

## Australia studies work-life balances

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Australian experts say they are developing a practical measure of work-life balance across cultures for use by Australian industries and governments.

The Griffith University-led study will focus on such issues as paid parental leave -- a government-funded entitlement in New Zealand, Britain and other European countries.

Paula Brough, chief investigator and senior lecturer in the university's school of psychology, said conflict between work and family responsibilities costs Australia about \$8 billion each year in losses such as staff turnover, absenteeism and health costs.

"Some employees, women in particular, will also scale down their career aspirations to balance work and family," said Brough. "This might be good for the new parents, but it is not necessarily good for the workforce."

One aspect of the study will document the employment experiences of new parents during a three-year period, including monitoring changes in job performance, satisfaction, well-being and aspirations as family responsibilities change.

The study, funded in the latest round of Australian Research Council Discovery projects, will gather evidence from Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and China.

"It will provide useful insight into cross-cultural differences between Western individualistic societies and more collectivist Asian societies," Brough said.

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