Variable work arrangements

Introduction

Council aims to ensure it has employees who are motivated and able to perform to their full potential and is committed to ensuring the workplace accommodates the reasonable requirements of employees in balancing their work/life and family responsibilities. Variable work arrangements were identified as an initiative that would help employees achieve a greater work/life balance through various consultation methods including the Employee Satisfaction Survey.

Council’s Workforce Strategy promotes the benefits of enabling employees to manage the demands of work with their other life activities while they achieve the objectives of our business.

Variable work arrangements are being offered to improve employee performance and productivity through work arrangements that are mutually beneficial for Council and employees.

These guidelines are aimed at providing Council employees with the flexibility to vary their normal working hours with the prior approval of management.

The three main objectives of these guidelines are:

- To enable employees to better balance work and personal commitments.
- To allow the retention of skills and organisational knowledge where employees would otherwise be forced to resign to meet personal obligations.
- To make all employees aware of the existence and operation of variable work arrangements, including some of the options that may be available to them with the approval of their Group/Executive Manager.

Some of the benefits of variable work arrangements include:

- More skilled and motivated employees, including mature age workers who are attracted to organisations with flexible working policies.
- Higher employee retention.
- The ability to attract employees that might have otherwise been unable to work.
- Savings on recruitment and retraining costs.
- Reduced absenteeism and stress as flexibility helps employees meet their outside commitments more easily.

The following conditions must be met in order for the arrangement to be approved:

- The variable working arrangement must have identifiable and meaningful benefit to both Council and the employee.
- The arrangement must not impact negatively on the service delivery of the work area and the work must be carried out as effectively as per the usual span of hours, this includes not backfilling positions with casual employees or increase in overtime.
- All operational requirements are satisfied.
- Arrangements are made for the appropriate supervision of employees.
• Arrangements are made through Pay and Conditions staff - for the correct recording of hours of work in an official Council work hours recording system.

• A meal break of a minimum of 30 minutes must be taken within the first five continuous hours work.

Work Health and Safety requirements are fulfilled including consideration of the arrangement of hours worked. The hours worked should not be such that would cause a risk to the employees’ health or the efficient operation of the business.

Procedure

When considering a variable work arrangement, there are a number of factors to take into account to ensure the arrangement is appropriate. Careful consideration by managers must be given to the suitability of the position and employee to accommodate a variable work arrangement.

Variable work arrangements may not be possible for all or any employees in some areas due to the nature of the work or the structure of the section.

Types of variable work arrangements may include:

1. Part time work
   This could result in full time positions being re-classified into part time positions, either as a short or long term option.

2. Job sharing
   Job-sharing offers the flexibility for two part-time workers to fill one full-time position. Job sharing must be reviewed annually to ensure it is suitable on an ongoing basis.

3. Phased retirement
   Please see procedure 5.04.26 Transition to Retirement for further information. This is essentially designed to allow employees to make the transition into retirement through part time employment.

4. Variable Hours (not available to employees working nine day fortnight)
   Full time employees may request to alter their start, finish and/or lunch times to accrue up to a maximum of 6 days each calendar year. These days are additional to the existing 15 rostered days off (RDO) that accrue each year.

   Part time employees may also request to alter their start, finish and/or lunch to accrue up to a maximum of 3 days each calendar year.

   The primary consideration for managers must be the impact on Council’s operational needs. There should not be any increase in overtime, or the use of casuals to backfill staff on variable work arrangements.

The variable work arrangement has the following provisions:

For full-time employees:

• 6 days (45 hours) variable leave may be taken each calendar year for leave accruing in that year.

• Only 2 days (15 hours) variable leave may be carried over into the next calendar year. The other days must be taken within the accrual year.

• Up to 1 hour in any one day may be accrued towards variable hours.

For part-time employees:

• Up to 3 days (21 hours) variable leave arrangement per annum and must be taken within the calendar year they are accrued.

