

SAGE CYGNET AWARD APPLICATION



SAGE

SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA
GENDER EQUITY

SAGE Cygnet Award Application

Name of Institution	Flinders University
Date of Application	30 October 2024
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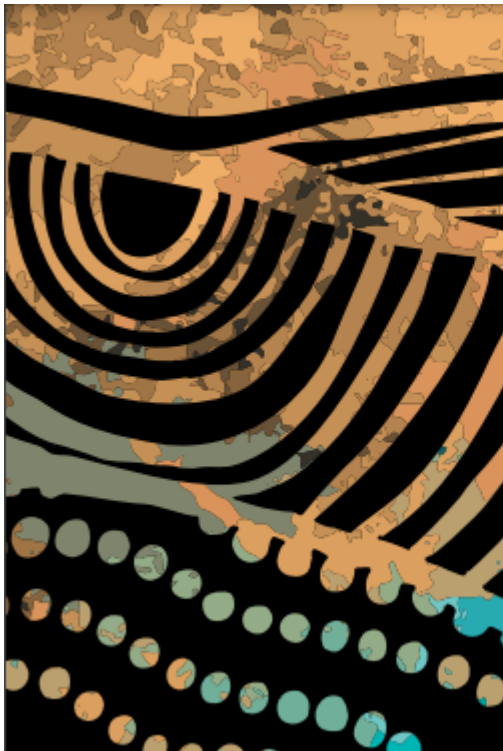
Flinders University

SAGE CYGNET #2

Word limit – 2500 words (excluding the action plan)

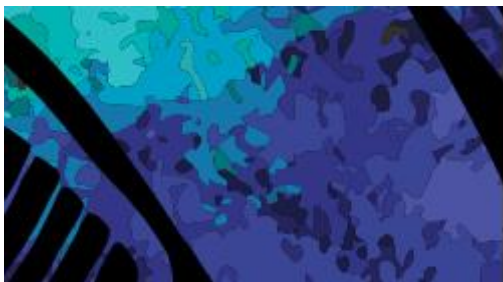
	✓ Current Cygnet	Barrier <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List the Barrier addressed in this Cygnet • List the Barrier for Cygnets already submitted
[Mandatory] Institution-wide barrier		
[Mandatory] Sub-group barrier		Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff.
Sub-group barrier		Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.
[Please select] Institution-wide/Sub-group barrier	✓	Parental support before during and after leave.
[Please select] Institution-wide/Sub-group barrier		

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY



Flinders University acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which its campuses are located, these are the Traditional Lands of the Arrernte, Dagoman, First Nations of the Southeast, First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee region, Jawoyn, Kurna, Larrakia, Ngadjuri, Ngarrindjeri, Ramindjeri, Warumungu, Wardaman and Yolngu people. We honour their Elders and Custodians past, present and emerging.

We also acknowledge and pay respect to the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander nations from which our students, staff and community are from.



Artwork credit

Elizabeth Yanyi Close
Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara, 2020

The artwork both explores Connection to Country and speaks to the Landscape around Flinders University, but it also deeply explores and speaks to the concept of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people travelling to undertake their studies bringing with them knowledge, wisdom and understanding of their own Language Groups and standing together as one.

Gendered Data

Flinders University recognises the non-binary nature of gender. We acknowledge that the terms 'male' and 'female' should refer to biological sex, while 'men' and 'women' should refer to gender. However, due to system limitations, for the purpose of this report gendered data has been reported as 'male' or 'female' where it has been collected and reported in this manner.

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ACRONYMS

ASBA	Athena Swan Bronze Award
ASBAP	Athena Swan Bronze Action Plan
CBGL	College of Business, Government and Law
CEPSW	College of Education, Psychology and Social Work
CHASS	College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences
CMPH	College of Medicine and Public Health
CNHS	College of Nursing and Health Sciences
CSE	College of Science and Engineering
DAS	Data and Analytical Services
DVCR	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research
EA	Enterprise Agreement
FLIP	Flinders Intelligence Portal
FLO	Flinders Learning Online
P&C	People and Culture
SG	Superannuation Guarantee
YVS	Your Voice Survey
VC	Vice-Chancellor
VPED	Vice-President and Executive Dean
WGEA	Workplace Gender Equality Agency



Source: Getty Images

KEY BARRIER

This Cygnet examines the range of initiatives Flinders implemented post ASBA to increase visibility and access to organisational resources and support for parents and carers.

EVIDENCE OF BARRIER

Flinders University has a longstanding commitment to equal opportunity, recognising the importance of flexible parental leave schemes that promote shared care and include superannuation payments. However, during the ASBA process several barriers emerged, highlighting gaps in awareness and accessibility of parental and caregiving supports:

1.1 Awareness Gaps among staff and supervisors.

Despite the availability of various supports for families and carers, feedback from surveys, focus groups, and workshops revealed that some staff and supervisors were unaware of the full range of provisions available before, during, and after parental leave. A Parental Leave survey¹ (2015-2017) conducted with 37 staff members² showed that while most were aware of available leave options, there was a lack of awareness regarding other supports, such as flexible work arrangements and special parking permits.

At the time of bronze accreditation, Flinders' bi-annual Your Voice Survey³ (YVS) indicated that 90% of staff believed their immediate supervisor genuinely supported gender equality. However, qualitative data from the Parental Leave survey and Athena Swan focus groups suggested that some supervisors lacked knowledge about flexible options for carers and parents, and the processes for accessing these supports.

Data from the YVS indicated that 42% (n=470) of respondents were parents of dependent children.

While 70% of respondents overall felt positively about their work/life balance, this was lower for men (64%) compared to women (73%), and significantly lower for staff with disability (45%).

In response to questions regarding flexibility, 73% of respondents indicated they were satisfied with their access to flexible working arrangements. Staff who are carers were slightly less satisfied (70%),

¹ Staff who had taken Parental leave during 2015-2017 were surveyed

² 68% (n= 25) maternity leave (language used in survey) and 32% (n= 12) parental leave

³ 2015 - 1,126 respondents, 30% male (n= 333), 56% female (n=629), 14% (n=164) not given.

than staff who are parents of dependent children (75%). Staff with disability responses, whilst higher than work/life balance satisfaction levels, were again lower at 65%.

