Reimagining Job Sharing

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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Executive summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>1. Flexible Work – History and Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Flexible Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>Legal Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>Limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2. What is Job Sharing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Benefits of Job Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>3. Limits of Traditional Job Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>4. Reimagining Job Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Three Levers of Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Temporal flexibility/asymmetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Personnel/Inter-generational sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Verticality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Variants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Advantages Compared to Traditional Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>5. Cost Implications and Government Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Remuneration Implications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Government Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>6. Implicit and Explicit Precedents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>An Explicit Trial at UNSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Benefits of the Job Share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>The Benefits of An Explicit Trial/Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>7. Preconditions: Clarity, Communication and Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Endnotes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

This report proposes a new model for job sharing that seeks to increase gender equality in the workforce, with a particular focus on senior levels of management. It reimagines traditional, horizontal job sharing arrangements and unlocks leadership potential by allowing for a more flexible division of responsibility and working hours between professionals at different stages of their careers, often with the allocation of responsibility for the job share arrangement to one “senior” job share partner.

This approach draws on three distinct modes of flexibility that can be used alone or in combination with other modes:

(1) job sharing between employees at different stages of their career (for example, in the form of a partnership between a senior and mid-career professional) (inter-generational);

(2) allocation of working hours in the job sharing arrangement according to the circumstances of the partnership, not based on a traditional division of working days (temporal flexibility), with the potential for the division of work and working hours between job sharing partners ranging from 20-80 to 50-50, depending on the circumstances of the partners (asymmetry); and

(3) division of responsibility for the overall relationship resting with one ‘senior’ job share partner (verticality).

Variants of non-traditional job sharing can draw on one or more of these modes to accommodate the needs of job share participants. There is also a range of implicit and explicit precedents for such arrangements, including a successful trial at the UNSW Sydney in 2019.

Non-traditional job sharing is just one of the many ways in which organisations can implement flexible working arrangements. By reimagining traditional ‘horizontal’ job sharing, non-traditional job sharing aims to create true flexibility in an important model of flexible work, and make it fit for purpose at the most senior management and leadership levels.

It also aims to promote male-male and male-female job sharing partnerships. This reframes job sharing as a flexible working arrangement that is available to both women and men, and provides a path by which junior and mid-career women can advance to mid-level and senior management roles whilst accommodating non-work responsibilities.
“Non-traditional job sharing is just one of the many ways in which organisations can implement flexible working arrangements.”
Flexible Work

History and Context

Flexible work

The term ‘flexible work’ encompasses a variety of arrangements between employer and employee that involve changes to the timing, amount, patterns or location of work. Examples include arrangements that allow for changed starting and finishing times, part-time work or job sharing, greater choice in work shifts, compressed work weeks and working from home. Many Australian workplaces now have some kind of flexible work arrangement in place. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency reports that in 2018–2019, 72.7 per cent of organisations had a policy or strategy for flexible working, compared to 57.5 per cent in 2013–2014. Flexible work was promoted in 79.9 per cent of those organisations that had a strategy.

The availability of flexible work options can also influence job choice. In one study, 41 per cent of job candidates surveyed in Australia listed schedule flexibility as a key motivator in their career decisions. This trend extended to males as well, with 40 per cent of men surveyed in 2016 listing flexibility among their top three considerations when making career decisions (as compared to 60 per cent of women). There was a strong preference amongst candidates for arrangements that allowed for flexible arrival and departure times, full-time work from home and choice in shifts. Moreover, 42 per cent of respondents preferred a part-time work model.

The availability of flexible work options can also influence job choice. In one study, 41 per cent of job candidates surveyed in Australia listed schedule flexibility as a key motivator in their career decisions. This trend extended to males as well, with 40 per cent of men surveyed in 2016 listing flexibility among their top three considerations when making career decisions (as compared to 60 per cent of women). There was a strong preference amongst candidates for arrangements that allowed for flexible arrival and departure times, full-time work from home and choice in shifts. Moreover, 42 per cent of respondents preferred a part-time work model.
The changing nature of the Australian workforce is one factor driving the increase in flexible work arrangements. Women now account for a significant proportion of the workforce (43.7 per cent in December 2019), and many more Australians are choosing to remain at work past the age of 65. This is accompanied by an increase in the proportion of high-skilled jobs. The need to retain valuable employees, especially those with non-work responsibilities such as caring for families, has compelled employers to introduce workplace arrangements that can accommodate different needs and attract skilled employees.

The growing demand for flexibility and reduced hours also corresponds with evidence of a ‘work hours mismatch’ between the work hour preferences of many employees and the hours they actually work. On the one hand, 13.6 per cent of employees reported regularly working 50 hours or more per week in 2018 (and Australia placed eighth out of 38 countries surveyed by the OECD for long working hours in 2017). This compares with the increasing number of people working part-time hours, with many working fewer hours than preferred. The result is a high incidence of both overemployment and underemployment.

