

## SAGE CYGNET AWARD APPLICATION FORM



## SAGE Cygnet Award Application

<b>Name of Institution</b>	Defence Science and Technology Group (DSTG)
<b>Date of Application</b>	28/06/2024
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## DSTG: SAGE CYGNET 1

	✓ Current Cygnet	<b>Barrier</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· List the Barrier addressed in this Cygnet</li> <li>· List the Barrier for Cygnets already submitted</li> </ul>
[Mandatory] Institution-wide barrier	✓	Flexible Work
[Mandatory] Sub-group barrier		
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### Word limit and actual word count

Section	Word limit	Actual word count
<b>Cygnet submission</b>	<b>2,500</b>	<b>2,478</b>
<i>Key barrier</i>		22
<i>Evidence of barrier</i>		295
<i>Activities and outputs</i>		706
<i>Outcomes</i>		970
<i>Impacts</i>		369
<i>Future Action Plan</i>		116

**Acknowledgement of Country**

Defence acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Lands throughout Australia. Defence recognises their continuing connection to traditional lands and waters and would like to pay respect to their Elders both past and present. Defence would also like to pay respect to the First Nations peoples who have contributed to the defence of Australia in times of peace and war, and acknowledges them as our nation's first scientists, technologists and innovators.

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## ACRONYMS

APS	Australian Public service
BYO	Bring Your Own
CDS	Chief Defence Scientist
CRTO	Chief Research & Technology Operations
DST/DSTG	Defence Science and Technology/Defence Science Technology Group
DSTL	Defence Science and Technology Labs
EDWCT	Executive Director Workforce Capability and Talent
FWA	Flexible Working Arrangements
FWCP	Flexible Working Campaign Pilot
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
HRBP	Human Resources Business Partner
M	Men
TOIL	Time Off In Lieu
W	Women
X	Non-Binary Gender
Z	Prefer Not to Say/Undisclosed

## KEY BARRIER

DSTG identified access to and uptake of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) as a key barrier. Four sub-barriers are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Sub-barriers to FWA at DSTG**

Sub-barrier 1.1	Lack of awareness by managers on the value and ways to use FWA resulting in an inconsistent approach
Sub-barrier 1.2	Perception that working part-time or flexible adversely impacts career prospects and access to opportunities
Sub-barrier 1.3	Lack of a flexible work culture
Sub-barrier 1.4	Lack of access to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and hardware to enable FWA

## EVIDENCE OF BARRIER

Six data sources established a baseline and measured changes to policy and practice, and early indications of attitudinal change (Table 2).

**Table 2. Summary of data sources used in Cygnet application**

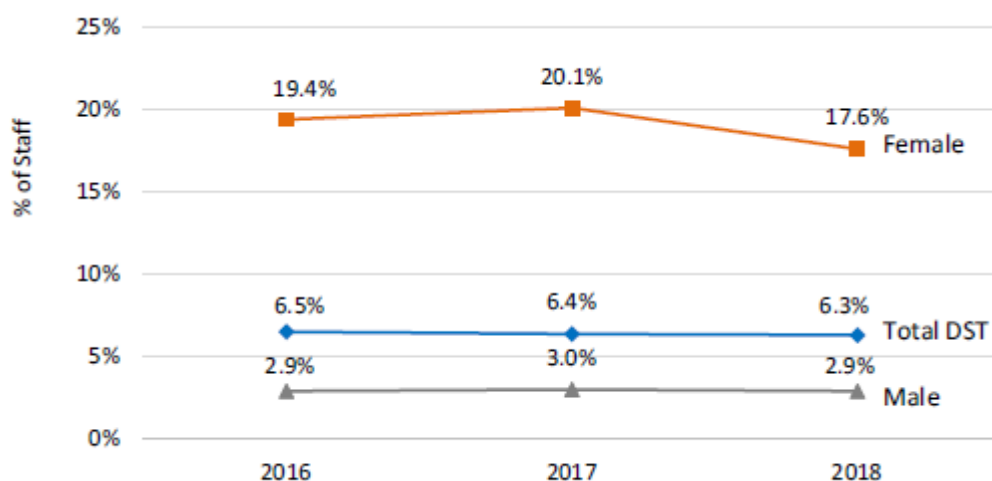
Data Source	Date	Description	Outcome
Workforce data analysis	2018	n = 2,141 women n = 489 (23%) men n = 1,652 (77%)	Apart from part time hours, metrics to measure flexible working are not collected by Defence/DSTG. As a result, part time hours was used as a proxy measure of FWA uptake.
The Defence Flexible Work Campaign Pilot (FWCP) Survey	2019	n = 121 responses (67% response) women n=45 (37%) men n= 75 (62%)	Survey data from the DSTGs division (Land Division) on their participation (2018-2019) in the 'If Not, Why Not' campaign. This examined the use of flexible work and perceptions of organisational support for flexible work
DSTG APS Employee Census	2019	n = 1107 (response 48%) women n = 273 (25%) men = 787 (71%) Z = <20	Designed to understand employees views on, and experiences of FWA at DSTG
	2021	n =1146 (response 50%) women = 273 (24%) men = 819 (71%) Z = 32 (3%)	
	2022	n = 1117 (response 52%) women = 276 (24%) men = 776 (69%) Z = 65 (6%)	
	2023	n = 1423, response rate 60% women = 338 (27%) men = 973 (68%) Z = 53 (4%)	

