ACCELERATING CHANGE ON
FLEXIBLE WAYS
OF WORKING

DISCUSSION PAPER

As we prepare to return to workplaces, now is the time to shift mindsets and behaviours around when, where, how and by whom work outcomes are achieved.

In this new world of work, we can **make bold moves on flexibility to accelerate change** towards a more gender equal, safe, inclusive and high performing organisations for all.

Context

During the early stages of COVID-19 many organisations and employees – through necessity – have had "deep dive" experiences with flexible ways of working.

Organisations are going through an unprecedented and in some cases existential threat - and the pressure is high for all. Among the significant business challenges, we are facing the largest disruption to the usual rhythm and practice of working life since the Second World War.

For some who have been able to work flexibly, the experience has in no way been ideal. Many people found it difficult performing their roles at home, often under changed conditions while also being responsible for additional home care, schooling, and/or supporting those on the frontline of the crisis.

For others, including those considered essential workers, COVID-19 has highlighted the challenges when flexible ways of working are limited. These challenges include the inability to perform their roles without affordable, flexible and accessible childcare and impacts on health and wellbeing.

During this time, there is much we have learned about what works well (and for whom), what's possible and what's essential when it comes to flexible ways of working. It's shown that we can create a wholly new way in which we approach work.

Prior to the pandemic, flexibility was often considered a workplace policy to attract and retain women – particularly those with caring responsibilities. COVID-19 has amplified the fact that the capacity to work flexibly is critical to business continuity, occupational health and safety, workforce planning and risk management. There is now an opportunity to fully embrace flexible ways of working as a business priority, and a critical leadership and organisational capability. To achieve this, organisations will need to be equipped to give people choice and agency in the form/s of flexibility which might best suit them, recognising that this still needs to be balanced with the specific requirements of each role and the needs of the organisation.

Caring for others continues to be a priority – in particular, during COVID-19, looking after vulnerable loved ones and keeping children away from the school environment due to health and safety precautions. Sharing these responsibilities fairly – not relying on women to manage all of the caring - will support gender equality, family and community economic security and wellbeing. Men's uptake of flexible work helps with this. Again, it's a situation that brings into sharp focus strong rationales for providing flexible ways of working for all employees.

The COVID-19 crisis has also reinforced some very human aspects of flexible working. This includes the importance of connection with colleagues, understanding and accommodating people's caring responsibilities and individual needs, inclusive collaboration, and getting to know our team as individuals - beyond their role as an employee.

As we prepare to return to workplaces, now is the time to shift mindsets and behaviours around when, where, how and by whom work outcomes are achieved. In this new world of work, we can make bold moves on flexibility to accelerate change towards more gender equal, safe, inclusive and high performing organisations for all.

We have an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate change on flexible ways of working

Flexibility supports gender equality in the workplace and advancing more and diverse women into leadership

Male Champions of Change have long held that the availability of flexible work will help to increase women's workforce participation, and enable more women to advance into leadership positions. This is validated by the experience of many of our member organisations.

Flexible work enables women to remain engaged in work – and to progress – particularly for those with caring and other responsibilities.

Continuity of employment, enabled by secure, flexible work, also has clear, long-term, positive impacts on women's economic security.

Providing flexible ways of working is a practical action all employers can lead to accelerate change on gender equality in the workplace.

Research also shows that flexible work is good for the health and wellbeing of all employees and supports organisational strategies to attract and retain diverse talent and improve employee engagement and innovation.
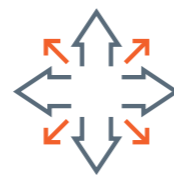
Flexible ways of working must be available to all, to realise the benefits

Over the past 10 years our coalition has prioritised flexible work as a strategy to help achieve gender equality in the workforce. For example, prior to COVID-19, 88% of members were focused on mainstreaming flexible work.

Many members have made good progress and a number are well advanced – through approaches such as "all roles flex" – where flexibility is available in any role for any reason.

