# Contents

About the authors ........................................................................................................ ix
Preface and acknowledgements ........................................................................ xiii

1. Introduction: politics, profits and practices in child and aged care ..................... 1
   Debra King and Gabrielle Meagher
   References .................................................................................................................. 9

2. The political economy of for-profit paid care: theory and evidence ...................... 13
   Gabrielle Meagher and Natasha Cortis
   Mapping the territory .......................................................................................... 15
   Profit and care: arguments for and against .......................................................... 18
      Arguments for for-profit paid care ................................................................. 18
      Arguments against for-profit paid care ......................................................... 20
      Arguments that for-profit status doesn’t matter ............................................ 23
   Evidence from social care systems ................................................................. 25
      Residential aged care .................................................................................... 26
      Child care ........................................................................................................ 28
      Home care for the elderly and people with disabilities .................................... 31
   Taking stock ......................................................................................................... 34
   References ............................................................................................................ 36

3. For-profit organisations in managed markets for human services ......................... 43
   Bob Davidson
   Human services ...................................................................................................... 44
   Managed markets ................................................................................................. 49
   Forms of managed markets ............................................................................... 52
For-profit organisations ............................................................ 56
For-profit organisations in managed markets for human services ........................................................................................ 58
   Incentives for entry .............................................................. 58
   Barriers to entry ................................................................... 60
   Entry and market type ......................................................... 61
   Market power ........................................................................ 62
   The effect of history, politics, and place ............................... 63
   Contract failure theory ........................................................ 64
Relational approaches in regulating entry .................................. 69
A future scenario? ..................................................................... 71
Conclusion .................................................................................. 72
References ................................................................................... 73

4. Outsourcing of elder care services in Sweden: effects on work environment and political legitimacy .................................................. 81
   Rolf Å Gustafsson and Marta Szebehely
   The context of the study .......................................................... 83
   New public management in Swedish elder care .................... 84
   Social infrastructure and public employers ............................ 87
   Working in Swedish elder care: a case study ......................... 89
      Private and public employment and the psychosocial work environment ................................................................. 90
      Perceptions of local politicians in purchaser-provider systems ......................................................................................... 94
      Who wants more outsourced elder care? .......................... 97
   Summary and conclusions ...................................................... 105
      Work environment .................................................................. 105
      Political control .................................................................... 106
Opinions for and against outsourcing............................. 106
Internal legitimacy and social infrastructure ............... 107
References ................................................................................. 108
Appendix................................................................................... 112

5. Caring for profit? The impact of for-profit providers on the quality of employment in paid care......................... 113
   Debra King and Bill Martin
   Caring for-profit? Or caring for profit? ......................... 115
   The data ..................................................................................... 120
   Working in aged care............................................................. 123
     The workplace: flexibility and the staffing mix .......... 124
     The work: caring for residents ......................................... 128
     The workers: attitudes, opinions and job satisfaction ... 133
   Does ownership type really matter? .............................. 138
   References ................................................................................. 141

6. Blurred boundaries: how paid careworkers and care managers negotiate work relationships ................................ 145
   Jane Mears
   Paid careworkers in Australia ............................................ 146
   What do we know of the experiences of careworkers? ...... 147
   The research project: method and participants .............. 149
   The research project: results ............................................. 152
     Providing good care............................................................ 152
     Transcending boundaries................................................. 154
     Care managers’ perspectives .......................................... 155
     Careworkers’ perspectives .............................................. 158
     Points of tension between managers and careworkers.. 161
     The role of policies and guidelines................................. 161
Conclusion .......................................................................................... 163
References .......................................................................................... 165

7. Parents as consumers of early childhood education and care: the feasibility of demand-led improvements to quality ............. 167