Data Source	Date	Description	Outcome
DSTG FWA Employee Census	2024	n = 311 managers reported on team usage of FWA, representing n = 1,959 employees (response 77%) women n = 548 (28%) men n= 1,399 (71%) X = 12 (1%)	Designed to provide quantitative data on current FWA usage patterns by gender and qualitative feedback on manager attitudes to FWA
Diversity & Inclusion Working Group Survey feedback	2024	n = 5 (response 10%) women = 3 men = 2	Designed to provide feedback on experiences of FWA from members of the First Nations Engagement Network, Disability Working Group, Neurodiversity working Group and LGBTI advocates

As at 2019, access to FWA as a key barrier was evidenced, through;

- Findings of the FWCP where, 74% (+ 6% vs baseline 2018) wanted the opportunity to working flexibly, particularly if barriers are reduced.
- The gendered uptake of part time hours in 2018, with more than six times the percentage of women using part time hours than men (Figure 1).
- A 30% decline in senior roles compared to junior roles, undertaken in a part time capacity in 2018.

**Figure 1. Trends in uptake of part time hours for DSTG staff, men and women (screenshot from DSTG Athena Swan Bronze submission 2019, noting use of different gender terms).**



## Sub Barriers

### 1.1. Lack of awareness by managers on the value and ways to use FWA resulting in an inconsistent approach

Findings from the FWCP survey 2019 revealed, 40% of managers wanted more training, opportunities to learn from other managers, and more guidance on reviewing requests. Similarly, 29% (+5% vs baseline 2018) reported not being familiar with FWA policies and procedures.

### 1.2. Perception that working part-time or flexibly adversely impacts career prospects and access to opportunities

The FWCP Survey 2019, identified that 50% of people who worked flexibly believed they did not have the same opportunities for promotion or personal development.

### 1.3. Lack of a flexible work culture

Employee feedback from the FWCP survey reflected a lack of ‘normalisation’ of flexible working with managers and within teams expressing that working from home wasn’t common practice at that time.

### 1.4. Lack of access to ICT and hardware to enable FWA

The FWCP survey results revealed ICT systems still remained the biggest barrier to embedding flexible work, with 60% of people sharing this as a barrier. It is worth noting that ICT systems are managed at the Defence, enterprise-wide level with DSTG representing 2% of the workforce.

## PROGRESS (ACTIONS AND OUTPUTS)

The following activities to address access to and uptake of FWA were delivered between 2020 to 2023 and as Table 3 indicates, some activities address multiple sub barriers.

When implementing any workforce initiatives DSTG is required to operate within Defence frameworks and policies. Table 3 distinguishes which activities are Defence or DSTG led.

**Table 3. The relationship between the key barrier, sub-barriers and actions taken to address these**

	Key Barrier: Access to and uptake of FWA			
Sub-barriers	Lack of awareness by managers on the value and ways to use FWA resulting in an inconsistent approach.	Lack of a flexible work culture.	Perception that working part-time or flexibly adversely impacts career prospects and access to opportunities.	Lack of access to ICT and hardware to enable FWA.
Activities	Launch of flexible work campaign, ‘If not, why not’. Led by DSTG.			Access to ICT software and hardware tools. Led by Defence.
		Launch of leaving loudly campaign. Led by DSTG.		
	Flexible Arrangements policy. Led by Defence.			

