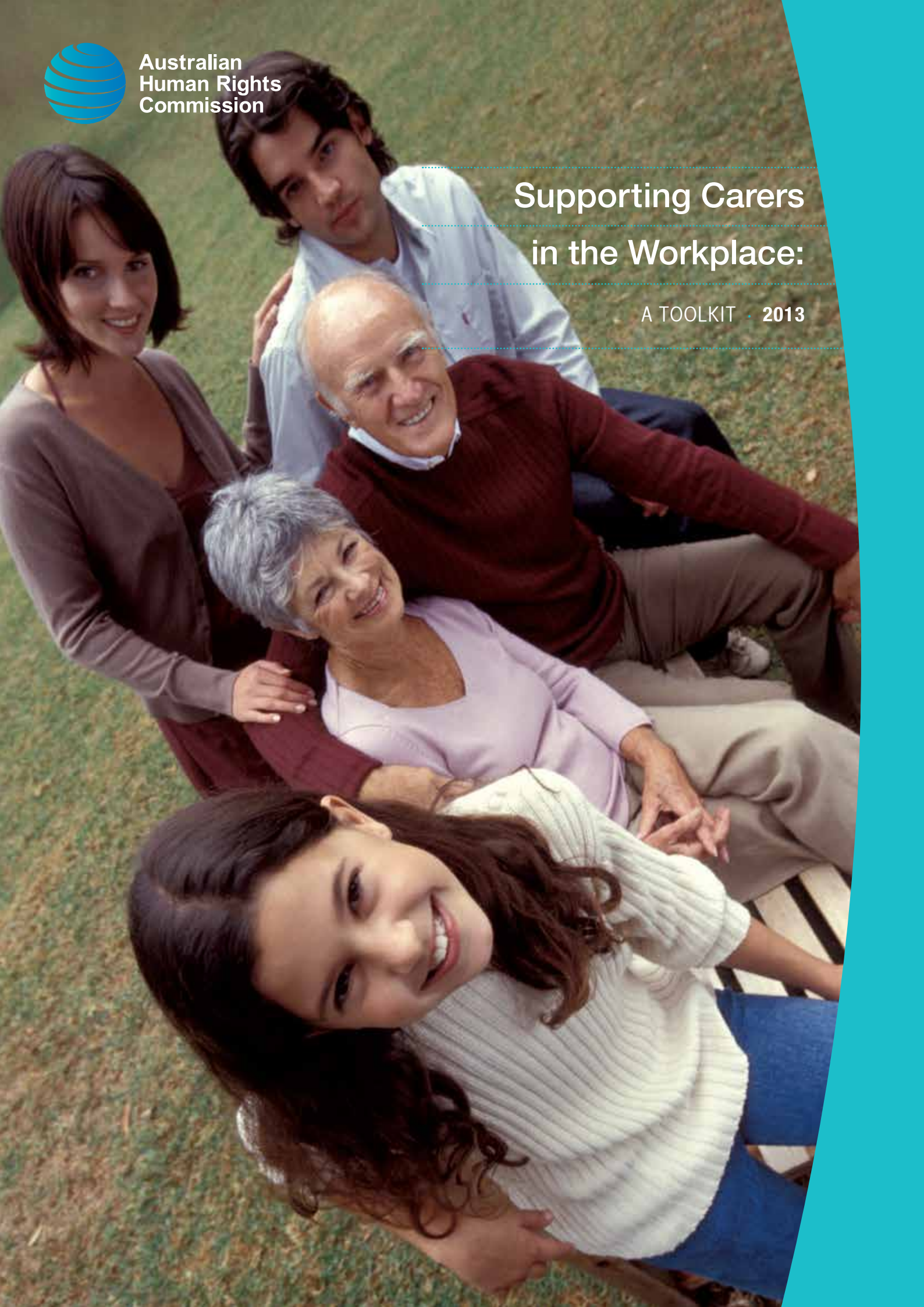




Australian
Human Rights
Commission

Supporting Carers in the Workplace:

A TOOLKIT · 2013



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Supporting Carers in the Workplace

A Toolkit

Australian Human Rights Commission 2013



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Contents

1. Unpaid carers in Australia	2
2. Carers in the workplace	5
3. A carer strategy for the workplace	7
4. Workplace mechanisms for supporting carers	11
4.1 Information and advocacy	12
4.2 Time and leave arrangements	12
4.3 Work location	13
4.4 Job redesign	13
4.5 Return to work arrangements and programs	13
4.6 Care-related services	14
4.7 Financial assistance	14
5. Tips for supporting carers in the workplace	17
6. Evaluating the success of a carer strategy	19
Appendices	
Appendix A: Talking about caring responsibilities and work	21
Appendix B: Further information	25

1. Unpaid carers in Australia

In Australia, it is estimated that nearly 5.5 million people between the ages of 15 and 64 years have unpaid caring responsibilities for relatives or friends.¹

Everyone will be involved in care relationships at some point across their lifecourse, either as care providers and/or care receivers.

Caring is valuable, necessary work undertaken by paid care workers and unpaid carers. This caring work is crucial to the well-being of those who are cared for as well as to the Australian community and economy.

Caring relationships and roles are diverse. Each care situation is unique and may emerge and change across the lifecourse.

Caring responsibilities can include caring for young children, for children or adults with disability, mental illness, chronic illness, or for older people. Carers can be women or men, who are parents of young children, guardians, adult children, relatives, friends, or neighbours. For many, this can mean having multiple caring responsibilities over the course of a lifetime.

The nature of unpaid care can take many forms. Some caring responsibilities are predictable or can be anticipated in advance. Other caring responsibilities are less predictable, require immediate attention or are of an irregular nature. The nature of caring responsibilities may also change over time – the type of care, intensity of care, length of time caring, level of support available or the person/s being cared for.

An example of a predictable caring responsibility is an adult daughter who has to take her father to hospital once a week for treatment of a long term illness.

An example of a less predictable caring responsibility is a father who has to attend to medical emergencies for his child who has a physical disability.

Unpaid caring responsibilities may demand a lot of time and affect people's capacity to participate in the workforce.