1.2 Review needed for parental leave policy provisions and access.

At the time of ASBA, language within the Flinders Enterprise Agreement 2014-2017 parental leave policy provisions was gendered. As detailed in the image below, data from 2015-2018 reported to WGEA showed that primary carer leave was predominantly accessed by females, with a declining trend in overall uptake. Professional staff accessed primary carer leave more frequently than academics, indicating potential disparities in how these policies were perceived and utilised across different staff categories (Image 1).

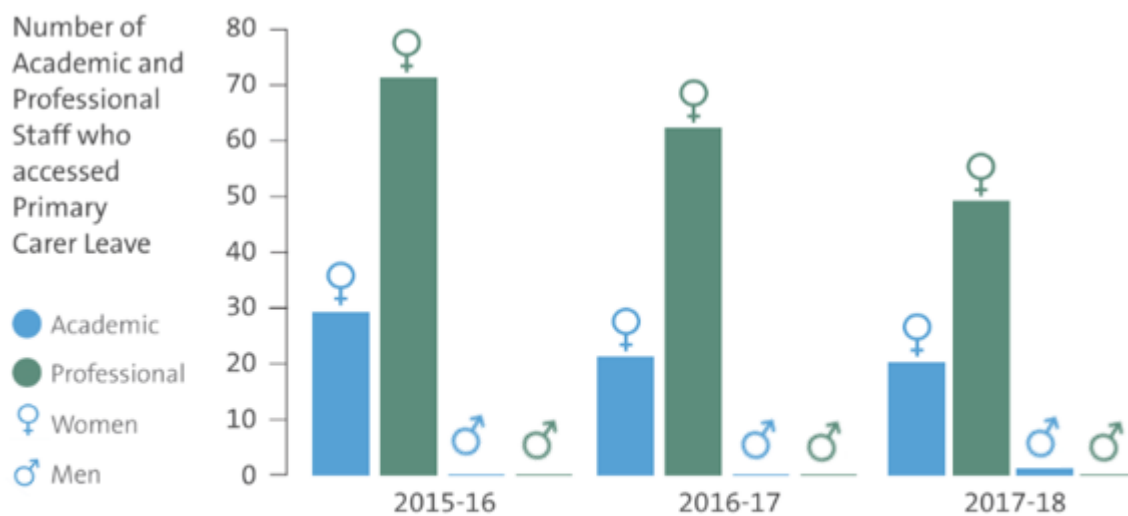


Image 1: Numbers of Academic and Professional staff who accessed Primary Carer Leave by gender 2015—2018. ¶
 Note: image captured from Flinders ASBA application and data aligns with WGEA reporting 1 April—31 March. ¶

Professional vs Academic

Flinders University is an Australian University leader in the area of employment of Academic women. At the time of ASBA, Flinders ranked 6th out of 43 Australian based universities for representation of women academic staff (Universities Australia 2016 Selected inter-Institutional Gender Equity Statics). At this time 56% (n= 646) of fixed-term and continuing Academic staff employed at Flinders (n= 1156). were women (Diagram 1).

Academic staff by gender (2017)

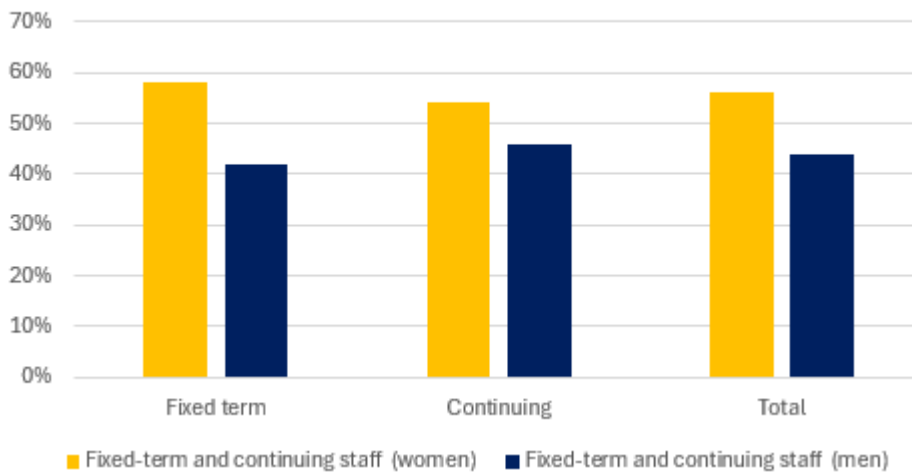


Diagram 1: University wide proportion of academic staff by employee status.
 Note: Sourced from Flinders university Athena Swan Bronze application and due to small numbers, non-binary gender is not reflected in percentages.

While there was no noticeable difference in engagement levels between Academic and Professional staff in YVS survey results, data and responses from focus group workshops indicated that some academics felt that leaving an early academic career position to have children results in “placing career on hold” (quote from Athena Swan parenting focus group).

Partner leave was accessed only by males during 2017 (Males n=13, females n=0), and feedback gathered during the “2015- 2017 Parental Leave Survey” indicated that participants felt strongly that partner leave should be encouraged more actively (image 2), with some supervisors lacking knowledge and experience in the process.

“I think it’s really important for partners to have ample leave at the time of the birth of their baby” The support for their partner is crucial and certainly had such a positive impact on my own experiences”

“I VERY strongly feel that the utilisation of partner leave should be encouraged actively”

“I feel that partner leave is significantly less valued that(sic) the leave allowances provided to the mother”

Image 2: 2015 – 2017 Parental Leave Survey participant quotes.

Overall feedback and survey results during accreditation showed that whilst staff felt that equality was supported in the University, there was a need for continued efforts to:

Actions
1.Enhance Parental leave offerings and address gaps in partner leave uptake
2. Increase access to and promote information and resources to help improve support for staff and supervisors to achieve improved work life balance.

Table 1: Flinders University Athena Swan Bronze Action Parental Support Actions



Source: Getty Images

ACTIVITIES

The activities undertaken to address these gaps were varied and comprehensive. They included increasing data capture capabilities, transitioning our application process for parental leave to an online platform, and improving accessibility to information by developing a family and caring webpage, complete with support guides and checklists. Paid parental leave was also increased and ensured equitable access to increased employer superannuation contributions⁴ through changes to our Enterprise Agreement. Additionally, efforts were made to remove gendered language from our policies, promoting greater inclusivity.