### Launch of DSTG’s Flexible Work campaign

Given the success of the FWCP 2018-2019, the ‘If not, why not’ campaign was launched across DSTG in 2020 to raise manager awareness of the benefits to working flexibly and to provide resources on how managers can support flexible work hours. The campaign was presented to the Executive teams of Divisions, with 8 of the 10 Divisions reached (n=60). Of the two remaining Divisions, one Division felt they had the information they needed as they were the original pilot Division of the FWCP and the second Division was interrupted by COVID19. To support manager questions, a SAGE Flexible

work email account was established, along with an online portal of FWA information that received 191 views. Table 4 presents the stories of FWA that were shared as part of this Flexible Work Campaign.

**Table 4. Articles published in DSTG's staff magazine (Connections) and DSTG's Intranet site (SATURN) from 2019- 2021.**

Year	Issue Month	Article Name	Publication
2019	October	My Experience – [Name redacted]	Connections
2019	October	Flexible Working Conditions – My Experience	Connections
2019	November	An investigation of experiences of Flexible Work Arrangements	SATURN
2020	April	Flexible work, the new norm?	Connections
2020	April	Working remotely and COVID-19	Connections
2020	April	Join ForceNet	Connections
2020	May	Flexible working arrangements, if not, why not?	Connections
2020	June	Job sharing	Connections
2020	June	COVID observations	Connections
2020	July	Defence promotes flexible working	SATURN
2020	July	Managing remote teams	SATURN
2020	August	Job sharing is a confidence booster	Connections
2020	September	Only women need flexible work options?	Connections
2020	September	Building an agile team of teams, flexible to the core	Connections
2020	October	Working from home as a survival mechanism	Connections
2020	November	Tuggeranong Flexible Working Hub	SATURN
2020	December	Keeping COVID safe at FMB	SATURN
2020	December	Overcoming the challenges of managing hybrid teams	Connections
2021	April	Leaving Loudly	Connections
2021	April	A call to leave & arrive loudly	SATURN
2021	December	Why aren't more dads taking parental leave?	Connections

A voluntary seven-member Flexible TIGER team was established to deliver this campaign and the Leaving Loudly campaign, described below. TIGER teams are widely utilised in Defence to assist implement priority actions over a short time period. Team membership was intentionally diverse in representation (across gender, location and seniority) and employee participation required management support.

#### **Launch of DSTGs Leaving Loudly campaign**

The Leaving Loudly campaign aimed to raise awareness of work-life balance supported by senior leader's role modelling FWA and to challenge the stigma that FWA negatively impacts career progression.

A communication plan focused on sharing case studies of managers adopting flexible work along with staff resources on FWA (Table 3). A presentation on Diversity and Inclusion was made to the Senior Leadership Team (n= 90) to share actions they could take to embolden flexible working including providing greater access to their calendars, where managers publically post leaving times or 'go home on time' days. Chief Defence Scientist described Leaving Loudly as '...a really powerful signal. Particularly if we can share the active balance between family and work.'

Extensive consultation occurred with our UK equivalent organisation, Defence Science and Technology Labs (DSTL), who had successfully implemented this campaign.

There were a number of challenges around the definition of 'leaving loudly' with its emphasis on 'school run'/family obligations rather than universal availability of flexible working. This was addressed somewhat in the case studies shared with the organisation to broaden the reasons for flexible working.

### **Access to ICT and hardware to enable FWA**

Creating systemic change within Defence is extraordinarily complex, given its size (over 123,000 employees), profile (armed forces and civilians) and unique security constraints. Whilst it was our intention to address this systemic barrier to FWA, it was during the COVID work from home mandates, that most employees were provided some of the tools to operate remotely. Whilst remote access to Defence's protected network was facilitated, employees were required to supply their own hardware and set up a work space at home. Associated costs were supported by Defence through the ability to salary sacrifice laptops/computers, however for some employees the financial burden was challenging. This burden is being addressed with the roll out of Defence laptops. This period, although challenging, normalised remote working for many DSTG employees and provided a fundamental shift in perceptions about where and when work could be done.

### **Flexible Work Arrangements Policy**

As part of Defence's commitment to progressing FWA, informed by findings of the FWCP survey, in June 2023 Defence released its updated policy on FWA. Policy consultation occurred with DSTG Human Resources representatives and executive leadership. This not only reflects legislative changes to the Fair Work Act 2019, but went further, responding to employee and union consultation, to impose no caps on work from home days and a bias towards approving requests and rights to appeal refusal. The policy also outlined culturally sensitive initiatives such as granting request for leave to observe a religious or cultural event, at full pay and an ability for staff to take a day-off on an alternate day in substitution for working a public holiday.

