



FLEXREPORT 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Build back better

COVID-19 accelerated some fundamental and long overdue changes when it comes to the way we work.

The new normal at work for Australians and New Zealanders in 2020 now looks different to any other point in time.

96% of the businesses we surveyed adopted flexible work arrangements, mainly remote working, to achieve business continuity. The business community adapted, learnt to work in new ways and did so under extreme stress test conditions.

We are proud of how we have made it through the virus, mostly in one piece. We are proud of the way our businesses reacted with agility and compassion, and somehow managed to maintain connection through this tumultuous period. And we are all in this together – trust in our organisations is at an all-time high with 74% of survey respondents having increased trust in their leaders and their employers.

This is our time to achieve sustainable change.

What has come out of the world's largest work from home experiment is a workforce with changed expectations, a larger and more anxious jobseeker market, and employers who have seen the benefits and challenges of working both flexibly and remotely.

As the economy starts to reopen, we will come back to offices that look different. Smaller, simpler, safer and

much cleaner. Safety culture will invade the office in the 2020s in the same way it did the worksite or the mine in the 1980s and 1990s, with a renewed focus not only on hygiene, but also mental health and wellness.

We have each been given a once-in-a-career opportunity to curate from all the different and new ways of working we are experiencing in 2020 to build back better. Organisations with cultures that are future-focused and ready for the future of work. More flexible, more remote, more productive and more inclusive.

Leadership will look very different too. Red team/blue team will become a familiar phrase. Gone are the days of having all members of a given team in the same place – leaders will need to adapt to a hybrid model of half their team in the office with the other half working remotely.

The future of work starts now.

It's different to what we expected with less AI and robotics, and more humanity and soft skills. COVID-19 and its associated redundancies have been a tipping point in our collective realisation that the skill set of today's workers might not match up to the demands of tomorrow's employers.

And it's a deeply personal experience too. While there are some strong and consistent themes, other data shows extreme dispersion between the ways different workers want to experience their working lives.

Finally, employer branding has fundamentally changed. Not only has 2020 made employers realise the promises contained in their EVPs no longer match the lived experience inside their organisations, but it has also switched around jobseeker priorities. The WHAT and the HOW are now just as important as the WHY. Employers have a unique opportunity to pivot their messaging now before they dive back into the recruitment market.

We hope you enjoy our report.

Joel McInnes
CEO & Co-Founder
[FlexCareers](#)





We would never choose to experience a pandemic. But how we respond to the ever-present risk of infection is creating a new normal. That new normal will be how we live, and work, for years to come.

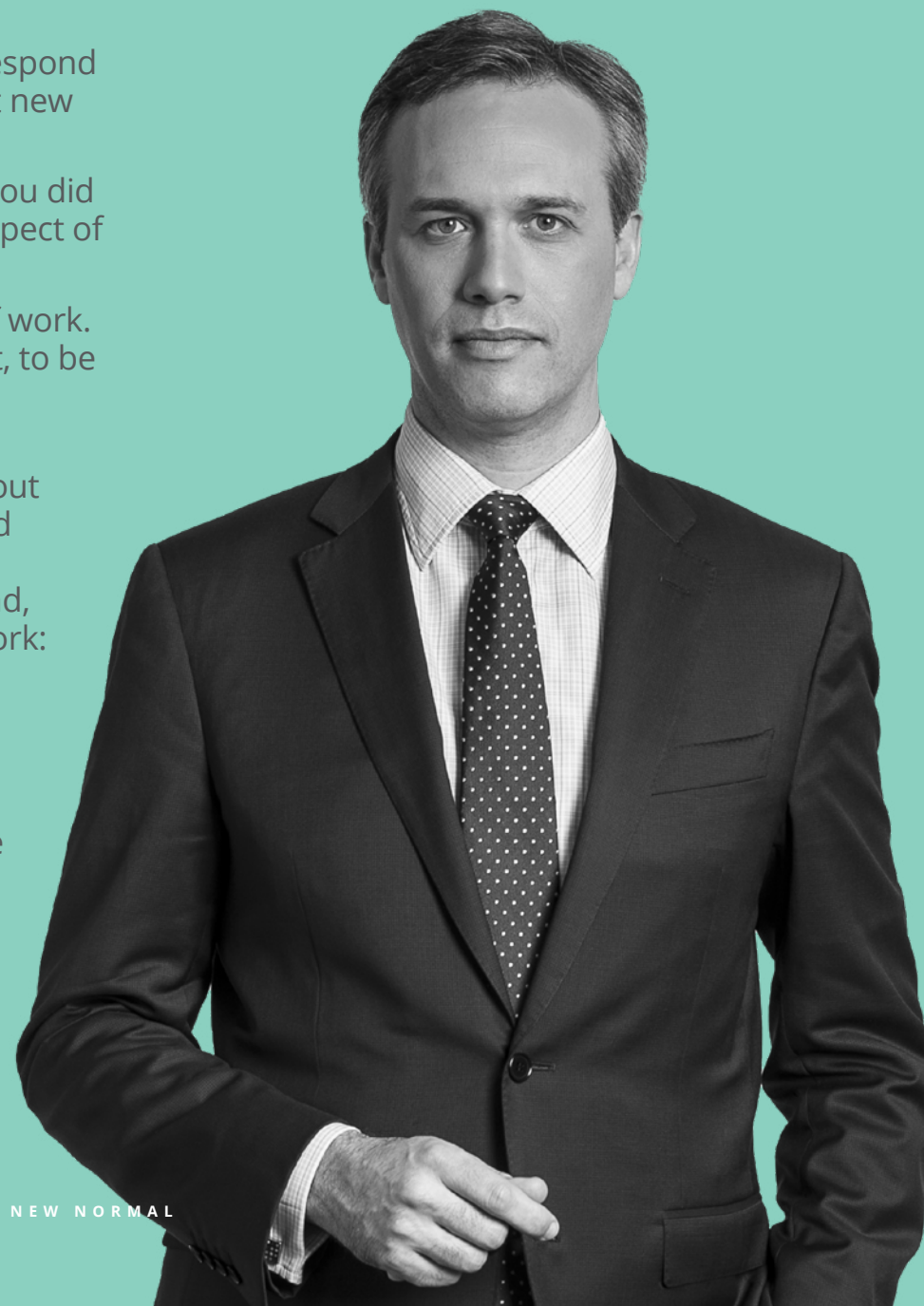
I remember when a videoconference or webinar was something you did when all else failed. But COVID-19 has radically disrupted every aspect of work: how we connect, collaborate and make decisions.

And our community is rising to the challenges of the new world of work. With creativity and grit, we've been discovering new ways to adapt, to be flexible, and to find silver linings.

For too long, we've been stuck in an unresolved debate about work-life balance. But perhaps now we have a chance to bring about positive change. The pandemic has revealed the often-hidden load borne by women – in families, work and elsewhere. Many people are committing to share family responsibilities more equitably. And, from there, we're opening bigger discussions about diversity at work: how we can accommodate, and embrace, people of all abilities, backgrounds and ages.