To promote these changes and available resources, Flinders published articles in newsletters, on relevant webpages, held information sessions and conducted an inaugural online family forum in 2024, inviting speakers from UniSuper, Employment Services, Business Partnering and Organisational Development and Diversity teams.

⁴ Higher than the minimum Superannuation Guarantee

This application contains case studies which delve deeper into key areas of change (table 2) post ASBA and the impact they have had in helping staff balance work and parental and caring responsibilities.

Athena Swan Bronze Parental Support Actions

Actions	Activities/Outputs
Reviewing and improving access to parental leave entitlements - EA changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removed gendered language from policy. • Increased support for paid parental leave entitlements. • Removed barrier to equitable access to above award superannuation.
Increasing visibility and awareness of Information and available supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of family and caring webpage. • Development of family and caring support guide and checklists for staff and supervisors. • Development and delivery of inaugural bi-annual Family Friendly Forum. • Health and Wellbeing – parental session.
Improved parental and caring leave application process and data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced a new service for streamlined application processing (Service One).
Enhancing support for staff returning to work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarded Best Practice Breastfeeding Accreditation. • Upgraded breastfeeding/parenting facilities.

Table 2: Flinders University Athena Swan Bronze Action Parental Support Key Actions

OUTPUTS

Reviewing and Improving Access to Parental Leave entitlements

The need to balance work and care arrangements is experienced by all genders. Flinders recognises that policies promoting equal care benefits not only women’s economic participation, but also that of men, LGBTQIA+ individuals and children.

The following case discusses progressive changes made to Flinders Enterprise Agreement to ensure that our policies support and reduce barriers for staff of all genders to balance work, parental and caring responsibilities.

Case study 1: Changes to Flinders Enterprise Agreement

Flinders Enterprise Agreement 2019 – 2022

Gender neutral language

Following ASBA, clauses in our EA were amended where appropriate, (and retained in the *Flinders University Enterprise Agreement 2023 – 2026* (2023 EA) to ensure greater clarity and gendered language was removed.

One key amendment in the 2019 EA (and retained in the 2023 EA) was to amend the paid parental leave provisions to reflect it being available to all employees of all genders (through primary carer leave) rather than available only to employees who are women (through maternity leave). This means that any parent, regardless of gender, can be recognised as the primary carer of the child.

These changes acknowledged the evolving dynamics of modern families and promote equality in caregiving responsibilities. By making these provisions more inclusive, we aim to support all parents in balancing their professional and personal lives effectively.

Increased Parental leave entitlements

In addition to making parental leave for primary carers gender-neutral, we also increased other entitlements to provide more comprehensive support for new parents. In the 2019 EA (and retained in the 2023 EA), paid partner leave was extended from one week at the time of birth or adoption to three weeks, giving partners more time to support their families during this critical period. Furthermore, in the 2019 EA (and retained in the 2023 EA), we increased paid leave for medically defined late pregnancy miscarriage or stillbirth from six weeks to eight weeks, ensuring that employees facing these challenging circumstances receive the support they need. All leave entitlements are pro-rated for part-time staff, ensuring equitable access to these benefits across our workforce.

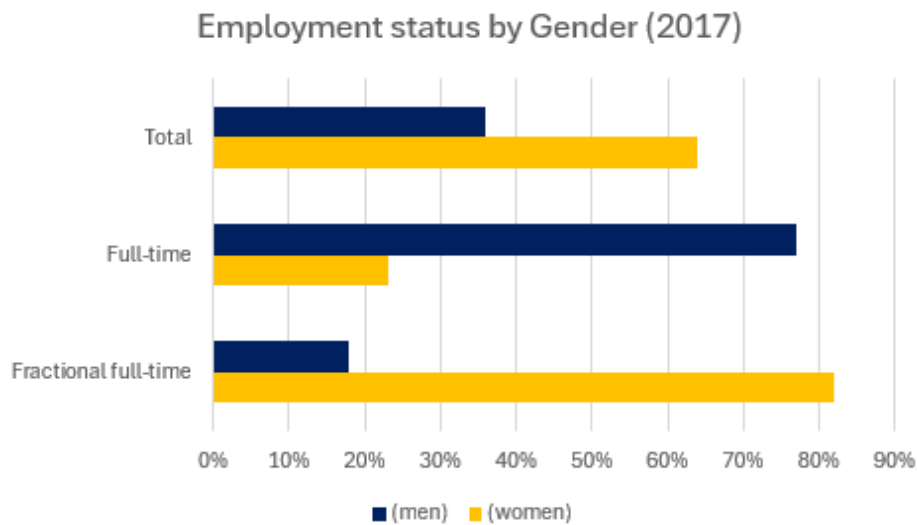
These changes to both primary carer and partner leave provisions allowed greater inclusivity for all and removed restrictions on leave provisions for both birth and non-birth parents.

Superannuation

Flinders recognises that women's financial security is a crucial factor in addressing and preventing gender-based violence. Economic independence can empower women to make safer choices and reduce their vulnerability to abuse. However, it is well-documented that women currently retire with significantly less superannuation savings than their male counterparts, which exacerbates their financial insecurity and limits their options later in life.

At the time of ASBA, Flinders offered 17% employer superannuation contributions, significantly higher than the legislated 9.5% Superannuation Guarantee (SG), to staff on fixed-term contracts longer than two years and to continuing staff with an employment fraction greater than 0.5.

As shown in Diagram 2 below, of the 2,161 (excludes casuals) staff employed at Flinders in 2017, 64% (n= 1,377) were female. There was, however, disparity in part-time roles, where 82% (n=502) of all fractional full-time (part-time) staff (n=617) were female, 18 percentage points higher than the overall female workforce. This figure exceeded the sector average, where 70% of fractional full-time (part-time) staff were women and 30% were men.



*Diagram 2: Flinders University Fixed-term and Full-time staff by gender (2017).
 Note: Sourced from Department of Education – Higher Education Statistics, 2017 staff numbers, Table 2.5*

While less pronounced, representation of women employed at Flinders in fixed-term positions was also disproportionate, with 67% (n=669) of these roles held by women.

