Doing things differently: 
Case Studies of Work-Life Innovation in Six Australian Workplaces

CATHERINE McMAHON & BARBARA POCOCK

The Centre for Work + Life is often approached for advice about the implementation of good work-life practices for women and men in different kinds of organisations.

The case studies in this report provide some practical examples of strategies that are being used by diverse organisations in Australia to develop better work and life arrangements. These could offer useful ideas to assist other organisations seeking to improve work-life balance in their workplaces.
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GPO Box 2471
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Authors: Catherine McMahon and Barbara Pocock

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Introduction

Australia is facing long term changes in work. These include changes in the location and form of work and its regulation, a shift in occupational and industry structure and increasing participation of women and carers in paid employment.

These are occurring against the background of changes in households and families, with more dual earner and sole-working parent households. These changes affect the capacities of working men and women to reconcile work with the rest of their lives and families, as well as the welfare of children and others who rely on working carers. They also impact upon economic productivity, economic growth and the strength of communities. They create new challenges for managers and supervisors.

Australia has a strong interest in seeing workplace arrangements that facilitate the reconciliation of work with the rest of life including family life, resulting in productive and sustainable workplaces.

This publication seeks to provide some practical examples of strategies that are being used by organisations to design and implement better work and life arrangements, by providing details of recent experiences in a set of diverse organisations in Australia.

Publication Partners

The Centre for Work + Life (CW+L) at the University of South Australia is a national research centre that investigates work and its intersection with household, family, community and social life in Australia. The Centre, established in 2006, aims to generate innovative thinking about work and life in Australia, making sense of experience in order to improve the wellbeing of Australians. It does this by undertaking research and linking research to practice and publicly disseminating ideas, research results and policy ideas. The Centre works closely with partners from employer, government and community organisations and unions. Additional information about the Centre, its research and publications is available on the Centre’s website.

The Centre is often approached for advice about the implementation of good work-life practices for women and men in different kinds of organisations. The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) agreed to assist the Centre with funding a small project to produce an electronic downloadable publication containing case studies of practical work-life strategies that are being applied in workplaces which could help inform practice in other organisations.

Participant Organisations

EOWA provided assistance in identifying organisations to be interviewed and in contacting organisations to seek their agreement to participate in the project. The six organisations who participated in the case studies covered a number of diverse industries across Australia (with some international firms) and included:

- a national contractor in construction, Probuild Constructions (Aust) Pty Ltd;
- a state office of a national and international law firm, Minter Ellison Perth;
- a long established manufacturing company, Cement Australia;
- a Sydney-based university, University of Technology;
- an international cruise company, Carnival Australia; and,
- one of the four largest Australian banks, Westpac Banking Corporation.

Case Studies

The case studies in this publication are drawn from interviews with the leaders, managers and employees in the Australian companies and organisations who participated in this project and outline practical strategies that affect work and life that are being applied in their workplaces. The case studies are designed to encourage organisations to learn from the experience of others in order to achieve better practice.

Each of the case studies follows a similar format, with a short background summary about the organisation; details of the particular program and implementation strategies; the benefits of the particular program for employees/employers as well as the challenges experienced and key lessons learned along the way. In addition some brief personal comments on the experiences of staff are included. A road map of each program is also included to set out in diagrammatic form the various steps and processes followed.

The programs outlined vary considerably, with some case studies addressing large scale initiatives to address workplace culture and mechanisms to support work-life balance on a number of levels, while others focus on specific initiatives such as tailored paid parental leave, pay equity, increasing women in non-traditional roles or flexible work and working from home initiatives. Some of these specific initiatives are part of broader initiatives which are not detailed here.

Some of the key points to emerge from the case studies include:

- high level commitment from senior management and governance structures is vital to success as is accountability;
- the involvement of managers and staff to assess needs and develop strategies is essential;
- flexibility is required in order to respond to different individual needs;
- workplace culture should be addressed and business models and practices may need to change;
- staff need to be kept informed and initiatives need to be promoted within and outside the organisation;
- it is important to analyse, monitor, evaluate and report on the program;
- efforts need to be sustained and consistency between policy and practice maintained.
We hope that these case studies provide organisations with practical solutions and ideas to assist them in developing work arrangements that meet the needs of employers and employees and help management and staff better reconcile working life with the rest of their lives.

Acknowledgements

The Centre for Work + Life at the University of South Australia would like to thank Probuild Constructions (Aust) Pty Ltd, Cement Australia, Westpac Banking Corporation, Carnival Australia, Minter Ellison Perth, University of Technology, Sydney and their staff who generously contributed their time to assist in the development of these case studies.

The assistance of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) with the organisation of these case studies and in funding this project is also gratefully acknowledged.
Company profile:
Probuild is a major national contractor with construction operations in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia, and civil engineering operations in Queensland and Western Australia. This case study focuses on the Victorian operations.

Industry:
The construction industry is highly competitive, with contracted deadlines and has a long standing tradition that people work long hours, including most Saturdays.

Background:
In early 2005, Probuild undertook a strategic review of the company addressing structure, procedures and resources to continue growth into the future. This involved face-to-face interviews with all employees, both salaried and waged. In this process the impact of social and workplace pressure became clearly evident at Probuild. The external consultants working with Probuild to interview staff alerted the Board, before the interview process was complete, that work-life balance was a significant issue and the CEO and Board decided to address it.

Program profile:
The program sought to change workplace culture and provide mechanisms to support work-life balance.

Strategies for implementation:

Provide high level commitment
Commitment to supporting work-life balance (WLB) was demonstrated from the outset by the Board, and the company’s two Directors. They were involved in initiating the program and talked about work-life balance as a business issue. They participated in the training of managers, monitored and reviewed outcomes, and promoted WLB in the industry. WLB was addressed as an issue that could impair the long term sustainability of employees, and their families, and hence the company’s ability to prosper in the longer term. WLB remains a standing item on the Board’s agenda.

Focus on and direct resources to the issue
Probuild engaged the services of a specialist work-life balance consultant to guide the company’s response, utilising a Victorian Government ‘Better Work and Family Balance’ grant in 2005. The company established a representative group from staff, union and management, initially to market test a staff survey, and the Work and Life Balance Group continued to meet every 3-4 weeks for a year to develop the Work and Life Balance Program.

Gather information about needs and how best to respond
Probuild developed a survey, in consultation with the representative group, which was undertaken confidentially by 150 staff in Victoria. The survey was presented to employees at face-to-face site meetings with a Director and a work-life balance (long term employee) champion. Confidential separate surveys were sent to partners of all employees and both surveys were returned to the work-life balance consultant. Following a low response rate by hourly paid employees (e.g. labourers) the survey was provided again to them with individual support. Focus groups were also conducted with employees and a focus group was held over dinner for employees’ partners.

The analysis of the surveys and focus groups revealed the impact of long work hours on employees and their families, identifying adverse impacts on families, relationships, health and wellbeing. The survey results revealed an average ‘satisfaction with work-life balance’ rating of 3/10. Employees’ partners were taking almost full responsibility for household management and family care, even though many were also engaged in paid work. They also reported that their personal health and wellbeing suffered as a consequence of their partners’ work arrangements at Probuild.

Change workplace culture
Cultural issues were identified as needing to be addressed first and foremost. So prior to developing any specific work-life balance initiatives, the representative group set out the strategic foundation of Probuild’s Work-life Balance Program. It had three key aspects:

- the basic framework which included a statement of commitment from leaders, program strategy, responsibilities, policy, guiding principles for implementation and a ‘Saturday and Excessive Hours Guide’;
- a supportive culture was necessary to ensure that strategy and policy are effectively implemented and are not just rhetorical;
- appropriate workplace practices were to be determined through consultation with staff.

The five guiding principles were: ‘there must be mutual benefit’; ‘it is a team effort’; ‘one size won’t fit everyone’; ‘hard work can be done flexibly’; and ‘good communication is fundamental to success’.

The ‘Saturday and Excessive Hours Guide’ identifies that there is no formal requirement to work on Saturdays (except in defined special circumstances) for head office staff, site secretarial staff, administrators and graduates. For staff on award wages, Saturday work occurs to meet project targets, having respect for any particular individual requests not to work. Foremen are expected to be available to work three out of four Saturdays, if the project requires Saturday work, having regard to their leave benefits and any particular requests regarding rosters. For Project and Site Managers, apart from periods of peak activity, working more than two out of every four Saturdays is considered excessive. The company’s aims with regard to excessive hours are for employees to have at least 12 hours between work periods for family, social activities and sleep, and at least 36 hours away from work in every seven days, outside daily rest.

To support the diverse work-life needs of Probuild employees, the WLB program now includes four key elements and a range of options to assist people at different stages of life to achieve the work-life balance they desire. Some of these initiatives may be customised to suit different work environments:
Engage managers

Once the basic framework was established, Probuild began building a supportive culture. Following a major launch event in July 2006 for employees and their partners, Probuild began to train and develop managers. Previously, training and development was technically focused, so a group workshop was held led by Directors. Managers were encouraged to raise and discuss their fears about the proposed culture change, to get them ‘on the one page’ in terms of their understanding of the business imperative to invest in work-life balance.

Next, managers were provided with the outline of a plan which they were required to tailor to suit their work environment. Each individual plan was signed off by the Directors before managers were empowered to implement their pilot over a six month period. After evaluating their plans, a roundtable discussion was held to share learning and suggest how the company should proceed to introduce a consistent work-life balance management process. From this, the work-life balance management process was documented. This action-learning process created a sense of ownership as all managers actively participated in the development of the work-life balance implementation process. It was not something ‘thrown’ at them by Human Resources or a consultant, which made it so much easier—for those more familiar with managing construction to speak away from the hustle and bustle of a project/office environment, to discuss work and family responsibilities.

Once comfortable, managers displayed attitudes and behaviours required to underpin the ‘new’ culture. From here Probuild began to introduce a series of workplace practices/initiatives with their full support. The set of 5 guiding principles support managers in their decision making. The initiatives are in four categories to ensure the company provides ‘something for everyone’. However it is the work-life balance management process which Probuild consider the strength of their program.

Demonstrate change to employees

As outlined above, following the consultation process with employees and their partners, there was a major launch for employees and partners that provided an opportunity to provide feedback, demonstrated that the company had listened to their concerns and had started to act on them, and made a public statement of commitment. An information pack was provided as a guidebook for employees to work out what suited them. The Work and Life Balance Policy identified that managers were responsible for the creation of ‘a supportive culture by promoting, implementing and sustaining work and life balance initiatives’, and employees were encouraged to take responsibility for determining and discussing their work and life balance challenges with their manager, consistent with the policy.

In the performance review processes, individual’s work and family responsibilities are documented. The review allows a manager and subordinate to have quality one-on-one time: to speak away from the hustle and bustle of a project/office environment, to discuss work and family responsibilities. Recognising that individual needs change over time, there are monthly conversations between managers and employees about work-life arrangements.

Promote program

While face-to-face communication and ongoing implementation of the program have most potently demonstrated organisational commitment, there has been written communication to staff about the program and ongoing reminders, e.g. inclusion of a work-life story in each edition of the staff newsletter which is mailed to employees’ home addresses.

Three key messages have been important over the course of the program:

- ‘Work and life balance … it’s okay to talk about it at Probuild’. This statement made it clear to everyone that the culture would only change by making it ‘okay to talk about’ having balanced lives;
- ‘Work-life balance … it’s a journey not a project’ was used to emphasise the program does not have an end date, that it will continue to improve and evolve;
- ‘Work-life balance … something for everyone’ recognises people at different life and career stages have different needs, and no matter where they are at, the company will endeavour to help them achieve their work-life goals.

