The quantitative data generated from the Likert scale were analysed using the descriptive statistics function in IBM SPSS Statistics 22. This analysis provided both the distribution of ratings and the means. The findings are presented in Chapter 5 and 6 and the SPSS 22 tables of frequencies and percentages showing the distributions is provided in Appendix Six.
Exploring a Secondary Data source

When developing the methodology the value of using secondary data to understand how workers in the disability sector, or the broader community services sector, rated different job quality characteristics was considered. Secondary analysis is the further analysis of an existing dataset where the researcher aims to address research questions distinct from the original purpose that led to the creation of the dataset. It generates new interpretations and conclusions (Hewson, 2006).

During the methodology phase I explored undertaking secondary analysis using items from the Victorian Work and Life (VicWAL) Survey Dataset (2009). This dataset was used to construct the VicWAL Job Quality Index (JQI) (2009). This has local relevance because it was developed through a partnership between Workforce Victoria, Regional Development Victoria, RMIT University and the University of Sydney (Charlesworth et al. 2014). It was based on a telephone survey conducted in 2009, and using random digit telephoning it achieved a total sample of 3007 adults living in Victoria. This identified six dimensions of ‘job quality’. It is designed to measure ‘poor job quality’. The six job quality components in the VicWAL JQI are: Job security, Job control, Workload, Skill development, Access to work-life provisions and Working-time autonomy (Charlesworth et al. 2014).

This data could provide valuable insights on how the large group of ‘community and personal services workers’ rated each of the six job quality components, and how their responses were distributed between the different categories of ‘quality jobs. However, its value was limited for the purpose of this study as the codes used for the occupational groupings were at a broader level than was optimal for a study of in-home support workers. The taxonomy used to code respondents’ occupations in the VicWAL survey dataset was the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classifications of Occupations (ANZSCO). Occupations had been coded using the broadest level: Major Groups 4 level. This classification system divides occupations into eight groups of which ‘Community and Personal Service Workers’ is one. While disability support workers are captured in two Unit Groups within ‘Community and Personal Services Workers’, the data could not be dis-aggregated to distinguish these workers from other occupations within this large group. The large number of occupational categories contained in the ‘Community and Personal Service Workers’ classification is presented in
Figure 8. This figure reveals that less than 20 per cent of ‘Community & Personal Services Workers’ would fall into the two categories relevant to this research. Furthermore, these two categories would include workers supporting people in facilities as well as at home, so the relevant number would be smaller still. As a result, it was decided that the data did not provide sufficient illumination of perceptions of job quality for in-home disability support workers to justify inclusion in the thesis.

Figure 8: Group 4 Community and Personal Services Workers in Victoria (Source: ABS 2011 Census)

Concluding Comments

This chapter has outlined the study’s mixed methods research design and the two data collection methods used. Semi-structured interviews with 18 in-home support workers provided qualitative data which was subject to thematic analysis using Nvivo. It also provided quantitative data generated from the use of the Likert scale, which was analysed using SPSS descriptive statistics.
Chapter 5: A Good Job — the Workers’ Perspective

This chapter presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews related to the first research question: how do in-home support workers define a good job? The chapter is divided into two sections. The first is the quantitative data analysis. This section provides the workers’ mean ratings of importance for each of the 16 job quality dimensions that structured the interviews. The second section is the qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews. This section begins with a detailed analysis of the participant profile, which is followed by the findings presented under each job quality characteristic. A description of what the ideal job would look like for each of these characteristics is described under the ‘good’ heading. This section concludes with a framework of ten key job characteristics that define a good job for this group of workers. Throughout this chapter the quantitative and the qualitative findings are integrated with the literature to highlight where these findings add further support to the literature, diverge from the literature or suggest a new perspective. Pseudonyms have been used for all participants.

Quantitative Findings – Descriptive Statistics

What is important to workers?

During the interviews participants described their experiences in relation to each of the 16 job quality characteristics and rated each characteristic on its importance to them on a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranged from a ‘1’, meaning ‘not at all important’ to a ‘5’, meaning ‘very important’. Figure 9 shows the mean ratings for each job characteristics. The mean ratings on 13 of 16 characteristics, was between four and five which indicates a significantly high level of importance.

The characteristic rated the most important by participants was the client/worker relationship. This result is consistent with numerous studies of the disability and home care workforces in both the Australian and overseas context (Donnelly et al. 2013; Kietzman, Benjamin & Matthias 2008; Laragy et al. 2013; Sims-Gould et al. 2010). Similarly, the importance workers gave to having adequate information is compatible with studies linking adequate client information to workers’ job satisfaction (Benjamin & Matthias 2004; Brooks, Gibson & De Matteo 2008; Stone et al. 2013).
In contrast, three characteristics, ‘job control’, ‘career progression and opportunities’, ‘recognition’, all had means below four. Job control was particularly low at 2.75. An examination of the interview transcripts of the participants who rated each of these three characteristics “somewhat important” or below was undertaken to provide possible explanations for these lower scores. These three characteristics are briefly considered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Client/work relationship</td>
<td>4.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate knowledge</td>
<td>4.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/Life balance</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Supervision and access</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical environment</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload/intensity</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work scheduling</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work itself</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role clarity</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills and discretion</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organisational support</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earnings</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career progression &amp; opps</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job control</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The low ratings for job control can be explained by participants’ views that job control was incompatible with both a consumer-directed model and their workplaces being individual client’s homes. This is discussed further in the analysis of the interview transcripts. The reasons why some participants rated the other two characteristics lower is less clear. In terms of ‘career promotion and opportunities’ casual staff were more likely to rate this lower than permanent part time staff. Furthermore, Sam and Linda two casual workers new to the field
had expected to find and wanted opportunities to move out of in-home roles. Once in the roles, however, they were disappointed with the opportunities they had found within the sector. They explained they rated the characteristics as ‘not at all important’ because they saw it as not achievable in their in-home roles. Their low ratings lowered the mean.

For the characteristic ‘recognition’ there were no clear patterns. However, two workers made comments that suggested altruistic motives and intrinsic rewards were more important to them than formal recognition. The literature offers possible explanation for participants’ low ratings for ‘recognition’ and their emphasising the intrinsic rewards of their work. One is the entrenchment of social norms around the expectations that women demonstrate high levels of altruism in care roles. Labour force academics have argued that female care workers are expected to undertake this type of work selflessly and with little reward or recognition (Baines et al. 2012; Baines, Charlesworth & Daly 2016; Baines & Cunningham 2016). If workers held such expectations of themselves, they may have been reluctant to admit to valuing being recognised in their work.

**Participant profile**

An analysis of the participant profile was undertaken to help elicit the factors, the institutional factors in particular, that influenced participants’ experiences of their work and views on what makes a good job in the field. This analysis revealed a range of views reflecting participants’ demographics; level of experience; duties and tasks; and career aspirations. They also differed on factors relating to institutional influences, such as employment status, working arrangements and employer type.

**Employment status and working patterns**

Of the 18 workers interviewed, 17 were female and one was male, and they ranged in age from mid-twenties to mid-sixties (see Table 8). In terms of cultural background they were all ethnically white and their accents suggested they had been long term residents of Australia, though their place of birth was not identified. The gender and age profile of participants was consistent with two Australian disability workforce reports (Martin & Healy 2010; Precision Consultancy 2011). The absence of workers from CALD backgrounds, however, resulted in the study profile being less reflective of the disability support workforce in this area, particularly in light of anecdotal evidence that a growing number of recently arrived migrants are moving into the sector.
All participants were employed as either permanent part-time or casual employees and no participants were employed as permanent full-time workers. A breakdown of workers by employment status was difficult because of the high number who worked for more than one employer. There were 13 (72%) of participants employed as casuals in at least one of their jobs in this sector. This was higher than the percentage identified in other Australian research on the disability workforce, which points to around a third of the non-professional workforce being employed as causals (Martin & Healy 2010). This could be explained by the higher proportion of participants in this study being employed in the not-for-profit sector and to a lesser extent the private sector compared to the Martin and Healy (2010) study.

The working patterns of participants added to this complex picture with 7 of the 18 participants undertaking only in-home support work with one employer. This group appears at the bottom in Figure 10. At the time of the interview one participant no longer worked in-home support and was employed in a group home. She was included because of her experience in individualised funding models in both the UK and Victoria. Two thirds of the participants held either two different jobs in the one organisation or were employed in two or three organisations. They are called ‘portfolio workers’ in this study. Nine participants were working in two or more organisations at the time of the interviews. Several workers were permanent part time with one organisation and casual with another (see Figure 10). This is compatible with Australian research that found this group has a high proportion of workers who held more than one job. Martin and Healy (2010) estimated this to be as high as 24 per cent for the non-professional disability workforce.
Years and type sector experience

Workers’ levels of experience ranged from less than two years to more than 20 years. At one end of the spectrum two workers employed by an organisation delivering services under the NDIS had less than two years’ experience. For both it was their first job in disability support. At the other end four workers had more than 20 years’ experience each, and had worked in both the government and not-for-profit sectors. Several also had worked, or were working at the time of the interview, with private providers. This meant the number of organisations workers drew on to relate their experiences totalled more than 25.

All workers had supported clients with personal care in their homes. Most had, or were also doing, community access shifts, that is, accompanying clients on visits to community facilities or a client’s workplace. Two had taken clients on overseas holidays and ten had worked, or were currently working, in day placement programs or community residential units. Two had worked in government run institutional settings with people with disabilities. This depth of experience meant many workers compared their in-home experiences to their experiences in other settings and their experience working in individualised funding models to block-funding models and different guiding philosophies. Four had also worked, or were working at the time, in team leader or management positions within the disability field.
The workers had experience working in three states/territories in Australia — Victoria, Queensland and ACT — and one had worked in in-home support in the UK. Workers supported people in the northern, eastern and southern suburbs of Melbourne, the Mornington Peninsula, Geelong and Barwon region.

The duties and complexity of the tasks undertaken by these workers varied. At the least complex end, workers’ tasks included light cleaning and housekeeping. At the more complex end, they supported clients with multiple disabilities, including behavioural issues and also undertook tasks previously associated with nursing roles.

**Career aspirations**

How workers perceived their work and whether they saw it as a job or a career varied. Their responses suggested five different categories of career perspectives, although a single worker could belong to more than one category. These categories are described in Figure 11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stepping stone job</th>
<th>Long term career</th>
<th>Encore career</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short term option</td>
<td>identify as a disability support worker</td>
<td>final job after higher level job or a job that suits semi-retirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>providing valuable experience for other roles</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job of convenience</th>
<th>Portfolio job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>viewed as a short term option only</td>
<td>in-home work done in conjunction with other separate roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11: Career Aspirations

Note: The researcher allocated the categories not the workers. Workers often fell into more than one category as is indicated by the numbers allocated to each group.
Table 7: Participant Portfolio

(NB: This data is based on information collected in the interviews. In some cases workers were unsure if organisations were not-for-profit (NFP) or private, (All efforts have been made to present the data as accurately as possible, but due to the complexity of many respondents’ working arrangements, details may be incomplete) (*Pseudonyms have been used for all names.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years Exp</th>
<th>Total No. of employers in sector</th>
<th>Overview of experiences in disability sector by service type</th>
<th>No. of employers at time of interview</th>
<th>No. of jobs and employment status at time of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ella*</td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>In-home, (through NFP and private agency and direct employment) adult day centre, residential units, respite houses</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Day centre, casual (main job)(NFP) In-home, casual Residential unit, causal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>≥4</td>
<td>In-home (NFP, private agency) Community access Residential units, Holidays, NFP</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Had just moved into Team Leader position for in-home support workers (NFP) Previous acting management roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Margie</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>≥4</td>
<td>In-home institutions Residential units</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>In-home , casual with three employers (1 private, 2 NFP) Previous management roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>≥4</td>
<td>In-home, community access Residential units, respite</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>In-home , casual in-home Residential unit, PPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>In-home, community access</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>In-home, casual (NFP) In-home PPT, community access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>&lt;2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>In-home, residential unit</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>In-home, casual (NFP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tabitha</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>In-home, (NFP) community access nursing home</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>In-home, casual (NFP) Community access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>&lt;2</td>
<td>≥4</td>
<td>In-home Nursing home Disability and aged</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>In-home, casual (private agency) In-home, casual (NFP or private agency) Other job – FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Narelle</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>≥20</td>
<td>≥4</td>
<td>In-home, NFP</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Previous in-home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Years Exp</td>
<td>Total No. of employers in sector</td>
<td>Overview of experiences in disability sector by service type</td>
<td>No. of employers at time of interview</td>
<td>No. of jobs and employment status at time of interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Live in, UK Adult Day Centre Residential unit</td>
<td></td>
<td>Residential unit, PPT (NFP) one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ros</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>In-home disability and aged, community access</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>In-home, PPT (NFP) Community access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Lu</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>≥4</td>
<td>In-home (NFP/Private) community access NFP/Private agency</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>In-home, PPT Community access Rostering role, PPT (NFP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rosie</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>In-home, community access Interstate Govt PPT State Govt (Vic)</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>In-home, casual (NFP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>55+</td>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>In-home, community access</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>In-home, PPT (NFP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>55+</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>In-home, facilities, aged care</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>In-home, casual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Maureen</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>In-home, community access</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>In-home, PPT Community access NFP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Joan</td>
<td>55+</td>
<td>≥20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>In-home, institution, community access State government Education</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>In-home, PPT (wants more hours) Day centre, casual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Sonia</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>In-home, activities, day centre</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Casual for three employers Activity/recreation program (NFP) in-home (NFP) In-home/ residential unit (NFP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Darlene</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>≥4</td>
<td>In-home, residential units, holidays</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Full time admin In-home, casual (private agency) Residential unit, casual (NFP)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative Findings: The workers’ perspectives

This section of the findings is structured around the job characteristics that formed the basis of the participant interviews. Under each job characteristic the experiences of workers are described and the level of consistency between workers and any dominant view is highlighted. This approach is consistent with the critical realist perspective that emphasises the need to capture the diversity among participants as well the commonalities (Maxwell 2012). In line with the new institutionalist theoretical approach the various institutional influences (including employment status, employer type and working arrangements) are highlighted where they explain differences in perspectives between participants. Other factors shaping the perspectives of workers such as their years and depth of experience, whether workers performed in-home support work only or had a portfolio work life, and their career aspirations, are also highlighted to provide a nuanced analysis. Each section ends with a description of how participants described ‘good’ for each job quality aspect. Quotes from participants are used to demonstrate this influence. The final section condenses these findings into a framework.

Although 16 job characteristics were used to structure the interviews, the findings are presented under the following 15 headings to avoid repetition between the ‘work itself’ and ‘workload’.

- Job security
- Earnings
- Scheduling
- Job control
- Skills utilisation and discretion
- Work itself/workload
- Client/worker relationship
- Direct supervision
- Role clarity
- Adequacy of knowledge
- Career development and opportunities
- Recognition
- Physical environment
• Organisational support
• Work/life balance

**Job security**

In the interviews, job security was defined as ‘worry about job loss and/or getting the amount of work you want’. The degree to which workers feared losing their jobs was directly related to their employment status in their organisations. With one exception, all permanent part-time workers perceived their jobs to be secure. In contrast, six casual workers described their employment as insecure. Noticeably, three casual workers who considered they had good job security were highly experienced workers. Two of these three were ‘portfolio workers’ and their in-home roles were secondary to their main job in the disability sector.

