



## Quality Part-Time Work in Hospitality

### Assisting with work and family balance

An effective solution to balancing work and family creates a productive workplace, as well as a rewarding family life.

Today's workplace must respond to a changing labour force, the need for increased workplace flexibility and the importance of a skilled and engaged workforce.

Quality part-time work is about attracting and retaining skilled workers who also have family responsibilities. Putting quality part-time work firmly on the agenda is one step towards an effective response to contemporary needs and demands.

The information set out below is designed to encourage businesses to consider quality part-time work to assist with the balance between family and work.

Women returning from maternity leave and others whose family requirements mean that working part-time is a short or long term strategy to assist with the balance between family and work may benefit from quality part-time work.

However, quality part-time work is not just for people with family responsibilities. It can assist employees to combine work with study or other life pursuits or can be used to assist in graduated retirement.

We encourage you to think about the information within these guidelines and to use it to assist your staff with balancing work, family and other life matters.

Putting quality part-time work in place is good for everyone.



Victorian Employers'  
Chamber of Commerce  
and Industry



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This guideline has been developed by Industrial Relations Victoria in partnership with the Australian Hotels and Hospitality Association (Victoria), ClubsVic, Restaurant & Catering Victoria, the Australian Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union (Victorian Branch) and the Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The guideline provides information to employers and managers in the hospitality industry about how to put in place quality part-time work arrangements to assist employees who have family responsibilities. It is not meant to be prescriptive. The ideas and industry examples are meant to stimulate interest in and commitment to quality part-time work.



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## Part-time work in hospitality

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*“Part-time employment provides more flexibility with our workforce to meet increasing trading hours and an increasing interest in a work-balance lifestyle.” Karon Hepner, Human Resources Development Manager, Compass Group*

The ebbs and flows in customer demand mean that the need for staff changes over the work day and work week. Part-time workers are vitally important in covering these ebbs and flows. And many workers, particularly those with family responsibilities, appreciate being able to work less than full-time hours.

Across the Victorian accommodation, cafes and restaurants, clubs and hotels industry:

- half of all employees are part-time (29% of Victoria's workers are part-time);
- almost two-thirds (63%) of all female employees are part-time (46% of Victoria's women workers are part-time);
- well over a third (37%) of the male staff are part-time (across Victoria 15% of men work part-time).

Part-time work is here to stay and in hospitality, part-time workers are critical to a profitable business. They must be taken seriously. Many want a career in hospitality and will move around to find a good employer.

Good jobs, whether part-time or full-time, attract good people.

And while there is a lot of part-time work in hospitality, much of it is perhaps not quality part-time work.

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## What makes for a quality part-time job in hospitality?

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While all workplaces are different, the one thing that does distinguish *quality* part-time jobs from other part-time jobs is that people doing them are seen as *part of the regular workforce*.

### **Quality part-time work works for everyone**

*In the hospitality industry, good customer service is the main factor in business success. Recognising that staff have a life outside work and providing the flexibility to meet their varying needs, means that quality staff can be recruited and retained. And quality staff means great customer service.*

*This philosophy certainly works in practice for Ian Larkin who was awarded 2004 Hotelier of the Year and who owns Irish Murphy's in Ballarat.*

*Lisa Lewis, who works at Irish Murphy's, explains, “Working part-time rather than as a casual means set hours of work rather than rostered hours. This means I can plan my time because I have these set hours and with things like school holidays, I can fit in my work time around my family. Being part-time also means I'm on a set hourly rate so I can budget a little easier knowing what my wages will be each week. This really suits me as I am single mum.”*

*Quality part-time work at Irish Murphy's, Ballarat*

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## Myths about quality part-time work in hospitality

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There are lots of views about part-time work – many of these have no basis in fact. Here are just a few that might apply to hospitality:

- **Employees who work part-time aren't interested in getting ahead**  
People who work part-time are like everyone else. Some will want to move ahead in their careers and others will not. There should be no disadvantage in working part-time. Make sure you don't assume people who are working part-time aren't interested in promotion – either to a full-time position or a part-time position. And certainly don't assume that their experience and commitment are less than those of full-timers. Give them an equal chance.
- **Managers can't be part-time**  
Quality part-time work should be available to all employees, except where genuine job requirements make this unreasonable. With supervisors or managers, a job-share arrangement might make good sense or perhaps jobs could be redesigned to accommodate part-time work in hospitality.
- **Only women want to work part-time for family responsibilities**  
Men have family responsibilities too. And there are lots of men in the hospitality industry. They might also choose to reduce their hours to help with family care.
- **Part-time work is very hard to set up and manage**  
Quality part-time work is all about fairness, transparency and consistency. See below for some steps to ensure success.

Use the following checklist to see if the part-time jobs in your business are quality jobs.

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## The quality part-time work checklist

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- Our business gives both men and women the opportunity to work part-time. Depending on organisational requirements, people can work part-time across all the areas of our business.**  
What sets businesses with quality part-time work apart from others is that part-time work is found throughout the business and both men and women have access to part-time work. In hospitality this is certainly possible. Remember that if part-time jobs are only available at around the entry level, experienced women who choose to return to work part-time after maternity leave, for example, will not want to work for you.
- People who work part-time in our business have the same protections as the full-time workforce, including job protection and predictability of hours.**  
Job security and predictable work hours are particularly important to people with family responsibilities; for example, those with children in child care may need to fit their work around the child care centre hours.

✔ **People who work part-time receive pro-rata wages and access to benefits.**

This includes any benefits full-time employees doing the same or a similar job might accrue, such as holiday and sick leave, salary bonuses and access to other job-related benefits.

✔ **People who work part-time in our business are encouraged to participate in training and can apply for promotion if they wish.**

Quality part-time work means equal access to training and promotion. Employees who work part-time bring a full set of skills to the workplace. Businesses that are serious about quality part-time work never assume part-time workers do not want to add to their skills or move ahead in their careers.

✔ **People can move between full-time and part-time work as they require.**

While the option to move between full-time and part-time work will depend upon business and job requirements, the option should be there. For people with family responsibilities, the need to work part-time changes across the life course. For example, when babies are small, parents may wish to work part-time, but as children go to school, longer hours might be preferred.

✔ **Part-time employees are treated the same as those who are full-time.**

In businesses with quality part-time work in place, managers and other work colleagues see part-time workers as valuable contributors. Their work is challenging, meaningful and satisfying – not just the bits and pieces or the shifts that no one else wants.

✔ **Our business recognises that employees have a life outside work.**

Better balance between work and the other things in life, including family, is important for everyone. A growing number of women in the paid workforce and an ageing population mean most people will have child care or elder care responsibilities for at least a part of their working lives.

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## The advantages of quality part-time work in hospitality

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*“You would not survive in the industry without professionalism. While the business does rely on the presentation of the hotel, as well as the drinks and meals at the bar or in the restaurant, understanding the requirements of your customers at all times is so important. And that’s why quality part-time work makes good business sense too.” Ian Larkin, Proprietor, Irish Murphy’s*

### The ability to recruit and retain experienced and skilled employees

The big advantage of quality part-time work is that it helps to retain experienced and skilled workers who may not wish to work full-time at particular stages in their lives. Staff returning from parental leave might return to work earlier if opportunities for quality part-time work are available, while those who are nearing retirement may continue in the workforce if they can cut back their hours.

### Increased morale, productivity and efficiency

Morale, productivity and efficiency increase when workers know their employer has invested in them. And that’s got to be good for business. Putting quality part-time work in place can help reduce employee stress and unplanned absenteeism.

### Becoming an employer of choice

Employers can benefit from being known in the community as family friendly. This could mean attracting better employees and an enhanced reputation with potential customers.

*“The food service industry is a 24/7 business. With a significant decline in young people entering the workforce, our labour force reflects an ageing population. A number of our part-time employees have returned back to the workforce once their families have reached school age. With the flexibility of part-time hours in our business, any employees who have family commitments can be rostered around their needs.” Karon Hepner, Human Resources Development Manager, Compass Group*

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## It’s also about risk management!

