



Family  
Friendly  
Workplaces™

# IMPACT CASE STUDIES



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Parents  
At Work



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# Introduction

Family Friendly Workplaces was established in 2021 by UNICEF Australia and Parents At Work together with a group of leading Australian employers.

This program provides an accreditation for organisations across all sectors in Australia. Its purpose is to build a family-friendly Australia by enabling more employers to adopt policies and practices that foster workplace cultures that are safe, inclusive and family friendly to genuinely support employees to thrive at work and at home.

Nicole Breeze, the Chief Advocate for Children at UNICEF Australia, says the FFW program is about wellbeing: family wellbeing, community wellbeing, as well as the productivity and benefits that can be achieved for workplaces and the economy. But she also notes the priority of UNICEF, which is the wellbeing of children, and how workplaces can support caregivers in delivering for the key needs of children, particularly in their first five years of life. She says she sees plenty of employers that appreciate this responsibility and are willing to prioritise and leverage more family friendly workplace practices, but they don't always know where to start or what good practice actually looks like.



# Impact

The program is strongly aligned with the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals of Good Health & Wellbeing and Gender Equality.

Specifically, the program seeks to impact:

- Increased gender equality, particularly through a gender-neutral approach to paid parental leave, encouraging men to take up the opportunity for greater caregiving paid parental leave, and empowering more women to return to the workforce
- Greater LGBTIQ+ inclusion in workplace policy and practices
- Improved workforce productivity and the ability to attract, motivate and retain employees
- Better child development outcomes for children with working parents.

The program seeks to drive reform in adoption of family friendly workplace policies and practices in Australia and seeks to measure the extent to which this adoption is occurring and understand the impact of the change.

**“The tension between work and family life is no longer something employers can afford to ignore. Many organisations are taking a stand on helping Australian parents and carers to better manage dual roles. The results, as these case studies highlight, are obvious. The people and their families in the following stories are a shining example of how working for a certified Family Inclusive Workplace goes a long way to producing a thriving work environment and community.”**

**Emma Walsh, CEO  
Family Friendly Workplaces**

**“One of the ways we can help employees manage competing pressures is by making workplaces more responsive to the needs of families, thereby relieving the pressure on caregivers, promoting women’s economic participation and giving men more opportunities to participate in family life. According to the World Health Organisation, an enabling environment of policies is essential in achieving this thus Governments must play their part, however the best outcomes will be achieved when this responsibility is shared with employers as well as caregivers themselves.**

**UNICEF is calling on all nations and organisations globally to invest in family-friendly policies and is urging government and the business community to take more action. These policies play a vital role in meeting the needs of employees to enable them to thrive at work and at home, increasing women’s workforce participation and ultimately supporting children’s developmental needs in a positive way.”**

**Tony Stuart, CEO, UNICEF Australia**

**Employers creating  
Family Friendly  
Workplaces**



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Australia underperforms on work-life balance indicators, paid parental leave and affordable childcare when compared with the majority of other OECD countries. UNICEF is calling on all nations and organisations globally to invest in family-friendly policies and is urging government and the business community to take more action.

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Since launching the National Work + Family Standards in May 2021, we have been encouraged to see employers across a wide range of industry sectors and size including government agencies, stepping up their efforts to adopt more family inclusive work practices. These practices help to reduce the stress and tension felt by employees when combining work and life responsibilities, particularly when caring for others.



**Employers play an integral role in the success of our society - both from an economic and health and wellbeing point of view. The policies and practices employers embed as well as the family friendly cultures they nurture, have the power to improve work-life wellbeing and consequently feed back into an employee's family and broader community.**



## Theme 1:

## Theme 2:

### Proven Change About the Case Studies

In early 2024, UNICEF Australia conducted a series of compelling interviews with employees who work for a certified Family Inclusive Workplace. The purpose of these interviews was to develop case studies that showcase and profile organisations that have adopted and embedded policies and practices as a result of their certification including showing the impact on employees, families, children and the organisation as a whole.

