



T R U S T

success through diversity
Ahakoa whakaaro kē, ka puta a ihu

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He Pānui mō ngā Take Mahi me ngā Take Oranga

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Helping parents work while their children have fun

School holiday time is here and parents are facing the challenge of keeping their children well looked after and usefully occupied for six or seven weeks.

For those with access to an OSCAR programme (out of school care and recreation) things may not be so challenging now or during the school year. OSCAR programmes are for children aged from four to 14, and include before and after school care and holiday programmes.

OSCAR programmes are more than a child-minding service and aim to meet the needs of children in a safe and fun way. Most OSCAR programmes are run by community groups but some employers can see the benefits of providing OSCAR programmes for their staff. (See case studies)

The benefits for workplaces are similar to the benefits of other work-life initiatives and include:

- Improved productivity
- Improved attendance
- Higher morale, commitment and loyalty
- Improved staff retention
- Improved and more equitable recruitment¹

The annual EEO Trust Diversity Survey shows a reduction in the numbers of employers providing school holiday programmes, although the numbers providing after school care have remained stable. The 2003 survey was completed by 486 workplaces compared with 350 in 1998.



Some workplaces, like Te Utuhina Manākitanga Trust in Rotorua, welcome children in the workplace after school.

If you would like information about the Equal Employment Opportunities Trust services or resources, please contact:

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Employers providing:	1998	2003
After school care	7%	7%
School holiday programmes	18%	14%

Of the 549 providers who completed a 1997 National Association of OSCAR (NAOSCAR) study, 67 had an employer based management structure. More recent figures are not available but the national co-ordinator of NAOSCAR, Sandy Thompson, agrees that employer interest in providing OSCAR programmes has waned. She says this may be partially due to changes in fringe benefit tax which have increased the cost of providing such programmes.

Certification and funding

In total there are about 600 Child Youth and Family (CYF) approved OSCAR programmes around the country and a large number that do not have CYFS approval.

One of the main benefits of CYFS approval is being able to apply for government funding of up to \$9000/year. The Government introduced this funding last year to help programmes with operational costs. The grants are intended to improve the viability and quality of programmes.

To be eligible for the funding, programmes must operate for at least 10 hours per week or 30 hours per week for holiday programmes.

How can workplaces help?

Workplaces which wish to help ease workers' stress around out of school care have a number of options.

NAOSCAR suggests the following steps to assessing the situation and finding possible solutions, using their video and workbook as a guideline²:

- Identify any trends affecting your workplace
- Assess the costs of not supporting an OSCAR initiative
- Survey workers to find out their needs (suggested survey included in NAOSCAR booklet)
- Find out the range of options to solve any care needs

NAOSCAR says that if the programme is consistent, affordable and of good quality it will be used well by employees. "Also, the morale of the children who participate in these programmes often feeds back into your company."

NAOSCAR provides a range of resources to assist, in particular *Setting up an out of school care and recreation programme* which details the assessment and planning process, provides activity ideas and suggests contacts for further information and support.

OSCAR fieldworkers are available to help programmes with establishment and on-going operation.

An alternative to setting up their own programmes is for workplaces to buy places for staff on existing programmes.

This approach works well for companies with employees at a number of different sites as it helps ensure that all have access to quality care.

NAOSCAR suggests that organisations carefully evaluate programmes before supporting them and provides a checklist to assist this evaluation in its guide to setting up a programme.



Photo supplied by NAOSCAR

Resources and contacts

The *Oscar and the Workplace* video and workbook outlines ways employers can assist workers with school-age children. The 15-minute video and workbook are ideal for using in workshops and seminars with staff and managers or in presentations to senior managers. Available from the EEO Trust or NAOSCAR.

Setting up an out of school care and recreation programme is available from National Association of OSCAR, naoscar@xtra.co.nz, 09 845 2524.

OSCAR Legal Resource Kit outlines legal issues related to OSCAR. Available from The Out of School Care Network, Auckland Inc, 09 366 0320.