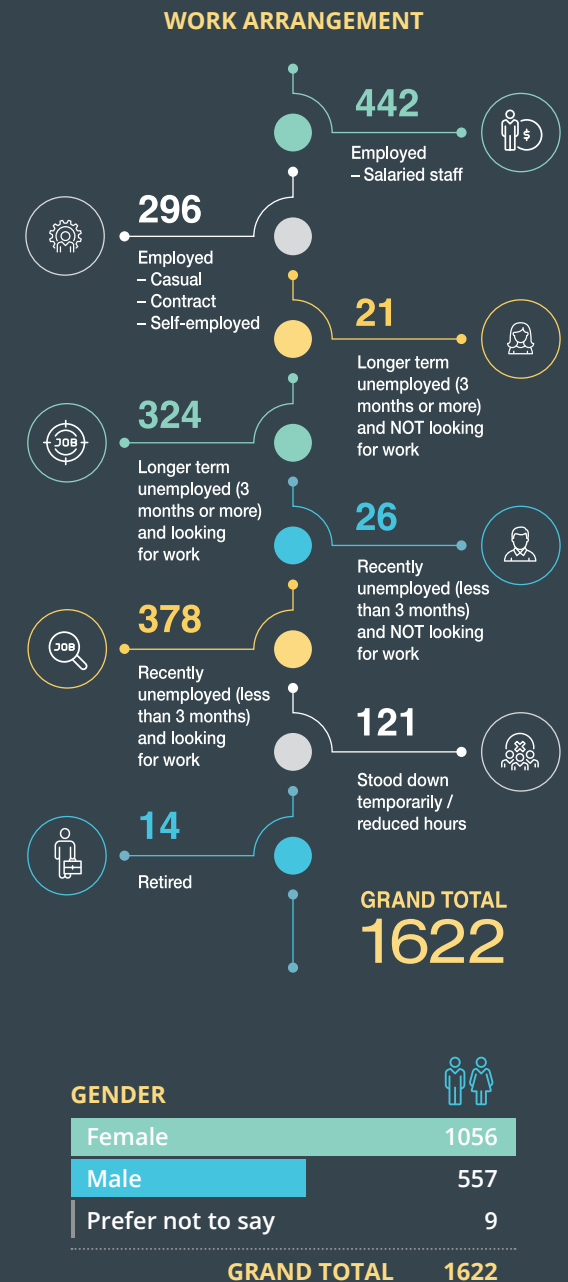
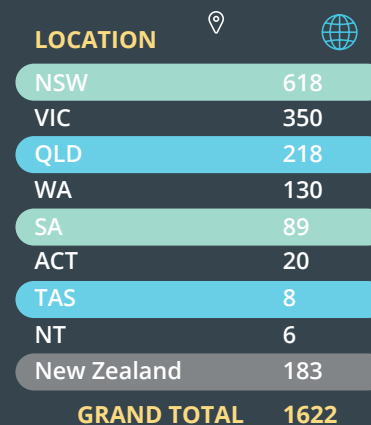
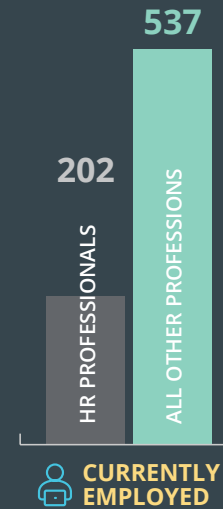
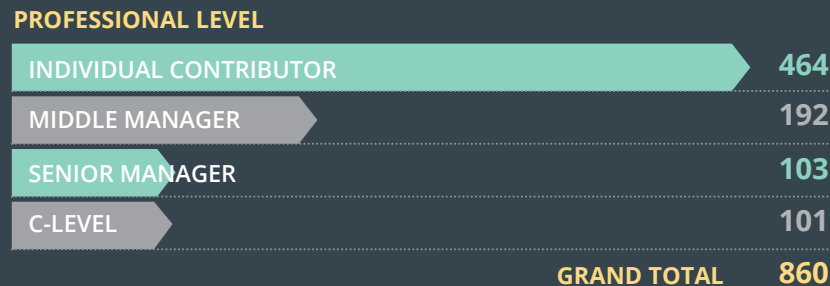
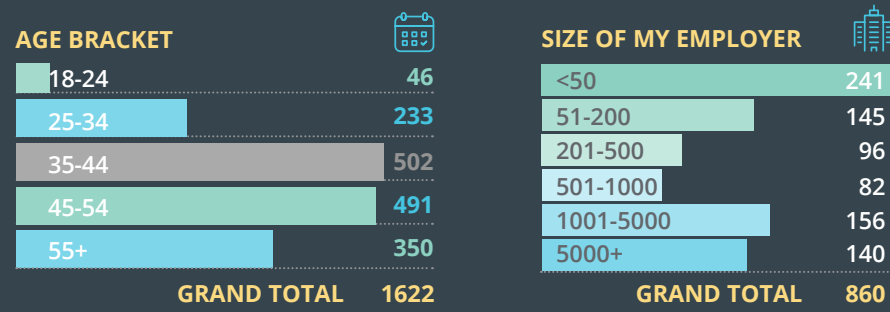
This report validates that people want more choice in where and how we work, and that employers finally appreciate that flexibility can make good business sense. Out of necessity, we've shown we can improve how we work, opening up new pathways towards a more equal workforce, with benefits for our whole community and the environment.”

Edward Santow,
Human Rights Commissioner



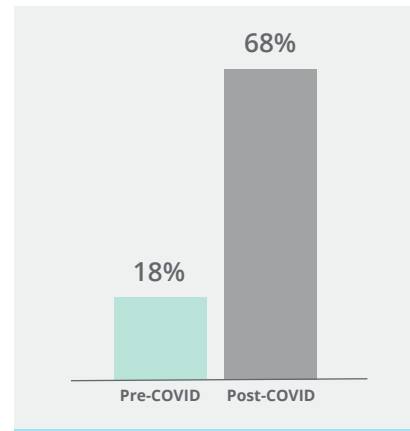
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

The 2020 FlexReport survey was open from 17-29 May 2020 with a sample set of 1622 respondents from the FlexCareers database and an open survey on social media.



WHAT DOES THE NEW NORMAL LOOK LIKE?

The overarching consensus from HR professionals is that the new normal is going to be more **REMOTE** and more **FLEXIBLE**, with business uptake of remote work increasing by 278%:



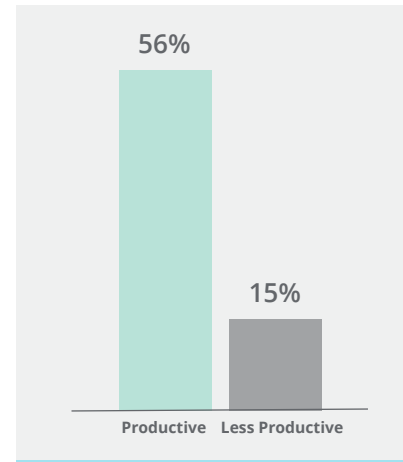
68% of businesses allowed some remote work post-COVID vs 18% pre-COVID.

Throughout COVID-19, most organisations have adapted by using flexible work tools, proving that these work (minus a few video etiquette mishaps!) – which has been a major hurdle to overcome.

Those who said “it will never work” have had an opportunity to now see it work.