We've learned that having a policy will not guarantee sound implementation, nor will a policy alone ensure that all employees will have equal access to the flexibility they need.

When more employees have access to – and use - flexible ways of working, traditional gender stereotypes and barriers that have limited women's engagement and progress in the workplace can be challenged and/or dismantled.

When all employees are able to play a more active and equal role in caring, more women can play a more active and equal role in the workforce.

For many organisations, the disruption of COVID-19 has rewritten the business case for flexibility

COVID-19 has irrevocably changed the views of many regarding how, when, where and by whom work gets done, and what drives performance.

The ability to meet customer and client needs through alternative work spaces and channels became a business continuity issue for many.

Many organisations participated in a mass scale, imperfect flexibility experiment during the early phases of the pandemic.

This included remote working, changed working hours and workplace design, and flexible start and finish times supported by large-scale reliance on technology.

The ability to rapidly transition to flexible work – where possible – became an occupational health and safety, workforce planning, employee wellbeing, inclusion, risk management and performance priority.

The conditions were less than ideal. However, despite all the challenges, where adjustments could be made, the experiment was in many ways successful.

In some workplaces, it accelerated change on flexibility that might have otherwise taken years or even decades to achieve.
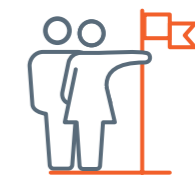
There is now an unprecedented opportunity for leaders to make essential and lasting change to the future of work

Leaders are now making critical decisions about their organisations that have the potential to impact the landscape of work for generations to come.

These relate to:

- Returning to the office or onsite environment
- Evolving business models
- Creating different ways of delivering services or products
- Changing organisational structures and size

A flexible mindset around work constructs - working hours, working weeks and workplaces - may help to drive faster business, economic and social recovery from COVID-19.

This report supports an immediate priority of returning to the office and onsite environments (where and when safe to do so) while wholeheartedly seizing the momentum on flexible working.

It envisages a future where working flexibly is fully embraced, essential to business strategy and where flexible workers have access to stable and rewarding career paths.

A flexible mindset around work constructs - working hours, working weeks and workplaces - may help to drive faster business, economic and social recovery from COVID-19.

Listening and learning during COVID-19: Overall, working flexibly was a positive experience for our employees

Overwhelmingly, more flexible ways of working are preferred

Based on surveys taken during and after the initial lockdown period across our coalition, employees consistently reported they would like more flexible ways of working to be an ongoing feature of their roles.

An immediate driver of this is health and safety concerns about their own and families' exposure to COVID-19 on public transport or in the workplace.

With a longer-term lens, employees - many for the first time - appreciated the personal benefits of working at home: 'less commute time', 'time to exercise', 'walk the dog when it's light', 'do household chores in breaks', 'structure work around life commitments, 'more time with family'.

Where it is possible to work remotely, employees believe they are equally or more productive as in the office.

There are circumstances where office-based or onsite work is preferable

The COVID-19 lockdown also highlighted when, where, why and for whom office-based or onsite work is preferable for at least some of the time.

This included:

- When employees would usually engage face-to-face with customers and/or clients.
- Where in person engagement is more conducive to certain types of work, collaboration and strategic planning.
- Where information access and security cannot be guaranteed while remote working.
- When the home is not safe, for example where employees may be at risk of, or experiencing, domestic and family violence.
- Where employees do not have adequate technology, suitable workspaces or the ability to connect with their teams.
- Where employees have dependants at home and it is difficult to dedicate periods of uninterrupted time to work.
- Where employees live alone and rely on office or onsite environments for professional and social interaction, or they thrive on the energy of interacting with multiple people every day, and the absence of this impacts their performance, productivity and mental health and wellbeing.

Remote working elevated the importance of wellbeing and balance

During the lockdown period, with so many employees working remotely, organisations introduced more comprehensive approaches to employee communication, wellbeing and engagement. These communications were often personalised to the individual needs of employees - for example, to assist those impacted by domestic and family violence.