Deeper analysis paints a more complex picture. While workers perceived that permanent part-time status would protect them from losing their jobs, permanent part-time status did not guarantee them the hours they needed. Four of the eight permanent part-time workers held contracts for less than their desired hours. Furthermore, even permanent part-time workers, who had regular hours and regular clients, feared the temporary loss of hours due to clients taking holidays, being hospitalised, or the permanent loss of hours if clients passed away or transferred to an alternative service. For three workers, their fears were founded on recent experiences of losing clients. The experience of Chris, who had worked in the sector for more than 20 years, illustrates this insecurity resulting from the workers carrying the risk associated with losing client hours:

_I have grave concerns with the home (work) as what if something was to happen to the client and they don’t replace the client with another client. So [with] the person I transferred across from one organisation to another organisation, what if something was to happen to him? The other clients wouldn’t get the funding that he has...There is no security in the in-home. I’m on leave because my client hasn’t got funding for the four weeks in the holidays so I have to take leave... Every school holiday I have to take a week off, plus four weeks at Christmas... so this is why I have a second job, so I can work in that period (Chris PPT)._  

Chris’ experience lends support to the findings of a cross national study whose authors warned that increased job insecurity would result from the portability of client funds or budgets (Cunningham, Baines and Charlesworth, 2014). Participants’ fears of losing hours due to their hours being directly aligned to clients’ demands for their services is also consistent with the findings of Australian studies (Cortis et al. 2013; Macdonald & Charlesworth 2016; Meagher, Szebehely & Mears 2016; NDS 2014; Quinlan, Bohle &
Furthermore, the experience of workers attaining fewer hours than their desired working hours mirrors the experiences of in-home support workers in adult social care in the United Kingdom (Cunningham 2016; Cunningham & Nickson 2010; Rubery & Urwin 2011).

The client’s right to request a worker be “taken off their team”, a central aspect of consumer-directed models, also contributed to the precariousness of their work. While workers uniformly supported this aspect of the model of client rights, it made their employment more vulnerable. This is reflected in the comment from Diana, a casual worker who spoke with enthusiasm about enjoying her job.

“It's not really secure at all. It's secure in that my clients want me. It's only secure where the clients like what I do and how I do it with them (Diana, casual).

However, her perception was different to other casual workers, who as a group held much more diverse perceptions than did the permanent part-time workers. Their perceptions of job security were associated with their level of experience and training, and their relationships with employers. Four casual, but highly experienced workers, considered they had very good job security. However, two were portfolio workers and in-home work was not their main source of income, which may have influenced this perception.

The experiences of three casual workers who needed full time, or close to full time hours, illuminated the difficulties in-home workers faced trying to secure and sustain standard hours (30–38 hours) in this type of work. One worker was employed by three different organisations to gain the hours she needed, and said that if one of her employers offered her permanent hours she would accept. Another worker had recently taken an administrative job within the disability sector after failing to secure the hours she needed as an in-home worker. The third worker, who needed longer and guaranteed hours, was taking a break from the disability sector and had accepted a job in hospitality.

**Good job security**

Regardless of their employment status, in-home workers consistently described ‘regular clients and regular hours’ as the key to ‘good’ job security. Fifteen of the 18 workers equated ‘good’ job security with regular clients and regular hours. In keeping with the strong desire for predictable hours, the replacement of clients when shifts were cancelled increased good
job security for a third of the interviewed workers. Five of these workers were highly experienced workers. The other element of ‘good’ security, universally supported by workers regardless of their employment status, was the matching of their desired hours. This was more important than permanent part time status. Part-time status was associated with ‘good’ job security for eight of the eighteen workers.

**Earnings**

The subject of earnings produced the most emotionally charged responses and without exception workers voiced frustration or dissatisfaction with the wages they received. In addition to their low pay, they were dissatisfied with four other related aspects. These were, first, the lack of wage parity between in-home support work and other areas within the disability sector. Second, the lack of parity with jobs they perceived were equivalent or lower skilled outside the disability sector. Third, the out-of-pocket expenses they incurred in their day-to-day work with clients for which reimbursement were either not available or were insufficient to cover their costs. Finally, the unpaid time that was spent, whether by phone, by email and occasionally in person, talking to co-coordinators about clients whose conditions were deteriorating. These are briefly discussed.

Workers employed by multiple organisations reported different hourly rates of pay, although it was notable how unsure several workers were about their exact hourly rate. Hourly rates ranged from a permanent base rate of $20.50 to a casual base rate of $27.00. At the time of interviewing participants, the minimum wage determined by Fair Work Australia for the financial year commencing July 2014 was $16.87. Two participants reported receiving a slightly higher rate than the SCHCADS Award, but expected this would reduce once they were reclassified from a ‘Social and Community Services Employee’ to a ‘Home Care Employee’ for a ‘disability support workers as ‘home care workers’ under the SCHCADS Award. Two casual workers employed under enterprise agreements received a flat casual rate of $25 regardless of the day or time of day they worked. These hourly rates varied according to participants’ employment status (permanent or casual), their employer’s service type (Government/ not for profit or private), and whether their conditions were regulated by an enterprise agreement, the SCHCADS Award (2010), or an alternative award.

With the exception of two staff, most participants reported receiving penalty rates. The rates they received, however, showed some variation. Some workers received a 20 per cent loading for weekends, others received a 50 per cent loading for Saturdays, a 100 per cent loading for
Sundays, and more for public holidays. Some workers also reported receiving small loadings for early morning and evenings. Two highly experienced workers, Joan and Chris, who had previously been employed by the Victorian Government as disability support workers, were receiving lower wages since joining large community organisations. One was working with clients funded under ISPs, the other with clients funded under the NDIS.

One worker’s not-for-profit employer had just introduced higher penalties for weekends and public holidays. It was unclear whether this was the result of a merger with another organisation or a new workplace agreement. It is notable that several workers were unclear on aspects of their pay, which most likely reflected the degree of change in the sector due to amalgamations, the pending renegotiation of enterprise agreements and updates to awards. Maureen, whose organisation had recently amalgamated with another, was a case in point.

I think we got a new agreement, but I’m not sure what’s happening with it to be honest... I know my organisation was saying they pay differently and that we wouldn’t be under the SACS award, I think. They were saying that unless we were doing community access work we’re ‘home care workers’, not disability support workers. It didn’t sound quite right (Maureen, PPT).

The perceived lack of wage parity with jobs both internal and external to the sector was mentioned by the majority of workers. While many workers found working in a private home to be at a slower pace than working in residential units, they perceived the isolation and having to deal with unexpected events on their own justified a higher rate of pay. Sonia, employed as a casual in three organisations, received $27 an hour working in a day centre compared with $22 providing in-home support. She was surprised by the discrepancy given she considered her in-home work required more responsibility than her work in the activity program. Her view echoes a group of US researchers who were surprised to find hospital aides and nursing homes aides received higher wages than home care workers despite the latter groups being more autonomous, having less supervision and exercising more judgement (Banijamali, Jacoby & Hagopian 2014).

In the Australian context, the outcome of the 2011 Equal Remuneration Test case has reinforced this pay discrepancy between disability settings. The 2011 Equal Remuneration Case resulted in workers employed under the SCHCADS Industry Award receiving pay increases between 19 and 41 per cent as well as a 4 per cent loading in recognition of barriers
to bargaining, both introduced over eight years (Cortis & Meagher 2012; FWA 2012). However in-home support workers employed under the Schedule E as ‘Home Care Workers’ have been excluded from these pay increases.

Other workers, including Ros and Marie, were more concerned by the lack of parity with retail, fast food and hospitality roles they perceived as less skilled and less challenging. Workers who had worked in these alternative industries provided tangible examples where they were paid a lower hourly rate for their in-home work. This further supports the already robust literature that links women’s work that resembles unpaid work in the home with poor pay and working conditions (Atkinson & Lucas 2013; Baines & Daly 2015; Charlesworth 2012; England 2005).

The lack of reimbursement of expenses for the workers who accompanied their clients outside the home reduced the net earnings of workers. The cost of their own coffees, lunches, dinners, seeing films and using their own cars to drive clients were the expenses most frequently incurred. Joan, who supports clients funded under the NDIS, described how these expenses could reduce her net income by more than a third.

Expenses wise, it's incredible the number of times your clients want to go out for coffee and things like that. So if you think about maybe three or four cups of coffee with clients a week that, you really wouldn't have had otherwise, it all adds up...I mean you can sit there and have a glass of water, but that's not... I used to have a client where it was required that we took him out for dinner. The company would reimburse up to $15 of our meal... But now it's not worth me working a one and a half hour shift to take this client out to dinner, and spending $15 to $20 on a meal (Joan, PPT and casual).

The inadequacy of allowances to cover the costs of meals has received little attention in the literature, but the opposite is true for the inadequacy of allowances to compensate workers for transporting their clients. This issue has been well documented in Australian, UK and North American studies of in-home support work with both people with disabilities and the elderly. (Ashley, Butler & Fishwick 2010; Butler et al. 2010 Curtis et al. 2013; Rubery et al. 2011). Interestingly, few workers reported working extra unpaid time while they were in clients’ homes, which has been raised in several international studies, particularly in the USA context (Delp et al. 2010; Grey-Stanley & Muramatsu 2011; Matthias & Benjamin 2005). In the current study, workers’ unpaid time occurred for follow-up work outside clients’ homes, usually in the form of workers emailing and having telephone discussions about clients.
**Good earnings**

Workers nominated either $25 or $30 as a fair base pay for permanent in-home support workers. Interestingly, the workers who had experience working in higher level positions outside the disability sector all nominated $30 as a fair hourly rate. The other features of a good job in relation to remuneration were pay parity within and external to the disability sector, and adequate reimbursement of expenses for work undertaken outside clients’ homes.

**Scheduling**

Participants’ experiences revealed a high incidence of fragmented work patterns. Both permanent part-time workers and casual workers described schedules featuring short shifts, shifts with unpaid time in between (split shifts) and modest total hours spread across several days. Participants described in-home support work as less predictable than other types of disability work and accepted that some roster changes were inevitable. For casual workers, employers expected a high level of availability. One permanent part-time worker had a regular client whom she supported in three separate shifts over meal times during the day. She accommodated this because the client lived nearby.

Participants, however, differed in their willingness to work unsocial hours, accept short shifts, particularly shifts at short notice, and undertake shifts with unpaid gaps between clients. The more experienced workers, both part time and casual, were confident they could restrict their hours to their permanent part time hours or reject shifts without consequences. These workers commonly described themselves as being ‘strategic’ or ‘picky’ about shifts. In contrast workers new to the field, or who needed substantial hours, did not enjoy the same level of influence over their schedules and perceived the flexibility of the job favoured the employers over the workers.

Three casual workers spoke of feeling pressured to accept shifts. One of them was Rosie, an experienced casual worker who supported people with high physical needs who needed near full time hours. At the time of the interview she had just decided to take a break from the work largely due to the unsustainable nature of her fragmented schedule. She was starting to feel ‘burnt out’ after long working days characterised by 7am starts and 11pm finishes, which left her little time for a personal life. She had accepted a casual job in hospitality that, while casual, came with the promise of regular eight-hour shifts.
The experiences of Sam, another casual worker needing long hours, are captured in the quote below. Sam’s experiences illuminate the flexibility that can be expected of casual workers and the pressure on them to accept shifts.

I felt you were having continual negotiation over your shifts and it’s not something I have had to deal with before. I’ve had casual roles before, say in a supermarket, and it’s been ‘here are your shifts’... and they were decent-sized shifts, it was always a minimum of four hours....Perhaps I wasn’t ideally suited to it (home support) because your shifts are more likely to be just one hour or two hours. There’s a one hour shift, a two hour break and another one hour shift. Some enterprise agreements seem to have a half hour minimum...

When I got offered a half hour shift I just said “no, I’m not doing it.

The other thing I found was there was bullying with the scheduling. There was real pressuring to do a shift. [They’d say] ‘You said you were available. [I’d say] Well I can’t do it I’ve got something {on}’. I used to have a falling out because you’d have your availability but sometimes you might not find out until the Friday that you’ve got a shift on that weekend. So you’d made plans for that weekend and then you find on your schedule on the Friday they’ve put a new shift in for you and no-one had called you up and told you. Some of these shifts may have come up on the Monday to start on Saturday, but they didn’t tell me until Friday because I had said I was available. It wasn’t a very considerate model for employees.

...there was never a sense of what’s your preference? What do you want? So in other words, if I had said, ‘look I want 40 hours a week and I want them all late nights, these wasn’t a sense of, “ok, well let’s try and get that for you (Sam, casual).

The fragmented working schedules experienced by many workers in this study were consistent with the findings of other Australian and overseas studies that have highlighted the transference of risk to individual workers, which is a feature of individually funded models (Pennycook 2013). Workers typically carry the risk and are unpaid when there are gaps in their client schedules (Cortis et al. 2013; Cunningham, Baines & Charlesworth 2014; Rubery et al. 2015; Rubery et al. 2011)

The experiences of the workers in this study who had reduced their in-home work to a small number of regular shifts as a second job, or in the case of Rosie who was taking a break, are consistent with a large body literature linking irregular schedules and unsocial and inadequate hours with workers’ intention to leave or actual leaving in-home support work (Benjamin & Matthias 2004; Nugent 2007; Sims-Gould et al. 2010).

However, the level of pressure to take on shifts experienced by Sam and two other workers, has been largely absent from the literature reviewed in this study. A possible explanation is
that their experiences were exceptions rather than the norm, or that other employers are more concerned with maintaining a positive relationship with their workers. Another area that has attracted little attention in studies has been the redeployment of workers at short notice following the cancellation of their shifts. The sector was in a transition stage at the time of interviews so policies varied. Some permanent part-time workers took paid leave when clients cancelled rather than pick up another client. They lacked the confidence to be redeployed at short notice to clients with whom they were unfamiliar without first undertaking shadow shifts. However, redeployment at short notice was in the main desired by the most experienced workers, particularly those employed as casual workers who needed the hours.

**Good scheduling**

In terms of the scheduling of their working time participants valued regular hours with regular clients, longer shifts, or consecutive clients when shifts with each client were short. They also valued employers asking their preferences in terms of the hours they wished to work and their preferred shift times, for example, evenings rather than mornings.

**Job control**

Job control was described by workers as their ability to influence when they did their work, how and in what order. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, most workers saw job control as being incompatible with a funding model based on consumer-direction or choice and control. They were also consistent in the view that when you were working in someone else’s home, you relinquished a degree of job control. Their views reflected social norms around people having the right to control what happens in their own homes. To date the impact of homes as workplaces and how the clients’ control of these workspaces affects workers is an area far from fully explored, other than in relation to occupational health and safety. However, the elevation of clients’ rights when their home is someone else’s workplace environment is consistent with doctoral research undertaken by Bryant (2009) which found that many boundaries become blurred between in-home support workers and people with disabilities. The heavy influence of social norms around the rights people have in their own home coupled with a consumer-directed model is captured by Marie:

> When you’re working in peoples’ homes, you have to respect what they want and how they want it done, because it’s their home. It’s their life and we’re supposed to be there to care for them… and for me it is empowering them in whatever way we can. For me it’s very important that once you understand what the client likes and how they want it done then you do it in
Hence, workers’ job control was limited to accepting or not accepting a new client, requesting to stop working with a client, or, in some cases, accepting or declining a shift. The experience of low job control reported by this group of workers is compatible with a recent Australian study which concluded that job quality was declining for frontline workers in human services (Cortis & Eastman 2015). The findings are also consistent with an Australian study of community aged care workers which found that ‘freedom to decide how to do their jobs was not a significant predictor of intention to leave’, hence not of high importance to workers (King, Wei & Howe 2013, p.314).