Caring responsibilities can impact on a person's work and life more generally, particularly for women carers. In Australia, women comprise 92 per cent of primary carers for children with disability, 70 per cent of the primary carers for parents, and around half (52 per cent) of the primary carers for partners.² Men constitute a significant proportion (48 per cent) of the primary carers for partners, particularly in older age.³

The provision of unpaid care has a negative impact on unpaid carers' participation in employment⁴ and work hours.⁵ In addition, carers are more likely to leave employment than reduce their work hours when taking on caring roles.⁶ This has a significant impact on the incomes of carers over their lifecourse putting them at risk of poor mental health⁷ and poverty in later life.⁸

Unpaid carers can experience difficulties in balancing their work commitments with their caring responsibilities. Caring responsibilities significantly impact on their workforce participation, including on their ability to continue in paid employment. Unpaid carers, particularly women, have significantly lower rates of workforce participation and are more likely to work in part-time and casual jobs as well as in forms of insecure work.

The labour force participation rate for women aged 15-64 years is 70.6 per cent, compared to 82.4 per cent for men.⁹ Among employed women 15 years and over, 45.8 per cent work part-time compared to 16.5 per cent of employed men.¹⁰

The employment rates of female parents are 39 percentage points lower than male parents who had a youngest child under six years.¹¹ Across all age groups, less than 23 per cent of female primary carers of people with disability, illness or frailty participate in full-time employment at any point.¹²

Undertaking periods of unpaid care can also affect financial security in older age. The superannuation system in Australia, which is tied to paid employment, financially disadvantages people who take time out of the workforce for caring responsibilities. Estimates from 2009-2010 suggest that the average (mean) superannuation payouts for women are just over half (57 per cent) those of men.¹³

There can be significant differences in caring responsibilities for young children compared to caring responsibilities for people with disability, mental illness, chronic illness, or for older people.

While there is some awareness of the need to support carers of young children (for example, parental leave schemes, flexible work conditions for parents, and provisions for child care) in general, Australian workplaces do not adequately accommodate the needs of unpaid carers, particularly of unpaid carers who are caring for people with disability, mental illness, chronic illness, or for older people.

In order to assist unpaid carers in the workplace to balance their work and caring responsibilities, it is essential to remove the stigma of caring responsibilities.

In order to value unpaid caring, it is necessary to create a cultural change in our society and our workplaces. Such change needs to start with addressing gender role stereotypes and social norms related to unpaid caring responsibilities and participation in paid work by men and women across their lifecourse. It is important to challenge the model of the 'ideal worker' who is perceived to be unencumbered by any caring responsibilities – and start to see how men and women can share the responsibility for unpaid care.

Leadership from employers in challenging the rigid distinctions between those who undertake paid work and unpaid care will be essential to any cultural shift in our society.

There is a strong business case for workplaces to better support unpaid carers, with gains for efficiency, productivity and diversity, particularly in terms of retaining women workers with caring responsibilities.

Enabling women's workforce participation also contributes to women's greater economic security and greater productivity

across the economy. It has been noted that increasing women's participation in the workforce by 6 per cent could contribute to increasing Australia's gross domestic product by \$25 billion.¹⁴

A Toolkit for workplaces to support unpaid carers

This Toolkit is designed to assist managers and staff in the workplace to find constructive and sustainable solutions that support unpaid carers to remain engaged and productive at work.

For the purposes of this Toolkit, 'staff' can include anyone who works for the organisation, irrespective of their type of employment, their employment contract or arrangement, hours worked, or status as permanent, casual or temporary.

This Toolkit focuses on strategies workplaces can use to support unpaid carers in being able to meet their caring responsibilities while continuing to work.

The Toolkit provides practical suggestions and examples of different kinds of workplace mechanisms to support carers in organisations and workplaces of all sizes and types. These examples have been drawn from current practice both within Australia and overseas. Practices were sourced from 24 countries. Some of the suggested workplace mechanisms will suit small organisations, while others will be more suitable for large organisations.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's *Valuing Unpaid Caring Work in Australia Research Project* investigated the nature of unpaid caring work in Australia. The Project focused on the impact unpaid caring work has on the carer's participation in paid work in addition to their retirement savings over their lifetime. Read more about the Project and the report at www.humanrights.gov.au/about/publications/. This Toolkit is a companion resource to the Project's research report.





2. Carers in the workplace

4.1 million employed people in Australia (38.2 per cent of all employees), have unpaid caring responsibilities.¹⁵ This number will grow substantially over the coming decades and is likely to affect all of us.

Demographic and policy changes will mean the numbers of women and men, who have caring responsibilities while employed, is increasing.

An aging demographic and increases in longevity will likely result in a higher proportion of people with unpaid caring responsibilities for older people.

This in turn will potentially impact the existing arrangement and organisation of work across the economy. It will also have a significant social impact, with the potential for nuclear family households no longer being the norm.

For carers, trying to juggle paid work and caring responsibilities can adversely impact career progression and work performance.¹⁶

The provision of support also has a long-term negative impact on participation in employment and income. When caring stops or the level of need decreases, carers often find it difficult to re-enter the paid workforce.¹⁷

In the context of changing demographics, potential skills and labour shortages, and increasing caring responsibilities, organisations need to give serious consideration to how they can retain their existing workforce and attract new people.

The challenge will be enabling people to attend to their caring responsibilities while maintaining their attachment to the workforce.

Legislative requirements

There are minimum legal requirements for people with caring responsibilities in the workplace.

These include provisions under the National Employment Standards (NES).

Employment laws to support carers in the workplace prescribe the following as a minimum under the NES:

- Requests for flexible working arrangements – available to parents or carers of a child under school age or a child under 18 years with disability.
- Parental leave and related entitlements – up to 12 months unpaid leave, plus a right to request an additional 12 months unpaid leave for the birth or adoption of a child.
- Personal/carer's leave and compassionate leave – ten days paid personal/carer's leave and two days unpaid carer's leave per occasion. In addition, two days compassionate leave per occasion is also available if a member of the immediate family or the household has sustained a life-threatening illness or injury.

You can find more information on the NES from the Fair Work Ombudsman at www.fairwork.gov.au.

For parental care, additional entitlements are provided through the government paid parental leave scheme.

The government-funded Parental Leave Pay is provided at the national minimum wage for a maximum period of 18 weeks. Any employer-funded paid parental leave is additional to the government scheme.

You can find more information on the paid parental leave scheme from the Family Assistance Office at www.familyassist.gov.au.

In addition to workplace laws and entitlements, state, territory and federal anti-discrimination laws prohibit discrimination against workers on the ground of family responsibilities, and to a more limited extent, caring responsibilities. Appendix B has links to federal, state and territory government anti-discrimination laws.

See also the *Carer Recognition Act 2010*, which aims to increase recognition and awareness of the role carers play in providing daily care and support to people with disability, medical conditions, mental illness or who are frail and aged. Appendix B has links to information about the Act.

Legislated workplace entitlements may not be sufficient for many carers to deal with their caring responsibilities or provide enough of an incentive to remain in the workforce.