Based on survey responses about their experiences, feeling supported by managers and connected to teams while working remotely during the pandemic has generally been a positive experience for employees.

That said, balancing work and caring responsibilities has been a major challenge, particularly for women who typically shouldered the 'quadruple' burden of working remotely, home schooling, domestic duties and the 'mental load'. Some argued these unequal demands on women during the crisis have wound back 50 years of progress on gender equality.

As schools have returned to more normal schedules and some onsite workplaces have re-opened, the pressures have eased somewhat, but anxiety over COVID-19, isolation, social distancing, economic volatility and work pressure remains high.

We need to be mindful of reverting to, or further entrenching gender norms in strategies for returning to the workplace

There are clear business benefits for some degree of return to office or onsite work. For many, this sense of returning to normality will be welcome.

While most employees want to retain some of the benefits of flexibility, it is imperative that workforce planning strategies are geared to ensure:

- Work and related activities are accessible to all regardless of their location (e.g. through video meetings)
- The rotation of employees between in-office/onsite and remote working to avoid central workplaces becoming centres of power dominated by men and/or people without caring responsibilities.
- Men can equally share in caring responsibilities

Feedback from staff surveys during COVID-19 show that ongoing, employee preferences are to share their time between the home and onsite workplaces, with the majority suggesting two or three days from home or at a secondary office location would be ideal.

The fundamentals of flexible working

COVID-19 re-wrote and amplified the business case for flexible ways of working

Focus before COVID-19 and ongoing		
Gender equality / advancing women into leadership	Attract, retain and advance more women, including those with caring responsibilities. Create family-friendly flexibility supporting shared care and the disruption of gender norms which can limit women's careers.	
Employee health, well-being and engagement	Build employee engagement, job satisfaction, employee advocacy and health and wellbeing. Lack of flexibility has the opposite effects. Increased stress, burnout and depression are more likely, family and personal relationships are strained.	
Attraction and development of diverse talent	Work-life balance ranks as the number one employment driver across diverse generations and genders.	
Environmental benefits	Contribute to reduced pollution and urban congestion	

Amplified through COVID-19		
Business continuity and risk management	Support business continuity and manage organisational risks. Work outcomes able to be achieved anywhere and anytime, recognising time and location limits on some tasks and roles.	
Occupational health and safety	Leverage flexible ways of working to support the health and safety of employees travelling to, from and while at work.	
Future capability and workforce planning	Effectively prepare and enable the right mix of employees across multiple modes of work and locations to support product and service delivery and performance.	
Productivity	Flexible approaches have enabled more efficient use of time and other resources.	

The principles of what makes flexibility most effective remain the same

High Performance

- Flexibility is elevated as a business priority
- Focus is on outcomes not inputs
- Performance is valued over presenteeism
- Culture promotes trust and accountability to deliver outcomes
- Access to and effectiveness of flexible working is monitored and measured
- Capacity and support for balance, health and wellbeing

Visible Leadership

- Immediate/line manager support critical
- State and demonstrate commitment to flexibility
- Agree clear expectations on outcomes and performance
- Capability to manage flexible teams for results
- Empower employees to deliver
- Manage for results
- Role model flexibility in practical ways
- Invest to make flexibility work
- Share and celebrate success

Inclusion for All

- Inclusive access to forms of flexibility, in every role, for any reason
- Responsive to individual needs
- Recognition that caring is a shared responsibility
- Secure and meaningful work

Genuine Enablement

- Policy settings
- Job design
- Workplace design
- Tools and technology
- Safe and supportive conditions

Types of flexibility

			Choice and agency for employees
	Time	When work happens. Includes flexible hours/scheduling, part-time work, job sharing, split shifts, compressed hours/compressed week, variable year employment.	Not all types of flexibility are ideal in every role, but some type of flexibility is possible in every role.
	Location	Where work happens. Includes working remotely at home and from different locations.	Consider:
	Tools	How work happens. Includes technology, workplace design, other conditions and enabling factors.	