**Benefits**

Flexible work has benefits for employees and employers alike. Flexible work arrangements allow persons to participate in the workforce who otherwise would not be able to, and improve job satisfaction and work-life balance. They can help men and women to take on a more equal load of caregiving responsibilities whilst staying in the workforce.

Organisations likewise benefit from more productive employees, better retention rates, increased job satisfaction and employee loyalty, and reduced absenteeism. Flexible work policies, such as giving employees access to technology that allows them to work from home, have been shown to increase employee satisfaction and retention. This correlates with reduced turnover costs – the savings from which increase over time – and increased customer satisfaction levels due to greater employee engagement.

Finally, there is evidence that flexible work arrangements, when widely used within an organisation, will produce positive advocacy for the organisation. This is especially the case amongst women who work flexibly – they become stronger advocates for their organisation than those who do not work flexibly.

“Women now account for a significant proportion of the workforce (43.7 per cent in December 2019), and many more Australians are choosing to remain at work past the age of 65.”
Legal framework

In Australia, the National Employment Standards (NES) under Division 2 of the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) gives certain employees, who have worked with an employer for at least 12 months, the right to request flexible working arrangements. The circumstances in which employees may request flexible work include where they: are a parent or a carer, have a disability, are 55 years old or older, are experiencing family violence, or provide care or support to a member of their family experiencing family violence. The employer may only refuse such a request on reasonable business grounds.

Limitations

Despite this demand for, and legal framework supporting, flexibility, there is still a long way to go in implementing truly flexible working arrangements in Australian workplaces. Although many Australian workplaces now offer flexible working arrangements, their uptake amongst employees remains limited.

Key barriers to the uptake of such arrangements include adverse perceptions of dedication, ambition or the kinds of roles that lend themselves to working flexibly. As Annabel Crabb has recently highlighted, men, in particular, report a frequent lack of support and even unlawful forms of discrimination when they seek to take advantage of flexible working arrangements such as parental leave. This lack of support is borne out by statistics published by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, which shows that whilst many organisations have a flexible work strategy in place, only a quarter of these provided manager training, and only 2.3 per cent set targets for men’s engagement with flexible work.
What is Job Sharing?
Job sharing is an important flexible work policy that can be made available to individuals wishing to work less than an ordinary full-time load. Job sharing involves two or more part-time employees sharing responsibility for one full-time job. It can involve full or ‘pure’ job sharing, whereby employees share all roles and responsibilities (a ‘twin’ job share model)\(^2^8\). Or it can involve something closer to a job ‘split’ rather than share, whereby employees allocate different aspects of the workload associated with a role, and then carry out those tasks individually (an ‘island’ job share model)\(^2^9\); or else a true hybrid of the two approaches\(^3^0\).

In both cases, job sharing has traditionally involved a partnership between employees at the same level of seniority, sharing the equivalent of a full-time salary for the role, and taking responsibility for a designated portion of the workweek.

Job sharing of this kind is also an increasingly common tool of flexible work in the public sector in Australia. The majority of federal and state government departments in Australia have included job sharing as part of their flexible working policies. And there have been some notable cases of successful job sharing in a public sector context: for example, two women share the role of Senior Executive Leader in the Corporations team at the Australian Securities and Investments Commission\(^3^1\). The New South Wales Public Service Commission (PSC) and the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning have also launched an online job share matching platform in collaboration with Gemini3, a company that offers a digital platform for job share matching and consulting advice\(^3^2\).
Through its partnership with Gemini3, the PSC has established a platform that currently provides access to job sharing opportunities for approximately 20,000 current employees across eight pilot agencies.

Job sharing has been offered by a number of companies in Australia and overseas as part of a suite of flexible working arrangements. Examples include large corporations such as Telstra, Commonwealth Bank of Australia, NAB, ANZ Bank, PwC, Credit Suisse, and UBS. And there have again been notable job share partnerships in leading private sector organisations: key examples include Ella Tassi and Darlene White, who shared the position of Head of Marketing at Bennelong Funds Management from 2006 to 2016, and Alix Ainsley and Charlotte Cherry, who were joint HR Directors in Group Operations at Lloyds Banking Group from 2016 to 2017.

But job sharing still remains less common than many other forms of flexible work even in the public sector; and is even less common in the private sector. This is also a potential missed opportunity, as well as a reflection of the potential limitations of traditional job sharing in certain contexts.