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Both Federal and State legislation promote equal opportunity in the workplace and outlaw discrimination on the grounds of parental or carer status or family responsibilities. Reasonable accommodation of employee requests for flexible work arrangements to assist them balance their work and family responsibilities is important where this is possible.

This does not mean that employers have to agree to every request for part-time work. However, it does mean that before making a final decision, you should seriously consider requests case-by-case in the light of genuine work requirements, and creatively explore how the job could be performed under alternative work arrangements.

*“Part-time work is good in that it gives you the flexibility and if workers are happy you do get productivity. However, there are some restrictions to the times people with family responsibilities want and are able to work; for example, child care centres don’t open till around 7.00 a.m. You need to put other strategies in place to ensure you have enough workers to cover the rosters. But we always try to give as close as we can the hours people want.” Yve Green, General Manager, Deer Park Club Inc.*



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## So what do I do when someone asks to work part-time to accommodate family responsibilities?

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The real key to success in quality part-time work is open communication between employees and owners or managers.

### Be prepared

Every request for part-time work will be different. If you already know the steps you will take to consider a request, the process will be clear and consistent. Consider developing a written policy, including the steps you take in considering a request. This could speed up decisions and help ensure consistency and transparency.

### Suggest the employee develop a formal proposal

Before you meet to consider a request, ask the employee concerned to write down what they want to achieve by working part-time, the impact this might have on those they work with and what it might mean for the job they do and the business.

### Consider each request objectively and sensitively

Seriously consider each request. Be flexible and creative. There are not many jobs in hospitality that could not be adapted to part-time work. Think about and plan for how the part-time work arrangement might be best managed. Make sure you think through and plan for the reduction in the employee's work load, as well as any impact on the work of colleagues and on your business requirements. If it is not possible to meet the request for part-time work, consider other flexible work options that could assist the employee to balance work and family responsibilities.

### Write down what has been agreed

Agree in writing to a regular pattern of work and include the length of time the arrangement will be in place, as well as the dates for regular review. And remember, if you turn down a request from someone who wants to work part-time to assist with family responsibilities, explain your reasons in writing, giving clear business reasons.

### Ensure part-time employees are part of the regular workforce

Include part-time employees in all communication, consultation processes and social activities. As far as possible ensure that any training or meetings are scheduled when part-time staff can attend. Put in place a planned process to ensure that work colleagues are aware of changes to work hours and have a plan of action to deal with any problems should these arise.

### Monitor part-time work arrangements

Make a time for regular review of the part-time work arrangement to make sure it is working for everyone – if there are any doubts about whether it will work consider putting the arrangement in place for a trial period.

#### ***A structured approach to considering requests for part-time work***

*“Women returning from maternity leave or people with changed family circumstances mean that a full-timer will request part-time work. We always try to accommodate this and have a formal process for consideration.*

*We have a talk about the request and this includes a look at the reason for the request. If I can meet the business needs and the hours of work, we accommodate it. I do ask people to apply in writing if they want to revise their hours – they assess themselves. And we always talk about the financial implications of going from full-time to part-time. Everyone here knows the process; and any decision is signed off by all parties. I find this formality ensures both transparency and certainty.”*

*Yve Green, General Manager, Deer Park Club Inc.*

### Right to Request and the Family Provisions Test Case

In August 2005 the Australian Industrial Relations Commission handed down its decision in the Family Provisions Test Case. One of the relevant provisions is an employee's 'right to request' a return from parental leave on a part-time basis until a child reaches school age to assist an employee reconcile work and parental responsibilities. An employer will need to consider such a request having regard to the employee's circumstances, provided it is genuinely based on the employee's parental responsibilities. The 'right to request' also means that an employer has a right to refuse the request but only on reasonable grounds related to the effect on the workplace or the employer's business such as cost, lack of adequate replacement staff, loss of efficiency and the impact on customer service.

## For Further Information

For more information, go to the Industrial Relations Victoria website at [www.irv.vic.gov.au](http://www.irv.vic.gov.au)  
**Industrial Relations Victoria** Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development