



# Work Life Balance

## Human Resources Policy

Effective Date: August 2009

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	PURPOSE.....	3
2	APPLICATION.....	3
3	GUIDELINES.....	3
4	DELEGATION .....	3
5	RERFERENCES .....	3
6	SUPERSEDES.....	3
7	POLICY .....	3
7.1	Work and family .....	3
7.1.1	Principles.....	4
7.1.2	Legislative requirements .....	4
7.1.3	Enterprise bargaining .....	4
7.2	Child care .....	5
7.3	Work and breastfeeding.....	5
7.3.1	Benefits of breastfeeding .....	5
7.3.2	Queensland Health's commitment to the encouragement of breastfeeding.....	5
7.3.3	Key principles.....	6
8	APPLYING THE POLICY .....	6
8.1	Work and family .....	6
8.1.1	Implementation of the work and family leave initiatives.....	6
8.1.2	Accountability .....	6
8.1.3	Determining family responsibilities.....	7
8.1.4	Family members or dependants.....	7
8.2	Child care .....	7
8.2.1	Arrangements for child care facilities .....	7
8.2.2	Options for child care .....	7
8.3	Work and breastfeeding.....	8
8.3.1	Provision of workplace facilities .....	8
8.3.2	Employee responsibility for caregivers.....	9
8.3.3	Flexible work options.....	9
8.3.4	Lactation breaks.....	9
8.3.4.1	When lactation breaks can be taken.....	10
8.3.4.2	Arranging lactation breaks with manager (agreement).....	10
8.3.4.3	Emergency situations or client/patient care.....	11
8.3.5	Informing staff.....	11

9 DEFINITION ..... 11

10 HISTORY ..... 12

ATTACHMENT ONE: Implementation of the work and family leave initiatives

## **1 PURPOSE**

To outline Queensland Health's policy on childcare, breastfeeding and enabling staff to have work/life balance.

## **2 APPLICATION**

This policy applies to all Queensland Health employees.

## **3 GUIDELINES**

Guidelines may be developed to facilitate implementation of this policy. The guidelines must be consistent with this policy.

## **4 DELEGATION**

The 'delegate' is as listed in the Queensland Health Human Resource Delegations Manual as amended from time to time.

## **5 REFERENCES**

- *Public Service Act 2008*
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*
- *Industrial Relations Act 1999*
- Employment HR Policy B35
- Telecommuting HR Policy C5
- Special Leave HR Policy C7
- Carer's Leave HR Policy C9
- Purchased Leave HR Policy C21
- Parental Leave HR Policy C26
- Long Service Leave HR Policy
- Optimal Infant Nutrition: Evidence-Based Guidelines 2003-2008

## **6 SUPERSEDES**

- IRM 2.5-22 Work and Breastfeeding
- IRM 3.10-1 Work and Family Considerations
- IRM 3.10-2 Child Care

## **7 POLICY**

### **7.1 Work and family**

Queensland Health recognises the need for productive and responsive workplaces to deliver quality services. Queensland Health's employment policies aim to enhance efficiency and effectiveness by selecting and retaining staff from the widest available pool of talent and developing a staff profile that more accurately reflects the profile of the Queensland community.

Queensland Health values the contribution of workers with family responsibilities to the delivery of quality services. Queensland Health is committed to the development

and implementation of more flexible working arrangements and conditions to enable workers with family responsibilities to balance their work and family commitments.

Specific initiatives are included in individual district equal employment opportunity (EEO) management plans to promote EEO for workers with family responsibilities. Human resources (HR) policies and practices are also reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they support employees in balancing their work and family roles.

### **7.1.1 Principles**

Queensland Health recognises the contribution of workers with family responsibilities towards an efficient and productive public sector, and aims to create a work environment in which their needs are recognised, providing:

- the elimination of provisions within HR policies and practices and industrial instruments that discriminate against workers with family responsibilities
- the development of flexible working arrangements and conditions to allow employees to balance working and family responsibilities.