Current legislative provisions only cover a small proportion of the working conditions necessary for supporting unpaid carers in the workplace. For example, existing leave and flexible work arrangement provisions may not allow for the carer of an adult with disability, mental illness, or chronic illness, or a carer of an older person, to deal with a range of emergency situations that occur on a regular basis.

Designing policies and initiatives to specifically address the needs of carers will have a positive impact on carers in the workplace.

There are a wide range of policy and program measures that organisations can undertake to better support unpaid carers in the workforce.

Focusing on carers' needs is a way of retaining carers as well as valuing the skills, talent, knowledge and experience that these individuals bring to the organisation. For staff, this can also inspire loyalty to the organisation and motivate them to be more productive.

One critical measure is developing a comprehensive strategy to support carers in the workplace. A **carer strategy** can provide guidance for organisations in assisting staff with caring responsibilities to balance their work and caring commitments, over the long term.

Part 3 of this Toolkit provides guidance on developing and implementing a carer strategy and Part 4 identifies different workplace mechanisms that can be employed within the context of a carer strategy.



3. A carer strategy for the workplace

Changes in workforce and social demographics in the coming years will mean that employers will have to find innovative ways of attracting and retaining their workforce. In this context, developing a carer strategy is a key method by which employers can attract and retain staff with caring responsibilities.

For a carer strategy to work effectively for individuals and the workplace it must be underpinned by reciprocity, trust and good communication.

Embrace workers with caring responsibilities as the norm rather than the exception.

A carer strategy can assist to:

- Ensure there is a valuing of workers with caring responsibilities across the organisation;
- Enable a flexible approach that recognises and responds to a diverse workforce, where each individual has different needs;
- Encourage both women and men, at all levels, to undertake flexible work for the purposes of caring;
- Enable long-term planning that supports staff returning from carer's leave or career breaks and supports the career development of staff who are carers;
- Embed an **integrated approach** that ensures positive outcomes for both the organisation and the carers; and

- Change the organisation's culture to embrace diversity and flexibility as an ongoing commitment to the entire workforce – not just 'special treatment' for the few.

Developing and implementing an integrated carer strategy

Following is a general guide on developing a carer strategy, which organisations can adapt to suit their own particular situation, size, and type of work.

1. Conduct an audit of your current workplace flexibility and carer policies and programs for their effectiveness

Compile a comprehensive checklist of all the policies, programs and initiatives your organisation currently offers to support staff with caring responsibilities.

Invite carers in your workplace to review the list and provide feedback. Carers may be unaware that they are entitled to flexible working provisions and access to other supportive policies. If this is the case, it may be necessary to re-communicate the policies so all employees are aware of them.

Research the use of flexibility and carer policies, programs and practices in your organisation and review any feedback you have received on the effectiveness of these mechanisms from your staff.

Some good examples:¹⁸

- A financial services organisation in the US surveyed its employees to identify the number and types of carers within the company, **audited** its care support policies, and held focus groups with carers to elicit their concerns. It also engaged a specialist consultancy firm to apply a 'care lens' when developing policies and processes, including market research and measuring tools.
- A telecommunications organisation in Austria established the role of a '**Commissioner for work-life balance and leave management**', with responsibility for leave and reintegration and all issues concerning work-care reconciliation.
- A pharmaceutical company in France introduced a '**credit-hours**' scheme which provides two hours paid leave per month for carers.
- A public sector organisation in Australia provides a **Carer's Register** to streamline approval processes for carer's leave and supply relevant information and opportunities to carers.
- An insurance organisation in Germany developed a '**Profession and Care Service**' initiative which comprises four types of services for carers including information, consultation, intermediation, and training.



Carers Australia may be able to help you develop aspects of the strategy in relation to people with caring responsibilities for those with disability, mental illness, chronic illness or who are frail and aged. They have direct experience in developing policies and processes.

Find out more about Carers Australia at www.carersaustralia.com.au. See Appendix B for more information and links to state and territory based carers' organisations.

2. Survey staff to assess what carers need and would value

Understanding the prevalence and nature of caring responsibilities among your staff will allow you to assess their specific needs. It will also enable you to assess demand for different types of support and services. One method for collecting information about your staff's caring responsibilities and their needs is a survey.

Identify if there are different types of caring responsibilities and what the needs of different types of carers are. For example those with child care responsibilities and those with caring responsibilities for people with disability may have very different requirements. Identify any sets of common needs for carers that emerge from the survey results, and compare these sets of common needs.

It is important to determine and address the work/life needs of all staff, regardless of their caring responsibilities. These surveys usually elicit more responses if they are anonymous.

The questions you ask in your survey will determine the analysis that is possible. It is also recommended that you include a question to elicit whether staff feel too afraid to request flexible work arrangements. This will help you understand whether the culture is one that is supportive of people with caring responsibilities.

3. Analyse the results to understand the needs and investigate further

Once the surveys have been completed, you will want to know the extent to which staff are able to navigate their work and caring responsibilities, and what aspects are creating difficulties.

Hold focus groups with staff to dig deeper into what their needs are. If necessary, organise follow up meetings or discussions with targeted groups or with a broader range of staff.

4. Think through the solutions and develop a carer strategy

A carer strategy can be developed, based on understanding of the prevalence and nature of caring responsibilities among staff and the possible barriers to balancing work and caring responsibilities.

The carer strategy should be aimed at bridging the gap between the existing support available to carers and the extra caring needs identified in the survey, focus groups and other discussions.

Based on the results of your survey and analysis, reassess the list of workplace mechanisms you currently offer your staff and identify any gaps. Consider how to address any gaps. Redesign your existing policies and practices if they are not inclusive of all carers. Prioritise new initiatives to support carers.

Given that the situation of each carer can be unique, it makes sense for organisations to develop a carer strategy that is flexible and adaptable to the different types of caring roles.

Ensure that a carer strategy encourages both men and women at all levels to undertake flexible work for the purposes of caring.

Ensure that solutions include long-term planning that supports staff returning from carer's leave or career breaks and supports the career development of staff who are carers.

See Appendix A for guidance on conducting conversations with individual staff members with caring responsibilities about their needs and how to develop an individual plan.

Identify the need to support staff with caring responsibilities as a business need.

Have a long term business commitment to enabling flexible work and supporting staff with caring responsibilities. A carer strategy that works for business and the individual will deliver benefits to both.

