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Women In Construction Industry Innovation Program

Flex from the Start: Evaluation

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Executive summary

> Highlights

- As one of Australia's biggest employers, the construction industry could be a game changer for women's equality. But inflexible masculine norms and working practices are locking women out of construction.
- Flex from the Start empowered workers on three construction sites to co-design their own flexible work trials, which were observed over an eight-month period.
- The interventions that were role modelled by leaders and adopted by all team members were the most successful.
- Successful interventions included a compressed working week, rostered time off, and flexible working plans tailored to individuals' needs.
- While the move to flexible work is positive, unless there is a change to the overall long working hours in construction there will be ongoing negative impacts on worker wellbeing and women's participation.
- A longer study period would allow more time to gather information on how to shift workplace behaviours and attitudes to flexible work.

> Introduction

The construction sector continues to be Australia's most male-dominated industry, despite efforts to correct the gender imbalance. A key barrier to women's participation is the inflexibility of working practices and long work hours, which are incompatible with the domestic and caring responsibilities that many women carry. Until now, there has been little research to evaluate what types of flexible work could make the construction industry more inclusive.

> About Flex from the Start

In the Flex from the Start project, Australian construction firm John Holland invited a Melbourne University-led research team to study flexible work initiatives on three Sydney construction sites. Workers on the three sites were given education about flexible work ('flex') and supported to design interventions to suit their needs. The project set out to understand what types of flexible work could improve conditions for all workers on construction sites, particularly women. The results will guide John Holland in its wider roll out of flexible work strategies and could be adopted by wider industry

This report outlines the initiatives that were trialled, and contains analysis of the results, including the factors that enabled and constrained the interventions, the outcomes and benefits. The report also highlights the experiences of John Holland employees and project leaders and what they found valuable in the interventions. It contributes novel and practical information on the types of flexible work initiatives that showed promise on construction sites and the factors in their success.

The research was conducted from October 2023 to May 2024, however not all of the interventions operated for this entire period. Flex from the Start was funded by the NSW Government Women in Construction Industry Innovation Program (IIP).

Project Sites		
Next Rail	**M7-M12 Integration Project**	**Waterloo Over Station Development**
Interventions		
No Meetings Monday Blocking the entire project team's calendar so that meetings could not be scheduled on this day.	**Flex boards** Each team member had a whiteboard showing what flex was being taken up by whom and when.	**Early finish** Site supervisors and engineers had the opportunity to finish at 3pm once a week.
Trial 9 A compressed nine-day fortnight roster with increased daily work hours over nine days, and a scheduled day off on the tenth day.	**Five-day work week** Working Monday to Friday, no work on weekends.	**Individual flex plans** Each team member has their own plan for flexible work.
		Five-day work week Working Monday to Friday, no work on weekends.



> The challenge of flexible work in construction

Achieving flexible work in construction is vital if the sector is to be a more inclusive, satisfying, and safer place to work in the future. Flexible work has been found to improve job effectiveness, job satisfaction, and help manage work overload for both men and women. It helps companies attract and retain employees who feel positively about their employer. It could be transformational in the construction sector, where women currently make up only 12% of the workforce.

In industries where long and rigid hours are the norm, flexibility carries stigma. As it is usually women employees who need to seek alternatives, they are penalised with the resulting embarrassment or guilt. A lack of leadership and trust in the workplace can also stand in the way of flexibility. The construction industry is not alone in facing these obstacles. But there are additional factors unique to the sector which make the introduction of flexible work more challenging.

More than employees in other sectors, construction workers' time at work is not their own. They are at the mercy of contractual arrangements, the demands of clients, the activities of other contractors and the schedules of special machinery on site. Some workers are incentivised to work more hours, and across the board, workers are valued if they can be available for long working days.

> Key findings

Direct outcomes of Flex from the Start were:

- Participants' knowledge about flexible work and the factors that enable flexible work improved.
- Participants' experience of different flexible work options for different onsite roles improved.
- Long working hours remained a significant issue on all three projects. Even after the introduction of successful flexible working interventions, more than half of survey respondents reported working more than 50 hours per week.

Interventions that improved flexibility were:

- A compressed work week, in the form of a five-day week and a nine-day fortnight
- Rostered time off, in this case, an early finish once a week
- Individual flex plans, which gave everyone in a team access to flex that was tailored to them.

Factors in the success of the interventions were:

- Leadership – where leaders actively role modelled flexible work and shared why it was important to them, the rest of the team was more likely to participate.
- Resource planning – putting thought into how to cover for team members who were working flexibly, and adequate staffing for projects.
- Commitment – where teams took flexible work seriously and showed an 'all-in' approach, the intervention was more likely to succeed than where they were treated as optional and ad hoc.

Some key enablers for flexible work were identified:

- Raising awareness – Before Flex from the Start, there was limited understanding about what flexible work was, and the different ways it could be applied. Facilitated training and education challenged long-held misperceptions about flexible work and allowed teams to take a more considered and creative approach to designing their interventions.
- Communication – When interventions were supported by effective communication, team members felt engaged, had clear instructions on how to get involved, and understood each other's flexible work needs. Communication also helped to make the interventions transparent and helped to normalise participation in flexible work.

Some factors that constrained flexible work were:

- Long working hours – To deliver projects to the schedule set out in their contracts, site teams were required to work more hours than the national employment standard or else face financial penalties. As demands on sites increased, the use of the flexible work interventions declined.
- Gender norms, values and behaviours – The rigid work practices in construction operate around gender norms that position men as breadwinners and women as carers. Construction work has not moved on – it still values employees who uphold these norms by being present for long, inflexible shifts. Despite the education and training, there were still workers who rejected flex, or who perpetuated shame and stigma around taking flex.

> The experiences of participants

Workers who were involved in successful interventions reported a range of benefits, from increased wellbeing and work-life balance, to reduced stress, better fatigue management and improved planning and productivity at work.

Participants in the five-day work week said:

"... it's probably brought me closer to the family ... I've got a seven-year-old that's starting to play cricket and soccer ... So, it's obviously allowed me to be around a lot more, which is great, personally."

—Management

"It's definitely a good thing to have a five-day work week. It's like, you don't get stressed as easily about things as well, like if you've got multiple things on your plate during work. Able to make better decisions. Work better. So, I think it's definitely a good thing that we should continue."

