



Australian Women in Resources Alliance  
Strength through workforce diversity

## 06

### THE WAY FORWARD GUIDE TO SUPPORTIVE WORK-LIFE STRATEGIES

Implementing a work-life strategy in the workplace can contribute to employee satisfaction and retention which has a positive impact on productivity and competitiveness. Organisations that enable their employees to manage work responsibilities alongside personal and family needs offer a powerful Employee Value Proposition and will be seen as preferred employers by both candidates and existing employees. This guide is intended to give resource industry and human resources leaders a catalogue of work-life programs to consider within their organisation.

The Australian population is changing and the needs and desires of workers are altering. The Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>1</sup> predicts that the median age of Australians is expected to increase from 37 years in 2011 to as much as 45 in 2056. The proportion of Australians over 65 years could increase from 15% to at least 25% during the same period.

Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) make up approximately 25% of the Australian population, and all will have retired by 2020. Generation X (born 1965-77, approximately 21% of the current population) are increasingly shouldering the burden of care for their aging parents, often at the same time as caring for young children born to older parents. Generation Y (born 1977-1994, a further 20%) make up the most formally educated generation ever and have high expectations of the culture, fulfilment and remuneration that employers offer them.

Employers should therefore be mindful of the generational differences in work-life needs: Baby Boomers may want to transition into retirement, Generation X may have family and other caring responsibilities and Generation Y may want flexibility for study or personal interests. Supportive work-life programs, delivered to all employees, are an extremely effective part of an employer's ability to

attract a potential employee or ensure the engagement and commitment of an existing one.

The line between our work and non-work lives has blurred irrevocably, so most employees seek 'harmony' between their work and the commitments and interests outside of work, such as study, volunteering, and caring. A strategy that respects the employee's life and needs outside of work, and empowers them to contribute to their life circumstances as completely as they can, will be perceived as inclusive and engaging. This brings many benefits to employers, as discussed in *Way Forward Guide 05 Building an Inclusive Culture and Engaged Workforce*.

The participation and engagement of women, who tend to have greater caring responsibilities than men, is particularly enabled by the employers that offer a strategy supporting work-life harmony.

Supportive work-life strategies comprise three broad categories:

- flexible work arrangements
- enhanced leave benefits
- employee support schemes, facilities and benefits

## 1. Flexible work arrangements

The National Employment Standards outline minimum entitlements with regard to flexible work and the employee's right to request such arrangements<sup>2</sup>. Opportunities exist well beyond these minimum standards to accommodate an employee's needs while still fulfilling the company's operational requirements.

The payoffs to businesses are undeniable: individuals (and their families) with perceived job flexibility have been found to benefit in the form of reduced psychological distress related to marital and parental role quality, increased job satisfaction, increased quality of work-life balance, reduced likelihood of leaving and decreased absenteeism. In addition, these individuals are able to work more hours per week before their workload negatively impacts on their perceived work-life balance.<sup>3</sup>

Globalisation and mining industry production demands means that many workplaces operate 24/7. As is discussed in the summary of flexible work arrangements in the boxes below ([Flexible Work Arrangements at a Glance](#)), this too can create unprecedented scope for flexible work arrangements. Advances in technology mean that work has become something workers do, not a place they have to go. For example, remote working is feasible in many situations, including remote operation of heavy mining plant and equipment.

While there is no 'one size fits all' solution, appropriate flexible work arrangements allow employees to more effectively manage their time and do their best at work.

## FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS AT A GLANCE (PART 1)

### 1. TELECOMMUTING, REMOTE WORKING

Telecommuting involves working other than at the workplace, either on occasion or routinely. Locations can include the employee's home, smart work centres, satellite offices, the client's office, as well as cafes and other suitable locations where employees might work while between meetings instead of returning to the office.

Apart from avoiding stress and time consumed commuting, a key benefit of this arrangement is perceived control and trust on the part of the worker – precursors of engagement, satisfaction, productivity and retention.