5. Communicate the carer strategy

Although organisations may have a carer strategy or support systems in place for carers, there may be a lack of awareness of these among staff. To avoid any negative perceptions about caring responsibilities, such as carers feeling less valuable or anxious about how others may perceive their ability to work and care, people with caring responsibilities do not tend to broadcast the fact that they are carers. There can also be a reluctance on the part of carers to discuss such issues with their manager.

Such barriers to discussing caring responsibilities within the workplace, make it even more important that there is ongoing and regular communication about a carer strategy and other support mechanisms.

Organisations need to think about engaging carers in different ways and actively encourage talking about their work and care concerns.

Any policies, benefits and services offered should be continuously promoted to staff so they are aware of their existence and they will use them. Awareness of the strategy can be maintained by producing online profiles, poster campaigns, publicising policies, activities and initiatives.

By using all communications channels to promote policies that support carers, staff can quickly access the information when they need it. Likewise, ensuring managers are fully informed of what they can do to support staff, including understanding the legal framework and the organisation's policies for carers.

Raise awareness of support for carers through the following groups:

- **Senior Managers:** Senior managers can genuinely commit and lead by example. They can be effective role models for flexibility generally and caring responsibilities specifically. Leaders should have the capabilities to manage a flexible workforce and actively support and communicate the carer strategy.
- **Carers' Network:** Establish a carers' network to act as a resource and advisory group that contributes to the formulation of future policy and to help communicate the strategy, policies and initiatives. A carers' network can also be useful for carers to discuss their issues and support each other.
- **Carers' Champion:** The Carers' Champion provides a focal point within the organisation that is responsible for delivering the business case for carers internally and externally. The Champion can actively support the carers' network, raise awareness and drive the carer strategy forward.

6. Monitor and evaluate the progress of the carer strategy

Needs assessments and implementation of workplace policies and programs should ideally be followed by an evaluation to determine if staff needs and concerns are being addressed.

Routine monitoring of changing legislation and industry leading practice will help keep your organisation current and competitive.

It is important to have ongoing and periodic reviews of policies and processes, including regular auditing and gap analysis to understand whether the existing policies and procedures, such as recruitment and retention, are inclusive of carers.

Reporting on the progress and outcomes of the carer strategy should be integrated into standard business reporting.





4. Workplace mechanisms for supporting carers

This section looks at the different types of policies and mechanisms that can be implemented as part of the carer strategy to support carers in the workplace. A carer strategy can encompass a variety of policies to address carers' needs. It might include time and leave arrangements, return to work programs, care-related services, financial assistance, and information and advocacy. Not all mechanisms or policies will suit all workplaces, or all types of caring responsibilities. Organisations should consider what is appropriate for their workplace, staff and business needs. The table below provides examples of current mechanisms used in organisations in Australia and internationally to support carers in the workplace.¹⁹

Workplace mechanisms to support staff with caring responsibilities			
Information and advocacy	Time and leave	Services	Financial assistance
<i>Information and advice is provided to staff</i>	<i>Flexibility is mainstreamed and tailored to a carer's needs</i>	<i>Care-related support and direct services are freely available to staff</i>	<i>Financial assistance is available to assist with caring responsibilities</i>
Education and training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education seminars tailored to staff needs • Awareness-raising via emails, publications, research partnerships • Training programs to increase the capacity of managers to support carers • Training programs for carers – face-to-face, online, CD Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toolkits for carers and managers • Online caring resources and community • Corporate libraries • Newsletters, guides and factsheets • Regular video updates from the CEO so everyone knows what is happening in the business Networks and forums <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee carers' network • Annual carers conference for staff 	Flexible work schedules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compressed work week • Flex-time Reduced work hours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part-time work • Job-sharing • Phased retirement Leave <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid family leave • Paid carer leave • Personal time (earned time) • Extended unpaid leave as required Work location <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work from home • Work in the same location as the person requiring care Job redesign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesign role and objectives • Multi-skilled staff Return to work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs • Additional support for re-entry 	Employee assistance programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual and family counselling • Wellness programs • Support groups • Crisis intervention Direct services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carer assessment • Professional advice and information • Referral services • Partnerships with community groups or organisations • Access to health services • Resources for long distance carers • Back-up or emergency care • Before/after school and vacation care On-site facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child care centre • Adult day centre • Concierge services • Transport services • Access to phone, computer, internet • Room for private conversations • Parking space 	Cash and subsidies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash or payment for costs related to caring work • Subsidies, monthly allowances, vouchers, discounts for care • Interest free loans Tax and insurance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent care tax credit • Insurance products and benefits • Tax-related incentives and benefits

4.1 Information and advocacy

Communication with staff about the carer strategy and the needs of carers in the workplace is crucial to ensure that the strategy is implemented successfully and is achieving its goals. As part of the communication, it is important to provide information and educational resources to support both carers and other staff to understand the needs of carers and how they can be integrated into the organisation.

Education and information can be provided a number of different ways. This can include online resources, newsletters and other publications, information sessions, seminars, workshops, training, awareness-raising, and carers' networks or forums for carers in the workplace to meet on a regular basis and to provide mutual support.

Some good examples:

- A county council in the UK developed a **comprehensive toolkit** for its managers to support carers in their workplace, which includes information on support from the council, other organisations, and how managers can support employees.
- A health organisation in France developed a **guide** which provides information and practical advice to working carers at each phase of the caring situation as it evolves. It also developed a **carers' network** for over 200 members and runs a **'knowledge call' teleconference** for carers to find out what works for them in their working life.
- A university in New Zealand has a **portal** to provide resources and initiatives for employees with carer and family responsibilities. It also provides a toolkit to employees on combining parenting and having a career.
- A public sector organisation in Australia **holds annual forums** for employees with caring responsibilities, with speakers from peak bodies, to provide information for carers in that organisation.
- A global telecommunications company in the UK developed a range of resources to support carers, including a **'Carer Passport'** which describes the nature of the caring responsibilities and adjustments the individual might need to make.

4.2 Time and leave arrangements

Carers require time to undertake their caring responsibilities. Access to flexibility in the workplace assists carers to remain in and re-enter employment.²⁰ Access to paid and unpaid leave, provides job protection to maintain their attachment to the labour market and facilitate workforce re-entry entitlements. This is crucial for parents and carers with caring responsibilities. Access to paid leave also lessens the impact of time spent caring on both current and future income and retirement savings.

Having policies that allow flexibility in working time and leave arrangements is a first step in accommodating the needs of carers in the workplace. The following list gives an indication of the type of time and leave arrangements your organisation could adopt.

Working time arrangements

There are several types of working time arrangements that are already common features in many workplaces in Australia and overseas. Allowing flexibility in this area can be crucial to keeping unpaid carers in the workforce.