The findings are, however, at odds with other studies. A recent English study found workers considered their ability to control their hours through being able to work flexibly was a positive attribute of the job (Hussein 2017).

A Swedish study of personal assistants concluded reduced job control stemming from the subordinate position of these workers was contributing to work-related stress (Ahlström & Wadensten 2012). Low job control for the workers in the current study was much less of a negative than for the Swedish workers. In my study only four workers relayed negative experiences of feeling ‘bossed around’ or ‘micromanaged’.

The low importance workers in the current study placed on job control is also at odds with the job quality literature. Job control has been regarded as a fundamental dimension in job quality frameworks (Green 2006; Kalleberg 2011; Skinner & Pocock 2015). However, this is possibly because job quality frameworks are based on traditional employment models and workplaces, as opposed to workers having multiple workplaces that include multiple private homes.

**Good job control**

Workers perceived that job control in their day-to-day work was limited by their employment in consumer directed models in private homes, and their need to adhere to duty statements and support plans in limited timeframes. At the same time they valued the ability to exercise some influence over how they did their tasks, and to work in partnership with clients and their families. ‘Good job control’ was most commonly associated with having influence over
when they worked. This included being able to reject shifts they perceived were beyond their skill level or were unattractive, commonly because of their short length.

**Skills utilisation and discretion**

‘Skills utilisation and discretion’ covered workers’ ability to use their skills, initiative, knowledge and influence and apply their ideas. Differences in the responses reflected the experience level of the workers, and associated with this, the complexity and type of support required by their clients. At one end of the spectrum the workers providing basic personal care and light housekeeping, indicated that discretion and use of skills was limited as to how they engaged with the client. At the other end, workers supporting clients with more complex needs reported drawing on higher level of skills, particularly in relation to nursing-like procedures, or managing challenging behaviours. The wide diversity in client needs and therefore workers’ roles is consistent with a recent research of workers employed under the NDIS by Macdonald and Charlesworth (2016).

In the main a picture emerged of a group of workers whose skills were underutilised. Approximately half the workers voiced frustration about the lack of opportunities to use skills they had developed through other jobs and training. This frustration was strongest among long-term workers who identified as “disability support workers” and the workers who had entered the disability field more recently from other industries. One worker, who had been supporting ISP clients with high support needs for nearly 10 years, described herself as ‘brain dead’. Working one-on-one with clients she missed the opportunities to be involved in non-direct support work that she had enjoyed as a worker in state-run residential units. As a “portfolio worker” she undertook casual shifts in a community residential unit to maintain skills she seldom used in her in-home support role. Another worker who had joined the sector late in her working life commented that the work offered limited opportunities to ‘use your brain’. Other workers valued being matched with clients that enabled them to use skills related to their interests. For Sam this was cooking and for Marie this was gardening. Many workers simply wanted to have their suggestions heard about how their service to a client could be improved.

The role of workers in the development of client plans was raised by many workers, most commonly the experienced and qualified workers who identified as disability support workers. Their eagerness to be involved with client plans reflected both their level of
experience and their client load. The most experienced workers appeared to support clients with the most complex needs, needs that often included behavioural concerns or mental health issues. They found their perspectives were more readily sought when working in residential units or adult day centres or activity programs, due to their more frequent contact with supervisors. In the home environment they often had to initiate the contact as is illustrated by Sophie’s experience. At the time of the interview she had just moved into a team leader role.

*I did push myself into team meetings that were going to be happening about a particular client, because I felt that their needs weren’t being represented, or because I thought what I had to say was important* (Sophie, casual, portfolio worker).

The low input into decision making about their clients is similar to the experiences of a large group of in-home support workers in the US context (Benjamin & Matthias, 2004; Gray-Stanley & Muramatsu 2011).

**Good skill utilisation and discretion**

Having opportunities to use their skills appeared more important to workers than having discretion with how they worked with clients. This was the case for workers who brought a variety of skills and knowledge from other sectors, as well as the workers with extensive work histories in the disability sector. They valued opportunities to have input into client plans where they perceived it to be appropriate.

**Work itself and workload**

The findings related to the nature of the work undertaken by support workers and their workloads are discussed sequentially in this section, beginning with the nature of the work itself.

Participants’ descriptions of their work illuminated the variation in the roles between workers; the blurring of boundaries between in-home support, nursing, and cleaning; and the factors that contributed to satisfaction with the job. Workers’ descriptions of their work and tasks highlighted how individualised funding models gave little recognition to the complexity among clients and the varying skill levels among workers. The most experienced workers supported the clients with the most complex needs and the newer and less qualified workers supported more independent clients. This finding supports an argument made by Macdonald
and Charlesworth (2016) in relation to the NDIS, that flat wages structures fail to recognise the differing levels of complexity entailed with different clients.

All workers expressed preferences for the type of work they undertook, with the more qualified and experienced workers preferring roles that used their skill and knowledge and included little cleaning. Other experienced workers, such as Ella, Sophie and Margie, described themselves as being ‘choosey’ or ‘picky’ about shifts. Two disability support workers who had enrolled for nursing qualifications preferred roles where they could use their nursing skills and learn new skills. In stark contrast, the less experienced workers avoided shifts that involved perceived nursing duties.

The workers who chose to combine in-home support roles with work in other disability services were in the main more positive about their work than those who worked only in-home support. ‘Portfolio workers’ who combined in-home work with adult day care, residential units, rostering or other administrative roles enjoyed the ‘variety’ of their work life. The workers who combined in-home roles with other roles were in the main more positive about their work than those who worked only in-home support. ‘Portfolio workers’ who combined in-home work with adult day care, residential units, rostering or other administrative roles enjoyed the ‘variety’ of their work life. In stark contrast, the less experienced workers avoided shifts that involved perceived nursing duties.

In this study, isolation, and less frequently boredom, were the main reasons most portfolio workers combined in-home roles with other roles. In fact, isolation emerged as a major disadvantage of in-home work. Nearly all participants described the in-home support work as ‘lonely’ or ‘isolated’ at some stage during their interviews. Linda, who had entered disability support work late in her career and had come from an office setting, described the isolation as ‘a massive problem’. Most workers had little face-to-face contact with their employing organisations or other in-home workers. The isolation of the work has been raised in a small number of studies (Ahlström & Wadensten 2012; CSHISC 2010; Maddox & Pontin 2013; Manthorpe, Moriaty & Cornes 2011).
However, despite the isolation, and as previously mentioned, the strong dissatisfaction with pay, they enjoyed their work. They emphasised the intrinsic rewards, specifically knowing they were positively contributing to their clients leading more fulfilling and independent lives. Their high rate of overall satisfaction with their work is highly consistent with Australian studies on disability support workers across all settings (Donnelly et al. 2013; Rimfire 2010a), and studies of in-home support workers working with elderly clients (Meagher et al. 2016). It also mirrors studies in the US, Canadian and UK contexts which have reported high job satisfaction (Benjamin & Matthias 2004; Kietzman, Benjamin & Matthias 2008; Stone et al. 2013).

In terms of their workload, the vast majority of workers found the pace manageable, finding that sufficient time was allocated to accomplishing their tasks. It was generally unexpected events or issues arising with highly dependent clients that resulted in shifts running overtime. This finding is consistent with a recent Australian study of in-home workers in the aged care context (Meagher, Szebehely & Mears 2016), but diverges from research based on US and UK home care workers, which found that individualised funding models had resulted in work intensification and unpaid hours (Cunningham & James 2009; Delp et al. 2010).

While all workers found their workload, in terms of getting their tasks done, manageable for most of the time, they expressed widely divergent views on the physical and emotional demands of the work. Workers undertaking substantial part time hours (i.e., 30 hours a week), such as Lu, and those supporting high needs clients, such as Joan and Chris, found the work emotionally exhausting, regardless of their level of experience. Overall it tended to be the most highly experienced staff that worked significant hours and/or supported high needs clients. This provides further evidence that the more experienced workers are allocated the clients with more complex needs. Their experiences provide further evidence of the need to acknowledge the emotional labour inherent in the in-home support workers’ roles (King 2007; Mears 2009).

**Good work and workload**

In-home support workers valued feeling they were contributing to improving a person’s life and increasing their independence. They appreciated a workload that allowed them time for the relational aspects of the work as well as sufficient time to get their tasks completed. A good job has variety in terms of the tasks and a balance of clients. A balance of clients was
most commonly related to the complexity of clients’ needs and the physical demands of the work. This was particularly important for workers who have in-home support as their only or main job.

**Client/worker relationship**

In line with participants’ comparatively high ranking of the client/worker relationship in the quantitative analysis, participants emphasised the importance of the relational aspects of their work: specifically the matching between clients and workers and the need to nurture a positive client worker relationship. Central to positive worker client relationships were trust and respect. Participants also respected the rights afforded to clients under consumer-directed models, such as clients’ rights to request a certain gender of worker and to have workers removed from their team. At the same time they valued their own option to request to stop working with particular clients.

A client/worker relationship is not commonly recognised as a dimension in job quality frameworks. It was included as a job quality characteristic in this study because the importance of relational aspects to in-home support workers has been established by numerous studies (Cortis et al. 2013; Laragy et al. 2013; Matthias & Benjamin 2005; Kietzman, Benjamin & Matthias 2008). The present findings provide further evidence of the centrality of this relationship.

For many workers it was their relationship with their clients which was the difference between enjoying and not enjoying their work. In line with the importance of this aspect, a negative relationship with clients was a source of significant stress for workers. The most experienced workers pointed to how emotionally draining it can be for workers who need to maintain respectful and professional relationships when faced with rudeness from clients, or (as in Chris’s case, a client’s spouse).

Many workers expressed pride in their ability to control and suppress their emotions when working with clients whom they described as demanding or bossy, or whose situation they found sad or confronting. Joan, a highly experienced worker was one example. Joan had supported a lady over several months who passed away from cancer, an event which she described as ‘very emotionally draining’. With another client she was reaching a point where she could no longer support a client as she needed ‘a stiff scotch’ after every shift:
I have actually had a client who used to make me so angry, but you can’t show that to the clients. You can’t. You’ve got to keep control and when you leave you might close the care door rather firmly. But you just get on and do it (Joan, PPT).

This is compatible with the findings of a large study of home care personal assistants supporting aged care clients in the US who found emotional exhaustion led to workers burning out and leaving their jobs (Butler et al. 2010); and a large Canadian study that found difficult clients were associated with the poor mental health of workers (Denton, Zeytinoğlu & Davies 2002). While the workers interviewed for the present study often expressed pride in their level of emotional control and competence in handling difficult situations, their descriptions did not suggest that this emotional suppression increased their job satisfaction.

This finding is supported by a large study on Californian in-home workers (Delp et al. 2010).

The majority of workers considered the need to maintain professional boundaries. The quote below by Tabitha demonstrates how she views the client worker relationship in the context of choice and control and professional boundaries. Her views were shared by many workers.

*My view is that if I respect the client and they respect me, we can virtually get through anything… I think getting along with your client is really important and it’s just respecting and treating them as a person. If I can’t do a shift they go “I got this old granny and she just goes about doing her own shopping and she’s not putting me first… I think be friendly, but not friends and just be respectful…in the end if the client is informed they have the right to make their own decisions, whether we think they’re the wrong ones or the right ones. It’s their life. I definitely don’t make the right decision all the time and that’s my right* (Tabitha, PPT).

**Good client /worker relationship**

A good client worker relationship was based on careful matching, trust, respect and the maintenance of professional boundaries and rapport. It allowed both clients and workers to have the right to request not to work with each other. Good matching was fundamental to their work and they describe this matching as including not just hours, but matching their skills levels with the clients’ needs. Depending on the type of support they were delivering, matching interests was also valued.

**Direct supervision**

Participants typically worked with clients on their own, rarely visiting their employing organisations’ offices and having only limited contact with other in-home support workers. Outside conversations around rostering and new clients, workers contacted their head offices
to discuss their workload, a personal issue or career options, or most commonly, to seek advice or clarification when they were with a client. While workers described numerous situations where they may have had to contact office staff or a case manager, this contact was generally one way. A handful commented that they were only contacted when a shift was needed to be filled at short notice. Marie who had worked for more than ten years in the same organisation and enjoyed steady hours and regular clients described the limits of her contact with ‘head office’ and the level of contact she would like:

> Just a phone call maybe from the coordinator or someone to say how are you going? Is everything going alright? Is there anything I need to know? If they don’t have team meetings – and they won’t have team meetings where everyone could just sit down and have it all out with a coordinator present – I don’t know, the sad thing is whenever you get a phone call from the coordinator, they’ll start hi blah, blah blah, and you know they only want you to fill a shift. That’s the only reason they have rung. You get to the point of saying what do you want? I know that’s terrible, but because you’ve never had this sort of relationship with management or the office (Marie PPT).

Workers valued clear lines of accountability and having designated people for workers to contact to discuss client concerns or arrangements. A minority said they could speak to a person who knew their clients whenever they needed. For other workers, employers had limited structures in place, or the worker was unsure who to contact about client issues. Two workers, Chris and Joan, who both had experience in government run services commented that communication and back up was less reliable in the not-for-profit sector. Overall it was the most experienced workers who emphasised the importance of having ‘back up from the ‘office’. Chris, who was one of the most qualified and experienced worker accompanied two regular clients who had ‘challenging behaviours’ on outings and described the frustration experienced when back up was required and was not forthcoming.

> It takes too long to ring back. They [the supervisors] need to ring us straight away. I know there are hundreds of us out there and maybe 20 of us who could ring up at the same time … but they need to ring us back. They have to make sure we are safe out here. We are ringing them for a reason. It can be a behaviour management issues or maybe we’re ill and they have to arrange someone to get to our next job (Chris PPT/casual).

**Good supervision**

Workers identified that good supervision included having designated staff, who were familiar with their clients and who were contactable during their shifts. They also wanted contact from their supervisors/team leaders outside their shifts to discuss issues, their hours, workload and career opportunities. Consistently, workers wanted their supervisors/team
leaders to periodically call them to check how they were finding their work. This was particularly important for workers whose only or main job was in-home support and they felt isolated.

Role clarity
The participants pointed to different expectations of the support workers’ role being a source of tension between managers, clients and workers, although these tensions appeared much less influential on how they viewed their jobs than other aspects of job quality, such as scheduling and earnings. They described three areas of tensions. First, tension stemmed from different expectations of the worker’s role held by clients and/or family members and the worker. Second, the inclusion of cleaning tasks in job descriptions. Workers, particularly those who identified as ‘disability support workers’, viewed this as a downgrading or de-professionalisation of their role. Third, clients’ requests for workers to do tasks for their whole family, rather than or in addition to the client created tension.

Role clarity is another dimension that is not commonly associated with job quality by labour force academics. It has, however, emerged as a source of tension, primarily in large scale studies of home care workers (Matthias & Benjamin 2004) and disability support workers in residential settings (Gray-Stanley and Muramatsu 2011) in the USA context.

Participants also reported that the level of detail in job descriptions, duty statements and care plans not only helped prevent differing expectations between themselves and clients but also helped ensure consistency between team members. The quote below from Ros demonstrates how clients can be at the centre of negotiations with clients when there is a lack of consistency between workers:

...sometimes one carer will do something and another carer won’t do it and you get clients saying “such and such would do that, why can’t you do it?" (Ros, PPT).

One participant describing a pending change of their job title from ‘disability support worker’ to ‘home carer’ under the SCHCADS Awards was concerned this would contribute to changed client expectations of the role and a broadening of their role.
**Good role clarity**

Good role clarity was needed so that workers understood the current needs and abilities of clients. It also helped to ensure that clients and their families had a shared understanding of their role.

