

Work Life Balance Award Entrant: Arup NZ



Video Link <https://vimeo.com/178545407/cec77d886a>

Flexible working arrangements are undoubtedly making a difference at Arup NZ, where 78 per cent of staff are engaged in their work.

The positive feedback, gathered this year since the introduction of the company's enhanced Flexible Working Arrangement policies across all employees, illustrate the success of a better work life balance.

Flexible working has motivated and energised Arup's employees, and is now an integral part of their benefits offering.

Arup is an independent firm of designers, planners, engineers, consultants and technical specialists. Operating in New Zealand for over 20 years, the company currently has up to 20 staff based in its Auckland country office, as well as project staff working in Christchurch and Queenstown. Arup is a large global organisation.

Arup NZ's repackaging of their FWA policies followed updates to the New Zealand Employment Relations Act 2000. They decided to offer all staff (not only parents and caregivers) flexible arrangements. Unlike other areas of Diversity and Inclusion strategies which focus specifically on gender, age and minority groups, flexible working has universal

appeal. The company believes FWAs are not only intended for mothers returning to work after having a child, or employees transitioning to retirement.

By creating a suite of FWAs, Arup has been able to reduce stress and avoid 'burnout', manage workloads more effectively, improve health and wellbeing and increase productivity and motivation.

Among other practices, staff now have the option of applying for staggered start and finish times, working remotely and hot desking. They have the opportunity to "purchase" up to two weeks of additional leave per year and can apply for unpaid leave up to a period of 12 months.

The initiative is supported by leaders and managers within the business who also take up flexible working arrangements themselves when the need arises.

Principal/Regional Legal Counsel for Arup Australasia, Kiri Parr, is a great example of a leader supporting the policies and walking the talk herself. Kiri has worked part-time at Arup for the last nine years. The majority of her team also work part time and most have flexible working habits which she describes as "working in a way that best suits your style, energy and family."

"I've had very supportive bosses and have had the freedom to get the job done and not become mired in the 'how' or 'when'. Including when my second child was little – she flew with me to board meetings with our nanny and/or my mum. And I simply stepped out of those board meetings to feed her when I needed to.

"Flexible working practices make you happier, smarter and more productive when you are at work. And hopefully I am not only leading by example but allowing and encouraging others to do the same."

The 2016 Working at Arup Survey showed 67% respondents in Australasia felt their direct supervisor supported them in achieving a reasonable balance between work and personal life. And 66 per cent felt they could make use of flexible work arrangements without limiting their career.

Flexibility can be important for health reasons, as explained by one worker.

"Three years ago I had an accident which has made it physically difficult for me to work a standard nine to five office job. The staff were (and still are) very helpful and supportive and have made it possible for me to work from home two days a week (or more if I have a bad day), while still having a full-time career. My team knows that they can reach me whether I'm in the office or not."

And for one father, flexibility makes his life much more complete.

"It's very important to me to be part of my kids' night time routines. They are often asleep when I leave each day, and by leaving at 4:30 I'm part of their dinner, bath, stories and bed routine every day. Maintaining this daily involvement is one of the most important things I do, and I'm very glad that Arup has been so easy to work with to make it happen."