- *Flex-time* – flexibility in working time, such as when a carer starts/finishes the working day, or working more hours on one day and fewer hours on another day.
- *Compressed work week* – for example, working a nine-day fortnight without reducing the hours usually worked in the week or the pay.
- *Reduction in hours* – for carers who need to take time off from work on a regular basis, a reduction in the weekly hours worked may address some of their needs. This might mean the carer works part-time hours and/or there is a job-share arrangement.

While, part-time work is an important mechanism for women and men to balance unpaid care and paid work responsibilities, any inequitable outcomes for carers, with respect to access to promotions, training and retirement incomes and savings should be considered.

Some good examples:

- A telecommunications company in Austria has **embedded work time flexibility in the workplace culture**, with a policy to make as many positions as possible available on a part-time basis.
- A technology company in Australia offers **flexible work options** which allow employees to make changes to the way they work to accommodate their personal needs. These include individualised work schedules, compressed or flexible work weeks, part-time work, job sharing, working from home and leave entitlements, such as paid parental leave, self-funded leave, personal work-life leave, study leave, leaves of absence, religious observance leave and floating cultural holidays.
- A financial company in Australia offers **Formal Flexible Work Options** including flexible working hours, location of work (including telecommuting), part-time work and job-sharing opportunities.
- A financial company in Australia provides a range of leave options including **parental leave** comprising up to 104 weeks parental leave (13 weeks paid and the remainder as unpaid) and pays up to 39 weeks superannuation contributions on the unpaid parental leave portion. Other leave options include **grandparental leave** of up to 52 weeks to be the primary care giver of a grandchild, which can be taken flexibly. There are also a wide range of flexible work options for parents and other carers. The company has also developed a number of **toolkits** including a Working Parents Toolkit, an Eldercare Kit and a Flex-E Toolkit, which provide information on the company's policies and available services in the community.



Leave arrangements

Flexibility in how carers can access and use their leave is also significant in accommodating their needs.

- *Carer's leave* – providing additional leave for carers (above the minimum legal requirements) will assist carers who have exhausted their legal entitlement to carer's leave.
- *Emergency leave* – especially important for carers who have unpredictable or 'on-call' caring responsibilities.
- *Buying extra leave* – carers can be provided with an option where they are able to 'buy' additional leave. This may be similar to arrangements where employees are allowed to purchase additional annual leave. In many organisations the salary is 'smoothed' over the entire year.
- *Long term leave with retention of job* – carers who require a long period of leave from work to meet their caring responsibilities, but know that the leave is temporary (e.g. several months or a couple of years) would benefit from this option. The organisation would also benefit by retaining the skills and knowledge of that worker.

Some good examples:

- A pharmaceutical company in France introduced a **'credit-hours' scheme** which provides two hours paid leave per month for carers.
- A public sector organisation in Portugal provides carers with **ten hours of special leave per year and one day of leave before or after a national holiday** to support family events.
- An industry peak organisation in the US provides **10 days paid family leave** to assist a family member of any age.
- A pharmaceutical company in the Netherlands provides five extra paid carer's leave days per year for specific situations. It also provides a **savings plan** to finance leaves of absence in the future. Carers can buy extra leave hours, up to 37.5 hours per year.
- A pharmaceutical company in the US provides 'dependent care leave', allowing employees with caring responsibilities for young children or elderly parents to take up to **three years of unpaid leave** (the employee must have been with company for at least one year).
- A military organisation in the US has introduced a **career intermission program** which provides for up to three years unpaid leave for further education or care purposes.

4.3 Work location

Another important means of flexibly arranging work so that it suits carers' needs is to allow, if possible, work to be done outside of the workplace or perhaps closer to where the caregiving takes place. This could take the form of working from home or working at another office or location that is more suitable to the carer. Commuting and being close to where caring is taking place can be of vital importance to the carer.

A good example:

- A computing company in the US introduced 'Life Event Leave', which provides **telecommuting options** to expand flexibility in managing doctor's appointments or other required work-schedule appointments.

4.4 Job redesign

Changes to working time arrangements for carers may require job redesign. Job redesign seeks to make adjustments to the role and objectives of the carer's job.

When redesigning a role, consideration should be given to the aspects of the carer's job that require adjustments, such as realistic work hours and reasonable workloads that are achievable within a manageable timeframe.

Job redesign should not diminish the quality of the tasks or responsibilities of the carer's job, or indeed the key business outcomes of the role. Having multi-skilled staff who are able to step into different roles, would assist in dealing with the changes in the carer's job.

4.5 Return to work arrangements and programs

If a carer has had significant time away from the workforce and wants to work again after their caring responsibilities have significantly lessened or ended, a return to the workforce can pose a number of challenges for that person.

A lack of confidence in their ability to perform in a job or being out of touch with developments since they left the workforce to attend to caring responsibilities can become barriers to re-entering the workforce.

Return to work programs can provide a means for carers to transition into the workforce and gradually rebuild their confidence, get updated on recent developments or become skilled in new areas of work. It can provide a meaningful way for carers to re-enter the workforce and for organisations to regain people who may have a range of skills, knowledge and experience that will otherwise be lost.

Some good examples:

- A global finance company in the US introduced a **ten-week preparatory program** providing returning individuals an opportunity to sharpen their skills in a significantly changed work environment. The program is tailored to address individuals' concerns including their ability to transition into a new area of expertise.
- A financial advice firm in the UK **recruits and trains** those who have spent time out of the workforce to raise children or looking for a career change. The firm offers **flexible working hours, choice of location, structured training program** and the chance to gain professional qualifications. It provides classroom teaching and practical work alongside established advisers.
- A pharmaceutical company in the US provides carers of young children or elderly parents **up to three years unpaid leave**. It also provides **access to the internal position posting system prior to returning** to the company at the end of the leave to help returning employees find a position.
- An accounting company in the US allows participants (on unpaid caring leave for a period of up to five years) to stay connected with their colleagues, by providing them with a **'coach'** while they are gone and making available firm resources, such as certain training and events.
- A law firm in Canada introduced **Maternity Leave Buddies** where each woman preparing for maternity leave is paired with a contact in her practice group who assists with winding down before maternity leave, provides contact during the leave and assists with reintegration.
- A petrochemical company in Australia has a **Baby Care Bonus** which provide workers with four 3 per cent return-to-work bonuses over the first year a parent returns to work after parental leave.