Key considerations when implementing work and family initiatives are:

- **flexibility** to accommodate the needs of workers with family responsibilities and the requirements of Queensland Health
- **access** to family friendly conditions of employment to ensure that employees can balance work and family responsibilities without discrimination
- **equity** for employees by ensuring they are not disadvantaged by their family responsibilities and are supported in contributing to their fullest potential.

### **7.1.2 Legislative requirements**

For legislative requirements, refer part 2 chapter 2 sections 30 – 34 of the *Public Service Act 2008*.

The *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, pregnancy, marital status, parental status and breastfeeding amongst others.

The *Industrial Relations Act 1999* includes provisions relating to work and family, including family leave. This Act also requires Awards to:

- not contain discriminatory language
- include provisions allowing agreement to be reached at the workplace on work and family responsibilities.

### **7.1.3 Enterprise bargaining**

Initiatives have been developed through the enterprise bargaining process to assist employees to manage their work and family commitments, including:

- enhanced flexibility in working hours
- permanent part-time work
- job sharing

- family leave provisions

Specific initiatives are outlined in the implementation of work and family initiatives (attachment one).

## **7.2 Child care**

Queensland Health recognises that child care for our employees is an important issue. The availability of appropriate child care services assists with the recruitment and retention of employees, enhances productivity, and improves employee morale.

While Queensland Health facilitates the provision of child care where appropriate, it is to be noted that Queensland Health staff are not to provide child care.

## **7.3 Work and breastfeeding**

### **7.3.1 Benefits of breastfeeding**

Breast milk is the optimal source of infant nutrition and offers all the nutrients a baby needs in the first months of life. The World Health Organisation (WHO) and National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life. The NHRMR also recommend the introduction of appropriate solid foods at this age, in addition to continued breastfeeding to at least 12 months old, and breastfeeding thereafter for as long as mutually desired.

Queensland Health developed the Optimal Infant Nutrition: Evidence-Based Guidelines 2003-2008 to parallel the NHRMC recommendations with the aim of increasing Queensland's breastfeeding rates.

Research has shown there are significant benefits when breastfeeding employees are supported, including:

- reduced absenteeism because babies are generally healthier
- lower staff turnover and higher morale
- positive recruitment and retention
- maintenance of the skills base.

### **7.3.2 Queensland Health's commitment to the encouragement of breastfeeding**

Queensland Health has a key role in advocating breastfeeding in the community. Queensland Health also encourages breastfeeding and supports employees who choose to continue breastfeeding following their return to paid work with Queensland Health. Queensland Health acknowledges that breast milk is optimal infant nutrition and recognises the importance of breastfeeding for both the mother and the baby.

Guidance for the provision of workplace facilities and practices which support and enable women employed within Queensland Health to continue breastfeeding are provided. Queensland Health's aim is to provide a family friendly workplace that enables mothers to balance breastfeeding and work responsibilities.

### **7.3.3 Key principles**

The following key principles apply to breastfeeding in Queensland Health:

- Queensland Health is committed to fostering a supportive work environment for breastfeeding employees.
- A flexible approach is required to ensure success in combining breastfeeding and work.
- Queensland Health is to provide workplace facilities for employees who choose to:
  - express breast milk
  - breastfeed their child (if the child is brought to the workplace, or receives workplace based or home based childcare).
- Employees may have access to flexible work, rostering and leave arrangements, including part-time work, job sharing and lactation breaks (refer sections 8.3 and 8.4).
- Client service and patient care is not to be compromised as a result of work and breastfeeding arrangements.
- Queensland Health employees are to be made aware of this policy and the option to breastfeed during their employment.

## **8 APPLYING THE POLICY**

### **8.1 Work and family**

#### **8.1.1 Implementation of the work and family leave initiatives**

The implementation of the work and family leave initiatives (attachment one) contains supporting information for managers, supervisors and employees, including:

- guiding principles in managing work and family issues
- benefits of the policy
- responsibilities of managers and supervisors
- rights and responsibilities of employees.

#### **8.1.2 Accountability**

All managers and supervisors are to adopt workplace practices which:

- maximise the contribution of employees with family responsibilities to enhance service delivery
- ensure compliance with the relevant anti-discrimination, equal employment opportunity and industrial legislation.