Key documents that have been provided to all employees include:

- ‘Work-life Balance Policy’ in 2005;
- ‘Questions you might want to ask’ (regarding work-life balance) in 2006;
- ‘Work and Life Balance - It’s okay to talk about it at Probuild’ in 2006;
• ‘Work and Life Balance - Something for everyone’ in 2008;

Maintain managers’ accountability for work life balance
Probuild introduced specific key performance indicators (KPIs) for management in relation to how they support the program, for example, managers should:

• ensure that the work-life balance initiatives are of benefit to both the company and the relevant individual;
• actively participate in the implementation plan developed for each project team;
• provide appropriate leadership to demonstrate commitment to the Work-Life Balance Plan;
• act in accordance with the intent of the ‘Saturday and Excessive Hours Statement’.

There is a requirement for managers to report that they have conducted WLB conversations with new staff within two weeks of their having either started employment at Probuild, or joined a new team within the Company. Managers are also required to monitor individual WLB objectives with all employees on a monthly basis and monthly WLB reports are provided for executive review by each manager.

Monitor and report
For Probuild, monitoring and reporting are cornerstones of the program and fundamental to work-life balance success in their work environment covering diverse work sites and constantly changing teams. Individuals’ goals are documented and monitored on a monthly basis in consultation with their managers. This also assists managers to forecast and plan work around the changing needs of staff and the business. Monthly Work-life Balance Management Reports go to the Directors and the Board.

Have different responses for different needs
Probuild found that salaried and hourly-rate employees have different needs. Salaried staff primarily want access to ad hoc flexibility to attend to such things as personal appointments, caring responsibilities, school and family events, and do not want consistent Saturday work. Hourly-rate employees want to work as much as possible, particularly on Saturdays, because of the pay loading. Research indicated this employee group in Victoria generally was reluctant to ask for time off for anything, other than a wedding or a funeral, due to fear about employment security. At Probuild, the work-life balance conversation process enables hourly-rate employees to indicate whether they wanted Saturday work or ad hoc flexibility.

Choices suited to individuals are facilitated through discussions with their line manager.

Maintain and extend the program
A further survey of staff was conducted in March 2008 to ensure that the program was effective and to identify possible improvements. Managers were prepared for the introduction of the National Employment Standards, which include new rights to request flexibility, through training and information sessions, emails and individual management meetings.

After several years of experience with flexible working arrangements (FWA), Probuild formalised the process to improve the company’s approach and ensure equity and consistency across the company.

The process put in place to establish a flexible work arrangement has four steps:

• ‘clarify’ : when an employee considers a flexible work arrangement might be an option a discussion is initiated between the employee and his/her manager;
• ‘consult’ : the employee talks to those who may be affected by the proposed change;
• ‘consider’: the best solution to meet individual and business needs is fully considered by the employee and his/her manager (a discussion checklist is available on the intranet);
• ‘complete’- an arrangement that balances individual and business requirements is determined, documented and a trial period set (a simple agreement proforma is available for this purpose).

In 2009, Probuild developed the wellbeing aspect of the program further by providing a range of initiatives that promote a healthy lifestyle.

The Health and Wellbeing Initiative targets alcohol consumption, prostate cancer, depression, skin cancer, diabetes and the environment, smoking and health, fatigue, heart disease, stress and ‘losing weight the healthy way’. The company seeks to target these areas and educate employees through the health and wellbeing intranet page, monthly posters, e-newsletters, workplace activities, employee assistance program, ‘stay in touch initiative’ (for employees who have transitioned to retirement, or who have had to depart the industry due to incapacity), and Probuild Training and information Days.

Change business practices
At the negotiation phase with clients, Probuild discusses how it sees managing work-life balance as a crucial issue for both the industry and for project success. At the outset of each project, project managers will consult with subcontractors about how to reduce the overall project work burden. As one senior leader put it, ’Someone has to start this conversation at the frontline in the industry and we are prepared to lead the way.’

In tender documents, Probuild includes details of its approach to WLB to illustrate its investment in people as a point of difference in competitive tender processes.

Engage in industry leadership
Probuild is active in promotion of work-life balance as a business issue, adopting a strategy to communicate Probuild’s approach to work-life balance in the broader business environment. This includes presentations at numerous Victorian construction industry events and Work-life Association roundtables, participating in the State Government’s Working
Families’ Council and speaking to graduate schools. Probuild also arranged for a Slade Recruitment Report about best practice employee engagement strategies, to be featured in press articles, Master Builders’ Association Victoria (MBAV) and Building Commission newsletters.

Benefits to Employees and Employer:

For employees

For employees on Probuild construction sites, informal flexibility is the most prevalent form of flexibility available. Early leaving times are standard across all sites to accommodate personal appointments, sport, family, and social functions. All sites have a foremen roster, so foremen can self roster weekend work. Labourers have the option to work on weekends and a process exists to enable assistance from other sites to be called in to cover labour shortages if required. Project and Construction Managers rotate weekend work.

Office staff work Monday to Friday unless circumstances are exceptional. Office based staff are more likely to request formal flexible arrangements and these include working from home, flexible part-time work and flexible start/finish times. All staff who have made a request for flexible work have been accommodated.

The take-up of FWA is reflected in the following graph for 2009:

![Flexible Working Arrangements 2009]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arrangement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working from Home</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P/T work + University</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon-Fri Work</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon-Fri Work + Sat</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon-Fri Work + some Sat</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management w/e rotation</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreman w/e rotation</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour optional w/e work</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexi Start/Finish Times</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For employer

In the early years of its work-life balance initiatives commencing in 2005/06, Probuild experienced reductions in staff turnover, reduced talent shortage, increased attraction of employees and reduced recruitment costs, reduced burnout, benefits to the company’s reputation and improved communication with its employees. During the global financial crisis (GFC), the company sought to retain its workforce and limited separations to voluntary redundancies. Now the company is again benefiting from its reputation for good work-life balance through retention of existing employees and attraction of new employees (both from individuals who know of the company’s reputation and as a result of the recommendations of existing employees).

Attracting and retaining people capable of assisting Probuild achieve its business strategy is fundamental to the company’s business success. Probuild wants to be the construction company of choice, to attract and retain the best people.

Challenges and Key Lessons:

Challenges

‘The primary objective of our Work-life Balance Program is to ensure we maintain our reputation as a hard working, reliable, profitable and growing construction business, whilst we assist our people to achieve a satisfactory sense of life balance through access to flexible work practices, wellbeing initiatives and a workplace culture respectful and supportive of commitments outside of work.’
Key lessons learned:
These include the need to:

- recognise problems early and, at Director (CEO) and Board level, to be willing to address these, and to draw in external expertise;
- find out what’s needed by engaging with employees and employees’ partners across the entire organisation rather than assuming to know;
- invest in training managers to support cultural change, since the program will not work without managers’ support;
- recognise and support the different nature of employees’ needs. The best initiatives are those developed by the people directly affected;
- analyse, monitor and report on program implementation;
- realise there are benefits in being an industry leader, in having ‘first mover’ status.

Personal comments:
‘Probuild’s approach to work-life balance has allowed me the flexibility to play footy on the weekends and train two nights a week. Most construction companies insist you work Saturdays so you have no hope of doing footy or cricket. Having an outside interest such as footy keeps me fit and healthy which makes me feel good. That benefits me and Probuild because my head is clear when I come to work and that is so important for safety in my role.’ (John)

‘By working part-time two days in the office and two mornings at home I was able to settle my daughter into primary school and participate in the school community. From what my friends tell me, it would be hard to find an employer as flexible as Probuild.’ (Rebecca)

‘Knowing that our management understands my on-the-job life and my off-the-job life is fantastic and greatly reduces the pressure. Being able to fit in lunch with my partner on Friday makes a big difference to me.’ (David)

From 2008 Work-life Balance Booklet.

Company Contact Details:
Geoff Thomas
Group HR/EHS Manager
Probuild Constructions (Aust) Pty Ltd
230 Albert Road, South Melbourne, VIC 3205
Ph: 03 9693 8222 Email: gthomas@probuild.com.au
Company website: http://www.probuild.com.au

Information current at 19 November 2010
**ROAD MAP**

**WORK-LIFE BALANCE (WLB) STRATEGY**

### Business Objective
- Strategic company review for future growth
- Face-to-face staff interviews revealed social/ workplace pressures
- External consultants’ advice work-life balance issues

### Commitment and planning
- Board and Directors’ commitment
- Allocate financial resources
- Establish group to oversee process [staff, union, management]

### Identification of needs and strategies
- Gather information on effect of long work hours [surveys/focus groups with staff and partners]
- Develop main guiding principles and framework for WLB workplace practices

### Workplace culture change

#### Step 1: Engagement of managers
- Training for managers – workshops
- Work areas pilot plans tailored by managers/ signed off by Directors
- Pilot plans implemented
- Roundtable on pilot results for more consistent WLB management processes

#### Step 2: Engagement of employees
- Launch of framework – employees and partners
- Information pack
- Program promotion [face-to-face, newsletters, key messages]
- Documentation of work and family responsibilities [performance review]

### WLB Program Implementation
- Flexibility in WLB application to meet individual needs
- Managers’ KPIs include WLB program support
- Monthly review of WLB needs – managers/employees mtgs
- New staff informed of WLB within 2 weeks of starting
- Monthly WLB management reports to Board/Directors

### Monitoring and ongoing development
- Staff survey on effectiveness & future improvements
- Keep managers up-to-date on related initiatives
- Investigate further initiatives – wellbeing, flexibility
- Change business practices – negotiations with clients and sub-contractors
- Promotion of benefits of WLB in broader business environment
Company profile:
Minter Ellison (ME) is a full service law firm with offices in the Asia Pacific and UK. While Minter Ellison Perth is a member of the national and international ME Legal Group, it is locally owned and controlled. ME Perth comprises two separate entities which together employ 188 staff, including more than 90 partners and lawyers. The office specialises in a diverse range of fields from dispute resolution to financial services, energy and resources for mostly corporate clients, particularly large banks and resource companies.

Industry:
The legal profession is known for its long and anti-social hours, competitive culture and intense pressure on staff to meet financial targets and personal performance indicators. Law firms traditionally operate in ways that can limit the potential for flexibility in employment, which include performance and remuneration models based on inputs rather than outputs, high service delivery expectations to clients and support services required for legal staff.

Despite women comprising more than 50% of law graduates in many parts of the world, women lawyers continue to be disproportionately clustered in the lower echelons in managed positions, are assigned less prestigious work, and earn less money than men, despite the prevailing discourse of gender equality.

Background:
In 2006, ME Perth suffered from a staff turnover rate of around 50% per year. Internal staff surveys showed low levels of staff engagement and the firm was experiencing decreases in revenue. External consultants were brought in, and recommended a ‘root and branch’ re-evaluation of the office’s entire operation. In 2006, after prompting from one of the consultants, the current Managing Partner (MP) was appointed from within the firm and he led and continues to lead the structural change.

A staff taskforce was formed in 2006 with representatives from all levels and departments in the firm. Work-life balance (WLB) initiatives were identified as a means of improving the business, and in particular to attract, develop and retain people.

Program profile:
Work-life balance initiatives by their very nature need to be flexible. ME Perth works hard to meet the evolving needs of their people and provide the right forums and culture for the WLB arrangements to work. The firm recognises that the needs of employees are many and varied. Staff take-up work-life balance initiatives (FWA) for diverse reasons, including: family, study, working in the family business, second careers, transition to retirement, volunteer interests, health, house renovations and sporting interests.

ME FWA include part-time, job-share, flexi-time, rostered time off, time in lieu and flexi-place (working at home or interstate), and range in length from a few weeks to a permanent arrangement. Paid parental leave includes paid leave of up to 14 weeks (after one year’s service) for the primary caregiver. ‘Hey Dad’ paid leave is also provided for new fathers in the non-primary caregiver role and allows fathers to work the equivalent of a four day week (with reduced financial targets), whilst still remaining on full pay for the first 2-3 months after their baby’s birth.