Out of 1,258 survey responses in the YVS results (2018), 234 women (19%) indicated they were employed on a fixed-term basis. Of these women, 50% (117) had child dependents. Additionally, 74% (n= 86) of the women on fixed-term contracts reported working part-time, and among them, 65% (n=56) were also parents of dependent children.

In comparison, 8% (n=106) of the total respondents were men on fixed-term contracts, with 46% (n=49) of them having child dependents. Only 12% (n=13) of the men on fixed-term contracts reported working part-time, and five were parents of dependent children.

This data highlighted that women on fixed-term contracts were more likely than men to work part-time and to have caregiving responsibilities for children. This data further suggested that removing restrictions on higher employer superannuation contributions (17%) based on employment fraction and status would eliminate systemic barriers to equal access.

To address this, changes were implemented during negotiation of our 2019 Enterprise Agreement (EA). These changes included an express entitlement to higher superannuation payment of 17% for staff on fixed term contracts of less than two years and fixed term and continuing staff engaged on a less than 0.5FTE basis, enabling all fixed-term, and continuing staff to access the same superannuation payments above the SG rate. This reduced the economic disadvantage experienced by women with caregiving responsibilities.

To supplement this, Women and Finance seminars were offered twice a year (2018-2024). Initially face-to-face then transitioning online due to COVID. These seminars are aimed at increasing financial awareness for women, are delivered by UniSuper and cover:

- How to build a financial foundation
- Understanding your super
- Insurance considerations
- Planning retirement

Flinders Enterprise Agreement 2023 - 2026

Changes in this agreement elevated support and recognition for diversity and inclusion, included enhanced parental leave provisions, new gender affirmation leave provisions, and greater representation, participation and career development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff. See below for further detail on flexible work and paid parental leave changes.

Flexible Work

Amendments were made to incorporate a right to request flexible work arrangements beyond the eligible employee categories set out in the National Employment Standards of the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) changes, to encourage genuine discussion between staff members and their supervisor around flexible working arrangements. An additional amendment was included to reflect that a staff member returning from parental leave will be entitled to apply for flexible working arrangements and the application will not be unreasonably refused.

Paid Parental Leave

As a result of a sector scan of parental leave provisions, changes were made to the baseline of paid parental leave entitlement to increase support of child-carer bonding, and to establish Flinders university as a contemporary employer of choice.

Negotiation was undertaken to increase the baseline paid component of paid primary carer leave for eligible staff members to twenty-five weeks (25), as an alternative to the previous provisions where staff were able to access 18 weeks of paid parental leave and then a top up payment* for the first 16 weeks following their return to work. The previous arrangement was complex, not well understood by leaders and employees, and challenging to administer.

As part of the bargaining process various communication and consultation was undertaken with staff. This included an "Agreement Explained" document, outlining key changes and minor amendments (n=45) between the current and proposed EA clause-by-clause., including parental leave changes.

During the consultation process the most responses and queries received were related to parental leave.

Of the staff who voted, 95% supported the new agreement indicating an extremely positive result and support for these new changes.

Implementation

Changes were promoted in leadership groups, College forums, via newsletters, webpages and all staff emails and forums.

Consideration was given to queries raised during consultation and as a result the following actions were taken:

1. Wrote to 44 staff on or due to commence parental leave, giving the choice to access old or new provisions
 - a. 41% (n= 18) chose to stay on old EA conditions (18 weeks paid parental leave plus 16 week top up payment).
 - b. 59% (n= 26) chose the new provisions (25 weeks paid parental leave).
 - c. an existing verbal agreement to access the old arrangement was also honoured.

*16 week subsidised salary (all staff) to a maximum of 0.4 of their substantive salary, or financial support (academic staff only) of up to \$7,000 (pro rata for part-time staff).

Case study 2: Increasing visibility and awareness of Information and available supports

The following case study explores the development of the Flinders “Family and Caring” webpage, “Family and Caring Guide”, and Family Friendly Forum. These demonstrate how grassroots work in individual Colleges have contributed to our commitment to increase visibility and awareness of the range of information and resources available to parents and caregivers.

Family and Caring Webpage

To promote a family-friendly workplace, several College-based working groups reviewed the existing parental webpage and identified areas for improvement. Feedback revealed that the available support and information were often difficult to find, scattered across multiple pages, and that additional resources for supervisors and carers were needed. This feedback was integrated with a comprehensive review of our EDI webpage content.

As a result, the parental webpage was replaced with a “Family and Caring” webpage, specifically designed to raise awareness and improve visibility of resources and information for staff with parental and caregiving responsibilities. This change aims to better represent the wide range of work-life balance supports available and provide easier access to essential information.

Parental and Caring Guide

In 2021, the College of Nursing and Health Sciences (CNHS) developed and piloted the FLAME Bronze Leadership Program, a "training by experience" initiative tailored to meet the leadership needs and preferences of CNHS staff. This program was created in response to feedback from the YVS, which highlighted the demand for career development opportunities.

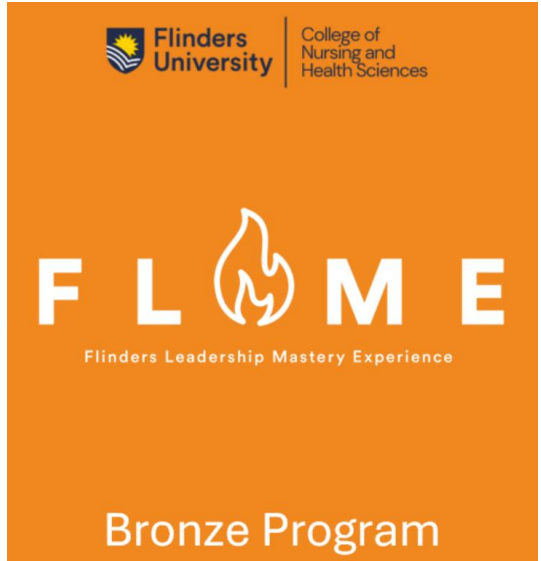
As part of the program, a group of participants undertook a "Learning in Action" project directly aligned with the College's Athena Swan action plan. The project's goal was to "Develop a parental leave checklist and career break transition plan to be used by staff and supervisors, aimed at facilitating discussions on minimising the impact on research continuity and academic careers."