Managers and supervisors are required to implement the work and family initiatives in their workplaces and be accountable for the implementation. It requires all decision makers to consider the impact of their decisions on workers with family responsibilities, and to be able to justify those decisions.

### **8.1.3 Determining family responsibilities**

The key consideration when defining family responsibility is that the worker has a responsibility toward the family member(s) concerned. In this context the term family denotes a relationship of care, whether based on a biological tie, or on a recognised familial link.

The cultural diversity of Australian society means a broad view is to be taken on where family responsibilities lie. The responsibilities of the worker may be just as strong to their extended family and more distant relatives as to immediate family members.

Employees with family responsibilities may need to deal with a range of situations, including:

- arranging care for young children or older relatives
- helping relatives needing short-term care when ill
- assisting family members in the event of a death or serious accident, or the birth of a child.

### **8.1.4 Family members or dependants**

In circumstances when an employee has a responsibility to a family member not included in the definition of family members or dependants (but can provide evidence of that responsibility) the employee may be regarded as having family responsibilities for the purposes of the work and family initiatives.

As the family responsibilities and obligations of each employee are varied, the person who is in the best position to clarify these responsibilities is the employee concerned. A broad interpretation of family members or dependants is to be applied to for the purpose of the work and family initiatives.

## **8.2 Child care**

### **8.2.1 Arrangements for child care facilities**

Capital Works Branch, Queensland Health ensures that arrangements for child care facilities are considered when planning for all new works and refurbishment. They also take the particular needs of shift workers into account in recognition that:

- shift workers constitute a significant proportion of employees of the department
- the particular needs of shift workers are not adequately addressed in the community child care centre setting.

### **8.2.2 Options for child care**

Child care options to be considered include, and are not to be limited to:

- child care centres
- outside school hours care
- provision of breastfeeding facilities
- priority access in community child care centres
- priority access in family day care, adjunct and emergency care

- child care information
- referral service and care for sick children.

District health services are to discuss child care options with district equal employment opportunity consultative forums when child care initiatives are being considered.

### **8.3 Work and breastfeeding**

#### **8.3.1 Provision of workplace facilities**

Queensland Health is to provide workplace facilities for employees who choose to express breast milk or breastfeed their babies if the baby is brought to the workplace or the child is in workplace based childcare.

Facility provisions vary for individual employee and workplace requirements, due to the diverse nature of both the workforce and the business of Queensland Health. Consideration is to be given to space and logistic restrictions.

Employees are to discuss suitable locations for breastfeeding or expressing breast milk with their manager.

The provision of workplace facilities is to include the following (when possible):

- A private, hygienic and lockable space that is kept clean and private and is suitably signed.
- Comfortable and appropriate seating.
- A table or bench to support breastfeeding equipment.
- A power point suitable for the operation of a breast pump.
- Access to facilities for nappy changing, washing, and drying of hands and equipment.
- Access to existing refrigerators (in appropriate locations) for storage of breast milk.
- Facilities for storage of breast pump and other equipment (e.g. a cupboard or locker).
- An appropriate container for rubbish disposal (including nappy disposal).

A confidential booking sheet is to be available when there is more than one woman using the facilities.

Employees have a responsibility to:

- provide their own breast milk expressing and storing equipment (if not available in the workplace)
- supply appropriate storage containers for expressed breast milk and to clearly label these containers with their name and date before placing it in the refrigerator
- discuss their specific needs and situation with their manager.

### **8.3.2 Employee responsibility for caregivers**

Employee obligations under the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* include the requirements to not wilfully:

- place at risk the workplace health and safety of any person at the workplace
- injure themselves.

Employees have a responsibility to ensure:

- caregivers entering the workplace do so on the understanding that restricted access applies
- caregivers make certain that they, and the child/children in their care, avoid environments when there is a risk of cross infection or injury
- the caregiver or the employee constantly supervise children in the workplace - consistent failure to comply with this requirement may result in re-negotiation of existing arrangements
- children are delivered directly to the workplace facility designated for the purpose of lactation breaks
- caregivers and the child/children in their care vacate the workplace at the completion of each lactation break.

