WORK AND FAMILY INITIATIVES

IN AUSTRALIA.

by

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Why is it that in the current period of high unemployment and industrial restructuring, some employers are implementing policies which attempt to make it easier for employees to combine employment, domestic and family responsibilities? It would seem unnecessary in times of economic difficulty and adjustment for employers to accommodate the needs of employees, particularly when unemployment levels are high – in the case of Australia unemployment exceeds 11%. This paradox, however, exists in many western industrialised countries.

The implementation of policies designed to enable employees to participate in the care of dependents has occurred in many countries. The nature of these policies, the timing of their implementation and the way in which they were introduced varies between countries. Government and trade union support of these policies appears to be a critical factor influencing the implementation of these policies.

In Sweden the government actively supports people with dependents participating in employment. Since the 1960's it has enacted legislation such as the new Tax Code 1971, the Parental Leave Act, the Security of Employment Act, the Promotion of Employment Act 1974 which sought to make the combination of employment and domestic duties easier for both men and women (Moen 1989). Sweden provides generous paid leave arrangements for both mothers and fathers to care for new born, adopted or sick children (Haas 1992; Kamerman and Kahn 1991). The ability to shorten working hours while children are young and retain working conditions and benefits is also available in Sweden (Kamerman and Kahn 1991; Haas 1992). A comprehensive system of public child care is provided through local government authorities, with state, local authorities and parents sharing the cost (Ochiltree 1991).

At the other extreme, in the United States, the government plays a limited role in supporting employees combining domestic and employment responsibilities. Until the
implementation of the Family and Medical Leave Act in August 1993, there was no consistent provision of leave for the care of newborn or adopted children, with state legislation providing a wide variation of benefits to employees. The Family and Medical Leave Act establishes a minimum standard of leave for employees with 12 months or 1,250 hours of service. It requires employers with 50 or more employees to allow employees to take up to 12 weeks unpaid leave during any twelve month period in order to care for a new born, foster or adopted child. It also allows this leave to be taken in the event of serious illness of a spouse, parent or child or because of the employee's own serious illness.

Despite the government's laissez-faire approach to this matter, almost all of America's largest corporations offer a variety of family supportive programs and services. These range from the very common maternity leave arrangements, to the availability of part-time work and, in some instances, the provision of assistance with child care. However, this last benefit is reported to be rare. Researchers report "it appears that work–family initiatives may be recession–proof and increasing" and that they are "becoming a mainstay of corporate life in the United States" (Galinsky, Friedman and Hernandez 1991:5).

In the United States the federal government does not have a coherent policy on the provision of childcare services, and as a result, the private sector, communities and states provide these services. Although employers are increasingly establishing day care centres to meet the child care needs of their employees (Galinsky, Friedman and Hernandez 1991), these initiatives really only occur in relatively few organisations. The child care problems of employees tend to be dealt with informally by many employers (Hayghe 988:42–3). Part time employment is available in the United States; however, unlike Sweden this is usually associated with poorer pay and employment conditions (Moen 1988:70). Research indicates more employers are providing flexible working arrangements for some employees (Galinsky, Friedman and Hernandez 1991).
The situation in Australia is different again. In 1990, the Australian government ratified ILO Convention 156 and thus demonstrated its commitment to the creation of a situation where workplaces are free from discrimination for workers with family responsibilities. To achieve this, the government has adopted a Work and Family Strategy which includes promoting attitudinal change in the community and the workforce, acknowledging that workers with families have special needs by implementing employment conditions which assist workers with accommodating child care and employment, and ensuring these employees share in the benefits of training.

Unpaid leave is provided to mothers and fathers following the birth or adoption of a child (ACTU Guidelines 1992:6). In some sectors a proportion of this leave is paid. For instance, in many areas of the public sector twelve weeks paid leave is available (Glezer 1988:2). As yet, there are no provisions for special family leave, with employees taking their own sick leave to deal with family responsibilities (VandenHeuval 1993:78). The government funds publicly subsidised community based child care and provides low income earners with relief with the cost of child care fees. However, it is seeking to encourage employer sponsored involvement in the provision of child care services.

Part time employment is also available in Australia, but in most instances the employment conditions associated with full time employment do not apply to employees in part time jobs. These employees receive few benefits such as sick leave (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1993). If these employees are casual, part–time employees they also experience job insecurity.