**Adequacy of knowledge/information**

The degree to which workers had adequate knowledge to do their jobs depended on their access to: up-to-date client documentation; opportunities to exchange knowledge with team members; and information technology that supported the sharing of client information. It was the most experienced workers who placed the heaviest emphasis on the need for client information detailing their level of independence, preferences, goals and any behavioural management plans. This was particularly the case when they were doing ‘fill-in’ shifts.

Participants described the unease they felt walking into unfamiliar clients’ homes feeling unprepared. While some families gave workers time at the start of their shift to read through plans and other documentation, other workers managed this situation by arriving early to read the available information in unpaid time. All workers emphasised the value of ‘shadow shifts’, where workers accompanied an experienced worker to ‘learn the ropes’ before working with clients for the first time.

The experiences of Margie, a worker with more than 20 years’ experience, illuminates the impact of inadequate preparation time and not having access to up-to-date support plans. Some employers failed to appreciate the nature and complexity of the work.

*My biggest issue is that you’re not issued enough information before you go to a shift... I think it’s a problem for the private sector because they don’t set themselves up like that. I’ve been sent to a shift where I’ve been told the person has cerebral palsy and “you need to help with their personal care”. Well I’ve arrived and I’ve not known whether they’re ambulant, whether they’re in a wheelchair, how much they can help themselves. And that sort of stuff takes only a few minutes to email or to tell someone over the phone. I don’t know whether it’s just assumed because of my level of experience I don’t need as much. I’ve walked into shifts with a completely different idea of what I was doing and the sort of person I was supporting... Some have plans or you’re told it’s in the home. So then you think ok, well do I take 10-15 minutes out of my time to get there early to read it because am I going to have enough time within the shift?... I did go into one where I was given basic information by email and told the bulk of it is in the plan in the home. I arrived and was given time – the family said ‘ok here’s the plan, we’ll give you some time to read it* (Margie, casual, highly experienced).
Her experience supports the findings of a large US in-home study of workers that found a link between workers having ‘pertinent’ client information and their satisfaction (Benjamin & Matthias 2004). The ‘adequacy of knowledge’ of workers is not typically considered a job quality characteristic, but other studies have also found its lack to be a source of frustration and stress for home care workers (Benjamin & Matthias 2004 and Brooks, Gibson & De Matteo 2008).

Many workers viewed information technology as being instrumental to workers having access to information. Workers most commonly voiced frustrations with the inadequacy of the technology or made suggestions on how technology could improve access to client information. Access to technology such as online schedules, clients’ information and work emails either on their own phones or iPads or those of their organisations varied between workers. At one end of the spectrum workers had no work email and either dropped in to the office or faxed hard copies of their timesheets. At the other end, workers were provided with a work email and recorded their hours electronically.

**Good adequacy of knowledge**

For these workers, adequate knowledge was closely associated with having adequate client information. Adequate information meant workers had access to up-to-date and detailed client information so that they could understand the abilities, level of independence and goals of their clients. This meant they felt prepared to support their clients. Very few workers had access to technology that provided them with up-to-date client information, but workers who had experienced this technology considered it help ensure they had adequate information.

**Career development and opportunities**

This section summarises participants’ views on opportunities for skills development and career progression. Experiences of skill development opportunities are covered first.

All participants had undertaken mandatory training. This included training in areas such as first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and manual handling. Their opportunities to develop and share their skills and knowledge beyond that required by government regulation varied widely. A lack of access to skill development beyond that which was mandatory, limited the opportunity for some workers to be allocated new clients. For example, Naomi was unable to do additional training in areas not directly required by her current clients.
They will ring you and it’s an emergency shift. I’ve had it a few times. They will say, “it’s PEG feed”, let’s say, or epilepsy. They’ll say, “can you do so and so?” I will say, ‘well, no, I haven’t done PEG feed, or I’ve only seen it and it was a year or two ago’. They’ll … obviously then won’t give it to you (Naomi, PPT and casual).

No participant working in NDIS models mentioned receiving training in negotiation or advocacy skills, which was of note, given it has been considered important for workers under consumer focused models (Cortis et al. 2013; Precision Consultancy 2011).

In terms of other formal skill development, many workers had been supported to undertake certificate III or IV qualifications, and these workers greatly valued these opportunities. This appeared to reflect, in part, the wide availability of government subsidies for workers. Three new workers to the field had been ineligible for subsidies.

Participants’ perceptions of the career opportunities for in-home support workers also varied and were shaped by whether they were portfolio workers, their level of experience and their employers’ type and size. In the main, workers perceived there were opportunities to make internal lateral moves. The portfolio workers suggested it was easier to move into in-home support roles from other disability settings, than vice-versa. Experienced workers, including Joan and Chris, had struck obstacles when trying to make lateral moves. These were policies requiring workers to apply for externally advertised positions and to participate in competitive interview and selection processes. For Lu, the chance to combine a rostering role with in-home workers was the ideal combination and her organisations supported this work design. Those new to the field, who were yet to investigate roles beyond in-home support roles, were more positive about the career opportunities than the highly experienced staff.

In contrast, others, including Ella and Maureen, perceived there were good opportunities to move into roles within their organisation or sector, though they had not always received the support to transfer to other roles. Three experienced workers, two casuals and one permanent part time, were undertaking higher qualifications with the hope of gaining a professional job outside the disability field. They had found few opportunities to move vertically in their respective organisations. Their perceptions are consistent with the concerns raised by academics around the flattening of organisational structures that has occurred in community services and care roles under neoliberal policies (Charlesworth 2012; Macdonald & Charlesworth 2016).
**Good career development and progression**

‘Good career development’ involves employers supporting workers to gain skills and certificates to increase the range of clients they can support. It also involves providing opportunities for workers to learn from their colleagues on-the-job. ‘Good career progression’, is associated with employers supporting workers to make internal lateral moves, vertical moves, or to combine another role with in-home support.

**Recognition**

Recognition by employers took a number of forms. These included service certificates and pins; annual staff parties; gifts and personalised thank yous. The forms workers most valued were the thank you phone calls and hand-written cards or notes, particularly if they stemmed from client feedback or colleagues. This was reflected in the level of detail in their anecdotes and their body language when recounting these occasions. Lu was particularly animated when she described receiving a personal thank you and more public recognition for her work:

> I worked with a new girl and she kept raving about me and went to the co-ordinator. She said ‘I was great to work with, I showed her what to do and I made her feel so comfortable. I got a phone from the co-ordinator that day. Now that put me on cloud nine. And they put a little thing in the newsletter so everyone else could see it. It was like yeah, go me! (Lu PPT)

While this was the type of recognition they most valued, they were more commonly acknowledged for being a ‘good worker’. Maureen said she was usually thanked for ‘filling in a shift at the last moment’. This likely reflects the invisibility of much of their work. This is consistent with other studies of Australian disability support workers, which also found that participants valued being acknowledged for caring about their work, their clients, and taking initiative (Laragy et al. 2013).

**Good recognition**

Workers valued personalised thank yous that acknowledged their initiative, care and/or the effort they had taken with clients. Workers were also consistent in suggesting that better pay would be a form of recognition for their work. As mentioned under the earnings section, they wanted financial recognition for the skills and knowledge their job required which would mean parity with other areas of disability and with jobs with similar skill requirements. Being recognised for their skill and knowledge was particularly important for the experienced workers, and they saw being asked their opinion as a way organisations could express this.
Physical environment

Most participants worked alone in multiple clients’ homes. They consistently described their work as physically demanding and at times emotionally demanding. Workers described how hoisting, rolling people over in their beds and transferring clients to wheelchairs could be particularly challenging in private homes where conditions were cramped or cluttered compared to purpose built homes or facilities. They were particularly concerned about damaging their backs. Their experiences and concerns are consistent with recent Australian studies (Palesy 2016; Quinlan, Bohle & Rawlings 2014). As mentioned in the earlier section on job control, workers believed they relinquished some rights when their workplace was someone else’s home. At the same time they were quick to list potential risks in home environments, particularly with helping clients with personal care in private bathrooms. Staffing ratios, access to and useability of clients’ equipment and the level of clutter were the main issues that influenced their perceptions of risk. The most frequent issue raised was the number of staff allocated to clients with little physical movement and how promptly their organisation responded to requests for client reviews. The description by Linda, highlighted the challenges workers can face working alone in the home environment.

[The shift] was with a very, very big person...more than double my weight that person would be, easy. It got to the point where there’d be texts coming out ‘we need someone urgently there’. On one particular day the co-ordinator did it. Then it became a two person shift...But you’re still rolling the person and for a while I struggled to hold the person on a roll because they’re that big. Just even to get the arms over and to hold them. I can do it now, but still struggle if it’s for any reasonable length of time, because I’m not particularly big (Linda, casual).

Several workers found their requests for a move from a one-person to a two-person shift, new equipment or an OT review, was accepted quickly. Two workers who had worked in multiple organisations had found that generally organisations were more responsive to workers’ concerns about their own safety than to concerns raised about client safety. Although this was not widespread, it did suggest the priority given to risk management, which is in keeping with New Public Management approach described in Chapter Two.

The literature on the health and safety of in-home support workers is noticeably small and lower than would be expected given the size of and growth in this workforce. The findings in this study mirror other Australian studies that have highlighted the challenges of physical environments for this group of workers. These challenges are associated with the quality of
risk assessments undertaken prior to workers’ commencing with a client, the safety of bathrooms, cluttered homes and user-friendliness of the clients’ equipment (Quinlan, Bohle & Rawlings 2014).

A good physical environment

Workers described ‘a good physical environment’ as one where workers have access to the necessary aids and equipment. It also involves employers undertaking risk assessments of homes and responding to workers’ requests for two-person shifts, or OT reviews when there are safety issues in a home.

Organisational support

Five themes relating to organisation support emerged from participants’ experiences. These were the relationship between employees and their employers; the prevalence of isolation and loneliness among the workers, the high value workers placed on teamwork; the varying levels of emotional and social support provided by employers and the shortcomings of the technology infrastructure.

Participants’ experiences suggested a weak employer/employee relationship reflecting a combination of the role being a second job for many and a lack of face-to-face contact with office colleagues. This was regardless of workers’ employment status or organisational size. Regular staff newsletters were a valued source of information, but participants’ interest in social events was strongly associated with their level of engagement with their organisation. Again it was the workers whose work was limited to in-home who were the least connected. This is reflected in a comment by Sonia, who worked for three providers and only felt strongly connected to the day activity program provider.

_ I feel very disjointed in that job. I almost feel I’m just doing it, like I’m not even working for them, I’m just helping her [the client] out. It’s really weird. I feel like there is no actual employer there_ (Sonia, casual).

Workers’ opportunities for contact with their colleagues varied. Six workers had access to peer network programs but had mixed views on the value of these programs. Two permanent part-time in-home only support workers were very positive about them and valued the opportunity to meet other workers. Peer support appeared less important for the portfolio workers who had contact with colleagues in the other settings. Marie, who had worked
exclusively in in-home support for more than a decade, attended peer network meetings to feel part of a team.

*We're called a team of carers but what's bizarre is we don't even know each other much of the time ... I kept going the entire time for several reasons. ... to get to know the other workers because, as I was saying, it can be a lonely job. It's important to me to not feel like an island, because it's easy to feel like that.* (Marie, PPT).

Although the peer network format did not appeal to all workers, more opportunities to meet with colleagues with whom they shared clients did. In the main, workers wanted this contact through team meetings that focused on resolving issues or sharing their knowledge and skills. They also valued peer support or debriefings after a critical incident, such as a death of a client. The staff who had previously been employed in state run services had observed a decrease in the provision of such programs. This is consistent with the many studies that have found individualised funding models provide little funding for activities outside direct client support (Baines & Cunningham 2015; Cunningham, Baines & Charlesworth 2014).

One aspect that did not emerge in this study but has been raised in the Australian literature (Charlesworth 2012) was experiences of violence and abuse. Three workers spoke of being accidentally hit and bruised by clients and one spoke of dealing with repeated sexual innuendos from a client. The reasons for this is not clear. It may reflect the experience level of many workers interviewed, who may have been able to deal with the situations they encountered. It may also reflect effective risk assessment practices and the training offered by some of the employers. A more likely reason is that questions were not directly asked about abuse and violence.

**Good organisational support**

For workers ‘Good organisational support’ means their isolation is recognised and organisations implement systems to enable workers to connect and form relationships with other staff. Workers wanted face-to-face contact with colleagues, supervisors or team leaders around skill development, problem solving, improving client service, and understanding career opportunities or to debrief following an incident.
Work/life balance

Workers’ views on what constituted work life balance, whether they had it currently and the degree to which they considered it was attainable in an in-home support role varied widely. The employment status and experience level of workers provides a partial explanation for this variation. Permanent part time workers who had regular clients and their desired hours enjoyed the highest degree of work/life balance. Marie, for example, supported two long term clients for whom she worked a total of 20 hours a week spread over weekdays. She was very satisfied having a role featuring regular hours with weekends free. Not all permanent workers had such predictable working patterns and many were required to work weekends. Similarly, casual in-home workers who had regular part-time hours and wanted a low number of hours valued the flexibility of the role. Casuals who wanted a significant number of hours had found juggling work across most days of the week left little time for their private life.

Workers’ life stages, their level of dependence on the earnings and family commitments led to differing preferences and experiences in balancing work and life. Weekend work with a long term client appealed to Darlene, who used the supplementary income to fund her love of travel. In contrast, for Tabitha, Naomi and Sonia, weekend work, early morning and evening shifts had to be fitted in around busy family schedules so held less appeal. The number of shifts scheduled over meal times was problematic for workers who had family responsibilities and wanted substantial hours in line with traditional 9 to 5 hours. The experience of these workers is compatible with the findings of a cross-national study that found increased disruptions in work life balance for the workers at two large providers of disability and other services (Cunningham, Baines & Charlesworth 2014). Similarly, it supports the findings of a Canadian study on home care workers with elderly clients who found this type of work made balancing work and home lives challenging (Tremblay & Llama 2015).

Another aspect of work life balance that has received less attention in the literature, but arose in this study was the ability of workers to leave the job behind when they were not with clients. The vast majority of workers had developed the ability to separate work from their personal lives. This appeared to reflect their level of experience. Five workers spoke of the difficulties cutting off when they initially started the work, but had developed strategies once they had settled into the role. This is consistent with the findings of Benjamin and Matthias (2005 p. 485) who compared the ability of agency employed workers and directly employed
workers and concluded that the agency employed were more able to ‘leave their work behind’ than workers directly employed by their clients.

An issue of greater concern in this study for workers was being contacted multiple times in a day about picking up extra shifts. This is an area of their work that has received scant attention in the literature. Lu, who describes herself as ‘loving her job’, described how it affected her down time.

You’re on your time off, but you’re talking to work for a lot of your time off. You can’t sit and have a coffee, or you can’t sit and do something because you’re connected to your phone. You put it down, you put it on silent, then you take it out of your bag and you’ve got 10 missed calls and you’ve only been gone for half an hour. It’s a little bit overwhelming, annoying and frustrating (Lu, PPT).

**Good work life balance**

Good work life balance is associated with workers having their preferences regarding hours and times of work considered and accommodated where possible. It also features employers having streamlined rostering processes in place to communicate with staff about rosters and shift requests.

**Ten characteristics of ‘a good job’**

This section synthesises the key findings on what make ‘a good job’ as defined by workers. These findings suggest the characteristics of a good in-home job extend beyond working conditions. Rather, the characteristics fall under three distinct areas: the work itself; the working conditions and the work environment (See Figure 12).
Under these three areas, 10 dimensions describe the central characteristics of a good job for this group of workers. The three characteristics grouped under the ‘work itself’ are: the ‘client/worker relationship’, ‘client information’ and ‘supervision and support’. The four characteristics under working conditions are ‘scheduling’, ‘earnings’ ‘work life balance’ and ‘skill development’. The characteristics associated with the third area, the work environment, are: ‘health and safety’, ‘career opportunities’ and the ‘recognition’. A framework further describing these characteristics is presented in Figures 13.