Consider:

- choice to work certain scheduled shifts
- ability for employees to design their own rosters, swap shifts
- choice of location
- flexible start and finish times
- combining and sharing roles
- reduced hours (part-time)
- flexible leave options (e.g. additional purchased leave)

Informal flexible work	Formal flexible work
- Ad hoc remote work - Unplanned change to hours - Activity-based working on site	- Part-time - Regular remote work - Compressed work week - Job sharing - Regular change of hours/days

System shifts that support greater flexibility and practical actions to accelerate change

High Performance

	Before COVID-19 →	Insights from Lockdown →	Challenges →	The Future	Practical Actions
Business continuity and risk management	Flexible working was still largely an accommodation for women with caring responsibilities and to support gender equality strategies. Many organisations had policy-centred approaches to flexibility without a more complete focus on the wider business benefits or support for the practical requirements for implementation.	**Remote and flexible work became critical to risk management and business continuity.** • Flexible work is no longer just the hallmark of a generous employer but is now essential.	• In times of economic uncertainty people have accepted conditions or arrangements in the interests of job security that they may not ordinarily accept.	**Flexible teams that can operate with agility are now essential elements of business continuity and effective risk management planning.**	• Embrace flexible ways of working as a key business priority, organisational, and leadership capability. • Update business continuity plans to include flexible work as an enabler. • Invest to provide employees with the technology they need to work flexibly.
Outcomes	There was an implicit premium placed on visible work and workers.	**For the most part, many people can do their jobs remotely and flexibly, with little or no impact on individual productivity or organisational performance** • Employee engagement increases when working time can be constructed to suit employee and business needs.	• Clear expectations of work requirements and outcomes needed to be agreed where they were not already in place. • Support was required when outcomes could not be achieved due to the challenges created by lockdown conditions.	**Organisational culture prioritises performance and outcomes over inputs and presenteeism.** **Productivity is enhanced through more flexible approaches to how, when, where and by whom work gets done.**	• Continue to monitor business results and productivity, taking flexible ways of working into account. • Build trust within diverse, collaborative teams, and ensure clear, shared understanding of performance expectations. • Enable teams to remain connected and focussed on shared and individual accountabilities, regardless of the time or location of work activity.
Customer needs	Head office and functional roles were most commonly designated for flexible working. Flexibility for frontline workers was largely limited to either part-time or shift work, usually constructed to meet both employer and employee needs.	**Economic and social factors meant that customer needs changed, reduced or grew at a pace that many organisations were not used to.** • Organisations and employees had to transition quickly to deliver products and services in new and different ways. • This required employees to change the way they engaged in work. • Stand down and job losses occurred in cases when businesses and roles could not be adapted (through no fault of their own).	• For scheduled or frontline roles, flexibility was more challenging, but in many cases still possible. • Employment and resourcing models needed to adapt to support product and customer service delivery, anywhere any time where possible. • New skills were required to move from in-person to digital product and service delivery.	**Product and service strategies incorporate a range of delivery mechanisms enabled by employees who work flexibly.** **Employees are skilled and equipped to support customer and client needs through multiple channels backed by technology.**	• Focus specifically on scheduled and frontline roles where solutions require greater innovation and work redesign. • Use customer experience data to construct flexible product and service delivery strategies, supported by ways of working that meet customer needs. • Consider team-based approaches to test different ways of working, based on the needs of customers and clients and the requirements of the projects or roles.

Visible Leadership

|	Before COVID-19 →	Insights from Lockdown →	Challenges →	The Future	Practical Actions

Senior leadership	Flexible work for others was supported as part of gender equality strategy, but was not necessarily seen to be accessible or appropriate for leaders	Implicit or explicit leadership on remote and flexible working has given people at all levels permission to do the same and led to rapid adoption of new ways of working.
		