This paper examines the development of initiatives in Australia which seek to accommodate employee's work and family responsibilities. It identifies the nature of these initiatives, the reasons these initiatives were developed and possible prospects for further
developments in these policies. It is particularly concerned with examining the role of trade unions, governments and employers in the initiation of these policies in an attempt to explain the character of initiatives in Australia and why they are different from those in other countries such as Sweden and the United States.

**WORK AND FAMILY INITIATIVES**

Policies in this area can be delineated in terms of those which apply to the entire workforce or in terms of those which apply to only particular sectors, such as certain employers or in some industries. They cover matters associated with working arrangements, leave provisions and facilities for dependent care. At a broader level they refer to issues such as the culture of an organisation and the way the culture is reflected in a Vision, Value or Mission Statement and human resource management policies in general. Work and Family initiatives therefore cover a broad range of policies, and are not limited to only employment policies.

**Employment Provisions**

In Australia, standards establishing leave arrangements are set by awards which are determined by industrial tribunals, and by legislation in the states of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. All employees covered by awards are entitled to leave arrangements which seek to enable parents to accommodate the birth or adoption of a child. In the private sector this leave is unpaid and it entitles women and men to resume their previous job or a job of equivalent status. In the public sector, employees are entitled to 12 weeks of paid leave. In the three states and territory where there is legislation, permanent female employees not covered by Federal awards are eligible for leave based on the standard Federal award clause. Table 1 lists the main provisions of the standard award clause and the New South Wales legislation covering parental leave.
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<td><strong>Notice of return to work</strong></td>
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<td>NSW legislation:</td>
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<td>Standard clause: Federal, QLD &amp; WA awards, Vic and SA legislation</td>
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Some organisations provide more generous leave provisions and maintenance of entitlements for employees while on maternity leave. The National Australia Bank allows employees on Maternity Leave, Annual Leave or Paternity Leave to keep their concessional benefits, such as reduced home loans, on condition that they return for a similar period after their leave. Similar conditions apply in the ANZ Bank, while in Hewlett-Packard employees are allowed to keep their cars. A number of organisations attempt to maintain contact with employees on maternity, paternity or parental leave through providing these employees with newsletters, information about job vacancies, inviting these employees to lunches and workshops on topics such as child care options (ACTU 1993; Crocombe 1993).

**Working arrangements**

Working arrangements refers to the number of hours and pattern of hours worked during a particular period. It also refers to the location in which the work takes place. Standards determining working hours are set out in awards or in state legislation. The general standard is that working hours should not exceed

- eight hours out of any consecutive 24 hours
- 40 hours per week
- 120 hours in 21 consecutive days or
- 160 hours in 28 consecutive days.

In addition, many awards establish the working week as being from Monday to Friday. The custom has been that any work performed outside these standard hours requires special payment in the form of penalty rates, shift allowances or overtime payments. The employer has the right to determine the starting and finishing times within the limits prescribed by the award.
It is possible for employers to make adjustments to working hours. These can take the form of:

- staggered working hours in which starting and finishing times vary for employees
- working hours which predict workload levels and base staffing on this prediction
- Nine day fortnight which allows the employee to work the total fortnightly hours in nine days and is then entitled to one day off a fortnight
- Flexible working hours which allow the employee to choose when he or she will start and finish work within the limits of the core period when all staff must be on duty
- Variable working hours which provides the employee with complete freedom to choose the hours worked subject to completing the contractual obligations entered into with the company

Flexible working years allow employees to choose the number of hours per month during an established period, for instance six months.

Australia has been slow in developing flexible working arrangements. In 1990 it was claimed Australia lagged 3–5 years behind the US and even further behind welfare oriented countries like Sweden (Neales, 1990). However, schemes providing for flexible working hours have gained in popularity and have been introduced into the public and private sector for white collar, production and factory workers (CCH 1993:33–300). These schemes have been tailored to suit the organisation's requirements and have been introduced as a means of improving productivity (Neales 1990; CCH 1993:33–300).

The Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) determined in 1990 as part of the Parental Leave Test Case that female employees were entitled to engage in "permanent part-time work" during pregnancy and a male or female employee was entitled to engage in permanent part-time work for up to two years after the birth of a child with the right to return to their former full-time position after the period of part-time work. However, this entitlement is only available if the employer agrees. The availability of an automatic
entitlement to part-time work after maternity leave has been introduced in a number of organisations in the finance, computing and manufacturing industries. The ANZ, Commonwealth, Westpac banks, National Mutual, IBM, Hewlett-Packard, ICI, Esso, Biotech and McCain's Frozen Foods are instances where flexible working arrangements have been introduced into an award or into company policy (ACTU 1993:7).