• Up to 1 hour in any one day may be accrued towards variable hours.
Refer to procedure 5.04.1 Leave for details relating to accrued hours.

Leave may accrue when employees:

- work on their rostered day off
- elect to accrue time in lieu of overtime when required or directed to work
- are required to work when on call or a public holiday
- undertake approved training after normal hours

The Local Government (State) Award 2014 provides that where prior agreement is reached, an employee directed to work in excess of ordinary hours may elect to be paid either the appropriate overtime rate or be granted time in lieu equivalent to the actual hours worked.

a. Accrual of hours must be approved in advance by the relevant manager (or Group/Executive Manager in the case of a manager working) and notified to the Group Manager within one week.

b. Accrual of hours will not be considered where the employee works or attends meetings outside normal hours at their own discretion.

c. Accrual of hours may only be authorised where an employee is directed or requested to work outside normal working hours.

d. Accrued leave occurring as a result of working additional hours must be taken within 2 weeks of the accrual occurring unless authorised by the Group Manager.

e. Accrued leave occurring as a result of untaken rostered days off is to be taken within six months of the date of accrual.

f. The maximum amount of accrued leave is five days and accruals in excess of 5 days are to be taken when directed.

g. Employees who are required to respond to operational emergencies retain the option to accrue time in lieu in accordance with the Award and obviously such arrangements cannot be approved in advance.

h. Accrued leave should be taken as a priority over annual leave.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accrued leave</th>
<th>Rostered Days Off</th>
<th>Variable Leave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee elected - Single time in lieu of overtime</td>
<td>15 days per year</td>
<td>6 days per year (full-time staff)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum accrual/ carry over</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>2 days per year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. **Nine day fortnight (no participation in RDO scheme)**

Employees taking advantage of this option do not participate in the RDO/variable work arrangement scheme as outlined at 4 above. Employees who work a 9 day fortnight already have access to shorter working days for part of the working week.
7. **Extended meal break**
   Employees, with agreement from their supervisors, may take advantage of this option to participate in wellness activities such as going to the gym, playing touch football etc. This allows them to take a longer lunch break and make up the time either before 8.30 am or after 5pm that day.

8. **Leave Without Pay**
   Short or long term leave without pay can be used to meet family or other responsibilities. This option could also include part time leave without pay, which allows full time employees to work part time on a temporary basis and take leave without pay for the remaining hours in the week.

9. **Return from Parental Leave on reduced hours**
   Allows parents returning from parental leave to request to work reduced hours either temporarily or permanently as per the Award. Any reduction in hours must be reviewed after a 6 month period to assess the arrangements for ongoing suitability.

General approval conditions and terms

The variable work arrangements listed above are examples of what may be available to employees (depending on their position and other requests in their section). All requests for variable work arrangements must be approved by the Group/Executive Manager. Approval must be obtained before commencing any arrangement.

Any variable work arrangement must be reviewed by the relevant Manager (as a minimum) every 6 months to determine if the arrangement continues to be of benefit to Council and the employee.

If it is determined the arrangement is impacting negatively on operational requirements and is to be suspended or cancelled, the Manager will write to the employee providing them with reasons why the arrangement is to be suspended or cancelled.

Instances of poor workplace performance or behaviours may also result in the temporary suspension or cancellation of a variable work arrangement.

**How to apply for a variable work arrangement**

To apply for variable work arrangements employees must write a letter to their Manager outlining:

- the type of variable work arrangement option;
- when they wish to commence (and cease – if this is a temporary arrangement) the arrangement;
- the reason for their request;
- any supporting documentation that will assist their application.

Managers must then consider the request for variable work arrangements and make a recommendation to their Group/Executive Manager.

**PLEASE NOTE**

An employee’s particular circumstances and reason/s for the request, along with any required rearrangement of workflows or staffing will be considered in the assessment of each application for variable work arrangements.

If the variable work arrangement is not approved the employee may request reasons in writing outlining why their request is not supported.

For more information about variable work arrangements, please contact the Payroll Officer on extension 160.