

Work-Life Balance The Business Case

Don't lose your balance



Education Queensland actively encourages and supports the balance between work and life for all employees. Enabling employees to achieve work-life balance is part of Education Queensland's broader commitment to creating an inclusive work environment that is free from all forms of unlawful discrimination and harassment, and where people are valued for their diverse experiences, knowledge and abilities.

Work-Life Balance programs, practices and information can enable employees to balance their work and personal lives in order to manage lifestyle commitments including family responsibilities, sport, study, and community involvement.

Initiatives include: flexible work practices such as part-time work, working from home, and job sharing; flexible leave arrangements such as parental leave, carer's leave, cultural / religious leave, and study leave; health programs such as managing stress workshops and resources, carer's rooms and employee advisory services; and information programs / services such as child care referral services, keeping in touch programs, and general advice on work-life balance.

Research in best practice public and private sector work-life balance initiatives demonstrates many benefits for individual employees and organisations such as:

- ✓ Retaining valuable employees and reducing turnover
- ✓ Reducing absenteeism and lateness
- ✓ Improving organisational health through reducing illness and stress
- ✓ Increasing productivity and performance
- ✓ Controlling costs

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- ✓ Enabling flexible structures, systems and processes that respond to diverse client expectations
- ✓ Improving client service and reflecting a diverse client base
- ✓ Increasing employee motivation and commitment
- ✓ Responding to changing employee requirements for how work is organised
- ✓ Improving public image and becoming an “Employer of Choice”
- ✓ Attracting skilled and talented potential employees
- ✓ Achieving EEO targets and managing diversity

Did you know that Education Queensland has diverse employees working in a variety of locations? For example:

- ➔ Women represent 72% of the Teaching Workforce and 81% of the Non-Teaching Workforce.
- ➔ 90% of women in the Teaching Sector are employed at the classroom/senior teacher level. Conversely only 10% are employed in promotional positions.
- ➔ Only 18% of women employed as public servants are above the A04 level.
- ➔ Outside of teachers, teacher aides are the largest employment category. Teacher aides also experience the highest level of casualisation. 96% of teacher aides are women. 35% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People employees are employed as teacher aides.
- ➔ Since 1995 Education Queensland has had an increase in the attrition of male teachers - from 4.6% to 5.2% in 2001.
- ➔ There are more than 2300 schools and workplaces spread over 1.73 million square kilometres.

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Promoting work-life balance programs, practices and information can bring the following benefits to your workplace:

IN DETAIL — ATTRACTION

Benefits to Workplace

- Become an “Employer of Choice” - demonstrating a commitment to employee health and flexible work options can attract a diverse and talented workforce
- Profile part-time, job-sharing and working from home as career opportunities that do not limit the promotional paths of employees (particularly women)
- Attract talented and diverse employees who are actively seeking part-time, job sharing or working from home roles
- Profile the support of workplace managers/principals and senior management in encouraging work-life balance and flexible work practices

Benefits to Employee

- Look for organisations that offer benefits such as health programs, flexible work practices, information on family and work-life balance
- Innovative, flexible and rewarding work environment that values a diverse workforce who brings a variety of knowledges, experience and abilities
- Look for organisations that encourage participation in family life, community, sport, study and hobbies

Do you know?

Many organisations - government, community and private - include information on work-life balance and flexible work practices on their websites.

90% of MBA final-year students rated achieving a balanced lifestyle as the key factor when choosing employers (Coopers and Lybrand 1997)

60% of families with dependent children under 15 have both parents working outside the home

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First Steps

- Think about what benefits your workplace can offer such as working from home, job sharing and leave arrangements
- What values and attributes do you think define your workplace? - e.g. commitment, innovation, flexibility, teamwork etc
- Are you attracting people who fit your “culture”?