### **8.3.3 Flexible work options**

Employees may have access to flexible work, rostering and leave arrangements, including part-time work and job sharing. Flexible work options are to be considered in an equitable manner for the whole work unit.

Queensland Health flexible work arrangements can assist employees make a successful transition back to work. Existing arrangements include the following HR policies:

- Employment HR Policy B35
- Carer's Leave HR Policy C9
- Purchased Leave HR Policy C21
- Parental Leave HR Policy C26
- Long Service Leave HR Policy

Information on flexible work arrangements is to be provided to women before they commence maternity leave, so they can consider the options available to them. The line manager is responsible for providing the information.

No member of the work team/unit is to be disadvantaged as a result of flexible work options implemented to support work and breastfeeding arrangements.

### **8.3.4 Lactation breaks**

Lactation breaks are available for employees who choose to combine work and breastfeeding. The lactation breaks are specifically for:

- expressing breast milk
- feeding the baby (either on or away from the work site)

Lactation breaks can be accessed when other specified breaks are not suitable. Employees combining work and breastfeeding may be granted up to a total of one hour as paid lactation breaks during an eight hour working day.

The one hour of paid lactation breaks includes travelling time for employees who take lactation breaks off the work site. When an employee works less than an eight hour work day, lactation breaks may be accessed on a pro rata basis based on one eighth of their work day. For example, an employee who works a six hour day has an entitlement up to a total of 45 minutes.

Total time away from the workplace (not including other authorised breaks) is not to exceed one hour per eight hour work day. Any excess time is to be taken as either accrued time off or leave without pay.

#### **8.3.4.1 When lactation breaks can be taken**

Paid lactation breaks are to be taken at times appropriate to the employee's circumstances. The flexibility women need to breastfeed or express milk is to be considered in the timing of paid lactation breaks. For example, some breastfeeding employees may require two 30-minute paid lactation breaks, whereas a one hour lactation break may be required by other employees.

Lactation breaks are not normally to be combined or taken in conjunction with morning and afternoon tea breaks or lunch breaks. Employees who take lactation breaks off the work site may seek agreement with their manager for the lactation breaks to be combined with meal breaks to incorporate travel time.

#### **8.3.4.2 Arranging lactation breaks with manager (agreement)**

Paid lactation breaks are to be discussed and agreed between individual employees and supervisors before the first lactation break is taken.

The timing of lactation breaks is to take both the organisational and employee needs into account, with a focus on minimising disruption in the workplace. Client service/patient care issues require careful consideration by both parties.

The work and breastfeeding agreement form is to be used (refer HR forms on QHEPS). The purpose of the written agreement between the employer and manager is to:

- facilitate breastfeeding in the workplace.
- clearly outline the work and breastfeeding arrangements agreed between the employee and their manager (i.e. the frequency and duration of breaks).

Agreement for lactation breaks is to be made on a monthly basis. Each agreement is to be stored in an appropriate location.

Any change of circumstances resulting in a change to the agreement requires notification and discussion by both parties. The written agreement is to be revised to reflect any changed circumstances.

### 8.3.4.3 Emergency situations or client/patient care

When emergency situations or client service/patient care issues delay the taking of lactation breaks:

- efforts are to be made to ensure that employees are able to take the lactation breaks as soon as it is practicable to do so
- the written agreement is to be discussed, and revised as appropriate, if an employee feels that their health or milk supply may be compromised by regularly missing lactation breaks.

### 8.3.5 Informing staff

All employees and prospective employees are to be advised of workplace facilities for breastfeeding and relevant policies.

Information is to be displayed and distributed as appropriate to inform employees who are pregnant or may be considering pregnancy.

