



Benetas



Health Care and
Social Assistance



1,500
employees



84%
female



16%
male

Challenge

Health Care and Social Assistance is the fastest growing sector in Australia, yet to meet increasing demand for care, the workforce of 350,000 needs to triple by 2050. That is an enormous task.

It is a female-dominated sector: 80% of aged care workers are women, and almost 90% of the graduates entering the industry are women. With the slowdown in mining and manufacturing, the traditional gender-segregated workforce patterns of 'male' and 'female' work urgently need to be addressed.

Strategy

Benetas is striving to achieve cultural change in its workplaces and create greater gender balance by challenging gender stereotypes.

Traditionally it has been women with caring responsibilities who have sought flexible working options, but research shows this is changing. Increasingly, workplace flexibility is a key driver of employment decisions for men – especially younger fathers, male managers and men approaching retirement.

This interest in flexibility reflects a societal shift where many men do not conform to the ideal 'full-time' worker model and instead have a range of priorities and aspirations, such as to be active fathers or engaged in their community.

"The demand to have greater access to flexible work enables men to share the balance of caring and household responsibilities and helps to facilitate gender equality at work and at home," says Ellen Flint, General Manager, People, Development and Diversity at Benetas.

“For me, I think there was a belief that there was a trade-off between flexibility and career, and you couldn’t have both.”

Actions

Benetas actively promotes the benefits of flexible work to its male employees, highlighting part-time, job-share and flexible opportunities in the jobs section of its website, and often features profiles of male care workers.

Men and women are encouraged to take up a purchased leave arrangement which enables them to purchase an additional two or four weeks of annual leave each year.

“We are seeing flexibility, such as part-time or shift work, as something that we can offer to attract more men to aged care,” says Ellen.

The organisation has also discovered what it calls a ‘hidden pay gap’ which is as a result of women working part-time and taking more unpaid leave than men. At the same time men tend to work full-time and take less leave, which affects their capacity to share in caring responsibilities outside work.

As one way to address this imbalance, in 2015, Benetas introduced superannuation payments for all staff on paid parental leave to help ease the financial pressure of taking time out of the workforce for both women and men.

Benetas offers eight weeks’ paid parental leave for primary carers and two weeks’ paid leave for secondary carers. Paid parental leave for secondary carers can also be staggered over three months to enable part-time work during the period and some

new fathers have used this option to work part-time following the birth of their child. There have also been a number of men taking 12 months away from the workplace to be the primary carer for their children so their spouse can return to work.

As well as flexibility, Benetas has prioritised clear succession planning and promotion opportunities to retain more male employees.

Outcomes

“As a result of our emphasis on challenging stereotypes, we are seeing more men working flexibly,” says Ellen. “In the last five years there has been a 3% increase in male employees. It’s a high priority for us to continue to increase the number of males in the industry.”

Employee experience

Andrew Jamieson worked in manufacturing and mining before joining Benetas as the Learning and Organisational Development Manager in 2014.

“I used to have deeply held assumptions about the role of men, about work and about families. I was full-time, the main breadwinner and left the majority of caring responsibilities to my wife who is actually a full-time teacher. For me, I think there was a belief that there was a trade-off between flexibility and career, and you couldn’t have both.

“I’m lucky now to be working in a culture that values diversity and flexibility in its workforce. And in 2016 I took up purchased leave to have an additional two weeks’ leave each year. I use this to share caring responsibilities for our 25-year-old son who has an intellectual disability.

“But it’s done more than that – I now think differently about my role as a father and husband and my role at work. A career can co-exist with flexible working, and I’m hoping this will also allow my wife to develop her career further without many of the impediments that existed previously.”



Visit www.wgea.gov.au to learn about employer best practice and download practical tools to improve gender equality in your workplace.

Drill down into our data at data.wgea.gov.au to compare how industries are performing on gender equality.