96% of HR professionals said they used flex work arrangements to achieve business continuity. Employees confirmed this as well, telling us remote work is more

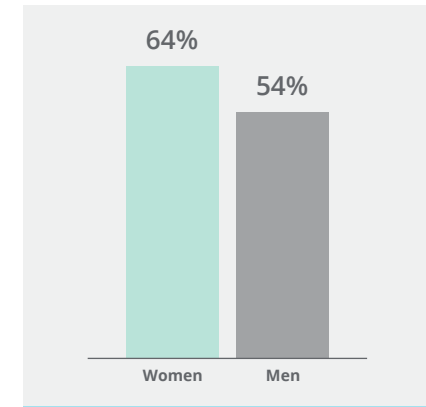
productive for them compared to working in the office, with **56% saying they were more productive** (vs 15% saying less productive).



People have had a taste of flexible and remote working and clearly understand whether it is right for them. A staggering 62% of employees stated they will be working remotely more frequently than they did in the past. While remote working is the extreme of flexible working, it has given people an insight into what flexible working practices can achieve.

59% of employees have a more favourable view of flex working in 2020 vs 5% holding a less favourable view. Interesting to note the gender split here too – women still view flex more favourably than men although the gap has closed dramatically.

We are having many conversations about D&I with our partners and how flexible working can enable their workforce to live and work infinitely better, which we have showcased with some of our stories in this report.



Following COVID-19, 64% of women view flex more favourably vs 54% of men.

As a general rule, people are not rushing back to the office, with a 50:50 split between those who will go back as soon as they are able vs those who want to wait. This corroborates the fact that the COVID-19 version of enforced remote working is not flexibility – having the ability to **choose** whether or not you go into the office is.

One major barrier to returning to the office is the commute, with 67% of workers either worried, or strongly worried about

travelling on public transport. Use of private transport will increase for those working from the office, as will demand for parking.

There is a clear acceptance now of remote working from employees, with only 5% of workers looking to return to the office completely. Going forward, we'll see a pattern of dynamic, hybrid teams, with individuals looking to spend more time out of the office than in it.

Days to be spent in the office % respondents



Finally, employers are (rightly) proud of how they **SUPPORTED** their employees. The top five reasons why, are the increase of:

- 01 AGILITY IN RESPONDING TO REMOTE WORK
- 02 COMMUNICATION FROM LEADERSHIP
- 03 CARE FOR PERSONAL WELLBEING
- 04 COMPASSION FOR INDIVIDUAL SITUATIONS
- 05 CONNECTION BETWEEN MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES, AND WITHIN TEAMS

WORKPLACE HEALTH & SAFETY

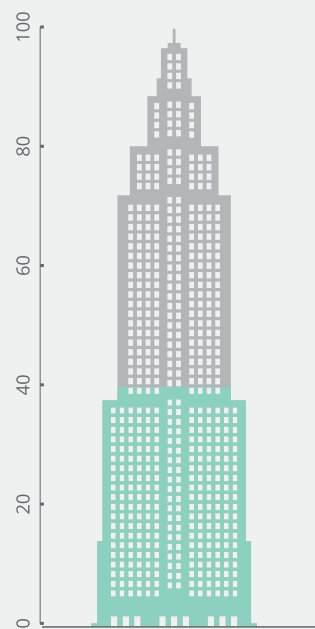
Workplace Health & Safety (WHS) now also encompasses [wellbeing](#) and [psychological](#) safety. As the lines blur between work, home and travel, employees will expect more from their employers, as 45% of employees suffered mental health issues through COVID-19 with their employers supporting them through the experience.

Employers will be pivoting [WHS](#) strategies to safeguard against other major catastrophes. Safety culture will infiltrate the office in the 2020s the same way it did the mining and construction sites back in the 80s and 90s.

The office we return to will be very different from the one we left back in March.

59% of offices were set up to facilitate activity-based working, which is likely to be less popular and possibly replaced by a central collaboration space as we see in smaller office footprints.

64% of businesses believe the layout of their office will change after COVID-19 to incorporate better cleanliness as 53% of employees are worried about office hygiene.



40% of businesses will reduce their office space



We are following all of the recommended guidelines from both WorkSafe and SafeWork. Social distancing, additional cleaning, anchored desks for everyone, 100% clear desk each day, traffic flow markings, no visitors, temp checks, staggered start and finish times and continued embracing of flexible work practices. We also expect there will be a number of people who won't want to return to the office for a very long time – if at all.”

HR Director, Federal Government agency

CULTURE

‘Never let a good crisis go to waste.’ We have a short window to achieve meaningful positive change. Experience tells us this level of TRUST will not last forever, so now is the time to adopt change to keep momentum.

There is an acknowledgement that **the future of work starts now**, as 84% of businesses will be more flexible than they have been in the past. 85% of employers say their executives will be more aware of the value of flexible working. The cultural change coming will be both top down and bottom up.

The mix of flex arrangements will change with an increased acceptance of job share, compressed work weeks and self-managed shift work. Remote work will increase 63% overall, with the percentage of employees working remotely, at least some of the time, increasing from 35% to 57%.

Despite a more dispersed workforce, employers anticipate a stronger

and tighter CULTURE, as people embrace the new ways of working. **However, 54% of respondents do miss seeing colleagues in person**, which means organisations will have to address what culture means for them and how to keep employees inspired and motivated.

Employer branding for a new decade

Complementing new cultural tenets, employer branding will need to catch up to the future of work. 55% of employers believe they will need to update their employer brand to reflect new ways of working, as both current and future employees now want different career support from organisations.

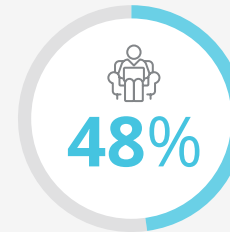
Three strong themes have emerged from our research:

- 1. Workforce Health & Safety (WHS)** – **how** are you going to keep me safe?
- 2. Flexible working practices** – **how** are you going to let me work?

3. Learning Value Proposition (LVP) – what are you going to do to support my growth into the future of work?

Generally, employees are confident their employers will look after their safety at work, however they don't have such strong confidence about their careers and are concerned about their jobs in a weak economy (62%). Almost one fifth of employed people (18%) strongly agree that they will be seeking a second income. 56% of our jobseekers have recently joined the job market having been laid off or stood down due to COVID-19.

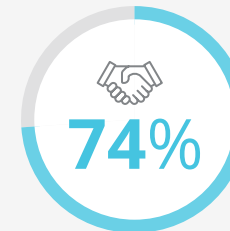
Organisations will be looking at how they can communicate and engage with a whole new talent pool that are concerned about job security & stability. Whilst for talent this may mean a preference for full time and permanent roles, employers who can't offer this can communicate and offer stability in other ways.



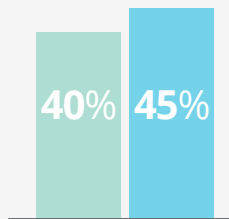
are looking for a role that enables remote working



will be continuing their professional education independently of their employer



of HR professionals say employees increased the trust in their leaders and in their organisation



40% want to look at career switching and 45% want to switch industries altogether



50% of HR professionals think employee engagement will increase.

FLEX STORIES



“At EY, our purpose is to Build a Better Working World. As an organisation, we challenge our perceptions about where, when and how work gets done to respond to the diverse needs of our people, enabling them to lead sustainable, fulfilling, personal and professional lives.”

Company

Ernst & Young Pty Ltd
("EY Australia")

Industry

Professional Services

No. of employees

Approximately 8,000
in Australia

FLEXIBILITY AT EY AUSTRALIA

Flexible working has been a critical focus at EY for many years and we are proud of the progress we have made. At the end of 2019, 27% of our people in Oceania used informal flexibility regularly and 45% occasionally.