The 10 dimensions associated with a good job put forward in my study are congruent with the job quality literature reviewed in Chapter Three. This literature suggested job quality was associated with: pay; job security; skill development; career opportunities; scheduling; and health and safety (Green 2006; Kalleberg 2011; Muñoz de Bustilla et al. 2011).
As well as supporting the importance of these dimensions that are consistently included in job quality frameworks, the present findings support the importance of two characteristics, work life balance and supervision, that have been emphasised by Australian labour force scholars (Charlesworth et al. 2014; Pocock & Skinner 2012). The present study found work life balance relates to workers’ preferences being accommodated rather than their employment status. This supports Pocock and Skinner’s (2012) argument that individuals have different preferences and that these preferences change over their lifespan. The pivotal role supervisors play in influencing job quality found in this study is consistent with the findings of Burgess and colleagues (2013).

The present findings also showed some divergence from the literature. This is reflected in the omission of the terms ‘job security’ and ‘job control’ from the framework and the inclusion of three dimensions arising from the disability and in-home support literature. These are: ‘the client/work relationship’, ‘client information’ and ‘recognition’. For many in-home support workers job security is more closely associated with predictable hours and regular clients than their employment status as a permanent employee. For this reason, in my framework the notion of job security is included under scheduling rather than being a separate dimension. Secondly, a high level of job control was seen as unachievable in a job shaped by individualised funding and work environments that were first and foremost the client’s private home. This explains the absence of this dimension from the framework despite job control being considered central to job quality in the literature. However, this is not to suggest job control is unimportant to workers or unattainable in their role. Rather it points to the need for more detailed research on how in-home support roles can offer greater job control, and on the type of control that is possible while still ensuring the principles of a client-directed model are prioritised.

Finally, three dimensions included in my framework are not usually considered central characteristics of job quality by labour force scholars. Two of these dimensions, which participants viewed as central to their day-to-day work, have been highlighted in studies published in the social care literature. The importance of the client/worker relationship was highlighted by Kietzman and colleagues (2008) and Matthias and Benjamin (2005). The importance of workers having access to client information was highlighted by Nugent (2007)
and Stone and colleagues (2013). The final dimension I have included, ‘recognition’, was one included in the job quality framework developed by Burgess and colleagues (2013), but is a characteristic omitted from other job quality frameworks. The importance workers placed on these three characteristics in my study supports the use of a broad range of characteristics when the aim of a study is to investigate the job quality of an occupational group.

In this chapter I have answered the first research question: How do in-home support workers define a ‘good job’ under individualised funding models? In Chapter Six, I re-examine the findings to answer the second research question: To what extent can employers shape the job quality of in-home workers under individualised funding models?
This second findings chapter is structured around the ten dimensions that in-home support workers associated with ‘a good job’. It re-examines the findings in light of the second research question: To what extent can employers shape good jobs as defined by workers under individualised funding models? Each of the 10 dimensions are briefly described before discussion of the extent employers can shape each dimension. This analysis shows how institutional forces constrain or support employers’ capacity to provide quality jobs as defined by these workers. The identification of institutional forces is based solely on the workers’ lived experiences, so the evidence is suggestive rather conclusive. Gaining the employers’ perspective would have contributed to a more complete picture, but was beyond the scope of this study.

Under each dimension a description is provided, the experiences of workers are summarised and participant quotes are used to illustrate the key points. This is followed by a brief discussion of how each dimension relates to the relevant literature. It is worth reiterating here that this study draws on the very broad definition of ‘an institution’ proffered by new institutionalists’ Powell and DiMaggio (1991). Social patterns as well as entities are captured in this definition, as was emphasised in Chapter Two.

**Work itself**

1. **Client/worker relationship (clients and workers are carefully matched)**

Participants reported that a good client/working relationship is based on trust and respect and is heavily influenced by the careful matching of clients and workers. They reported that this matching required employers to consider the level of support clients required, the tasks clients needed done and their desired hours along with workers’ preferences and skills. Most participants found employers took care to match clients with workers taking into account the workers’ preferences as well as that of the clients. Margie is a highly experienced worker who has worked with private, government and not-for-profit employers, and was employed with three organisations at the time of the interview. In her experience employers can and do make matching a priority under individualised funding models.
I think the organisations I’ve worked with have done that really well. I think matching has been a priority. This can sometimes cause complaints that it’s taken too long to find a support worker, but that’s because they want to find the right one…I tend to only look to work for agencies that have that as a priority. Even my main one that is a for-profit organisation, she still takes the time. She’ll ring and say; ‘now I have this job, but I’m not sure if it’s really what you would like or what you would enjoy (Margie, casual).

Margie’s experience suggests that successful matching is associated with the extent the employers know their staff and clients rather than with the employer type, that is, she had experienced no differences between for-profit employers and NFP employers. With two notable exceptions the other participants’ descriptions were similar. Maureen and Joan perceived their organisations were reducing the time managers were spending on matching and attributed this to a higher turnover of office staff. Maureen, who mainly worked with ISP clients, perceived it was due to amalgamations of providers. Joan perceived it was due to the centralising of functions following the introduction of the NDIS. The reduced time invested in matching workers and client is evident in Maureen’s comments.

Maureen: I think [employer] used to consider that more than they have seemed to in recent years.

Interviewer: How did they show that they considered it more in the past?

Maureen: Well it helped when you had a regular, like I had. I knew the office staff a bit more and I had my specific contact person. They seemed to have a bit more time to talk through working with new clients, and making sure we fed back on how it went. They actually talked about finding a good match. Now it just doesn’t seem to be a consideration that I’ve noticed…. I think they tried to grow and that was a bit of a failure. Now they’ve moved back to a small office (Maureen, PPT).

Participants’ experiences suggest employers have a strong influence on the client worker relationship through prioritising and taking care to match clients and workers. The priority employers place on matching could be attributed to their need to take a stronger client focus as the sector moves to a more competitive market. In a competitive market where clients have greater freedom to leave providers if they are dissatisfied with their support workers, this relationship becomes central to the viability of organisations. Hence employers have strong incentives to consider workers’ as well as clients’ preferences. Clients were influential though, as was illustrated by the experiences of two workers who had been taken off a team following requests from clients. Overall, employers play a pivotal role in the client worker relationship through taking time with matching. The time employers devote to the matching task appears to be influenced by the funding provided for organisational functions organisations outside of direct client support.
The importance of employers in supporting the client/worker relationship indicated in this study has been recognised by other scholars and helps explains why, in most cases, employers were placing a high priority on careful matching (Laragy et al. 2013). The suggestion that the task of matching has been hindered by high staff turnover is congruent with research on the NDIS Barwon trial site (NDS 2015). The experiences of Joan and Maureen are consistent with recent Australian research pointing to the low pricing of personal care under individualised funding models being insufficient to cover the non-direct care elements of this service (CSHISC 2010; Macdonald & Charlesworth 2016; NDS 2014b).

2. Client information (workers have access to sufficient and current client information)

The findings showed that the provision of adequate information is important in making workers feel prepared and confident to support their clients. They wanted information on their clients’ needs, clients’ goals and duty statements. In line with the diverse nature of workers’ roles, the level of client information needed varied. For workers who supported more complex clients, particularly clients who were non-verbal, had behaviour issues, or required ‘nursing’ type interventions, detailed and up-to-date information was a higher priority than for the other workers.

Organisations decide the time they allocate to updating plans and briefing workers, but workers’ descriptions indicate other influences on the level of client information available to workers. These include clients’ or families’ willingness to share information and organisations’ capacity to invest in IT to support information sharing. Sam’s employer provided little information for reasons of ‘client privacy’, which Sam accepted because most of her work was at the less complex end of support. Others found information could be misplaced in homes. A much greater influence was their organisations’ IT systems, which were seen to enhance information sharing.

Workers who had worked in government run services or in-home support roles, such as Margie and Rosie had found the sophisticated IT systems available in governments and some not-for-profits allowed the regular updating and sharing of information. Rosie’s not-for-profit organisation was unable to provide in-home support workers with work email addresses, so paper rosters were sent in the mail and she dropped off her timesheet in person. This was in stark contrast to the IT systems at a past government employer where all in-home support
workers had a phone application (app), which enabled workers to access up-to-date client information as well as their rosters and time sheets. She described her organisation’s current IT capabilities as ‘stone age’, compared to the technology she used in a government-run service interstate:

We had apps on our phones and we could update memos about clients or concerns on the app. We had their duty statements on the app, we had permanent rosters and roster changes – it was fantastic...

...when you get to a client, you press the app that clocks you on at that house....before you clock off you can write notes. When you are visiting somebody every day you might notice that one day they are more breathless than you have ever seen them. So you would write that in the notes. It would go directly to the office and update their system straight away....It was really good...And if you’re clocking on at that person’s house you’re receiving their full duty statements and tasks and needs for that person. It was amazing... (Rosie, casual).

She also noted the marked differences between the technology provided by government and not-for-profit employers in her local area, having observed local council home cleaners being provided with apps on their phones. Workers used iPads for checking rosters and time sheets, but it was not clear whether the devices belonged to the workers or the organisations. Workers’ comments suggest funding for investment in IT systems that would support better communication with workers in the field may not be readily available under individualised funding models. More research would be needed to verify this.

The findings indicate that employers play a strong role in ensuring workers have sufficient information to undertake their work. They also suggest that government service providers have more sophisticated technology available to workers to support access to client information than do other types of service providers. It should be noted, however, that there was insufficient time in the interviews to cover in detail all participants’ access to technology. Employers’ ability to ensure workers have sufficient information is also influenced by the accessibility of information in the clients’ homes.

Differences in IT systems found between providers in the study is consistent with the findings of the Productivity Commission (2011). It estimated government funding to NFPs to deliver individualised funding programs was 70 per cent of the cost of running the services when delivered by governments. It is also consistent with other research that has highlighted the low funding level for support outside the direct care of clients (CSHISC 2010; Macdonald & Charlesworth 2016; NDS 2014).
3. **Supervision and support (supervisors initiate contact and support is available, particularly when workers are in clients homes)**

Participants predominantly worked on their own with clients and emphasised the need for good ‘back up’ in the role. Participants identified three elements of good supervision and support. These were: the provision of a central contact person who knew the clients; a designated person who initiated periodic contact with workers; and the provision of support when workers were with clients in their homes. The four workers who had experienced formal supervision, involving performance management plans or career development plans, placed value on these formal structures.

Workers reported their organisations offered on-call numbers for outside hours, though the level of support varied. Diana had supervision and support that was similar to that described as ideal by most workers. She had received prompt responses to queries or issues when she was in clients’ homes and was confident any urgent and non-urgent issue she raised with her designated case managers would be addressed. She also had a co-ordinator whose role included the well-being of workers. It appears that this support has influenced her decision to stay with her employer despite other offers.

>You just make an appointment and go and see her. You don’t even have to say why, she doesn’t ask. You just go in there and you can either give it [your issue] to her written out or just talk it over. They’re very good and they’ll get to the bottom of it, work it out... I think it’s [employer] quite good actually, I’ve been approached by two others to work for them and I have said ‘no thanks’ (Diana, casual).

Workers’ reports suggest that employers may provide some of the elements workers consider essential to good supervision support, but at varying levels. Diana’s employer, a large NFP provider, provided designated staff who workers could contact about clients and other staff they could contact about their workload, issues with colleagues or personal issues. They also offered monthly group supervision sessions for workers. It was only the periodic ‘check-in’ phone calls that were absent. What was most evident was that workers’ descriptions of ‘good supervision and support’ were well within the boundaries of a standard employee—employer relationship. The perceived inadequacy of the support provided is consistent with other studies of individualised funding models (Delp et al. 2010; Gray-Stanley & Muramatsu 2011).
The sample size was too small to determine if the difference in individual workers’ experiences could be explained by their employer’s type or their employer’s size. Some differences may have been related to how different employers viewed their workers. In Diana’s organisation, the provision of a co-ordinator for workers suggests workers are valued and her employer recognises the difficulties workers could face in their role. On the other hand, Sam’s descriptions suggested that workers were seen as resources that needed to be efficiently deployed. This is consistent with research on health workers which found that differences in supervisory practices and relationship with employees reflects organisational culture. Specifically, it depended on whether workers are viewed as people to be nurtured or as a resource (Dill, Craft Morgan & Kalleberg 2012).

The level of supervision also relates to the number of in-home support workers that are allocated to each team leader/supervisor. The link between individualised funding models and high supervisor to frontline worker ratios has been raised as a concern (Macdonald & Charlesworth 2016; NDS 2014).

**Working Conditions**

4. **Scheduling (predictable hours, reasonable shift lengths and low fragmentation)**

Workers associated ‘good’ scheduling with three factors: predictable hours, longer than minimum shift lengths and low fragmentation. Scheduling was important to these workers because of its close relationship to job security and work life balance. Workers had different personal views and preferences in terms of what constituted predictable hours, what constituted a good shift length and what level of fragmentation still fitted with a good working arrangement. Their views depended on their how their in-home work fitted with the rest of their lives.

Employers attempted to provide predictable hours through seeking to understand workers’ preferences and providing rotsters and indicative rotsters. Most employers took steps to improve predictability through the creation of teams for workers. Casuals Margie, Rosie, Tabitha, Darlene all had regular clients and were part of teams. Darlene had full time administrative work and worked a weekend shift with the same client. She perceived employers were increasingly recognising casuals’ desire for regular hours.

...*when I first started in the field I found that you didn’t know as a causal how many hours you were going to get the next fortnight...[now] even as a casual I’ve got ongoing shifts, so that provides me with security. I feel much more comfortable knowing that my hours are*
scheduled, knowing when I’m working. I’m very lucky because most casuals don’t have regular shifts. They’re more called in when someone is absent or sick or whatever. …If the shifts are cancelled at that time I don’t get paid for them, but that doesn’t happen very often… I guess it’s important to casuals to have notice, but that’s not always possible (Darlene, casual).

The findings suggest that employers can, and many do, take steps to increase the predictability of shifts through allocating regular shifts and clients. However, enterprise bargaining agreements and awards also shape employers’ ability to provide the desired predictable hours. For example, internal cancellation policies were influenced by conditions in their enterprise bargaining agreements (EBAs), which were in turn influenced by clauses in awards. Workers’ diverse experiences in relation to cancellation policies appeared to reflect whether their working conditions were covered by an expired EBA or clauses under the SCHCADS award. The cancellation of clients led to different scenarios for workers. Casual worker Linda said if her regular shifts were cancelled with less than five days’ notice she was entitled to be paid for this shift. In contrast, if Maureen had regular shifts cancelled she took annual leave if she was not allocated another client.

If a client cancels a shift with more than 24 hours’ notice, you just don’t get paid. I think according to the EBA you’re supposed to get another shift to replace it. But in order for that to happen you have to be very proactive I think. It’s not really brought up unless you go to the trouble of ringing up and chasing up [a shift] (Maureen, PPT).

Areas related to good scheduling, shift length and the level of fragmentation, appeared difficult for employers to control, being driven by clients’ demands and preferences. Joan supported one regular client in three separate meals shifts, amounting to a total of five and half hours spread over the day. This reflected the client’s need and preference. Employers had little control over the high demand for shifts at meal times. The majority of workers described themselves as ‘lucky’ when they had shifts of four or five hours, or more.