## **OUTCOMES**

Table 5 summarises the sources of outcome and impact data used in this Cygnet.

**Table 5. Summary of desired outcomes, indicators and means of verification**

<b>Key Barrier:</b>	<b>Goal:</b>		
<b>Access and uptake of FWA</b>	<b>Increased access and uptake of FWA</b>		
<b>Sub-barriers</b>	<b>Desired outcome and/or impact</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Means of verification</b>
1.1 Lack of awareness by managers on the value and ways to use	1.1.1 Improved awareness by managers on the value	Self-reported manager awareness of the benefits of FWA and	FWCP Survey results 2019

Key Barrier: Access and uptake of FWA	Goal: Increased access and uptake of FWA		
Sub-barriers	Desired outcome and/or impact	Indicator	Means of verification
FWA resulting in an inconsistent approach	and ways to use FWA resulting in more consistent implementation	confidence implementing FWA  Self-reported manager feedback of equitable access to FWA  Self- reported employee satisfaction regarding experiences of FWA	DSTG FWA Census 2024  APS Employee Census 2019- 2023
1.2 Perception that working part-time or flexibly adversely impacts career prospects and access to opportunities	1.2.1Reduction in perception that FWA negatively impacts career opportunities	Self-reported perception of a stigma associated with FWA	FWCP Survey results 2019  DSTG FWA Census 2024
1.3 Lack of a flexible work culture	1.3.1 Improvements towards a culture where flexibility is embedded	Rates of FWA usage across gender, divisions and seniority.  Self- reported employee satisfaction regarding experiences of FWA  Self-reported manager perceptions of DSTG having a flexible work culture  Self- reported manager resistance to FWA Policy shift with a bias towards flexibility	FWCP Survey results 2019  DSTG FWA Census 2024  APS Employee Census 2019- 2023
1.4 Lack of access to ICT and hardware to enable FWA	1.4.1 Improved access to ICT and hardware to enable FWA.	Self –reported levels of ICT tools as a barrier to FWA	FWCP Survey results 2019  DSTG FWA Census 2024

### Desired outcome 1.1.1: Improved awareness by managers on the value and ways to use FWA resulting in more consistent implementation

When asked about the advantages of FWA (Employee FWA Census 2024), 96% of managers were able to cite one or more evidence-based benefit, demonstrating a good understanding of the value of FWA. This is an improvement from 2019 where only 46% cited a benefit of FWA, measured after the year-long FWCP program.

In 2019, 40% of managers who piloted the ‘if not, why not’ campaign (FWCP survey) expressed a desire for further training on ways to use FWA. Today this has almost halved, with fewer managers (24%) requesting more support to implement FWA (DSTG FWA Census, 2024). Given the newer FWA policy, released in 2023, issues of unequitable access to FWA given some roles are more challenging to perform flexibly, concerns that the current policy isn’t sufficiently prescriptive, and uncertainty about procedures to formalise FWA are top of mind for these managers. This is addressed in our future action plan.

With improved manager confidence implementing FWA, we hoped to see improvements in employee perceptions of FWA (Table 6). Whilst the values in Table 6, indicator ‘a’ show a large increase between 2020 and 2021, there is a slight decrease from 2021 to 2023, especially for women a decrease of 8% (2021 91% vs 2023 83%). Similarly, for indicators ‘b-d’ the values are high compared to feedback from the FWCP survey 2019, whereby only 72% of employees felt managers were supportive of FWA, but there is a decrease for ‘c-confidence that FWA will be supported’ from 2021-2023. We hypothesize employee’s gradual return to office, after mandated work from home directives due to COVID19 around 2021, reflected this reduction in employee’s experience of FWA.

**Table 6. Trends in DSTG employee perceptions of FWA, APS Employee Census 2019-2023**

Employee Experience of FWA	M/W	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
a. % Satisfaction with non-monetary conditions (eg FWA, leave)	M	45%	53%	86%	84%	85%
	W	65%	69%	91%	88%	83%
b. % Flexibility to use FWA when requested	M	These questions were not asked prior to 2021		83%	90%	89%
	W			85%	89%	88%
c. % Confidence flexibility will be supported	M			92%	89%	86%
	W			89%	85%	84%
d. % Confidence FWA request will be given due consideration	M			92%	90%	91%
	W			89%	90%	89%

### Desired outcome 1.2.1: Reduction in perception that FWA negatively impacts career opportunities

300 respondents answered the qualitative component of DSTG FWA Census with only three people reporting that adopting FWA, exclusively referencing part time work, negatively impacts career prospects. This stigma associated with part time status could be driving its low uptake and is addressed in our future actions.

