

# Workplace flexibility

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[wgea.gov.au/topics/workplace-flexibility](http://wgea.gov.au/topics/workplace-flexibility)

Flexibility is becoming increasingly important for organisations across Australia as they begin to recognise it as a key enabler of gender equality. To help organisations, the Agency has developed a comprehensive suite of resources to help employers to take a strategic approach to workplace flexibility and support for caring and family responsibilities.



## What is workplace flexibility?

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'Workplace flexibility' is where a business and one or more of its employees agree on changes to standard working arrangements to better accommodate employees' commitments away from work. Flexible working arrangements usually encompass changes to the hours, pattern and location of work. Flexibility is becoming increasingly important as employees and managers balance competing priorities in life.

Flexibility in work can be a number of different things, including:

- telework or working from home
- flexible hours
- compressed working weeks
- job sharing.

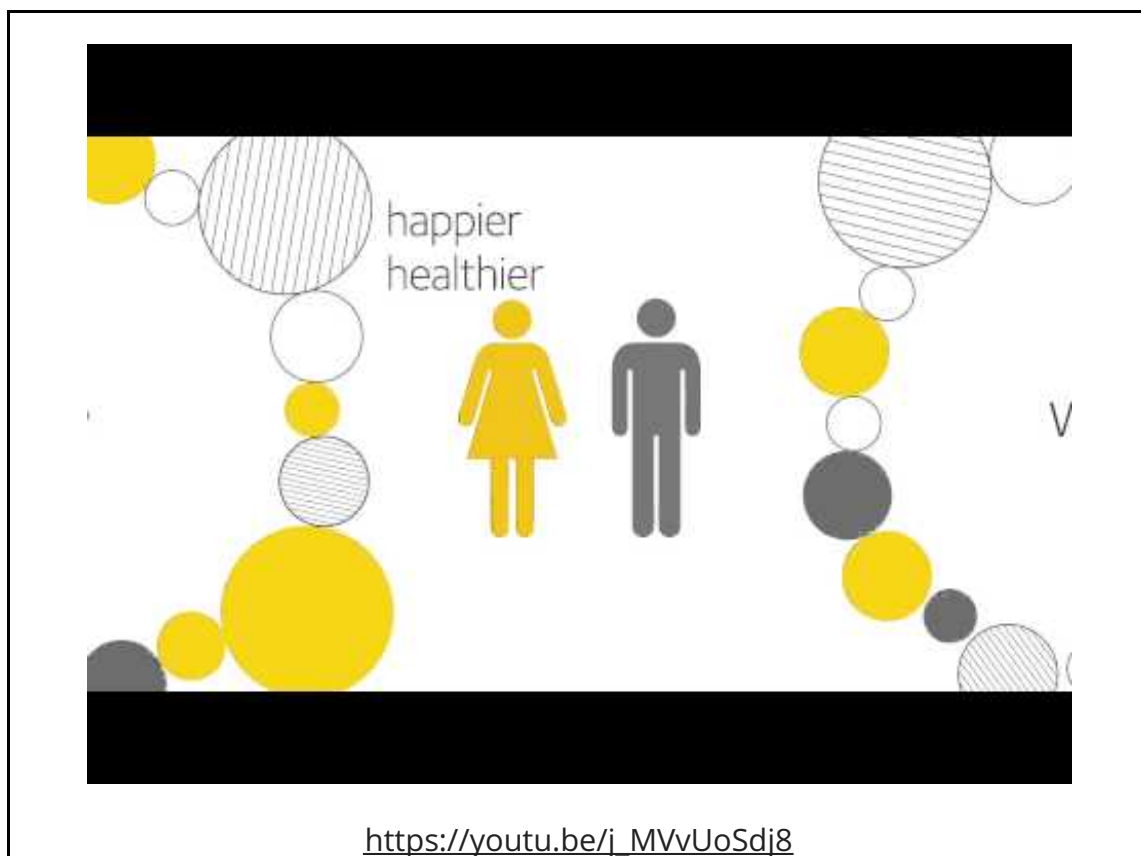
## What workplace flexibility is not

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Managers can sometimes confuse some relatively minor and ordinary work adjustments with the idea of flexible working arrangements. For example, someone taking time off as carer's leave, compassionate leave or parental leave is not the same as working flexibly. These arrangements fall into the same category as annual leave and personal leave, in that they are standard employee rights at work. While part-time work is currently considered to be a flexible working arrangement, the realities of part-time work are often much the same as those of full-time work and may not offer much flexibility around time or location of work. Part-time work, however, does offer flexibility in the capacity for someone to work even though they may not be able to work full-time.

The video below depicts some of the benefits of flexibility in the workplace:

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## Legal requirements

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The *Fair Work Act 2009 (FW Act)* provides different groups of employees with the right to request a change in their working arrangements, specifically the hours, patterns and locations of work. While the FW Act specifies the groups that can statutorily request flexible working arrangements, any employee can approach their employer with such a request, but their request may be dealt with differently as it would not be governed by the current Act.

An employer who receives a request covered under the Act must provide a written

response within 21 days. Employers covered by an award must first discuss the request with their employee to try to reach an agreement about changes to the employee's working conditions. A request can only be refused on 'reasonable business grounds'.

A flexible working arrangement may involve a change in working arrangements for a fixed period of time, or on an ongoing basis, to accommodate a range of personal commitments.

For more information on requesting flexible working arrangements, please visit the [Fair Work Ombudsman website](#).