Workers’ experiences suggest employers have some capacity to provide workers with regular clients and regular shifts, which support workers’ desire for predictable schedules. However, their capacity to provide workers with shifts of reasonable length appears more limited. Employment regulation and the consumer control philosophy play pivotal roles in shaping the working time and shift lengths of workers’ schedules. This finding is compatible with other research in Australia (Macdonald & Charlesworth 2016; NDS 2014b; NLS 2016), and in the
UK (Rubery et al. 2015; Rubery & Urwin 2011). The most recent report by the service provider body concluded

_Individual purchasing under the NDIS encourages fragmentation rather consolidation of hours. Many employers would argue that the combination of award rigidities and lean NDIS prices makes employing people casually and for short-hours jobs supporting specific clients the only financially viable option (NDS 2016)_

5. **Earnings (pay parity and the reimbursement of expenses)**

A good job with respect to earnings for these workers would see their hourly rates align with the rates for other roles within disability services and similarly skilled roles outside the sector. It would also include the reimbursement of expenses directly incurred as part of their work. The experiences of workers who had been employed by multiple organisations over many years suggested the extent to which employers influenced the workers’ rates of pay.

Margie’s payslip from one of her three employers shows the link between her hourly rate of pay and her clients’ funding.

_I’ve been paid at five different rates because of the different hours I work and the different people I support...With one package, their funding is determined on how many medical interventions the child needs. My lowest rate is $25.00 an hour, that’s the lowest rates. Well they’re probably the ones with ISPs I would I say. It’s under the Award I think...within the industry, all agencies are so different the way they pay. The agency that I mentioned that I had good career prospects with, their rates are lousy....They might start at $21 I think. Because I’ve made this one my main employer, by the time the tax comes out from my other agencies, it’s just not worth it_ (Margie, casual).

Similarly, Chris worked for two organisations paying different hourly rates, but in her case the differences pointed to employers’ policies and enterprise agreements. Her quote also highlights the influence of funding models on the reimbursement of travel expenses.

_[NFP 1] has just brought in penalties on a Saturday. Before they had a flat rate. So that’s exciting. It’s time and a half on a Saturday. With NFP B you get 10% for the afternoon shift plus .25 on the flat rate..._

Margie and Chris’ experiences suggest a direct link between pay differences and the pricing levels set under the funding model. The influence of funding models has been well established in the Australian context by both service providers and researchers here (Charlesworth 2012; NDS 2014b) and in the UK (Rubery & Urwin 2011).
The workers who had previously worked in government-funded services or who were employed in both government and non-government services at the time of their interview described receiving lower rates of pay in non-government services than in government services. A report published the year after the interviews in the present study were conducted indicated these pay differentials were a hurdle for non-government service providers trying to hire staff that had been employed in government services. The report stated that employers outside government ‘…cannot match or replicate the wage levels or types of conditions that have historically been available to state government workers’ (NDS 2015, p. 4).

The differences in pay rates, payment of penalty rates and reimbursement for expenses experienced by workers documented in chapter 5 and in this chapter, suggest employers have a highly constrained influence on in-home support workers’ wages. Their experiences point to a complex interplay of institutional influences with variations in hourly pay rates being shaped by the employer service type (Government/ NFP or private), employment regulation (enterprise agreements, the SCHCADS Award (2010) or alternative awards), and the particular source of individualised funding received by clients. A further, less direct influence, evident in this study, was the social norms around support and care roles as work, which influences the financial value placed on care and support roles. This was illustrated by the experiences of Lu and Ros who had found their jobs in rostering and the fast food industry less challenging but better paid than in-home support work. Their experiences offer further support to the wide body of literature arguing that work that closely resembles women’s unpaid work in the home is undervalued (Baines & Daly 2015; Charlesworth 2012; England 2005). The lack of pay parity experienced by disability support workers is congruent with the findings of scholarly analysis of paid care wages in the Australian context (Cortis & Meagher 2013).

The Productivity Commission (2011) suggested the labour market could influence the pay rate employers offered workers. The commission suggested that a surge in demand for in-home support workers could produce a tight labour market that in turn could lead to a rise in wages. At the time of the interviews for this study there was little evidence of wage increases for staff funded under the NDIS pilot, ISP, or any other individualised funding programs that funded the cost of workers’ wages, even though there is some evidence of labour shortages in some areas (NDS 2016; NILS 2016).The evidence from this study points to funding models,
awards and the undervaluing of these roles trumping any market forces, and limiting employers’ ability to help workers achieve the pay parity they desire.

6. Work/life balance (preference on employment status and hours considered)
For in-home support workers work/life balance is a match between their preferred employment status and hours and their actual employment status and hours. Workers said employers varied in their efforts to understand and accommodate their preferences.

As highlighted in Chapter Five, differences between employers seemed to reflect how well rostering staff knew the in-home support workers and their preferences. There were examples of employers trying to accommodate workers’ preferences for PPT status, although matching their preferred hours appeared more difficult for employers.

Employers faced challenges in accommodating workers’ preferences due to funding models that required expanded operating hours, with clients often only needing workers for short shifts, and the employment regulation supporting workers being employed for minimum shift lengths. This finding is consistent with recent studies in the Australia, the US and the UK (Cortis et al. 2013; Cunningham, Baines & Charlesworth 2014; NDS 2014b; Nugent 2007; Tremblay & Llama 2015)

7. Skill development (opportunities to develop and share skills)
For the majority of participants ‘good’ opportunities to develop their skills involved having opportunities to learn on the job and off the job. The ‘ideal’ job includes workers having on-the-job opportunities, such as learning from other workers through shadow shifts and participating in team meetings focused on improving their client support skills. Off-the-job opportunities involve workers participating in training sessions and having the chance to complete formal qualifications as well as one-off training.

While some employers provided opportunities for staff to develop their skills and knowledge in line with workers’ definition of good skill development, this was far from uniform. Some employers provided opportunities for workers to attend formal training opportunities. Sonia’s experience suggests training opportunities are associated with service type. She attended regular seminars and training with her activity program provider, but only attended
mandatory training with her in-home provider. In contrast, Lu’s employer had offered staff behaviour management and self-defence training over several days.

The experiences of workers who had worked for different employer types suggested funding models were playing a significant role in shaping the level of skill development available to in-home support workers. Chris, who had previously worked at a state-run residential unit described receiving extensive development opportunities which included being supported to complete a degree qualification in disability.

“There are lots of flaws in the system and I think each organisation will have different flaws. I am just so glad to have been trained by DHS. They have their flaws too, but I was trained really well. Everyone thinks they are too strict, but they are making good workers whereas with these not-for-profits there is a lot of room for improvement. They haven’t offered me any behaviour management courses. There is no development in what I am doing. If something new came out on autism I would have to research it myself. I am not made aware of it (Chris, casual, PPT).

Government policies relating to training subsidies had been highly influential in enhancing development opportunities for the interviewed workers, employed in both government and non-government service providers. Workers who had lacked post school qualifications such as Lu, Ros and Narelle had been supported to undertake certificate, diploma and degree level qualifications in disability over the past decade.

The capacity of employers to provide development opportunities appears mixed. The small sample of workers’ experiences suggest funding models are constraining their ability to offer general staff development in areas of disability, but that OH&S related training remains a high priority. It is likely that this reflects the strong influence of OH&S legislation requiring employers to provide a safe work environment. Sonia’s experiences suggest there is scope for larger organisations to include in-home support workers in development being run for staff working in other service types. The data also pointed to the key role government subsidies for training play in supporting the training of staff.

Research published after the interviews were conducted highlighted the influence of consumer-directed models on employers’ ability to fund skills development. It showed in the initial phases of the NDIS, client plans were omitting the costs of workers’ training and development (NDS 2014b). The limited training opportunities appear to be related directly to
the low level of government funding, which is consistent with research findings in the early stages of the implementation of the NDIS (NDS 2014b).

Work Environment

8. Health and safety (worker/client well-being and safety is a priority)

Health and safety is a high priority for workers and having good health and safety means training is provided, the necessary equipment is available in clients’ homes, risk assessments are undertaken and the organisation is quick to review clients as their needs changed.

Workers uniformly described access to training directly related to compliance requirements such as first aid, manual handling and CPR, as key to good health and safety. Similarly, they described having access the equipment they needed as vital. Consistently employers had ensured workers had access to equipment and were trained to use it safely. One highly experienced worker had found her employers more concerned about her safety than her client’s safety.

While there was much evidence of employers trying to provide safe work conditions, workers’ experiences highlighted the many and varied challenges for employers achieving a safe work environment. Naomi’s quote highlights the difficulties employers face in resolving issues around heavy clients and equipment when staff work alone.

*I had a scenario with a wheelchair that I was required to take a client out in. [The shift] included lifting the wheelchair in and out of the boot of my car. I think five times within an hour and a half. Also I had to help transfer the client, who was quite a big lady in and out of it. So after a few weeks, I thought this can’t be right. I have had manual handling training before, but they didn’t talk about how many times it was OK to lift a wheelchair in and out. So I thought I’ll question it and I asked the agency... I went to the Worksafe website and it said their policy is we shouldn’t lift at all and that we should be provided with a special attachment at the back of the car. We got none of that. Anyway the agency got the OT to write me a paragraph that basically said what I should do to make the wheelchair lighter... They said I had to take it apart more. So the two wheels, two hand rests, and the footrest come off, so yes the wheelchair was lighter, but I had more parts to put on and off, so it didn’t really resolve the problem* (Naomi, PPT, casual).

This experience suggests the funding model did not allow the allocation of two workers for this shift, despite the physical difficulties this worker faced supporting her client on her own.
Another influence on employers’ capacity to provide safe working conditions relates to challenges faced when clients’ personal homes are workplaces. The majority of workers appeared reluctant to request that changes be made in the client’s home to make it safer, believing that people had the right to control their private home. Support workers consistently described asking their employers to negotiate with family members with only a handful of the most experienced describing how they tried to negotiate changes to make things safer. Maureen’s example illustrates how hard it can be for employers to improve the safety in private homes and how workers tend to accept the difficulties.

> Generally it’s been alright for me. There’s one client that I work with regularly where what we are expected to do is a bit problematic….Well the Mum has been doing things her way for a long time now and she’s paying the price. She’s very stubborn about changing things. NFP has put their foot down a bit and said no to some specific things she was insisting on doing. That was in response to one team members having back troubles. So things have changed but they’re still not good. It involves a bit too much bending over while she’s on the toilet. I only do it once a week usually, but it’s physically hard, though I’m sort of use to it now (Maureen, PPT).

Despite the employers’ attempts to improve the safety for workers, the mother was reluctant to change and the worker appeared powerless to enforce the changes. This suggests a deeply embedded ‘my house my rules’ social norm for workers as much as clients and their families.

Participants’ experiences point to multiple institutions interacting to influence the extent employers can provide a safe work environment and show concern for workers’ health. These include occupational health and safety legislation, the funding models in terms of both funding available for equipment and the consumer direction philosophy, and social norms around the rights of people to control what happens in their own homes.

Employers can provide training to support safe work practices, promote the need for workers to report safety concerns promptly and act on them, and be prompt in negotiating with funding sources when clients’ needs change. However, their capacity to provide safe work environments is hampered by workers supporting people in an environment over which the employer has reduced control. The difficulties workers described are with the issues highlighted in other Australian studies that focused on home environments (e.g. Quinlan, Bohle & Rawlings-Way 2014). However, one significant difference was that in my study the majority of participants had received OH&S training, and most gave examples of their employers responding positively to their safety concerns. They were much more positive
about their employers’ commitment to OH&S than the participants interviewed in the study undertaken by Quinlan, Bohle and Rawling-Way (2014).

9. Career opportunities (employers support career aspirations, portfolio working arrangements, job mobility)

Workers value employers who understand different career priorities and discuss career opportunities with their workers. They desire opportunities to combine two roles in an organisation or to have the option to transfer internally.

Some employers enabled workers to combine two roles within their organisation and Lu’s employer was an example.

I’ve been doing this quite a long time. I’m very good at what I do, very thorough. I’d made it clear when I started that I didn’t want to do this work forever. I would like to move up. I would like to go into the office, do rostering or case management. I applied three times got knocked back three times. I got told, “You are too good in the field, you’re not coming out”. So I’ve taken it further and I’ve done this diploma. I applied for the rostering job again and this got it this time. So I’m starting to move up… I’ll be sticking with my clients, but I’m doing quite a few hours rostering now. I have set days so I know exactly when I’m working and I can work my shifts around them. So it’s all working out really well for me… I don’t want to be a fieldworker forever. I’m getting older now. It’s starting to take a toll (Lu, PPT).

A small number of workers provided examples of their employers providing avenues or structures to discuss career opportunities, Linda’s employer was undertaking performance appraisal plans, Diana’s had a workforce co-ordinator available for staff to discuss career opportunities with, and Margie had one employer who was proactive in discussing career opportunities.

Workers’ experiences suggest employers can support the career aspirations of in-home support workers in several ways: through discussing career aspirations at the time of hiring, or reviewing them as workers gained experience; encouraging workers to transfer to other service delivery areas; or supporting portfolio job arrangements where workers combine two or more roles in the one organisation. Most of these strategies involve employers having regular contact with their staff, which has been emphasised in relation to other findings, such as the matching of clients and workers.

The extent employers can offer promotions within in-home support work (i.e. senior in-home support worker roles for clients with complex needs) appeared limited. It appears highly constrained by enterprise agreements, awards and pricing models attached to funding.
programs. The flat structures limiting career opportunities has been highlighted by both national bodies and academics (Macdonald & Charlesworth 2016; NDIS 2016).

The findings of this small sample suggest there is value in employers mapping and raising awareness of the jobs available in their organisations to highlight career opportunities and pathways outside in-home support roles. Research on frontline workers in health care suggests employers can choose how they organise work. Dill and colleagues (2012) argued that employers can improve poor quality jobs through the creation of career ladders that map career opportunities and pathways.

10. **Recognition (Skills and efforts with clients are formally and informally recognised)**

Workers in this study valued employers recognising their efforts with clients and acknowledging their skills and expertise. They appreciated employers asking their advice or opinions about their clients, which they viewed as a form of recognition. The link between employers asking their opinions and the workers’ feeling valued is demonstrated in a quote by Marie:

> I’m really lucky with the clients I work with. I have great rapport with them. I’ve been able to stay with them and have gained heaps of experience. And I know the organisations value that too. I’ve been called on a couple of times, not to get talked to but just to be asked options and stuff like that. So that’s been nice (Marie PPT).

Other workers including Lu, Chris and Joan made similar comments.

Employers provided recognition in several forms that were appreciated by workers, though levels varied widely. Forms workers valued included service certificates and pins, end of year celebrations, chocolates, vouchers and gifts and personalised thank yous. The high value workers placed on personalised ‘thank you notes’ suggests that employers can demonstrate they value their in-home workers and some are already doing this to varying degrees.

Workers’ desire to have their efforts with clients recognised and their knowledge drawn upon is well within the realm of individual employers. The value and capacity of employers to play a key role in recognising support workers has been put forward by other researchers (Laragy et al. 2013). At the same time, workers perceived the main reason that workers’ efforts were seldom recognised was the perceived high turnover in ‘office roles’.
Summary

This chapter has re-examined the findings to explore the extent to which employers can offer the dimensions found to comprise a good job for in-home support workers employed under individualised models. The findings suggest that employers had a high degree of influence over some the dimensions, but had more limited influence over others. Employers had the most control over aspects of the ‘work itself’. Under individualised funding models, a good relationship with their clients, a manageable workload, sufficient information to feel confident in their work and having back up support if needed, were central to a good job as defined by the workers. These features enabled workers to perform their work and enjoy their jobs. Employers had a large degree of control over these elements that are of the highest importance to workers. At the same time low levels of funding for services outside direct support in these models appeared to limit the time team leaders/supervisors could devote to monitoring these relationships and ensuring client information was up-to-date. This was most noticeable in the low level of investment in IT systems to support communication with workers.