Broader work-life balance initiatives include 5 weeks annual leave for senior staff; the ability to purchase additional leave; health and wellbeing programs (such as gym membership, subsidised in-house massages, yoga, pilates, and seminars); paid study/scholarship leave; an extra day’s paid leave to undertake volunteer work in the community; a counselling service for employees and their immediate family; deferred starting dates for graduates wishing to travel; and extended leave without pay arrangements. An annual ‘Kids Day’ is held each October for children and grandchildren of employees to come to lunch in the boardroom and participate in a range of fun activities with parents or grandparents.

The firm operates with a full suite of support services provided to legal staff from 8am to 6pm. To ensure these services are provided and do not compromise WL, ME make full use of job-share, flexi-time and rostered time off arrangements for support staff. They also ensure that individuals in support roles are cross-trained and back-up is available so that service levels are not compromised.

The take-up rate of FWA is approximately 50% across the firm.

Strategies for implementation:

Provide high level commitment
The MP believes a good team comes from ‘using positive energy to empower others to be the best that they can be in an ethical way, which is the complete opposite of the command and control model’. The MP makes obvious to all his commitment to FWA (reflected at a micro-level by his encouragement of FWA for those who report to him (the management team), through to firm-wide level by ensuring those on FWA continue to receive the same opportunities and recognition as others) and in doing so, reassures staff that the organisation is committed to FWA in practice.

Lead by example
Two partners and 5 of the 7 managers are currently on an FWA.

Have ongoing staff input
Formation of a staff taskforce in 2006, with representatives from all levels and departments in the firm, led to WLB initiatives being identified as a means of improving the business. At the same time the firm’s (now annual) climate survey was designed and introduced to gather feedback on partners and staff perceptions and opinions about working at ME.

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Other means of engaging with staff include the biennial values review; regular MP and People and Development Manager meetings with different focus groups of staff; and one-on-one discussions between individuals and their ‘responsible person’ or People and Development staff.

Communicate with staff
Communication about WLB begins during recruitment when the candidate’s preferred employment terms are discussed. After induction training, communication continues through fortnightly internal newsletters; the intranet ‘Family and ME’ and an online discussion board. At group level, communication takes many forms, including MinterChange (an opportunity to present to the entire firm at quarterly staff updates); MinterChat (informal ‘fireside’ chats between new graduates and senior members of the firm); presentation of climate survey feedback to groups within the firm, and regular lunches for those on maternity leave to assist them to stay in touch with the firm. Internal seminars include the ContactPoint program (an intra-firm group to provide new avenues for staff to build internal networks with the aim of achieving a better WLB); wellbeing seminars (such as ‘Burnout to Balance’), and career development seminars which encourage staff to think laterally about the types of WLB initiatives available to them.

Engage with clients
Firms can operate as though clients have 24 hours a day access to their lawyers. ME Perth has been discussing these perceptions with clients and sought feedback on how the specific FWA in place is operating. Where certain practice areas do not lend themselves to traditional FWA, such as part-time work, ME Perth makes full use of alternative FWA such as working from home arrangements to accommodate staff requests.

Utilising FWA mean that clients are exposed to, and build relationships with, more than one of the legal team working on their legal matter which results in more than one person within the firm getting to know their business well. Measureable outcomes for the client include increased accessibility, improved efficiency and turnaround time (where a matter is urgent) and improved peace of mind from the knowledge that more than one person understands their business drivers and needs.

Application, trial and review
Staff interested in a FWA, are encouraged to discuss a proposal with their manager and/or the People and Development Team. Criteria for evaluation include the employee’s personal circumstances, client service requirements, impacts on the team, and the employee’s personal attributes e.g. reliability. Additional considerations are required where an applicant is requesting a working off-site arrangement, for example, an assessment of the duties that can be performed at home and the suitability of the home environment. Once an agreement is reached in principle, requests are formally recorded on a specific form, with the approval and terms confirmed by letter.

Once implemented, FWA are subject to a three month trial period and/or ongoing review. Almost all FWA continue in place indefinitely. If the trial is not found to be working for either party, a discussion is held and either an alternative FWA is trialled or the FWA comes to an end by mutual agreement. In several cases, FWA have been amended time and time again to accommodate the changing needs of the individual, for example, in response to a growing family’s childcare needs and availability.

Continuous innovation
ME Perth encourages a culture of thinking differently where most policies and procedures are subjected to ongoing review and enhancement to reflect best practice. The firm takes the approach of being receptive to any request and tries to find ways to meet requests in a mutually beneficial way, rather than restricting FWA to a narrow list of prescribed types.

Values led
The organisation’s values are also a significant part of ME Perth’s culture. WLB initiatives are a key component of ME values, (including ‘make it work, sustainably’ and ‘success through collaboration’) and these values drive expected behaviour and guide decision-making. The values are publicised around the firm, on screen savers and throughout performance evaluations and advancement criteria.

Change the business model
The model that forms the framework for the business planning process puts people first and financial outcomes last, based on the belief that getting the preceding factors right (people, clients, wellbeing of the organisation) leads to financial success. There is a consistency of approach in the agendas for board, partner, division and team meetings, so all agenda items are divided into people, clients, wellbeing, finance, consistently through the organisation.

Change remuneration
Generally, performance and remuneration models in legal firms are based on inputs rather than outputs, with ‘fee earners’ required to record as many billable hours as possible. ME Perth have been, and are continuing to, change their focus from inputs (time) to outputs (results for clients). This has included moving partners and some senior managers to a purely outputs based model for remuneration and increasing the use of value-based billing.

Embed in Performance management
Partners and staff are held accountable to the firm’s values through the performance management framework. Annual performance reviews and advancement applications include a self and manager rating on each of the five values, including a commitment to WLB initiatives. Evaluation of partners goes further to include a broader 360 degree review which is conducted by an external provider and invites self, manager, peer and team members’ ratings in terms of the 25 individual value statements. These results are then collated and provided to partners by way of a one-on-one individual feedback session with an external psychologist. A portion of the partner’s remuneration is calculated on the rating of the manager, peer and team members on the partner’s commitment to leading, mentoring and encouraging their teams to meet their full potential.
The final phase of embedding WLB initiatives into the performance framework was to remove hours worked as a measure of partner remuneration (June 2009), and further to extend the outputs-based model to other staff as appropriate in the future.

**Equity**
ME Perth was very aware that staff could perceive the use of FWA as primarily being for mothers, or as potentially impairing advancement. Communication is focused on the breadth of FWA available and the promotion of examples within the firm.

ME Perth is also aware that FWA should not be just the prerogative of senior staff and so, when it became apparent that secretarial staff were not using the FWA options, a rostered time-off policy was developed and implemented.

**Provide training and development**
Management recognised not only the business case for ongoing professional development, but the overwhelming desire of employees for these opportunities. Many training sessions are presented on more than one occasion to accommodate the needs of those on FWA.

In 2010, ME Perth focused on a couple of programs to advance the careers of senior women in the firm, providing external coaching and career resiliency training.

**Adopt technology**
To support the needs of partners and staff on FWA, the firm provides remote access and a ‘Blackberry’ to all senior staff and on application to any other member of staff who would benefit from the additional support. Where possible, meetings and training sessions are scheduled to accommodate the needs of FWA staff. Alternatively, staff working off-site may participate by tele-conference. Staff presentations and training sessions are recorded and available through the firm’s online video library to those who are unable to attend in person.

**Share Minter’s experience**
ME Perth recognises that their commitment to WLB initiatives extends beyond the firm, and this is reflected in their values being ‘grounded in the community’. The company have promoted WLB initiatives to the broader community at external presentations, including as part of the WA Department of Commerce’s WLB seminar series in April 2009.

ME Perth won the Business and Professional Services category of the 2009/10 National Work-Life Balance Awards in March 2010 and since winning this award, ME Perth has presented at several external engagements, including the University of WA Masters of Commerce program and an Australian Institute of Management event. The MP and People and Development Manager conducted a panel discussion for clients to talk about how they can implement WLB initiatives and the People and Development Manager has responded to questions from colleagues in the legal profession about what the firm does differently.

**Benefits to Employees and Employers:**

**For employees**
Staff indicate, for example through the climate survey, that they appreciate the flexibility offered by ME Perth and are willing to recommend the firm as a place to work (reflected in the high number of internal vacancies filled by referrals). Promotion of staff who are on FWA, and the example set by partners and managers who use FWA, demonstrate to staff that their career will not be derailed or on the ‘slow track’ through the use of FWA, and this gives staff confidence about their future at the firm.

**For employer**
After the changes were instituted, according to internal surveys, 94% (December 2008 & December 2009) of current employees indicated that they would highly recommend working for ME Perth to a friend. Since 2006, staff turnover has dropped from approximately 50% to a low of 10% in 2009. Internal surveys showed that 96% of staff have a good understanding of the firm’s goals and ME Perth grew its revenue by approximately 45% between 2007 and 2009.

ME Perth is well recognised in the WA legal market as an ‘employer of choice’ for anyone seeking WLB, as reflected in the acceptance rate of graduate offers which increased from a low of 25% in 2006 to 91% in 2009, and by the increased number of vacancies being filled by internal referrals.

With the resulting savings in turnover costs, the People and Development Team has been able to focus time and attention to further developing WLB initiatives and investing in staff development and external community engagement activities.

**Challenges and Key Lessons:**

**Challenge**
Operating in a professional services context where both clients and law firms create expectations about immediate access to ‘their lawyer’, ME Perth seeks to grow its business and meet client needs, while providing the flexibility staff want to stay at the firm and have sustainable careers.

**Key lessons**
ME Perth’s key learnings include the need:
- for CEO leadership, including leading by example:
- to address needs of all staff:
- to engage line managers:
- for persistent and sustained effort:
- for consistency between policy and practice:
- for willingness to rethink business models.
Personal comments:
‘When I became pregnant, the firm agreed to my request to reduce my working week to four days without hesitation. Since returning from maternity leave, I now work three days a week. I was recently promoted to Senior Associate, a position which brings increased responsibility and autonomy which I am able to meet on a part-time basis. Minter Ellison is supportive of my family responsibilities and provides me with alternative ways to keep in touch with colleagues and clients alike. For me, Minter Ellison provides a valuable combination of professional satisfaction, advancement opportunities and balance.’ (female Senior Associate)

‘Being able to start and finish earlier each day allows me to spend a bit more quality time with my young family before they go to bed each night. I get to help them with reading and other homework or even just to sit and watch a bit of TV with them.’ (male Manager)

‘I really appreciate Minter Ellison giving me the flexibility to work a half day on the occasional weekend as my husband works weekends and it allows me time to spend with him while he’s off work during the week. It’s a win-win situation as the work I do on the weekend is easier to complete while the office is quiet.’ (female Executive Assistant)

‘FWA really work for the individual and the business, and by their creative nature enable the firm to develop existing and new revenue streams. My FWA enhances my profitability by allowing me to focus on legal instructions at the office, and on business development, and management matters when working from home. It also enables me to continue my career in a commercial environment.’ (female Partner)

Company Contact:
Louise Shelton,
People and Development Manager
Minter Ellison Lawyers
Level 49 Central Park
152-158 St Georges Terrace
Perth WA 6000
Ph: 08 9429 7526 Email: louise.shelton@minterellison.com
Company website: http://www.minterellison.com/public/connect/Internet/Home/About+Us/Our+offices/Office+-+-+Perth

Information current at December 2010
**ROAD MAP**

**WORK-LIFE BALANCE (WLB) STRATEGY**

### Business Objective
- High staff turnover rates/decreased revenue
- Low level of staff engagement (staff surveys)
- Well known negative employment issues in legal profession [e.g., long anti-social hours; women under-represented; performance measured on inputs not outputs]