### 2. FLEXI-TIME/STAGGERED START AND END TIME, FLEXIBLE HOURS, FLEXIBLE LUNCH TIME, LUNCH TIME SWAP

These are arrangements where employees work a normal (full-time) number of hours, but can vary the way these are spread through the day, week or other accounting period. A worker can vary their daily start and end times or lunch break time to suit their work and personal commitments. Employees might be required to start and finish within a window, e.g. between 8am and 10am and correspondingly 5pm and 7pm, and there may be a core time, say 10am to 4pm, during which employees must work. An employee may be able to work shorter or longer days to suit their needs, with the requirement that the mandatory hours are worked over an accounting period (say, a reporting period). A worker might be allowed to accrue time worked in excess of normal hours and take that time off in lieu (TOIL) as leave.

The increased flexibility allows the employee to manage work and personal commitments, such as appointments or school events, and may experience reduced travel time and stress by avoiding peak periods. Employers can offer longer opening hours to attract more customers, can match working hours with peaks and troughs of demand, international time frames or 24/7 production.

### 3. COMPRESSED WORK SCHEDULE, CREATIVE SCHEDULING

There are a variety of industry norms for rostering /scheduling, but ultimately - within the constraints of legislation and employment agreements - the design of work schedules is limited only by imagination when it comes to satisfying the needs of both the business and the employee. Employees commute less and enjoy full or half days of personal time, while employers can minimise overtime payments, overhead costs and underemployment during off-peak days.

## FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS AT A GLANCE (PART 2)

### 4. PART-TIME WORK, PHASED RETIREMENT, PHASING IN OR OUT

Under this type of arrangement, an employee works reduced hours on a regular basis (e.g. shorter days, fewer days per week or a combination). Increasingly, part-time work is offered as a way to phase employees in (e.g. return from maternity leave) or out (e.g. to retirement) of full-time work.

Part-time work allows the worker flexibility for personal reasons or for transitions, while employers gain access to expertise and talent that otherwise may not be available, as well as numerical flexibility to match workload, and reduced overhead costs.

### 5. JOB SHARING

This is an arrangement that allows two or more people to share the responsibilities of one full-time position. They might share responsibilities for a single job, or might divide the job tasks/projects/clients, or be allocated completely separate responsibilities (essentially two part-time workers). Typically they work at different times and/or different locations; maybe even identical jobs in different departments. Often they act a 'backups' for each other and share an understanding of the work and of its status. Therefore, it is good practice to provide an opportunity for the jobsharers to work together regularly in order to communicate and maintain continuity.

Job sharers often split days, weeks or alternate weeks. Job sharing presents a cost-effective way to benefit from wide experience and expertise with improved coverage/continuity compared to other flexible work arrangements. Employees benefit from sharing full-time or heavy workloads and opened opportunities where part-time arrangements do not suit business needs.

### 6. INTERIM OR CONTRACT WORK, SEASONAL WORK, PROJECT-BASED WORK, RETIREES COVER FOR WORKERS ON LEAVE

In order to complete a project or carry out seasonal work, employees can be given opportunities for a specific, limited time. Such arrangements may suit employees who need to dedicate time to other personal projects. Employers benefit from accessing appropriate skills only so much as is required for the project/season. A special case may include engaging retirees for short-term arrangements.

**Critical to the success of a strategy that includes flexible work arrangements is the 'mainstreaming' of the arrangements. To do this it is necessary to implement normal business policy, processes and practices around the arrangements.**

Firstly, clear and inclusive policies and procedures need to be developed and widely communicated. Processes and forms for application and approval of flexible work arrangements must be clearly documented. In order to make flexible arrangements work, procedures should include the following measures:

1. Schedule meetings for a time when all people can attend either in person or via teleconference/webinar, if possible.
2. Provide professional development/training opportunities during work hours. If possible, make these available via webinar or record them for those who are unable to attend.
3. Implement a policy that addresses flexibility in rostering, working hours and leave provisions.
4. Make all employees and potential employees aware of the flexible working arrangements available during recruitment and induction.

People-managers need to understand the reason for the strategy and receive training to ensure that the strategy is implemented correctly. Managers are often reluctant to approve flexible work arrangements for fear of the complexity and difficulty in managing workers undertaking these arrangements. It is the responsibility of senior managers to gain the commitment of line managers and hold them accountable for appropriate use of this contemporary human resource management tool. Refer to [this guide for private and public sector managers](#) as a starting point for developing training and instruction for people-managers.

Finally, employees need to understand the opportunities and limits of the arrangements, as well as the processes for application and negotiation.