To create a checklist that truly served its purpose, the participants conducted a consultation across the College through an anonymous survey. This survey targeted staff who had taken or were planning to take a career break due to parental responsibilities.

Participants indicated that there was a lack of supervisor knowledge about policies and processes and parents often sought out information on their own. The survey results were then shared with the Athena SWAN working group for further input.

The feedback was instrumental in developing a draft checklist and career transition plan. This draft was further refined after being presented at a supervisor training session and was subsequently piloted within the College in 2023.

In 2024, building on the work initiated by CNHS, a university-wide Parental and Caring Guide was developed by the People and Culture Team. This was then launched (image2), accompanied by a new webpage, at our inaugural Family Friendly Forum.



Family Friendly Forum (Online)
Supporting Work-Life Balance
Monday 2nd September



Come and join us **Monday 2nd September at 1.30pm** for our inaugural on-line Family Friendly Forum.

- Discover updates to the Flinders webpage and the new Parental and Caring guide for staff and supervisors.
- Gain insights into available resources and support systems related to parental leave and caregiver support.

Registration is via [j-enrol](#) and can be accessed in the QR code below:



*Image 2: Family Friendly Forum Poster, Parental and Caring Support Guide and CNHS Flame Bronze Program
 Note: Images within the poster and guide are sourced from Getty Images*

Family Friendly Forum

The Flinders Family Friendly Forum was launched in 2024 to introduce the updated Flinders webpage and the new Parental and Caring Guide for staff and supervisors. The forum also highlighted available resources and support systems related to parental and caregiver assistance. Speakers from Employment Services, Business Partnering, and the Organisational Development and Diversity teams provided an overview of the services they offer.

The forum was promoted through newsletters, emails, digital screens at the Tonsley and Bedford Park campuses, and posters.

Health And Wellbeing

As part of our overall Health and Wellbeing program delivered in conjunction with BUPA, a 1 hour online Parent Wellbeing session was delivered in early 2024. This session was evidenced-based and designed to help alleviate guilt and conflict that parents can sometimes experience, by sharing a family-work enrichment mindset:

Topics covered included:

- Managing our nervous system to build resilience
- Adopting the mindset of family-work enrichment to lessen the guilt and conflict
- Applying the evidenced-based strategies of The CALMER Parent Wellbeing Model to build our wellbeing and 'joie de vivre'

This session was attended by 92 staff. Comments and high ratings (average 8.86) obtained through a participant survey also indicated that the session was well received and the content beneficial (image 3).



Image 3: Rating satisfaction and sample comments from survey responses

Case study 3: Improved application process and data collection

At the time of the ASBA application, the process for applying for parental leave was manual, requiring a paper form. In 2020, Flinders implemented a new HR system, Workday, which transitioned the parental leave application process online. This shift was designed to enhance data capture, improve reporting capabilities, and enhance the user experience.

Insights from the 2022 Flinders Your Voice Survey (YVS), a process efficiency pulse survey, and focus groups revealed specific pain points in university-wide processes. It became clear that a more sophisticated data set and greater visibility in tracking the parental leave application process would benefit both staff and supervisors.

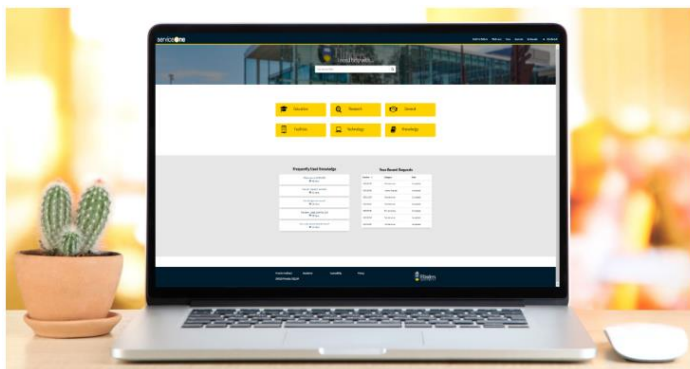
To align with our commitment to improving process efficiency and accommodate updates to parental leave in the new Enterprise Agreement, the following actions were taken:

- The parental leave application process was moved to an online interactive form (Service One), with gender-neutral language aligned with the Enterprise Agreement.
- Three infographics were developed.
- An FAQ section was created.
- A six-weekly reminder report was built into the system, enabling Employment Services staff to contact employees due to return from parental leave and offer additional support during their transition back to work.

As a result of these changes, applications, amendments, and extensions for parental leave can now be accessed entirely online. The updates and available resources were communicated via all-staff emails, integrated into relevant internal webpages, newsletters, distribution lists, and meetings.

Improvements in service delivery for staff accessing parental leave include:

- A reduction in approval steps, increasing overall efficiency and processing times.
- Enhanced visibility of documentation, with all documents stored in one place and accessible in real-time by supervisors, staff, Employment, and Payroll teams.
- Increased transparency in the process, allowing staff and supervisors to track the progress of parental leave applications in real time.
- Improved reporting capabilities to support supervisors in workforce planning and assist transitioning staff back to work successfully.
- A reduced risk of overpayment, as staff are contacted before their return to confirm any changes to their recommending fraction.



Case study 4: Enhanced support for staff returning from parental leave

In 2022 Flinders received "Best Practice" accreditation in recognition of the university's efforts to go above and beyond in the elimination of workplace barriers to breastfeeding.

Following the ASBA accreditation, Flinders increased the number of breastfeeding, parenting, and expressing rooms available for staff and students

In the College of Nursing and Health Sciences (CNHS), facilities were upgraded after it was observed that, despite the large number of women among the staff and students, these rooms were underutilised.

Consultations revealed that the space was small, uncomfortable, and uninviting. In response, the following upgrades were made:

- Chairs specifically designed for breastfeeding were sourced.
- The room was repainted.
- A microwave was added.
- A screen was installed between chairs for privacy.
- Signage was updated to be non-gendered.

Child and Parenting Facilities



Image 4: CNHS upgraded child and parenting facilities

Note: Images on the right are sourced from Getty Images

After the CNHS parental room was upgraded, several staff members shared feedback with the Chair of the CNHS Athena SWAN group, expressing that the facilities were significantly improved. They described the space as inviting and enjoyable to be in, noting that babies appeared more settled and relaxed, feeding well in the calming, soothing, and clean environment.