### Identification of needs and strategies
- External consultant’s report on need to re-evaluate operations
- MP appointed to lead structural change
- Taskforce established with representatives from all levels and departments

### Workplace culture change: Engagement of managers & staff
- MP demonstrates commitment
- Company partners/managers currently on FWA
- Annual climate survey feedback [partners and staff]
- Biennial values review
- Regular focus group meetings with staff by MP and People and Development Manager

### Communication Strategies
- Company values include WLB initiatives and are well publicised
- Recruitment – establish preferred employment arrangements
- Newsletters, intranet, ‘Family and ME’ and online discussion board
- Group level communication/updates across firm [e.g., climate survey; maternity leave lunches]
- Internal seminars including networking, wellbeing and career

### Program Implementation
#### Changes to workplace conditions
- FWA introduced including part-time; job-share; flexi-place (home, interstate)
- Parental leave conditions [14 weeks paid parental leave; maternity ‘hey dad’ full pay with reduced targets for 2-3 months]
- Broader leave and wellbeing programs [purchase additional leave; gym membership; study/scholarship leave; volunteer work, extended leave without pay]

#### Changes to support services for staff
- Family involvement initiatives [employee assistance counsellors, kids day at workplace]
- Legal support services maintained and support staff are cross trained and back-up arrangements in place

#### Business model changes
- Business planning [People put ahead of financial outcomes]
- Client relationship changes [Clients involved with more staff on legal team]
- Performance and remuneration models [Changing focus from inputs (time) to outputs (results) and value based billing]
- Professional development [Offerings broadened; dedicated in-house training]
- Increased use of new technologies [facilitating remote access to conference/training]

#### Performance management
- Values, including WLB initiatives, are used for performance evaluations and advancement
- Annual reviews include self and manager ratings on values [inc WLB commitment]
- Partners’ 360 degree reviews affecting remuneration (conducted externally) include ratings on criteria of leading teams to full potential and WLB
- ‘Hours worked’ removed as a measure of partner remuneration (June 09)

### Monitoring and ongoing development
- FWA introduced with 3 month trial period and/ ongoing review
- On review, FWA is adjusted if issues arise for both parties, or needs change.
- Internal staff surveys on firm [includes comment on recommending firm as employer]
- Staff turnover statistics [dropped from 50% to 10% over 3 years]
- Financial revenue [shows 50% growth over 3 years despite the global financial crisis]
- Measures for ‘employer of choice’ status [includes acceptance rate of graduate offers and vacancies filled by internal referrals]
Organisation profile:
The University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) differentiates itself, as do its four interstate colleagues in the Australian Technology Network of Universities, with its focus on technology. UTS was established as a University in 1988. In 2009, over 29,800 students were enrolled at UTS in onshore and offshore courses and the total number of staff (full-time equivalents (FTEs)) was 2,682.

Industry:
The University sector has been a leader in the provision of support for employees who are parents with caring responsibilities. In 2001, the Australian Catholic University (ACU) broke new ground nationally when it included in its enterprise agreements paid maternity/adoption leave of up to 52 weeks for staff with more than two years of service. Twelve weeks maternity leave at full pay followed by 40 weeks leave paid at 0.6 of full pay for those with more than two years of service and 15 days paternity leave in the first 12 weeks following the birth of a child.

Background:
Following the ACU initiative, paid parental leave was a significant issue for the higher education sector. Universities considered the competitive advantage achieved by ACU in providing such generous paid maternity/adoption leave. UTS, in particular, was concerned to establish an environment that would increase the participation of young academics as a strategy to address the ageing academic workforce and the competitive labour market in higher education. Increasing paid parental leave was also an issue for unions in enterprise bargaining.

In the enterprise bargaining round which resulted in its 2004 enterprise agreements, UTS increased paid maternity/adoption leave from 12 weeks (under the 2000 enterprise agreements) to 20 weeks. While the unions sought another 6 weeks of paid parental leave (i.e. a total of 26 weeks), UTS instead proposed new arrangements for return to work support (in addition to the 20 weeks of paid leave). The Agreement for Non-Academic Staff (support staff) was settled first and the ‘return to work’ support funding was set at a value of $4,000 per person. The funds could be used for paid leave for phased return to work and/or career development projects. In the Academic Staff Agreement the support available was expressed as 30 days’ paid leave or the equivalent in value.

During the enterprise bargaining round that resulted in the 2006 agreements, the support staff agreement was amended to provide for 30 days’ return to work support to be taken as paid leave or equivalent in value (i.e. the same as for academic staff) and the detailed procedures associated with the arrangements (some of which had differed in the two agreements) were removed from both agreements.

The 2010 enterprise agreements took effect from October 2010. During enterprise bargaining negotiations, the University proposed increasing the flexibility around the use of the 30 days ‘return to work’ support. This proposal was based on feedback from staff about how they wanted to use the leave and was agreed to by unions.

This case study looks at UTS’s innovative policy for return to work support, in the broader context of UTS’s provision of support for employees with family responsibilities.

Program profile:
**Tailored Parental Leave**
UTS provides paid maternity or adoption leave of 20 weeks, which can be taken as 40 weeks on half-pay or a mix of full and half-pay (this leave can be shared if both parents are UTS staff); 20 days paid partner’s leave (including same-sex partners) which can be taken at any time in the three month period following the birth or adoption of a child and up to 104 weeks’ unpaid leave for the primary carer of the child. With the national Paid Parental Leave scheme commencing in 2011, UTS will add the provisions of that scheme to its current entitlement.

In addition to paid maternity and adoption leave of 20 weeks, UTS provides the following return to work support to staff who are eligible for paid maternity/adoption leave following parental leave:

- up to 30 days paid leave for phased return to work;
- alternatively, the equivalent monetary value of the 30 days’ paid leave as funding for career development projects;
- any combination of paid leave, phased return and/or funds for career development projects.

When the above arrangements were introduced, the paid leave for phased return to work could not be taken as a continuous block of leave. However, under the 2010 enterprise agreements staff may now take the 30 days’ leave as a continuous block on full or half-pay.

Eligible staff have made greater use of leave for phased return to work than funding for career development projects. Only three staff have accessed the leave as funding for career development projects. Most staff who are eligible for the return to work support use it and are encouraged to use it. However, non-academic staff (support staff) are more likely to use their full entitlement to the phased return to work than academic staff. This is probably because academic staff can create the flexibility that they need through their work schedules (and may find this approach easier than applying for phased return to work).

UTS has found that staff generally take a year of combined paid maternity and unpaid parental leave. It remains to be seen if staff will use the 30 days’ paid leave to extend their period of paid maternity leave within a 12 month period or phase in their return to work after the 12 month period. Certainly the combination of the UTS paid leave (26 weeks) and the national Paid Parental Leave scheme (18 weeks) will allow staff to be better remunerated during a 12 month absence.
Flexible Working Arrangements
UTS recognises that flexible working arrangements (FWA) are important in enabling both men and women to manage their work-life balance. UTS has a broad range of flexible work practices, including:

- part-time and part-year/sessional employment on a temporary or on-going basis;
- job-sharing;
- alternative working hours for support staff: for example compressing working hours into a mix of longer and shorter days or into fewer days per week or fortnight;
- flexible hours options for support staff, i.e. flexi-time and rostered days off;
- flexible workload arrangements for academic staff.

UTS is committed to providing arrangements which facilitate work-life balance as a staff retention strategy, and allow women with families to maintain career continuity which can facilitate career advancement.

Strategies for implementation:

Provide high level commitment

The Vice-Chancellor’s commitment to equal opportunity (EO) for women is demonstrated in his strong public statements of support and the continuing funding of a wide range of gender equity initiatives within UTS. The Women@UTS Program, which has run for five years, was specifically developed to provide a comprehensive and integrated program of professional development opportunities for all women working at UTS. It has had a significant impact on women’s representation and participation in the workplace and on the culture of the organisation.

Professor Milbourne’s commitment was acknowledged when he was named Leading CEO for the Advancement of Women at the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) Business Achievement Awards in November 2009.

UTS has an Equity Reference Group chaired by a member of UTS Council that reports annually to UTS Council (equivalent to a Board). The Group includes the Director of the Equity & Diversity Unit and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning and Equity) with responsibility for equal opportunity who is answerable to the Vice-Chancellor. Membership of the Group includes students and staff from targeted equity groups, as well as a designated position for a staff member to represent gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender/intersex issues.

The Group’s terms of reference are to:

- advise the UTS Council on action it might take regarding UTS equity policy and governance;
- discuss UTS equity and diversity plans, programs and performance;
- assess the UTS equity and diversity program performance against internal indicators, as well as against external benchmarks and best practice;
- comment to the UTS Council, at least annually, on the UTS equity and diversity performance.

Identification of the need for ‘return to work support’

When UTS first developed its proposal for return to work support, it was concerned to distinguish itself from other universities that were focused on matching the ACU paid parental leave arrangements. In terms of the paid maternity/adoption leave provided, UTS did not want to dictate to staff how they should take their paid leave. Instead the maternity/adoption leave was increased to 20 weeks and staff could elect whether they wanted to take it on full-pay or half-pay or a combination. The proposal for return to work support was developed in response to awareness by members of the Human Resources Unit (HRU) of the difficulties that female staff members could experience following return to work from parental leave. Such difficulties can include financial pressures, adjustment to working motherhood (particularly when returning to work full-time) and the desire to quickly regain professional currency and career traction. The leave for phased return to work sought to address the financial and adjustment issues while the career development project funding addressed career issues.

While UTS has arrangements in relation to the temporary variation to mode of employment which allows staff to move from full-time to part-time work, staff returning to work following parental leave were not always sure about the proportion of part-time work hours that they would be able to work (particularly first-time mothers). The 30 days phased return period allows ‘a bridging period’ between the end of the parental leave and the commencement of part-time (or full-time) work, during which staff can design their own arrangements as they adjust to returning to work and meeting family commitments.

Formalise arrangements

The provision of return to work support was incorporated in the UTS Enterprise Agreements, Parental Leave Guidelines and parental leave application forms. Applicants for parental leave receive a letter setting out their parental leave arrangements and reminding them to apply for their return to work support before the conclusion of their parental leave.

Provide information in person to staff

Most of the staff who are going to have a baby, or adopt a child, attend a face-to-face meeting with a member of ‘Staff Services’ in the HRU. Staff Services provide advice and information to staff members about their pay and conditions.

The meeting with Staff Services, provides staff with the opportunity to receive copies of forms and guidelines (also available on the HR website), to ask about entitlements, for examples of what others do in their circumstances, for assistance with completing forms and sometimes for information or coaching to talk to their supervisor.

Provide information and support to managers

UTS has had a long commitment to providing flexible work practices and supporting staff with carers’ responsibilities. This is part of the culture of UTS and most managers understand this.
UTS has HR Partnership Teams to provide advice and coaching to managers and supervisors about staff management and supervision. Each partnership team has a HR Partnership Manager and HR Partners. HR Partners are allocated faculties/units and develop strong relationships with managers and supervisors of those areas. HR Partnership Teams assist managers with workforce planning and the implementation of HR strategies aimed at the attraction and retention of staff. They ensure that the managers are aware of, and appropriately implement, the conditions and benefits (including flexible work arrangements) available to staff through enterprise agreements and guidelines.

**Set performance indicators**

The University has developed equity-related performance indicators at the whole of organisation level. Now as part of UTS’s Business Intelligence Project (management information system) the indicators are cascading down into faculty and unit action plans, with consequent management responsibilities to meet the key performance indicators (KPIs) at that level. By 2018, UTS aspires to achieve employment in all categories to match population distribution. The current focus is on increasing the percentage of women in senior academic and non-academic positions.