		• Employees were acutely aware of role models - who was 'zooming in' from the office, and who was not. The informality of how leaders dressed and interacted was seen as symbolic of the embracing of flexible work. Senior and critical roles can be done flexibly. Life's complexities – children, parents, pets – became more visible and more acceptable because we all, including leaders, shared our experiences.
		
		• Employees are now looking to leaders for direction and to share their expectations for how we will work in the future.
			• As workplaces begin to re-open, some leaders are challenged with the idea of a continued 'free for all'.
			
			• In many cases, leaders were also the first people to return to the office.
				Flexible work is endorsed, promoted and role modelled in practical ways by the most senior leaders, underpinned by trust, accountability and support.	• Share a bold, clear position on future ways of working, prioritised with investment. For example:
					  ◦ Reinforce a range of flexible options, not just working at home, such as "All Roles Flex" and "FlexBetter".
					  ◦ Evolve positions based on the COVID-19 experience such as "Anywhere, Anytime", "Forever Flex" and the "Four Day Work Week".
					  ◦ Address the perceived (widening) disparity of access to flexibility between office based and frontline/scheduled workers
					• Insist on cohesive and inclusive leadership of flexible teams (remote, office-based and other forms of flex) as a core leadership capability and invest in skills development, across senior teams.
					• Respond to the groundswell of expectation from current and future employees seeking and expecting greater flexibility in the future.
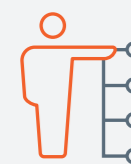
Line manager capability	Line manager support for flexible work was primarily a talent retention strategy that was often inconsistently available and accommodated begrudgingly. The person who was dialling into, or less dominant in meetings was present but not included or forgotten.	Leading and supporting remote teams and fostering inclusion and cohesion was made a critical leadership priority. • Line manager resistance had been a significant barrier to flexible work in the past. People have appreciated the choice to work at home regardless of managers' preferences for themselves. • The work ethic of our people has demonstrated to line managers that they don't have to micromanage people if they are not visible. • It has forced leaders to reconsider preconceptions about the risk of 'opening the floodgates' or the 'burden of too many people in the team working flexibly'.	• The success of flexibility relies on the capability of individual managers. • The positive shift in intent towards more flexible ways of working was not always supported by leaders' managerial capability. • Safety, balance, domestic violence and mental health became more prominent issues for managers.	**The ability to inclusively lead a flexible team, irrespective of location, is a core leadership capability.** **Leaders role model flexible working, empower others, agree clear performance expectations and manage for results.** .	• Build "leading and managing flexible teams" as a core leadership capability. • Expect line managers to agree clear performance expectations with people in their teams and to assess performance based on outcomes delivered and impact rather than time spent in the office. • Encourage line managers to support flexible work and listen to and learn from a diverse range of employee feedback on new ways of working. • Recognise leaders who visibly role model flexible work and support their teams in accessing the full range of flexible working options. • Intentionally support access to senior leaders, clients and critical projects across office-based and flexible workers, particularly for women.