OUTCOMES

Target 1: Reviewing and Improving Access to Parental Leave entitlements

Changing the language in the Enterprise Agreement and increasing parental leave entitlements has increased accessibility to all new parents and carers irrespective of their gender identity, promoting inclusivity for all.

Whilst the tables below show that some women are now accessing partner leave and some men primary carer post ASBA, the increases are minimal and therefore continued promotion is required.

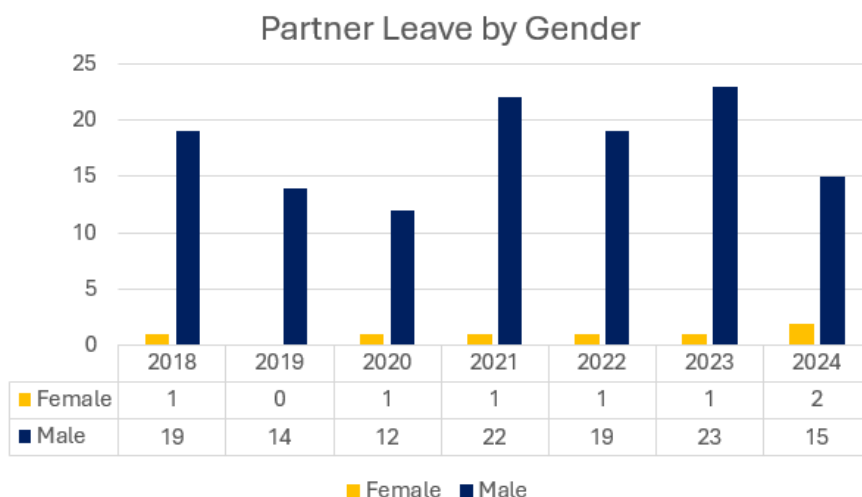


Image 5: Staff who accessed Primary Carer Leave by gender 2018 – 2024, data aligns with WGEA reporting 1 April – 31 March.

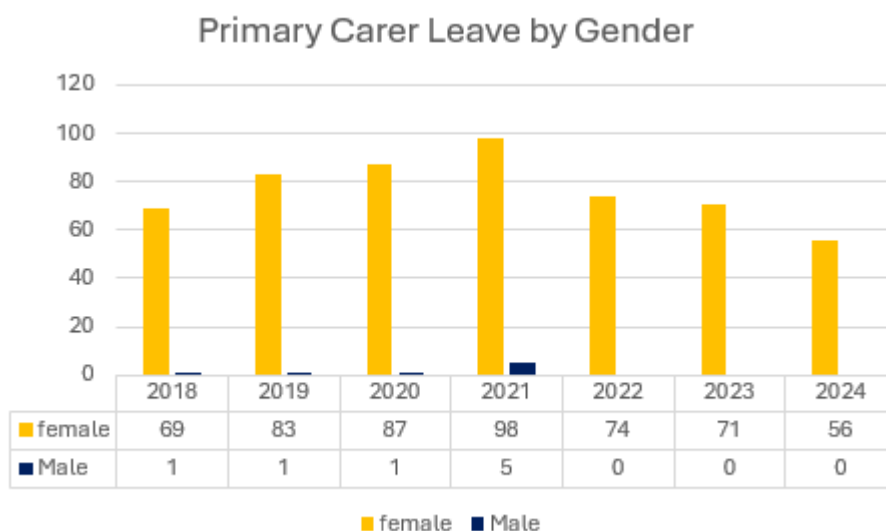


Image 6: Staff who accessed Partner Leave by gender 2018 – 2024, data aligns with WGEA reporting 1 April – 31 March.

Superannuation – Economic barriers

Removing barriers to increased employer superannuation contributions has disproportionately benefited women and carers. Among the 1,666 responses from the 2024 YVS, the proportion of respondents with caring responsibilities remained consistent with the 2018 findings across genders. Key insights include:

- **22% (364) of women** were on fixed-term contracts:
 - 38% (117) cared for children and/or children with disability/medical conditions.
 - 8% (28) cared for adults with disability/medical conditions and/or elderly adults.
- **35% (129) of these women** worked part-time:
 - 53% (68) cared for children and/or children with disability/medical conditions.
 - 10% (13) cared for adults with disability/medical conditions and/or elderly adults.

In comparison, **8% (137) of men** were on fixed-term contracts, with 30% (41) having child caring responsibilities. Only **16% (20) of these men** worked part-time, and 6 were caregivers for children.

These results show that women at Flinders University, particularly those on part-time or fixed-term contracts, continue to carry a larger share of caregiving responsibilities than men. As a result, changes to superannuation benefits have likely had the greatest impact on women with caregiving duties, helping to reduce the gender pay gap and address systemic economic disadvantages.

As illustrated in **Table 3 below**, WGEA data shows that the gender pay gap (measured by both median and mean total remuneration, including superannuation) decreased during the 2022-2023 period, following the increase in superannuation contributions that came into effect in the first pay period after December 31, 2021.

Gender Pay Gap over time

All employees	2021-22	2022-23
Average (mean) total remuneration	13.3%	11.2%
Median total remuneration	11.3%	9.7%
Average (mean) base salary	12.3%	10.4%
Median base salary	8.9%	7.9%

Table 3: Extract of WGEA data comparison of Flinders University Gender Pay Gap ,.

Increased Parental Leave Entitlements

In the 2024 YVS, staff were surveyed regarding their satisfaction with benefits such as superannuation and leave. The results indicated a 4 percentage point increase in satisfaction levels for all staff, rising from 78% in 2018 to 82% in 2024. These satisfaction levels were notably higher than the Australian and New Zealand university benchmark (7% higher), Innovative Research Universities (7% higher), and across all industries (14% higher).

A deeper analysis by gender and employment status (diagram 3) revealed key observations:

- Men working in fixed-term, part-time roles (n=20) reported the highest satisfaction levels with benefits at 95%.
- Women and men who are part-time with caregiving responsibilities also reported above-average satisfaction levels with benefits, with 90% for women and 91% for men.