—Non-management



Participants who had an early finish once a week said:

"Got more freedom. Have a better interaction with the team [sic]. They're a lot more relaxed. They feel close[er] together."

—Management

"I think it improves the relationship [with co-workers] because I think there's something nice about you covering someone while they take their early day and vice versa."

—Non-management

Participants in the trial of a nine-day fortnight, known as Trial 9, said:

"It's been good for me. I spend Thursdays now with my grandson, so it's really good. Don't really get a chance to see him that much on the weekends, really, and Trial 9 gave me the ability to spend some valuable time with him."

—Management

"You just wanna smash out the work. You just wanna get everything done. It doesn't matter if I have to work more than like I'm used to. I'm like, 'I'll do it. I don't care,' because I know I'm refreshed. I feel good. I don't have to feel like I have to rush home all the time to do stuff 'cause I've already done it. It feels good."

—Non-management



> Key recommendations

This report makes 18 recommendations, in no particular order, to John Holland on how to successfully embed flexible work initiatives into its business. Many of these recommendations can also be applied to wider industry. The recommendations are grouped into six focus areas: skill building, accountability, adherence, leadership, transparency and resource planning. These are some of the highlights.

Theme	Recommendation
Skill building	1. Develop leaders' skills in operationalising flexible work
	2. Use inhouse expertise to roll out flex
Accountability	3. Act on work hours and presenteeism
	4. Allow workers to rest on weekends
	5. Manage and eliminate psychosocial risks
	6. Align company values and leaders' behaviours
	7. Incorporate flexibility in the company values, action statements
Leadership	8. Lead by example
	9. Develop people management skills
	10. Empower leaders to work flexibly
	11. Listen to leaders on how to support flexible work.
Adherence	12. Take an 'all in' approach
	13. Move from the enabling to the implementing
	14. Use pilots to encourage innovation
	15. Monitor progress
Transparency	16. Communicate widely
Resource planning	17. Plan a workforce with adequate coverage
	18. Audit technology to find efficiencies

Develop skills in how to operate a flexible workplace.

Project leaders and team members must be supported to gain more knowledge about flexible work, and how to apply it to frontline construction roles. Participants from Flex from the Start could be invited to deliver the training, making it more authentic and providing first-hand case studies.

Systemic action on work hours and presenteeism.

The benefits of flexible work may be undermined unless excessive working hours are reduced. One recommendation is to make reduced work hour targets a KPI for leaders. To overcome presenteeism, it is important that leaders shift their mindsets. It is not the number of hours worked that matters, but the delivery of outputs.

Leaders must role model flexible work.

The research found leaders must 'walk the walk' – not only actively communicating the benefits of flexible work but taking advantage of it. However, project directors and project managers were often either too overburdened or otherwise reluctant to take flex. One recommendation is for further study into how flex can be applied to these leadership positions.

Communicate widely to normalise flex.

Communicating about interventions while they are operating helps to make the processes transparent and accessible to everyone.

It is also important to continually reinforce the many reasons why flex is important, and the many ways it can be adapted. Stories about how flexible work is also benefiting men and linking flex to safety (e.g. reducing psychosocial risks) will help to normalise it.

Put more time into workforce planning.

Flexible working is more successful for frontline construction roles when individuals can be substituted while they are offsite. More time should be invested into workforce planning that allows this coverage to happen, including resourcing plans, rosters, flexible work schedules and handover procedures. This should be factored into projects from the tender stage.

Continue the research into flexible work.

Because Flex from the Start studied the interventions for only a brief period (eight months), it is recommended to continue the interventions and do a follow-up study to understand the longer-term effects. An economic evaluation of the interventions could also be of benefit after initiatives are rolled out across John Holland, to measure the value for money, cost effectiveness and cost-benefit.

"18 recommendations to John Holland on how to successfully embed flexibility... can also be applied wider industry."




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1. Introduction

> 1.1 The problem

The construction sector is Australia's most male-dominated sector despite different government, business and union interventions to address this issue. This project aims to provide a novel response to a persistent structural barrier to women's successful participation in the Australian construction sector. Flexible work is understood to be a critical lever for women's participation in the construction sector and improves job effectiveness and satisfaction for all workers. Yet a research gap exists in the evaluation of different applied flexible work interventions. This project seeks to address the following main research question: what types of flexible work interventions can be successfully applied to construction sites to improve flexibility for all workers, particularly women?

The project's objectives are to investigate, co-design, implement and evaluate three flexible work interventions on three different construction projects in New South Wales (NSW). Results from this project will inform flexible work initiatives scalable across the John Holland business and the construction sector.

> 1.2 Linking gender equality and flexible work in construction

Women make up only 12% of the Australian construction workforce[1]. Flexible work is critical to retaining more women in frontline careers in the sector, and for their satisfaction, wellbeing and advancement at work. However, there are issues unique to the construction industry that make shifting work practices particularly difficult. If flexible work is effectively implemented in construction, the economic benefits could be significant. Australia's construction sector accounts for close to 10% of the national active workforce[2]. Not only would it make a construction career possible for more women, but it would be life-changing for the existing workforce, who can spend over 60 hours of an average week at work[3].

In summary academic research finds:

- The long, inflexible work hours in construction are a barrier to women's participation. The sector's work practices are not compatible with activities such as caring, which are deeply gendered.
- For both men and women, flexible work improves job effectiveness, job satisfaction and helps to manage work overload. For companies, it helps attract and retain valued employees who also feel more positively about their workplace.
- Barriers to implementing flexible work in construction include the stigmatisation of seeking alternative work arrangements, and the lack of managerial support and trust in the workplace. There are also factors unique to project-based construction work that make flexible work more challenging than in other work settings including limits to autonomy and control of workers' time on project-based work, contractual arrangements, the inter-relationship of different contractors, the type of client, the use of special machinery, the incentivisation of work hours, as well as the location and scale of a project.
- Research to date points to some success factors for future flexible work interventions. They should be leadership driven, co-designed with workers, steered by a multi-stakeholder group and regularly monitored and evaluated over longer periods.
- Few cases of flexible work initiatives in the construction industry have been evaluated. Most have relied on qualitative data for evaluation.

> 1.3 What is Flex from the Start?

Funded by the NSW Government's Women in Construction Industry Innovation Program (IIP), Flex from the Start has trialled different flexible working interventions on three John Holland projects.

