



Employment Matter Guidelines

Work Organisation

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Introduction

With increasing competitive pressures, many Australian organisations are achieving improved workplace performance through new ways and forms of work.

These include multi-skilling, teamwork, devolved responsibility and authority, integrated business systems, performance based rewards and incentives, restructuring, downsizing, flattened organisational structures and flexible workplace practices (for example, working full-time, part-time, from home, or job sharing).

The information provided here aims to assist you to start thinking about:

- How you could analyse your workplace to identify any work organisation issues for women.
- Suggested actions you could take to address the work organisation issues for women you have identified.

Keep in mind that women are a diverse group and differences such as age, religion, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, disability, sexual orientation, etc. warrant consideration in shaping your workplace practices. Organisations that recognise and value the different backgrounds of Australian women stand to benefit from a range of experiences and skills. These skills are a resource for doing business in a diverse society.

Not all issues, actions and examples suggested here are relevant to your organisation. It is up to you to decide what is appropriate and relevant for your organisation to consider when analysing your workplace to identify issues for women, and taking actions to address these.



Analysing Your Workplace

To assist you analyse your workplace to identify work organisation issues for women, we suggest you:

- Revisit your workforce profile to find where your female employees are.
- Consult with your employees.
- Examine your workforce and your human resource and business needs.

Questions to Identify Work Organisation Issues for Women

Remember, your organisation is unique and may have unique issues. However, the following questions may be helpful when analysing your workplace.

?	Is work organised in your organisation in a way that effectively meets the needs of your customers and employees?
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Organisational Change

?	Do you use restructuring opportunities to review the gender composition of your workforce and any business implications? Have you thought of reviewing employee diversity as part of this exercise?	?	When changes are made in your work organisation, are the potential impacts on all female and male employees considered?
?	Would it be beneficial for areas within your organisation to operate on similar management and work organisation principles? For example, is there a consistent approach to multi-skilling, team-based organisation of work, or putting flatter structures in place?	?	Are men and women given the same opportunities to express their choices when changes are to be made? Has the impact of changes on women of different cultural backgrounds been taken into consideration?

Types of Employment

?	Does the make up of the different types of work, for example, full-time, part-time and casual work, effectively meet both business needs and employee choice?	?	Do men and women get the same opportunities to work overtime? Are they given the same options to decline overtime, without negative consequences?
?	Do your female and male casual employees get the same opportunities to access permanent vacancies?	?	Have you talked with both male and female employees to identify how shift arrangements and changes, such as set night shifts, rotating shifts, etc, may impact upon their work and family or other responsibilities?
?	Are the turnover rates for casual employees the same for women compared with men? If not, is there a reason for this?	?	Do you consider workplace flexibility by balancing your employees' needs (eg, related to family, lifestyle, cultural/religious practices) with the business needs?



?	Does your casual workforce have access to training and development?	?	Given the requirements of your business, are opportunities to work in different ways, such as home-based work, job-sharing, part-time work and flexible hours, available throughout all levels and all areas of the organisation as far as possible?
?	Have your outsourcing and contracting-out decisions considered the impact on your female employees?	?	Do employees who choose to work flexibly or part-time in your organisation have access to career development opportunities?

Occupational Segregation

?	Are female and male employees clustered in particular occupations or work areas? If clustering occurs, do you see other patterns (eg, in cultural or linguistic background)?	?	Is your organisation adaptable and flexible? Are there unnecessary barriers between 'casual' and 'permanent', 'men's work' and 'women's work', 'blue collar' and 'white collar' work?
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Suggested Actions to Take to Address Work Organisation Issues for Women

To **comply** with the Act, you need to take actions to address the work organisation issues for women you identified. You do not need to do everything all at once and you can aim to achieve equal opportunity over time.

To be **waived** from reporting in following years, you must demonstrate that you have taken all reasonably practicable measures to address work organisation issues for women you have identified. For example, your issue may be a large pool of ongoing female casual staff who would prefer to have access to regular part-time work arrangements.

The following suggestions will help you start thinking about actions you could take to address any work organisation issues you have identified.