**Benefits of job sharing**

For those with significant family and non-work responsibilities, job sharing arrangements can provide the flexibility to manage these responsibilities without sacrificing or postponing career aspirations. Job share partners enjoy the benefits of a full-time role, with the corresponding level of responsibility and the security of a permanent position, including access to training and development opportunities, career progression and internal recognition. This compares to part-time and temporary roles that are sometimes perceived as ‘a lesser form of employment’, involve less responsibility and job security, and offer fewer opportunities for advancement. And while job sharing clearly benefits both men and women, women’s currently disproportionate engagement in child care and other family responsibilities can mean that this is especially beneficial for female labour force participation and career advancement. Like other forms of flexible work, job sharing can therefore increase female participation in the workforce and the retention of women in highly skilled roles.

Job sharing also provides coverage of a full-time role across the entire working week. This allows employees to truly work part-time (rather than taking on full-time responsibilities in a part-time role), and to manage their work and family responsibilities, reduce the likelihood of work interfering with non-work responsibilities, and better achieve work/life balance. Job sharing studies also point to the advantages of employees being able to control their work schedule and change working days and hours with a job sharing partner when weekly schedules and commitments change.

For employers, job sharing is beneficial because it provides both teams and clients with ongoing coverage across a particular role throughout the workweek. Job sharing and schedule alignment between job share partners allows for a significant decrease in both office space accommodation costs and paper usage. One demonstration of this is KPMG’s adoption of activity-based working by removing desk assignments and eliminating unused office space in 2012; as a result, the amount of office space required per person was reduced by 35 per cent, and the amount of paper used by 65 per cent. Finally, due to the increase in employee engagement that flexible working opportunities have been shown to produce, job sharing can also have a positive impact on client satisfaction.
Reimagining Job Sharing
3

Limits of Traditional Job Sharing
Although job sharing has a number of benefits, the capacity for traditional job sharing policies to increase the number of women in senior management, particularly in professional services firms, is limited.

First, the success of job sharing is constrained by the scarcity of eligible participants – or the number of people seeking to work flexibly with similar skills and experience, and compatible schedules or flexibility demands.

One important response to this is for employers to invest more heavily in advertising job sharing opportunities, and ‘matching’ those interested in this kind of flexible work arrangement. The good news is that a number of commercial and government providers are currently rising to meet this demand by establishing online matching and job hunting services for interested participants.

For instance, Gemini3, an Australian company, has created an online enterprise matching platform that connects compatible employees to create job share relationships. Co-founder of Gemini3, Mariebelle Malo, identified some of the factors behind the limited uptake of job sharing:

75% of Gemini3 survey respondents said they would consider job sharing, and 28% would consider it right now. However, job share continues to be an exception embraced by a few and has not shifted much beyond 3% of the working population over the past years. The reasons behind such low adoption continues to be a misperception that HR and hiring managers have around the stigma that job share is too complex, or a tainted memory from a failed job share experience that wasn’t set up for success – there is resistance thereafter to reconsider it again.

Gemini3, is helping to overcome some of these factors by using its ‘specialist’s insight and proprietary technology platform to help companies achieve flexibility, diversity and productivity …’

Another example is the Australian website Puffling, which provides a matching software that is directed at working mothers. Puffling provides a platform on which women looking for a job share partner can message like-minded individuals, meet with them and apply to job share roles together. The NSW Government and a number of companies, including Telstra, Westpac, ANZ Bank, Visa and Mirvac, have partnered with Puffling to implement job share arrangements for role sharing.

Overseas, the United Kingdom Civil Service established a job share finder in 2015 that matches registered participants according to established parameters. Over 3000 employees have registered for the program as at October 2019, with successful job sharing arrangements currently set up for 108 employees (including 88 senior female civil servants). Lloyds Banking Group has also launched a job sharing approach and support tools in the UK.
But there are still some limitations to role matching of this kind: its success still depends on there being a sufficient number of individuals to be matched with those at relatively similar levels of seniority, work-life demands, and who have complementary work-styles and skill-sets.

Another clear obstacle to the success of job sharing initiatives is the perception that job sharing has a distinctly gendered coding. On this view, job share arrangements, which have been predominantly adopted by women, can result in the siloing of the job share participants. For women, this may direct them towards the ‘mummy track’; where in opting for a job sharing arrangement, they face an implicit trade-off between flexible working and their prospects of promotion. And for men interested in working flexibly, this may discourage them from pursuing an interest in job sharing.

A final potential limitation is that traditional, horizontal forms of job sharing arrangements may be perceived – rightly or not – as incompatible with senior roles that involve a single line of risk and judgment. Divided responsibility may not be seen by key decision makers to align well with roles that require critical strategic or commercial judgment, and has the potential to create confusion about responsibility for decisions and the work produced by job share partners.
4

Reimagining Job Sharing
This report therefore proposes a new, more flexible way of thinking about job sharing that helps to address these limitations, and increase the scope for job sharing to serve as a tool for flexible work at all levels – including the most senior. This model is based on the flexible division of tasks and working hours between employees of different levels of seniority, and promotes inter-generational partnerships across the life cycle of an employee.