IN DETAIL — RECRUITMENT

Benefits to Workplace

- Moving away from standard working arrangements is one way of recruiting people from a diverse population
- Job sharing arrangements enable more collaboration and innovation through exchanging ideas
- New staff are recruited and consider the organisation to be an employer of choice
- Incorporating employment equity principles into all stages of the recruitment process can ensure that a more diverse applicant pool is examined
- Applicants do not self-select out when they are informed of work-life benefits offered by the organisation
- Organisation can be recognised as an “Employer of Choice”

Benefits to Employees

- Appointment is based on merit
- Selection criteria is inclusive and transparent
- Organisational fit

Do you know?

A UK study indicates that skilled people have more choice than ever before about where to work and for whom.

Replacing a staff member leaving permanently for family reasons can cost up to a year's salary (OECD report)

57% of students in 11 countries consider achieving a balanced lifestyle and having a rewarding life outside work as their top priority in their future career (PriceWaterhouseCoopers International Student Survey)

73% of parents think that family-friendly employment policies will become more important to employers in the next 5 years

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First Steps

- Do all positions in your workplace require 1 employee working full-time?
- What are the outcomes you need to achieve in 3 months, 6 months or 12 months?
- Can flexible work options help attract and recruit the diverse, talented staff that you need to reach these outcomes

IN DETAIL — RETENTION

Benefits to workplace

- Reduced turnover - Cost of replacing an employee
- Increased morale and motivation
- Increased organisational loyalty and commitment
- Reduced length of maternity leave
- Increased rate of return from maternity leave
- Work-Life issues demonstrated as important by managers / principals
- Maintaining and sustaining organisational knowledge
- Reduced WorkCover premium and workers compensation claims
- Increased productivity
- Maintain and increase organisational knowledge

Benefits to employee

- Integrate professional life with family and other personal responsibilities/interests
- Enhanced quality of life as management focuses on the welfare of employees
- Career progression through flexible work such as part-time, job sharing & working from home

Do you know?

- 46% of managers would change jobs in exchange for a better quality of life, 30% would take a pay cut to improve their work-life balance (Management Today Work/Life Survey 1999)
- 31% of full-time employees work more than 48 hours per week
- Approximately 75% of EQ's workforce is female
- 86% of Australian organisations indicate that their motivation to implement work-life strategies was based on the need to retain staff (2001 Annual Benchmarking Survey Managing Work-Life Balance)
- AMP found a 400% return on investment over 4 years due mainly to improved retention

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following maternity leave.

A Victorian Government study revealed the most highly sought after family friendly provisions were:

- Working from home
- Support for and/or access to childcare
- Flexible start and finish times
- Work and family information

A survey of 10,000 managers in Europe, the US, Russia and Japan found that balancing the needs of work and personal life was the most or second most important attribute in a job. The need for balance was placed higher than remuneration in almost every country (Gemini Consulting 1998, International Workforce Management Study).

First Steps:

- Schedule meeting times in core business hours, between 9am and 4pm
- Undertake a self-assessment of your work-life balance (download the Work-Life Balance questionnaire from www.education.qld.gov.au/workforce/diversity/equity)
- As a principal or manager, discuss findings from the work-life balance questionnaire
- Promote discussion of work-life issues in team meetings
- Promote flexible work arrangements such as flexible start and finish times, job sharing, part-time work and working from home where possible

IN DETAIL — DEVELOPMENT & PROMOTION

Benefits to Organisation

- Development opportunities tailored to individual employee requirements
- Increased ability of staff to attend training courses
- Increased ability of staff to travel for work
- Diverse range of employees take advantage of development and promotional opportunities
- Increased return on training for both employee and organisation

Benefits to Employees

- Able to access training and development services whilst managing personal life responsibilities
- Increased opportunity to act in part-time promotional positions
- Increased opportunity to act in promotional positions that reflect flexibility (e.g. start / finish times, core business hours, working from home, time-off for appointments)

Do you know?

