



Media Release

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Dads also balance laptops, baby and fatherhood!

This Father's Day we should remember that many Australian Dads face the daily challenge of integrating a balanced work and family life.

'The Work-Life balance debate has always been centred on women however more and more men are opting to be more hands on in relation to family commitments and workplaces need to accommodate this growing trend,' says Fiona Krautil, Director of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA).

In a study of a national random sample of 1000 Australian fathers led by Dr. Graeme Russell from Macquarie University, it was found that compared to 15 years ago, fathers are now spending more time alone with their children and 15% are the major caregivers of their children for a significant period during each day. Further, a father at home and a mother a work is no longer consider an 'unusual' arrangement in our community.

Overwhelmingly, the men in the study believed that the major barrier to their being the kind of father they would like to be is the commitment they have to paid work. They also felt workplaces needed to change to more supportive of fathers who are seeking a better balance between work and family commitments.

Consistent with recent research findings, the majority of fathers also recognised that their active involvement has a significant impact on the development of their children. Yet, 68% felt they did not spend enough time with their children and the majority said that they would prefer to spend less time on paid work, with the ideal being 10 hours less than their current work time.

Dr. Russell says that many men are warmed up and motivated to be more actively involved as fathers, and some are currently doing this. Others are looking for opportunities to achieve greater flexibility in the workplace. He argues that this process of change can be given greater support by both celebrating fatherhood – recognising the benefits to fathers themselves and the satisfaction they obtain from being actively involved, and affirming fatherhood – recognising the contribution fathers make to outcomes for children.

Family patterns have changed and technology has changed the way we work, but we still don't seem to have changed the way we manage in our workplaces.

Fiona Krautil further believes that we can no longer define our ideal worker around men's traditional life patterns. 'Men want flexibility in the workplace so that they can meet their family commitments, we have to break down this image of the perfect worker,' says Fiona. "It used to be that men assumed that women do all the housework and parenting, but now that women are nearly equal participants in the labour force, in fact, 44%¹, men are assuming more of the tasks that it takes to run a home and raise children."

The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency has a variety of programs and workshops to assist organisations in contributing to equal opportunities for women and men in the workplace. Our website features a number of 'how to' tools and programs to address EO in the workplace; EO benefits not only women but also men and the company's bottom line.

¹ABS Labour Force 6202.0 July 2003

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