- The M7-M12 Integration project, a project that supports future development growth in Western Sydney by improving travel times and congestion.
- The Waterloo Over Station Development (Waterloo OSD), an urban revitalisation project integrated with a new Metro station in Sydney's inner south,
- Transport for NSW's Rail Services Improvement Program (Next Rail), a program to modernise Sydney's rail.

The trial first involved the three project teams understanding what flexible work is and the factors that enable flexible work.

The three teams designed interventions bespoke to their sites and employees' needs, that could be implemented quickly and refined over an eight-month period. The interventions did not need to apply to the whole site, and could be specific to a job role, section or group (site management, for example). The interventions needed to be scalable so that they could be rolled out to other John Holland projects.

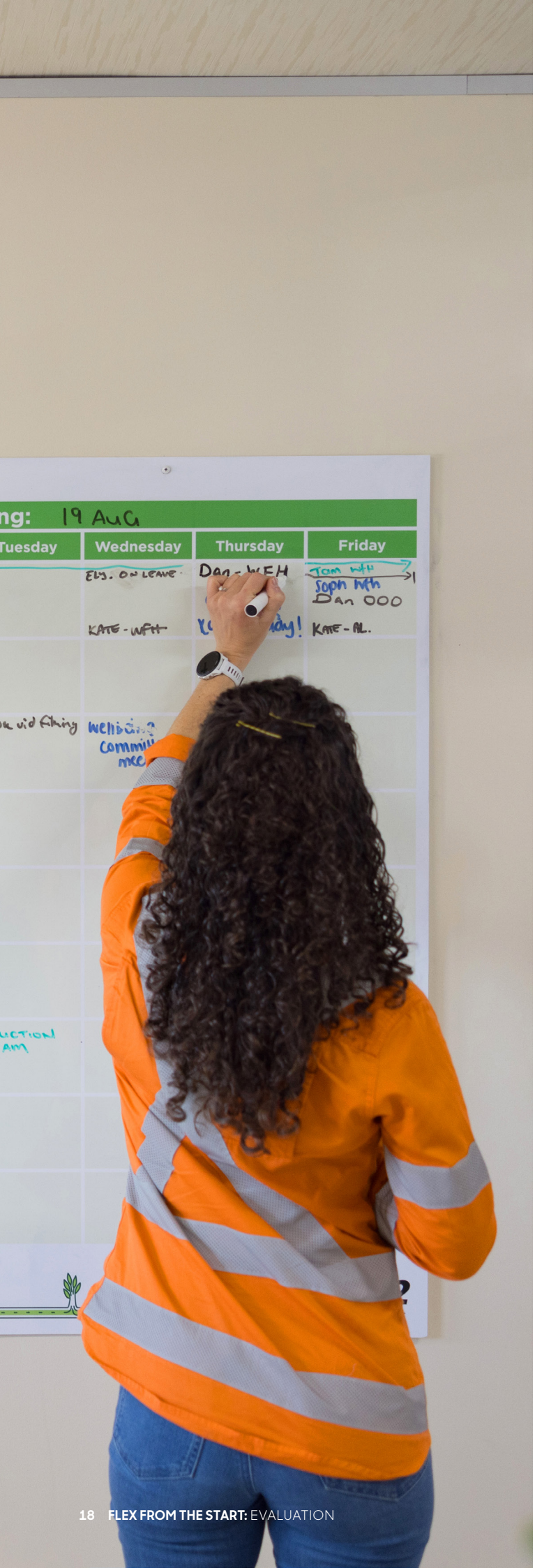
The University of Melbourne-led research team evaluated and provided critical feedback to the site teams in two design workshops. The research team conducted a final evaluation of the interventions. Representatives from each project presented details of their intervention, its enablers and challenges, the lessons learnt and next steps to the company executive and the research team prior to the final research findings being released.

[1] ABS 2018, 4125.0 - Gender Indicators, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia, Sep 2018. Available at: https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4125.0~Sep%202018~Main%20Features~Economic%20Security~4

[2] ABS 2022, Industry Employment Guide, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia. Nov 2022. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/industry-employment-guide#overview

[3] Lingard H and Francis V (2009) Managing work-life balance in construction, CRC Press LLC, London

The flexible work initiatives were co-designed and implemented on the three sites from October 2023 to May 2024.
The aim of the project is to provide a novel response to a persistent structural barrier to women's successful participation in the Australian construction sector.
The project aims to address the following main research question: *What types of interventions can be successfully applied to construction sites to improve flexibility for all workers, particularly women?*
The project's objectives are to investigate, co-design, implement and evaluate three flexible work activations on three different construction projects in New South Wales (NSW).
While flexible work is understood to be a critical lever for women's participation in the construction sector, there is a research gap in evaluation of different applied flexible work interventions.
The research will be based on three John Holland sites trailing the flex interventions, which are Next Rail (Rail Project), Waterloo OSD (Building) and M7-M12 Integration Project (Road).
Results from the project will inform flexible work initiatives scalable across the John Holland business.



> 1.4 The Flex from the Start interventions

When designing their interventions, project teams considered their personal and project needs, organisational possibilities, and targeted issues. Also considered were different roles and responsibilities in operation on the project sites, including whether they were primarily office or site based, blended roles requiring both onsite and office work, and frontline work which is performed mostly onsite.

Project teams aimed to address unique contextual challenges such as fatigue management, possessions and occupations (closing down of an operational rail or road for an extended period of time), constraining contractual requirements, contractual deadlines, resourcing challenges and so on.

However, all projects had the same underlying issues: long work hours, low understanding of flexibility and how to apply flexibility in practice on working construction sites, trust, management capability and capacity for managing remote workers, contractual constraints and client demands (e.g. meeting schedules etc.), varying support from higher leadership, varying resourcing budget and human resource planning (coverage).

The duration of interventions varied, and in some cases only operated for a short period of time. For example, the five-day work week on the Waterloo OSD project operated for approximately 15 months, while Trial 9 on the Next Rail project ran for only three months. In addition, where different sites trialled the same activities, for example the five-day work week, they operated for different durations.