**The interviews address two core themes.**

**Investing in family-friendly policies is good for everyone, especially children.**

While parents want to do the best by their children, many have no option but to work long hours. This means that many are away from home, miss significant periods of time, or lack the time to spend with their young children.

The case studies highlight the developmental and wellbeing benefits children receive from parents working for family-inclusive employers and directly connects to UNICEF Australia's key mandate on improving the lives of children.

Key themes for these stories focus on:

- Share the care (men participating in parental leave and flexible working)
- Workplace flexibility to meet family and childcare needs
- Investment in early childcare support by organisations
- Grandparent's leave.

**Investing in family-friendly policies is good for women**

Family friendly policies and practices enable more women to participate in the workforce and for longer, to return to work after having a child and to better balance their work and caring responsibilities. The case studies highlight that working for a Family Friendly Workplace clearly has a positive impact on women personally, their participation in the workforce, their career progression as well as the wellbeing of their family.

We encourage employers and employees alike to read and share these case studies to advocate for why creating family-inclusive workplaces is a must for all people, not just parents. The benefits are clearly seen through the lives of those making the most of their employer's family-friendly policies.

# Case Study 1: Claire, HCF

Executive Assistant to Chief Officer – People & Culture

## A more inclusive paid parental leave policy

Having welcomed her second daughter, Riley, in January, Claire is grateful to receive her company's new paid parental leave (PPL) offering of 18 weeks including superannuation for all employees, regardless of gender – including those welcoming a child by birth, adoption, surrogacy, or permanent kinship or foster care.

When she had her first daughter, Tayla, Claire took 12 months off and received HCF's old PPL offering of 15 weeks plus superannuation. This time around, she says she felt more relaxed heading into her leave because she knew she has a few extra weeks to settle the new baby into day care before she returned to work.

As part of its new PPL policy, HCF has also introduced up to five days of paid leave for employees who have experienced pregnancy loss, which recognises the challenges some families face on the road to parenthood and the importance of providing support to them during a difficult time in their lives. The new policy also provides up to five days of grandparent leave, allowing grandparents to take time off work to care for their family. Employees can also access the HCF Family Hub where they can find out what benefits are available to them and get in touch with Parents At Work when they go on leave for return-to-work coaching and support.

Before becoming a Family Friendly Workplace, HCF already had several flexible work options in use, including a nine-day working fortnight with compressed hours, varied start and finish times, job sharing, hybrid working, and part-time work. After it became accredited, the company introduced a new Flexible Working Policy which formalised the ability for employees at all levels of the company to request the different types of flexibility.



These are arrangements that Claire has benefited from first-hand. With a long commute time, she enjoys the freedom of being able to work from home most days. After her first baby, she returned to work four days a week for 12 months before moving to a 9-day fortnight with full-time hours. Not only has it given Claire a dedicated weekday every fortnight to book her medical appointments, but it has improved her mental wellbeing, as well as that of her young daughter.

***“It means I get a day a fortnight off to spend with my daughter, and I am not so stressed on the weekends as I can do what needs to get done that day. The compressed work week has freed up the mental load – I know that I have that day up my sleeve,” Claire says.***

She says HCF's family friendly policies have made returning to the company after her parental leave a no-brainer. “I live quite far from the city, so prior to COVID-19 it may have been a case of finding another job, but the hybrid arrangements and parental leave benefits have made it a lot easier to stick it out and stay,” she says.

**“While our existing approach already had some real positives, we knew there was more we could do. These changes aim to bolster our employee experience, create a fairer and more flexible approach, and support more of our people through the different stages and challenges of parenthood.”**

**Angela Wilcox, Chief Officer, People & Culture, HCF**

## Case Study 2: Vicki, Investa

Workplace Manager, Investa Property Group

### Paid leave and flexible work arrangements for grandparents



After the birth of her eighth grandchild, Vicki was delighted to be able to take advantage of her company's broad range of parental leave benefits. Investa is an accredited Family Friendly Workplace offering five days paid grandparent leave and up to 12 months' unpaid grandparent leave, available within the first 24 months of the child's birth or adoption.

