



# **Family Friendly Policies and Practices for Women's Small Business**

## **Staff Handbook**

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## **Introduction for Employers**

This handbook provides a template for the implementation of family friendly policies and work practices into your business. It can sit alongside, or be incorporated into, your existing employment staffing policy handbook/manual, and thus become part of your human resource strategy and management.

This is by no means a definitive list of family friendly policies but it is a list of suggestions to help you think about what policies and work practices would fit into your business and successfully work for you and your employees. The details in each of these sections can be modified and personalised to fit neatly into your business.

Deciding on the most appropriate family friendly policies and work practices for your business is best achieved by taking a collaborative approach with open and honest discussions between you and your employees. Involving employees in developing the best solutions for all concerned will have a positive and profitable outcome for the business.

It's important to consider both the operational needs of your business, your needs as the owner and you and your employees' family and caring needs. Involving your employees through open honest communication allows 'all the cards' to be thrown on the table, in particular finding solutions if your business has peak output.

The following draft clauses can be adapted for inclusion in your staff policy manual. Advice to employers is provided in rounded brackets ( ) and highlighted in *italics*. Items where workplace practices may vary eg. number of days provided for carer's leave are noted in square brackets [ ]

### **1. Mission Statement for family friendly work practices**

*(Employer's note: Insert a paragraph outlining your organisation's commitment to providing a family friendly workplace)*

## **2. Leave entitlements**

### **2.1. Variations to annual leave and rostered day off arrangements**

#### What is it?

Employees may take single annual leave day(s), or accumulate up to [\_\_\_\_] days time in lieu or rostered days off to meet the care needs for family members.

#### Procedure

Where possible, staff should negotiate such arrangements with their supervisor at least [\_\_\_\_] days in advance of taking such leave.

### **2.2. Parental Leave**

#### What is it?

Parental leave includes maternity, paternity and adoption leave. Parental leave refers to the minimum legal entitlement of an employee to take up to 52 weeks unpaid leave in connection with the birth or adoption of a child. A full-time or part-time employee will qualify for unpaid parental leave after the completion of 12 months continuous service.

*(NOTE: Employers may also wish to provide some **paid** parental leave eg. 2 weeks paid leave plus up to 50 weeks unpaid parental leave)*

Procedure

Staff should notify their supervisor in writing at least [\_\_\_\_] months in advance of their request to commence parental leave.

Staff should notify their supervisor in writing at least [\_\_\_\_] months in advance of their request to return from parental leave.

### **2.3. Families and Carer's Leave**

What is it?

As well as caring for children, employees may have a responsibility to care for adult family members, elderly relatives and relatives with disabilities.

Employees are entitled to [\_\_\_\_] days per year (pro-rata for part-time employees) and this leave [will / will not] be cumulative.

Procedure

Staff should notify their supervisor as soon as possible to request carer's leave. Where possible, such leave should be negotiated in advance to minimise disruption to the workplace.

### **2.4. Religious and Cultural leave**

What is it?

For employees who observe different religious and/or culturally significant events, leave is provided from the public holiday leave entitlement. For example Good Friday or Easter Monday may be exchanged for Greek Easter or another celebration.

Procedure

Staff should discuss different religious or cultural requirements as part of the employment contract negotiation.

## **3. Part-time work**

What is it?

A part-time work arrangement is defined as regular, ongoing work where employees perform an agreed amount of hours, less than the normal full-time hours span. Part-time work may be requested by employees for many reasons including:

- Those who wish to gradually return to the workforce after parental leave
- Those who are unable to find suitable full-time care for their children;
- Those who may wish to work fewer hours during normal school hours;
- Those who have caring responsibilities for sick, elderly or disabled relatives.

The salary of part-time employees is calculated as a percentage of full-time hours and they are entitled to the same conditions as full-time employees but on a pro-rata basis.

Procedure

Staff wishing to negotiate a change to their working hours should discuss this with their supervisor.

**4. Job sharing**

What is it?

Job sharing is an arrangement in which one full-time position is shared by at least two employees. This is different to part time work in that it is one position with the same work outcomes. The two employees share the, hours, salary and entitlements, such as annual leave and sick leave, of that full-time position.

The job sharers may split the hours of work between them in a variety of ways, such as:

- A 50:50 split working 2.5 days each week;
- A 50:50 split with one employee working mornings and the other working in the afternoons;
- One employee working longer hours per week than the other such as a 3-day/2-day per week (or 60:40) arrangement; or
- The two employees working alternate weeks.

Procedure

Staff wishing to negotiate a job sharing arrangement should discuss this with their supervisor.

**5. Flexible Working Hours**

What is it?

Flexible working hours are an arrangement between the employee and their supervisor. Flexible working hours assist employees to manage their work and family responsibilities.

*(Employer Note: Delete clauses below that are not available in your workplace)*

**5.1. Flexitime and banking time:**

Flexitime allows employees to choose when they start and finish each day whilst ensuring that core work times are covered. Banking time allows employees to work extra hours above the agreed weekly (or fortnightly) hours, during the busy and peak periods, and then take this time

off in lieu (TOIL) during quieter times by agreement with their supervisor

## **5.2. Staggered starting and finishing times**

This consists of determining working hours outside the normal 9am – 5pm structure, for example 7.00 am – 3-00 pm or 10.00 – 7.00 pm. Hours may vary from day to day, but must equate to the required hours per week or fortnight.