EY Australia's flexible working strategy has three goals:

- To challenge the existing perception of what it means to work flexibly by showcasing tools, technology, new ideas and tips for working flexibly, sharing stories of how employees work flexibly, and providing evidence-based papers and materials.
- To demonstrate the organisation's acceptance and encouragement of flexible working with role-modelling and messaging from senior levels.

- To elevate the discussion around flexible working from being individual to team focussed by encouraging regular collaboration and dialogue about how to enable flexible working as a team.

The provision of flexible work policies in itself is not enough to enable flexibility.

We continue to focus on embedding a culture of flexible working by providing the necessary tools, resources and leadership such as internal campaigns, toolkits, training and panel discussions. We also host regular webinars exploring different aspects of flexible work, such as Fighting Flex-ism, Formal Flexible Working, Flexibility & Emotional Health and Men & Parental Leave.

Our 2018 Global People Survey showed positive progress against our measures of flexibility. 84% of employees responded "My manager enables flexibility in when and where people work", an



Millennials in particular at EY are driving the demand for flexibility, as their preference for diverse and stimulating career experiences overrides traditional workplace structures and timelines,”

says **Kate Hillman**, EY Australia People Partner.

increase of three points from our 2017 survey. Similarly, the measure “I have the flexibility I need to achieve my personal and professional goals” has grown 6% from 70% to 76%.

Flexibility strategy highlights

- Launching [Flextober](#) in Oceania in 2017, a campaign now run annually to promote flexible working arrangements with real-life case studies. The 2019 campaign was themed to demonstrate how you can use flexible working to enhance your wellbeing. Flextober has a strong focus on sharing stories from informal flexible workers who use their flexibility to volunteer, spend time with their partners or enjoy late starts, and formal flexible workers with childcare responsibilities or high-level sporting commitments.
- Developing a [Job Redesign Toolkit](#) in 2017 to empower our people to adopt formal flexible working arrangements and ensure that their new roles with reduced hours were set up to facilitate long-term career success. At EY, we believe it is vital to share ideas and leading practises with the broader community, which is why in 2018, this Toolkit was refined and released externally.

Gender-neutral parental leave

Over the last few years, we have also put considerable effort into promoting and supporting men to take extended parental leave. Our parental leave policy is gender-neutral, but we now include educational sessions for men, targeted messages and male imagery in our communications and shared stories of male parental leave, often linked to Father's Day or Flextober.

According to our 2018 Workplace Gender Equality Agency submission, the introduction of the new flexible parental leave policy resulted in a [76% increase in men taking parental leave in FY18](#). This new rate of uptake remained steady in FY19.

COVID-19 response

Globally, EY has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic based on principles aligned to our values and purpose.

1. [The health and wellbeing of our people](#)
2. [Helping clients navigate volatile times](#)
3. [Impact on society and doing our part](#)
4. [Ensuring financial stability and growth](#)

EY people have been – and will continue to be – our number one priority.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have enhanced our [resilient working environment](#). Our people have risen to the occasion and proven themselves to be strong and productive. We have made good use of collaboration technology to continue to execute our projects. Our campus recruitment team is holding virtual student events and 450+ EY people attended our virtual *Round the World in 80 Minutes* tour for World Day for Cultural Diversity.

As part of our immediate response to remote working, we set up a comprehensive microsite on working from home, with guides and resources on remote working tools, learning and development opportunities, supporting a virtual team, wellbeing and mental health, and support for parents and carers.



As a rower within EY Australia's Elite Athlete Program, I am balancing the demands of being an elite athlete along with the challenges of building a career in the business world. EY has supported me in balancing my professional and athletic careers with a flexible working arrangement and enduring team support.

“EY encourages a culture of flexibility, of working to your strengths. Thus, I still embrace a flexible working schedule, even without a gruelling 3-a-day training regime. This is how I get the most out of my work for the betterment of my colleagues, clients and, most importantly, myself.”

Georgie Howe, *Management Consultant, EY Australia*

The move to remote working has been more challenging for some of our people who have required additional equipment to support their health and wellbeing and productivity during these extraordinary circumstances. This included supporting our employees with a permanent or temporary disability, medical conditions, or ergonomic requirements to work from home.

To support our parents and carers, we ran a [virtual school holiday program](#) to help keep children entertained and educated. We have also recognised the importance of [maintaining physical fitness during this time](#), and EY people have the option to participate in virtual yoga, HIIT and barre classes to name a few, to look after our minds and bodies.

myWELLBEING

We also launched our [myWELLBEING](#) platform in early May to further support our people's health and wellbeing. This digital offering gives our people access to a [central hub of health resources](#), daily habit tips, invitations to wellbeing events, digital challenges, and more. myWELLBEING features all our wellbeing resources aligned to financial health, physical and mental health, and building strong personal connections, and supporting family and the community.

We also recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic has created additional health problems including but not limited to stress management, anxiety and depression. We have therefore developed new tools, resources and learning sessions to support our people who may need help over this time.

Online learning

EY is one of the few organisations with a global online learning platform, and before the pandemic, approximately 40% of all learning at EY was online. We have seen a record increase in online learning since the pandemic started as EY people make use of the opportunity to develop their skills while working from home – online learning content consumption has increased by almost 40%.

Key COVID-19 learning

[Transparent and consistent communication](#) with our people has been crucial. Tony Johnson, Chief Executive Officer and Regional Managing Partner, Oceania, has been giving short, weekly video updates, which have proven to be a hit, to make sure our messaging has been clear and direct.

Kate Hillman, EY Australia People Partner, provides regular and timely updates as does each Service Line Leader. The feedback from our people, which we received via a recent survey, indicates that this has contributed greatly to a feeling of security and feeling informed. This communication approach cascades throughout the organisation and is not just a pre-requisite for our senior leaders.

Build back better

EY recently surveyed our people to see what they were thinking about a return to the office. Only 11% stated they want to be one of the first people to return to the office, while 20% want to stay working remotely indefinitely. We will be using this knowledge and our new remote working skills



Videoconferencing has also provided visibility into everyone's non-work life like never before. That greater melding of the personal and professional will have long-term flow-on effects around attitudes more broadly about team members who choose to work flexibly. Everyone is now experiencing the reality that work can be done at home effectively, without it compromising their professionalism,"
says **Kate Hillman**.

to change our workforce strategies for the future, which will likely include reducing our real estate footprint and travel.

The pandemic has given us strong evidence that working remotely does not negatively impact client delivery. We will be further empowering our people to discover what working style works best for them, which may not mean working in one location all the time or for the standard 9-to-5.

We must bear in mind that our mass-transition to remote working has not been smooth for everyone and has not been by choice. Many of us have been working remotely for the first time with young children unexpectedly at home or in

other less than ideal circumstances, and our need for coaching in this area remains ongoing.

We could not be prouder of how our people have responded to the current pandemic. The decision to work remotely was embraced across the practice and our people have continued to be motivated and engaged delivering to our clients as well as supporting each other.





“We now have a great opportunity to rectify gender bias in the workplace and allow mothers to be the best they can as a parent and in their careers, by fully committing and embracing both work and family time.”

Leah Barroccu – Head of Field Sales

Company

Nestlé

Industry

FMCG

No. of employees

Approximately 4,000 in Australia

NESTLÉ'S OUTCOMES-FOCUSED APPROACH TO FLEX

Some forms of flexible working have been available at Nestlé for years. But in 2017, we simplified our approach to making flexible working more accessible to more employees.