The resource, allied and construction industries have unique workplace requirements including complex rosters and fly-in, fly-out/ drive-in, drive-out access to remote regional locations, which can make accommodating flexible work requests challenging. If a company has a compelling business case for gender diversity and inclusion, and has made a commitment to increase and include female talent, it has to accept that flexible work arrangements are a necessary part

of that commitment. These arrangements must be offered to all employees and work undertaken to ensure that these arrangements are mainstreamed (that is, accepted as a smart, contemporary workforce management practice, not just positive discrimination, favouritism, accommodating or a compromise. See the box [\*How flexible is your organisation ... really?\*](#) below).

Flexible work arrangements shape employees' daily routines and have great impact on their work-life harmony. An organisation can often reap dramatic benefits from a well-implemented flexible work arrangement, with extensive cost savings and ramped-up efficiency and productivity.

## HOW FLEXIBLE IS YOUR ORGANISATION ... REALLY?

In his paper presented at the 2013 inaugural AWRA Conference, Dr Graeme Russell<sup>4</sup> argued that there are various levels of flexibility at which an organisation can operate:

1. The most common approach involves flexibility in:

- scheduling full-time hours (such as allowing staggered start and finish times)
- the number of hours worked (e.g. part-time work)
- personal and family needs (such as parental and carer's leave)
- where work is done (e.g. working at home)

Note: This may result in 'Inflexibility in flexibility', where the worker becomes inflexibly bound to a new schedule.

2. Increased flexibility involves allowances in:

- how work is done (such as what tools and processes are used)
- who does the work (e.g. job share)
- careers and development opportunities
- job, work and business design

Note: Without career flexibility, part-time work will not deliver gender outcomes.

3. Full flexibility, enabling work-life harmony is innovative and transformational. Flexibility is built in rather than bolted on and is 'mainstreamed' by becoming:

- a way of thinking, a mindset, openly acknowledged with clients and business partners
- seen as enabling and empowering rather than accommodating or a compromise
- a two-way street, sought by both employer and employee
- a core leadership and team capability, and recognised as complex but with payoffs
- the basis of agility and adaptability, actively pursued
- guided by principles and business boundaries (thinking beyond the unquestioned current needs of the business), used to shift business into new opportunities

## 2. Enhanced leave benefits

In addition to annual and other statutory leave, a variety of enhanced leave types (including both paid and unpaid) are being used by organisations to provide for caring, education/development, leisure, celebration and adverse circumstances. These include:

- maternity/extended maternity/paternity leave
- parental/adoption leave
- childcare leave including first day of school leave
- extended childcare leave
- elder care/family care sick leave
- bereavement Leave, compassionate leave

- emergency leave
- voluntary service leave
- unrecorded time off for family/personal matters
- study/exam leave, sabbatical, career break leave
- personal day off
- marriage leave
- birthday leave
- purchased leave by pay averaging

Again, any such arrangement must be implemented with clear policies and processes, and communicated to all stakeholders including candidates outside the organisation who will see these as features of a preferred employer.

## CASE STUDY: CALTEX *BABY*CARE



In 2012 Caltex introduced their innovative Caltex *BabyCare* initiative, designed to provide both financial and practical support to permanent employees who are new parents returning to work. The initiative was developed after an internal review found that turnover was more prevalent in the 12 months after women returned to work, compared to women failing to return from maternity leave. Caltex already offered 12 weeks maternity leave on full pay, plus eight weeks' full pay for parents of an adopted child.

Under the *BabyCare* initiative, Caltex pays a 3% bonus each quarter (a total of 12% per year on base salary inclusive of superannuation) to a primary carer once they return to work. This payment helps to offset the additional costs to the employee, in particular, the costs of childcare.

Caltex also understands that sometimes to 'get the job done' a new parent may need urgent care for their baby. Through its *Emergency BabyCare* initiative, Caltex also provides returning primary carers with access to Dial-an-Angel mothercraft nurses or carers. This service is available for up to five times each year, to the value of up to \$300 per session, until the child turns two.

Caltex provides a specialist service that assists working parents to locate the type of childcare that they want for their baby.

During 2013 Caltex introduced facilities at its key workplaces that provide privacy for nursing mothers.