**Facilitate recognition of employees’ family responsibilities**

The UTS work plan template includes a section for staff to record any personal, family or other matters that may impact on their hours of work or workload schedule, such as picking up children at a particular time or regular visits to healthcare professionals for a medical condition. Work plans are developed annually but are regularly discussed and may be updated. Including special needs as part of work plans encourages discussion between staff and supervisors so that arrangements to accommodate those needs can be put in place.

**Undertake communication and promotion**

UTS’s conditions and benefits (including FWA and parental leave) are communicated and promoted to staff through the following:

- the UTS website provides comprehensive information for UTS staff and prospective staff on all employment conditions and benefits and how to access them;
- all supervisors receive a regular HR Brief with short punchy articles about topical HR matters, e.g. in late 2009 there was an article about the flexible working hours provisions for parents with under school aged children in the National Employment Standards;
- new staff receive comprehensive information through an induction overview with Staff Services, completing the online induction, and attending a Welcome to New Staff Session;
- changes to employment conditions and benefits (through changes to guidelines and enterprise agreements) are notified to staff through broadcast emails, Staff Notices (issued regularly) and/or other forms of communication.

**Seek feedback from staff**

Two rounds of staff engagement surveys were conducted at UTS in 2007 and 2009. In these surveys, work-life balance was rated as favourable by 68% of participants in 2007 and 71% in 2009.

From time to time, UTS undertakes reviews of policies and guidelines which set out arrangements applicable to employment conditions and benefits. Such reviews normally involve consultation with different groups of staff via committees, focus groups and or HR Policy Reference Group (established under the enterprise agreements to provide feedback on proposed changes to HR policy and guidelines).

Feedback from staff on policy and guidelines received outside a review cycle is forwarded to the Workplace Relations and Policy area to be recorded and fed into the next review of the relevant policy or guidelines. Such a review may be brought forward as a result of staff feedback.

**Understand staff profile**

There is an employee self-service system in which staff are encouraged to enter equity information about themselves into the HR system. This information is monitored in order to understand changes in the staff profile. Also, UTS analyses a range of staff data in order to identify workforce trends. Such data includes a breakdown to determine whether there are differences in trends based on gender.

**Revise provisions as appropriate**

UTS has provisions that enable changing hours of work for employees through:

- variation to hours or mode of employment – for example to change from full-time to part-time on a temporary or permanent basis;
- alternative working hours for support staff – for example to compress working hours into a mix of longer and shorter days or into fewer days per week or fortnight;
- flexibility in workload scheduling for academic staff;
- the new enterprise agreement for support staff (effective in October 2010), allows a staff member to enter into an individual flexibility agreement with UTS for working hours outside the ordinary span of hours (i.e. 7am-7pm, Monday to Friday). Under this new arrangement, staff whose roles do not include direct contact with clients, may be able to negotiate working hours which suit their personal needs. For example, staff members with children may arrange to start work before 7am so that they can finish work in time to collect their children from school.

Many staff returning to work after parental leave elect to work part-time, so then the phased return to work option becomes less relevant for those staff. Staff have requested that the 30 days be incorporated into their continuous leave. Since the new enterprise agreements became effective in October 2010, it has been possible for employees to take the 30 days’ paid parental leave as an extension of their 20 weeks’ paid leave, so it becomes 26 weeks’ continuous leave at full pay, or 52 weeks at half-pay, or a combination of full and half-pay.
Given the extensive use of part-time work at UTS, with many staff in client contact roles wanting to work three days per week, UTS seeks to develop systems that allow seamless service to clients (through documentation, communication, staff covering others’ work).

Identify future needs
In 2009, in the context of a new strategic plan, UTS developed two possible scenarios for the future of the University; it analysed future workforce needs for those contexts, comparing it with the workforce profile and determining strategies for going forward including re-designing academic roles and careers, promotion, leadership and succession planning, development of academic leadership and a different recruitment model.

UTS is currently reviewing patterns of academic work, academic roles and career paths from several perspectives. This review is being undertaken to address the ageing academic workforce and to expand the potential pool from which academic staff can be appointed. The anticipated outcome of the review will be academic roles and career paths which meet the needs of UTS and are attractive to groups who are not currently well represented in higher education (including women) and the next generation of staff.

Monitor and report
UTS has KPIs at the University level, including some in relation to diversity. These are published and reports on these are submitted to University Council. UTS also has management forums where these KPIs are discussed.

Benefits to Employees and Employer:

For employees
UTS’s return to work support provides the following benefits to staff:

• allows staff to design their own method of phasing their return to work as they adjust to working and meeting family commitments;

• allows staff to return to work on a part-time basis but on full pay. This can relieve financial pressure following a period of unpaid parental and the extra costs of childcare;

• encourages staff to return to their UTS positions rather than resign;

• provides wellness benefits for new parents;

• allows staff, through the career development project funding, to quickly regain professional currency and career traction.

For employer
UTS’s return to work support provides the following benefits to UTS:

• retains younger female staff and provides ongoing access to their skills and corporate knowledge;

• demonstrates support for women staff which contributes to UTS’s standing as an employer of choice;

• assists staff to maintain professional currency through career development activities, if they choose to use the return to work support for this purpose;

• encourages work units to work more flexibly as they accommodate flexible work arrangements;

• encourages open communication about personal and family needs within work units, and particularly between staff and supervisors.

Challenges and Key Lessons:

Challenges
The challenges associated with the return to work support include the need to:

• support female staff to successfully return to work after maternity/adoption leave, as they combine work with parental care and as they resume their profession;

• skill managers to be more flexible about the organisation of work and to manage part-time workers. This includes managing and improving communication, allocating facilities (work stations, computing facilities, etc), and maintaining client service;

• assist women returning to work on a phased return or part-time basis to deal with issues associated with ownership of their work, to prioritise and plan work within their part-time hours, to communicate with others so that work continues during their absence, and develop a new working relationship (possibly with someone who has a different work style) if they are job-sharing and/or hot desk or share a work station.

Key lessons:
This has included the need:

• for sustained leadership by senior management;

• to extend accountability across the organisation;

• to address women’s employment as a strategic issue in workforce renewal;

• to progressively modify support provisions, reflecting employee preferences;

• to offer competitive provisions within that industry;

• to recognise that FWA are important to enable both men and women to manage work-life balance;

• to acknowledge that FWA are important strategies in the attraction, retention and career management of staff who are parents, or carers.
Personal comments:

‘UTS’s paid parental leave is generous and long enough to allow parents to care for their baby when they are most in need of full-time attention, and when parents have least energy to devote to their work. The phased return to work was as flexible as I needed it to be, I was free to choose my own part-time arrangements, and the University accommodated everything that I needed. The phased return to work means that both parent and child are able to adapt to the new arrangement. It also means that parents can access childcare on a part-time basis which, in inner-Sydney, is all that you are likely to find in the medium term. It gives you time to make alternative arrangements, and time for everybody to adjust to the logistics of the work-life balance.’

Katherine Biber, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law

‘I am an academic researcher, mother of three small children and sometime carer of elderly parents. I was recently employed by UTS in a full-time, three year research position. When I was first offered the position I raised the issue of my caring responsibilities, and my first point of contact in the Research Office suggested that the position could be made part-time and extended to four years, something that would not have occurred to me to ask for. This arrangement was met with enthusiastic support by research management and my own faculty. Although I was offered a similar position at another research institution, UTS was a far more attractive prospect because of the positive attitude to caring responsibilities that I encountered at every level of the organisation as well as the willingness to put good policy into practice with a very practical solution for someone with significant caring responsibilities.’

Karen O’Connell, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Faculty of Law

Organisation Contact:

Lisa Carroli
Senior Workplace Relations and Policy Specialist
Human Resources Unit
University of Technology, Sydney
P.O. Box 123
Broadway, NSW 2007
Ph: 02 9514 1079 Email: Lisa.Carroli@uts.edu.au
University website: http://www.uts.edu.au

Information current at November 2010
SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES WITH FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Business Objective
- Attract, develop and retain high quality staff
- Attract more female academic staff
- Attract younger staff
- All employment categories to match population distribution by 2018

Commitment and planning
- Vice-Chancellor and University Council commitment
- Commitments to diversity & equity in UTS Strategic Plan
- The Human Resources Unit and Equity & Diversity Unit partnered to develop Work-Life Balance program
- Equity Reference Group

Identification of needs and strategies
- University sector and UTS committed to lead in paid parental leave
- University sector and UTS provide employee flexibility in work practices
- Need to be competitive nationally & globally

Reinforcing workplace culture - managers
- HR support (HR Partners) including advice to managers on attractors for staff
- Equity-related performance indicators in annual work plans for all senior executives
- Equity-related performance indicators in Faculty/Unit action plans and individual work plans
- Supervisors sign off (in work plans) on employees’ arrangements to meet their specific needs

Reinforcing workplace culture - employees
- Communication and promotion of policies and provisions to employees
- ‘Staff Services’ as a service to individual employees
- Reminder letter to staff on parental leave to apply for return to work support

Program Implementation
- Negotiate & incorporate in Enterprise Agreement
- Establish guidelines and forms for ready access
- Promote through website, induction processes, Staff Notices
- Monitor uptake of specific provisions
- Revise provisions as appropriate

Monitoring
- Equity Reference Group of University Council
- Biennial UTS staff engagement surveys
- Employee access to policies is monitored annually
- Monitoring of equity through workforce database by HR and Equity & Diversity Unit
Company profile:
Cement Australia’s business is the manufacture, sale and distribution of cement and associated products. Cement Australia was formed in 2003 as a merger of two Australian cement companies.

Industry:
The industries in which Cement Australia (CA) operates have traditionally been male-dominated and roles have been gender segregated: males in management, mining, operations and tanker driving and women concentrated in administration in lower paid positions.

Background:
To address skill shortages, CA developed a strong commitment to recruiting the best people and building a diverse workforce. In CA, diversity is seen as socially responsible and as bringing value to the business by broadening the range of ideas and talents of a diverse workforce that reflects the community it serves.

There is a high representation of men in ‘waged’ positions which affects the proportion of women in the company overall. In 2003 women made up 11% of CA workforce, and this reached 14% in 2010. The position is more positive with regard to ‘salaried’ positions, with women’s representation growing from 25% to 29% over the same period and the proportion of women in management growing from 14% in 2003 to 20% in 2010.

Program profile:
The program aims to eliminate pay inequities based on gender, and build a more diverse workforce that progressively includes more women in the company in an expanded range of roles. This case study explores how the company has increased the employment of women and improved its pay equity outcomes.

Strategies for implementation:

Provide high level commitment
The CEO has championed the quest for a diverse workforce: ‘I am personally committed to driving and achieving CA’s diversity initiatives and judge my senior executives and managers alike on how well they also do this’.

Change workplace culture
A Diversity Initiatives Group was formed in 2004, led by a senior female mine manager. An external Human Resources (HR) advisor was provided to the Group. Diversity focus groups were conducted in 2005 to explore further diversity possibilities which led to an Indigenous Employment Strategy being set-up. In addition, CA broadened its attraction program and promoted innovation by identifying differences in thought as well as in culture.

Guiding Principles (around ‘Safety, Health and Environment’, ‘People’, ‘Add Value’, ‘Customers’ and ‘Partnerships’) were developed and all change management processes and programs follow these.

Cement Australia’s efforts to build a diverse workforce include recruiting from overseas; recruiting older workers and workers with disabilities; improving the selection and development of women; establishing flexible employment arrangements and adopting an Indigenous Employment Strategy.

Change processes for assessment of individual performance
Job analysis has been proceeding according to the Hay system since October 2003 to establish relevant competencies for each job role. The CA automated performance management process contains Individual Development Plans (IDPs) which are an integral part of the process and are linked to other processes in CA’s performance management tool-kit.