For Vicki, who has worked at Investa for more than 16 years, the paid grandparent leave allowed her to support her daughter who was suffering from post-natal depression. "It meant so much to her that I was able to be there for her, and she got back to work faster because I was available to support her and her child," she says. "She had the confidence to move forward."

Investa's flexible work arrangements for grandparents also mean that Vicki can continue to look after her granddaughter, who is now nearly two years old. Not only does it help her family financially, but Vicki has also been able to form a strong and meaningful attachment with her grandchild by having that regular time together.

***"It is such an advantage to still be a grandparent and working and being able to support my children and bond with my grandchildren one-on-one. Twenty years ago, you would not have been able to do that, to be able to have that balance. I really value it," Vicki says.***

Investa's flexible work arrangements also extend beyond children. The company previously supported Vicki as she cared for her elderly parents. "I am proud to be working at Investa," Vicki says. "Investa shows empathy, it is a company where family comes first and comes right from CEO and down."



## Case Study 3: Chris, ING Australia

Senior Manager, Wealth, Risk and Compliance

### Gender equal and flexible parental leave for all carers

After Chris and his partner had their first child, Rafael (Raffy), in late 2022, he knew it wouldn't be a problem if he took ING's full paid parental leave offering of 14 weeks, including superannuation (now 20 weeks as of March 2024). That's because at ING Australia, an accredited Family Friendly Workplace since 2021, all employees - regardless of gender - are encouraged to take parental leave, carer's leave and to work flexibly under ING's FlexING approach.

Chris had seen first-hand how other employees, including senior leaders, had benefited from it. In the first weeks of Raffy's life, taking parental leave allowed Chris and his partner to enjoy spending quality time with their new baby together and for Chris to support his partner.

***"There was something special about us both having time off together with him. It is a real benefit and a bonus," Chris says.***

Nearly a year later, Chris took his full paid parental leave and unpaid parental leave to look after Raffy as his partner returned to work. Not only did it help his family save on childcare costs, but more importantly, Chris said it made him a more confident father and strengthened the bond between him and his young child, a time that he will forever cherish. "I could also help with chores, making things a bit easier around the house and even hang up new pictures of our family," he says.

Although he was on parental leave, Chris found ING really made an effort to ensure he felt like he was still part of the team. Before Raffy was born, Chris said he was given a lot of flexibility to accompany his partner to medical appointments.



During his second block of parental leave, Chris said his team was incredibly supportive and that he has been able to remain present in his job. He was given the freedom to decide for himself how involved he wanted to be while on parental leave and attended team strategy days, events and meetings when possible.

Chris is proud to work for a Family Friendly Workplace like ING where all parents are empowered to share the care. "They live and breathe it," he says. "They are doing it because it is what's right, going above and beyond and raising the bar with benefits for everyone. Inclusion is at the core of what ING does, and it is not just for parents."

**"By becoming a family friendly accredited workplace we're making it clear that we welcome and celebrate the different set of circumstances and needs that each parent brings to ING. This creates an environment where parents feel understood and encouraged to find the right balance between work and home, leading to better work and life outcomes. We think our approach is the right one for any modern workplace wanting to encourage happier, healthier and higher performing people - both at work and in their personal lives."**

**Melanie Evans, CEO, ING Australia**

## Case Study 4: Ray, Investa

Facilities Manager, Investa Property Group

### Paid leave and flexible work arrangements for grandparents



Like Vicki, Ray is another Investa employee and proud grandparent whose family has benefited from grandparents leave.