4.6 Care-related services

Providing information and access to services specifically for the needs of carers is another way that workplaces can support carers. This may include having an in-house Employee Assistance Program for carers (and other staff) to access when needed, or providing counselling or referral services. Other types of care-related services can include providing a carer assessment, support groups, crisis intervention, on-site facilities such as child-care centres and transport services.

Some good examples:

- A health insurance company in Germany provides an **'emergency care file'** to prepare employees when relatives require care, and **consulting services** to assist the process of developing individual solutions for private care.
- An energy company in the UK provides a **confidential helpline** to all employees and their family members. The company also provides **advice on financial assistance and support for carers**, as well as **facilitates access to counselling** for carers.
- A telecommunications company in Ireland has an **in-house Employee Assistance Program (EAP) support service** which provides advice and guidance to employees and their families.
- An electricity company in France has an **arrangement with housework services companies** that assist carers in a range of services, such as shopping, making appointments with the doctor, and dry-cleaning. It also provides **health and well-being modules** for carers.
- An industry peak organisation in the US provides back-up care consisting of **subsidised in-home care** for older adults. The employee out-of-pocket cost for the care is approximately \$6 per hour and each employee is eligible for up to 20 days of subsidised care.
- A pharmaceutical company in the US offers services to employees free of charge including an **assessment of the care recipient's needs**, help with planning and coordinating services, **respite care** for a fixed number of hours annually, and referrals to services.

4.7 Financial assistance

A range of different financial supports can be provided to carers. They may include direct one-off cash payments or regular allowances, payment of care-related costs or subsidised costs, insurance products and benefits, and tax-related benefits.

Some good examples:

- A printing and publishing company in Portugal offers a **financial support scheme that assists** employees with additional expenses related to caring responsibilities on a case-by-case basis, such as travel and accommodation expenses when obtaining medical assistance located away from the local region.
- A pharmaceutical company in France has a **working cheque service** which provides staff with material and financial support for care costs to a maximum amount of €900.
- A public sector organisation in Poland provides **repayable aid for housing purposes**, covering costs such as adapting a home to meet the needs of a family member with disability. It has also established an **Employee Social Benefit Fund**, which provides various kinds of financial assistance to employees, intended for those in a difficult living, familial or material situation.
- A county council in the UK offers child care **vouchers** through salary sacrifice.



5. Tips for supporting carers in the workplace

Senior management actively supports the carer strategy

The senior management team can show leadership in this area by ensuring that everyone in the organisation understands how important the issue of unpaid caring is for the workplace. Small messages such as naming caring responsibilities as a plausible excuse for not attending important events sends a strong message that the organisation supports carers.

Create a cooperative and supportive workplace culture

Given, the number of people with caring responsibilities is going to increase, creating a workplace culture in which carers feel supported can contribute to staff co-operating to meet the organisation's business and operational needs. This can require additional training, education or information for staff.

Communicate about carers' issues

Creating a safe environment in the workplace to allow staff to openly discuss carers' issues is a good first step. This can reassure staff that any problems or issues they face in relation to their caring responsibilities will be treated seriously, sensitively and with an open-mind. Free and open communication of information and any issues that arise in the workplace can make staff feel confident that the organisation is serious about their work/life balance needs.

Provide access to basic facilities to accommodate carers' needs

Having access to basic facilities in the workplace can be very helpful to carers. For example, providing access to a phone, computer and internet, private room for confidential conversations, occasional parking space, and greater flexibility around the time worked during the day can be very useful for carers to manage their daily caring responsibilities. For some carers the provision of such basic facilities can go a long way to reducing any stress they may feel in balancing work and caring responsibilities.

Consider each request from carers fairly and consistently

Each carer will have different needs which are dependent on the specific nature and circumstances of their caring responsibilities.

In any agreement for a carer to change work arrangements, it is useful to set realistic goals and timeframes – focusing on the outcomes to be achieved rather than on the time being spent in the office. It is also worth holding regular meetings to track how well the new arrangements are working. This provides an opportunity to discuss any issues that arise due to the new arrangement.



6. Evaluating the success of a carer strategy

Once a carer strategy has been implemented and has been in place for some time it is important to evaluate its effectiveness for staff, managers, and the organisation as a whole. The best carer strategy is one in which both employees and employers benefit.

An evaluation can be conducted through a number of methods including: surveys, questionnaires, group interviews/discussions, and individual meetings with carers and their managers, as well as other staff.

A formal evaluation of the carer strategy should take place after the strategy has been in place long enough for all working/operational arrangements that had to be altered to accommodate carers, to have settled. This could be as short as 3 months or as long as 12 months, depending on the strategy, the number of carers, and the nature of work done at the workplace.

Monitoring the progress of the strategy (as it is implemented) can feed into the evaluation process. While monitoring is important to track the progress of the individual components of the strategy, a more in-depth evaluation is important to assess the strategy in a holistic manner. For instance, it is important to evaluate whether the different components of the strategy are complementary and achieving the goals of the strategy.

The following elements should be taken into consideration when evaluating a strategy:

- *Have all aspects of the strategy been implemented?*
- *Has the strategy been communicated to all staff in the workplace?*
- *Do all staff understand how the strategy and its policies work in practice and what this will mean to work arrangements and to the organisation?*
- *What is the take-up rate of the initiatives in the workplace? Does it reflect the actual numbers of carers in the workplace?*
- *What are the barriers to taking up or accessing these policies for carers?*
- *Is the strategy meeting the needs of carers in the workplace?*
- *Are business and operational needs being met?*
- *What is working well and what is not working so well?*
- *How can the strategy or its components be improved to work more effectively?*





Appendix A

Talking about caring responsibilities and work

This appendix is designed to give practical information and guidance for managers on how to have a conversation with a staff member who has requested support to meet their caring responsibilities and develop an individual plan.

How do you have the conversation to discuss caring responsibilities and the workplace support required?

Carers who are starting to care for a dependent may find it bewildering, confusing and demanding. Some may find it hard to ask for support and others may find that they become increasingly isolated.

Ensuring information on meeting caring responsibilities is available and accessible to all staff can assist managers to initiate conversations on caring responsibilities and not having to wait for staff to make the approach.