Each site explored these three types of flexible work, or a combination of them:

1. **Flexibility in time:**
   Focused on when work happens and can range from having flexible time schedules to part-time and trust-based working hours. In the latter, work is regulated not by schedules, but by agreed time to complete the target outcomes. An example includes team members having individual flexible work arrangements agreed with their line managers.
2. **Flexibility in location:**
   Remote work implies that employees have a defined second workplace besides the office. Examples of this include team members working from home or working from a different location such as a satellite office/ head office, rather than the site office.
3. **Flexibility in process or tools:**
   The re-arrangements of work based on agreements, sharing work, rosters, compressed work weeks or other strategies. An example of this includes a compressed five-day work week.

Next Rail

This project focused on two main flexibility in process initiatives, No Meetings Monday and Trial 9 (Figure 1). No Meetings Monday involved the project manager blocking the entire project team's calendar so that meetings could not be scheduled on this day. No Meetings Monday, while not a flexible work intervention per se, aimed to make it easier for employees to take their scheduled fatigue day or have dedicated focused work time. The initiative was communicated via toolbox talks on work-life balance and a presentation by the senior leadership team on the John Holland flex wheel which is a simple and visual way of demonstrating to employees the many different ways to flex at John Holland. The wheel is an easy way to inform employees of the main options available to them, including flexi-shifts, flexi-hours and flexi-breaks.

Over the past three years, the Next Rail project has worked on average 40 weekends per year. Managing fatigue on the project was a major issue that the team wanted to address. Trial 9 aimed to give all permanent employees on the project greater opportunity for downtime and improved health and wellbeing. It involved a compressed nine-day fortnight roster with increased daily work hours over the nine days, and a scheduled day off on the tenth day. It was trialled over a three-month period. 98% of eligible full-time employees opted-in to Trial 9. Monday was scheduled as the day off (SDO), and employees were split into two groups (Group A or Group B) so that their rostered days off occurred on alternating weeks, allowing for coverage on days off.

This No Meetings Monday was an enabler for Trial 9, because it allowed the site to have a day free of meetings when staff could be rostered off. Once the opt-in process was complete, the roster was developed and communicated and operational requirements and ongoing site needs considered. Consultation was held with internal John Holland stakeholders to ensure the trial met legal and corporate compliance. Pulse surveys and enforcement and monitoring by the project manager also supported the intervention.

Following feedback from Next Rail management, the HR team and representatives from the other two sites undertook training to upskill their understanding of managing a hybrid team following feedback in workshop two. Further education and toolkits focused on managing hybrid teams is underway at John Holland following this training which will support projects with managing hybrid working teams. The training was conducted by Australian Human Resource Institute.

Figure 1. Next Rail Interventions Diagram

Next Rail	
No Meetings Monday Blocking the entire project team's calendar so that meetings could not be scheduled on this day. →	Enablers and supporting activities: – Senior leadership team presentation on "flex wheel" – Communciation with client – Project-wide toolbox talks on work-life balance – Project Manager booked out on Mondays in team's diary – Pulse survey
Trial 9 A compressed nine-day fortnight roster with increased daily work hours over nine days, and a scheduled day off on the tenth day. →	Enablers and supporting activities: – No Meetings Monday – Consultation with corporate, payroll, stakeholders – Group A/B roster coverage system – Enforce by Project Manager

M7-M12 Integration Project

The M7-M12 Integration Project implemented one flexibility in process initiative and combinations of flexibility in time and location (Figure 2). The in process initiative was the five-day working week, where the site was consistently open Monday to Friday and closed on weekends. This site also implemented flex boards for each team member. These whiteboards within each team listed what flex was being taken up by whom and when. To support the uptake, leaders were provided with training on flexible working and encouraged to role model these initiatives.

M7-M12 Integration Project also established a paid pre-employment program during the trial period that differentiated with having a late start as a key part of the program. It attracted over 300 applicants and 11 women commenced an apprenticeship after the pre-employment and maintained a start time of 8:45am. Removing the 6:45am start time which is seen as a barrier for women's participation. While this program was not included in this evaluation as the interventions was not focused primarily on John Holland salaried staff, senior construction leaders actively supported the initiative noting that they intended to attend the later timed pre-start meetings provided to this group, as they fit with their own care responsibilities.

The Activities that supported this intervention were facilitated workshops for team members on flexible working, facilitated mindset training for leaders on flexible work and pulse surveys. In addition, the project team conducted analysis on job role efficiencies (known as 'a day in the life') and commenced a review on how technology could enable efficiencies in job roles. The intervention also featured an onsite gym and wellbeing area for employees.

Figure 2. M7-M12 Integration Project Interventions Diagram

Interventions on M7-M12 Integration Project	
Flex Board Each team member had a whiteboard showing what flex was being taken up by whom and when. ↓	**Five-Day Work Week** Working Monday to Friday, no work on weekends. ↓
Enablers and supporting activities: – Leader mindset training on flexibile work – Facilitated workshops on flex options – Pulse survey – 'A Day In The Life Of' analysis – Review of technology enablers – Onsite gym and wellbeing area	

Waterloo OSD

The Waterloo OSD project explored one flexibility in process initiative, one combination of in time and process, and one combination of in time and location (Figure 3).

The in process initiative was the five-day working week, as detailed above for M7-M12 Integration Project. The combination of in time and process initiative was an early finish time once a week for site supervision and engineers. Employees had the opportunity to finish at 3pm once a week and a roster system was developed to ensure coverage for their roles. A second pre-start meeting was introduced at 2pm each day, to give more flexibility to engineers. Many in this group had been working long hours, beginning with a long commute to the site for a 6:30am 'pre-start' meeting to discuss the day's work. The new afternoon meeting was established to discuss the work for the following day. As a flex in time and location initiative, individual flex plans were introduced for each team member. To assist in the implementation, leaders received training on flexible work, and a whole team exercise was conducted where everyone filled out a 'flex bubble' detailing what flex meant to them.

The activities that supported the five-day work week included enforcement of site closure on weekends by the project manager and an employee gym within the site office. Additionally, on rostered days off (RDOs) team members were allowed to work from home and complete any online mandatory training. Activities that supported the early finish trial, in addition to the afternoon pre-start meeting, were a roster system that was role modelled by site leaders and a mindset shift around the value of flexible work. The individual flex plans were supported by leadership training on flexibility and team meetings where employees nominated their flexible work plan.