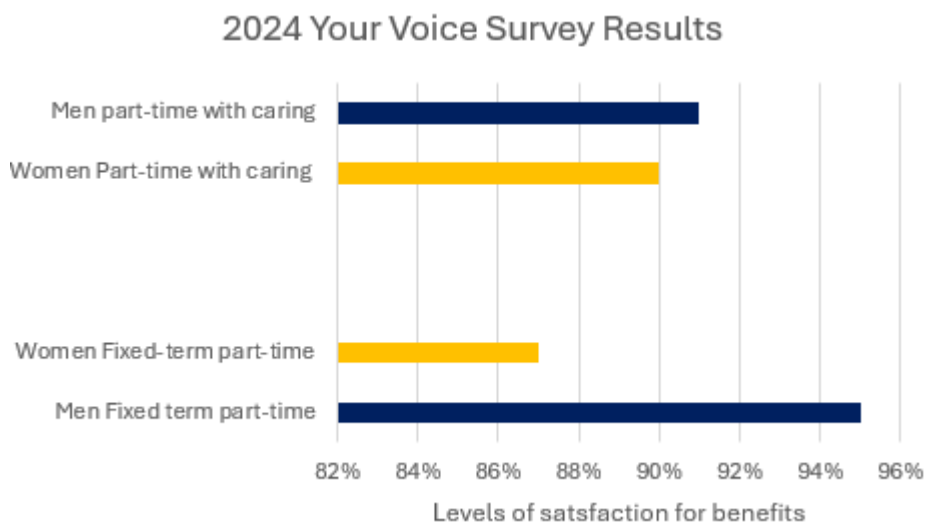


Diagram 3: YVS survey results for question addressing satisfaction of benefits (Superannuation and leave)

Overall, satisfaction with benefits is high, particularly among staff with caregiving responsibilities. The positive feedback suggests that recent changes to superannuation and leave policies have successfully enhanced satisfaction, particularly by addressing systemic barriers.

Challenges and Future Actions: Despite the overall high satisfaction, disparities remain. While 90% of women caring for children reported positive responses, only 60% of women caring for children with disabilities or medical conditions shared the same sentiment. This highlights the need for further efforts to address the specific needs of these groups.

Target 2: Increase staff and supervisor awareness of the full range of provisions and support available before, during and after parental leave

Family and Caring webpage, guide, and Family Friendly Forum

In 2024, a redesigned Family and Caring webpage, guide, and Family Friendly Forum were launched to support staff and supervisors, featuring checklists and resources. The forum had strong participation, with attendees including academic and professional staff, both women and men. Survey feedback showed that the forum increased staff awareness of available supports for balancing family and work/life commitments. Future forums will continue to survey participants to identify areas for growth and provide valuable feedback for updates to the guide and webpage.

IMPACT

To assess the impact, staff and supervisors' lived experiences were gathered through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and testimonials.

In 2023, an email was sent to all CNHS staff⁵, inviting those who had recently taken or were planning to take parental leave to participate in a survey aimed at understanding the challenges and support they encountered during their transition back to work. The survey received 33 responses.

Although demographic data was not collected⁶, it is notable that, despite the high proportion of female staff within CNHS at the time of the survey (87% n=272 fixed-term and continuing), the qualitative responses suggest that both men and women participated in the survey.

The results indicated that efforts to reduce barriers, such as providing clear, accessible forms (Service-One) and promoting gender-neutral policies (EA Changes), were having a positive impact. However, responses also suggested there was a need to update the webpages and to more broadly promote support initiatives, like the DVCR Conference Travel Fellowship (Carer Support). The 2024 webpage review addressed this feedback. Additionally, the responses underscored the positive impact of the upgrades to the CNHS parental room (Table 3).

⁵ Whilst the exact number of invited participants is not known, on the date of the survey (25th July 2023) there were 314 fixed-term and continuing staff employed within the CNHS.

⁶ The staff involved in collecting the data felt that gathering demographic information might compromise respondents' anonymity. As a result, they preferred to focus more on identifying barriers that affect all individuals, rather than collecting detailed demographic data.

Flame Project Survey results

Support	Feedback
Support in transition from work to parental leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “As a father taking paternity leave, it was helpful to have colleagues who were supportive and made time for handovers.” • “Peers who have gone through the process, university policies and procedures. I sought out the parental leave flo site but this was not maintained and out of date information broken links.” • “Clear and easy access of forms to fill in and clear guidelines about timeframe and how much I was entitled to as per the EB.”
Was there any information you were hoping to find to support your return to work but couldn’t	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Information about how to apply to schemes Centrally (for example held by the DVCR) • “what leave I could access to start my paternity leave early if my child was born early
Please tell us what supported you in your transition from parental leave back to work? For example, working at fraction of FTE. Please include any specific resources that you accessed/used.	“...Great organisational support for breast feeding, with a pleasant space and fridges to keep expressed milk until home time”

Table 4: Sample of responses from respondents in CNHS 2023 Survey results – Career Break Transition Plan.

Amy Godfrey – Navigating Parental Leave: Financial, Emotional, and Caregiving Benefits from Enhanced Paid Parental Leave Provisions

Amy was among the 44 staff members notified when the paid parental leave entitlement was extended to 25 weeks. In the testimonial below, she reflects on her experience, highlighting how the extended leave positively influenced her financial stability, emotional well-being, and the quality of bonding time with her child.


Action	Feedback
<p data-bbox="230 467 640 528">Increased Parental leave Entitlement</p> 	<p data-bbox="640 467 2022 496">I am a mother of three, and have been employed at Flinders University since January 2019.</p> <p data-bbox="640 544 2022 794">All three of my children were born while I was employed at three different employers. The first, back in 2007, was just as paid parental leave was becoming a focus for employers and so there were no entitlements for me at that point in time. My next parental leave was in 2017, and that employer had no paid parental leave policy. On top of that, I was a couple of weeks shy of completing 12 months of service and was told I was not eligible for leave of any kind, consequently, I resigned. Hardly a positive experience as a woman and new mother in the workplace. The reason I mention this is to provide a background of my previous experiences, trying to have my family while still maintaining my home and work life. It was incredibly difficult.</p> <p data-bbox="640 842 2022 983">I took my final parental leave here at Flinders University in 2023/24, where I was able to take advantage of benefits such as paid antenatal leave and increased paid parental leave that was recently implemented with the new Enterprise Agreement. This increase, from 18 weeks leave to 25 weeks leave, has had a big impact for me personally and has been invaluable to providing me with an increased sense of wellbeing and better mental health while on leave.</p> <p data-bbox="640 1031 2022 1209">Personally, I was contacted to advise I was eligible to make a choice between the old leave provisions or take advantage of the new increased entitlements. To me, there was no choice. The ability to take 50 weeks of half pay, and then 2 weeks of annual leave to make up the balance of my 52 weeks parental leave was invaluable. It meant I would be paid for my entire leave as well as not losing service entitlements that could affect my increment increases. Pay rises on parental leave? Yes please!</p>