As an accredited Family Friendly Workplace, Investa offers five days' paid leave to any employee whose child or stepchild (or their partner) gives birth to or adopts a child, which may be taken flexibly within two months of birth. Employees are also given the option to take up to 12 months of unpaid grandparent leave within the first two years of birth.

When his eldest daughter went into labour weeks before her due date and her husband was away for work, Ray took two days of grandparents leave on short notice so he could support her during this stressful time.

"It would have been very difficult if I didn't get the two days off - I would have taken it as annual leave," he said. "I can now save my annual leave for a proper holiday. There is nothing worse than having to use your leave when you are not resting."

Peter Menegazzo, CEO of Investa, stated that "Family plays such an important role in the health and well-being of employees. Positioning its culture to be supportive, inclusive and forward-thinking allows an organisation to realise the benefits that come from a diverse workforce at all levels. Organisations with supportive and inclusive policies and practices will, without doubt, attract and retain strong talent."

"Households are increasingly becoming dual income; meaning that families are often juggling parental responsibilities and/or carer responsibilities for aging family members and the like, whilst also managing their work commitments and priorities. For workplaces to remain competitive and progressive, employees must be holistically supported. Family Friendly Workplace accreditation positions organisations to challenge their practices and take a really intentional approach to enhancing their support and offering, ultimately providing strong outcomes for both employees and employers," Peter said.

**"Commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace is a forward-thinking approach, enabling employees of any gender to share the responsibilities that come with family life. By doing so, employees are supported to actively incorporate family life with their work life, an outcome of which will be a positive impact on gender equity outcomes. Embracing family inclusivity positions organisations to sustain their success now and in the future."**

**Peter Menegazzo, Chief Executive Officer, Investa**

## Case Study 5: Jennifer, QBE

Portfolio Management Office Manager

### Paid parental leave for those impacted by loss

The past nine years have been incredibly challenging on a personal and professional level for Jennifer, who has experienced three miscarriages. After taking two weeks' annual leave after her first pregnancy loss in 2018, Jennifer told her colleagues that she had been sick with a virus as she didn't want to come across as unprofessional.

But once her employer of 13 years, insurance company QBE became an accredited Family Friendly Workplace and partnered with the Pink Elephants Support Network – a not-for-profit that provides resources and peer-support for anyone impacted by early pregnancy loss – there was a huge shift in the support she received following her most recent pregnancy loss.

The change saw QBE extend its paid parental leave allowance of up to 12 weeks paid leave across 24-months to birth mothers, fathers and LGBTIQ+ employees impacted by loss. Affected employees can also access mental health care resources including leave allowances on loss anniversary dates.

“It understands the fact that pregnancy loss is not a single event – it is an all-encompassing experience and journey,” Jennifer says. “It doesn't finish when the physical things happen – it is emotional, physical and affects everyone differently at different times – much like the grieving process.”

The policy provided a lifeline for Jennifer during this difficult time. “I don't know what I would have done if that policy was not in place, I didn't have enough leave,” she said. “I couldn't physically have come to work and manage it all. It helped me build back up my resilience and strength.”



In addition to creating more inclusive policies, QBE's partnership with Pink Elephants has helped educate employees and leaders on how to support colleagues who have experienced pregnancy loss and fertility issues. Jennifer says the program has empowered her to advocate for an issue that affects one in three Australian women yet is still considered taboo.

“There is probably someone in every team that has experienced pregnancy loss directly or indirectly,” she says. “As a leader, the support I have received from QBE through Pink Elephants has allowed me to make a safe space for others so I can normalise the conversation and speak with genuine care and experience. It is important we don't leave people feeling alone.”

Under Australian workplace law, employees are currently entitled to just five days of leave following a pregnancy loss. Jennifer says QBE has been a trailblazer in this space and that her experience has cemented her loyalty to the company as she considers her future career.