Figure 3. Waterloo OSD Interventions Diagram

Interventions on Waterloo OSD	
Early Finish Site supervisors and engineers had the opportunity to finish at 3pm once a week. →	Enablers and supporting activities: – Introduction of 2pm 'pre-start' meeting – Role modelling and visible leadership – Roster system for coverage – Mindset shift on value of flexible work
Five-Day Work Week Working Monday to Friday, no work on weekends. →	Enablers and supporting activities: – Employee gym onsite – Enforcemeny by Project Manager – RDOs used for work from home/mandatory training
Individual Flex Plans Each team member has their own plan for flexible work. →	Enablers and supporting activities: – Leader training on flexibility – 'Flex bubble' exercise – Team meeting discussions

> 1.5 Evaluation

In August 2023, the University of Melbourne was commissioned by John Holland as part of the NSW Government IIP Grant to evaluate the flexible work initiatives. The evaluation framework can be found in Appendix A. It guides the evaluation of the Flex from the Start initiative. Specifically, it seeks to:

- Articulate the intended outcomes
- Identify appropriate tools and indicators to evaluate
- Establish a timeframe for conducting the evaluation.

Overall the evaluation seeks to:

- Inform the improvement of Flex from the Start
- Provide an evidence base regarding the effectiveness of the Flex from the Start.

The key questions for evaluation were:

1. Is there a need for flexible work in the construction sector?
2. Were the interventions effective?
3. What types of interventions were successfully applied to construction sites to improve flexibility for all workers, particularly women?

Further evaluation sub-questions can be found in **Appendix A**.

Figure 4: Evaluation Schedule Diagram

Evaluation schedule Data collection for monitoring and evaluation purposes occurred in parallel with the roll out of Flex from the Start.	
Data Collection October 2023	– Baseline survey. – Baseline focus groups with managers and non-managers determine their current sentiment toward flexible work.
Leaders Workshop October 2023	– Awareness raising on flexible work and flexible work in construction. – Each site co-design flexible work intervention/s to be implemented on their site.
Data Collection February 2024	– Round 2 survey. – Round 2 focus groups with managers and non-managers to see how/ if the interventions are progressing.
Leaders Workshop February 2024	– Research feedback to projects. Iteration to flexible work interventions and project plan.
Data Collection May 2024	– Round 3 survey. – Round 3 focus groups with managers and non-managers to see how/ if the interventions are progressing.
Shark/Flex Tank Activity May 2024	– Sites present their interventions, lessons learned and what next to research team, other participating site teams and company executives.
Final Workshop August 2024	– Research findings and communication of learnings presented back to the John Holland people team, relevant site representitives and the SMEs.

> 1.6 Method

A comprehensive literature review was undertaken to help understand the barriers and challenges around implementing flexible work initiatives. This supported the interpretation of findings from the survey and focus groups.

Workshops, surveys, and focus groups were used to study participants' experiences of the Flex from the Start interventions. The research was conducted in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and was approved by the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics (see Appendix C).

The workshops were held at critical points throughout the project. The first workshop attended by project leaders aimed to build participants' knowledge of flexible work, its importance in the construction sector and gender equality and different types of interventions. Participants were also tasked with designing different interventions to be implemented on project sites. In the second workshop, participants iterated and altered their intervention designs and implementation, based on baseline data findings. The third workshop known as 'Shark/Flex Tank' gave the participants the opportunity to reflect and share lessons learnt with participants from the other sites. The final workshop presented research findings to the John Holland people team and site representatives.

The survey was focused on access to flexible work, acceptance and norms associated with flexible work, work hours and work preferences, and job satisfaction. A total of 434 participants were surveyed across three time points (for more detail see Appendix A). The response rate was approximately 21% at M7-M12 Integration Project, 95% at Waterloo OSD and 54% at Next Rail. It was easier to engage a greater proportion of employees in the evaluation at smaller sites than larger ones.

Focus groups were also conducted at the same three time points as survey data was collected. For each site, there were two focus groups consisting of management and non-management employees. The focus groups enabled the research team to capture processes and outcomes that can be challenging to quantify or are less tangible. By collecting data across three stages of the research project, the research team was able to share research findings with the site team, enabling the site team to iterate and alter their intervention design and implementation.

Data was collected at three time points across the project. The first data point in October 2023 provided baseline data on existing flexible work practices and mindsets. The mid-way and final data points measured the implementation of the intervention and the effects of the interventions on employees. Some interventions, for example, the five-day work week on Waterloo OSD and M7-M12 Integration Project, had been operational before the commencement of this research project.

For more details of the method and evaluation, including demographic details, see **Appendix A**.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2. Research findings

Flex from the Start was useful, relevant and challenged most participants and sites.

The research findings are categorised into themes, which are primarily derived from analysis of the focus groups:

- Intervention enablers
- Intervention constraints
- Benefits of the interventions
- Outcomes
- What works and why

> 2.1 Findings in summary

Is there a need for flexible work in the construction sector?

- There is a need for flexible work in construction. Yet a greater need is a reduction in the unyielding long work hours expected of employees to complete a project.
- A fully resourced project that meets the National Employment Standards (38 hours per week[4]) enables all team members to engage with flexible work interventions as they have capacity in their role to work flexibly.
- Upskilling managers in alternative resourcing methods, such as rostering, will enhance the substitutability of workers. This would allow workers to work fewer hours and more flexibly.
- If team members are working long hours, at best, flexible work practices may act to reduce overall work hours – if the project is adequately resourced and/or employees are not expected to make up the hours in their personal time (for example, at night or on weekends). At worst, flexible work practices may create division between those who can shuffle their hours and those who can't, thus potentially reinforcing gender stereotypes in construction.
- Without the reduction of long work hours in construction, there will be little change to women's participation, employee wellbeing (regardless of gender) and work-life balance

To what extent are the interventions effective?

- The interventions have achieved some short-term outcomes (see page 23) including improved understanding of flexible work, flexible work enablers, barriers to flexible work etc. Less evident however, was role modelling by leaders.
- Given the project's duration, there is not sufficient information to confirm the medium to long term effects of the interventions, particularly on shifting workplace norms and behaviours that act against women's participation.

What types of interventions were successfully applied to construction sites to improve flexibility for all workers, particularly women?

