Evaluation of flexible work practices
executive summary

Flexibility is key in today’s workforce—it creates an agile, mobile, adaptive, responsive and diverse workplace needed to serve customers and support employee wellbeing.

The results of the pilot programs add to the growing body of evidence, which demonstrate that workplace flexibility is no longer only about offering part-time work or a nice policy to have, it is a crucial foundation in driving business outcomes and the attraction and retention of talent.

All roles flex is an approach, introduced by Telstra and many other organisations, which seeks to mainstream flexibility, by challenging existing assumptions and reversing the burden of proof.

During 2015-2016, three Queensland Government agencies piloted varying versions of All Roles Flex programs:

- Public Service Commission (PSC)
- Department of Energy and Water Supply (DEWS)
- Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (DCCSDS) undertook various activities to promote new and flexible ways of working across their agencies.

In May 2016, the Queensland Public Sector Inclusion Champions of Change sought to measure the outcomes achieved by each pilot agency, with the purpose of expanding the discussion and concept across the sector.

In undertaking the evaluation, the flexibility in flexibility was considered, namely the ability to accept and allow routine changes to working hours, places and schedules in order to deliver optimal business outcomes and ensure employee wellbeing and work-life balance.

The results demonstrate that when flexibility is at the forefront of thinking, much can be achieved in a short time-frame. When compared to the rest of the sector pilot agencies demonstrated not only higher rates but a greater range of flexibility being utilised. There were also favourable team environments were regular effective performance conversations, innovation, continuous improvement, leadership commitment and an appetite for risk give rise to greater acceptance and uptake of flexibility. However, it was noted that some more traditional ways of flexible working may be less responsive to business needs and may have unintended consequences for employees.

This discussion paper outlines the:

- Problem identified and key elements
- Evaluation evidence supporting the problem statement
- Insights derived from the evidence
- Disruptive ideas for 2017

The evaluation findings indicate there are significant differences in the size, functions and cultures of Queensland Public Sector agencies, which will impact on the ability of agencies to achieve flexibility in all roles. Much has already been achieved and some agencies are well down the path to flexibility. However, there is still a long way to go. In order to truly achieve flexibility in all roles the system as a whole must be reorientated towards agility, innovation and flexibility.
Traditional, inflexible approaches to work are failing to meet employee and business needs.

- Inflexibility means employees are not reaching their potential.
- Flexibility is being held back by team culture.
- Systems constrain innovation, agility and flexibility.

Evaluation of flexible work practices – The problem
Evaluation of flexible work practices – The evidence

Inflexibility means employees are not succeeding

**PILOT Evaluation Findings**

- **Flexibility**
  - Pilot Agencies
  - 30% Greater uptake of flexible work
  - 20% Higher satisfaction with work/life balance

Some flexible work patterns are not responsive to change

- Work schedules need to vary to meet business needs
- Part-time workers have less opportunity

**Average Salary for all 59 A08s (DEWS)**

- $104,166
- $116,502

- 35 Females
- 24 Males

**QLD Public sector**

- 61.6% satisfaction with work/life balance
- 28.2% feel burned out by their work ($579 million in absenteeism costs)
- 29.9% of the QPS is part-time
- 89% of part-time workers are female

Flexibility is being held back by team culture

- 51% of senior staff use no flexibility
- Excessive hours a badge of honor
- Happiness increases when flexibility is embraced

- Managers critical for increased flexibility

Flexibility draws out the best in staff

- Flexibility = Innovation

Systems constrain innovation, agility and flexibility

- No time-sheet = increased trust
- Technology is an enabler or blocker
- Flexible work increased as a result of streamlining and transparency

- QPS telecommuting 2.4% vs 30% for Australians
- 45% of workforce works flexibly in some way

Queensland Government
The insights
How can we be more agile in how we work?

Disruptive ideas for 2017
- Design a principle-based framework called ‘Flexible by Design’.
- Interrupt the practice of full-time work being the default for recruitment.
- Gather and share flexible work stories from across the sector and state.
- Target part-timers with ‘Path to Parity’ education program.
- Ensure accountability by monitoring performance.