



Work-Life Balance

Chief Executive Officer's introduction

☞ Flexibility has to be a two way process ☞

Forward-thinking organisations like the City of Gosnells are reaping the benefits of work-life balance for their employees. Working together, we can fulfil our vision of enhancing our economic performance and at the same time improving the work-life balance for individuals. This is about imagination, not legislation.

The world of work is changing. We recognise that and want to position the City of Gosnells as a highly desirable employer. Our goal is to ensure that the way the organisation works today reflects the present and the future, not the past.

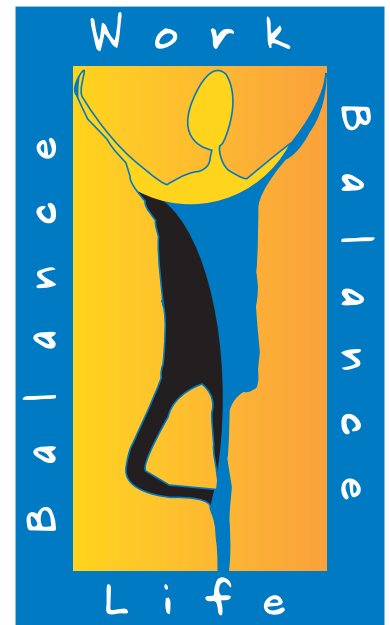
Work-life balance is about common sense and good practice in management. Building a culture of work-life balance can make a real difference; a more flexible, competitive and respected organisation - and a better quality of life for those who work at the City.

By putting work-life balance at the heart of our corporate culture,

we believe that we can reduce absenteeism and employee turnover, improve morale and increase productivity. If industries like local government, and the City of Gosnells in particular, are to be competitive and attract the best employees, it is vital that this issue is put firmly on the agenda.

Work-life balance does not have to mean a reduction in productivity or all employees working different hours. It can be as much about improved communication, understanding, clearer job roles and job descriptions and better training and development, as changes in actual working patterns.

Work-life balance is not an easy option and it will mean something different for each and every one of us. It is about striking a balance between the needs of the employee, the City and our customers. For the initiative to work, it has to be about all parties working together to seek the advantages of implementing more imaginative ways of working.



Employer of Choice

The City accepts that all employees need a life outside of work whether for sport, recreation, education, relaxation or to spend more time with their family. A happy and satisfied staff member is a productive staff member.

Ian Cowie

Chief Executive Officer ■



What are work-life balance policies?

These are workplace policies that assist employees in combining their personal, family and work responsibilities. They consist predominately of flexible work arrangements, breaks and a range of information and referral services. ■



What is a family-friendly workplace?

A family-friendly workplace is one where employees feel that they are supported by management and their colleagues in meeting both their work commitments and their family responsibilities. Family-friendly employers accept that family responsibilities will have an impact on employees' working lives and are prepared to accommodate these needs wherever possible.

Employers can promote a family-friendly workplace by developing and maintaining a supportive work culture for employees with family responsibilities and by introducing family-friendly work practices.

In a family-friendly workplace, it will



be acknowledged by management and staff that many employees may have responsibilities in relation to older relatives or those with disabilities, as well as, or instead of, young or school age children. Employees with other non-work responsibilities or commitments, including study, will also benefit from a work environment where employees are seen as whole people with lives and responsibilities outside work, which will sometimes impact on their working lives. ■

Building a family-friendly workplace culture

Key elements in creating a family-friendly workplace culture are a supportive workplace, good communication and a commitment to teamwork.

A supportive workplace is one in which employees feel able to discuss their family responsibilities and needs, and where both management and workers recognise that family responsibilities can sometimes be stressful to manage or can impact on an employee's productivity at work. It is one where equal recognition is given to the needs of those responsible for family members. It is marked by an internal culture of mutual respect and has an atmosphere of trust and communication engendered by fair and equal treatment for all.

Good communication is important so managers and supervisors understand employees' family circumstances (or other non-work responsibilities) and employees in

their turn appreciate the operating requirements of a customer focused Local Government. Open communication can be encouraged by development of procedures clearly stating flexible arrangements available to employees.

Teamwork is critical in assisting to create a positive culture in Local Government. Where an atmosphere of cooperation and support is built between staff members, it generally extends to family emergencies. A supportive workplace with good teamwork operates on the basis of 'give and take'. Where assistance is available to employees to help them manage their work and family responsibilities, they generally reciprocate with increased loyalty and commitment to the organisation

and will work together to make sure that the work is covered.

In general, family-friendly work arrangements can be minimal, such as allowing employees reasonable access to work phones to contact older children or aged parents who may be at home alone; or can involve major re-organisation of employment arrangements and conditions, such as making a local agreement to enable staff to 'purchase' additional annual leave entitlements. Many arrangements which will help employees balance work and life responsibilities are available under existing legislative and award arrangements. ■

Healthy lifestyle

The City supports staff in developing and maintaining a healthy balance between their private lifestyle and work.

The City offers a variety of flexible working hours which includes the provision of a 9 day fortnight.

The City also makes available a variety of health options including:

- Annual health assessments
- Skin cancer screening
- Wellbeing and vitality program
- Staff gymnasium in Civic Centre
- Staff discount to Leisure World and the Don Russell Performing Arts Centre ■

Is there an automatic right to work flexibly?

No, all employees are entitled to request a flexible working pattern and the City has a duty to consider such requests seriously. That does not provide employees with an automatic right to flexible working conditions. There is an onus on employees to be reasonable with requests. Whilst our philosophy will be to accommodate requests, there may be occasions where it is not possible. ■

What happens if all employees want to take up these working arrangements?

Research has shown that even though large numbers of employers offer flexible working arrangements, there can be a relatively low take up by employees of such arrangements. However, there may be specific sectors where there are more applications for a particular form of flexible working than is feasible for the City to accommodate. In these instances each situation will be considered on its merits but in consideration with any other requests. ■





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For more information on the
City of Gosnells Work-Life
Balance Program contact the
Human Resources Branch on
9397 3361.



Employer of Choice



Components of the City's Work-Life Balance Program

- A supportive working environment
- Flexible work arrangements including a 9-day fortnight
- Opportunities for part-time work
- Access to job share arrangement
- Information on child care facilities
- Information on elder care facilities
- Consideration for employees as carers of people with disabilities
- Employee Assistance Program
- Flexible leave options
- Reduced working hours/phased in retirement
- Phase back to work for new parents
- Access to phones for emergency use
- Leave without pay for cultural purposes
- Health and fitness programs, including staff discount to Leisure World
- Staff discount to Don Russell Performing Arts Centre
- New Civic Centre complex with state of the art, accessible modern facilities. ■

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