Facilities for dependent care

The Commonwealth government supports the provision of child care for pre-school age children by supporting

. the supply of child care services
. targeting areas of highest need for work-related care
. ensuring child care is affordable for low and middle income families
. enabling the provision of quality child care in the interests of children, including children with special needs (Department of Health, Housing and Community Services 1991 (a):3).

The government allocates funds to achieve these objectives. In 1992 it has committed funds for an additional 10,000 new centre based places in the community sector, 10,000 new family day care places and 30,000 outside school hours care places, including vacation care. In addition it has extended fee relief to low and middle income families using employer sponsored and commercial child care. The government is also keen to encourage employers to develop policies which accomodate the child care needs of their employees, particularly the development of new employer sponsored child care services. To this end it provided funding for the establishment of work and child care advisory services in the states of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. These services provide free professional advice to assist employers with the analysis and assessment of suitable options for helping their employees with child care responsibilities (Department of Health, Housing and Community Services 1991 (a):3–4). The Commonwealth government also provides tax concessions for employers who provide child care for their staff. These
tax concessions accrue as the result of capital expenditure on child care facilities, operating costs associated with running a child care centre and exemption from the payment of fringe benefit tax (FBT) (Commonwealth Department of Health, Housing and Community Services 1992).

A survey of Australian employers indicated that the provision of employer sponsored child care was seen as a means of increasing the organisations competitive position. Only nineteen per cent of companies surveyed supported employer sponsored child care and these employers claimed they would consider investigating child care under the following conditions:
. in the event of child care facilities increasing the competitive position of the company,
. in the event of financial support being provided when economic conditions improved, or
. in circumstances when the provision was part of other workplace reforms (Fisher and Biggs 1991:viii).

Employer sponsored child care has been provided in the form of long day care and extended hours child care centres and school holiday care programs. One of the characteristics of these services is that the number of places available at the child care centre is small compared to the number of employees in the organisation (Department of Health, Housing and Community Services 1991(b)).

Finally, some employers have developed policies which allow employees to work from home. Technology, such as the fax machine and computers which can be linked to the office, has facilitated the development of home work through "telecommuting" or "teleworking". Employers have accommodated home work in a variety of ways such as
. at Mercantile Mutual allowing employees to work from home in cases of family emergencies for up to 10 days a year
. at ICI some employees, pharmaceutical sales representatives are able to work from a home office

. at BP some home based work areas such as data input conditions have been negotiated with the trade union and health and safety concerns have been attended to by providing ergonomic furniture being provided in the home office.

The ACTU provides for Working from Home clauses to be included in an enterprise agreement. However, it has a policy that award conditions and protection should be extended to all workers, including outworkers, part-time, casual and seasonal workers. Its policy states

"Any policy on home–work must however be approached carefully. Most areas of "home work" have traditionally been very exploited forms of employment, eg outworkers in the clothing industry, Family Day Care workers in the child care industry and even freelance journalists, tend to work for wages and conditions which are lower than for those employed in factories and offices. The test case for clothing outworkers won in 1987 by the Clothing Trades Union and the ACTU, established award wages and conditions for outworkers but, a similar case for Family Day Care workers was lost, and implementing the outworkers ruling is very difficult.

The ACTU considers that any policy on home–working for employees should therefore ensure the following:

. Wages and conditions must be at least as good as for all other workers covered by the agreement

. All equipment used should be paid for by the employer

. There should be regular contact between employer and employee

. Training, promotion and other opportunities available to "on–site" employees must be equally available to "home–working" employees." (ACTU 1993:25).
In the last five years employment conditions for most employees have been developed to accommodate work and family responsibilities. Standards providing for leave to undertake recent child care responsibilities and child care facilities have been extended to most employees. In addition, in some organisations employees have been given access to more flexible working hours without losing employment benefits, provision has been made for employees to work at home and the availability of child care facilities has increased.

**ORGANISATIONAL POLICIES**

Initiatives which seek to accommodate employees' family and work responsibilities have also been developed in the context of general organisational policy. They have been developed in Vision and Value Statements, Human Resource Management strategies and Affirmative Action plans. When developed as part of these wider policies, these initiatives are viewed as ways of improving organisational productivity and efficiency. These initiatives are however, still not common in Australian organisations.