Non-traditional job sharing is proposed as a complementary tool in the flexible work toolkit that is likely to work in contexts that are more challenging for traditional flexible work arrangements, such as senior management positions in professional services firms. Non-traditional job sharing can set women on the pathway to career advancement without sacrifice to family responsibilities, as well as bridging the gap between the increasingly pronounced problems of underemployment and overemployment.

**Temporal flexibility/asymmetry**

In most job sharing partnerships, there will be an aspect of asymmetry in terms of time and responsibility. This can be enhanced in non-traditional job sharing partnerships, where the distribution of work and hours between job share partners can range from 20-80 to 50-50, depending on the nature of the relationship. This distribution can also change over time as the expectations and responsibilities of the job share partners evolve.

With temporal flexibility/asymmetry, job share partners can allocate responsibility and working hours according to the requirements of their job and their non-work commitments. They are freed from the expectation that the workweek will be divided according to weekday (for example, Monday-Wednesday, Thursday-Friday), and permitted to make changes to these arrangements on an ongoing basis. This ties in particularly well with other flexible working arrangements, such as working from home and flexible start and finish times, and can accommodate major life events such as maternity leave.

Shift work as a form of temporal flexibility has been incorporated into roles such as nursing, where constant coverage is required. However, a similar ‘shift work’ style model could also serve as a template in the job sharing context, to maximise flexibility and ensure coverage over longer periods. For instance, a workday could be split into two shifts – 7am-3pm and 2pm-10pm – with each job share partner working one shift, and with one hour of overlap for handover between shifts.

**Three levers of change**

Non-traditional job sharing expands the range of situations to which flexible work can be applied by drawing on three different levers of change – independently or in combination with each other:
Personnel/Inter-generational sharing

Non-traditional job sharing departs from traditional arrangements where job share partners are selected for similarity in seniority and life-stage. The model instead encourages partnership between senior and junior employees and employees of different genders. It might, for example, involve seeking to align the interests of a senior professional looking to reduce their workload (whether in the lead up to retirement or otherwise) with a mid-level professional seeking to reduce their working hours to accommodate family and other non-work responsibilities. Inter-generational partnerships can also be introduced in the context of maternity leave job sharing.

Verticity

In most traditional job sharing partnerships, both parties share responsibility for managing the relationship and for key decisions. It is, in this sense, a flat or horizontal job share arrangement.

This dimension to job sharing, however, could also be varied based on the nature of the partnership and role. For instance, one partner could be designated the ‘senior’ job share partner (usually, though not always, the person who is more senior in career stage and working longer hours) with responsibility for managing the job share partnership, reporting on its performance to more senior management, and where necessary – making sensitive judgment calls in the face of a disagreement on approach between job share partners. We call this the idea of a ‘vertical’ job share.

Non-Traditional Job Sharing: Three levers of change

Temporal flexibility / Asymmetry
- Working hours
- Asymmetric sharing of work and time
- Ongoing flexibility

Personnel
- Life-stage
- Mixed gender

Verticity
- Responsibility
- Link to hours and personnel
Variants

Variants of non-traditional job sharing can draw on one or more of the above levers to accommodate the needs of job share participants. For instance, it could involve job share pairings between:

- **Mid-career** professionals of the same or different genders, but asymmetry in job sharing to enable a senior or mid-career professional to better manage or reduce their workload and accommodate non-work responsibilities without sacrificing career advancement. This job share arrangement might involve the senior partner retaining 80 per cent of their workload, whilst another employee steps up to take on 20 per cent of that job. In instances where the senior partner already works at 120 per cent of their capacity, a job share partner can assist them to reduce their workload to a more realistic full-time role. Depending on the circumstances, responsibilities could also be split 70–30 or 60–40 between the job share partners.

- A senior executive on or returning from **parental leave**, and a deputy or other senior colleague ‘acting up’ to share part of that role. This could again involve asymmetry in allocation of workload, but with the senior job share partner having either a higher or lower job share load, which may vary over time. It would also likely involve some form of temporal flexibility, whereby one or both partners’ hours are distributed flexibly across the week according to non-work and work demands, such as significant meetings.

- An employee in senior management who is looking to reduce their working hours and responsibilities over a 5–10 year period might job share with a mid-career professional who gradually takes on more responsibility. This form of a ‘**staged retirement model**’ both facilitates succession planning and reduces risk. It provides an avenue for a senior professional to mentor and train, over a period of several years, a mid-career professional to take on a senior management role. The staged retirement model can also be asymmetrical, allowing for the allocation of responsibility to evolve over the course of the job share arrangement. For instance, work might initially be allocated on an 80–20 (Senior-Junior) basis, but eventually evolve to a 50–50 or 30–70 split.