## PARENTAL OR OTHER EXTENDED LEAVE - BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER

Parental leave is part of a work-life strategy of particular interest to female employees and their families. It is important to have measures in place while employees are on parental leave or other forms of extended leave, to ensure that they continue to feel engaged and included. This assists in retention and is attractive to prospective employees, both men and women.

- Prior to the employee commencing the leave, communicate the options that are available to them when returning to work, and provide them with the relevant information/forms.
- On a case-by-case basis determine the employee's preferred method of contact while on leave (e.g. email, phone) and if they want access to the company intranet while away. If applicable, discuss whether they wish to keep their phone/laptop.
- Keep in touch with employees on leave and offer them opportunities for ongoing training and support. This can help keep them engaged and motivated to return to a supportive workplace. Be aware of the effect that 'keeping in touch' days at work may have on the employee's entitlement to government-funded parental leave payments.
- Invite employees to company functions while they are on leave.
- Ensure employees on extended leave receive the same consideration for promotion and transfers and have their remuneration reviewed along with other employees.
- Discuss the option of graduated return to full-time work and strategies to manage their personal and career goals once they have returned.

Parents returning from parental leave will also benefit from support to assist in their transition back to work. This might include a policy for breastfeeding and breastfeeding/pumping facilities available to employees, as well as information and assistance to find child care, emergency care, nanny services and school holiday care.



### 3. Employee support schemes, facilities and benefits

Some employee support schemes and facilities aim to help employees manage non-work aspects of their lives, especially in the face of 'time stress', caring and other responsibilities. Others promote engagement more directly, through recognising and appreciating workers' non-work activities.

These schemes, like flexible work arrangements, can have a significant positive impact on workers' lives, and can be designed to be extremely cost-effective. Examples include:

- family care information / referral
- childcare and/or elder care support, such as subsidies, on-site facilities
- childcare network and finder/referral service
- lactation/family care/sick room
- children's educational scholarships, bursaries (cash or kind e.g. tutoring)
- personal loans, loan packages or other financial assistance
- family relocation program, such as financial and social support
- social activities for singles/family members
- subsidised or corporate gym membership,
- subsidised/discounted recreational activities
- holiday/accommodation subsidies or discounts
- family day/bring children to work day
- gifts for family events (newborn baby, marriage, hospitalisation/illness, bereavement)
- team/company celebrations
- staff lounge/recreation area/clubhouse
- bicycle parking
- change/shower/locker facilities
- work team sporting participation
- leave work on time day, ride to work day,
- time-saving services e.g. concierge, internal postal or banking services
- concierge service
- takeaway food services
- transport provided or assistance
- medical and insurance coverage for family
- counseling services/hotline for employee assistance
- financial and tax advice
- legal advice
- health screening
- in-house health and wellness programs (e.g. quit smoking)
- talks, workshops or training on work-life integration
- fundraising/community participation

## CASE STUDY OF EMPLOYEE BENEFITS: CSA MINE GLENCORE (COBAR)<sup>5</sup>

CSA Mine offers a range of benefits to its employees and their families.

- Free Season Ticket to the Cobar Memorial Swimming Pool for employees and immediate family members
- Free use of the facilities at the Cobar Youth & Fitness Centre for employees and immediate family members
- Novated leasing available
- Salary packaging available for mortgage interest, fuel, travel, home purchase and rent through a provider
- Quarterly and End-of-Year Target Bonus Scheme
- \$10,000\* Yearly Residential Bonus (please note: \*amount subject to change)
- Above standard company superannuation contributions (starting at 10% for new, full time employee and increasing by 1% every anniversary, capping out at 13%)
- CSA Mine Home Ownership Program Policy (worth \$30,000 less associated costs)
- \$1500 Spotters Fee (Employee Referral Bonus)
- Employee Assistance Program (Access to free counseling for employees and immediate family members)
- Employee Rewards & Recognition Program
- Corporate rate health fund through NIB
- Company superannuation fund through Colonial First State with negotiated low fees and additional benefits
- Free Flu and Hepatitis A & B vaccinations for employees and immediate family members

## LIVEABILITY: WHEN WORKING AND LIVING COMBINE

A liveable environment is one in which both men and women feel content and safe to work and stay. It is particularly important in the resource, construction and allied service industries to create a liveable environment as many employees are required to live in village accommodation and/or spend long hours at work.