The research suggests that employers had much less control over shaping the dimensions associated with good working conditions. This was particularly the case for predictable scheduling and earnings. The findings of the study support the arguments of other researchers, that in relation to working conditions for this group the influence of employers is constrained (Charlesworth 2012; Cunningham 2016; Cunningham & James 2009; Dill et al. 2012). The pay differentials participants experienced between their in-home support work and jobs in other industries suggest the influence of social norms around women as carers. A positive institutional influence on working conditions was evidenced by government policies that had supported employers to help their eligible staff gain formal qualifications.

In terms of the dimensions related to the work environment employers’ ability to provide these depended on them having regular and positive relationships with both workers and clients. Employers can appreciate their workers if they have regular contact with them and their clients. Similarly, employers can acknowledge career aspirations and resolve any concerns around health and safety if team leaders and others in supervisory roles have regular contact and good relationships with their workers. Employers’ ability to do so appeared restricted by funding models which provided little funding for work areas outside direct support tasks.
A further influence on the work environment emerging in this study that requires more research is strength of the social norm around people’s rights to control what happens in their own home. This norm appeared to reduce workers’ confidence and perceived right to negotiate aspects of how they worked, most notably around issues of safety.

Overall these findings support the evidence presented in Chapter 2, that while employers are a key influence on workers’ jobs, their ability to shape these jobs is influenced by multiple external factors. The literature reviewed in that chapter pointed to the structure and quality of in-home support worker jobs being shaped by a complex interplay of institutions including: employment regulation; funding models; social norms around women as carers; OH&S legislation; the labour markets; and trade unions. The institutional influences suggested by the findings are presented in Figure 13.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

Workers supporting people with disabilities under individualised models primarily work alone, have people’s private homes as their workplaces, often are employed by more than one employer and tend to have variable schedules. These workers have far from standard working arrangements, but little research has explored how they would define ‘a good job’ under these models. My study helps fill this gap. It investigated the characteristics of ‘a good job’ for in-home support workers employed under these funding models. My study found that ten dimensions are associated with a good job and that employers’ capacity to offer each dimension varies. It is strong for some characteristics and highly constrained for others. This final chapter examines the implications of these findings in the light of disability workforce reform and the labour force more broadly. The contribution this study makes to the literature, acknowledging its limitations, and suggesting areas for future research are discussed.

Job quality is a highly contested concept and researchers have forwarded many approaches to conceptualising it and categorising its dimensions. My research points to another variation. I argue that when the job quality of a single occupation is being investigated, the dimensions of quality are best considered in relation to three different aspects of the job: the ‘work itself’, the ‘working conditions’ and the ‘work environment’. My research has found that aspects of the ‘work itself’ were the most important to workers. Poor working conditions threatened the sustainability of the work, and a work environment comprising multiple homes posed challenges for workers. The implications of each of these findings are discussed in turn.

The three dimensions falling under the ‘work itself’, the ‘client/worker relationship’, ‘client information’, and ‘supervision and support’, were found to be the most highly valued by workers. This reflected workers’ commitment to their clients, their desire to feel prepared to do their jobs and their need for appropriate back up and support when required. It also reflected the isolation experienced by workers employed under individualised funding models, who commonly have very loose attachments to their employers. It is a phenomenon that has implications for both the well-being of these workers and their management.

The isolation expressed by the workers who worked exclusively in clients’ homes, as opposed to ‘portfolio workers’ was striking. This was mainly due to their minimal face-to-
face contact with colleagues, supervisors and rostering staff in their organisations. There are two main implications of this lack of face-to-face contact. The first is about workload. While employers certainly appear to provide manageable workloads, workers manage their own hours. They accept or reject shifts at their own discretion. With minimal face-to-face contact with their workers employers face difficulties identifying and monitoring workers who may be struggling with the hours, workload, or particular clients. With such dispersed workforces under these models, employers need mechanisms to monitor workloads. They need systems that track shift patterns and flag when individual workers have highly fragmented schedules. Without such mechanisms, employers rely on workers initiating conversations about their workload or a client or family members reporting an issue, or only becoming aware of an issue following an incident.

Such systems would not identify workers who are juggling shifts with two or three employers, nor those for whom in-home support work is a small part of their working life. Such work patterns are prevalent among workers in this field and suggests that employers need to monitor staff wellbeing through ensuring there are avenues for face-to-face contact with their in-home support workers. Some employers already provide opportunities through peer support, small group training and one-on-one meetings, but this is far from uniform. These models point to the need for employers to look at ways of maintaining regular contact with their staff. It also highlights the need for employers to understand different segments of their workforce, beyond their employment status and working hours. Through understanding how in-home work fits with their workers’ overall working lives, employers can monitor workers most vulnerable to feeling isolated or at risk of burn out. This is central to client safety and to worker wellbeing given the well-established link between quality work and quality care that has been recognised by both service providers and researchers in paid care. (Armstrong, Armstrong & Daly 2012; Fisher et al. 2009; NDS 2014a).

In terms of the second group of dimensions, those associated with good working conditions, this study found a substantial difference between participants’ definitions of ‘good’ working conditions and participants’ actual working conditions. This pattern points to working conditions that were a stark contrast to secure work with predictable hours with one employer and a single workplace, which was more typical of the standard employment relationship (SER) as described by labour force scholars (Kalleberg 2000; Rubery & Urwin 2011). This
research has illuminated just how distant many in-home support jobs are becoming from the SER.

The increasing deviation from the SER in part reflects how employment regulation, particularly the SCHCADS award has been evolving. Workers’ descriptions of their working conditions suggest changes to this award are enabling working conditions that will support individualised funding models in the short term, but could threaten the sustainability of the jobs in the longer term. The evolution of these roles could lead to them becoming less sustainable for segments of the current pool of workers and less attractive for many potential workers. In-home support work risks becoming predominantly a good and satisfying second job. That is, being an attractive option to those people who are looking to support one or two clients on a regular basis, as supplementary to work in another disability service type or their main job outside the sector. It appears a difficult role for workers who want significant hours and who desire some work life balance. The danger with this scenario is that clients and service providers may lose many highly skilled and experienced workers. This includes workers who have undergone significant education and training as disability support workers and for whom this work has been a career. At a time when demand for disability workers is predicted to increase markedly, it is important not to reduce the pool of potential workers.

My research found that the capacity of employers to improve the working conditions of in-home workers was limited. Workers’ experiences pointed to employers being highly constrained by the combination of employment regulation undermining existing conditions, and the low pricing of in-home support within funding models. The influence of social norms around the expectations of women in support roles was also evidenced by workers’ experiences of receiving better pay in less demanding jobs. There is a concerning implication for the future. Employers facing pressures to remain viable and competitive in a deregulated national market may well support the further squeezing of working conditions without considering the broader implications their deterioration will have on their workers.

Participants’ experiences suggest the working conditions for in-home support workers have been declining over time as service delivery is incrementally shifting from the government sector to the not-for-profit sector and private agencies. The numbers in this study were small, but the workers who had been employed in government-run services described these conditions as being characterised by better pay, longer shifts, more staff development, and
better short term and longer career opportunities than those they had found working under individualised funding models for not-for-profit or for-profit providers. As services are increasingly delivered by non-government sectors, fewer workers will have access to the more attractive conditions that have been available to workers employed by government-run services.

Given the profile of the in-home support workforce, this shift of jobs from the government to not-for-profit and private sectors without the transfer of similar working conditions is predominantly disadvantaging female workers who are the majority of the in-home workforce. This suggests a growing number of women will lose their predictable and secure forms of employment. This has happened in the UK under individualised funding models as Rubery (2015b) has described. Given the considerable size of this workforce, the less favourable working conditions and earnings could result in a reduction in financial security for a significant number of women in the workforce. Monitoring the impact on this group of workers will be important, and this monitoring will rely on the collection of good quality data.

To date access to accurate and current workforce data in this area has been a challenge, and this research has further illuminated how researching the extent to which working conditions are changing is severely hampered by the lack of reliable data. There is both a lack of data on this work force as well as a lack of systematic methods to monitor changes in these jobs. In the future when there is a much larger number of service providers delivering in-home support in a deregulated disability market, the systematic monitoring of working conditions, and other aspects of job quality, is likely to become more difficult. Given that the success of the NDIS relies on a supply of appropriately skilled workers, there is an urgent need to develop reliable and accessible data. This need to monitor worker conditions has been described by other researchers in Australia and overseas (Cortis et al. 2013; Macdonald & Charlesworth 2016; Rubery & Urwin 2011).

The final aspects of a good job suggested by this research relates to the work environment. Workers are well aware of the risks of in-home support work and employers appear to make a significant effort to ensure they have the equipment they need and the training the need to work in people’s homes. Workers’ experiences suggest social norms around people’s rights to control what happens in their own home is an area of potentially significant tension.
between clients, their families, workers and their organisations. It is a social norm that workers respected, even though it meant the safety of their work environment could be compromised. The findings showed employers can and do influence the safety of the home environments. Workers’ experiences suggested case managers and team leaders intervened and worked with clients once they were informed about an issue. However, individual workers often showed a reluctance to raise issues with clients perceiving they had limited rights when they worked in clients’ homes. This will be a tension that will be challenging for workers and employers. It further highlights the need for employers to maintain regular contact with their workers to help workers negotiate what can be difficult terrain and to intervene when necessary. This is another topic warranting future research, and a particularly important one given job control has been closely associated with job quality by sociologists (e.g., Kalleberg 2012) as well as the implications for worker safety.

The Contribution
My study deepens our understanding of in-home support workers, working with clients who are living in their own homes and receiving supports under individualised funding models. It has highlighted the isolation they can face which is often accompanied by weak relationships with their employers and a lack of personal relationships with colleagues. The highlighting of the diversity of the working arrangements of these workers provides a new way for employers to segment their workforces and design customised strategies for these different segments.

The proposed framework offers a new approach to examining the job of in-home support workers under individualised funding models, suggesting dimensions under three broad areas(1) the work itself; (2) working conditions; and (3) the work environment. Researchers in the main have focused on the working conditions associated with in-home workers, paying less attention to their working environment and the work itself. The ten dimensions of a good job identified could contribute to the development of a job quality framework for this important group of workers. These dimensions could also be used in the development of a framework for in-home workers who are supporting frail aged people in their homes, another group whose model of care is shifting towards individualised models of support in Australia. By identifying the areas within the ‘work itself”, which are the highest priority for workers,
and which employers can significantly influence, this research highlights areas for employers to focus their efforts on. This gives the research a practical application.

**Strength and Limitations**

Job quality has proven an effective heuristic to research this occupation. The use of job quality as a heuristic combined with the scaled questions has produced rich and detailed data on this occupation. It has, however also encouraged a wide exploratory lens. The inclusion of so many characteristics to guide the interviews meant they were unable to be explored in depth.

The limitations of this study were the small number of participants as well as the lack of participants from culturally diverse backgrounds and rural areas. Men were also under-represented in the sample. A further limitation was the sole focus on employees. Under the National Disability Insurance Scheme, a new class of worker is emerging, one who is directly employed by the person with disabilities, often through a website platform. Monitoring the job quality for this group of workers compared with the employee workforce will be more difficult, but will be an important area for future research.

**Further Research**

This research suggests there is value in developing a job quality framework for this occupation. A validated framework can provide direction for employers looking to attract and retain suitable and skilled staff. It could also help organisations map changes and improvements over time. The development of such a framework would require further research to validate the 10 dimensions identified in this research and to identify any additional ones.

This research also points to the need to monitor changes in the structure of the disability sector as a whole and the working conditions of workers specifically. Such research is needed as service provision shifts to a national individualised funding model. Reliable data on service providers is needed to monitor the shift in employer type and size and the services they are providing. Data collections carried out in aged care in the Australian context (Department of Health 2016) and the annual analysis of the adult social care sector in the
England provides examples of the type of research that could be undertaken (Skills for Care 2016),

The development of key metrics would enable a more granular monitoring and analysis of working conditions and how they are changing over time in the context of deregulation and the shift to a disability market. Key metrics, such as hourly rates, ordinary working hours, minimum working hours, penalty rates and cancellation policies could be tracked over time. In addition, such metrics would support further research comparing the jobs of in-home support workers with other similarly skilled jobs. This would contribute to ensuring equity in pay rates in a care workforce.

Related to the need to monitor the working conditions is the need to understand how this group of widely dispersed and isolated workers can gain a collective voice. This research raises questions about the role of unions in supporting in-home support workers. While it was not a focus of this investigation, workers’ comments suggested that union representation for this segment of the disability workforce is low. This raises the question of who is advocating on their behalf to ensure they have a voice to prevent a further decline in their working conditions.

In conclusion, my study has made a small but worthwhile contribution to understanding a section of the disability workforce that is central to the delivery of individualised funding programs. This understanding of what makes ‘a good job’ from the in-home support workers’ perspective can inform employers’ strategies on attraction, retention, workforce development and workforce design. It can also play a small part in helping to build a skilled and sustainable workforce to realise the aims of the NDIS for people with disabilities.


Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011) Census 2011 (Figures generated using Table Builder)


CSHISC (2010) An examination of workforce capacity, issues in the disability services workforce: increasing capacity (Final Report), Strawberry Hills, NSW


ILO (nd), Decent work and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, Geneva


NDS (2014b) National Disability Workforce Strategy Project: Barwon Site Profile and Findings


(NDS) (2015) Submission to The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) on the management of the transition to NDIS disability services markets


Social, Community, Home Care & Disability Industry Award 2010, (2010)


Appendices
## Appendix One: Legislation and Regulation in the Australian Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clients</th>
<th>Unpaid Carers</th>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>Service Providers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992</td>
<td></td>
<td>Social, Community Home Care and Disability Services Award 2010</td>
<td>Australian Charities and Not-For-Profit Commission (ACNC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Disability Act 2006 (public sector bodies)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Organisational HR policies and practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Two: Forms of labour security under industrial citizenship (Standing 2011)

Labour market security — Adequate income-earning opportunities; at the macro-level, this is epitomised by a government commitment to ‘full employment’.

Employment security — Protection against arbitrary dismissal, regulations on hiring and firing, imposition of costs on employers for failing to adhere to rules and so on.

Job security — Ability and opportunity to retain a niche in employment, plus barriers to skill dilution, and opportunities for ‘upward’ mobility in terms of status and income.

Skill reproduction security — Opportunity to gain skills, through apprenticeships, employment training and so on, as well as opportunity to make use of competencies.

Income security — Assurance of an adequate stable income, protected through, for example, minimum wage machinery, wage indexation, comprehensive social security, progressive taxation to reduce inequality and to supplement low incomes.

Representation security — Possessing a collective voice in the labour market, through, for example, Independent trade unions, with a right to strike.

Source: (Standing 2011 p. 17)
Appendix Three: Ethics Notice of Approval Letter

Notice of Approval

Date: 11 August 2014
Project number: CHEAN B 000018740-06/14
Project title: A job quality framework for the Disability Sector
Risk classification: Low Risk
Investigator: Dr Carmel Laragy and Wendy Taylor
Approved: From: 11 August 2014 To: 29 February 2016

I am pleased to advise that your application has been granted ethics approval by the Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network as a sub-committee of the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

Terms of approval:

1. Responsibilities of investigator
   It is the responsibility of the above investigator/s to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by the CHEAN. Approval is only valid whilst the investigator/s holds a position at RMIT University.