All these models can also be adapted to involve greater, or lesser, use of the broader models of job sharing – ie twin versus island models of job sharing. And they represent just three of the ways in which non-traditional job sharing arrangements can be modified to apply in a range of different circumstances.

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“**Vertical forms of job sharing can also improve lines of reporting and risk management.**”
Advantages compared to traditional models

There are several advantages of non-traditional job sharing compared to existing horizontal job sharing models. Perhaps most importantly, it can:

1. **Broaden the pool of potential matches** in a job share relationship, and therefore also the number of complementary skills of job share partners;

2. Encourage more men – and especially senior men – to participate in job sharing, in ways that change the gender coding of participants and job sharing as a model of flexible work;

3. Encourage **clear lines of accountability and risk management**; and

4. Encourage **succession planning and effective training and mentoring** of staff.

Job share arrangements of this type would promote overall performance and outcomes, as job share partners can draw upon a wider set of skills, experience and ideas between them.

Such arrangements can also facilitate a strong degree of mentoring and training. Working as a junior work share partner for a number of years will equip an employee with the skills and experience necessary to assume an equivalent full-time role at a later stage, or to become the senior partner in another similar work share arrangement.

Job share partners in this model will also often be of different genders. For example, it encourages men near the end of their careers or looking to reduce their hours to engage in job sharing not only as a means of promoting their own well-being, but also as a means of fostering gender equality within their own organisation and society more broadly. In this sense, the proposal directly builds upon the success of the ‘Male Champions of Change’ program. And by doing so, it both broadens the pool of potential job share matches, and changes the gender coding of job sharing as a model of flexible work.

Vertical forms of job sharing can also improve lines of reporting and risk management. Often, non-traditional job sharing is based on a discrete allocation of tasks, in a way that allows for more accurate monitoring of the relative contributions of job share partners to overall outcomes and performance in a jointly shared role. More importantly, under this model, the ultimate responsibility for the performance of a job share partnership falls upon the senior manager entrusted with managing the job share relationship in non-traditional job share arrangements. The senior manager would thus be responsible for the commercial judgments and actions of the job share team.

It should be noted that non-traditional job sharing is just one of the many ways through which organisations can implement flexible working arrangements alongside a suite of existing policies. It is not designed to replace existing models of job sharing, but to expand and complement them in order to help organisations better achieve the objectives of flexible work strategies.
5 Cost Implications and Government Support
Non-traditional job sharing will entail certain cost implications for an organisation, similar to those associated with traditional job sharing.

**Remuneration implications**

Most job sharing arrangements will work best if remuneration is allocated on the basis of 120 per cent of the equivalent cost of a full-time role. This additional remuneration covers overlapping hours between job share partners for the purpose of conducting handovers and collaboration. Overlapping hours are better accommodated in the non-traditional job share model, but job share partners should be remunerated accordingly (thus pushing the original salary above 100 per cent). Additional remuneration might also encourage greater uptake of non-traditional job sharing, especially in its initial stages, and avoid the danger of exploitation between job share partners.

This cost can be justified by looking to the way that access to flexible working opportunities can reduce the costs of lost productivity and overwork, low retention rates and high turnover. A number of studies report a positive correlation between flexible work and productivity, employee engagement and reduced absenteeism\(^5\). There is also evidence that the availability of flexible working options results in higher retention rates amongst men and women, facilitating their return to work after taking parental leave\(^6\). Long-term job sharing arrangements in senior management roles can also help to reduce the risks of costly and disruptive succession arrangements when a senior manager retires.

For organisations that are unable to bear the cost of remuneration at 120 per cent over a long-term period, this remuneration arrangement could be limited to a trial period. After the conclusion of the trial period, which enables job share partners to determine whether the arrangement is working, remuneration can be made cost neutral by allocating a single full time salary between job share partners on a pro rata basis.

**Government support**

The cost implications detailed above could also, in part, be addressed with the assistance of government support. For instance, the uptake of non-traditional job sharing could be enhanced through the possibility of payroll tax concessions, at a concessional or even negative rate, for job share roles.

Reinforcement of child-care and parental leave policies would also support the feasibility of this model. For example, subsidies could be provided for flexible or in-home childcare, and for those with working hours outside of the 9am – 6pm framework\(^5\).