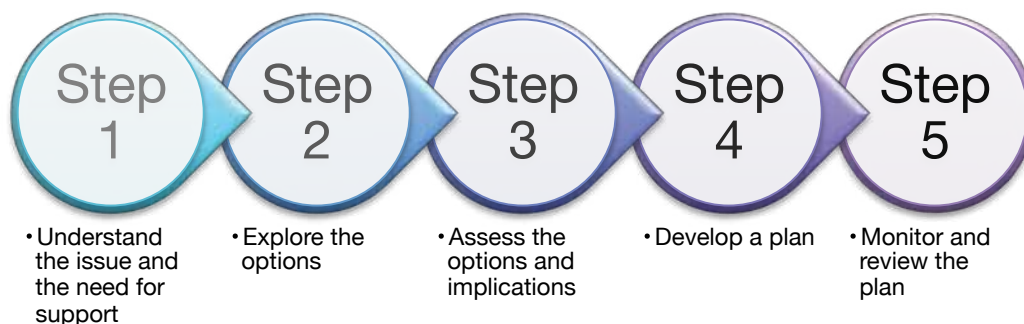
Caring for someone is a challenge that many of us are likely to face in the future and of course we naturally may ask ourselves:

- How will I cope when this happens to me?
- What will I need to do?
- Can I care for someone as well as keep my job?

The needs of each carer will be unique and managers should talk to the individual staff member about their situation in order to explore what support may be required.

The following provides a five-step guide to help managers and carers to have this discussion.

Five steps for having an effective conversation with a staff member



Step 1: Understand the issue and the need for support

Careful consideration should be given to any requests for support or adjustments. While it is common to focus on what cannot be done, a better way to approach each discussion is to focus on the issue, the options and the possible solutions. Think about how something *can* work rather than the obstacles to it working. **Evaluate an individual's request for flexibility.**

It is good to spend some time thinking about what the actual issues are and what needs both the carer and the business have. Rushing to a solution without giving the matter proper consideration can often result in an arrangement that is unsuitable and unsustainable for both the organisation and the carer.

Manager

- *Help staff member identify what the real issues are and consider what can be done*
- *Encourage flexible work practices for both men and women*

Staff member

- *Think about the issue or situation that you want to discuss*
- *Try to think about what support you need to balance your caring responsibilities with your work*
- *Think about any impact on the business outcomes of your role*
- *Think about how long you will need support*
- *Make sure you are open and honest*

Step 2: Explore the options

What kinds of flexible work arrangements are available to staff in your organisation?

While the organisation may have a range of flexible arrangements available to staff, the suitability of these available options depends on the specific circumstances in each case and the nature of the work the person does. The table in section 4 highlights a number of workplace mechanisms that may be available for the staff member to explore.

The needs of the carer need to be balanced with the demands of business operations and what is manageable for the organisation. Staff and managers will need to explore the available options and consider what is suitable. Well-functioning flexible work arrangements are underpinned by good communication, trust and reciprocity. These issues should also be a focus for the discussion.

Manager

- *Expand your knowledge about the options available to support staff with their caring responsibilities*
- *Discuss the alternatives with the staff member and team*
- *Consider opportunities for staff returning to work after carer's leave, including career development opportunities*

Staff member

- *Review the organisation's carer strategy, policies and workplace mechanisms*

Step 3: Assess the options and the implications

After exploring the available options, carefully **assess which arrangements are most suitable and most likely to address the needs of the carer and the organisation.**

A workable solution will require taking account of the carer's individual circumstances, business needs and operations, and the work done in the organisation. There may be several different ways of achieving a solution. Depending on the case, it could involve a slight reorganisation of the work, or changes to various workplace arrangements to accommodate the needs of the carer and the organisation.

Manager

- *Discuss with the staff member what their desired outcome is*
- *Allow time to consider the options*
- *Think about what will be the benefits or impacts on the work area – such as the effect on other staff members, workloads, and on the work of the organisation etc*
- *Check what the options mean for legislative and organisational policy requirements, including work health and safety issues*
- *Make the process open and transparent*

Staff member

- *Consider which option/s would work best for you*
- *Consider any issues for the work area, for example, the effect on other staff and the work*
- *Think about the benefits or disadvantages of this arrangement*
- *Consider any implications on your career and your remuneration*
- *Assess whether you can balance your caring responsibilities with your work responsibilities under this arrangement*

Step 4: Develop a plan

Developing a plan for the carer's new arrangements can be useful for both the carer and the manager to ensure that this new arrangement is working well and expectations are being met.

A written document setting out all the relevant details of the arrangement will provide a useful reference point for the staff member and the manager.

The plan can be negotiated during its development. If agreed to, the plan can also be altered during course of the arrangement if the circumstances change for the carer or the organisation, or if you find that in practice, adjustments need to be made to ensure its effectiveness.

Manager

- Discuss the agreement with the team and any impact on them
- Consider developing new performance measures or changing performance objectives
- Consider working in different locations (ie working at home)
- Consider the impacts of travel
- Consider options for when the staff member returns to work after carer's leave
- Document the agreement with the staff member (it may be necessary to write a letter or an agreement)

Staff member

- Consider any concerns or issues raised by the manager
- Consider any adjustments needed if working from home, particularly any work, health and safety issues
- Consider any travel issues

Step 5: Monitor and review the plan

The plan can include a process to review the arrangement to ensure that what has been agreed to is working as expected. It can be effective to trial the arrangement with a clear timeframe and review any key performance indicators before making a long term commitment.

The review process may take many forms. Depending on the nature of the arrangement, the review may include a formal assessment of how the arrangement is meeting expectations, or it can involve only an informal discussion between the manager and staff member.

The review process will determine how successful or effective the new arrangement has been so far for the carer and the organisation.

The review process should also determine the best way forward. This may result in a number of outcomes including:

- Continuing with the agreed arrangement, and setting a new timeframe for the next review.
- Agreeing to end the arrangement, with the staff member returning to their original work arrangement.
- Making adjustments to the arrangement as a result of changes to individual circumstances or organisational needs.





Appendix B

Further information

This appendix provides some useful information and links for carers and organisations.

Australian Human Rights Commission links

- Find out more about the [Valuing Unpaid Caring Work in Australia Research Project](#) and read the report, *Investing in care: Recognising and valuing those who care* (2013) (<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/publications/>)
- Read the *Accumulating poverty? Women's experiences of inequality over the lifecycle* (2009) issues paper
- Find out more about unpaid carers and hear their stories in [Something in Common](#)
- Find out more about [federal anti-discrimination laws](#)

Information on federal workplace policies and laws

The [Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations](#) and the [Fair Work Ombudsman](#) have information about workplace laws and policies.

The [Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs \(FaHCSIA\)](#) and the [Department of Health and Ageing](#) have information about the *National Carer Recognition Act 2010* (Cth), the [National Carer Strategy](#) and the [National Carer Strategy Implementation Plan and first Action Plan](#) (2011-2014).

Register as a Care Aware Workplace under the [Care Aware – National Carer Awareness Initiative](#) and get information for employers and carers. The initiative aims to raise awareness, recognition, support and appreciation of people who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends.