Keep in mind that:

- Not all of these actions may be relevant to your organisation. You will need to decide whether you choose to do all, some, or none of the suggested actions, and whether you wish to tailor suggested actions to suit the needs of your workplace.
- If your workplace analysis demonstrates your organisation has no issues for women in this employment matter, you would not need to take any actions.

Implementing Organisational Change

- When restructuring or redesigning organisational processes, identify key issues for both men and women in your organisation. In identifying key issues, remember to consider the employee diversity.
- If restructuring decisions unavoidably impact on particular groups of employees, put strategies in place that provide an easier transition to new employment for men and women. (See Promotion, Transfer and Termination Employment Matter Kit).



- Build into future reviews or restructures the need to take into account the impact upon different groups of employees including women.
- Adopt an organisational policy that values diversity and accommodates differing employee needs and a range of workplace practices. (See example, [Making a fair go work at PMP](#)).
- Look for opportunities to expand effective new management processes, for example, team-based work, multi-skilling, etc, which have a positive impact on both men and women, to all parts of the organisation.
- Consult with both female and male employees to find out if there are issues about the way work is organised. Don't overlook the different needs and ideas of diverse employees. Identify creative ways to reorganise work that improve both individual and business performance.
- Ensure new ways of working are innovative in meeting customer and employee needs, rather than simply a relabelling of the old ways of working.
- Ensure that organisational change is accompanied by a leadership commitment that is communicated effectively to all employees.



Reviewing Who Does What Type of Work

- Examine your casual workforce. Identify the pros and cons for the business and for both female and male employees of the nature of this workforce.
 - Is the balance right for your business?
 - What would happen to your business if your casual employees became in demand from a competitor and left your organisation at a critical time?
 - Is there a higher turnover among casual employees and a higher cost in replacing them?
- Develop a cost/benefit analysis of regular part-time workers versus casual workers for your organisation.
- Before you advertise your permanent vacancies, consider the talent in your existing pool of both female and male casual/temporary workforce.
- Before outsourcing or contracting out work, consider the talent within your organisation. Take the opportunity to 'grow' valuable experience and skills within your own organisation.
- Make sure decisions relating to outsourcing and contracting-out take into account the impact on both men and women.
- If outsourcing decisions unavoidably impact on particular groups of employees, put strategies in place that provide an easier transition to new employment for men and women. (See *Promotion, Transfer and Termination of Employment* Employment Kit).
- Put in place policies and practices for achieving discrimination-free access to overtime and shiftwork. Review their effectiveness regularly. Discourage excessive overtime.



Implementing Workplace Flexibility

- Consider reviewing jobs to see if flexible work arrangements can be accommodated, that is, rather than designing all jobs around the traditional '9am-5pm' approach.
- Visit the [Work and Family Unit Website](#), which provides a range of options available to employers and employees to organise work more flexibly.
- Put regular part-time work, home-based work and/or job-sharing on your workplace agreement agenda.
- Vary the length of shifts to meet the range of needs of your employees, including men and women with family or other responsibilities, and the needs of your business.
- Talk with employees about how shift arrangements and changes (for example, set night shifts, rotating shifts, etc) impact upon their work and family or other responsibilities (eg, cultural or religious practices).
- Pilot new working arrangements in areas with supportive management so that you can test whether those arrangements will work in your business.
- Develop policies or procedures which enable managers and female and male staff to reorganise work so that they can balance business needs with individual needs.
- Survey employees about the effectiveness of these policies and procedures.
- Put flexible working hours and arrangements on your workplace agreement agenda.
- Ensure applications for flexible work are given consistent, due consideration by managers across your organisation.
- Assist female and male staff members who wish to work flexibly to develop a well thought through proposal of how their work can be organised and the business needs met, and how to put their proposal to their manager for consideration.
- Communicate to managers and staff that they could apply flexible work practices in their workplace. Provide examples and case studies.
- Advertise positions that can be worked in a flexible way, both internally and externally, to increase the pool of talented women who can apply.
- Review all your position descriptions to identify positions that could be performed flexibly.
- Consider part-time work, flexible hours or job-share arrangements for your senior female and male managers as well as for your less senior staff. Consider these arrangements for all areas of your business, not just clerical or predominately female areas.
- Ensure that staff who work flexibly have equal access to promotion, training and other benefits.

