

FLEXIBLE WORKING PLAN

INTRODUCTION

While COVID-19 pandemic impacts have certainly hit our economy and our community hard, and life as we knew it has changed radically over the past 4 months, it has also enabled some positive changes and improved ways of operating. These changes have enabled us to think differently about how we conduct our business, including flexible working arrangements and working from home.

The Greens believe that this has provided an opportunity for the ACT to offer better work-life balance for ACT public servants through allowing people more flexibility in their hours and where they work. This will enhance the compatibility between work, personal life and family life, as there is strong evidence that this flexibility improves people's wellbeing and quality of life, and helps people to work more effectively and productively.

The Greens want ACT Government agencies to develop policies that more easily accommodate working from home arrangements and provide efficient application for a four-day work week, reduced working hours or flexibility in working hours.

The Greens Flexible Work Plan carries the positive changes COVID-19 has brought to the way many of us work into the future, to build a better normal.

THE ACT GREENS FLEXIBLE WORK PLAN WILL:

- allow ACT public servants, wherever possible, access to working from home arrangements;
- allow ACT public servants, wherever possible, access to a 4 day work week, or reduced hours; and
- Support the private and community sectors to offer similar flexible working arrangements.

SUPPORTING WOMEN AND FAMILIES

The Greens believe that maintaining the status quo of set work hours and days does not always offer people the flexibility they need to enjoy full quality of life, and creates conflict between work, personal and family life. When people have more time to engage in other activities they have better social connectedness and wellbeing.

The Greens plan also recognises that the current working arrangements do not best support gender equality in the workplace. The Greens understand that women will significantly benefit from these opportunities as they typically take on the load of family responsibilities and this will provide greater flexibility to manage priorities. Evidence shows that flexible work arrangements - for both parents - are critical to supporting women to progress through their careers, by facilitating a more equal distribution of caring and domestic work.

Good work-life balance is inclusive and gender neutral, and broadens focus beyond the workplace to include family as well as other types of personal activities and interests, such as education, community involvement, sport and recreation and religious activities.

We know that greater flexibility in the workplace leads to a reduction in conflict between work and personal/family life and this has many positive outcomes for the collective community.

Did you love the short commute from the kitchen to your dinner-table desk? The ease and economy of lunching from your own fridge? The opportunity to greet your children when they come home from school? The chance to listen to your favourite music while you worked? Were you more productive? Less stressed?

Or did you struggle to switch between professional and personal roles with no change of scene to help? Did the kids interrupt you too much? Did you have too little space for your work papers and equipment?

Would you prefer a mix - say two days a week at home and three in the office?

The Greens understand that everyone's work-life situation is different, and so is every workplace. We've seen the opportunity the COVID-19 lockdown has presented for many professions and workplaces to re-imagine the way people work - to create a work arrangement that suits their unique circumstances. This is integral to building a better normal.

Literature demonstrates that greater flexibility in working arrangements increases both individual and organisational productivity, providing a cost-benefit to organisations.

The ACT Public Sector Administrative and Related Classifications Enterprise Agreement 2018 - 2021 already provides clear avenues for seeking flexible working arrangements under clause E1 & E2. The Greens want to ensure that this commitment is granted without any risk or issue to the requester, as long as it is within workplace possibilities and requirements. For example we understand that working from home is not achievable for many frontline workers, like direct healthcare. The Greens want each ACT Government agency to promote this condition to employees.

For those positions where it is easily achievable, we do not believe that every request should need to be signed off by the Head of Service. The Greens want each ACT Government agency to promote this condition to employees.

1. ACCESS TO WORKING FROM HOME ARRANGEMENTS

The Greens plan will make access to working from home more readily accessible and flexible for ACT Public Servants, wherever their job requirements allow it.

This will require continuous encouragement and cultural shift to provide greater opportunities for these flexible work arrangements, whereby workers do not feel there is any risk to their positions in seeking these arrangements.

We also want to support other workplaces such as the private sector and community organisations to also have the chance to re-think how to best use their space and their staff to improve everyone's well-being.

2. ACCESS TO A 4 DAY WORK WEEK, OR REDUCED HOURS

Flexible work arrangements and access to a four-day work week - or other reduced hours as requested - are fundamental to helping ACT Public Servants find greater work-life balance and overall job and life satisfaction. This directly aligns with the ACT Government's wellness indicators, both on an individual level, but also collectively, as when the population has greater satisfaction and is happier, everyone benefits.

This will make access to a 4 day work week or reduced hours easily accessible for those wishing to seek variations to their employment. Agencies will be encouraged to support these applications, creating a culture whereby no risks are posed to the individual should they seek this flexibility.

3. SUPPORT THE PRIVATE AND COMMUNITY SECTORS TO OFFER SIMILAR FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

To extend flexible working arrangement options to the private and community sector in appropriate areas, an ACT Government team will be established, to:

- explore incentives and encouragement programs for the private and community sectors that looks at how to support flexibility while maintaining job security;
- develop resources to promote flexible working arrangements such as working from home, including advice, information and support for businesses; and
- support the community sector to enable working from home and more flexible hours.



These initiatives will help expand the cultural shift required to ensure flexible working arrangements are more easily accessible for employees.