## 9 DEFINITION

<b>Caregiver</b>	Any person who has responsibility for bringing a child onto Queensland Health premises to deliver the child to an employee for breastfeeding.
<b>Dependent child</b>	<p>A person who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is aged under 18 years</li> <li>• resides with the officer for at least 50% of the year, excluding that time spent in attendance at boarding school or another educational institution</li> <li>• receives remuneration less than the Queensland minimum wage percentage equivalent for persons under the age of 18 (\$358.80 per week for Award employees as at 1 September 2008).</li> </ul> <p>In exceptional and deserving cases, for the purposes of this policy, the district CEO or equivalent delegate may deem a person under the age of 21 who satisfies the above criteria to be a dependent child.</p>
<b>Family members or dependants</b>	<p>Include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• members of the worker's immediate family, such as children (including adopted and step children), adult children, spouses and de facto spouses (including former spouses and de facto spouses), parents, grandparents, grandchildren, and siblings of the employee or spouse of the employee</li> <li>• members of the employee's household.</li> </ul>

## 10 HISTORY

<b>August 2009</b>	Amended to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• include a definition for dependant child</li><li>• remove reference to the <i>Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Act 1992</i>, and replace it with the <i>Public Service Act 2008</i></li></ul>
<b>April 2008</b>	Developed as a result of the HR policy consolidation project.

## Implementation of the work and family leave initiatives

Queensland Health recognises the need for productive and responsive workplaces to deliver quality services. Queensland Health's employment policies aim to enhance efficiency and effectiveness by selecting and retaining staff from the widest available pool of talent and developing a staff profile that more accurately reflects the profile of the Queensland community.

Queensland Health values the contribution of workers with family responsibilities to the delivery of quality services. Queensland Health is committed to the development and implementation of more flexible working arrangements and conditions to enable workers with family responsibilities to balance their work and family commitments.

Specific initiatives are included in individual district EEO management plan to promote EEO for workers with family responsibilities. HR policies and practices are also reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they support employees in balancing their work and family roles.

### 1.1 Benefits

The work and family initiatives assist Queensland Health in:

- adapting to the changing profile of the workforce
- meeting legislative requirements
- enhancing productivity.

Flexible and family friendly work practices offer numerous productivity benefits to workplaces, including:

- improved retention rates for staff, resulting in reduced recruitment and training costs
- reduced absenteeism, more effective workload planning and management when work and family conflicts arise
- access to a wider recruitment pool
- more effective service delivery through a more representative workforce
- reduced worker stress and distraction, with a consequent positive impact on occupational health and safety
- enhanced staff commitment and morale
- development of an outcome focused workplace culture which values the contributions of a diverse workforce
- enhanced protection for agencies against complaints of unlawful discrimination.

Flexible and family friendly work practices also offer a number of benefits for employees, including:

- an improved level of communication with family members
- enhanced career and development opportunities
- maintenance of skills
- greater focus and energy at work along with increased motivation and job satisfaction

- increased job security arising from the knowledge that a commitment to family is not viewed as a lack of commitment to the organisation
- a reduction in stress as a result of flexible and more suitable working arrangements
- maintenance of physical and emotional health.

## **1.2 Enterprise bargaining**

Work and family initiatives developed through enterprise bargaining, include:

- development of a job sharing policy and guidelines
- development and expansion of flexible working arrangements
- review of operational requirements to use alternative patterns of work, including the appropriate use of part-time, casual and temporary staff and job sharing
- special and family leave
- introduction of six months half pay long service leave for family purposes
- review of arrangements for part-time employment to improve operational flexibility and movement between full and part-time employment
- examination of existing leave and hours provisions and review of policies for rostering of staff
- development of initiatives for cultural leave, child care, access to telephones (to contact dependants during work hours in emergent situations) and parental leave
- purchased leave (development and introduction of guidelines to allow employees to elect to work reduced months in a year and receive a reduced average salary over a full 12 month period)
- development of a remote/rural district incentive scheme.

HR policies developed include:

- Employment HR Policy B35
- Telecommuting HR Policy C5
- Special Leave HR Policy C7
- Carer's Leave HR Policy C9
- Purchased Leave HR Policy C21
- Parental Leave HR Policy C26
- Job Sharing HR Policy
- Long Service Leave HR Policy

## **1.3 Responsibilities of managers and supervisors**

Managers and supervisors are responsible for assisting employees to manage their work and family needs. Managers and supervisors are also to work with employees to find solutions that are fair and equitable to everyone involved. Managers and supervisors are also to ensure that the work of the unit continues.