"Autoliv allows flexible working hours for those with family commitments such as school interviews or assisting family in getting to appointments. Of significant importance to the staff is the early finish on Fridays (2:30pm) to allow families to shop and organise for weekends."

Leny Plonsker
Employee Relations
Coordinator
Autoliv Australia



Communicating about Work Organisation

- Ensure that managers and staff are aware of flexible work options available, such as:
 - Part-time work.
 - Job sharing.
 - Flexible hours of work.
 - Home-based work.
 - Six hour shifts instead of 12 hour shifts.
 - Working from home on an ad hoc basis.
 - Compressed working week.
- Develop a module in your management training to assist managers to effectively manage a diverse team with a range of working arrangements.
- Develop and publicise successful case studies across your workplace.
- Use training forums to 'mainstream' EEO issues (for example, cover 'valuing and managing difference' and 'harassment-free workplaces' in induction training).
- Encourage managers to discuss work organisation issues when providing feedback or conducting performance appraisals.
- Ensure both female and male employees, and employees on long-term leave, have access to the information on changes to work organisation.
- Educate managers on how to implement work organisation changes effectively and in a non-discriminatory way.
- Hold managers accountable for implementing work organisation changes effectively and in a non-discriminatory way.



Predominantly Male Workplace Issues

An equal opportunity program must deal with the specific needs and issues of your organisation. Such a program identifies and outlines the issues you are addressing and the initiatives you will put in place to achieve results. The most significant issues facing organisations with a majority of male employees may be:

- A lack of applications from female employees.
- A low proportion of women in management.
- A low proportion of women in non-traditional occupational categories eg. trades, labouring, plant and machinery operators.
- Problems retaining female employees.

?	Do your policies and practices reflect the needs of staff?	?	Have you introduced part time work and family leave?
?	Have you surveyed staff to identify work, family and flexibility needs?	?	Do you allow part-time work at management levels?
?	Have you introduced family-friendly and flexible practices?	?	Do women return from maternity leave?
?	Can you introduce more flexible hours (start and finish times)?	?	Can you introduce a 'work from home' policy?
?	Have you developed a job-sharing policy?	?	What is the usage rate of these policies? Does it vary for men and women?



Predominantly Female Workplace Issues

EOWA is aware that some organisations have been implementing very good Human Resources policies for a number of years but have under reported on this information because they don't see it as relevant to equal opportunity for women. All HR policies and practices, whether formal or informal, affect all the people in your organisation and, therefore, are relevant to equal opportunity for women.

?	What work and family policies and practices exist?	?	When consulted, do women and men indicate that the organisation assists them to balance their work and family priorities?
?	What is the usage rate of these individual policies? Are there different usage rates for women and men?	?	Do women/men resign for work and family reasons? Has this changed over time?
?	Is the rate of return from parental leave high or low? Has this improved over time?		



Case Studies

All case studies are available from www.eowa.gov.au

Mixed gender

Sara Lee Household and Body Care Australia found, through analysis of the workplace, that the majority of employees were carers of school-aged children. To accommodate the needs of these employees, support was provided to working parents including work from home initiatives. [Find out what resulted here...](#)

Sea World Enterprises found that a lack of broad-based skills was preventing flexibility and mobility within the organisation. To combat this, broad-based skills training was developed and implemented which resulted in mobility within the organisation and promoted work/life balance. [Find out what other initiatives Sea World implemented.](#)

Through profile analysis, surveys and focus groups, **The Friend's School** has been able to successfully identify that there were no senior part-time, non-teaching staff. To overcome this, advertised jobs applicants were asked if they were interested in job sharing as well as discussion groups to capture staff feedback. How did they go? [Find out here...](#)