Work & Life Bulletin, Vol. 2, No. 1, March 2001 contains additional information on OSCAR. Available to EEO Employers Group members by going to www.eeotrust.org.nz/employers/index.shtml and logging on to the members area.

¹ NAOSCAR *OSCAR and the Workplaces: Out of School Care and Recreation* booklet accompanying video of the same name.

² *ibid*

Forest Research support two generations of children

Forest Research in Rotorua may have the longest running employer-funded school holiday programme in the country. It started 25 years ago and currently caters for at least 80 children for 10 weeks of every year.

Forest Research management assistant, Lesley Caudwell, says it's a high quality, resourced and reliable programme. "We wear them out so that they return home exhausted. Their parents love it because the children go to bed with no fuss!"

At the most recent programme children experienced Leisureworld, the movies, quiz and games afternoons, Hamilton Zoo, hot pools, a trip to Hastings, a day on a farm and lots more. The children travel on buses jointly funded by Rotorua District Council and Forest Research which is a partner in the programme.

Forest Research employs 365 people, 65 less than when the programme was started in the late seventies. Their children have priority for places on the programme, while Rotorua District Council children have second priority, followed by the public which takes the remaining 25 or so places.

Lesley Caudwell says some Aucklanders even send their children to stay with family in Rotorua during the holidays so they can go on the programme.

The council has only been involved with the programme for a couple of years when it negotiated contributing to transport to ensure that its workers' children got places.

Parents' fees pay for staffing and other costs associated with keeping 60 children amused and stimulated for 10 weeks. The cost to Forest Research of providing facilities and administrative support is around \$15,000/year.

Forest Research management say that the programme is of great benefit to Forest Research staff and the surrounding community.

"It is difficult to measure this in terms of return to the bottom line, but the programme was pioneering in terms of understanding how a family friendly, flexible working environment boosts job satisfaction and increases productivity.

"Allowing parents to be safe in the knowledge that their children are safe in a stimulating and caring environment enables them to be worry-free and concentrate on their work. The returns are many-fold; productivity, loyalty pride in the company to name a few."

Like AUT, Forest Research says that the school holiday programme is a tangible way of putting its values into practice.

"Forest Research has always been aware of its importance to the community, and the community's importance to Forest Research. To contribute to the community in this way is a reflection of one of Forest Research's values, which is to contribute to the improvement of society and environment.

"By providing an educational programme during the school holidays and making places available to children in the community as well as the children of Forest Research staff, we act out that value."

Forest Research assists staff to maintain balance in their lives in other ways too. There is a cafeteria on-site, accommodation for newly arrived staff, and workers have a high degree of flexibility around working hours. Staff returning from parental leave receive an ex-gratia payment after six months.

AUT formalises its school holiday programme

Auckland University of Technology has been running a school holiday programme for many years but just this year embedded it as a regular, on-going programme on both its campuses.

The programme runs in the three breaks during the university year, but not over the summer school holidays as many staff time their holidays to coincide with their childrens' at this time of the year.

AUT employs around 1350 full-time equivalent staff on its two campuses. The school holiday programme caters for around 20 children, mainly of staff but is also open to the children of students.

Executive Director of Corporate Services at AUT, Phil Ker, says that when the programme was assessed earlier this year to evaluate whether to make it a more consistent and actively promoted part of campus life, he was pleasantly surprised by the costings.

"When we looked into it, we thought 'why didn't we do this years ago?' It adds to the suite of services we make available and makes a statement about what we value. We value our staff and it's another way to support them and students."

The annual cost of running the programme on both campuses is around \$12,000 which Phil Ker describes as "chicken-feed". "It's surprisingly inexpensive."

When asked about the benefits for the university and staff, Mr Ker admits to having inside knowledge of what it's like to have children on campus during the holidays, as two of his children go on the programme.



"It's an enormous relief to know that the kids are okay. It's one less thing to worry about and it provides a different kind of interaction with the kids, bringing them in to work. And they love being on campus."