Inclusion for All

	Before COVID-19 →	Insights from Lockdown →	Challenges →	The Future	Practical Actions
Inclusive culture	A stigma about flexible workers meant that their commitment, value and contribution were questioned.	**The focus switched to what was important performance, connection and wellbeing – not physical presence in the office.** • The shared experience of working at home during the pandemic has been described as humanising and a great leveller. • Removing the stigma and myths about flexible workers (that questioned their commitment, value and contribution) empowered people to embrace new ways of working. • The complexities created by the crisis and lockdown required greater understanding, collaboration and agility in how and by whom work was done.	• Our offices are still perceived to be the centres of power, connection and progress • We risk broadening the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' if we don't equally prioritise flexible options for frontline workers, all genders, and people who wish to work flexibly for reasons other than caring responsibilities.	**Open minds support flexible options for everyone.** **Organisations value all contributions irrespective of when, where, how and by whom work gets done.**	• Create a culture where individual needs and preferences are understood. • Empower teams to create and share their own patterns of flexible working using the full range of flexible options. • Support boundaries between work and home, when home becomes a workplace. • Value all contributions and commitments, including those of workers who work in different places, at different times. • Ensure access to power is evenly shared across on-site and flexible workers, particularly among genders. This includes access to senior leaders, interactions with key clients and involvement in critical projects. • Collect and use gender disaggregated data to understand employees' access to, and experience of, flexible work and related dynamics such as recruitment, promotions and exits. Include diversity dimensions such as cultural identity, disability and carer status, where available. • Enable recruitment of talent beyond usual locations to include rural and regional.
Shared care	Caring responsibilities were a private matter for individuals to manage once we had given them the flexibility to do so.	**The real challenges people face integrating work and caring responsibilities became visible** • Remote work, flexible work and shared caring are often considered interrelated, however our experiences during COVID-19 have shown this is not the case. • Two critical elements made it possible for women's continued workforce participation – access to (free) childcare and men's or other partner's greater participation in caring. • The pandemic highlighted our reliance on the informal caring economy (e.g. grandparents) to enable women's workforce participation. • There is new appreciation and respect for colleagues who have worked flexibly and managed care for a long time.	• Flexible and remote work has not automatically translated into parents or partners sharing care and/or home-schooling equally. In fact, the burden of maintaining careers, caring for parents, home schooling and domestic duties and the mental load of family management has been largely shouldered by women. • Often, men's continued full time and overtime hours were prioritised in households and there was a perception that this was the expectation from leaders and organisations.	**Organisations embrace the combined roles of worker and carer and expect and enable all employees to actively share care responsibilities.** **Flexible work is structured to support and enable all employees to actively share in the care.** **Leaders explicitly communicate their understanding that employees have responsibilities outside of their employment, which do not need to be hidden from view.**	• Visibly role model shared care • Understand and address the cultural barriers to men's participation in caring. • Include discussions about care and outside work responsibilities in regular performance and planning discussions for all employees. • Facilitate help for employees to manage caring issues (e.g. employee hubs for information or support services). • Support access to affordable and accessible child care. • Provide policies and procedures that support shared caring e.g. flexibility for all, gender neutral parental leave and the removal of distinctions between primary and secondary carers. • Consider special leave provisions for employees with caring and/or cultural responsibilities and other personal priorities.