- Women have traditionally been penalised for requiring flexible work, often to accommodate care responsibilities. Thus, formal interventions adhered to and formally applied teamwide, are likely to have the greatest effect on women. By formalising and normalising widespread flexible work practices on construction sites, stigma and entrenched gendered practices that stymie women's participation are reduced. Additionally, interventions that challenge and change long-held attitudes around work practices, trust and increased time for life are considered the most successful, particularly for women.
- A combination of formal time/location/process interventions applied on the sites met these conditions. These included a compressed work week (the five-day work week and nine-day fortnight), rostered time (early start/early finish) and individual flex plans (including working from home) when adopted by all team members and adhered to. Successful interventions are those that touch all employees and make them realise that flexible work is for all roles - for everyone.
- Success of the intervention hinged on specific conditions. These included how the intervention was led, role modelled, enforced and adhered to by managers and project leaders. Also critical was the consideration given to resource planning and design (for example in No Meetings Monday on Next Rail and the day ahead pre-start meeting for engineers on Waterloo OSD), coverage of absent team members (for example in Trial 9 on Next Rail when teams were divided into two groups), transparency and adherence (for example, when the site was closed weekends on the five-day work week). Finally, successful interventions were those which stuck, even when faced with challenges (for example, at Waterloo OSD even when there were performance issues the manager continued to respect and adhere to flex plans.)

[4] https://www.fairwork.gov.au/tools-and-resources/fact-sheets/minimum-workplace-entitlements/maximum-weekly-hours
For more information relating to the NES, click here.

> 2.2 Intervention enablers

Enhanced knowledge and competency

At the commencement of the project, it was evident that there was a lack of knowledge and awareness of what flexible working was, and how to apply it on sites through different flex modes associated with time, location and process. Facilitated training and education provided to leaders and their team on modes of flexible working assisted in raising awareness. Training in the form of workshops also covered managing flexibility, implementation of flexible working and tackling bias against flexible work, and leading by example.

In addition, these knowledge and awareness raising exercises challenged long-held perceptions around what is and isn't flexible work. For example, flexible work is not a luxury, a privilege or a performance management tool, and it isn't attending medical appointments, which is a leave entitlement. Leaders and their teams also debated the conditions around flexible work. Importantly, the enhanced knowledge enabled project leaders to expand their approach and creativity towards flexibility work initiatives. For example, the Waterloo OSD project team 're-purposed' rostered days off for staff to work from home and complete any mandatory training modules. This intervention reduced overall work hours, supported work from home and management of it, and gave time to necessary staff training.

Strong leadership and role modelling

Project leaders have voice and power to champion, support and enable flexible work interventions should they choose to. Where interventions were led and enforced by senior leaders (a top down approach), it resulted in high participation and engagement with team members. No Meetings Monday, Trial 9 and the five-day work week at Waterloo OSD were evidence of this.

> *"... we need to encourage managers and encourage workers to leave loudly and promote flex. And, if it doesn't happen at leadership level, it falls apart."*
> —Management

A significant enabler was leaders actively role modelling flexible work. Examples of role modelling included leaders participating in interventions (i.e. walking the walk) and communicating to team members the importance of flex to the project and their own reasons why flex is important to them. Leaders who role modelled flex were consistent in the application of flexible work practices with team members and respected their team's flexible work practices, were proactive and used positive language around the flexible working interventions. For junior employees, seeing their leaders model flexible working practices was critical to their participation, which helped to normalise conversations around and confidence when asking for flex.

> *"... when I say we as the project, we've been told from up above, 'This is what you must do.' It's been driven. Again, it all comes from the top."* —Non-management

Shifting values, norms and behaviours

The construction sector's traditional values of predictability, reliability and total availability, by their nature, subvert values associated with trust and collaboration, which are the cornerstones of flexible work. Unpicking these traditional values that have resulted in well-established norms and behaviours is difficult to do, but some managed to start valuing trust, collaboration and redefine what is 'critical' work. Leaders and teams learnt that by trusting team members to work flexibly allowed them and their interventions to thrive. Interventions were successful where leaders were able to recognise that their team was committed and dedicated to the delivery of their work and trusted that their team would continue to work diligently while working flexibly. Work cultures with high levels of trust were evidently more collaborative. For example, team members wanted to help each other out, they had a strong team ethic and supportive, approachable managers. Consequently, teams were invested in wanting the intervention to succeed (for example, early start/early finish for engineers and supervisors on the Waterloo OSD project).

Interrogating what is important and 'critical' work and how responsibility can be shared between team members led to more collaborative behaviours and freed up resources to work flexibly. Evidence of this shift was in No Meetings Monday, which limited meetings to four days a week, freed up team members to take their fatigue day or complete their work uninterrupted or provide coverage for others taking their fatigue day. Early start/early finish on the Waterloo OSD project also improved teamwork and collaboration and challenged notions of total availability.

"I find this is a really good working environment. It's good people. We've got good managers. No one's really ever given a hard time about something."
—Non-management

Resource planning and substitutability

Consideration and engagement with resource planning enabled formal and transparent employee rosters and role coverage that was a significant enabler to individuals engaging with flexible work interventions. These resource planning processes were communicated widely within the team and to stakeholders. Resource pre-planning and coordination provided adequate staffing, whether team members were starting or finishing late, such as the supervisors and engineers at Waterloo OSD, or the Group A and Group B teams in Trial 9 on Next Rail. Transparent rosters allowed junior employees to understand their roles and responsibilities, which might have previously seemed porous and poorly supported.

"That transparency of where everybody is. Being driven from the top and being forced, 'This is what you need to do,' it was just a change for everybody around us to re-evaluate the way we did things, think about the way we did things."
—Non-management

Clear communication, transparency and consistency

Consistent, transparent application and communication are essential enablers for successful interventions. Articulating the different reasons why flexible work was important to the company, project and team members was critical. Communicating with transparency the details of the intervention to the entire project team was also necessary. Consistent communication helps normalise the uptake and enable a broader understanding of what flexible working is and the interventions in action. Communication was also critical for individuals to understand and respect each other's flexible work needs. Where interventions had successful communication, team members were provided with clear instructions, engaged to actively support the intervention, and motivated to participate and adhere to the intervention. This was evident on Trial 9 for Next Rail and the five-day work week at Waterloo OSD.