2. Amendments
   Approval must be sought from the CHEAN to amend any aspect of a project including approved documents. To apply for an amendment please use the ‘Request for Amendment Form’ that is available on the RMIT website.
   Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from CHEAN.

3. Adverse events
   You should notify HREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

4. Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF)
   The PICF and any other material used to recruit and inform participants of the project must include the RMIT university logo. The PICF must contain a complaints clause including the project number.

5. Annual reports
   Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report. This form can be located online on the human research ethics web page on the RMIT website.

6. Final report
   A final report must be provided at the conclusion of the project. CHEAN must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

7. Monitoring
   Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by HREC at any time.

8. Retention and storage of data
   The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

In any future correspondence please quote the project number and project title.

On behalf of the DSC College Human Ethics Advisory Network I wish you well in your research.

Suzana Kovacevic
Research and Ethics Officer
College of Design and Social Context RMIT University
Ph: 03 9925 2974
Email: suzana.kovacevic@rmit.edu.au Website: www.rmit.edu.au/dsc
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Disability Support Workers

Project Title: A Job Quality Framework for the Disability Sector

Investigators:
Wendy Taylor, Master of Social Science student,
Dr Carmel Laragy, Senior Lecturer, RMIT University,
Dr Larissa Bamberry, Lecturer, RMIT University,

Dear [    ]

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by RMIT University. Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please ask one of the investigators.

Who is involved in this research project? Why is it being conducted?

Wendy Taylor is undertaking this research as part of a Master of Social Science degree by research. Dr Carmel Laragy from the Centre for Applied Social Research and Dr Larissa Bamberry from the School of Management are her supervisors. The project has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee.

Why have you been approached?

You are being contacted through your employer, union or an advertisement. Wendy wants to interview Disability Support Workers who have:

- worked for two or more disability support providers; and
- worked, or are working, with clients in their own homes.

Those willing to speak to Wendy are asked to contact her directly by phone or email. Fifteen Disability Support Workers will be interviewed.

What is the project about? What are the questions being addressed?

Wendy would like to find out what makes a good disability support worker job when workers are in peoples’ homes. Wendy will ask what is important to you and will be interested in your views on topics such as the work itself, job security, career progression, supervision and
support, and work live balance. Wendy will send you a list of topics she is exploring before speaking to you.

**What are the benefits associated with participation?**

After information is obtained in the interviews, an existing generic job quality framework will be tailored to the needs of Disability Support Workers. It is hoped that this framework will assist employers provide satisfying disability support jobs. The framework will:

- Identify the good or “quality” aspects of the job
- Identify the aspects that take away from a job being a good job
- Identify areas that can be improved
- Monitor how jobs are improving or declining over time
- Compare jobs in this sector with other organisations or industries.

**If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?**

If you agree to speak to Wendy she can meet you face-to-face or speak by phone or Skype over the Internet. The interview will take between 45 – 60 minutes. If you meet face-to-face this can be at a place convenient for you.

You will receive a $30 supermarket/department store voucher as compensation for your time.

It is perfectly OK if you decide not to participate in an interview. You will not be disadvantaged in any way.

**What are the possible risks or disadvantages?**

It is unlikely that you will experience any harm from being interviewed. However, speaking about your experiences may be upsetting if you have had unpleasant work experiences. If this happens, Wendy will stop the interview and help you as much as possible.

Wendy will not tell your employer, union or anyone else what you said during the interview.

If you have any concerns about any aspect of the research process or interviews you should contact her supervisors Dr Carmel Laragy or Dr Larissa Bamberry. Their contact details are listed above.

**What will happen to the information I provide?**

If you give permission the interview will be audio recorded or otherwise notes can be taken. Recordings will be transcribed by a professional transcription service without any names being recorded. For example, it will be titled Interview Six with a fake name.

The interview records will be seen by the transcriber, the researcher and two supervisors. Any information provided that identified you can only be disclosed if (1) it is to protect you or others from harm; (2) is specifically required or allowed by law; or (3) you provide the researchers with written permission.

The results will be published in a thesis without any real names. This will be available in the RMIT Research Repository. People can view electronic copies of theses by going to the
“Research Repository” via the RMIT website. The thesis will remain online and the findings may be published in journal articles.

The results of the research will also be available to participants on request.

The interview transcriptions will be kept securely at RMIT for 5 years and then destroyed.

What are my rights as a participant?

You have the right to:

- Withdraw at any time
- Request that Wendy stop any recording or note taking
- Have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, provided it can be reliably identified, and provided that so doing does not increase any risks to you
- Have any questions answered at any time.

Whom should I contact if I have any questions?

Please find the contact details for all the researchers and the RMIT Ethics Officer below.

I am interested in your views on your job and would value your contribution.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Taylor
January 2015

Wendy Taylor, Master of Social Science student, B.A, B.Soc Work (Hons), Grad. Dip (Evaluation) Cert Publishing, Dr Carmel Laragy, Senior Lecturer, B.A. B. Soc.Work (Hons), M. Soc Work, PhD, RMIT University, Dr Larissa Bamberry, Lecturer, B.A. (Hons), PhD. RMIT University,

If you have any concerns about your participation in this project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers, then you can contact the Ethics Officer, Research Integrity, Governance and Systems, RMIT University, GPO Box 2476V VIC 3001. Tel: (03) 9925 2251 or email human.ethics@rmit.edu.au
CONSENT FORM

1. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet

2. I agree to participate in the research project as described

3. I agree: i) to be interviewed
   ii) that my voice will be audio recorded (cross out if does not apply)

4. I acknowledge that:

   (a) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied (unless follow-up is needed for safety).
   (b) The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
   (c) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
   (d) The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a summary of the project outcomes will be provided to participants upon request. No information that will identify me will be used.

Participant’s Consent

Participant: __________________________ Date: ____________________

(Signature)
Appendix Five: Interview Schedule

Revised Interview schedule for interviews with Disability Support Workers (Dec 2014)

Interview Participants: Background information to be collected at the interview
Interviewer to complete (Circle responses)

1. **Age**
   - 1-24
   - 25-34
   - 35-44
   - 45-54
   - 55-64
   - 65+

2. **Gender**
   - Male
   - Female

3. **Highest education qualification (ABS categories) (circle)**
   - Not competed Year 12
   - Completed Year 12
   - Skilled vocational qualifications
   - Associate Diploma/Advanced Certificate
   - Degree or Diploma (three years full time)
   - Postgraduate degree or diploma

4. **Level of any current study**

5. **No. of disability service providers ever employed by in total (direct employment counts as one including current employers)(circle)**
   - One
   - Two
   - Three
   - Four or more

6. **Type and size of disability services employers**
   - Not for profit
   - Private service provider
   - Private agency
   - Direct employment

7. **Client Individualised Funding Program**
   - ISP
   - NDIS
   - Other

8. **Working arrangements**
   - Permanent full time
   - Permanent part time
   - Casual – organisation’s casual pool
   - Fixed –term contract
   - Agency
   - other
9. Ave No. of hours worked each fortnight
< Ten   11-20 hours   20-30hours   30-40hours   40-60hours   Full-time

10. No. of years working as a disability support officer

11. Types of work
In-home support   activity centre   group home/CRU
Other
........................................................................................................................................

12. Do you see working as a Disability Support Officer or in a related role (e.g, a more senior role in the sector) (circle)
As a short term job?
A medium or long term career?
Other
**Job Quality Framework (Burgess et al. 2013)**

This framework will be used as a guide in the interviews with disability support workers. It will also cover a few additional areas that disability support worker literature suggests are important in their work, such as the worker/client relationships and clarity of role.

**Framework for the Investigation of Job Quality in the Workplace**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension 1 Job Prospects</th>
<th>Dimension 3 Intrinsic Job Quality</th>
<th>Dimension 4 Working Time Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>Meaningfulness of work</td>
<td>Work Life Balance/Fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Interesting work</td>
<td>(impact of work on home/family life)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career progression</td>
<td>Skills and Discretion Skills and Autonomy</td>
<td>Duration/Work Scheduling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Ability to influence decisions; use full range of skills; apply own ideas)</td>
<td>Discretion/flexibility (Choice over schedules/possible flexibility)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training Access</td>
<td>Working hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(training paid for by employer in past 12 months)</td>
<td>(Enough time to get job done during regular working hours?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work Intensity</td>
<td>Shift patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pace of work, work pressures</td>
<td>(Regular hours or shifts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Capacity to cope with pace of work/deadlines)</td>
<td>Flexible work arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional/value conflict demands</td>
<td>(Possibility of flexible work arrangements?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dealing with angry clients/job requires ‘emotional labour’</td>
<td>(Impact of technology on blurring the work/life boundaries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good Social Environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relations at work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Good relations with colleagues)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct Supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Manager helps and supports you)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Encouraged to participate in decision making)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organisational support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Positive work environment; effective grievance management)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Output – Influence at the Employee, Workplace and Organisational Level to be determined**

Source: Created from Eurofound 2012, p. 20 and various Australian surveys by Professor John Burgess, Professor Julia Connell and Associate Professor Mike Dockery at the Curtin Business School, Curtin University for the Quality of Work Research Project, commissioned by the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency.
Semi-structured interview: Questions for Disability Support Workers

Introduction:
In this interview I am interested in hearing about the work you do and the aspects of your job that make it, or could make, it a good job. I want you to think about all your experiences working as a disability support worker, not just your experiences in your current job. If you have worked in jobs outside the disability sector, you could look back on these experiences when you are thinking about what make a good job for disability support workers.
Workers will be asked to think about their work as a disability support worker, focusing on their in-home experience, for both their current and past employers in relation to the following areas:

a) Job security (worry about job loss, getting the amount of work you want)
b) Recognition (credit for good work or taking initiative, being thanked)
c) Career progression (promotional opportunities, ability to move around the organisation)
d) Work Scheduling (no. of weeks’ notice, ability to change shifts/ impact of cancelation of shifts at short notice, ability to pick up shifts following cancellations, minimum hours)
e) Workload (enough time to get the job done, pace of work, intensity, emotional demands)
f) Job Control (Ability to influence when you do your work, how, and in what order)
g) Earnings (rate and access to benefits/ items that are not covered e.g. travel between clients/minimum hours, salary sacrificing)
h) Good physical environment (physical demands, access to equipment, concerns re personal safety, contact with harmful substances)
i) Client/worker relationship (matching of clients to worker, mutual respect, worker/family relationship)
j) Clarity of role (clear expectations from employer and clients, cleaning versus support tasks)
k) Adequacy of knowledge to do job (Knowledge of conditions, disability equipment, procedures, medications, behaviour management)
l) Direct Supervision (Access to supervisor when needed e.g. night shifts)
m) Work Itself (meaningfulness, interesting/boring, importance)
n) Skills and Discretion (ability to use skills initiative, apply ideas, influence ideas)
o) Work Itself (pace of work, emotional demands of work))
p) Organisational support (positive work environment/effective grievance/complaints process, participation in decision making, consultation, social environment, relationship with colleagues)
q) Work Life Balance/Fit (Flexible work arrangements, Ability to cut off)

*Descriptions are in brackets

Interview structure

1. What is your experience of (each dimension)
2. How important is this factor to you seeing the role as a good job?
1. Very important
2. Important
3. Somewhat important
4. Not very important
5. Not at all important

3. What would ‘good job security “(“good client/ worker relationships”, “good pay” /etc look like in this role?
4. At the end of the interview ask: Is there anything you would like to say about your work that has not been covered by the topics.

a) Job security (getting the amount of work you want, not fearing you’ll lose your job)

Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Very important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What does or would good security look like for a disability support worker?

b) Recognition (credit for good work, taking the initiative, being thanked)

Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Very important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What does or would good recognition look like?

c) Career Opportunities and progression (promotional opportunities, training)

Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Very important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Very important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What does or would good work scheduling look like?

e) Workload (enough time to get job done, pace of work, intensity and emotional demands of work)
What does or would good workload look like?

f) Job Control (Ability to influence when you do your work, how, and in what order)

Experience

What does or would good job control look like?

g) Earnings (rate and access to benefits/ items that are not covered e.g. travel between clients/minimum hours/salary sacrificing, loadings)

Experience

What does or would good earnings look like?
h) Good physical environment (level of physical demands (lifting)) access to equipment, concerns re personal safety, contact with harmful products

Experience

Importance

| 1. Very important | 2. Important | 3. Somewhat important | 4. Not very important | 5. Not at all important |

What does or would a good physical environment look like for a DSW?

i) Client/worker relationship (matching of clients to workers, level of respect, worker/family relationship)

Experience

Importance

| 1. Very important | 2. Important | 3. Somewhat important | 4. Not very important | 5. Not at all important |

What does or would good client/worker relationships look like?

j) Role Clarity (clear expectations from employer and clients, understanding when you should and shouldn’t do something for or with a client, or when to ask for help)
Experience

Importance

| 1. Very important | 2. Important | 3. Somewhat important | 4. Not very important | 5. Not at all important |

What does or would good role clarity look like?

k) Adequacy of knowledge to do your job (Knowledge of conditions, behaviour management, medication, equipment organisational procedures)

Experience

Importance

| 1. Very important | 2. Important | 3. Somewhat important | 4. Not very important | 5. Not at all important |

What does or would good knowledge to do your job look like?

l) Direct Supervision (Level of support and access to supervisors when needed)
Experience

Importance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. Very important</th>
<th>2. Important</th>
<th>3. Somewhat important</th>
<th>4. Not very important</th>
<th>5. Not at all important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

What does or would good supervision look like?

m) Work Itself (meaningfulness, interesting/boring, importance)

Experience

Importance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. Very important</th>
<th>2. Important</th>
<th>3. Somewhat important</th>
<th>4. Not very important</th>
<th>5. Not at all important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

What does or would good work look like for a DSW?

n) Skills and Discretion (ability to use skills and initiative, influence decisions, apply ideas, access to training)

Experience

Importance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. Very important</th>
<th>2. Important</th>
<th>3. Somewhat important</th>
<th>4. Not very important</th>
<th>5. Not at all important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
What does or would good ability to use your skills and discretion look like?

o) Organisational support (positive work environment/effective grievance/complaints process/, level of consultations, participation in decision making, good social environment/ relationship with colleagues)

Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>1. Very important</th>
<th>2. Important</th>
<th>3. Somewhat important</th>
<th>4. Not very important</th>
<th>5. Not at all important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

What does or would good organisational support look like?

p) Work Life Balance/Fit (Flexible work arrangements, Ability to cut off)

Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>1. Very important</th>
<th>2. Important</th>
<th>3. Somewhat important</th>
<th>4. Not very important</th>
<th>5. Not at all important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

What does or would good work/life balance look like?
Q) Is there anything else that influence how you see your work that has not been covered that would contribute to a ‘good’ disability support worker job?
Appendix Six: Likert Scale Data on ‘Importance’

Quantitative data on the ‘importance’ of each factor for workers from the Likert Scale

Frequency Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is Job security?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very important</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is recognition?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important if career progression and opportunities?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very important</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## How important is work scheduling?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## How important is workload/intensity?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## How important is job control?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very important</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing system</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### How important are earnings?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Very important</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How important is a good physical environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Very important</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How important is good organisational support?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Very important</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>82.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very important</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How important is the client/worker relationship?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Very important</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### How important is role clarity?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not very</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How important is having adequate of knowledge to do your job?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How important is having good supervision and access to supervisors?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How important is the work itself?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**How important is it to use your skills and discretion?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How important is work/life balance?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>