The performance of each employee is assessed against the Guiding Principles and their personal objectives. In the IDP, career aspirations are discussed and this information is used throughout annual succession planning activities. Based on employee performance and capability, decisions are made about remuneration and promotion.

Employing more women in CA, and in an expanded range of roles
CA’s initial efforts to ensure gender diversity began with recruitment and drawing on ‘objective data’, including reference checking and broad psychometric assessments in selection processes. A panel of preferred recruiters was developed to ensure that recruitment procedures were consistent with equity principles.

Managers and team leaders were trained in recruitment practices, and HR involvement on selection panels was increased, along with the systematisation of knowledge about recruitment and policy in a handbook to standardise procedures across the company’s operations. Greater attention was given to the development of position descriptions, given their central role in recruitment and performance decisions.

Visual representations of women employees were developed for employment advertising and use on the company’s website. The website also highlighted the contribution of women in several non-traditional key positions. Women candidates were increasingly encouraged into non-traditional roles, including as truck drivers in 2006 in response to shortages, and more generally in the intakes of graduates and apprentices. Efforts were also made to break down gender segregation in administrative roles. In 2007, there was a rollout across the company of a ‘Diversity in Action’ documentary.

The importance of female role models was progressively recognised and supported, and activities included increasing the visibility of opportunities for women, establishment of career guidance and support to existing female employees, inspiration and motivation for existing and potential female employees and increased appreciation of female leaders across Cement Australia.

Improvements to HR reporting and processes were made so that the needs of new entrants to the organisation — and the reasons for organisational exit — were more fully understood. An external
provider was engaged to conduct exit interviews with all women employees, and key male employees, to identify issues or themes that the company needed to address, including relationships, cultures and diversity.

The company’s performance management processes, which began with employees and their supervisors assessing areas of strength and weakness in employees’ performance, were formalised into a system that included IDPs.

Remuneration and promotion outcomes were determined from the performance management processes. Based on the Guiding Principles, behaviours were described on a 5 rating level scale and employees assessed as either ‘lagging, learning, living, leading or leveraging’ and remunerated and promoted accordingly (or not).

Managers review the employee’s position description, its objectives, KPIs, responsibilities, and accountability and then employees are measured against those. Once all performance reviews are completed, they are peer-reviewed. All executives bring their assessment results for their employees to an executive meeting and these can be challenged by others.

Career aspirations are discussed in IDPs and this information is used later at the annual Succession Planning workshop. The company developed succession planning tools and methods in a system that relied less on subjective assessments to measure potential and abided by equity principles. This enabled the talents of women to be recognised and rewarded.

Championed by the CEO, an Executive Coaching and Mentoring program was developed for participants of high promise and high potential, some of whom are part of the ‘Shadow Executive Team’. Selected on merit, this group included 25% women in 2008 and currently includes 29% women in the Succession Planning group and 32% in the Mentoring Program.

While development and education opportunities are available for all employees, the company has increasingly focused on provisions relevant to the needs of individuals. CA sought to assist workers with family responsibilities through providing more non-residential company courses and financial support for further education, particularly through flexible study delivery methods like external studies, or e-learning. A quota of two was set for women’s participation in each Team Leader course.

The company sought to ‘exceed standard practice in according benefits to employees with children or who may have children’, offering 12 weeks’ paid maternity leave, and one week paid paternity leave. Formal policy was developed to facilitate re-entry options after pregnancy, building on informal arrangements for part-time work, job-share and working from home after pregnancy. ‘Toddlers to Teenagers’ family rooms were provided progressively at major office locations.

Analysis of pay equity
CA has increased its understanding of the nature of pay equity and substantially deepened the analysis conducted since 2003. In the early stages, CA conducted ‘pay reviews’ with statistics on total employment costs by gender. This aggregate analysis revealed little difference between average female and male remuneration at most levels of the workforce. The only significant disparity was thought to be in the administrative/clerical band and a job redesign program was undertaken to ensure that there was no systemic reason for this disparity. Promotion and development and lateral recruitment were also to be part of progressively ensuring pay equity across the organisation. The Hay system was used for the grading of jobs and managers were trained in the use of this system.

Use of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) pay equity tool began in 2005/06 through an external consultant. This indicated that pay inequity existed, with women paid, on average, 95% of male wages. This was not reflected at higher levels of the organisation, nor in some business units. The significant disparity was in the administrative/clerical band and it was believed that the company’s job redesign program would address this.

In 2007, the company looked in more detail at four kinds of issues leading to pay inequity:

- pay discrimination at similar grades;
- occupationally-based inequity— the concentration of women in administration;
- classification inequity, with few women in senior roles (so greater pay inequity) and many men in lower paid wages roles (thus concealing some of the inequity in salaried roles overall);
- workforce participation-based inequity, with levels of workforce participation seen as employees’ prerogative.

The company increasingly investigated whether discrimination was occurring within the grading process.

In early 2009, CA made a start to review the issue of pay discrimination at similar grades through a process called ‘Review of Grading Consistency by Gender’. This process consisted of:

- a preliminary analysis performed by the Business Improvement Team to extract salary and grading information for all female employees, and to identify one or more ‘similar’ roles filled by male employees for comparison;
- formation of a round table of HR managers to review the data for inconsistencies;
- active discussion of roles where grading inequity was a potential issue, and compilation of a list of roles requiring further investigation;
- commitment to including these roles as a designated subset of the next round of role gradings, and to engage the independent grading consultant in active discussions regarding the appropriateness of gradings for these roles.

In some instances there were issues related to how a job had been graded historically, or differences in grading between the two pre-existing merged companies. In other instances, there was no clear explanation for why some women were on lower grades than their male colleagues and in other instances women were on the same grade as male colleagues, but were paid less.
The company identified such issues in 2008/09 and addressed them in 2009/10, concluding that, ‘A more detailed analysis of salaried roles to split out individual grading levels shows outcomes over the reporting period have been excellent and we are now close to achieving our objectives of 100% equity’ at each grade level.

CA recognises that the equity of the process relies very heavily on the accuracy of the grading process. While they believe this process is objective and fair, they continue to review roles as they reorganise the business to ensure grading is consistently applied.

Monitoring and review
Since 2003 outcomes of pay reviews have been presented to the Company Executive on a regular basis including a discussion of gender equity. Mid-year reviews are conducted with the CEO.

Leadership in industry
In promoting the cement industry as a positive career choice for women, CA is leading the industry and collaborating closely with the Cement Industry Federation (CIF) and relevant government agencies. CA sponsors, and actively participates in, the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) in Queensland. Attendance at the NAWIC events is open to all female employees regardless of their position within CA.

Benefits to Employees and Employer:

For employees
- improvements in pay equity for waged and salaried employees;
- more women in non-traditional roles;
- more women moving from administrative to other roles.

For employer
- competitiveness of business – attracting and retaining the best people;
- improving the quality of applicants;
- improved decision-making and enhanced innovation;
- the emergence and greater contribution of leaders;
- awarded the Minister’s Award for Outstanding EEO Practice in 2009.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt:

Challenges
CA plans to continue changing the culture of the organisation to embrace diversity and to fairly remunerate all employees, redressing any gender-based pay inequities.

Key lessons:
These included the:
- the importance of CEO leadership;
- the key role of analysis to support decision-making;
- the importance of seeing equity as a business issue – getting the best outcomes for the business;
- need to apply a persistent and sustained effort;
- the willingness to rethink assumptions.

Personal comments:
‘Never once am I questioned on my ability to perform the job because I’m a woman. I commend Cement Australia for making diversity and equal opportunity part of our daily life’.
Kristin Devlin, SHE Compliance Manager

‘I was offered a promotion while I was on maternity leave. I was so ecstatic when I heard about the promotion offer. It really demonstrates Cement Australia’s commitment to its performance management and succession planning process. They had no concerns about promoting a mother who was returning to work, but rather left the decision up to me. I knew Cement Australia would provide me with the support and the flexibility that I needed as a working mum, so the decision was easy - I accepted. I was right.’
Aiveen Kearney, Group Commercial Manager

Company Contact:
Cate Metzner
Business Improvement Manager
People & Performance
Cement Australia
Lvl2 Cement Aust House 40 McDougall St
Milton QLD 4064
Ph: 07 3335 3073 Email: Cate.Metzner@cemaust.com.au

Information current at November 2010
**Business Objective**
Recruit the best people and build a diverse workforce

**Organisational strategic direction**
- Encourage recruitment of more diverse staff:
  - Older workers
  - Overseas workers
  - Workers with disabilities
- Women: Increase employment of women in more diverse roles and improve pay equity
- Flexible employment practices
- Indigenous employment strategy

**Workplace culture change: engagement**
- CEO Commitment
- Set-up Diversity Initiatives group
- Champion – female mine manager and external HR consultant
- Widely disseminate Diversity Guide

**Implementation processes**
- Recruit the best people and build a diverse workforce

**Recruitment**
- Establish Guiding Principles and a Code of Conduct
- Process consistent with equity principles
- More objective data/ tests
- Handbook with standard procedures
- Company advertising shows women in non-traditional occupations
- Induction pack includes Diversity DVD
- Panel of preferred recruiters; HR involvement
- Training for managers about recruitment

**Workplace / Employment Conditions**
- Improved job design including position descriptions
- Job analysis via Hay system
- Women encouraged into non-traditional roles
- Breakdown gender segregation in administrative roles
- 12 weeks paid maternity leave, 1 week paid paternity leave
- Improved HR reporting
- Exit interviews to identify issues
- Access to external consultant for workplace grievances
- Re-entry options including part-time; job-share; working from home

**Performance Management**
- Performance management tool-kit
- Performance management system
- Individual development plans including career aspirations
- Succession planning tools – equity principles
- Rating for pay and promotion against the company’s Guiding Principles

**Pay Equity**
- Use of EOWA pay equity tool
- Review of pay grading consistency by gender
- Identify and address potential inequities between individuals
- Ongoing role reviews to ensure grading consistency

**Training & Development**
- Executive Coaching & Mentoring program
- Shadow Executive team
- More non-residential courses
- Financial support for further education - especially flexible delivery

**Communication & Promotion Strategies**
- Company advertising, shows women in non-traditional occupations
- Diversity in action documentary
- Sponsor of National Association of Women in construction
- Collaboration with Cement Industry Federation and government on career choice for women

**Monitoring/review and ongoing development**
- Reports to Executive
- Detailed half yearly reviews with CEO
Company profile:

Westpac is one of the four major banking organisations in Australia, and one of the largest banking organisations in New Zealand, providing a broad range of banking and financial services. As at 30 September 2010, The Westpac Group employed approximately 39,000 people in Australia, New Zealand and around the world. Westpac is ranked in the top 5 listed companies by market capitalisation on the Australian Securities Exchange Limited (ASX) and as at 30 September 2010 market capitalisation was $69.5 billion.

Industry:

The Australian banking sector is dominated by the four major banks. These four banks also provide services in funds management and superannuation, in competition with a broader range of financial intermediaries.

Background:

Westpac’s initiatives to support employees with family responsibilities aim to attract and retain talent. Westpac knows - based on feedback from their recruitment and ‘on-boarding’ processes, their employee engagement surveys and high return rates from parental leave (84% in 2009) - that flexible working arrangements (FWA) and innovative policies and programs are all key considerations for employees choosing Westpac over other organisations.

Program profile:

Westpac was one of the first publicly listed companies in Australia to provide paid maternity leave in 1995 (and paid paternity leave in 1998). Over the ensuing 15 years Westpac’s support for its employees with children has evolved to include FWA, tailored parental leave and other innovative policies.