Flexibility is the key principle for ensuring that work and family issues are well managed. This means considering the individual circumstances of workers with family responsibilities and being prepared to change ways of operating to accommodate these circumstances and maintain or enhance productivity.

The work and family initiatives do not involve managers and supervisors disregarding existing policies on employee entitlements and conditions of service. They encourage

managers and supervisors to explore a range of possibilities in assisting workers to meet work and family demands.

#### **1.4 Guiding principles in managing work and family issues**

Managers and supervisors can effectively deal with work and family issues by observing the following guiding principles:

- Treat employees as individuals with different needs and ways of balancing work and family.
- Encourage employees to approach you about family concerns which may interfere with work. This facilitates early, planned, joint resolution of problems and helps to create a supportive work environment.
- Respect employees' rights to privacy in relation to their personal lives. Your focus is to be to manage the workplace impact of work and family issues.
- Maintain confidentiality about family concerns which have been disclosed to you by employees.
- Be fair, consistent and reasonable in making decisions about leave and adjustments to work arrangements, and help all employees to understand the rationale and process for these decisions.
- Plan for contingencies through multi-skilling, job rotation, and streamlined arrangements for temporary employees. In this way emergency family situations will not result in disruption to work output.
- Act as a role model for employees by personally maintaining a reasonable balance between your work and family life. Manage trends towards a long hours work culture by organising work and measuring productivity on the basis of outcomes required, rather than the time inputs.

Applying these principles as part of everyday management practice creates a workplace environment where there is a stronger recognition that family responsibilities do impact on work. Employees are more likely to raise and resolve work and family problems.

#### **1.5 Implementation guidelines**

The following are some practical ways that managers and supervisors can assist staff to effectively manage their work and family responsibilities and maintain or enhance productivity:

- Ensure all staff are aware of their conditions of service and leave entitlements.
- Consider a range of options to manage a work and family issue with the affected employee. These options may include flexible working hours, emergent or compassionate leave, bereavement leave, parental leave, special leave without pay, recreation leave, long service leave on full or half pay, part-time work, job sharing or working from home.
- Take a flexible approach to approving leave to accommodate the needs of employees with family responsibilities, while remaining focused on achieving the outcomes of the work area.
- Consider whether the role can be undertaken on a part-time basis as well as full-time before advertising positions. Advertise the role as available for both full-time or part-time employment (if appropriate).

- Make more use of permanent part-time employment and job sharing for existing roles. This can produce quite dramatic increases in productivity and the quality of service delivery in areas such as direct customer service.
- When creating part-time positions or job share arrangements, aim for a job design which promotes job satisfaction and offers developmental opportunities.
- Ensure that part-time staff have equal access to training and career development opportunities, staff meetings and other staff communication and consultation processes.
- Schedule meetings at times which accommodate the needs of workers with family responsibilities.
- Give a high priority to staff development during normal working hours. Live-in courses are to be considered a last resort.
- Review the travel arrangements of the work unit to minimise conflicts with the family responsibilities of employees.
- Consider reimbursing an employee for additional child care costs where work or training demands extend outside normal hours.
- Keep employees on extended leave informed of workplace developments through sending newsletters, announcements of changes, training calendars etc.
- Ensure that employees returning from extended leave receive adequate re-orientation into the workplace.
- Refer employees to the employee assistance service (EAS) and/or relevant community services, where appropriate, to assist with resolution of complex family problems.

### **1.6 Checklist for managing work and family issues**

- Be familiar with the work and family initiatives and the various employment conditions available to workers with family responsibilities.
- Discuss any matters with the affected worker in a location which offers privacy.
- Gain an understanding of the impact of the work and family issue on the workplace
- Jointly examine all possible ways of managing the situation.
- Jointly develop a range of solutions and agree on the most effective one.
- Implement the solution, and monitor and review if necessary.

### **1.7 Rights and responsibilities of employees**

Employees have the right to be treated as individuals and to have fair and reasonable consideration given to their work and family issues by their manager or supervisor. Employees are entitled to appropriate privacy and confidentiality.

Employees are responsible for informing their manager or supervisor, in a timely manner, of family issues which may impact on their work. Employees are required to work with their supervisor or manager to resolve the situation.