We did this by launching our [How We Work](#) policy which was backed by a clear commitment from the CEO and senior leadership team.

How We Work asks employees to answer two simple questions when considering flexible work:

1. Will I be able to get my job done?
2. Will my choice negatively affect others?

When the answer is 'yes' and 'no' respectively, employees have the green light to make appropriate choices about how and where they work.

The following three stories illustrate how Nestlé's flexible working policy helps leaders and parents balance their families with work and lead fulfilling careers. It is possible!

Sales Leadership

Leah Barroccu – Head of Field Sales

In my role, I am responsible for leading our field sales team of 425 employees who service over 9,000 customers across the country in our Supermarket, Impulse and Pharmacy channels.

I have always had a remote field sales team. But as we have embraced new ways of working, including remote working and more flexibility in hours, we now [think differently](#) about how, and who, we can hire for our headquarters in Sydney going forward.

We have historically assumed roles would need to be based in Rhodes and so have often rejected some incredible talent from other cities. As part



of our focus to be more resilient and diverse, we are now taking the opportunity to hire great talent who work remotely, to open up a whole new world for Nestlé from a [recruitment and succession planning perspective](#).

As the mother of two small children, I have had many challenges in the past around building the confidence to even talk about balancing home and work life. I found it difficult to be [fully authentic](#) at work.

As a leader, I did not want to be labelled the 'working mum' and would always try to protect my image as a capable, driven sales leader. The massive shift we have seen over the last few months towards being transparent about our lives and the need for flexibility has been a silver lining for many.

Thankfully Nestlé embraces flexibility and understands my working hours are anything but standard, so I can be present when my children need me most. Nestlé's appraisal of work is [outcomes and performance focussed](#) which suits me fine. It is less about being visible in the office and more about what results I achieve and how I work that matters.

I would still be able to do my role if my work time were less flexible. It would just make juggling work and family commitments extremely challenging.

Global teams

Ben Harper – Head of Procurement

My team is based in Sydney but works with and connects to a global Nestlé Procurement team. This means we require flexibility due to time zone differences and are also quite experienced at [building and maintaining](#) remote working relationships.

We make sure we connect regularly and have proved remote work works! A new team member started working with us whilst we were working from home, and it was five weeks before I met them in person. But it did not matter. Thanks to our rigour in connecting via technology it was like they had been with us forever.

My team holds meetings in the evening. It's part of the job which means we all work flexibly to manage this commitment. As a parent of two children under 10, taking some of my calls at odd hours frees up my day to support school drop-offs and pick-ups. That's why the focus for us is on outcomes, not hours in the office. We only have one rule – no Friday night meetings!

My wife also works full time, so flexibility allows me to [support her career](#) and [manage our school responsibilities](#). Working from home for me also allows for flexible hours. I don't so much have a typical day, more a typical week. I drop the kids to school once or twice a week, pick-up when I can and also take one of them to sport or dancing.



If I didn't have flexibility, I wouldn't be able to do my job without sacrifice – whether at the expense of my career, my wife's career or being there for the times we choose to be present for our kids."

Having a more active role as a parent is very fulfilling and balances my week very nicely. The benefit for my team is that [I lead by example](#). If I do it, then they can too. As a leader, you need to set an example, [no questions asked](#).



I could do my job without workplace flexibility, but my family life wouldn't function as well as it does now. It's all about balance for me, and it's important my family is happy and well, which enables me to be at my best at work."

Rural living

Elizabeth Bollard – Factory HR Business Partner

I am fortunate to live in idyllic Port Macquarie on five leafy green acres, 15 minutes from the beach and 25 minutes from work at Nestlé Smithtown, the home of MILO!

My husband and I had three children in two years and my work arrangements have adapted over this time. Nestlé has been supportive every step of the way, especially as my children have started school, which has been incredible.

My week looks so different from what it did pre-children. But I have become clearer in my objectives and goals at work, prioritising tasks that make the biggest difference and also becoming more efficient over time.

Nestlé **trusts me to get through my work**, and in return, I have been given the flexibility to work part-time. I make myself available to take calls and respond to emails outside of my standard work hours to keep things moving. I can also switch my workdays around with a little notice.

I have been able to contribute to key areas of the business, my creativity has increased, I have implemented significant changes and helped assist my team in reaching goals. My wellbeing has also improved significantly.

Working for a leading food and beverage company and being able to visit the beach before or after work is a magical combination.



“We are excited by the possibilities of true flexible work and what it means for our roles, families, and whole lives.”

Company

South East Water

Industry

Water Utility

No. of employees

703

At South East Water, we offer a variety of flexible work arrangements to help employees achieve work-life integration. We packaged this offering into a formal program in July 2019 and it includes:

- Purchased leave
- Flexible start/finish times
- Flexible work location
- Guiding principles
- Toolkits to support leaders and employees
- Expansion of parental leave to three months paid for both parents/carers and reducing eligibility requirements

However, we still experienced a few practical limitations relating to technology and people leaders expectations – for example, some critical roles were still perceived to require a physical presence which often led to a focus on presence, rather than outcomes.

When coronavirus (COVID-19) hit, continuing our services with a fully remote workforce – apart from our on-site maintenance roles – was our first priority.

Luckily, we had already embedded our flexible framework which led to a complete normalisation of remote working, very quickly.

As previously noted, the challenges regarding technology, leadership capability and cultural expectations still needed to be resolved. However, within the first month of working remotely, **absenteeism halved, and we maintained strong employee engagement levels.**

The new COVID-19 workplace environment supported a further cultural shift towards flexibility and demonstrated the genuine business benefits of an inclusive workforce. There was also some great role-modelling by many of our leaders to demonstrate the different flexible working options.

“

I am personally most proud of our organisation’s ability to transition to a mostly remote working environment in a very short period of only one week, with an absolute focus on our people, safety and wellbeing while also continuing to deliver to our customers and the community.”

Bridget Thakrar, *General Manager, People and Safety*

In July 2019, 79% of employees felt they were genuinely supported in making use of flexible work arrangements. This increased to 87% in March 2020 (metric via Culture Amp pulse survey).

Key learnings

Technology: We addressed some of our previous challenges around key operational areas very quickly, [deploying technology at scale](#) to enable access and connection.

Flexibility: We demonstrated that flexible work [is workable](#) for the majority of our employees.

Wellbeing and safety: We reinforced the importance of wellbeing and safety, and implemented ergonomic setups where necessary to ensure [optimal work environments](#) in very challenging circumstances to make sure we continue to put safety first – even when we’re working remotely.

Lead by example: Our leaders demonstrated sound adaptability – a key focus for our senior leadership development.

Learning: We rapidly developed an in-house eLearning offering to support internal change management initiatives.

Build Back Better

In April 2020, our Executive Team started to look at opportunities beyond COVID-19. A voluntary group of cross-functional leaders workshopped different ideas. These were then themed and further developed with our Executives to feed into our corporate planning process. The opportunity themes are:

- Leveraging the government investment stimulus
- Future ways of working

- Collaborative alliances
- New customer interactions
- Remote operations

We’re also co-creating flexible work solutions with our employees, taking into consideration their unique circumstances and showing that we care and understand the challenges of remote learning, caring and schooling responsibilities.