Flexible Working Arrangements

Westpac recognises that for many women (and men) opportunities to work flexibly are attractive and the company’s strong track record in providing these opportunities is reflected in the number of FWA on offer and their take-up rates: a recently conducted Diversity Survey (with a response rate of about 50%) indicated that 43% of respondents (48% of females) had utilised one of the Westpac’s flexible working options, including:

- job-sharing;
- telecommuting;
- career breaks for up to twelve months;
- purchased leave for up to eight weeks;
- part-time employment;
- FWA including working from home and condensed hours.

Tailored Parental Leave

Westpac provides both financial and non-financial assistance to employees who are new parents and seeks to help these employees balance their work and family commitments. This includes:

- thirteen weeks of paid parental leave on full salary or on a half-pay basis over a 26 week period;
- if both parents work at Westpac, each is eligible for 13 weeks’ paid leave;
- no qualifying period of service to become eligible for paid and unpaid parental leave;
- automatic right to two years’ unpaid parental leave for the primary caregiver of a child;
- annual leave and long service leave may also be taken as part of the maximum 104 weeks’ leave;
- after parental leave, an employee has an entitlement to return to the position they held before they started their leave;
- employees may request to return to work on a part-time basis until their children reach school age and then return to a full-time position comparable to the one held before starting parental leave;
- employees may also choose to remain part-time and permanently change their mode of employment. Requests by an employee to work part-time under this policy will only be refused on reasonable grounds related to the effect on the workplace or the business.

In 2008, 1,329 employees applied for paid parental leave (991 had unpaid parental leave) while in 2009, 1,322 employees applied for paid parental leave (908 had unpaid parental leave).

Westpac aims to retain talented employees and support them to continue their career with the Group. Westpac believes that the parental leave process starts before the employee takes leave and not when they want to return to the office. To help with this process, Westpac has designed a parental leave program which ensures there is good communication between an employee and manager before leave begins, throughout that person’s leave, and as they return to work.

This program provides employees with a toolkit containing a range of practical advice on parenting and flexible workplace options prior to them taking leave. A ‘Corporate Communications’ newsletter is released each two months containing business updates, links to financial education and information, a section on career management, a profile on a working parent, and general tips on balancing working and parenting responsibilities. There is also a workshop available in the employees’ final months of leave to help them consider suitable work options and network with other parents due to return from leave.
Upon return to work, Westpac offer two support programs for mothers and fathers. The series of Mothers’ and Fathers’ Forums brings together like-minded working parents in a supportive, non-judgmental group, to help increase the number of options/solutions working parents have for dealing with the typical challenges they face. At the forums, participants discuss the challenges they face and share solutions for making both aspects of their lives less stressful and more productive, helping them to be more satisfied with both.

The forums cover topics such as managing guilt, and managing judgment and perceptions of others about working mothers. Topics include tips for negotiating with partners and colleagues, helping the person to get a clear view about the most important priorities and how to look after these at home and at work, all to assist in building confidence and competence as a working parent.

**Parental leave for non-primary caregivers**
An employee who is the non-primary caregiver may take an unbroken period of one weeks leave at the time of birth of the child. For parents adopting a child, the non-primary caregiver may take an unbroken period of up to three weeks’ leave when the child is officially adopted and moves to the family home. This leave may be taken from accrued sick leave (up to 38 hours), annual leave or on an unpaid basis. An employee who is the non-primary caregiver may also request Westpac to extend the period of simultaneous leave up to a maximum of 8 weeks. This further leave may be taken from any accrued annual leave or long service leave or as unpaid leave.

In addition, the leave policy includes reference to using accrued sick leave in flexible ways including for:
- the non-primary caregiver to take leave during the week after the birth or adoption of their child;
- accompanying a pregnant partner or spouse to a pregnancy-related appointment;
- carer’s leave.

**Childcare**
To assist employees who have pre-school aged children requiring childcare, the Westpac Group has negotiated special arrangements where Westpac Group employees have priority access to 22 high quality childcare centres around Australia. The childcare centres are managed by professional childcare service providers. All these centres are registered with the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) and participate in the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System.

**Innovative Policies**
As a provider of superannuation services and an employer, Westpac recognises that women employees are financially disadvantaged in retirement, through lower retirement savings as a result of taking time out of the workforce for their family.

To address this, in June 2010, Westpac became the first Australian private sector firm to pay up to 39 weeks in employee superannuation contributions while employees are on parental leave. Eligible male and female employees receive superannuation contributions of 9% of their base salary paid as a lump sum amount. In addition, ‘BT Super for Life’ account holders (including customers who are not Westpac employees) will have their administration fees waived for the duration of their parental leave up to 12 months.

**Strategies for implementation:**

**Provide high level commitment**
The CEO of Westpac has international recognition for her leadership of Westpac and for her commitment and action to improve professional opportunities for women. Most recently this includes a commitment to increase the proportion of women in the senior management levels of Westpac from 33 per cent to 40 per cent in the next four years.

The Board has endorsed the strategy of Westpac becoming one of the world’s best firms for diversity and flexibility and the Board has oversight of diversity policies and outcomes.

The Westpac Group Diversity Council, chaired by the CEO and with her direct reporting executives as members, meets quarterly and is charged with driving the agenda across the Group and championing diversity. The Council reviews performance against plans and targets, drives accountability, and communicates across the Group and within divisions. The Council is supported by the Diversity & Flexibility Team, which sits within the HR function.

A Centre of Excellence in Group HR for diversity and flexibility has been established, led by a senior executive with line management experience. To maintain an ongoing focus on women across the Westpac Group, a Head of Women in Leadership has been appointed to focus on advancing the opportunities for women at Westpac and to remove any barriers that may exist for women to maximise their potential.

**Reinforce organisational culture**
Having been on the journey for some years towards greater diversity and equity in employment, Westpac continues to reinforce a culture that supports diversity and inclusivity through:
- core Westpac values including ‘One Team’, ‘Integrity’ and ‘Valuing Each Other’. These values are prominently communicated through the Group intranet site and on other tools such as mouse pads. They are also part of performance reviews, remuneration outcomes, and the recruitment process and they are recognised in the Code of Conduct;
- merit based recruitment and promotion;
- development and implementation of policies and programs as outlined above;
- clear and objective processes for staff to access provisions of policies and programs;
- clear and objective processes and systems in place for managing claims of discrimination.
Engage managers and ensure accountability
All employees are required to complete compliance training on a regular basis, which includes a module on diversity workplace practices, and new managers also have a diversity component in their induction training. Diversity & flexibility policies are clearly communicated on the Group intranet.

The Westpac Values are included in individual managers’ performance objectives and also taken into account in remuneration review decisions.

Use established processes for new initiatives
Westpac continues to develop initiatives that enhance its attractiveness to employees with family responsibilities. The processes that underpin the development and implementation of such initiatives include analysis of cost implications, engagement with key internal and external stakeholders, submission of proposals for executive approval, formation of a cross-functional implementation team, development of formal policy and communication strategies across the Westpac group. Specific initiatives are reviewed post implementation for effectiveness and uptake.

Promote program
Westpac has well established mechanisms for promoting the Westpac vision, policies, programs (including new initiatives) and successes. Some avenues of communication provide information in general to employees (e.g. the intranet) and some information is tailored to specific needs (e.g. the Parental Leave Toolkit).

Monitor and report
Regular reporting/statistics are provided to the Board through the Group Diversity Council which meets quarterly.

In 2010, Westpac monitored its diversity outcomes through an organisational wide diversity audit.

Westpac has processes for seeking information, across the Group, from employees including:

- feedback from new employees on recruitment and ‘on-boarding’ processes;
- a staff perspective survey, which is conducted annually;
- blogs and interactive forums for staff.

Benefits to Employees and Employer:
The specific benefits of the superannuation innovation include:

For employer
- attracting and retaining talent;
- enhanced standing of bank and leadership in the industry;
- contribution to employees’ longer term financial security (women’s retirement savings);
- encouraging other firms to provide this superannuation benefit;
- enhancing bank’s reputation and CEO’s standing as family friendly.

Challenges and Key Lessons:
Challenge
Attract the best staff and retain them and their expertise, as they progress through life stages that include caring for family members.

Key lessons
These include:
- first mover advantage;
- continuity in benefits offered and reputation sustained;
- related business benefit of further encouraging superannuation savings in Australia.

Personal comments:
‘I have been part-time for a little over four years. Initially I moved to part-time to spend more time with my three boys and support my wife who was starting a small business. I have been well supported through various roles since I commenced part-time and have a number of tools available to me to work from several locations giving me the flexibility to be the primary carer and deliver on my Westpac commitments. The continued support of my people leaders allows me to keep this family balance and ensured my boys have had my attention when required and allowed my wife to continue to build her business. Since I have started part-time work, or probably more correctly stated, spent more time not being at Westpac, I believe my perspective has changed, enabling me to provide different insights at work.’

Peter, Change & Implementation Manager

‘I’ve worked for Westpac for 28 years. In 2003 I had twin boys Matthew and Joshua. I came back to work two and a half days initially. Now I work four days – in the office and at home. Flexibility provides our family with enormous benefit. I can fulfil my needs for a career, and still be part of their excursions and sports days. Working part-time has pros but there are some cons too. Some say, working four days is akin to jamming five days into the hours you have. They might be right. I see it as a two way street. When Matthew was four he broke the femur bone in his leg. He spent four weeks in hospital and six weeks laid up
at home. I continued my work and cared for him. Without the
trust Westpac has in me, and flexible work arrangements I would
have been out of the picture for a few months.”
Debra, Manager, Westpac Women’s Markets SA

Company Contact:
Rachel Slade
Head of Diversity & Flexibility
Group Human Resources
Westpac Banking Corporation,
Level 16, 275 Kent Street, SYDNEY NSW 2000
Ph: 02 8253 (2) 3751 Email: rslade@westpac.com.au
Company website: http://www.westpac.com.au

Information current at November 2010
CASE STUDY: SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES WITH FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Business Objective

“To be one of the world’s great companies for diversity and flexibility”

Organisational strategic direction

To have a workforce that delivers competitive advantage
To be a truly inclusive, barrier-free workplace
To leverage the value of diversity for all our stakeholders
To be a role model and recognised as an innovator in diversity practice

Policies & Practices

13 weeks Paid parental leave (PPL)
13 weeks PPL each parent, where both are Westpac employees
2 years parental leave for primary caregivers
Up to 39 weeks employee super contributions on unpaid leave
Mothers & fathers support programs
Access to part-time work for primary caregivers
Workplace childcare centres

Maintain supportive workplace culture: engagement of managers

Commitment from Board, CEO and Group Diversity Council
Diversity focused culture developed over time
Built into managers’ performance objectives & remuneration

Maintain workplace culture: engagement of staff

Expressed through corporate values
Regular & frequent communication/updates
Opportunity for feedback through blogs and survey

Implementation processes for new initiatives

(used generally and most recently for superannuation on unpaid parental leave)

Planning & Approvals

Initial analysis of cost of proposed program
Engagement with key stake-holders
Seeking of formal approval from Executive
Establishment of cross-functional implementation team
Preparation of formal policies for release

Communication & Promotion Strategies

Communication across Group (different brands)
Parental leave tool-kit
Policies available on Intranet
Special interest articles and stories promoted throughout year
Blogs encouraging employee feedback

Monitoring/Review and ongoing development

Staff Perspective Survey conducted annually
Diversity audit underway – survey of whole organisation (first conducted in 2010)
Employee feedback via blogs and other interactive forums
Reviews conducted by Diversity & Flexibility Team
Group Diversity Council meets quarterly to review performance and drive accountability
Regular reports to Board which has oversight of diversity policies and outcomes
Company profile:

Formed in 2004, Carnival Australia is a division of the US company Carnival Corporation and represents six of the international cruise brands in the Australian tourism market.