Predominantly Female

Aldersgate Nursing Home quickly discovered through smart analysis that it had issues concerning work/life balance, job security and injuries in the workplace. Not anymore! [Check out their results...](#)

Australian National Credit Union (ANCU) realised that their staff wanted more flexibility at work. ANCU created new policies and the CEO spoke publicly about their new initiatives. Staff retention rates increased and keeping great talent is now one of ANCU's core philosophies. **Find out more...**

Autoliv Australia had traditionally employed casuals and contractors each time they wanted to launch a new product line. Through training and development, Autoliv was able to offer some of these contractors and casuals with full-time positions. You can do this too! [Find out how...](#)

Staff at **Blake Dawson Waldron** had indicated that flexible work options were a definite must to be an EO employer. Now staff turnover is dramatically down due to work-from-home initiatives and new part-time and job sharing arrangements. [This is possible for your organisation too!](#)

At the **Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA)**, there was an increasing demand from employees for greater work/life flexibility including part-time and job-share roles. To facilitate this bank-wide, the CBA has implemented their popular 'Job Share Request System' into an intranet site for all staff to access. Now 812 employees are job sharing of which 99% are female. [Read on...](#)

To improve retention rates at **Country Road**, management initiated family-friendly policies to improve their return from maternity leave, employee moral, and help attract quality candidates. Staff turnover is down and there is an 80% attendance at internal seminars. [Find out what their actions were...](#)



Hollywood Hospital has achieved outstanding results such as a reduction in total lost days and the lowest absenteeism in their industry as a result of combating inflexible work hours. What actions did they take? [Find out here...](#)

The **Institute of Chartered Accountants** has had flexible work practices for some time now, but wanted to reassure staff that their commitment was more than policy deep. [What did they do?](#)

Jetset Tours found that childcare was impacting upon mothers returning to work, so a trail was set-up for mothers to work from home. The benefits spread to all employees. [Find out how ...](#)

Santa Sabina always knew that employee turnover was disruptive and costly to their organisation. To reduce staff turnover, they enabled women to balance work and family commitments. [Look at the results!](#)

Diversity-related

Amex Canada Inc is part of the American Express Company and together with Amex Bank of Canada, employs some 3,500 people across Canada. As one of its initiatives to respect diversity, Amex Canada provides the opportunity for religious observance, especially by giving leave for this purpose priority over the seniority roster. At headquarters, a quiet room is also available for devotion or contemplation. (See [Employment Equity Merit Awards 2001](#))



Related Links and Resources

[Diversity Australia](#)

www.diversityaustralia.gov.au is a newly developed portal for diversity management, directed mainly to business, including business educators. The site is provided by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and complements another new portal that has a government and community focus. Both sites will be available in April 2002.

[Balancing the Till](#) (pdf)

Based on an in-depth study of staffing practices in the **retail** industry. Among its key messages, the study noted that to improve business viability and profitability, companies needed to understand and manage their workforce effectively. (AUST)

[Diversity Policy Template](#)

A sample policy with broad commitments related to recruitment, career development and promotion, as well as and flexible work practices. Made available by the Programme for the Practice of Diversity Management of the Australian Centre for International Business. (AUST)

[EEO/Diversity Policy](#)

An example, from the Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

[Work and Family Unit, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations](#)

The Work and Family Unit produces a series of fact sheets and guides dealing with a wide range of work and family issues. (AUST)

[Work and Family Makes Cents](#) (pdf)

Ideas on how to introduce flexible work options to help make your workplace more family-friendly. (AUST)

[Business versus Bath-time](#) (pdf)

Examines types of family-friendly policies and practices, as well as issues (such as workplace culture) that are faced by women and men in accessing them. (AUST)

Managing Work/Life Balance

<http://www.worklifebalance.com.au/>

Council for Equal Opportunity in Employment

<http://www.ceoe.com.au/>

The Council for Equal Opportunity in Employment Limited is Australia's leading diversity organisation. We focus on creating workplaces where differences are respected and valued; and there is no discrimination or harassment.

Work+Life Strategies

www.workpluslifestrategies.com