

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Australia now has a work + family policy blueprint and big business is on board**

- New research: COVID-19 is improving understanding of work-life tensions and bolstering flexible arrangements among employers;
- Despite that work and family demands persistently contribute to stress or tension at home and work for over half of Australians;
- Today, several of the nation's biggest employers are early adopters of an Australia-first initiative launching to support all families better combine their work and caring responsibilities.

An Australian-first initiative to create family friendly workplaces launches today announcing national work + family standards, as employers and employees grapple with the future of work.

Over 20 large Australian employers, across industry groups, including the Commonwealth Bank, Deloitte, QBE, Novartis and Randstad RiseSmart are early adopters of the standards and will be the first in the country to be certified as [Family Friendly Workplaces](#).

Established by UNICEF Australia and Parents At Work, the initiative delivers standards and a certification framework, developed in consultation with business leaders and community experts, to provide employers minimum and best practice ways to build a more inclusive, family friendly, workplace culture.

This culture is one where working families and carers are supported to combine their work and family life commitments.

UNICEF Australia Chair Ann Sherry AO encouraged Australian businesses to get behind *Family Friendly Workplaces*.

“The flow on effects of this initiative are significant – we know that family friendly workplace practices can really help to boost the wellbeing of children and carers in working families. They also promote inclusion and gender equity, increased workforce participation for women and caring opportunities for men. The productivity gains are not just for individual businesses, but for the wider economy,” Sherry said.

New research commissioned by Parents At Work highlights how critical this change is, according to CEO Emma Walsh.

“Due to COVID-19 the chasm between employees work and home life is no longer invisible, creating expectation and urgency for a transformative change in Australian workplace culture,” Walsh said.

The research surveyed Australian employees who experienced working from home since COVID-19. 65% of respondents reported their workplace is now more understanding of the work/life juggle.

Three in four (74%) reported improved flexible work arrangements compared to pre-pandemic.

However, Walsh said the research indicated a need for employers to do more to embed flexibility gains and reduce work life tension in workplaces and in the home.

“Over half of employees said work and family demands contribute to stress or tension with partners, colleagues, and managers, while 42% reported it affecting their relationships with children.”

“Concerningly, 41% of employees think their commitment to the job will be questioned if they make use of these flexible arrangements. Clearly there’s a disconnect between employers and working families.”

*Family Friendly Workplaces* provides leadership on policy and practices employers can adopt to be more inclusive and supportive of employees’ competing work and family needs.

Commonwealth Bank CFO Alan Docherty said the business supports *Family Friendly Workplaces* because of the importance of giving people with a diversity of caring responsibilities and family needs an equal opportunity to succeed in their careers.

“When people with diverse family needs feel supported in their workplace, not only do they benefit but their families and the broader community benefits too. As one of Australia’s largest employers, we have an important role to play fostering a culture of care, equality and respect so that our people can be at their best at work and at home.”

Randstad RiseSmart managing director Asia Pacific Alison Hernandez said organisations that support work and family life can enhance competitiveness to attract labour and talent.

“Creating an inclusive family friendly culture has a positive impact for employees of all ages and life stages with care giving responsibilities and is very powerful in talent acquisition and retention. It also helps to build trust, a cornerstone of the new employee relationship economy,” Hernandez said.

The wider business community is being urged to follow these early adopter organisations and take the first step on a journey towards creating a more family inclusive workplace for all by expressing interest in the initiative at [www.familyfriendlyworkplaces.com](http://www.familyfriendlyworkplaces.com).

#### *Quotes from additional participating Family Friendly Workplaces organisations*

“The struggle of the juggle is very real! Our parenting services have seen a 135% increase in demand with the pandemic, with the number three reason for referral being mental health related.” – Grainne O’Loughlin, CEO, Karitane.

“It’s not just the right thing to do, it makes perfect business sense, with family friendly workplaces delivering positive outcomes for society, business, our economy, and our families.” – Frank Costigan, Interim Managing Director, QBE Australia.

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**Media contact: Molly Bruce 0448 290 662 + [molly.bruce@coxinall.com.au](mailto:molly.bruce@coxinall.com.au) OR Chloe Fitzgerald 0427 374 228 + [chloe.fitzgerald@coxinall.com.au](mailto:chloe.fitzgerald@coxinall.com.au)**

#### **Note to editors:**

*Family Friendly Workplaces* participating organisations include AGL, APRA, Commonwealth Bank, Deloitte, Geneva, HESTA, HSBC, IBM, ING, Karitane, KidsCo, KPMG, Macquarie Group, Medibank,



Microsoft, NBCUniversal, Norton Rose Fulbright, Novartis, QBE, oOh Media, PEXA, Randstad RiseSmart.

Quotes and case studies from organisations certified as Family Friendly Workplaces (including Commonwealth Bank, Deloitte, QBE, Randstad RiseSmart, Novartis, Microsoft, IBM, and Macquarie Group) available here: [www.familyfriendlyworkplaces.com/case\\_studies](http://www.familyfriendlyworkplaces.com/case_studies)

This research was undertaken by PureProfile on behalf of Parents At Work. The research took place in May 2021. 1,000 Australian-based respondents aged 18+ completed the survey and they were an employee on wages, salary or commission who have/had been working from home (full or part time) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.