Finally, the Australian Public Service (APS) could use its position as a model employer to introduce non-traditional job sharing options for APS and other government employees. In this role, the APS and government agencies can improve on the proof of concept for non-traditional job sharing. This would be consistent with the APS’ gender equality strategy\(^6\) and also encourage increased uptake in professional services firms and other organisations.
“Most job sharing arrangements will work best if remuneration is allocated on the basis of 120 per cent of the equivalent cost of a full-time role. This additional remuneration covers overlapping hours between job share partners for the purpose of conducting handovers and collaboration.”
Implicit and Explicit Precedents
There are a number of implicit precedents for non-traditional job sharing arrangements of this kind. For instance, job sharing and part-time arrangements are widely accepted at the registered nurse level\(^6\) and in teaching positions in Australia\(^6\), and some of these roles have involved inter-generational and non-symmetric forms of job-sharing. A number of people who work in team-based professional services roles have also implicitly trialled aspects of non-traditional job sharing.

**An Explicit Trial at UNSW**

As part of this research, our own university, UNSW Sydney, also agreed to adopt an explicit trial of non-traditional job sharing, which involved:

- **Verticality**, or a designated ‘senior’ job share partner;
- **Temporal flexibility/asymmetry**, or an 80-20 per cent split of responsibilities, with the 20 per cent expended flexibly; and
- (in at least one case) an ‘inter-generational’ partnership, whereby a head of a division was paired with another experienced but slightly less senior professional.

Two trials of this kind were conducted in 2019, one between Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) for Equity Diversity and Inclusion, Professor Eileen Baldry, and UNSW Business School Senior Deputy Dean, Professor Leisa Sargent (Trial A); and another between Director of UNSW Knowledge Exchange (KE), Mr Warwick Dawson, and one of his senior staff, Mr John Arneil (Trial B).

In each case, the incumbent officeholders, Professor Baldry and Mr Dawson, were designated as the senior partner, and retained 80 per cent of their prior responsibilities, including (for Baldry) responsibilities for reporting to UNSW’s Management Board. Mr Dawson appointed one of the Division’s existing senior staff, John Arneil, as Co-Director of the KE team, whereas Professor Baldry conducted a public Expression of Interest (EOI) process within UNSW, and appointed Professor Sargent to the role of Co-DVC after a merit-based selection process.
Both job shares were designed as 80-20 shares, with the relevant 20 per cent being performed across the week, as well as on (part of) a designated day. In the case of Trial A, Professor Baldry generally spent one day per week out of the office, conducting meetings and her own research. For Trial B, Mr Dawson continued his previous routine of combining office-based work with a large number of internal and external meetings, but attempted to spend one day out of the office focused exclusively on projects, strategic planning and external meetings.

For Trial A, Sargent continued her previous role as Senior Deputy Dean 80 per cent of the time but appointed two 0.1 FTE ‘Directors of Academic Strategy’, Professors Jerry Parwada (Finance) and Hazel Bateman (Risk & Actuarial Studies) to support the performance of the remaining 20 per cent of her responsibilities as Senior Deputy Dean. For Trial B, Arneil continued to perform his prior role as Director of Unisearch and Short Course Offerings Portfolios on an 80 per cent basis, and the remainder of his responsibilities were shared among other senior team members. Both trials also combined aspects of the twin and island job share models. Within the Division of Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Professor Sargent led the large university-wide project on respectful behaviours, sexual assault reporting and prevention, and broader cultural change, as well as working jointly with Professor Baldry on other initiatives. Within KE, Mr Arneil led KE’s role in respect of short courses, and otherwise worked jointly with Mr Dawson in the day-to-day management of KE.

Both trials were also subject to a formal evaluation, as part of the research for this report and for internal UNSW purposes, at the end of 2019. This evaluation also suggested that both trials were widely viewed as a success, and as offering important benefits for both the University and participants.

Benefits of the Job Share

For Trial A, the non-traditional job sharing arrangement was perceived to offer important benefits for the realisation of key projects and priorities for the EDI. The ‘Respect!’ project, effectively led by Sargent as Co-DVC, was one of the key priorities of the Division in 2019, and interviews with members of the Division suggested that Sargent brought valuable experience and expertise to the leadership of this project – including her expertise in organisational behaviour, and experience within the Business school of overseeing processes of inclusion.

Baldry and Sargent were likewise seen to have complementary knowledge of, and connections to, different parts of the University – a real potential advantage in a Division that is responsible for working across the entire University.

The non-traditional job sharing arrangement was also seen to increase the capacity for the Division to be effectively represented at all relevant events and meetings. Compared to a situation in which the Manager or a Deputy of the Division attended these meetings, having a Co-DVC attend increased the authority and effectiveness of the Division’s representation.

Both participants likewise noted the benefits of having ‘two minds’ or perspectives on key strategic decisions, or management challenges – and the benefits of this in various contexts.

An additional perceived benefit of the non-traditional job sharing trial was that it provided a number of staff within the Division with the opportunity to work more closely with the senior leadership within the Division, and to learn from them and develop their skills as a result of that process. As Baldry noted, having an additional person in the role of Co-DVC for EDI freed up time for additional mentoring and support – and thereby made the DVC overall ‘more accessible’ to Division staff on a day-to-day basis.

