

MEDIA RELEASE

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Mother's Day: let's value mothers – at work as well as home

This Mother's Day, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) is calling on employers to recognise and celebrate the value of mothers in workplaces and across the economy.

"While Australians celebrate their own mums' contribution to their families, it is also important to remember the great economic contribution women make through paid and unpaid work," said WGEA Director Libby Lyons.

"Australian women are increasingly active participants in the workforce while still performing close to double the unpaid domestic work as men.

"If we are to continue to shrink the workforce participation gap between women and men – with all the business and economic benefits this delivers – it is important that employers value every mothers' contribution at work and remove barriers to their participation.

"Important ways employers can support mothers include offering access to flexible work – even in senior roles; providing proactive support for return to work from parental leave; as well as supporting their male employees to take an active role at home through flexibility, and access to carers' leave."

Ms Lyons said supporting new mothers who are coming back to work is vitally important – the investment retains skilled staff members, and boosts staff morale and organisational efficiency.

"There are broader economic benefits too, with OECD research forecasting GDP growth of 12% over the next two decades if women's workforce participation rate matched men's."

Some innovative ways Australian employers support mothers at work include:

- Onsite or subsidised childcare
- Payment of superannuation during paid and/or unpaid parental leave
- 'Stay in touch' schemes during parental leave
- Return-to-work bonuses to help women cover the costs of returning from parental leave
- 'Returnship' schemes to help women who have been out of the workforce for a period of time.

Ms Lyons said there is much more that can be done by employers and that those who have invested in their employees, who are mothers, have seen significant benefits to their organisations.

How do Australian organisations support mothers?

According to WGEA data:

1. **48% offer primary carers' leave**
2. **53.5% provide non-leave based measures to people with caring responsibilities**
3. **5.1% offer on-site childcare and 3.1% offer subsidised childcare**
4. **28.7% have on-site breast-feeding facilities**
5. **4% offer a return to work bonus**
6. **8.3% offer coaching for employees returning to work from parental leave**
7. **62.9% have a policy or strategy for flexible working arrangements**

Mothers and unpaid care

- For every hour of unpaid care work that men perform, women will perform one hour and 48 minutes
- The value of unpaid childcare work is around **\$345 billion** – making it almost three times bigger than the financial and insurance sector combined
- Time out of the paid workforce is a big contributor to Australian women retiring with almost half as much superannuation as men

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About the Agency: The Workplace Gender Equality Agency is an Australian Government statutory agency charged with promoting and improving gender equality in Australian workplaces.