We will soon have the ability to deliver a fully digital remote working employee experience. [This is going to allow us to genuinely promote our commitment to flexible work practices.](#)

Our key advice to enable flexible working:

1. Develop your leaders’ inclusion capabilities so they can be flexible when catering to a wide variety of employee needs. [EQ is even more important for leading remote teams.](#)
2. Expand your internal talent pool and foster innovation and agility with a more diverse workforce.
3. Focus on a culture that measures outputs and tools to help increase transparency and enable flexible work.
4. Focus on building trust. Enhance trust by being exposed to an individual’s home life. Trust also helps leaders move to an [outcomes-based performance measurement system.](#)
5. Develop a framework for your communication channels to avoid creating additional workloads.



When embedding true flexibility, you have to demonstrate the work can be done at an equal or better level of quality in terms of output. The conversation can then move from trust to transparency of outcomes. Once you’ve demonstrated high performance, there is rarely a good reason why flexibility won’t work.”

Bridget Thakrar, *General Manager, People and Safety*

Employee story:

Amy Fletcher – Organisational Development Lead

My role is to design and implement leadership and cultural development initiatives that support South East Water's growth and direction. I work 0.8 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE), which means I work a four-day week. Working flexible hours through the day and one day from home allows me to juggle a fulfilling career with being a parent.

I'm passionate about the work I do and wanted the opportunity to contribute and add value to my workplace. I have young children and spending quality time with them before they reach school is something I did not want to compromise on. When choosing a business to work with, finding an employer that supports and encourages flexible work was part of my criteria.

On a personal note, I've come to be at peace with the fact the pendulum never stays in the middle. It swings both sides and therefore the arrangement needs to be flexible. There are times where work needs more of me, and there are times where my family needs more of me, and that's OK. In a practical sense, the other side is ensuring the workload reflects the working arrangement – don't try to fit five days of work into four.

Keeping the conversation open with my leader has worked for me. Also, being upfront about what you need and what your leader needs is important. For example, making changes to my work schedule is something I can do, provided I have notice and can source childcare. Having that discussion helps to prevent an assumption of being unwilling or inflexible down the track.

"Flexibility allows me to be there for those important moments."



There are times where work needs more of me, and times where my family needs more of me, and that's OK. Working flexibly helps me achieve balance in my life – so everyone gets the best of me."



Supporting Neurodiversity Through Flexible Work

Company

Westpac Group

Industry

Financial Services

No. of employees

approx. 38,000

Neurodiversity at Westpac Group

In Australia, 1 in 70 people live with autism. One of the greatest challenges for people with autism is finding employment – with the current unemployment rate for people on the autism spectrum at 32% – that’s triple the rate of people with a disability and *six times* the rate of their neurotypical able-bodied counterparts.

The social and interpersonal nature of traditional recruitment processes, with formal interviews and culture-fit assessments, can make it difficult for people with autism to secure roles. And yet many people on the autism spectrum possess an impressive range of skills which are in high demand for many organisations. Analytical skills, problem-solving abilities, confidence using data and digital software, attention to detail, resilience and perseverance are all skills organisations

are seeking to keep pace in the future of work and are well-developed in many people on the autism spectrum.

That’s why in 2017, Westpac Group introduced a dedicated Tailored Talent Autism Hiring Program to turn the traditional recruitment process on its head. This program is now in place to capture in-demand skills from the market and provide a new pathway for people on the autism spectrum who may struggle to get into roles through mainstream channels.

This dedicated program is built on Westpac’s existing ‘All in Flex’ policy and contributes to the Group’s growing flexible work culture. Flexibility is vital to helping neurodiverse talent achieve their potential, as well as offering agile working environments with quiet or focused spaces or the ability to dial-in to meetings and town halls. But this type of flexibility is also valuable for any employee.

Four key goals

Westpac’s Tailored Talent Program has four key goals:

1. To create new pathways into employment for people on the autism spectrum
2. To reach untapped potential with a deliberate drive to hire candidates with in-demand capabilities who may otherwise not be found through traditional recruitment processes.
3. To lead the way and be the first Australian bank to run a program specifically aimed at hiring people on the autism spectrum.
4. To find the right roles and create a work environment for people with autism to thrive through a tailored recruitment experience.

Under Westpac's 'All in Flex' policy, people leaders are encouraged to allow flexibility for all roles across the group. This could be part-time or job-share arrangements, flexible hours or start and finish times, working from home or from another location best suited to the individual, or accessing flexible leave options.

For neurodiverse hires, access to flexible work arrangements is a key contributor to creating a supportive work environment – for example, starting later to avoid the sensory impact of a peak hour commute, finding a workspace that suits sensory needs (such as working from home on busy office days, quiet spaces away from high traffic zones and kitchens) and using collaboration technology tools to dial-in to large meetings and stay connected to colleagues.

With Westpac's 'All in Flex' policy already in place, existing employees already use many of the flexible work arrangements Tailored Talent participants may require. What might be considered a special accommodation at another organisation is not above and beyond what leaders would offer any employee and this allows for a seamless onboarding experience for Westpac's Tailored Talent participants.

Program success

The first cohort of Tailored Talent program participants commenced in February 2018. Westpac partners with Specialisterne, an organisation with expertise in autism employment, to co-deliver the tailored sourcing and selection process and provide ongoing support to the selected candidates.

There is still more work to be done in redesigning traditional recruitment methods, but to date,

the program has shown neurodiverse talent can thrive in Westpac's work environment.

Given the successful outcomes from the 2018 program, recruitment for a second intake will commence in late 2020. Westpac's I&D vision is to be one of the world's greatest companies for inclusion and to be known as an organisation that values neurodiversity, creating meaningful career pathways for people with autism.

To this end, Westpac tracks program-specific metrics such as:

- Retention of participants
- Performance of participants
- Demonstrated work outcomes of participants
- Senior leader advocacy
- Feedback from people leaders, participants and teams

Westpac's strong culture of flexibility has helped make this program a success.

Without Westpac's 'All in Flex' approach, it may have been more challenging to get business leaders to commit to hiring neurodiverse talent. Participants enjoy the same flexibility every Westpac employee can access and leaders are accustomed to providing the flexibility all employees need to be successful in their role.

For other organisations considering flexible working, it is critical to have a policy in place where flexibility requests are discussed positively, rather than considered a special entitlement for a select few.





“We believe that offering a flexible workplace is important for attracting and retaining the best talent. This also translates into our customer experience as good customer service is often a reflection of a good employee experience.”

Amanda Whiting – Executive General Manager, IAG

Company

IAG

Industry

Insurance

No. of employees

Approx. 11,000

FLEXIBILITY TO ENABLE SUSTAINABILITY AT IAG

IAG is the largest general insurance company in Australia and New Zealand, selling insurance under many leading brands including NRMA Insurance, CGU, WFI, SGIO and SGIC in Australia, and AMI, State, NZI, NAC, Lumley and Lantern in New Zealand. Our purpose is to ‘make your world a safer place’ and we do this for our people by recognising and encouraging diversity in all its forms, ensuring our people are equipped for the future, and creating an environment of wellbeing to support a whole-of-life approach.

Flexibility is one of three pillars we are focused on to build a diverse and inclusive workforce, including different genders, people of different cultures, across all generations and at all stages of people’s careers. **By making flexible work the norm**, all diverse groups benefit.