Jennifer Sumsion and Joy Goodfellow

Market rationality, imperfections and intervention mechanisms .............................................................................. 169
Demand- and supply-side imperfections ........................................ 170
Demand- and supply-side intervention mechanisms ............... 172
The feasibility of demand-led improvements to quality ......... 175
Developing the typology: an explanatory note ..................... 176
   A. Parents as uninformed, undiscerning consumers, focused on private benefits with limited agency/power ................................................................. 180
   B. Parents as potentially informed and discerning consumers, focused on private benefits with some agency/power .................................................. 182
   C. Parents as informed, discerning, community-focused consumers with considerable agency/power .................. 184
   D. Parents as informed, discerning consumers, focused on private benefits with considerable agency/power ............. 187
   E. Parents as informed, discerning, activist citizen-consumers, focused on social benefits with considerable agency/power ........................................... 189

Concluding thoughts ....................................................................... 195
References ........................................................................................ 197

8. Improving quality in Australian child care: the role of the media and non-profit providers ................................................. 203

Bronwen Dalton and Rachel Wilson
Evaluating child care: quality versus quantity measures .... 204
The child care quality assurance regime in Australia .......... 205
Factors influencing parental decisions about child care .... 207
The role of the media in influencing parental understandings of quality child care ................................................................. 210
Content analysis of media coverage of child care .......... 211
   Method ................................................................................ 212
   Analysis ............................................................................... 212
   Results .................................................................................. 213
Discussion of findings ............................................................. 217
Improving quality in Australian child care: the role of non-profit providers ............................................................ 218
From service providers to advocates? Strategies for making an impact .......................................................... 221
   Strategic communication .................................................. 222
   Conclusion ........................................................................... 223
   References ............................................................................. 225

9. The giant in the playground: investigating the reach and implications of the corporatisation of child care provision .......... 231

Frances Press and Christine Woodrow

Prologue ................................................................. 231
Introduction ............................................................. 232
Market domination ..................................................... 234
Interrelationships ........................................................ 237
Professional identity ..................................................... 239
Curriculum .............................................................. 242
Policy impact ............................................................. 244
Conclusion ................................................................. 247
References ............................................................................. 249
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Preface and acknowledgements

This book emerged from the second symposium of the Australian Paid Care Research Network, which we co-convened in November 2007. The symposium included papers from academic researchers and presentations from industry experts. The theme of ‘for-profit provision of paid care’ built on an earlier workshop that focused on more general issues relating to paid care. (Papers from the earlier workshop have been published in a special issue of the Australian Journal of Social Issues, volume 42, number 2.)

The focus on for-profit provision of care acknowledged the significance of the expansion of the private sector into social service provision, to the extent that, in sectors such as child care and residential aged care, for profit providers are now major players. This development raises some fundamental questions about the goals and capacities of the social service system in Australia, which the symposium sought to canvass and debate.

Debate at the symposium was enriched by the participation of a diverse audience, which included academic researchers from a variety of disciplines, representatives from unions, peak bodies and government, and providers of paid care (from for-profit and non-profit) services. There was little doubt that the issues we discussed were relevant to those providing paid care and making policy on care provision, and the opportunity to air them in a public forum was valuable. The array of interests in paid care is reflected in the book, chapters of which were first presented as papers at the symposium. (The original papers have undergone a rigorous process of review and revision by the editors and anonymous referees.)

Although the symposium placed no boundaries around the sector of paid care to be discussed, it eventuated that the papers presented focused on two sectors: child care and aged care. This is not entirely surprising, since it is in these two care sectors that for-profit provision
has been most prominent, and we have maintained this dual focus in the book.

We would like to thank the Social Policy Research Network of the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney for sponsoring the symposium and the publication of the book. Sponsorship for the publication of the book was also received from the National Institute of Labour Studies, Flinders University. We are grateful to a number of people who helped us to bring the book to fruition. Maria Bruzzese and James Burke of the Division of Professional Learning in the Faculty of Education and Social Work assisted with organising the symposium. The referees, who provided careful, constructive feedback on the chapters, have contributed significantly. Assistance with copyediting of the final manuscript was provided by Denise Thompson. Thanks are also warmly extended to Sydney University Press, to Susan Murray-Smith, for her confidence in the project and to Agata Mrva-Montoya for her very patient, competent and efficient work with us on the manuscript.

Debra King and Gabrielle Meagher