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Equal Opportunity for
Women in the Workplace Agency

media release

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Generation F: Attract, Engage, Retain Case Studies

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American Express

Tracey, a Vice President and General Manager, has been with American Express for more than 20 years and currently manages over 450 employees in 12 countries across the Asia-Pacific region.

Tracey believes it is important to adopt a flexible working approach to help manage one's work/life balance. She has personally taken advantage of American Express' new work/life diversity policy 'Summer Hours', which allows employees to alter their work schedules by providing extended weekends during the summer months. This policy gives her the flexibility to spend more time with her family and friends throughout the week.

Tracey sometimes elects to work from home when she needs to put together a strategy paper or a speech without interruptions, or when she has conference calls outside of normal working hours.

'It is a reality that people need flexibility in their working week occasionally. It is important as an employer that we partner with employees to help them achieve a greater work/life balance,' said Tracey.

'I believe knowing you have some flexibility to make time when you need it for family or personal reasons makes sense – it reduces absenteeism, empowers employees and creates a sense of loyalty towards the employer. '

'Where flexible work practices works for the company and the employer, it is a win-win.'



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Corrs Chambers Westgarth

After a period of parental leave following the birth of her first child, Fiona decided that she was ready to return to the paid workforce. She decided to seek a part-time role that would enable her to work around her child-care arrangements.

Corrs Chambers Westgarth, a leading Australian law firm, was extremely positive about recruiting Fiona into a part-time Senior Associate role and has remained flexible as her caring responsibilities have evolved.

Initially, Fiona worked three days each week in the office. When the availability of child-care increased, she was able to transition to three-and-a-half days and now works four days in the office each week. She is also able to work remotely when need be and Corrs has provided her with a laptop and BlackBerry to facilitate this.

'There are many challenges to face when you work in a professional role while also managing family responsibilities', Fiona says. 'For me, what makes Corrs a great workplace is the unwavering commitment to making it work, the open communication and an overwhelmingly positive attitude'.



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Deutsche Bank

Deutsche Bank values its employees. To demonstrate this, the bank has introduced several initiatives over recent years to improve the return to work rate of employees following parental leave and to facilitate greater attraction and retention of employees, especially women.

The bank provides 14 weeks' paid maternity/parental leave. In addition, a \$10,000 per annum Child Care Assistance payment has been designed to help employees returning to work from parental leave. The payment, paid monthly to primary carers returning from paid parental leave until the child turns three, equates to \$10,000 (gross) per child, per year for full-time employees (pro-rated for part-time employees).

Deutsche Bank also offers a fully equipped parents' room and 21 reserved and subsidised places at The Playroom, a purpose-built child-care centre located at Deutsche Bank Place in Sydney. Information about child and other family care options is also provided to staff through the bank's Family CareLink telephone information service.

Furthermore, salary packaging of child-care costs has been made possible by a 2007 ATO ruling obtained by Deutsche Bank confirming that the child-care benefits at the Playroom provided to employees do not attract Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT).



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HASSELL

HASSELL, an international architectural and design firm, recognises that paid maternity leave and flexible working hours alone may not eliminate the financial hardship and other difficulties many families experience after the birth of a child. To address this, the organisation now provides employees who are primary carers of their children forty-five dollars on top of their salary for each day they work in the first year following their return from parental leave. This is in addition to the provision of six weeks' paid parental leave and the ability to work flexible hours upon returning to work. Whilst the daily payment is designed to cover child-care costs, employees receiving the benefit can use it in other ways and are not required to disclose how they spend it.

As a result, these family-friendly initiatives have had a positive impact on the workforce. These include female employees announcing their intention to return to work from maternity leave earlier than originally intended and for more days a week. It has also led to a widening of interest from potential employees, who appreciate HASSELL's leading stance on family-friendly policies and practices.

These retention strategies have targeted valuable employees, particularly females in their mid thirties who have reached a level of maturity and skills vital to the culture of HASSELL. It is also aimed at retaining women ready for the next stage in their careers in management and ownership positions. HASSELL's attraction and retention strategy is leading the way in family-friendly practices.



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VicSuper

Since joining VicSuper eight years ago as a graduate, Joanna has taken advantage of the organisation's career pathing strategy. This has enabled her to pursue further study and progress to her current role of senior superannuation adviser. Her gender was entirely irrelevant in the traditionally male-dominated financial services industry, and the ongoing support provided by VicSuper ensured that she attained the skills and experience necessary to succeed. She is now a team leader focussed on learning and development for VicSuper's superannuation advice team.

"Throughout my career at VicSuper, I've been coached and mentored by my managers and colleagues...and I can't emphasise enough how supported and confident that made me feel. Although not all employers offer these kinds of opportunities to their staff, I hope more and more workplaces catch on. It makes a huge difference," she says.