### Desired outcome 1.3.1: Improvements towards a culture where flexibility is embedded

**Utilisation of FWA**

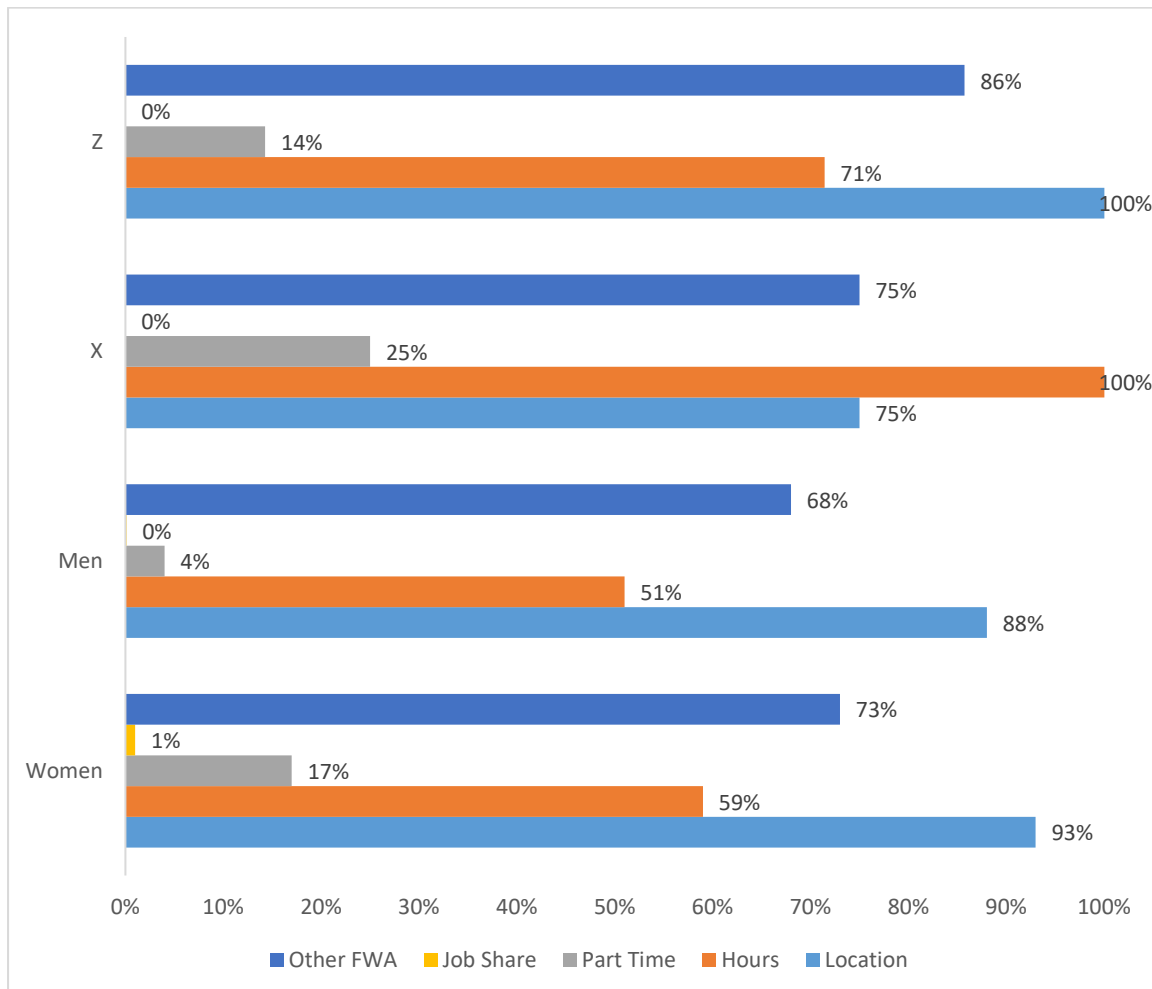
The 2024 FWA Census revealed 77% of the overall DSTG workforce is currently accessing FWA, compared to 68% in 2019 (FWCP survey). Whilst utilisation of FWA in 2024 was high, greater usage was reported for women (81%) than men (71%). Figures 2 describes the different types of FWA used by Women and Men.

