

Having flexibility in the workplace really allows me to actively engage in both work and family life – Industry worker and mother of two.

What are the benefits?

Finally businesses are recognising the benefits of having family friendly work practices. For business the benefits can include:

- More productive and motivated staff
- Improved staff retention and attraction due to workplace being able to accommodate changing circumstances
- Reduction in employee stress, absenteeism and staff turnover.

More importantly however are the benefits for workers, such as:

- Experiencing less conflict when juggling time spent at work and time spent with family (no guilt!)
- Being able to better manage family responsibilities
- Having responsibilities acknowledged by the workplace and understood (not frowned upon!)
- Increase in the number of women in workplace.

What are the protections?

There are a number of laws in place to protect family responsibilities. State Equal Opportunity Acts, the Federal *Sex Discrimination Act 1986* and the Federal *Fair Work Act 2010*. The *Fair Work Act 2010* sets out ten minimum standards for employment that cover most Australian workplaces. One of these standards legislates an obligation on employers to consider flexible working arrangements.



NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

The national employment Standards (NES) set out a safety net of minimum entitlements for most national system employees which includes the right to make a written request for flexible working arrangements by employees because they:

- Are the parent, or have responsibility for the care, of a child who is of school age or younger
- Are a carer (within the meaning of the *Carer Recognition Act 2010*)
- Are 55 or older
- Are experiencing violence from a member of their family
- Have a disability
- Provide care or support to a member of their immediate family or household, who requires care or support because they are experiencing violence from their family.

A request for flexible working arrangements can only be refused on reasonable business grounds.

Family-friendly workplace provisions can be negotiated between an employer and its employees they may include:

- Accessing annual leave in single or part-day periods
- Taking time off in lieu of overtime payments
- Working additional hours to make-up for time taken off
- Accessing accrued rostered days off in part-days or more flexibly
- Enabling children to access the workplace (where safe) or providing a carer's room, child care facilities or information about where parents can access these facilities near their workplace
- Working part-time or creating part-time opportunities
- Job share arrangements
- Telecommuting or home based work.

(SOURCE: <http://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/national-employment-standards> accessed 22 June 2015)

What strategies would suit forestry workplaces?

There are numerous strategies that can be negotiated and implemented depending on the workplace. The following strategies were discussed by members of WA WFTN network to determine their suitability in WA Forestry workplaces.

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	APPLICATION
Working from home/telecommuting	Can take the form of a home office. Office furniture, mobile phones, laptops, access to server may be required to meet equipment needs.	Only applies to workers who can undertake duties that don't require on-site facilities. Would not work for workers on the shop floor who are required to use large machinery etc.
Purchased leave	Purchased Leave is additional leave "purchased" by setting aside a portion of salary to facilitate payment during the time it is taken.	Terms can negotiated on case by case basis, an example could be - work 38 hours, get paid for 36, bank 2 hours to take as leave. Check for any principles/guidance notes that may be available for your workplace.
Flexible start and finish times	Enables carer to meet family responsibilities associated with dropping off and picking up children from school, attending professional appointments etc.	May involve reducing number of breaks or making up time to meet core hours. Supervisors note this strategy works well with employees who have a strong work ethic.
Part-time (even for a set period)	Reducing hours to meet family responsibilities, job sharing arrangements.	Terms negotiated on case by case basis.
Child care assistance	Assistance may include child care subsidies, provision of on-site facilities, arrangements made with local child care facilities.	Could be negotiated and incorporated into formal employment arrangements eg EBAs.