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Women in the Workplace Agency

Case Studies from EOWA Flexibility Survey

Parental leave

The University of Queensland

Parental leave is available to staff in same sex and heterosexual relationships. In addition to 26 weeks' paid parental leave for eligible staff, the University's Parental Leave policy provides the option of applying for part-time employment, including job-sharing for staff members who are either pregnant or returning to duty from a period of Parental Leave.

The Parental Leave policy states that a staff member's career will not be disadvantaged by having a child, and that the University will not unreasonably refuse a staff member's application for part-time employment on return to duty from Parental Leave or whilst pregnant, if the pregnancy makes part-time employment necessary or desirable.

A staff member who is the primary care giver of the child may undertake part-time employment until the child's second birthday, or in relation to adoption, from the date of placement of the child until the second anniversary of the placement. A staff member who is the primary care giver of the child may continue part-time employment past the child's second birthday if the supervisor and the staff member are in agreement.

The Parental Leave policy also states that part-time employment should be at the same classification level but need not be the same work as the staff member's normal position. Staff have the right to return to a position at the same classification level when returning to full-time employment.

As a result, a sizeable proportion of academic women returned from maternity leave to part-time work arrangements, although the majority chose to return on a full-time basis. There has been a reduction in the proportion of women returning to work part-time, though over the reported years academic women have generally experienced greater rates of part-time work than general staff. Very few resigned from the University while on leave.

More women in general staff positions return to work full-time, though a significant proportion return on a part-time basis and in comparison to 2005-2006, there has been a decline in the number of general female staff who resigned while on leave. The increased duration of paid maternity leave (26 weeks' paid leave) introduced in 2005 may be a contributing factor to this decline.



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Workplace Flexibility

ANZ

In embarking on an ambitious strategy to double profits and become a 'super regional bank' in the next five years, ANZ has identified employee flexibility as one of its critical ingredients for success.

According to ANZ Group General Manager Human Resources Susie Babani: "Flexible working arrangements are central to ANZ people being able to fully contribute and achieve their best in the workplace. It also makes business sense by helping ANZ attract and retain the best talent in the market.

"A survey we conducted in 2007 identified that 52 per cent of ANZ people benefited from flexible working arrangements. As a result of these findings, we launched *My Flexibility* to further promote employee access to our wide range of flexible working and leave arrangements."

ANZ's *My Flexibility* options include flexible hours, job sharing, telecommuting, 12 weeks paid parental leave, part time work, child care, career extension for people aged 55 and above and carer's, lifestyle and study leave.

My Flexibility encourages employees and their managers to explore how flexible working arrangements can help people achieve their personal and career goals, while ensuring team and business needs continue to be met.

It provides policies, tools and support services to make the rollout of flexible work easier and to ensure that flexibility is for everyone – it's not about special treatment for particular groups. Jacki Rush, an Area Manager in ANZ Business Banking Queensland who manages nine Business Banking Managers, is expecting her third child. Thanks to ANZ's *My Flexibility* options, Jacki works the equivalent of 3.5 days per week, spread over five days. Typically, she is out on the road twice a week meeting with customers and stakeholders to ensure her visibility, continue building quality relationships with clients and to coach staff. On other days she works from home, from where she is able to participate in teleconferences and catch up on general administration and email correspondence.

'It is important for me to balance my career with my family', says Jacki. 'If I didn't have the chance to return to a flexible work arrangement, it is unlikely I would have returned to the organisation.'

'I believe it works well for everyone, my flexible hours allow for some of my direct reports to step up into my role on Thursdays and Fridays when I am not physically in the office. This provides a great development opportunity for my staff and they really value this.

To date, I have only received positive feedback from my team, customers and stakeholders regarding my flexible work arrangement. I think the main reason for this is that I ensure my people are my priority and I make every attempt to ensure there is no impact.'



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Maddocks

Bronwyn works at the Melbourne and Sydney-based law firm Maddocks as a senior associate in the Construction & Major Projects group.

She is the mother of three young children (aged six, three and 18 months) and works part-time at Maddocks providing legal advice to the male-dominated construction industry.