Genuine Enablement

	Before COVID-19 →	Insights from Lockdown →	Challenges →	The Future	Practical Actions
Work environment	Offices were the centres of power, connection and progress.	**Work is something you do, not somewhere you go to.** • Traditional workplaces required re-designing and re-configuration to manage through different phases of the pandemic and for the foreseeable future, and to enable different work activities in shared spaces. • For those working in offices, it was important to find ways to maintain the collaboration, social interaction, learning, and space benefits of office-based environments where teams come together.	• Mandating remote work when caring responsibilities are unsupported requires changed expectations of work output by leaders • There are additional considerations and responsibilities when a home becomes a workplace - and the home is not safe. • Employees have borne the additional costs of utilities and equipment • Some people have thrived. Others need the socialisation and the energy of the workplace. It's been a lonely and isolated experience for some, and a noisy and interrupted period for others.	**Work locations have multiple modes which are all set up to support safety, agility, inclusion, collaboration and productivity.** **Employees have access to physically and psychologically safe conditions and places to work.**	• Adopt work environments that encourage agility and which are designed – e.g. as a collaborative or private space - for the activity that needs to occur in them. • Design workplaces for collaboration, connection, technology access, safety and convenience. Consider models beyond a central location. e.g. establish local hubs where people can work without a long commute, enable work from regional locations. • Consider a variety of work patterns that enable flexibility in terms of time – e.g. split teams attending the workplace. • Consider reimbursing or compensating for employee costs such as utilities and internet access. • Build in ergonomic and other health and safety considerations for workplaces at home. Put in place remote workplace assessments. • Ensure ongoing support for employees who experience domestic and family violence.
Technology and systems	People could work remotely, if the technology worked adequately.	**Reliable and accessible technology made new ways of working possible and we quickly upskilled.** • Underinvestment and/or retrofitting tech solutions that were not fit for purpose exposed business continuity vulnerabilities. • Organisations adapted quickly when good technology and systems were provided. • Where work redesign could leverage technology it enabled ongoing client and customer relationships and service delivery. • Where technology couldn't be accessed, core functions ceased and in some cases workers were stood down. • Video technology has underpinned a cultural shift on greater personal connection. Particularly in large organisations it has increased the visibility of the executive team which has been valued.	• Increased and more complex challenges in protecting data privacy and/or preventing trolls and hackers have emerged. • Video connection has adequately replicated in-person interactions but is not a perfect substitution. • Emerging evidence is suggesting video conferencing is very tiring and impacts employee wellbeing. • Investing in technology is difficult during economic uncertainty. • Competency and skill gaps in adapting to new technology or their greater use were evident.	**Accessible and reliable technology enables seamless connectivity by employees, anywhere, anytime and there is investment in technological competence.** **Employee and customer experiences via digital platforms reduce location and/or contact-based dependence where possible.**	• Obtain a clear view of current technology capacity and expected need to enable the shift to flexible ways of working, including budget required, policy settings around access to core systems and technical support. • Invest to upgrade systems e.g. ensuring meetings rooms have technology to connect with people not in the office, employees have secure access to roles specific systems . • Ensure all meetings, town halls, and non-location-based learning experiences have in-person and virtual attendance options. • Build systems to support flexibility e.g. an app for frontline workers to swap shifts. • Provide in-office and virtual options for key meetings and collaboration activities. • Maintain informal uses of technology that promote team cohesion and virtual 'corridor chats'.

System shifts that support greater flexibility - snapshot summary

		Before COVID-19 →	Insights from Lockdown →	The Future
High performance	**Business continuity and risk management**	Flexible working was still largely an accommodation for women with caring responsibilities and to support gender equality strategies. Many organisations had policy-centred approaches to flexibility without a complete focus on the wider business benefits or support for the practical requirements for implementation.	Remote and flexible work became critical to risk management and business continuity.	• Flexible teams that can operate with agility are now essential elements of business continuity and effective risk management planning.
	Outcomes	There was an implicit premium placed on visible work and workers.	For the most part, many people can do their jobs remotely and flexibly, with little or no impact on individual productivity or organisation performance	• Organisational culture prioritises performance and outcomes over inputs and presenteeism. • Productivity is enhanced through more flexible approaches to how, when, where and by whom work gets done.
	Customer needs	Head office and functional roles were most commonly designated for flexible working. Flexibility for frontline workers was largely limited to either part-time or shift work, usually constructed to meet both employer and employee needs.	Economic and social factors meant that customer needs changed, reduced or grew at a pace that many organisations were not used to.	• Product and service strategies incorporate a range of delivery mechanisms enabled by employees who work flexibly. • Employees are skilled and equipped to support customer and client needs through multiple channels backed by technology.
Visible Leadership	**Senior leadership**	Flexible work for others was supported as part of gender equality strategy, but was not necessarily seen to be accessible or appropriate for leaders	Implicit or explicit leadership on remote and flexible working has given people at all levels permission to do the same and led to rapid adoption of new ways of working.	• Flexible work is endorsed, promoted and role modelled in practical ways by the most senior leaders, underpinned by trust with accountability and support.
	Line manager capability	Line manager support for flexible work was primarily a talent retention strategy that was often inconsistently available and accommodated begrudgingly. The person who was dialling into, or less dominant in meetings was present but not included or forgotten.	Leading and supporting remote teams and fostering inclusion and cohesion was made a critical leadership priority.	• The ability to inclusively lead a flexible team irrespective of location is a core leadership capability. • Leaders role model flexible working, empower others, agree clear performance expectations and manage for results.
Inclusion for All	**Inclusive culture**	A stigma about flexible workers meant that their commitment, value and contribution were questioned	The focus switched to what was important – performance, connection, wellbeing – not physical presence in the office.	• Open minds support flexible options for everyone. • Organisations value all contributions respective of when, where, how and by whom work gets done.
	Shared care	Caring responsibilities were a private matter for individuals to manage once we had given them the flexibility to do so.	The real challenges people face integrating work and caring responsibilities became visible	• Organisations embrace the combined roles of worker and carer and expect and enable all employees to actively share care responsibilities. • Flexible work is structured to support and enable all employees to actively share in the care. • Leaders explicitly communicate their understanding that employees have responsibilities outside of their employment, which do not need to be hidden from view.
Genuine Enablement	**Work environment**	Offices were the centres of power, connection and progress.	Work is something you do, not somewhere you go to	• Work locations have multiple modes which are all set up to support safety, agility, inclusion, collaboration and productivity. • Employees have access to physically and psychologically safe conditions and places to work.
	Technology and systems	People could work remotely, if the technology worked adequately.	Reliable and accessible technology made new ways of working possible and we quickly upskilled.	• Accessible and reliable technology enables seamless connectivity by employees, anywhere, anytime and there is investment in technology competence. • Employee and customer experiences via digital platforms reduce location and/or contact-based dependence where possible.