Vision and Value Statements establish the values that formally underpin organisational policies and they represent the formal intent of the company. They can provide the basis for the development of employment policies and standards for employee behaviour. They are therefore an important way of signalling the company's culture.

BP has used its Vision and Value Statement to acknowledge that employees need to strike a balance between their responsibilities to BP and to their home life. This formal intent has been operationalized by providing part-time work, and where possible home based work, a sensitive relocation policy and a requirement for employees to think about their long term career aspirations and life goals in their development plan.

Some companies have also acknowledged that family responsibilities influence not only long term employment patterns, but also employee productivity. In these companies it is
believed employee productivity is effected by absenteeism rates, turnover rates and employee health. It is believed the company's employment costs could be reduced by changing their approach to the management of employees and as a consequence reducing absenteeism and turnover. In Pacific Brands, a Division of Pacific Dunlop, it was believed employment costs could be reduced by changing the style of management from an authoritarian to a more participative and open style, and by increasing flexibility. To this end, employees were made the focus of the strategies and a two way communication process was introduced. An attitude survey was conducted, with employees being surveyed about the reasons for their absenteeism. In addition effective communication structures and processes were developed, line management assumed responsibility for workers' compensation as well as for developing trust among employees and training programmes were developed with components dealing with gender issues. These programmes are reported to have been effective in reducing the costs associated with injuries, absenteeism and turnover. In five years injuries fell by 50% and absenteeism fell from 10% to 3.5% (Aidie and Carmody 1992).

Another organisation which has sought to develop a culture which was conducive to employees combining employment and domestic responsibilities is Biotech Australia (Biotech). Management decided it was important to retain and maintain skilled staff, and as a consequence a mission statement – "Quality through teamwork and innovation" – was adopted in 1991. This mission statement was the basis for the examination of existing employment policies and the subsequent development of a range of policies designed to promote teamwork, retention of staff and a culture of excellence. These policies included

. a parental leave policy available to staff with 12 months continuous service
. flexible leave and working times arrangements
. permanent part–time employment arrangements which provide employees with the same benefits and conditions as permanent full–time staff, including access to promotion
. policies which maintain contact with employees on maternity leave, for instance managers remain in contact employees, invite them to social funcyions, and can send them on training courses while on leave

. a "Special Family Leave" policy which provides employees with 5 days paid leave a year in order to care for a sick spouse or children

. assistance with relocating employees so financial assistance is provided and the employment and income requirements of the relocating employees spouse are taken into account (Cook 1993).

A fourth organisation which has sought to develop a family friendly culture is Michael Johnson and Associates, a Sydney based firm of consultants with sixteen employees. It was identified as Australia's fourth most family friendly company in the 1993 Business Council of Australia/Australian Financial Review awards. It is acknowledged as a successful, profitable business winning the NSW Small Business of the Year Award for Service Industries in 1991. This company emphasises the importance of profit but makes assumptions about employees behaviour so family–friendly employment policies can be developed. The assumptions and objectives underpinning the policies are that

. employees will put family responsibilities before work responsibilities

. it is impossible to predict the full range of solutions that may arise

. different people need different solutions to accommodate work and family responsibilities

. the overall focus is on maximising the firm's profitability

. our staff are mature, trustworthy and support the aims of the firm.

These assumptions were reflected in Michael Johnson and Associates emphasis on profit:

"Profit comes first – after profit we can embrace ideologically sound work practices, generous employee benefits, lunch, fun ... Profit is thus slap, bang central to our job descriptions, is the reason we are here and needs to be at the forefront of our minds in the performance of our job, our relations with each other and our relations with our clients."
Anything which gets in the way of profit presents a threat to this organisation, to me personally and to the good that we do."

In the light of this emphasis on profit and assumptions about employee motivation the following policies were developed:

. family members are welcome at work
. work can be carried out at home
. we acknowledge charge out rates are much higher than childcare rates so arrangements are made so employees can get on with their work
. different stages of life require different work patterns
. sometimes leave arrangements are used to enable the accommodation of work and family responsibilities
. the employees makes what they consider to be the best decision in terms of their needs and the requirement to minimise the profit impact (Johnson 1993).