Bronwyn supervises nine lawyers at Maddocks and heads up the Building Industry Regulation team. She is also one of four senior associates – all primary carers for their children and one of whom is male – working in a flexible working arrangement in Maddocks Construction & Major Projects.

Bronwyn works three days each week in the firm's Melbourne office. She is also able to work remotely when required and Maddocks has provided her with a laptop and BlackBerry to facilitate this.

Maddocks Construction & Major Projects group's collaborative team approach, and the firm's willingness to accommodate flexible working arrangements, allows men and women with personal commitments, dependent children or elderly parents to fulfil their care responsibilities while reaching their full potential in the workplace.



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Alcoa of Australia

Alcoa has a Managing Director who practices what he preaches. Alan Cransberg, who has worked for Alcoa for 28 years, is a father of four and has made it very clear to employees that if their child has a special school assembly, then they shouldn't be at their desk. With this leadership, gaining loyalty and commitment from employees, as well as developing a sound platform of mutual respect is undoubtedly enhanced.

At Alcoa, it's believed that embracing women and providing flexibility for working mums makes good business sense. In an increasingly tight labour market, the company has found it enjoys a much greater talent pool of female staff by offering a level of flexibility.

Karen is an Information Systems Consultant, based at Alcoa's Point Henry Smelter in Geelong, Victoria. Karen has worked for Alcoa for 20 years and is involved in systems analysis and development, project management, systems support and database administration. Karen is married with two daughters and utilises Alcoa's flexible hours policy and working from home arrangements.

'When I returned from maternity leave after my first daughter, I remained full-time but did two days from home', says Karen. 'After my second daughter I choose to go part-time and Alcoa supported that. Initially, I was only working three days a week but I was soon offered more time. But when I explained that I would need to get extra child-care and it would therefore not work for me, Alcoa offered me the chance to work a number of hours from home for a trial period. I was happy with that, it worked well, and I recently increased my home hours from five to eight.'

'Having a flexible employer means I can volunteer at my elder daughter's school and that helps give her a sense of importance. I walk her home from school and we can then catch up on the day, instead of me rushing home at 5 or 6 o'clock to cook tea, do housework and only get half the picture of what is going on in her life. The arrangements I have in place with Alcoa give me flexibility and the ability to fit it all in.'



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Staff Consultation

National Australia Bank

Over the past two years, NAB has taken a very deliberate approach to better understand how to create a more flexible work environment for all of its employees. NAB understands that the war for talent requires the bank to be more creative in how it sources, retains and responds to the varying demands and needs of its current and future employees, and therefore more effectively increase its talent pool.

The bank has approached staff in all parts of the organisation via numerous staff surveys about what it provides in terms of flexible working arrangements and how this aligns with what employees need now and also what they anticipate they may need in the future.

In response to the surveys' findings, NAB has implemented a number of initiatives to address employees' needs. For example, business-specific flexible working taskforces have been created. Executives have nominated their most talented people to be part of this group which works together to understand the issues and develop action plans to improve the practice and uptake of flexible working in their business units.

In a workforce notorious for its long work hours and inflexible working arrangements, the nabCapital Executive Committee has signalled a conscious shift by committing to role model flexibility and to ensure that every request for Flexible Working that is declined must be reviewed at a higher level.

Enabling more telecommuting has also helped the bank's environmental agenda. It reduces the carbon footprint of commuters and office space occupancy, reduces business travel costs and emissions, as well as travel-related stresses.



Australian Government

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Childcare

HSBC

Diversity became part of HSBC's global 'people' imperatives over five years ago and the Bank embraced the job with gusto, establishing a Diversity Committee chaired by the CEO and made up of employees who became diversity champions within the business, providing valuable input into new initiatives and driving action internally.

Initiatives include transforming the bank's primary and secondary carer leave, establishing a flexible work policy, starting internal mentoring programs and launching an inclusiveness strategy with training for managers.

The HSBC Childcare Centre in Sydney opened its doors early in 2008 to meet the needs of its employees. Located at the HSBC Centre, the childcare centre has places for 80 children aged from three months to five years. HSBC has also obtained a private tax ruling from the ATO allowing employees to salary sacrifice the fees and pay less for their childcare fees in pre-tax dollars.