Overall, ‘Other location’, or remote working was the most used type of FWA for both men and women, but slightly more by women (Women 93%: Men 88%). The second highest type of FWA was classified ‘other’ and represents Flexitime, TOIL and use of annual leave to achieve flexibility. Men reported greater use of this type of flexibility (Women 68%: Men 79%). Over half of respondents utilised hours as a way to achieve flexibility, with slightly more women (Women 59%: Men 51%) than men availing themselves of this option.

Larger differences between men and women were seen in part time and job share options. Women were far more likely to work part time than men (Women 17%: Men 4%), whilst job share was uncommon for both genders (three women and one men).

Usage of FWA by gender category X and Z/undisclosed in Figure 2 also mirror poor uptake of part-time hours, with highest usage of flexible location (Z=100%) and hours (X=100%), bearing in mind the number of responses were extremely low.

**Figure 2. Types of FWA utilised by gender, DSTG FWA Census 2024**



(Note: numbers do not add up to 100% as many employees use one or more type of FWA)

69% of non-managers utilised FWA compared to 31% of managers (23% women, 76% men, 1% X/Z undisclosed). The FWA Census didn't assess the type(s) of FWA usage by managers and this should be addressed in future surveys. Despite their limitations, these findings highlight the need to encourage more managers to role model FWA to aspire to a flexible work culture. Based on this evidence, our future actions will focus on closing the gap between senior and junior staff usage of FWA as well as achieving parity between women and men in part time arrangements.

### Comparison of FWA Utilisation by Division

Curiously when analysed by division (Table 7), three divisions significantly under indexed in utilisation of FWA<sup>1</sup>. Unlike the trend for all other divisions, Division H reported greater utilisation of FWA by men compared to women F:43%, M 64%. We hypothesize, that the reasons are related to a combination of these divisions having a greater percentage of roles which are more challenging to perform flexibly, for example laboratory based roles and employees working on classified systems only accessible on site. Manager attitudes towards FWA are also a potential contributor to poorer FWA utilisation. Supporting these divisions will feature in our future actions.

**Table 7. Comparison of FWA utilisation by division, highlighting divisions that under index in FWA utilisation**

DSTG Divisions <sup>2</sup>	Women			Men			Total		
	Total	Using FWA	%	Total	Using FWA	%	Total	Using FWA	%
Division A	24	23	<b>96%</b>	47	35	<b>74%</b>	71	58	<b>82%</b>
Division B	61	56	<b>92%</b>	172	136	<b>79%</b>	233	192	<b>82%</b>
Division C	81	76	<b>94%</b>	271	220	<b>81%</b>	352	296	<b>84%</b>
Division D	24	21	<b>88%</b>	45	38	<b>84%</b>	69	59	<b>86%</b>
Division E	85	78	<b>92%</b>	296	267	<b>90%</b>	381	345	<b>91%</b>
Division F	103	79	<b>77%</b>	201	124	<b>62%</b>	304	203	<b>67%</b>
Division G	79	52	<b>66%</b>	59	35	<b>59%</b>	138	87	<b>63%</b>
Division H	54	23	<b>43%</b>	280	180	<b>64%</b>	334	203	<b>61%</b>
Division I	22	22	<b>100%</b>	20	18	<b>90%</b>	42	40	<b>95%</b>
Division J	15	13	<b>87%</b>	7	7	<b>100%</b>	22	20	<b>91%</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>442.5</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>1398</b>	<b>1060</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>1946</b>	<b>1503</b>	<b>77%</b>

Qualitative feedback from the FWA Census 2024, found 21% of women managers and 33% of men managers reported that DSTG hasn't yet developed a flexible work culture. Issues raised which will be addressed within the future action plan include: a lack of consistent senior level support for FWA; manager discontent about the workload associated with implementing FWA; and concerns that FWA is being abused and reducing productivity.

### Desired outcome 1.4.1: Improved access to ICT and hardware to enable FWA.

At the commencement of the FWCP pilot, 62% of employees rated ICT issues as the biggest barrier to FWA. By 2024 staff have been provided with the tools to enable remote working and the issues identified in the FWA Census revealed focus on the performance of these tools. 43 managers (14%) complained of ICT connectivity issues impacting productivity and work/life balance (of these, 3% were women, 10% men and 1% prefer not to say). The issue of BYO devices is now largely resolved with the roll out of Defence laptops.

<sup>1</sup> Please note, to ensure anonymity, Divisions are not named.

