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## FLEXI FENCE SITTERS: AUSTRALIAN EMPLOYEES REPORT NO WFH POLICY AT THEIR WORKPLACE

Almost one in three (32 per cent) Australian employees that could work from home say their employer does not have a formal WFH policy despite three in four currently doing at least some of their job from home, according to new research from Officeworks.

The **2023 Officeworks Flexiworks Snapshot** surveyed 1,000 Australians performing jobs that could be done from home for businesses with more than 10 employees and provides insights into the current state of flexible work (three-quarters of participants were currently performing at least some of their jobs from home, while the remainder were not). The research comes as Australia is settling into the post-lockdown era with relatively stabilised business operations.

More than nine in 10 respondents (92 per cent) agree that employers should have a formal WFH policy in place and 91 per cent agree WFH allows for better work-life balance than working in the office.

Flexiworks Ambassador Dr Ben Hamer, one of Australia's leading voices on the future of work says, "employers can no longer afford to sit on the fence when it comes to flexible work arrangements".

"These Flexi Fence Sitters, employers which have yet to formalise a WFH policy, are not meeting the workforce's expectations. There is a talent shortage in Australia and flexible work is one of the most important factors in recruitment," said Hamer.

The **Officeworks Flexiworks Snapshot** found seven out of 10 WFH-capable employees would not consider an employer without a flexible working policy. Among those who have looked for a job in the past two years, 46 per cent have declined a job offer with unsatisfactory flexible work conditions. Among those currently WFH, salary was their top job criteria (34 per cent) followed by work-life balance (16 per cent) and flexible work arrangements (15 per cent). The impact of this will be felt in 2023 as more than half of respondents have looked for a new job in the past two years.

"People are actively choosing not to work for inflexible companies, so embracing flexibility is a no-brainer in this war for talent. Flexibility has a value attached to it and, in a market where many organisations aren't in a position to simply give their people massive pay rises, flexible working can be a quick and easy win," said Hamer.

"Employers also stand to benefit from affording employees a healthy balance between home and office work. Not only is it excellent for attracting and retaining talent, it has great benefits for productivity, providing employees with different work environments suitable for a variety of tasks such as team collaboration and deep thinking. This way, it empowers workers to do their best work."

When asked which environment was more productive for deep focus activity, 58 per cent selected WFH versus 21 per cent for the office. Two-thirds listed the office as more productive for collaborating with colleagues versus 12 per cent for WFH.

"The role of the office has fundamentally changed forever. It's about collaboration and connection, not productivity. The data from the US backs this up as well, which shows productivity dropped when people came back to the office because they were making the most of being with their colleagues and not burying their heads in laptops. We need to move away from this whole 'come back to the office because you'll be more productive' angle," says Hamer.

In terms of the optimal balance of where people work, 58 per cent of WFH-capable employees believe two-three or three-two is the best weekly balance of home and office work. More than three in four of those currently WFH (77 per cent) agree that their employer has found the right balance between working from home and from the office compared with 53 per cent of non-WFH employees.

“The industry evidence for a three-two split each way is overwhelmingly positive, but there are some risks to be considered. For employees to work most effectively from home they need a suitable workspace. Slouching in a dining chair at the kitchen table or working on the couch is an almost certain pathway to back pain and other health issues,” said Hamer.

The Snapshot survey revealed that 94 per cent say a good WFH setup is important to do their best work, but half of those currently WFH haven’t had any support from their company to set this up. Among those currently WFH, almost half (45 per cent) have experienced a health issue, the most common being back pain or neck pain (22 per cent). Despite this, only 37 per cent of currently WFH employees have had their home workstation assessed by their employer.

“The answer is that employers need to invest in their staff WFH setups – it’s a small cost that has a significant return on investment - and there is a legal duty of care for employees that must be considered,” Hamer said.

Officeworks Managing Director Sarah Hunter said: “Flexible work is now ingrained in employee expectations and is an important part of the future of work. For those businesses that are yet to do so, it’s time to reflect on flexible work arrangements, policies and practices to become an employer of choice and to set employees up for success. Services like Flexiworks are an excellent place to get started by capturing a clear picture of your workforce’s needs through the self assessment tool and then equipping employees to perform to their full potential.”

Flexiworks enables businesses to select a range of fit-for-purpose office supplies, furniture or technology for their employees. Each employee is then set up with an allowance to access and order what they need to work effectively from anywhere, at any time.

The Flexiworks platform includes an Online Ergonomic Assessment Tool for employees to complete upon signing up, allowing them to receive personalised recommendations based on their survey results. Features such as in-home office, and tech setup and furniture assembly are also available for employees who require additional support.

Business decision-makers can provide their employees with a one-off, monthly or annual allowance to shop for products and services they need to work from home or anywhere which benefits employers with better cost control and simplification of administrative tasks.

For more information about the Flexiworks offering, visit [www.flexiworks.com.au](http://www.flexiworks.com.au).

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The 2023 Officeworks Flexiworks Snapshot was conducted via online survey by Empirica Research on behalf of Officeworks with a view of understanding current ways of working. The survey sampled 1,000 Australian employees from Monday, 20th February 2023 and Monday, 27th February 2023. To qualify for the survey, participants had to be employed by an organisation with at least 10 employees, and be currently performing, or able to perform, at least some of their job from home.

# Media Release



Quotas were maintained on region, gender, and age to ensure a robust and diverse cross-section of opinions were obtained. The research has a maximum margin of error of 3%.

## About Officeworks:

Established 28 years ago in Richmond, Victoria, Officeworks is committed to making bigger things happen for its customers, team, the community and stakeholders. It operates 166 stores across Australia, a website that is home to more than 40,000 products, a national call centre, and a business team that helps micro, small and medium-sized businesses start, run and grow.

Officeworks offers customers a wide range of office supplies, technology, furniture, art supplies, education resources and helpful services like print & copy and on-site and remote tech support through Geeks2U – delivering an experience that is easy and engaging, no matter how customers choose to shop.

Officeworks is focused on the safety, wellbeing and career progression of the more than 9,000 team members it employs. It's also dedicated to operating in a sustainable manner, including building and maintaining meaningful connections with the communities in which it operates, fundraising for its national partners and local community groups, continuing to reduce its impact on the environment and source responsibly.