MyFlex

We wanted to introduce a **new way of thinking about workplace flexibility**, a culture shift from accommodating individual flexibility needs to becoming ‘just the way we do things’ at IAG. In 2017 we launched our flexible working program called ‘MyFlex’ centered around our people and their needs. The program looks at flexibility in terms of people’s time, annual leave, where they work and how they work.

At IAG, MyFlex includes:

- FlexiTime with adjusted start or finish times, reduced hours and compressed working weeks/fortnights.
- FlexiPlace to enable working remotely either from home or an alternative site.
- FlexiJob including job sharing and secondments.
- FlexiLeave including career breaks and recreational leave.



Flexible work options have often been easier to implement for people working in head offices, however, given that a large proportion of our people work in contact centres, we saw the need to look at options that benefit all our employees.”

Amanda Whiting ,
Executive General Manager, IAG

Once these foundations were complete, MyFlex was launched via an internal communications campaign, with endorsement from our CEO and senior leaders. We hosted workshops with managers across the business, encouraging them to enable MyFlex for their teams. The key directives were:

Say “yes” to flex

Managers are responsible for enabling successful flexible working within their teams and across the wider organisation, so we asked our managers to say “yes” to all requests for flexible working arrangements unless there was a significant business reason to say “no”. Even if there were some concerns around business-critical needs, we encouraged leaders to trial a flex arrangement and see how it worked.

Role model flexibility

The right behaviours start with leaders, so we encouraged them to look for opportunities to role model flexible working arrangements themselves, and to ‘leave loudly’ at the end of their MyFlex day.

We also [provided guides](#) for people and their leaders around how to have a conversation about flexibility, and shared stories internally which helped build momentum and spark change.

Our focus was on enabling greater flexibility for our people and each month we released a new video showcasing a different type of flexibility, and including testimonials from leaders and employees at all levels across our business. By profiling people across IAG, and in different roles, we ensured everyone could personally connect to the stories shared.

Investing in flex

In recent years we have invested in video conferencing and digital technology to ensure that

those who work regularly from home or other locations are able to easily connect with their teams, which allows us to create a more inclusive workplace, regardless of where our employees are.

Flexibility success

We estimate that [70% of our employees work flexibly](#), either formally or informally. The most significant impact of MyFlex has been on the wellbeing of our people, from parents and carers who are now able to flex their work and life more effectively and people choosing to invest more time and energy in their communities, to those choosing to live further out from the city.

Flexibility highlights and observations:

- People frequently report reduced travel times, ease of getting to work, a reduction in stress and [an increase in overall wellbeing](#).
- Remote working has, anecdotally, allowed many of our people to enjoy an [improved lifestyle](#), for example with a lower cost of living by moving further out from main cities.
- People choose to flex their hours so they can spend more time with [family or volunteer](#) in the community.
- People report they can get more done when they work from home as they can focus on deep work without interruptions. A lot of people comment that this enables them to think and be more creative, making a huge difference to their productivity, energy levels and motivation.
- Reducing the number of people on the roads at peak times has the added benefits of reducing traffic congestion and helping to [lower our carbon footprint](#).



IAG's Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS) has increased significantly since 2017. While the eNPS score measures a range of things, MyFlex has been one of the key organisational changes implemented during this time.

It has been our most referenced benefit in verbatim comments of our internal culture surveys since the program was introduced. Survey results show the number of people who described themselves as advocates and say they are happy to recommend IAG as a place to work has more than doubled since the introduction of MyFlex.

We hear this feedback through our Talent Acquisition team who are told that people have heard about our flex program from family and friends and it is one of the key reasons they were attracted to work for IAG. The impact MyFlex has had on our contact centre teams, and the flow-on effect for our customers, has been especially encouraging. Enabling contact centre employees to work from home has seen a reduction in unplanned leave and sick leave, as well as reduced call handling times in our contact centres.

COVID-19 response and beyond

In line with our purpose: we make your world a safer place, we made a decision in mid-March to ask all our people who did not have a critical need to work from an IAG worksite, to work from home. We did this to help keep our people safe and play a role in stopping the spread of coronavirus in the community.

By mid-April, 98% of our people across Australia and NZ were working from home.

One of the main reasons we were able to move quickly was because we were already well set up with technology and systems to enable remote working.

In addition, we created work-from-home tech equipment bundles and prioritised provisioning to customer-facing teams, to ensure they had the kit they needed to effectively support our customers.

In New Zealand we set up a 'tech drive-thru' where each employee could drive in at a scheduled time, pop the boot and have the kit they needed placed in their car. Social distancing and hygiene rules were followed at all times.

What we have found throughout this period is that the majority of our people have found they can work from any location and still feel incredibly connected to the business. We also found that during March and April, we had our lowest rates in absenteeism and turnover since reporting on these measures first began.

Build Back Better

At IAG, we are now starting to explore what the future of work will look like going forward. Conversations are now taking place to understand people's preference to work from home on an ongoing basis. What is clear at IAG, as with many other organisations, is that many people would like to retain the ability to work from home either permanently or with a mixture of working from home and an IAG office, and where possible, we will support this.



Switch – the way forward for call centres and flex

IAG created an app called 'Switch' that supports flexible working by enabling contact centre employees in Australia to make changes to their rosters and work hours online without seeking manager approval.

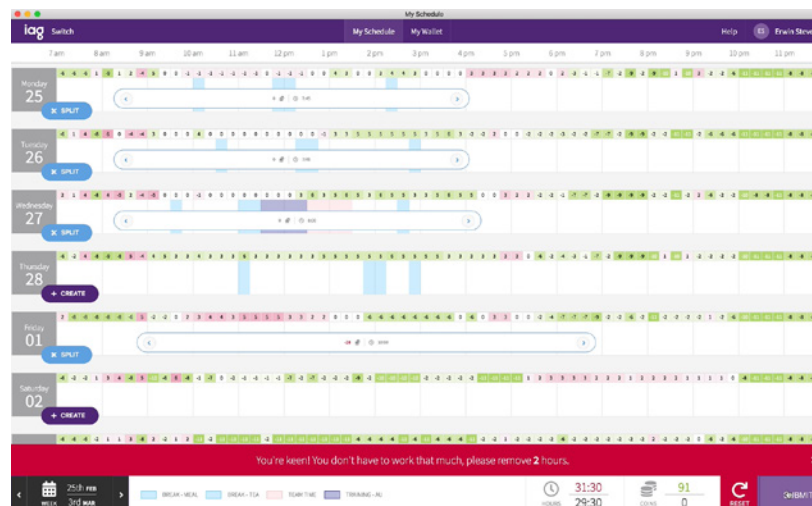
Developed by IAG as part of its ongoing focus to create a flexible workplace, the idea for Switch came in response to the flexibility challenges of the contact centre environment and a gap in the current technologies available for workforce management.

The app is unique to IAG and works by using a pricing algorithm and digital marketplace that manages supply and demand for different work shifts.

"The process of changing shifts has previously been quite manual and often involved several conversations between the employee, their manager and colleagues. Not only is this time-consuming for the individual, but labour intensive for the business," she said.

"The Switch app has automated that process and works in a way that no one needs to justify why they need to make changes and instead can change shifts on their own terms. We recognise that flexibility is different for everyone, which is how Switch really starts to add value."

"What we've seen is that some people are making small changes that can make a big difference to their lives. For example, we had one person changing their shift by just 15 minutes so they could leave a bit earlier, which allowed them to beat the traffic and make it home in time for the after-school pick-ups and dinner," Ms Whiting said.