## IMPACT

### Desired outcome 1.1.1: Improved awareness by managers on the value and ways to use FWA resulting in more consistent implementation

96% of managers reported the benefits of workplace flexibility (Table 8);

**Table 8.**

<p><i>“Allows staff to be the most productive and tailored to the needs of individuals so that each individual can perform at their best. It enables Defence, as an employer, to offer high degree flexibility to meet workplace priorities as well as helping staff achieve work outcomes while meeting the needs of a busy life”</i></p>
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Whilst the majority of managers could cite the value of FWA, a small minority (6%) felt the current policy was over-generous and a free-for-all (Table 9);

**Table 9.**

<p><i>“I have all the support I need from my local management”</i></p>
<p><i>“It’s a free for all where every staff member wants to do it differently and managers are unable to easily impose constraints”</i></p>

Whilst not asked directly, unprompted 16% of managers (men 73%, women 22%, indeterminate/prefer not to say 5%) expressed confidence implementing FWA (Table 10);

**Table 10.**

<p><i>“I do not see any issues whatsoever with FWA and think it is an excellent value-add proposition for both current and prospective staff members, especially considering that Defence/DSTG is unable to match the salaries that quality personnel would be able to command in industry”</i></p>
<p><i>“No issues encountered under current agreements. Continue supporting and promoting FWA”</i></p>

Other managers described the challenges they face implementing FWA, with 24% wanting rules to follow as shared by these managers (Table 11);

**Table 11.**

<p><i>“Clearer guidelines on WFH arrangements and expectations. Training for both managers and staff on staying engaged with each other.”</i></p>
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*“There are some real challenges for teams where most of the work is on high class[ification] systems. Most of the time the work requirement must take precedence but sometimes the need to be at home is high. It requires skill for the manager to negotiate that, especially because the at home need is different between staff members...”*

*“Have a mandated amount of working from home time that is allowable as it is currently managed at the group level and varies across groups. Should be same rules for everyone”*

Managers highlighted that some roles within DSTG are more challenging to perform flexibly and as a result are concerned about the inequity that arises (Table 12);

**Table 12.**

*“[FWA are] ...Not available for all people due to things like... [restricted] access, specialised machinery so can be seen as unfair on some people”*

### **Desired outcome 1.2.1: Reduction in perception that FWA negatively impacts career opportunities**

Whilst isolated, three comments described a stigma around working part time. This quote below describes why this maybe the case and this is addressed in our future action plan (Table 13).

**Table 13.**

*“The broader issue around FWA is for the impact on career progression for staff that are seen to be taking 'time out' from work by being part time as the most likely gender group to do this are women and DSTG is a predominately men workplace. Training for staff on interview panels would help with this making them aware of the bias around part time work”*

### **Desired outcome 1.3.1: Improvements towards a culture where flexibility is embedded**

Whilst usage of FWA is strong, there remains some cultural barriers within DSTG which indicate there is still more work to do. This is captured within the future action plan, to embed a culture of Flexibility as described by below by two women managers (Table 14);

**Table 14.**

*“I feel completely supported in implementing FWA as my management chain understands the benefits and actively encourages it. However, there are some managers in DSTG who are not supportive of FWA. They risk burning out their teams and have created poor working*

<i>environments. Better education and development of those managers would be useful in addressing DSTG's cultural issues."</i>
<i>"I feel there still exists a culture where we need to be physically present, in order to be perceived to be working, and also flexibility is subjective topic, that's discretionary and dependant on supervisor's interpretation of the policy. This can be detrimental to employee, but also taken advantage of in certain circumstances"</i>

#### **Desired outcome 1.4.1: Improved access to ICT and hardware to enable FWA.**

The quotes below, describe the gains DSTG has made, but also the nature and importance of the work to be done, in providing employees with the ICT tools they need to enable productive FWA (Table 15).

**Table 15.**

<i>"FWA is much improved since the pandemic as it was harder to access previously - for example getting remote access to ICT to work from home, except for senior leaders, was difficult so it would be good to continue to resource and maintain remote access for all staff."</i>
<i>"[We need] ...Electronic tools that work better. [Our communication software] ...are all hit and miss as to whether they will work when you want/need them to"</i>
<i>"Remote connectivity can impact on productivity when [access to the system] doesn't work"</i>

#### **Intersectionality**

When surveying DSTG's First Nations, Disability, and Neurodiversity working groups along with LGBTI inclusion allies we heard consistency in experiences of FWA with broader DSTG (Table 16). However, for neurodivergent employees and those with a disability, FWA allowed them to maintain a work-life balance that is beneficial to their personal circumstances but also be engaged and contribute to DSTG's operational and strategic outcomes. The flexibility to take leave on a day other than a public holiday, for example Australia Day as a sign of respect, was welcomed by a First Nations employee.