The different needs of men and women need to be taken into account to create a safe and inclusive workplace and living environment. Organisations must ensure that their policies and expectations are communicated to all staff, accommodation providers and contractors.

Essential steps to increasing liveability include:

- allowing women to have access to private and appropriate women-only amenities
- providing separate facilities as a basic and essential entitlement for women in the workplace, in line with occupational health and safety guidelines
- addressing women's specific hygiene by providing appropriate and readily accessible facilities and services
- providing additional amenities for women who are breastfeeding, in line with minimum hygiene and comfort standards

There are some simple and inexpensive housing modifications that can be made to significantly improve liveability such as insulating accommodation, both for temperature and sound.

Consider chain locks on accommodation doors and/or peepholes to improve safety and reduce vulnerability. Security screens are useful for both safety and comfort in warmer climates.

When planning and designing inclusive workplaces, attention should be paid to safety concerns (e.g. adequate lighting in car park/accommodation areas, emergency buttons or monitored security cameras) which can all significantly improve liveability while also reducing risk of adverse events.

Clearly delineating public and private spaces in the workplace and remote accommodation also helps to improve liveability.

Simple and cost neutral steps can greatly enhance liveability for everyone and should be considered. For example, in accommodation standard exemplars for remote sites, organisations could include a requirement that onsite commissionaires stock women's hygiene products and magazines. And that recreational facilities and access to satellite channels include channels and activities tailored to both men and women.

Provide detailed information to potential employees about the realities of a FIFO lifestyle. Information prior to beginning FIFO work can remove the unexpected and ensure commitment. This can increase retention and reduce recruitment costs.

## OTHER POINTS TO CONSIDER

- Consider taking into account outcomes achieved rather than just the hours logged at work.
- Rotate rosters so that employees don't miss special days, such as Christmas, in consecutive years.
- Provide assistance for those on FIFO for additional school/childcare costs associated with a parent's absence.
- It is important to remain engaged with employees who will be returning to the workforce following leave for illness, pregnancy etc. Allowing staggered returns may also enable employees to return to work much sooner than expected.

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## OTHER RESOURCES ON THIS TOPIC

- <http://www.amma.org.au/awra/awra-knowledge-centre#Flexible>
  - National Employment Standards (NES)  
<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/factsheets/FWO-Fact-sheet-Requests-for-flexible-working-arrangements-NES.pdf>
  - Women in male-dominated industries: A toolkit of strategies, The Human Rights Commission:  
<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/women-male-dominated-industries-toolkit-strategies>
  - Example Training Guide: *Making flexibility work - A practical guide on implementing flexible work arrangements for managers*  
[http://www.justice.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/28028/managers-guide.pdf](http://www.justice.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/28028/managers-guide.pdf)
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  2. Fair Work Ombudsman, *Factsheet 2: Requests for flexible working arrangements and the National Employment Standards*, 2013, retrieved 20 October 2013, <<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/factsheets/FWO-Fact-sheet-Requests-for-flexible-working-arrangements-NES.pdf>>
  3. EJ Hill, AJ Hawkins, M Ferris & M Weitzman, *Finding an Extra Day a Week: The Positive Influence of Perceived Job Flexibility on Work and Family Life Balance*, *Family Relations*, 50, 1, 2001, retrieved 17 October 2013, <<http://www.choixdecariere.com/pdf/6573/2010/HillHawkinsFerrisWeitzman2001.pdf>>
  4. Dr Graeme Russell, previously an Associate Professor in Psychology, began his work on fatherhood late in the 1970s. He is recognised as a leading international researcher on fathers and families. He has been an author or editor of six books on fathers, families and work/life, written over 20 book chapters and over 30 journal papers on these topics. More recently he has worked closely with leading national and international organisations to implement more effective approaches, to work/life, flexibility and diversity. This has included the implementation of the highly successful workplace program: Men at Work.
  5. <http://www.csamine.com.au/employee-facilities/>
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The Australian Women in Resources Alliance (AWRA) is an industry-led initiative dedicated to helping employers attract, retain and reap the rewards of women in resources workplaces.

AWRA is driven by Australia's resource industry peak body, the Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA), and supported by the Australian Government through the National Resource Sector Workforce Strategy.



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