Industry:

Over 250,000 employees work in over 3,800 call centres Australia wide and the average turnover rate in the industry is around 26% per year. Stress is the most common occupational health and safety (OHS) issue for call centre employees generally, as they juggle customer requests and performance requirements, and work in closely monitored work environments. Some call centre workers express feelings of isolation and pressure arising from staff shortages and team leader behaviour. Sixty-four per cent of call centre employees in Australia are female. In 2008 10% per cent of centres allowed telework (work-from-home) outside of a specific call centre).

Background:

Carnival has a customer service department, with an internal 6 day a week call centre operation, and an after-hours emergency assistance team. There were 100 people in the call centre operation when the company commenced a work-from-home trial. Approx 65% of the Carnival call centre workforce were female and approximately 20% worked part-time. More of the younger female employees work full-time hours (75 per fortnight) and more of the older female employees work part-time.

In seeking an expansion of its operation Carnival was struggling to locate suitable accommodation. Some staff were looking elsewhere for employment given the requirement that they work rotating shifts across seven days. Staff found that differing start times made it difficult to travel to work, particularly matching work schedules with public transport timetables and attending to responsibilities at home.

Program profile:

Operate a work-from-home call centre operation

Strategies for implementation:

Build on other’s experience

Carnival considered a work-from-home pilot for its call centre operation in Sydney after researching options to deal with expansion. It collected information from a visit to a sister US company that had a work-from-home program for its call centre operation and from some Australian companies that were trialling home-based call centre work. Statistical data from the US indicated that employees who worked from home in the call centre industry were happier, more flexible and more productive and anecdotal evidence from other Australian companies also suggested there were improvements in productivity and staff retention.

Undertake cross-functional planning

An internal taskforce was formed that looked at the implications of the work-from-home arrangements, from a commercial perspective, an operational perspective, and a people perspective. Information Technology (IT) experts were represented on the taskforce to look at the technology in addition to other representatives from the call centre (management and operators) and Human Resources (HR) area. The group did some research, looked at examples, talked to staff about what their preferences were, and then came up with a proposal for a pilot.

Choose skilled staff for the pilot scheme

Many staff were keen to participate in the small work-from-home pilot. Staff were chosen on certain criteria which included having a minimum period of 6 months service with Carnival and an appropriate personal track record (demonstrated flexibility in the past, trusted by the company, in the upper quartile for communication, and a low error rate in performance.) The criteria of six months’ service was an indicator of staff understanding about the culture and practice of Carnival, of their ability to represent the company well and to cope with issues that might arise. Remote supervision was also perceived to be a lower risk option with experienced staff. Of the seven staff participating in the trial, two were full-time including the team leader and five were part-time. The team leader was skilled and experienced.

Reach agreements with staff about home-based work

Part of the agreement that Carnival has with staff is that they will not be caring for children during their work hours at home. Employees complete an OH&S self-study module, an OH&S checklist to ensure their workspace is suitable and sign off on an OH&S policy. The agreement with staff allows Carnival to undertake audits of home-based workplaces if necessary.

Monitor and maintain culture

Work-from-home staff are monitored in the same way as office-based staff including length of calls, number of calls, number of successful outcomes, mistakes in data keeping etc. Home-based staff come into the office once a month for meetings, briefings about company developments and training.

Provide avenues for staff communication

Carnival was alert to potential problems with maintaining consistency of service and staff feeling isolated, so regular contact was maintained through social media, extension of the instant messaging service to staff working from home and monthly on-site meetings. In the initial months there were regular opportunities for staff to discuss how they were going and whether the arrangement was working for them. With the support from their team leader, the work-from-home team communicates together more than other employees. This means that despite being physically remote, they feel connected to Carnival. Online training/meeting tools are utilised and specific learning and development updates are produced for the work-from-home team (in the form of self-study modules).


Resolve technology issues

Technology and phone line requirements vary by residence and can sometimes result in connection delays creating difficulties in recruiting staff directly to the work-from-home option, so staff continue to be recruited through the call centre.

Employees use a computer that has been supplied by Carnival Australia and is for work purposes only. Concerns regarding the confidentiality of information are assessed as part of the work-from home checklist that is completed prior to commencing remote working.

Expand the pilot

The pilot was so successful that it was expanded to 13 staff in late 2009. There are currently 11 team members with two staff on maternity leave. An upper limit of 30% staff working from home seems likely because of the nature of the work, not the technology.

At this stage Carnival is currently reviewing its approach to recruitment and is giving consideration to how it can incorporate the specific recruitment of employees to work directly from home.

Benefits to Employees and Employer:

For employees

Employees reported to management that they felt more relaxed when working from home and felt more committed to the company. Employees working from home report saving many hours of time in commuting, being able to spend more time with their families, and being able to stay with the company despite changes in their care responsibilities.

For employer

Carnival reports that employees in the work-from-home group consistently perform amongst the top half of all call centre employees. The company experienced a dramatic reduction in sickness absenteeism of almost 50% amongst these staff and whilst the program is reasonably new, only two of the 13 employees had resigned throughout the entirety of the trial. Management noticed a willingness on behalf of employees to be more flexible with regard to the hours they could work e.g. starting an hour earlier if a need arose, and a willingness to accommodate requests by management to vary employees’ rosters.

Challenges and Key lessons:

Challenge

The challenge for Carnival is to operate an effective call centre operation in the context of the company’s expansion. Carnival elected to use its best performers for home-based work and is yet to establish whether staff who move to home-based work become the best employees as experience in the US suggests.

This is difficult to confirm given the limited number of employees that have moved from the office to the home-based work team. The work-from-home team perform above average compared to the office-based teams, particularly in terms of productivity.

Key lessons

• the implementation of the work-from-home team has been very positive. This can be attributed to the fact that the initiative was very well researched and project managed, problems that could have become issues were identified and managed as part of the trial;
• experience suggests that having the right operational technology is important. There are some technology limitations: due to the bandwidth required for the phone and network connection the work-from-home team are unable to utilise tools such as web cams to facilitate meetings;
• need for clarity with family members about the time and place of work-from-home. Mothers describe these clear boundaries as very helpful in working from home;
• need for internal policy considerations to address issues such as, when an employee relocates residence or an employee is selected/applies for a work-from-home position and Carnival is not able to provide a connection due to connection limitations.

Personal comments:

'I chose to work at home as I prefer a quieter environment, I am able to juggle my personal life a lot better working from home as I’m at home as soon as I have finished.’ Natasha Edminson

‘Not only does it save me time but saves me money...It allows me to do overtime if required as I’m not travelling home late at night.’ Cherie Crossingham

‘Working from home has enabled me to move further away from the office to a more affordable living location without the sacrifice of long travelling distance every day’ Michael Bond

‘I feel it’s given my job longevity - I do feel if I had to be in the office every day I would have probably resigned a year ago or more. The freedom it gives me - makes me want to keep working this way - it suits my needs.’ Jamie Byrne

‘I was given the opportunity to trial the working-from-home program right from the start, and I have to say I’ve never looked back. I did wonder at the time how I would find it, as it is a completely different environment, and I think that everybody worries they might get more blasé about work. I was concerned about the social side as well, but as I’m not one for drinks after work, I find it doesn’t affect me at all. It has been a trial and error process of course, but we get all the information we need and we have the support of our team mates and team leader who are all working from home so understand exactly what we need.’ Cathy Tallent
Accommodating transitions through flexible work: Julie’s story

The case studies in this document show a wide range of efforts to improve the bottom line of companies in diverse product markets – whilst also improving the lot of workers in these enterprises.

Each story shows benefits for employers and workers, and each case illustrates the necessary ingredients for success. The latter vary, but all share some characteristics: notably senior level leadership, listening and responding to employees, the commitment of resources to change, the linking of manager’s performance to change for the better, and persistent efforts, and evaluation of trials and change. The outcomes are – in each case - ‘win-win’ results where workers who are better off share benefits with their employers.

The case of Julie in Carnival Australia illustrates these lessons in a nutshell. Carnival has trialled working from home arrangements. It carefully prepared for a change, evaluated its outcomes, and has extended a program which saves its employees travel time and money, while ensuring a reliable, extended workforce and lowering company costs for office accommodation.

Julie’s story

Julie has been working for Carnival for 11 years and has seen the human resources complexity and capacity of the company change a great deal over the years as it has grown. She has worked for Carnival in a variety of jobs including in very demanding roles like event management and special projects.

Julie had her first child four years ago. However, soon afterwards her husband became redundant, so she needed to move from the part-time job she had returned to after paid parental leave, to full-time hours. ‘Being full-time, being pregnant and having a four year old while working in an events role was very challenging’ she says, especially in view of her three hour daily commute. After the birth of her second child, and her husband’s return to work, Julie looked for part-time work. The company was active in the support it provided for this transition, and Julie moved to her current role as a part-time cruise consultant working from home.

Julie currently works 20 hours a week over four days. These days, as a part-timer working from home, her hours complement those of her husband: he starts and ends his management job early so that he can look after the children while Julie locks her office door and does her job.

By working from home, Julie saves 12 hours a week of commuting – as well as the cost of travelling. Julie shares the care of the children with her husband, which they both believe is important.

Julie loves being a mother, but she also loves her work:

I like being involved in a really good company. I like having a sense that I’m helping out a company. My role - whatever the role is - is important. Like I said, I love being with my children and being a full-time carer, but I also love the connection with other adults. I like problem solving, I like dealing with customers, with happy customers… Sometimes with little kids they are not always happy customers, no matter how much you try…When I am working, I get to see my kids when I have my break and we have dinner together. Then I kiss my daughter goodnight. My husband then bathes them and I can actually hear them in the bath and I know they’re having fun… Both my kids know where I work but my door is locked, so they can’t come in. However, they know I definitely come out and see them every dinner time.

Julie describes herself, her husband and her kids as happier than when she was doing a long commute and her son was in long days of childcare. She has taken ‘a step back’ from a job in events management that she loves, for one that is less demanding, but which fits better with her young children: ‘I’m okay with that because I know once our kids have settled into school, I will still have the skills to go back to something similar’. What is more, she knows that Carnival is highly likely to offer her the opportunity to return to the kind of job she loves: ‘I think the people, or the senior managers and the managers, that I’ve dealt with know what I’m capable of… I don’t think I would have an issue if the right role came up and it was right for my family, to step back or to move forward’.

Julie is ‘a very grateful staff member for the opportunity’ to work from home: ‘I think that reflects in my work’. Now Julie’s household has weekends free of doing jobs like washing and cleaning. She feels that the flexibility she and her husband enjoy around this phase of intensive parenting is very important to their happiness: ‘Your family is first. It’s a bit of a motto in our family. We’re in a very good spot at the moment.’
ROAD MAP

HOME-BASED CALL CENTRE OPERATION

Business Objective
- Substantial growth of call centre operation
- Staff feedback revealed rostering, transport and work-life pressures
- Cost structure including accommodation

Planning
- Research alternative means of operation
- Learn from USA sister company operation
- Establish internal task force

Identification of strategies
- Propose pilot operation
- Establish technology for home-based work
- Establish nature of ‘agreement’ with staff for home-based work

Workplace culture change
Step 1: Engagement of managers/executive
- Ensure employee safety through home assessment, training and policy
- Satisfy Finance about performance through monitoring
- Satisfy Sales about quality of service through criteria for staff selection
- Resolve issues about security of the network

Step 2: Engagement of employees
- High level of interest from staff
- Advise criteria for staff selection

Program Implementation
- Choose experienced and skilled team leader to also work-from-home
- Begin home-based operation with existing staff
- Address technology issues

Monitoring and ongoing development
- Pilot was successful and so expanded
- Various technologies used to connect home based staff
- Monthly meetings/training in office for home-based staff