



Australian Government

Equal Opportunity for  
Women in the Workplace Agency

## media release

26 November 2008

### **More employers provide flexible working arrangements: EOWA flexibility survey**

New research released today by EOWA and Alcoa, shows that an increasing number of organisations are providing flexible work arrangements but more work needs to be done to ensure they can be accessed by employees across all sections and levels.

According to the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency's Survey on Workplace Flexibility*, the provision of all forms of flexible working arrangements – part time work, flexible hours, working from home, job sharing, compressed hours, child care assistance & services, and family and carer's leave - has increased since 2003. For general staff, since 2003 the most significant increases were in the number of organisations that now provide access to compressed hours (up 15%) and the ability to work from home (13.5%) while managers are now more able to access part time work (20%).

Childcare assistance which might encompass the provision of childcare referral services, reimbursing staff for childcare fees incurred to attend out of hours meetings or events, allowing parents to bring their children into the office when they are unwell or during school holidays, was the least provided arrangement and had only marginally increased since 2003.

EOWA's *Generation F: Attract, Engage, Retain* released in April revealed that 83% of women and 73% of men consider an organisation that genuinely supports work/life balance to be extremely important when job seeking. 12% of women and 11% of men said they left their previous job due to a desire for greater work/life balance. The same report showed that 17% of women and 21% of men believed their employers offered no flexibility whatsoever while over half of both women and men believed they did not have access to flexible working hours.

Anna McPhee, EOWA Director says "While it is extremely positive to observe from the EOWA Survey that more employers are helping their staff to maintain a work/life balance, employers need to carefully consider whether the flexibility policies and strategies being implemented are being properly communicated and can be equally accessed by all employees across the organisation."

"It is important that flexible working arrangements do not become stigmatised, resulting in those who are more likely to access these arrangements being disadvantaged in recruitment processes and when promotions, bonuses and development opportunities are awarded. All employees need to achieve a work/life balance whether this is to fulfil their family responsibilities or pursue other activities such as study, private business and sporting activities."

As an "Employer of Choice for Women", Alcoa of Australia funded the EOWA research. Managing Director Alan Cransberg believes offering a flexible workplace makes good business sense.

"By developing an organisational culture that provides our employees with the opportunity to succeed professionally and maintain the work/life blend, we all benefit – individually and as a business," Mr Cransberg said.

For more information contact  
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“We have certainly found that we attract a much greater talent pool of female staff by offering a level of flexibility.”

#### **Case Study**

##### **Wai Lim Kong, Experimental Scientist, Kwinana Refinery, Alcoa of Australia**

Wai Lim 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 married and 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. 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.”

“I don’t work from home a lot, but when I do 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.”

#### **Case Study**

##### **Kathryn, Architectural Team Leader, Boral Limited**

It was entirely coincidental that Kathryn joined Boral in April 2002. She and her son have Type 1 diabetes, and 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”.

As an architectural team leader in Boral Clay and Concrete Products, Kathryn 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.

This is quite a workload, and involves a significant amount of travelling by car throughout the State – also 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.

#### **Case Study**

##### **Bronwyn, 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.

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