**Table 16.**

<i>"..., as those [who] engage in FWA are more reliant on emails etc., it's worth noting that the written communications used by Senior Leadership aren't at all effective, especially to some [Neurodiverse] ND groups... as they're extremely</i>
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<p><i>verbose, and dense. This further disadvantages those not coming into the office.</i></p>
<p><i>"[It's] a lot less stressful than working in the office. My office work areas have caused a lot of sensory overload, particularly the noise from an open plan environment. Whereas at home I can arrange the environment to suit myself – I can wear comfortable clothing, control the noise levels, and so on."</i></p>
<p><i>"I have not disclosed my neurodivergence, but I have also requested, and been granted permission, to work from home on days where I required additional accommodations without my request being questioned. For example, one day I found that my light sensitivity was higher than usual, and I found that the office lights were overwhelming me as a result. Given that I had no business requirement to be in the office that day, I told my manager that I was going to work from home in the afternoon as the office lights were giving me a headache. He did not question my decision or need to work from home, and I was able to work from home that afternoon without any trouble"</i></p>
<p><i>"I'm proud that DSTG has a policy giving people the choice to work on Australia Day, allowing people to observe this day in their preferred way"</i></p>

## **FURTHER ACTION**

Our Bronze application identified Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) as a key barrier.

Whilst we have made progress on reducing of each sub-barrier to FWA there is more work to be done including: closing the gap on usage of FWA between men and women and between junior and senior employees; addressing the persistent stigma of part-time time work and career progression; continually advocating for improved performance of ICT tools; better supporting managers to implement Defence's FWA and therefore provide a better experience for all employees, as well as exploring creative ways to help with work-life balance in roles that are more challenging to perform flexibly.

To address these issues, further SMART actions are outlined in Table 17.

**Table 17. Action plan to improve utilisation of FWA**

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
<b>FWA.1</b>	Managers' report ICT communication tools can be unreliable and an absence of tools to support scheduling can lead to reduced productivity and ultimately reduced work/life balance.	Investigate if the planned roll out of Defence Laptops resolves issues around reliability of communication tools. If not, develop initiatives or tools assist staff in resolving the issues.	2025	DISG/ Infrastructure and Operations Group/ ICT Operations Division	CRTO	Manager feedback on annual FWA Employee Census results in improved reliability of ICT tools and improved employee accountability. All employees have access to Defence Laptop.
<b>FWA.2</b>	Managers have requested more guidance around supporting the implementation of Defence's FWA policy.	Develop and conduct a series of manager workshops to explain the FWA policy and guidance on implementation. Develop a FWA online resource hub tailored to DSTG	Commencing 2025 and annually thereafter	HRBP/ HR Services/ Workforce Capability & Talent Team/ Science Communications Team	HRBP	Annual FWA employee census reports manager's better informed and confident to implement FWA
<b>FWA.3</b>	Senior leadership utilisation of FWA is at 31% compared to 77% uptake across the workforce. Yet senior leaders are important roles models in reducing stigma associated	Encourage the Defence Leadership Team, Defence Management Team and Senior Leadership Team to role model FWA. Promote FWA discussions and documentation during Performance and Development discussions (PFADs). Develop a communications plan which	2025-2026	DISG/Workforce Capability & Management Team/ Science Communications Team	EDWCT	Senior leadership uptake of FWA is consistent with the broader workforce at around 77% uptake.

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	with FWA and fostering a Flexible work place culture.	regularly shares case studies of the benefits of working flexibly.				
<b>FWA.4</b>	Three of ten divisions within DSTG underutilise FWA and understanding the drivers, whilst not compromising organisational security posture will assist in developing targeted solutions.	Support these division to increase utilisation of FWA by overcoming challenges around roles that are traditionally not performed remotely.	2025-2026	DISG/Workforce Capability & Management Team	CRTO	Three divisions identified increase FWA utilisation to at least the average benchmark across DSTG (currently 77%)
<b>FWA.5</b>	Some types of FWA: job share and part time hours adopted by men are underutilised. Addressing the barriers could further improve FWA utilisation.	As part of the communications plan in Action FWA.3, raise awareness of the benefits of types of FWA currently underutilised - Part time, Job share.	2025-2026	Workforce Capability & Management Team/ Science Communications Team	EDWCT	25% Increase in part time and job share FWA will contribute to 85% overall utilisation of FWA