"I think that comes back to the fact that it's been driven from above and that transparency." —Non-management

Communication techniques included regular project-wide toolbox meetings to create a greater awareness of the John Holland flexible working procedure, which highlighted how the project management team and non-management interacted with the procedures or interventions and discussed the 'why' flex is important to the project and team members.

Communication outside of the project team was also important. Regular and ongoing briefings with clients and stakeholders were designed to highlight the importance of flexible work on the project and for the team, and aimed to gain support for the interventions. This was successful for Trial 9 at Next Rail. Educating stakeholders about how the project program, contractual requirements and meeting schedules all have an impact on project teams, their work hours and workload, is necessary for future change.

"Comes down to trust in the team as well. They're all on the bus, like I said. They all want to deliver." —Management

Utilising technology

Technology as an enabler across the projects was explored in various ways. Firstly, data collection by project teams and researchers through surveys helped gauge the effectiveness of and engagement with the interventions, tracked the outputs including benefits and shaped intervention design development and execution.

Second, project teams used technology to evaluate efficiencies in roles onsite to enable flexible work practices. At M7-M12 Integration Project, the John Holland technology team was brought in to assist in finding ways to improve operational efficiencies with the aim of giving individuals opportunities to focus on their outputs, reduce working hours and enable the uptake of their flex on a regular basis.

"Working hours remains a significant problem."
—Management



> 2.3 Intervention constraints

Contractual conditions

As noted earlier, a major impediment to the success of flexible work interventions was the need to work long hours, which are baked into the project's contractual requirements and largely outside the project teams' control. This represents a misalignment between resourcing, budget and programming expectations on the client side, and adequate resourcing on the project side. In short, to deliver projects to contractual demands, site teams must work more hours than the national employment standard or face substantial financial penalties. Team members and management alike spoke of the difficulty they faced trying to shift work hours and improve flexibility in the face of contractual terms from clients which perpetuated long and rigid work patterns.

Lack of awareness around flex

Confusion and an ongoing lack of knowledge associated with flexible work, and how it can be applied onsite via different modes associated with time, location and process, hindered the uptake of flex and the interventions themselves. For example, some believed working from home was akin to a light workday or a rostered fatigue day. Others understood flexible work narrowly to be part-time work. Many perceived flex to be something that was earnt, or a luxury that could be taken away at a whim should a team member's performance dip. Additionally, there also seemed to be a lack of willingness to learn from other project teams about flex and to attempt bold interventions associated with flexible work.

Unrelenting work practices

Working hours remained a significant problem. All sites relied on discretionary overtime to maintain the program. Long working hours are a significant barrier to team members adhering to flexible work initiatives or feeling they are possible in relation to their workload.

Across the three sites, more than half the survey respondents reported working over 50 hours per week.

"I would love it if we could just get down (to) like just 6:30 to 5:30. Like would that be possible just to do an 11-hour day? Like that would be bare minimum."
—Management

"... we're not flexible with the hours per day, permanently throughout the project."
—Non-management

"... it's concerning the amount of hours that we work Monday to Friday."
—Non-management

There was a consistent conflict between working long hours and how that fitted with flexible work. As the work on some project sites ramped up, the engagement and application of flexible working interventions dropped off.

"The common theme there is they work later at night or work back at night to make up the hours." —Management

For some project leaders, dedication to the job is still measured in the hours worked. While other leaders recognised that there needed to be a shift from presenteeism to work outputs.

"It's like dedication is measured by turning up at 6:30 and leaving at 6:30. Whereas dedication, surely, is measured by you doing what you need to do, however it needs to be done." —Management

When it came to flexible work, some managers and non-managers felt there needed to be 'give and take'. Yet many employees working very long hours felt this 'give and take' relationship routinely favoured the business. In other words, more take and little give.

"And how many hours a week do we work? So, it's not exactly like we've been given the greatest gift." —Non-management

Management and non-management questioned the consistency of the interventions, notably the five-day work week on M7-M12 Integration Project and the individual flex plans on Waterloo OSD.

Commuting times in Sydney to and from the sites exacerbated the practice of long working hours. It was not uncommon for managers and non-managers to take phone calls once they had left the site, in their often lengthy commute home, or receive/respond to emails/ phone calls on their fatigue day and/ or often log back onto the computer after hours on a leave early day.

Gender norms, values, and behaviours

In construction, employees have demonstrated their value through their adherence to rigid work practices, including long work hours, presenteeism and total availability. These long-held work practices operate around traditional gender norms associated with men being the breadwinner and women being the carer. Inflexible work practices maintain the gender status quo in construction. They prevent men and women from undertaking care responsibilities (e.g. dropping children at school, taking parents to regular doctors appointments), being an active participant in their community (e.g. coaching or playing football on Saturdays, volunteering) and attending to personal needs and unpaid domestic labour (e.g. getting a haircut). Resistance to flexible work is a form of resistance to gender equality.

"... it's a safety risk; especially, if they're having to drive home after work in those hours and then drive back early the next morning." —Non-management

There was a common perception shared by male participants in Flex from the Start that flexible work was a choice. Some participants demonstrated resistance to flexible work by choosing not to participate or publicly stating that they did not 'need' flex. They demonstrated a lack of understanding about the relationship between flex and gender equity, by not accepting that flex is not a choice for some and people's 'choices' are often limited. By resisting flex they were perpetuating guilt and stigma surround flexible work practices (e.g. by referring to flexible working hours as leaving 'early'). This was often accompanied by toxic banter that enforced the underlying informal rules on working hour norms. Stigma also existed around reasons for flexible work practices, with some considered more justifiable than others, such as having a family or care responsibilities.

"... this whole industry is based off banter, in my opinion, which I love but there is an element of toxic banter when it comes to flex."
—Management

Many junior to mid level employees perceived that promotion and career progression was based on being seen to do long hours on site. This view aligned with the perception that project life demanded you were present, even if you could get the work done from home.

> *"... the world is changing but I think, at the moment, if you want opportunities, I feel like you still need to be present for people to remember you."* —Non-management

There was also the perception that those in senior positions got the option to work flexibly, that you needed to prove yourself before being granted flexible work, and that flex was conditional on completing the work.

Furthermore, building trust within teams was challenging on some projects where new teams were being introduced as a project ramped up. It was far easier to build trust when there was a core group from the beginning that had worked together previously.