These examples illustrate how some companies view family friendly policies as a way of developing a work environment which encourages co-operative and trusting behaviour. Employment policies which allow employees to accommodate the demands of child rearing, particularly the unexpected demands, are seen as ways of developing employee commitment to the organisation and therefore productivity. In the cases cited, management recognized the value of existing employees and sought to develop means to retain these employees.

**REASONS FOR THESE INITIATIVES**

There were a variety of reasons these policies were developed in Australia. These include the development of international standards applying to the employment of women and employees with family responsibilities, economic pressures resulting from developments such as the internationalisation of the Australian economy and increasing competition and
a realization that employment costs could be reduced by cutting turnover, absenteeism and improving employee health and morale. The support of governments and the trade union movement were critical to the adoption of those policies which established standards across the workforce. At the organisational level managements desire to improve profitability through the adoption of more efficient employment practices was key factor in the development of initiatives. The development of industrial relations principles which facilitated flexibility in employment and the acceptance by some managements of the need to change organisational culture were also important catalysts in the process of change.

*International Standards*

The International Labour Office (ILO) established a number of Conventions and Recommendations, collectively known as the International Labour Code. These include

. Convention No 111, Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) 1958

. Convention No 100, Equal Remuneration 1951

. Convention No 156, Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities.

Governments which ratify the ILO Conventions have a responsibility to undertake legislative and policy measures to promote the principles embodied in these conventions.

Australian Labour governments have ratified these conventions and have sought to implement the principles embodied in the conventions through a variety of strategies including legislation, social policies and the provision of funding for policy initiatives. Legislation, particularly the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 and the Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act 1986 establishes the standards employers should use in employment policies. In addition, section 93 of the Industrial Relations Act 1988 requires decisions of the Industrial Relations Commission to comply with the Sex Discrimination Act and government contractors must comply with the

. to protect women employees in a more deregulated labour market,

. provide additional protection from discrimination to workers with family responsibilities and

. include victimisation as ground for complaint under the Act.

An award can be found to be discriminatory if it includes terms which treat employees unfavourably on the basis of sex. This could include instances where discrimination occurs in relation to access to shift work or overtime rates, or where allowances or increments are denied to women, or where wage rates determined under award classifications are undervalued on the basis of sex.

Although these pieces of legislation do not explicitly deal with the accommodation of the needs of employees with family responsibilities, they provide the opportunity for the examination of the way employment policies could discriminate against some workers, including workers with family responsibilities. They therefore establish a standard for behaviour and employment policies in organisations.

The ratification of ILO Convention 156 recognises that assisting employees to balance work and family is important for all the parties operating in the labour market – men and women, employers and unions and, that it also assists the functioning of the economy. Official policy states

"Minimising conflict between work and family responsibilities adds to an individual's quality of work and family life and enables our nation to achieve its full potential (Department of Industrial Relations 1993:1).

Following ratification, the federal government established a community education program about work and family and a Work and Family Unit which was to do research into work
and family matters. It also developed a strategy with objectives
. to achieve a better balance between work and family,
. the removal of discrimination against workers with family responsibilities,
. the development of employment conditions which facilitate the combination of
employment and family duties,
. improved access and incentives to employment, training and education for workers with
family responsibilities and
. the provision of better community services such as child and aged care (Department of
Industrial Relations 1993).

Economic pressures
Economic forces have often encouraged employers to modify their employment policies.
This was most evident during the First and Second World Wars when women were
selected for jobs traditionally done by men (Kramar 1982) and in the 1950's and 1960's
when restrictive practices affecting the employment of women and working hours were
revised. During these years part–time hours were introduced as means of dealing with
labour shortages in some industries. Surveys conducted by the Department of Labour and
National Service in 1964 and 1969 found all firms surveyed in 1964 and two thirds of the
firms surveyed in 1969 introduced part–time employment as a temporary measure to cope
with an acute labour shortage (Department of Labour and National Service 1970:13–17).
Another survey (Mountain 1968) found labour shortages had forced some firms to arrange
hours to suit married female employees so these women would enter employment.