For the Business School, interviewees likewise suggested that the non-traditional job sharing trial had valuable flow-on effects for career development for senior staff.
The trial also delivered clear benefits to participants. Baldry reported a meaningful improvement in her ability to combine her responsibilities as DVC with her other professional commitments. Sargent also reported positively on the opportunity for ‘sponsorship’ and career development associated with her appointment as Co-DVC and that she had gained valuable exposure and experience in the role, which would assist her in any future senior leadership position. She suggested that these benefits were greater than if she had been appointed as a Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) or Deputy DVC. Parwada and Bateman reported similar flow-on benefits and experiences.

For Trial B, the trial was likewise perceived to have delivered a number of benefits to both KE and participants. For the Division, it was seen to provide better coverage in signing/executing contracts; complementary skills, styles, connections and perspectives in the leadership team; and a greater strategic focus. One of the key responsibilities of KE is to execute various commercial agreements on behalf of UNSW. This often involves time-sensitive decision-making and action, which, in the past, has been difficult for the Director to combine with the amount of external engagement associated with the role. One of the key perceived advantages to having a Director and Co-Director, therefore, was that it gave authority to two decision-makers to execute agreements on behalf of UNSW.

Another perceived benefit of the non-traditional job sharing arrangement was that it increased the range of skills, styles, connections and perspectives in the Division’s leadership. Both participants noted the benefits of having ‘two minds’ or perspectives on key strategic decisions, or management challenges – and the benefits of this in various contexts, including in the (re)design of Division meetings. Arneil in particular also noted that it was useful to have clear lines of authority – ie a vertical arrangement – in this context.

An additional perceived benefit of the non-traditional job sharing trial was that it freed up the Director to have more time to focus on strategic over operational matters; and that this benefited the overall strategic direction of KE.

Finally, the trial was reported to have important benefits for the participants: Dawson reported a significant improvement in the manageability of his workload, and his ability to balance professional and personal demands. He also saw this as having important flow-on benefits for KE and the general effectiveness of his leadership. And Arneil saw the arrangement as offering a valued form of recognition and career development.

At the time of evaluation, Trial B had not led to significant flow-on effects – in terms of furthering other non-traditional job sharing arrangements. But an expansion of this kind was being considered as part of the proposed extension and renewal of the existing trial; and there was a clear shift in perception around job-sharing and flexible work. Both participants reported that they had not previously considered the possibility of job sharing at a senior management level, and the Division’s (male) Deputy Director reported the same prior perception – but that this had shifted in light of the successful trial. A number of more junior (female) team members also reported noticing the job share arrangement as an important endorsement of flexible work practices by the University.
The Benefits of An Explicit Trial/Policy

Many stakeholders we met with indicated that they had some experience with similar more implicit models, but no formal policy recognising or encouraging non-traditional job sharing of this kind. The benefits of formalising options for non-traditional job sharing can also include helping to:

- Publicise the option among employees;
- Explain how such an arrangement is expected to work, among members of a team;
- Enable appropriate evaluation and refinement of a job sharing model in a structured and supported way; and
- Encourage broader adoption of this type of model.

The trial conducted at UNSW also provided support for this prediction. Similar arrangements have been used from time to time within the University (including in the Business School) to accommodate a period of leave due to illness. But several interviewees noted the benefit of the explicit job share/non-traditional job share structure in terms of communication and active management of the job share relationship.

Baldry and Sargent, for instance, both noted the positive ‘educative’ effects of the formal non-traditional job sharing arrangement UNSW had adopted. Baldry noted the interest in the arrangement from other members of the Universities Australia Executive Women Group (of which Baldry is Co-chair). And Sargent noted interest from colleagues across the University, as well as in the NSW Government and private sector.

Baldry suggested that she thought the trial had had a ‘huge impact’ in signalling UNSW’s commitment to flexibility. And Sargent suggested that in her view it had dramatically ‘raised awareness’ and ‘fundamentally changed people’s views’ about job sharing within the University.

One EDI colleague noted that in her view ‘the flexible work conversation is definitely evolving past working from home one day a week and having senior leaders role modelling that is awesome’.
Reimagining Job Sharing
7

Preconditions
Clarity, Communication and Trust
Any form of job sharing will raise issues surrounding continuity, handover and responsibility, especially where job sharing is adopted at higher levels of management. Non-traditional job sharing models provide employers and job sharers with several options to increase clarity and accountability, in particular:

1. **Responsibility for the job share partnership and its workplace outcomes** can be allocated to one partner in the job share arrangement. This would usually be the more senior or full-time partner but, especially in a parental leave or pre-retirement context, responsibility may be allocated to the junior partner to ensure consistency. Allocating responsibility in this way provides clarity and consistency for colleagues and clients, and ensures a clear line of accountability that might otherwise be lost where responsibility is shared.