Resources

Practical Resources

- Workplace flexibility – strategy, business case, measurement (Workplace Gender Equality Agency)
- COVID-19 update: ANU campuses move to remote work and study (Australian National University, MCC STEM Group)
- Flexible Teams: Resources for Managers (NSW Public Service Commission, NSW Government MCC Group)
- Faculty of Medicine and Health Working from Home Guide (University of Sydney, MCC Founding Group)
- A Variety of COVID-19 Advice for Employers and Employees (Association of Consulting Architects Australia via MCC Architecture Group)
- Employee and Leader Guide to Working from Home Set Up (QBE, MCC National 2016 and Insurance Groups)
- Managing Virtual Teams and Managing the impact on you and your employees during COVID-19 (AMP Capital, National 2016 MCC Group)
- Setting your team up for remote working success (Australian Red Cross Lifeblood, MCC Health Group)
- Working From Home Guide (Australian Red Cross Lifeblood, MCC Health Group)

Research Insights

- A Blueprint for Remote Working: Lessons from China (McKinsey & Company, MCC Founding Group)
- Reimagining the post pandemic workforce (McKinsey & Company, MCC Founding Group)
- Why men are more keen than women to return to the office (AFR, featuring research by BCG, MCC National 2016 Group)

MCC members' perspectives on flexible work

- "Seizing the opportunities after COVID" (Telstra, MCC Founding Group)
- "Corona changes the game" (Lendlease, MCC Property Group)
- "Home work's the lesson as global law firm sets a new precedent" (Ashurst, MCC National 2016 Group)
- "How COVID-19 unlocked new voices in Cochlear" (Cochlear, MCC STEM Group)
- "Ten reasons why the office is still the best place to work" (Property Council of Australia, MCC Property Group)

MCC members' perspectives on shared care during COVID-19

- SBS stories and "campaign" regarding work and care
  - https://www.sbs.com.au/topics/voices/family/article/2019/11/01/i-had-never-realised-how-much-more-housework-my-wife-did-me
  - https://www.sbs.com.au/topics/voices/family/article/2020/05/26/my-challenge-other-fathers-during-covid-isolation?fbclid=IwAR1gqlPbSVIYvCupRbSves3awqkAPj-rz7elalw8MH-O4DjGQxK-TlltLbQ

MALE CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE ◆◆

About Male Champions of Change

Male Champions of Change is a coalition of CEOs, secretaries of government departments, non-executive directors and community leaders. Male Champions of Change believe gender equality is a major business, economic, societal and human rights issue. Established in 2010, by then Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick, our mission is to step up beside women to help achieve gender equality and a significant and sustainable increase in the representation of women in leadership.

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