**“QBE has truly embedded our program across all areas of the business from inclusive policies to in-house peer support companions and quarterly focus sessions. They are truly breaking the shame, stigma and silence so commonly associated with pregnancy loss and fertility challenges that often go hidden in the workplace.”**

**Sam Payne, Co-founder and CEO, Pink Elephants**

# Case Study 6: Jono, Medibank

Talent Acquisition Lead Corporate  
- Talent Inclusion and Engagement

## Four-day work week trial and Paid Parental Leave



Last year, Jono became one of 250 Medibank employees selected to take part in a four-day work week experiment over six months. As a father of one – and another baby on the way – the opportunity to change the way work gets done with the aim of unlocking greater flexibility has seen him maintain his output at work while being able to spend more quality time with his wife and two-year-old daughter, Primrose.

“We are much more involved because we can go along to the playground, swimming lessons, and those important moments, not just communicating through a text message or a phone call,” he says. “I have seen a shift with Prim asking, ‘Dad, are you working today, or do you have the day off today?’ and I can say ‘Yes, we can do something together,’ which is really nice.”

Once baby number two arrives, this greater flexibility will help Jono and his family more easily balance work and home life.

***“Having more time and choice in our lives is massive, especially as we adjust to having a new baby. We feel very lucky.”***

Jono’s entire team is taking part in the trial, and it has already seen a big shift in the way they work. They have worked really hard to become more efficient and remove low-value work including being stricter with their time when it comes to the number and length of meetings they hold every week and are also looking into ways of automating aspects of their work. Jono says the support and understanding of his manager and team has made all the difference. “They make it very hard to leave,” he says.

The four-day work week trial is one of several family friendly policies Medibank employees can access, including hybrid working and the removal of a wait period for new employees to access Medibank’s paid parental leave offering of 14 weeks, including superannuation, that all employees – regardless of gender – can access.

## Case Study 7: Luc, Department of Regional NSW

Principal Policy Officer, Local Land Services

### Flexible work arrangements for people with disability and carers

Luc, living in regional NSW, appreciates the flexibility his job offers while caring for his three children aged 11 to 17, including his youngest, Evie, who has cerebral palsy. For many years, his wife was the family's primary caregiver, and she usually took Evie to her medical appointments, most of which were out-of-town. .

However, the flexible work options offered by the Department of Regional NSW to people with disabilities and carers meant he could support his partner as she returned to work part-time.

Now in its third year of Family Friendly Workplace accreditation, the Department of Regional NSW offers employees flex time (i.e. flexible start and finish times), the option to purchase extra annual leave, part-time work, job sharing, remote working, leave without pay and study leave. Before the pandemic, all staff were required to work between 10am and 3pm unless they had organised leave.

While Luc previously struggled with meeting the demands of his job while also balancing his family's needs, he says having access to flex time and carers' leave has made a huge difference to the quality of his work and family life, particularly being able to support his wife in undertaking a caring role to Evie.



***“With no assistance available locally and a high work demand at times, I regularly utilise the Department’s agile working environment to strike the balance between work and family. Without these arrangements in place, I’d have to make a choice between work and family,” Luc says.***

The agile working approach has also improved staff retention within the Department, with employees more likely to stay on in their roles. Luc says the key to creating a successful flexible work arrangement is for workplaces and managers to be understanding and supportive of their staff, particularly when it comes to ensuring they are getting their work-life balance right.

“The support around carers is just as important as the focus on carers – together, we strengthen each other,” Luc says.

**“Being a family inclusive workplace empowers our team to balance their family and work life and bring their authentic and best selves to work, without having to compromise either their professional or family life.”**

**Steve Orr**  
Secretary, Department of Regional NSW



**Thank you to all our incredible families for sharing their stories and to the family-inclusive employers paving the way for real change in our workplaces.**

**WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO:**



## **ABOUT US**

We thank all our founding partners for supporting this initiative from the start, helping to create a solid foundation to carry the Family Friendly Workplace initiative into the future of work.

## **CONTACT:**

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