

ACTION AGENDA FOR  
**WORK & FAMILY**  
BALANCE

NOVEMBER 2003



For many Victorians, finding a better balance between work and family life has become one of their most important priorities. Changes in the labour market, technology, work practices and the structure of families mean that, more than ever before, Victorians are juggling work and family commitments.

Australia and Victoria face the challenge of finding new strategies to achieve a better balance between work and family responsibilities.

Meeting this challenge is not only vitally important for Victorian families; it will also deliver significant benefits for Victorian workers, businesses and the State's economy.

The Victorian Government is committed to showing the leadership necessary to realise these benefits and achieve a better work and family balance for Victorians.

The Government's *Action Agenda for Work and Family Balance* sets out the Bracks Government's strong record of achievement on work and family balance and outlines a positive agenda for leadership and action over the next two years.

It commits the Government to working closely with employers, unions and the wider community to address three key areas:

- raising employee, business and community awareness;
- providing practical assistance and support to employees and employers; and
- ensuring that government policies and programs reflect and reinforce the pursuit of a better balance between work and family life.

The Government recognises that new ways of working and new technologies offer exciting opportunities to increase the range of options available to Victorian families, while delivering improved productivity and positive results for Victorian business.

The Government's *Action Agenda for Work and Family Balance* aims to position Victoria as a leader in exploring these options and developing innovative work practices to deliver real and lasting improvements in the way Victorians balance their work and family commitments.

## **BENEFITS OF A BETTER WORK AND FAMILY BALANCE**

### **FOR BUSINESS**

- Improved staff retention and reduced labour turnover.
- Reduced absenteeism, less stress in the workplace and improved employee health.
- Higher morale and increased motivation.
- Better workplace cooperation.
- Recognition as an 'employer of choice,' with innovative and family friendly work practices.
- Greater capacity to meet customer demands through flexible working arrangements.
- Recognition as a 'good corporate citizen.'

### **FOR WORKERS AND FAMILIES**

- Greater job satisfaction.
- Less stress and better health.
- Improved personal and family relationships.
- Increased opportunities for participating in family and community activities.
- Greater feelings of control in terms of work, family and caring responsibilities.

### **FOR VICTORIA**

- Increased productivity and stronger economic growth.
- Access to a wider pool of skilled labour, particularly women and older workers.
- Greater capacity to address labour and skill shortages and attract skilled workers to Victoria.
- Greater scope to develop and realise the full potential of the workforce, new technologies and innovative work practices.
- More cohesive and caring communities.



The *Action Agenda for Work and Family Balance* sets out four key areas in which the Victorian Government will take action to help create an environment that fosters a better work and family balance.

### Leading the way in work and family balance

*The Government will lead the way by contributing to debate on work and family issues, raising public awareness about the importance of balancing work and family commitments and promoting the benefits of better work and family balance to business, industry and the wider community.*

Actions will include:

- Developing policies on work and family balance based on research from the *Better Work and Family Balance Program*.
- Intervention in the ACTU's Work and Family Test Case to argue for better recognition of work and family commitments in the Australian industrial relations system.
- Leading discussions with other States and Territories about a standard national approach to long service leave.
- Continuing to be a strong voice in advocating for a federally funded national maternity leave scheme and improved federally funded family benefits and entitlements.

### Supporting industry to adopt practices that enhance work and family balance

*The Government will encourage Victorian industry to recognise the benefits of a positive approach to work and family balance and support businesses to develop innovative solutions for a better balance between work and family life.*

Actions will include:

- Funding of up to \$50,000 under the *Better Work and Family Balance Program* for pilot projects in small and medium sized organisations to test innovative work and family balance initiatives.
- A promotional campaign to publicise the benefits of work and family balance.
- Convening a Work and Family Balance Conference for Victorian industry.
- Introducing specific work and family balance activities to support small business and other key industry sectors.

### Working in partnership with the community on work and family issues

*The Government will work with communities across Victoria to develop practical solutions to the problems employees face in balancing work with family and community commitments.*

Actions will include:

- Continuing to provide grants of \$1000, under the *Parents Returning to Work Program*, for the training of parents returning to work after two years of full time caring for children.

- Advice to Government by the Premier's Children's Advisory Committee on childcare provision for Victorian families and improving linkages between children's services.
- Ongoing roll out of the *Children First* initiatives, including the establishment of children's centres to create a single entry point to early childhood services.
- Improvements to maternal and child health services, a strategic approach to meeting the needs of carers and improved support for people with a disability who have complex needs, their families and carers.

### Demonstrating good work and family practice in Victorian public employment

*The Government will show leadership in moving towards a better work and family balance for public sector employees.*

Actions will include:

- A trial of part time work arrangements and the conduct of an Employee Childcare Needs Project by Victoria Police.
- A census of the public sector to collect demographic and employment data, including the take-up of work practices that assist work and family balance.
- An assessment by the Office for Workforce Development of quality part time working arrangements in the public service.
- An evaluation by the Office for Workforce Development of employee satisfaction with work and family life balance in the Victorian public service.

For more information about the *Action Agenda for Work and Family Balance*, contact the Work and Family Team at Industrial Relations Victoria on 9651 2712 or 9651 2714. Full copies of the Action Agenda can be downloaded from [www.irv.vic.gov.au](http://www.irv.vic.gov.au). The Office of Women's Policy can be contacted at [www.women.vic.gov.au](http://www.women.vic.gov.au) or on 9208 3129.

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