**Supporting Working Parents: Pregnancy and Return to Work National Review**

Questionnaire response from employers and industry groups addressing issues of pregnancy, parental leave and return to work

**Questionnaire Number: 35**

**Employer name: ThoughtWorks Australia Pty Ltd**

**Part C Questionnaire Response**

*What are the key challenges in managing an employee who is pregnant, on parental leave or returning to work after parental leave?*

Pregnant:

* Ensuring that a person’s workload is not too high.
* Ensuring a woman does not self-select out of accepting or applying for new opportunities (unconsciously) because she is pregnant and will be leaving for a period of time.
* Supporting a woman to believe she has a position to return to and that taking maternity leave will not affect her career development. We find a woman is more likely than not to believe that taking time from work will affect her job security.

Parental Leave:

* Staying in touch with the new mum consistently. It’s important to remain committed to staying in touch. We do it, but we could do this better.

Returning to Work:

* Ensuring there is a common understanding between the new mum and the company, that absolutely you can a) return to work, b) work flexible hours and/or c) work part time. It’s important for the new mum to understand that we might need for her to be flexible as well, on which projects she may or may not like to choose to work on.
* We are trying to find more job sharing opportunities. As a technology professional services company it’s probably the most challenging thing to organize as it relies on our clients being happy with 2 people doing a role part time, not one full time. This is something we want to get better at, although we have managed to make it work successfully.
* Supporting our new mums to feel confident that they will come back to work with just as much value to offer as when they left. We find that new mums often feel nervous/unconfident about coming back – thinking that their skills are not as fresh and strong as they were. They forget that their incredible experience of becoming a new mum brings more diverse thinking into the business – very valuable.

*What has worked well in managing an employee who is pregnant, on parental leave or returning to work after parental leave?*

I believe we have answered in the above. Going above and beyond the government recommendations of parental leave is working well.

*What training or support have you been provided with to manage employees who are pregnant and employees on parental leave or returning to work after parental leave (i.e work health and safety matters, staffing needs, requests for flexible arrangements, rostering etc.)?*

None – but we like to give anything a go. ThoughtWorks is a progressive thinking business and encourages people to offer suggestions in terms of how we can support our parents better. We won’t be constrained by the norm and sit in the more generous bucket rather than the more money constrained bucket of typical organisations.

*Recommendations for the National Review Report*

* More support for new fathers/secondary carers e.g. Parental leave can be split equally between primary and secondary carers if they so choose. And an option to take your parental leave at a later date if you are the secondary carer.
* The option to choose to use personal leave as carers leave, if you can’t get child care for your child at short notice, not just if your child is sick.
* Salary sacrifice child care without incurring Fringe Benefit Tax.