2. **Reporting the attainment of performance indicators and remuneration** can be assessed based on the performance of the job share partners as a team, rather than individually. This will ensure that the incentives of the job share partners remain aligned.

However, there remain several other important preconditions for the success of any job share arrangement, including a non-traditional job share partnership. The trial at UNSW, for example, suggested that both **effective communication** and **strong mutual trust** between job share partnerships were crucial to the success of both Trials A and B.

Participants in both trials indicated that effective communication between job share participants was a key factor underpinning the success of any job sharing arrangement. For Trial A, for instance, Baldry and Sargent reported a number of regular communication channels, being:

(i) Joint attendance at weekly team meetings, and monthly Division meetings;
(ii) A formal weekly ‘check in’ meeting after the Division team meeting;
(iii) An informal weekly ‘check in’ at the beginning of the day of overlap in the Division; and
(iv) Frequent informal communication via phone, or text, usually for a very brief time on a specific issue.

It was also important to the success of the arrangement that several of these forms of communication occurred in a way that involved other senior Division staff, such as the Director of Operations of the Division, Deborah Samuels.

For Trial B, the Director and Co-Director likewise conducted regular weekly 30 minute ‘check in’ meetings as part of the arrangement, and ongoing informal communication on issues as they arose.

Trust is likewise a key ingredient for the success of any such arrangement. For Trial B, both job-share partners had previous experience in working together, and suggested that this helped smooth the transition to a shared leadership model and the relevant channels of communication – in ways that might have required more extensive formal planning and communication, had the trial participants been less well-known to each other.

In the case of Trial A, Baldry and Sargent had not worked together closely in any previous context and reported that it took approximately 6 weeks to develop a shared understanding of the arrangement and each other’s working styles. However, Baldry was part of the selection panel who appointed Sargent and had a high degree of trust in her from the outset.
Not all forms of ‘flexible’ work are voluntary. OECD statistics indicate that in 2018, 1.1 million Australians were involuntary part-time workers, compared to only 830,000 in 2010. This trend is especially pronounced for people in the 15-24 years old age bracket, increasing from 13.4 per cent in 2007 to 20.7 per cent in 2018. However, the mismatch between preferred working hours and actual working hours also manifests in significant overemployment in some sectors.

Job sharing is one amongst many flexible work options currently available to a number of Australian employees that seeks to address this problem of both under- and over-employment. Other available options extend from flexible working hours to part-time work, compressed workweeks and working from home, and both employees and employers have been shown to benefit from their adoption.

However, there remain ongoing issues in workplace equality that current flexible working arrangements – including job sharing – are yet to resolve. In particular, female representation in the workforce continues to decline with seniority – although the representation of women across all manager categories is growing – and women who take advantage of flexible working arrangements such as job sharing risk being placed on the ‘mummy track’ and sacrificing opportunities for advancement. Men have reported that they feel deterred from taking advantage of flexible work options because of associated adverse perceptions of their commitment and ability.

In order to reap the full benefits that tools such as job sharing have to offer, we therefore need to be more flexible in how we think about and use them – or more flexible about how we understand and employ the idea of flexible work itself.

Recognising that no single model will suit all flexible working needs, non-traditional job sharing draws on three ‘levers’ for change that can be used to tailor a job sharing arrangement to the needs of both partners: temporal flexibility/asymmetry, intergenerational partnerships and verticality. In so doing, the non-traditional job sharing model reimagines job sharing as an arrangement that can facilitate skill transfer, promote gender equality in senior roles and encourage both men and women to take advantage of flexible working options.


4. Ibid 11-12.

5. Ibid 9.


8. Ibid 14.


11. Ibid 145.


22. *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)* s 65(5)-(5A).


32. Ibid 283.


insights/73/job-sharing-two-brains-for-the-price!XkgEi7Et >.


46. Ibid 22–3.


51. Email from Mariebelle Malo to Rose Vassel and Rosalind Dixon, 9 December 2018.


59. See, for example, the investment by the Gillard government in child care, including a $12.9 million package to increase the accessibility and flexibility of child care for modern families; see Peter Garrett MP and Kate Ellis MP, ‘Budget 2013-14: Record Investment in Child Care Continues’ (Joint Media Release, 14 May 2013) <https://ministers.jobs.gov.au/garrett/budget-2013-14-record-investment-child-care-continues>.


The New Economic Policy Initiative (NEPI) is a UNSW-based initiative aimed at promoting research and engagement around new public policy ideas—by current and future generations of Australian leaders. It is based in the Centre for Applied Economic Research (CAER), and continues previous work by UNSW scholars in these areas, under the auspices of the UNSW Grand Challenge on Inequality.

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