Carrie Cheung, Customer Retention Manager at HSBC, said, "I am so much happier knowing that my daughter is just a couple of floors away so I can see her at points during the day. I also don't have to rush out of the office and cover a long distance to collect her at the end of the day. I like the fact that she'll get to know the environment I spend my days in, and I like the fact that my colleagues get a glimpse of this important part of my life."



Australian Government

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Elder Care

Alcoa of Australia

By taking the issue of work/life balance seriously, Alcoa knows it stands a far greater chance of attracting the right people who are best placed to assist in delivering bottom line results. For these reasons, encouraging diversity and providing opportunities for women to realise their career potential have been central strategies for Alcoa.

Wai Lim, an Experimental Scientist, has been part of the Alcoa team since 1992. She works in research and development under the Technology Delivery Group at the Kwinana Refinery. Wai Lim is the carer of her elderly mother, who also lives with her. She works part-time and has the flexibility to work from home when the need arises.

‘Part-time works for me because I need to give support to my mother,’ Wai Lim says.

‘She’s in her 80s and started to need my assistance due to her health. Being a carer takes a lot out of you and my work arrangements allow me the extra time I need for myself and my family.

If my mum has an appointment at the doctor and the appointment falls in my normal work time, I have the flexibility to come in for half a day or work from home.

When I do need to work from home, I just need to inform my supervisor that I won’t be on site but will be available on the phone and online and it’s never a problem.’



Australian Government

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Women in the Workplace Agency

Non traditional Roles

Boral Limited

Kathryn joined Boral in April 2002 as an architectural team leader in Boral's Clay and Concrete Products business. She leads the masonry division in its dealings with all councils, commercial, residential and community building designers, architects, engineers and landscaping specialists: in fact everyone specifying Boral products in Victoria.

She has quite a workload involving a significant amount of travel by car throughout the State, including the daily grind of negotiating Melbourne's traffic jams on her way to and from work. Managing the work/life balance is very important to Kathryn. She tends to take her company-supplied laptop home so that she can catch up on more urgent matters.

Kathryn and her son have Type 1 diabetes; coincidentally Boral and its employees have been the major Corporate fundraisers for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JRDF) for some time.

Not surprisingly, Kathryn and her family have been very active in working on JRDF promotions within the company – and Boral has encouraged her to do so. She has captained the 'Walk for Cure Diabetes' team, and also taken part in the Ride to Cure Diabetes, a major JRDF cycling event in Adelaide.

Kathryn said that she had received strong support from the company on the two occasions her son had been rushed to hospital. "They just said 'take whatever time you need to be with your family'. In turn, my son is actively involved with Boral as a Youth Ambassador, helping to educate employees about Type 1 diabetes and assisting in raising money for research, he loves the welcoming environment given to him when he visits Boral locations".

"If you are passionate about your job, which I am, it is a matter of working as a team with your family and properly planning out the days ahead. I coordinate with my husband and my 15-year-old son to make it happen," Kathryn said. "The support of Boral in helping me to achieve this is very important."



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Women in the Workplace Agency

Flexible Working Hours

Savings & Loans Credit Union (SA) Limited

Savings & Loans Credit Union is focused on attracting and retaining the best staff. In some cases this involves tailoring conditions to suit an individual's circumstances.

For example, the transition from Maternity Leave to returning to work is carefully managed. Savings & Loans Credit Union is dedicated to providing options to team members on their return including, full-time, part-time, flexi part-time, job -share and working from home arrangements. As a working mother, Kerry balances her role as the Manager of Member Value and Retention with the needs of her family. Since having her first child over nine years ago, Kerry has worked part-time in a variety of positions with Savings & Loans Credit Union.

"Before I had my first child I was working full time, but came back from Parental Leave working two days a week, including working from home one day a fortnight," says Kerry.

"That arrangement seemed to suit everyone – I entered into a job share management position during this time."

Kerry now has two children aged seven and nine, and utilises flexible working hours to maximise the amount of time she can spend with her family.

"I work three days a week now and during the school holidays I spend one of these days working from home so I can spend more time with the kids. During the school term I have the flexibility of starting early so I can pick the kids up from school two days a week. It's about flexibility from both parties; anybody who's worked from home knows that you rarely work in eight hour blocks."