*Executive Director of Corporate Services at AUT,
Phil Ker describes the cost of the programme as "chicken feed".*

Unions tackle work-life balance issues

The Council of Trade Unions is building on its 2002 *Thirty Families Report* by exploring other areas of work-life balance and developing activities that can contribute to better balance for workers.

At the CTU conference in October, Secretary Carol Beaumont, released a discussion paper on work-life balance saying that for unions the "fundamentals" of decent work such as secure employment, decent pay, leave and working conditions, supported by quality and affordable care arrangements for families significantly enhance workers' ability to balance work with the rest of

their lives.

She said unions would continue to bargain for measures in collective employment agreements that improve work-life balance.

The discussion paper draws together the experiences of unions from internal discussion and from the CTU's work programme. It identifies that the concerns of unions concentrate on six areas of work-life balance:

- Modes of employment
- Hours of work
- Leave entitlements
- Pay
- Workplace culture

- Individuals' life, family and community participation

Workplace culture is one of the areas explored in the discussion paper which says that workplace culture has a significant influence on work-life balance. "This is not to suggest that

work-life balance policies are of no value, however, it is clear work-like balance policies depend on the culture of the organisation and the commitment of employers, unions and workers to make them real."

Full paper at www.union.org.nz

How well can technology contribute to work-life balance?

We've all seen the ads. With the latest communication technology we can fight frost, map golf courses, and shift biscuits faster. We can even take our desk with us to the beach house at Hahei. By spending money on technology we can change the way and place we work – it's easy.

But is it really that easy? Am I alone in thinking that there's something wrong with this picture? Fighting frost requires a lot of training and skill in how to use the technology effectively. Mapping golf courses and shifting biscuits faster requires a lot of organisation and new work processing systems. To use technology to improve our businesses (and our lives) we will have to change the way we think about the work we do and the kinds of lives we want to live. In short, we have to think about people: the skills they have, their interests and motivations, and the way we manage them.

This is perhaps the core issue when it comes to developing life/work balance programmes for our staff. How do we manage our workforce effectively? How can we take advantage of the technology, on the one hand, while ensuring that people can get more enjoyment out of life, on the other?

Perhaps the last thing we should be thinking about is moving our desk to the beach house. Perhaps we should be looking at ways of making our desk

accessible from home, during normal work hours. The beach house should be kept as a real holiday.

Sound telework programmes help organisations take advantage of technology to support and respond to the interests and skills of our staff. They do this by ensuring that work arrangements reflect the interests of all parties and are effectively managed. Adding the technology comes later – if it is needed.

There can be many benefits from the telework alternative. In recent European research, more than half of the surveyed employees felt healthier as a result of telework and more than 86% believed they had more control over their work and lives. The employers gained as well – productivity increased by over 60% and quality also increased, by over 57%.

Telework is only one of a variety of ways in which flexibility and home/work balance can be provided – but it is one of the more effective and profitable. If you would like to know whether your organisation could benefit from increased workplace flexibility, return the free assessment form at www.telework.co.nz/06TIP.htm.

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American study highlights work-life issues

The US based Families and Work Institute recently released a new study, *Highlights of the National Study of the Changing Workforce*. The report, which includes 25-year trend data, finds large-scale transformations taking place in the work and home lives of American men and women.

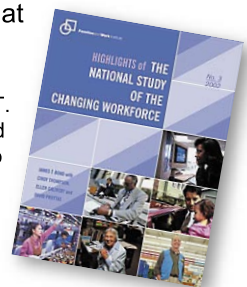
Every five years, the Families and Work Institute conducts the National Study of the Changing Workforce. It is the only study of its kind to provide 25-year comparisons, from 1977 to 2002, of life on and off the job.

Highlights of the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce is the first of several planned reports drawing on this data set. The report investigates a number of issues, including the “social glass ceiling” and work-life supports on the job.