## **5.3 Rostered Days Off (RDOs)**

The following arrangements are available:

**5.3.1. 9-day fortnight:** This arrangement provides for a day off every fortnight; employees work longer days for those nine days of the normal fortnight cycle and then take every tenth working day off, on a fixed and permanent basis.

**5.3.2. 19-day month:** This arrangement provides for a day off every month as employees work longer days for those nineteen days of the normal monthly cycle and then take every twentieth working day off, on a fixed and permanent basis.

**5.3.3. Compressed workweeks:** Instead of working full-time hours over the usual five days per week, compressed hours allows employees to work longer hours each day over fewer days. For example, a person working a full-time 38 hours week may opt to work 9.5 hours per day, Monday through to Thursday, and therefore not work on Fridays.

### Procedure

Staff wishing to negotiate flexible working hours should discuss this with their supervisor.

## **6. Flexible Working Year Schemes (Purchased Annual Leave)**

### What is it?

This is an arrangement where an employee works less than the standard year of 48 weeks (and 4 weeks annual leave).

Employees may negotiate to purchase up to an additional [\_\_\_\_] weeks paid leave. The annual income of the employee is adjusted to meet the additional leave. Employees accumulate hours during each working week to allow them to take the agreed additional paid leave period.

### Procedure

Staff wishing to negotiate flexible working year arrangements should discuss this with their supervisor. Leave should be agreed in advance to ensure workplace staffing requirements are met.

## **7. Employee choice rostering**

*(Employer Note: Selecting your own roster allows working parents who manage the care of their young children by having each parent work shifts at different times of the day or night, so that one parent is always at home with the children.*

*There are different types of rosters that can be put in place: a roster that is fixed for employees working permanent shifts, or a rotating roster with employees working different shifts over an agreed period of time.)*

### What is it?

Employee choice rostering allows employees to select their own shifts from a work place roster.

### Procedure

Staff may select their own rostered shifts in cooperation with their supervisor and other staff to ensure that workplace staffing requirements are met.

## **8. Home-based work**

### What is it?

Depending on the type of work the employee is engaged to do, employees may negotiate to work from home on an occasional, part time or continuing basis.

Home based work should not be used as a substitute for childcare arrangements but should be work time that is free of caring responsibilities.

### Procedure

Staff should negotiate with their supervisor if they wish to work from home on an occasional or continuing basis. Where special equipment is required to conduct work from home, the provision of equipment should also be agreed.

## **9. Return to work (following parental leave)**

### What is it?

Employees who wish to return to work after taking parental leave will be provided support and the arrangements to do so. Employees may negotiate part-time hours, flexible hours, reduced hours, home-based work or a change in their previous roster agreement.

Employees returning from parental leave are entitled to:

- return to their own job, or a job which is at least comparable in both pay and status to the one they were doing prior to parental leave;
- continue breastfeeding their baby after returning to work.

Procedure

Staff should discuss their return to work arrangements with their supervisor in advance of their return from parental leave. Changes to return to work arrangements should be re-negotiated during the return to work period.

## **10. Breastfeeding**

What is it?

Employees are supported to continue breastfeeding by the provision of:

- Lactation breaks;
- Breastfeeding and expressing facilities of a quiet and comfortable room with a refrigerator.

Procedure

Staff should discuss their breastfeeding requirements with their supervisor.

## **11. Childcare**

What is it?

Employees will be given advice and support to organise childcare, especially during the return to work phase. Employees are permitted to leave the workplace to attend to an emergency at the childcare provider establishment.

The employer will reimburse the employee for any childcare costs incurred by the employee if childcare is needed outside the agreed working times of the employee, such as attending professional events and/or training.

Procedure

Staff should advise their supervisor of their childcare arrangements and should let their supervisor know if they need to leave the workplace to attend to childcare arrangements.

Staff should notify their supervisor in advance if extended work hours would require them to incur additional childcare costs.

## **12. Family room**

What is it?

Employees may use a designated family room to accommodate children on a short-term basis. The room is equipped with [books, games and puzzles and a television, video/DVD player and computer games.]

The family room may be used by older school children who travel home from school independently to provide a meeting point with their parent.

### **13. Career break for family reasons**

#### What is it?

Employees may negotiate to take a break away from work for a fixed period of time to fulfil family responsibilities, while maintaining a guaranteed position at the end of the agreed break. The leave will be at the discretion of the supervisor and may be in addition to parental leave, personal/carers leave or other paid or unpaid leave. This career break will be unpaid.

To be eligible for this arrangement, employees must be either permanent (full- or part-time), or a long-term casual employee, who has been with the business for a period of 12 months or longer.

#### Procedure

Staff wishing to negotiate a career break should discuss this with their supervisor. Prior to an employee commencing a career break, the following issues should be addressed:

- The length of the career break;
- The commencement of leave and return to work dates (if possible);
- The impact upon the employee's sick leave, annual leave, long service leave and superannuation entitlements;
- The employee's capacity to return to work during the break to act as a relief employee;
- How the employee and supervisor will maintain contact during the break and keep the employee up to date with any changes in the workplace.

At the end of the career break the employee may return to a position at the same level and hours they worked before commencing the break.

Suitable notice of intended resumption of work should be agreed. If there is no position immediately available at the level the employee held before the break, it may be agreed to place the employee in another position but with the same salary and entitlements as paid before the career break.

### **14. Telephone access**

#### What is it?

Employees are provided with access to a telephone during business hours so that:

- they can be contacted in the event of an family emergency;
- they can be informed when older children are safely home from school; and
- they can contact essential services that may not be available outside of working hours.