
Human Resources - Employment Conditions policy (revised)

Responsible Officer: Group Manager People & Performance (Helen McNeil)

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Revoke the existing 'Human Resources - Employment Conditions' policy dated 21 August 2019 and any policies revived as a result of that revocation.
2. Adopt the attached revised 'Human Resources - Employment Conditions' policy.

Background

The impact of the coronavirus throughout 2020 and 2021 has created significant challenges for organisations throughout the world. Government restrictions introduced to minimise the spread of the virus meant that working from home (WFH) arrangements were implemented rapidly.

In Australia, the right to request Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) forms part of the National Employment Standards (NES). In NSW, this right is also reflected in the *Local Government (State) Award 2020 (Award)*.

FWA as a minimum employment standard existed for several years prior to the current pandemic, which has now cast a spotlight on whether these arrangements should form part of business as usual.

1. Requesting flexible working arrangements

All FWA requests currently received are handled in accordance with the Award and, therefore, only apply to employees who have completed 12-months continuous service and can demonstrate a genuine family/carer's responsibility.

Employers may provide for flexible working arrangements that are more than the national minimum and may include a range of informal and formal arrangements for when, where and how work can be done. It can also include remote working, career breaks, compressed weeks, job sharing, flexible rostering and much more.

Council recognises that organisations who value flexible working have productive and fulfilling workplaces that assist them to attract and retain employees, leading to savings in recruitment and training costs, as well as maintaining corporate knowledge and expertise. It also reduces high costs associated with workplace exclusion such as increased turnover, absenteeism, and reduced productivity.

2. Achieve Council's Vision and Workforce Management Plan Aim #6

By expanding the circumstances in which employees can request flexible working arrangements, Council is better able to meet its Workforce Management Plan objectives to '*Build and attract a diverse workforce by documenting and promoting the benefits of working for Rous*' and to achieve Council's Vision to '*thrive and evolve as a valued service provider*'.

Council will:

- Be an employer of choice for all our people and improve its ability to attract, develop and retain a diverse workforce.
- Make flexible working a central part of how Council and employees' work.
- Support and empower all employees to be able to do their best and work effectively.
- Ensure that all employees have equitable access to opportunities available at work and are rewarded and recognised for their contributions.

Governance

As per the body of the report.

- **Finance**

The revocation of the identified policy will not have a direct impact on the existing budget.

Consultation

A suite of documents has been developed in consultation with the Leadership Group (LG) and All-Staff that outline the FWA available. Four (4) submissions were received during the All-Staff consultation period. Feedback provided focussed not so much on FWA but establishing business-wide expectations and standardising business processes associated with Working from Home (WFH). Much of the feedback provided has been adopted and is reflected in the final suite of documents. These documents help facilitate an open conversation between an employee, their supervisor and more broadly, their team, to ensure that any arrangements are thoroughly considered and mutually agreeable.

As the suite of FWA documents formalises existing provisions provided for under the NES and the Award, and as we aim to extend FWA above what the Award currently provides for, consultation with the Unions was not necessary.

Conclusion

The inclusion of FWA in the 'Human Resources - Employment Conditions' policy, and expansion of the provision to allow all employees regardless of employment status or tenure to request FWA will allow Council to continue to meet its internal objectives from the Workforce Management Plan and ensure Council can confidently compete with other organisations when undertaking recruitment and remain an 'Employer of Choice' for existing employees.

Attachments:

1. Human Resources – Employment Conditions policy (for adoption)
2. Human Resources – Employment Conditions policy dated 21 August 2019 (for revocation)