The study’s key findings include:

- Today, women are more likely to work as managers or professionals than men (38% of women versus 28% of men), and are better educated, with 62% of women versus 56% of men having completed four-year college or some post-secondary education.
- Fathers in dual-earner couples today spend 42 minutes more doing household chores on working days than fathers in 1977. Mothers have reduced their time by approximately the same amount. So the combined time that spouses in dual-earner couples with children spend on household chores has not changed over 25 years. What has changed is how family work is divided.
- Employees with families report significantly higher levels of interference between their jobs and their family lives than employees 25 years ago. Men with families report higher levels of interference between their jobs and their family lives than women in the same situation.
- More employees are providing elder care for relatives. In 2002, 35% of workers, men and women alike, say they provided regular care for a parent or in-law over 65 in the past year, helping them do things that they could not otherwise do themselves.
- Work-life policies and practices provide significant benefits to employees and employers. Workers who have more access to such practices report less negative spillover from job to home, greater life satisfaction and significantly better mental health than other employees. They are also more likely to report positive work outcomes, be committed to their employers and plan to stay at their current company.

Highlights of The National Study Of The Changing Workforce by James T. Bond with Cindy Thompson, Ellen Galinsky and David Prttas. To download the free Executive Summary or buy the full report (available as a PDF) go to www.familiesandwork.org.



Flexibility for parents of disabled children

A UK study has explored the experiences of 40 families with disabled children where the parents are in paid work.

The authors, Suzan Lewis, Carolyn Kagan and Patricia Heaton, say interviews with the families highlighted the different needs of this group of employees. Often they required greater working hour/time flexibility, including

access to leave. Their caring duties did not necessarily follow the typical parenting path of time requirements declining with a child’s age, as the transition to schooling is often slower and may not involve full-time attendance. Likewise, the need to access healthcare and the incidence of emergencies may be ongoing and often escalating.

The families said that employers offered differing levels of flexibility, formally and informally. Where formal policies clearly defined forms of leave and processes for shifting hours the parents appeared more able to balance their roles and maintain a satisfactory relationship with their employer. Some reported a high level of informal flexibility, but expressed concern that this was often manager-specific and easily lost when managers shift roles.

The parents often had low expectations of their capacity to exercise

formal rights and were very aware of the negative impact of accessing leave on their career prospects.

The parents also reported high levels of commitment and reciprocity in terms of their willingness to “stick with” employers that are flexible and understanding. Often parents were prepared to overlook poorer pay and promotion prospects if flexibility was provided.

Managing work-family diversity for parents of disabled children in Personnel Review, No.3, 2000.

Upcoming Events

Helping Families Change

The Helping Families Change conference being held from February 19-21 in Auckland includes a morning of discussions around work and family issues called “Work and Family: Towards an Evidence Based Approach to Supporting Working Parents”.

Professor Matt Sanders of the Parenting and Family Support Centre at the University of Queensland and National Director of Triple P (Positive Parenting Programme) will be giving the keynote address for this session focusing on the effectiveness of family support interventions in workplaces. Prof Sanders has been involved in trials of Triple P parenting programmes which have shown reciprocal benefits for both families and workplaces.

The organisers say the session will be of particular interest to professionals interested in family assistance, work-life balance issues and the promotion

of family-friendly work environments.

Prof Mike O’Driscoll of Waikato University will look at contributors to both work-family conflict and work-family enhancement. He will discuss research which looks at whether organisational benefits like flexible working hours are effective in reducing negative effects of work-family conflict.

Members of the EEO Employers Group are being offered the Triple P accredited/students rate for the conference. Tick the student box or the registration form and write “EEO Employers Group Member” on the form.

Papers and workshop proposals are being accepted until 19 December. Contact Steven Hayns at sh@triplep.co.nz.

More information on the conference from Healthy Families Ltd.
admin@triplep.co.nz.

US celebrates National Work and Family Month

The US Senate has said that reducing the conflict between work and family life should be a national priority and launched the National Work-Life Initiative. This new and on-going national campaign aims to provide education and heighten awareness of work-life effectiveness as a key business issue.

October was declared National Work and Family Month as part of the initiative and a toolkit developed for workplaces to help them participate in the October celebration.

For more information go to www.theprogressfund.com

NATIONAL
WORK LIFE
INITIATIVE