More recently, major developments in national economies and markets, including
Australia, are causing "transformation in organizational missions, strategies, structures and
workforce characteristics. In both the public and private sectors, these changes are often
driven by increasing demands from influential stakeholders for greater profitability and/or
effectiveness" (Dunphy and Stace 1992:13–14). Both employer groups (Business Council
of Australia 1989; Hilmer 1989) and trade unions (ACTU 1993) consider that greater
flexibility in working hours and employment patterns would contribute to improved organizational effectiveness. Support for flexibility in employment was endorsed by the Industrial Relations Commission initially in the National Wage Case Decision of 1988. This decision provided for the granting of wage rises in exchange for productivity improvements which were assumed to result from the implementation of revised employment conditions involving changes in working hours, career paths and job structures, as well as from increased training and the rewriting of awards. Subsequent decisions further endorsed these principles and facilitated the negotiation of enterprise based agreements. These agreements were regarded as one way of enhancing employees commitment to the organization and as a consequence of reducing the costs of employment.

Some employer associations, particularly the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the peak trade union organization, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) also acknowledge the importance of accommodating the diverse needs of employees. The peak employer bodies recognize this need is a consequence of the changing demographic characteristics of the workforce and the need for companies to become more flexible, responsive to customers and market opportunities and more collaborative. Women with young children now return to the labourforce before their children enter infants school; two thirds of mothers return to paid employment within 18 months of their first child's birth (Carmody 1993:38–39). Projections of labour market behaviour, indicate women will continue to increase their participation rates and by the year 2005 the total female participation rate will be 60% (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1993:121).

In 1991 the ACTU adopted a "Workers with Family Responsibilities Strategy" which included a number of priorities including the inclusion of work and family issues on union agendas in enterprise negotiations, the extension of all award benefits to part-time workers
on a pro-rata basis and the development and conduct of a Special Family Leave test case (ACTU 1991). It acknowledged there was a need to extend policies in the work and family area for both men and women because of

. the increasing number of women in paid employment
. the ageing of the population
. the greater involvement of men in undertaking domestic responsibilities and caring for dependents
. ratification of ILO Convention 156 "Workers with Family Responsibilities"
. the need for the union movement to become more relevant to the needs of workers with family responsibilities (ACTU 1993:3).

Therefore there is support officially among peak trade union and employer groups for the implementation of policies which accommodate the needs of workers with family responsibilities because of the long term needs of improving business efficiency and maintaining trade union members.

Individual organisations also claim they introduced flexible employment arrangements as a way of improving profitability and efficiency. For instance, in many organisations with skilled employees which the organisation wished to retain after childbirth or during times of family crisis, arrangements were made to accommodate employee's needs. In these circumstances it was acknowledged that it was better to retain existing employees and use their skills than lose these employees (Cook 1993; Johnson 1993). In the banks the introduction of flexible working arrangements for men and women with young children was regarded as a way of retaining employees after maternity leave, and it was regarded as a more cost efficient option than investing in child care facilities which would benefit only a small proportion of employees. The principles handed down in the national wage case decisions in the late 1980's and early 1990's provided support for the introduction of more flexible working arrangements within the award structure.
CONCLUSION

The development of policies to accommodate workers with family responsibilities is a recognition that the impact of caring for children and other domestic responsibilities on employment is not necessarily detrimental for the productivity of the organisation. The introduction of these policies is based on the need for employers to adapt to changes in the composition of their workforce, economic conditions and international employment standards. This awareness occurred as a consequence of the increasing involvement of women with children in employment and was recognized by the ILO, the Australian government, the ACTU and some employers. Implied in this recognition is an acknowledgement that employees have different needs at different times of their working lives, and that taking these needs into account not only benefits the employees, but also benefits the organisation and the economy. The nature of the policies is a reflection of the Australian government and ACTU support for change.

In recent years some employers recognized that there were economic benefits to be gained by retaining existing employees, rather than recruiting new employees. In order to retain these employees it was necessary to make working arrangements more flexible, provide opportunities for breaks away from employment following the birth or adoption of a child and in some circumstances to continue benefits such as training, access to information and concessional loans. The trade union movement through the ACTU has developed policies and guidelines regarding flexible employment arrangements and initiatives designed to accommodate the needs of workers with family responsibilities in recognition of the changing needs of the workforce which is increasingly female. This apparent acceptance of greater flexibility in employment is consistent with the principles developed in the industrial arena and handed down in the decisions of the industrial tribunals. However, despite these changes, "work settings still tend to offer relatively little organizational flexibility in terms of working conditions, job mobility or career structuring, and the successful pursuit of individual goals remains inextricably linked to the achievement of
overriding organizational objectives" (Forster, 1990 as cited in Smith 1992:24). A key to developments in family friendly policies in the future will be the acknowledgement that there are many different ways to the achievement of organizational success and that success needs to be considered over the longer term.
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