Information on state and territory government policies and laws

You can find more information on workplace flexibility, work/life balance, carers in the workplace and anti-discrimination laws in Australian state and territory government websites:

New South Wales

- [NSW Industrial Relations](#) has some information about [workplace flexibility](#)
- The [Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW](#) has information on [carers' responsibilities and discrimination](#) under state law

Victoria

- [Business Victoria](#) has information on a range of workforce issues, including [workplace flexibility](#)
- The [Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission](#) has information on [carer status](#), [family responsibilities](#), [parental status discrimination](#), as well as [flexible work arrangements](#) for employers

Queensland

- The [Department of Justice and Attorney-General's Industrial Relations](#) division contains information on [work](#), [family](#) and [lifestyle](#)
- The [Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland](#) has information on discrimination based on [relationship status](#), [parental status](#) or [family responsibilities](#) under state law

Western Australia

- The Labour Relations division of the [Department of Commerce](#) has information on [work-life balance](#) and [creating a flexible workplace](#)
- The [Equal Opportunity Commission](#) has information on family responsibility and family status discrimination under state law

South Australia

- [SafeWork SA](#) contains information on [work-life balance](#)
- The [Equal Opportunity Commission](#) has information for employers about workplace discrimination against those with [caring responsibilities](#)

Tasmania

- The [Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner](#) has information about state anti-discrimination laws in relation to carers

Australian Capital Territory

- The [ACT Human Rights Commission](#) has information on discrimination against parents or carers

Northern Territory

- The [Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission](#) has information on discrimination against parenthood

Carers organisations

You can find more information on national, state and territory carers organisations here:

National

- [Carers Australia](#) is the national peak organisation for carers in Australia

New South Wales

- [Carers NSW](#) is the peak organisation for carers in New South Wales

Victoria

- [Carers Victoria](#) represents and provides support for carers in Victoria

Queensland

- [Carers Queensland](#) represents the needs and interests of carers in Queensland

Western Australia

- [Carers WA](#) is the peak body representing the needs and interests of carers in Western Australia

South Australia

- [Carers SA](#) represents carers in South Australia

Tasmania

- [Carers Tasmania](#) represents carers in Tasmania

Australian Capital Territory

- [Carers ACT](#) represents carers in the Australian Capital Territory

Northern Territory

- [Carers NT](#) represents carers in the Northern Territory

- 1 Based on analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia 2009*. Basic CURF, Version 3, CD-Rom, (2009).
- 2 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Caring in the Community, Australia (4436.0)* (2009), 5. See <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4436.0> (viewed 23 August 2012).
- 3 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Caring in the Community, Australia (4436.0)* (2009), 5. See <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4436.0> (viewed 23 August 2012).
- 4 M Bittman, T Hill and C. Thomson, 'The Impact of Caring on Informal Carers' Employment, Income and Earnings: A Longitudinal Approach' (2007) 42(2) *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 255; T Hill, C Thomson and B Cass, 'The costs of caring and the living standards of carers', *FaHCSIA's Social Policy Research Paper Series* (2011); DJ Edwards, M Higgins, N Gray, M Zmijewski and M Kingston, *The nature and impact of caring for a family member with a disability in Australia*, (2008); Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Labour Force', *Gender Indicators, Australia (4125.0)* (2012). See <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4125.0~Jul%202012~Main%20Features~Labour%20force~1110> (viewed 23 August 2012).
- 5 F Colombo, A Llana-Nozal, J Mercier and F Tjadens, *Help Wanted? Providing and Paying for Long-Term Care* (2011). See <http://www.oecd.org/health/longtermcare/helpwanted> (viewed 15 May 2012); C Wakabayashi and K Donato, 'The Consequences of Caregiving: Effects on Women's Employment and Earnings' (2005) 24(5) *Population Research and Policy Review* 467.
- 6 F Colombo, A Llana-Nozal, J Mercier and F Tjadens, *Help Wanted? Providing and Paying for Long-Term Care* (2011). See <http://www.oecd.org/health/longtermcare/helpwanted> (viewed 15 May 2012).
- 7 F Colombo, A Llana-Nozal, J Mercier and F Tjadens, *Help Wanted? Providing and Paying for Long-Term Care* (2011). See <http://www.oecd.org/health/longtermcare/helpwanted> (viewed 15 May 2012); R Cummins, J Hughes, A Tomin, A Gibson, J Woerner, and L Lai, *The wellbeing of Australians – carer health and wellbeing* (2007).
- 8 F Colombo, A Llana-Nozal, J Mercier and F Tjadens, *Help Wanted? Providing and Paying for Long-Term Care* (2011). See <http://www.oecd.org/health/longtermcare/helpwanted> (viewed 15 May 2012); T Hill, C Thomson, M. Bittman, and M Griffiths, 'What kinds of jobs help carers combine care and employment?' (2008) 80 *Family Matters* 27; C Thomson, T Hill, M Griffiths and M Bittman *Negotiating Caring and Employment – Final Report for ARC Linkage Project* (2008).
- 9 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Table 18 Labour Force Status by Sex 15-64 years', *Labour Force, Australia (6202.0)* (2012). See <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6202.0Jun%202012?OpenDocument> (viewed 23 August 2012).
- 10 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Author's calculations based on figures in 'Table 1 Labour Force Status Aged 15 years and over, Trend'. *Labour Force, Australia (6202.0)* (June 2012). See [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/meisubs.nsf/0/866EB53A3517BC58CA257A3800169F46/\\$File/62020_jun%202012.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/meisubs.nsf/0/866EB53A3517BC58CA257A3800169F46/$File/62020_jun%202012.pdf) (viewed 1 August 2012).
- 11 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Labour Force', *Gender Indicators, Australia, Catalogue no. 4125.0* (July 2012). At <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4125.0~Jul%202012~Main%20Features~Labour%20force~1110> (viewed 23 August 2012).
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- 15 Based on analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia 2009*. Basic CURF, Version 3, CD-Rom, (2009).
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- 18 These examples were compiled by the Australian Human Rights Commission, based on information from the Eurofound database and various reports and internet sources. See also Technical Paper F of the Australian Human Rights Commission, *Investing in care: Recognising and valuing those who care*, Volume 2 Technical Papers (2013).
- 19 These examples were compiled by the Australian Human Rights Commission, based on information from the Eurofound database and various reports and internet sources. See also Technical Paper F of the Australian Human Rights Commission, *Investing in care: Recognising and valuing those who care*, Volume 2 Technical Papers (2013).
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Further Information

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