- 9.8% of men are managers, compared with 3.7% of women. Women are 69% of part-time managers - 1 in 10 managers work part-time (ABS 1999)
- Women have 1/3 of positions on Commonwealth Government boards where the government has total discretion over appointments (Office of the Status of Women 1999)

A Victorian study revealed that:

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- Part-time employees can be perceived by colleagues as being less committed to their jobs, and not suitable or worthy of accessing training opportunities.
- Choosing to stay in one location can threaten the chance of promotion.
- Careers can be affected by using maternity leave with positions being reviewed, modified or dissolved during the employee's absence, making for an unsatisfactory outcome for the employee on her return to work.

First Steps:

- Use organisational culture inventory to assess perceptions of career and behaviours toward employees using flexible work arrangements
- Engage in career planning for full-time and part-time employees

IN DETAIL — ABSENTEEISM

Do you know?

- Reduces productivity
- Reduces motivation and commitment
- Costs money -
 - Absenteeism due to marital stress results in \$6.8 billion worth of annual work loss in the USA.
 - Health Canada estimates the cost of balancing work and family life is \$2.7 billion due to lost time relating to stress, medical leave, dealing with dependents and other personal responsibilities.

Absenteeism can be reduced by:

- Flexible work practices such as flexible hours, job sharing, staggered return from parental leave, cultural / religious leave
- Communication and Integration - put work-life balance issues as an outcome for your workplace in all planning and reporting processes
- Assisting employees to address stress through individual and group training programs & counselling services
- Discussing flexible work practices - both benefits and challenges - in team meetings

IN DETAIL — LONG HOURS CULTURE

Do you know?

- In Queensland 46% of those working full-time are now working more than 45 hours a week compared to 33% in 1981.
- A national study found that fathers are working an average of 47 hours a week, with one-third working more than 50 hours a week. Two-thirds believe they don't spend enough time with their children.
- 54% of respondents in a French opinion poll indicated that time off was more important than

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wage rises.

- 68% of managers think working long hours adversely affects their productivity (UK study)
- Australia parallels the United States among OECD nations in the proportion of men working more than 50 hours per week. More than 20% of men in both countries work more than 50 hours a week compared to less than 10% in Sweden, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg.

- **Long hours can:**
 - Negatively impact on family life and cause personal and professional stress
 - Prevent employees caring for their family, dependents and friends
 - Create an homogenous culture
 - Prevent employees playing a role in their community
 - Reduce productivity through lower quality work

IN DETAIL — PRODUCTIVITY

Do you know?

- Flexible work practices can increase productivity and service delivery
- Work-Life issues are considered a strategic business issue (2001 Benchmarking survey of 268 Australian organisations)
- Changing client expectations require workplace flexibility and high service standards
- Traditional hours of operation are changing
- Motivated and committed employees are more productive
- A workplace that emphasises performance becomes outcomes focussed
- A diverse client base expects service from diverse employees
- A Canadian company estimates it has saved \$8 million in reduced absenteeism, higher productivity, and better use of resources from a \$4 million investment in work-life balance initiatives

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Information services: inform staff of work and family policies, library of work and family resources, seminars, in-house community database, counselling service, and brochures on policies.

Assistance with care: help find community care, contribute to a community program, salary package of subsidies, and pay for emergency care.

Direct service provision: school holiday care, centre based child care, family day care, in-home child care, drop-in service for elderly dependents, emergency care service or sick room at work, and after school care.

IN DETAIL – THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Development and implementation of work-life balance programs, practices and activities occur within a legislative framework:

- Anti-Discrimination Act 1991
- Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Act 1992
- Family Leave Award - Queensland Public Sector 1996
- ILO Convention 156
- Industrial Relations Act 1999
- Public Service Act 1996
- Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995
- WorkCover Queensland Act 1996
- Awards and agreements applicable to Education Queensland employees
- Department of Education Manual
- Department of Education Work-Life Balance Policy

For more information on work-life balance and flexible work practices:

- log on www.education.qld.gov.au/workforce/diversity/equity
- contact your district office or employee advisor