Table 5: Testimonial and image of Amy Godfrey

Action	Feedback continued
Increased Parental leave Entitlement	<p>The impact this had for not only myself but my family while I was at home cannot be understated. I was able to take the time to bond with my new son, without having to worry about the financial implications of not being at work. This in turn provided me with a better mindset from the beginning as I wasn't at home worrying about finances, having to return to work early or full time.</p> <p>I am also currently breastfeeding my son, and knowing there are dedicated spaces for me to express on campus has been comforting and has allowed us to continue on our breastfeeding journey after returning to work.</p> <p>Flinders University has one of the best support frame for parents and carers, and their parental leave entitlements are no exception. They are clear, available to all (who meet the eligibility criteria) and visible across our webpages and also in the EA. Without them, I may not have been able to take the time I needed with my newborn.</p>

Table 6: Testimonial and image of Amy Godfrey continued

Flinders' inaugural online Family Friendly Forum, held in September 2024, attracted 51 staff members and was recorded for those unable to attend. Following the forum, attendees were invited to complete a survey assessing improvements in the accessibility and visibility of Flinders' support for staff with family or caregiving responsibilities.

Although the response rate was low (n = 7), the feedback indicated that the forum raised awareness of available support and clarified where staff could seek assistance in balancing work and life commitments (see Table 6). All respondents expressed a preference for hosting two forums annually instead of one.

Valuable insights were also shared through open-ended responses, including suggestions to provide examples of when to use different types of leave and to divide future forums into two segments—one focused on parental leave and the other on caregiving support.

To enhance data collection and enable a more comprehensive analysis of future forums' impact, additional questions will be incorporated into future parental leave surveys.

Participant responses - Family Friendly Forum

Program	Feedback
Has attending this forum increased your awareness of the types of support available to help staff balance parental and/or caring responsibilities.	Yes 86% (n = 6) No 14% (n = 1)
Has attending this forum increased your awareness of where to access further information and who to contact for further assistance.	Yes - 100% (n=7)
I am more likely to have conversations with my supervisor and apply for support having attended this forum.	Yes – 71% (n=5) No – 29% (n=2)
Please indicate your preference for frequency of future forums.	1 forum - per year – 0% (n=0) 2 forums - per year - 100% (n=7)
Are there any topics you would like more information on in the next forum?	“work flexibility for carers and generally more examples” “specific examples of when to use different types of leave”

Table 7: Sample of responses from participants in Family Friendly Forum.

FUTURE ACTIONS

To ensure equality of access and progression for staff utilising parental and caregiving supports, Flinders must continue to enhance awareness, accessibility, and inclusivity. While recent policy changes have positively impacted men and support for general caregiving responsibilities, there is still work to be done, particularly in supporting women caring for children with disability and increasing access to partner leave.

As our workforce ages and responsibilities for caring for elderly family members rise, it is crucial that our future actions are inclusive and considerate of all staff with caregiving duties. We will continue to monitor the demographic of our workforce to ensure our strategies remain responsive to these needs.

Moving forward, prioritising the promotion of partner leave and caregiving support options will remain a key focus, and the impact of gender and caregiving responsibilities will be closely monitored. We will continue to emphasise raising awareness, increasing visibility, and implementing actions to achieve the objectives and goals outlined in our strategic plans, as detailed in the table below.

Reference	Rationale/ Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcomes/ Targets/ Success Indicators
1.	Continue to increase awareness of the full range of supports available for parents and caregivers.	Review feedback from Bi-annual Family Friendly Forum to inform future updates to Webpage and support guide.	Bi-annual	Senior Diversity and Inclusion Consultant	Director People and Culture (P&C)	Increased awareness demonstrated bi-annually in survey results.
		Re-introduce parental leave questionnaire to measure and monitor satisfaction in supervisor support and knowledge.	2025	Senior Diversity and Inclusion Consultant	Director P&C	All staff accessing parental leave support surveyed bi-annually. Results collated and reported to D&I Committee.
		Review support provisions available to Women in Research.	2025	Dependant on outcome of review.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research (DVCR)	Women in Research Committee convened recommendations developed.

Reference	Rationale/ Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcomes/ Targets/ Success Indicators
		Promote Conference Travel Fellowship (carer support) and Parental Leave Research Support Scheme.	2025	Relevant Colleges and Portfolios.	Director P&C/DVCR	Increased visibility and usage.
		Expand supervisor checklist and guideline to incorporate information and process clarification on applying to parental leave support fund and research grant funded parental leave – replacement fund.		Workforce Strategy and Advisory Team.	Director P&C	Checklist and guidelines updated.
		Promote Partner Leave.	2025	Workforce Strategy and Advisory Team.	Director P&C	Promotion in bi-annual family forums, Fit Article and in Colleges and Portfolios.
2.	Australian Breastfeeding Accreditation	Continue to maintain “Best Practice” Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Accreditation.	October bi-annually	Senior Diversity and Inclusion Consultant	Director P&C	Successful bi-annual accreditation.

Reference	Rationale/ Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcomes/ Targets/ Success Indicators
3.	Increase data capture and reporting capabilities.	Athena Swan Dashboard review.	2026	Organisational Development and Diversity and Digital and Analytics teams.	Director P&C/ Associate Director, IDS Infrastructure and Portfolios Engagement & Success	Athena Swan Dashboard expanded to increase data reporting capabilities.
		Exit surveys automated and streamlined to capture increased data on staff accessing parental and carers leave as well as those not returning following extended leave.	2025	Organisational Development and Diversity Team	Director P&C	Exit surveys expanded annual reporting developed.