“Contact centres have historically been very structured and inflexible when it comes to people’s time. The benefit of Switch is that it gives our employees more control over their time and work-life balance, while allowing us to manage our business needs.”

Amanda Whiting,
Executive General Manager, IAG

RECOMMENDATIONS
THE NEW WORLD
OF WORK IS
HERE.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO TO PREPARE FOR THE NEW NORMAL OF WORK?



We have entered the new world of work with both opportunities and challenges in front of us.

On one hand there is a lot of uncertainty about how the workforce will look – office space and location, size of workforce, types of roles – which is creating anxiety around careers, sustainability and the macro economy more broadly.

On the other hand, the circumstances and the experiences that have led to this uncertainty have also resulted in a high level of clarity.

The biggest epiphany is the consensus that flexible work not only achieves business continuity, but it also enables trust, productivity, wellbeing and a more balanced lifestyle. And now we have both the qualitative and quantitative data to unequivocally prove it.

While there is a sense of trepidation about career security (62% of our respondents are concerned about their jobs), people are also very clear about how they want to work, what they want their employers to provide them with and who they want to work for (the industry switchers and career switchers).

We have moved from the need to provide a business case to prove flexibility makes good business sense - and what to do now is the next step.

CEOs, business leaders, team leaders, full-time employees, shift workers and casual workers have all experienced a new way of working. At all levels people have seen not only into their own lives, but also into the lives of their teams, suppliers, partners and spouses.

The sense of compassion and empathy brought into the world of work has hopefully permanently changed the need to hide aspects of our lives. There have been many conversations over the last few years about being genuine, authentic and bringing your whole self to work, however, as some of our stories and collective sentiments globally show, this has not always been the case. Unconscious bias, fear and ignorance have all had a part to play in blocking advancement which has now been alleviated, certainly at leadership level.



Care is Care

Many of the stories featured in this report have been about flexibility enabling parents to manage priorities, as this has always been the understood use of flexibility. The big focus for the 2020s is going to be around *care per se* as we see the rise of the sandwich generation, enabling care of family with disability, or personal mental health issues. Personal situations will no longer be hidden or taboo – they will be front and foremost in what people need from their job to be successful both personally and professionally. This blurring of lines between work and home will see the rise of support frameworks being provided by employers to their people.



Safety & Wellbeing Programs

Safety and wellbeing will no longer be a privilege of the global tech firms and the elite few. As the focus on trust, accountability and unstructured working weeks becomes more prevalent, so will the requirement to have both physical hygiene, mental wellness and psychological safety programs in place.

Physical hygiene as previously noted, will be predominantly focused on physical distancing – how people commute, occupy work spaces, interact with clients, eat lunch and collaborate.

Mental wellness is paramount in a post-COVID world. Whether it's isolation from remote working, anxiety about job security, fear of the future of work, engagement and connection to teams, organisations are going to have to take that responsibility on and implement programs to overcome these new(ish) work issues.

Psychological safety must be addressed. Employees will undoubtedly be concerned about the future for some time but will likely be unwilling to voice those concerns. Leadership and management programs will increase to make sure employees feel safe to bring up concerns and fears with a manager they see every day. From the top down, honest and open communication will be crucial to make sure good employees do not leave for perceived better experiences or career paths.



Learning

Our survey data tells us that 68% of respondents will continue to study independently of their employers. Progressive employers will be supporting their people to prepare for the future of work by helping them upskill so that they are relevant to the business as it goes through inevitable transformation.



Flexibility

Flexibility will be a framework, not a prescribed choice of options. Some will work from home, some from a workplace, some will mix it up. Working from remote locations, fulltime flexibly, part-time structured, will all be part of the new normal. Leaders and managers will have to learn, if they haven't already, how to motivate, measure and reward through new systems and metrics.



Employer Branding & Culture

Taking this into account means organisations need to update their employer branding. Not just for future candidates, but to help current employees understand the value they can bring and what they can expect to get back in return. No longer will fancy office locations, a short walk to a train station and international travel be a draw card. It might not even be a reality.

How you develop, support and care for your employees will be far more attractive and rewarding.

Organisations should be following by example, using a robust flexible working policy to actively attract a specific audience. By embedding true flex into the workplace, you will be able to communicate to a much



broader and valuable audience than ever before, bringing in new skills and diverse ways of thinking to add reciprocated value to your business.



Trust

One of the biggest topics of 2020 is about trust in the workplace. In August 2020, FlexCareers will be launching the FlexReady Certification. This is our way of helping organisations be truly committed to achieving a genuinely flexible workplace, ensuring that employees and potential candidates can communicate their needs devoid of fear of bias or a negative reaction.

We are excited to announce that CBA, NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, PepsiCo, South East Water and APRA are amongst the first companies to be part of this initiative and we look forward to welcoming more of you on board.

As the economy reopens, things will start to change rapidly. Some organisations will already be set up for sustainable success, others will find it harder to adjust and will need further help to align their workforce to so many changes.

We hope the insights in this report will help you make decisions about the future as we step into this new, uncharted decade of work. Thank you for your participation and as always, please contact us to find out more.

Yours,

The FlexCareers Team

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ABOUT FLEXCAREERS



WE PROVIDE SOLUTIONS TO ENGAGE, RETAIN AND EVOLVE TALENT IN THE NEW WORLD OF WORK.

Flexibility & Certification

We partner with you to embed truly flexible work environments with programs that align your organisation at all levels with tools and skills for peak effectiveness.

FlexReady: We partner with organisations to build a bespoke program that delivers flexibility with measurable outcomes in terms of your bottom line and the lived experience for your people.

FlexReady Certification: Stand out from the crowd and demonstrate your organisation's commitment to flexibility with a certification process that demonstrates your commitment to providing flexible work arrangements and delivers improved talent retention and attraction.

Build Back Better: Our process will define the change steps that will best support your people coming out of this crisis, and support the economic recovery of your organisation.

Outplacement & Career Support

We've reinvented traditional outplacement by bringing flexibility, technology and humanity together.

In conjunction with our friends at mwah, **CareerSwitch** offers a full service, high quality package of

traditional career transition services for your organisation and people. These include one-on-one coaching by highly experienced and accredited coaches, delivered remotely or in person, and a range of client specific workshops for individuals and/or employees delivered through your own branded online portal.

Recruitment & Employer Branding

Harness the power of our platform to attract and inspire the best talent, with sophisticated AI matching database, profile sharing and performance tracking with detailed reporting.

Recruitment: Let us help you reach your perfect candidate through ATS/HRIS integration; highly-targeted job matching alerts to candidates; algorithmic short-list of most relevant candidates; employer feature page; and more.

Employer brand: Differentiate your brand from your talent competitors as we help you develop and launch your employer brand to build an engaged, productive workforce and talent pool.

Parental Leave & Return to Work Support

We provide two tailored programs underpinned by technology and coaching to support great talent to be the best they can be, personally and professionally.

Internal relaunchships – retention solution: Retain your valuable talent and assist employees as they embark on their parental journey with a bespoke program that includes digital platform and coaching support to ensure they return refreshed, re-energised, and engaged.

External relaunchships – attraction solution: Attract highly skilled people from an untapped talent pool with a program that includes promotion of your relaunchships initiative, your platform providing digital education, career coaching support, leader training and detailed reporting.



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