> *"I don't think it's viewed by the large population here as genuine. It's available but, but it's not."* —Management

Inconsistent support and role modelling by leaders

Ingrained mindsets amongst some leaders around what flexibility was, its value and how it could be implemented hampered the application and success of some interventions. This was further exacerbated by senior management visibly working long hours, which on the surface may not seem unreasonable, yet is likely to perpetuate presenteeism amongst team members. The perception of surveillance of work hours further signalled a lack of trust and reinforced old ways of working. Worse still, it resulted in team members viewing the interventions as neither genuine nor important, which constrained their success.

> *"It's that lack of trust and the policing."* —Management

Some senior project leaders failed to role model and adhere to their own site's flexible work interventions. While they may have encouraged team members to adopt the interventions, their inability to role model the intervention left team members feeling unsupported and disappointed. Their actions also reinforced long-held beliefs in construction that to progress in the industry, employees need to be totally available and present both during and after work hours.

> *"It looks like a few leaders are doing it well. The other leaders are maybe not much. ...There are two sets of people. One, those who are proactively doing the flex work and those just doing flex for the compliance basis."* —Non-management

Some managers demonstrated a lack of respect for the flex interventions and their team members' time by scheduling non-critical operational meetings when individual team members were working flexibly. This further reinforced norms associated with total availability. This inconsistency and lack of support does little to change the culture of inclusion and women's participation in construction. Importantly, when it came to managing their team's flex, some leaders recognised that they did not have the skillset or experience to manage flexible work, particularly work undertaken away from the site.

> *"Just everyone needs to know whatever they're doing is being supported."* —Management

Ad hoc application

Because of a lack of leadership, some interventions were applied ad hoc and not taken seriously by team members. This was evident in relation to the flex boards on M7-M12 Integration Project and the individual flex plans on Waterloo OSD. Communication, resource planning and enforcement seemed lacking. Because the interventions were not taken seriously, team members did not feel they could take their flex as they were unsure if there was coverage for their role or if the interventions were valued.

Inflexible resource planning

Consideration and engagement with resource planning is necessary for flex to be enacted at the coalface. Yet there was a general lack of acceptance and skill associated with resource planning to enable team members coverage when they stepped away from site to work flexibly. In some cases, the onus was on employees to self-manage their fatigue with little recognition that fatigue management is a resourcing and project planning issue. This was especially the case for junior employees, where the lack of resource planning led them to feel like their roles were uncontained. As a consequence they were unable to grasp how and if they could access flexible work.

For some there was a perceived conflict with flexible work, as they believed that team members needed to be physically present onsite all the time to deliver the project. Their thinking did not extend to different modes of shift rostering and resource planning.

Further, there was a perception that as the site roles needed to be onsite during the core site hours, it would be unfair for other workers to take up flex roles such as working from home. Importantly, as the research progressed, a number of the interventions including the early start/ early finish for Waterloo OSD, Trial 9 on Next Rail and the five-day working week were able to demonstrate how flexible working interventions can be successfully implemented for site-based roles.

"But we've always had more work hours. I think we always will have more work hours. We're not gonna double the amount of staff that we have on the project." –Management

Total availability technology

Whilst technology was seen as an enabler to flexible work, it acted as a constraint as well. Inefficient and inconsistent operational systems and practices for sharing and distributing information and knowledge on sites exacerbated long working hours and held people physically on the job. As with resource planning, some teams seemed to resist utilising technology, particularly in the handover between team members.

"I take both phones everywhere with me. A party. Wedding. They're both with me all the time." –Non-management

"Some leaders recognised that they did not have the skillset or experience to manage flexible work."

–Non-management



> 2.4 Benefits of interventions

The interventions had numerous benefits including improved team relationships and collaboration, better resource planning at a project and individual level, the development of rosters and work schedules to improve coverage on sites, increased trust within teams and positive feedback from clients, who recognised no change in productivity or performance due to the introduction of flexible work interventions.

Five-day work week
(Waterloo OSD and M7-M12 Integration Project)

At Waterloo OSD, the five-day work week has had profoundly positive impacts on the team's health, work-life balance, job satisfaction and performance. Individuals felt more productive.

As a result of adherence and enforcement by senior leaders, the team felt supported and strove to ensure the intervention was a success.

The team undertook greater pre-planning than they previously did in a six-day work week, enabling them to deliver the program of work within the five-day work week.

The five-day work week continues to attract new staff and be popular amongst existing staff, particularly those who have come from projects where they worked six and seven-days per week. Some of those workers said they would have left the sector had they not begun working a five-day week, because the work was unsustainable to their health and wellbeing.

Like Waterloo OSD, the five-day work week was popular amongst existing staff who valued their weekends off on the M7-M12 Integration Project. Yet it was unclear whether there was the same level of adherence to the five-day work week, or enforcement by senior leaders.

Unlike Waterloo OSD, M7-M12 Integration Project experienced a considerable ramp up in project scale and personnel during the evaluation period. There was the perception held by team members that the five-day work week may need to be pushed out to 6 day working week to accommodate program and client demands.

While a shift to a five-day work week is necessary for gender equality, staff on both projects continued to compress long work hours into a five-day work week schedule.

Quotes from Waterloo OSD:

"... it's probably brought me closer to the family ... I've got a seven-year-old that's starting to play cricket and soccer ... So, it's obviously allowed me to be around a lot more, which is great, personally." —Management

"Life-changing." —Non-management

"And it's like an insult now to say 'Saturday'. If anyone says, "How about Saturday?" It's like, "No." —Non-management

"I feel like my mental health's way better. I feel a lot better than when I first started here. ... I just feel more satisfied on weekends. More energy for the weekends and my personal life ... I feel overall, better, and then not just that: it makes me think more about my own self, evaluations like dieting and exercise, all that. I feel I have the energy to actually put it into myself rather than in the job." —Non-management

"It's definitely a good thing to have a five-day work week. It's like, you don't get stressed as easily about things as well, like if you've got multiple things on your plate during work. Able to make better decisions. Work better. So, I think it's definitely a good thing that we should continue." —Non-management

Quotes from M7-M12 Integration Project:

"I think this project is pretty good in a way that your work's limited to Mondays to Fridays" —Non-management

"I'm gonna say five, yeah. We do work six, but it's on exception." —Management

"I think a lot of people know the option's there and it just suits them to work the normal hours and, you know, have their weekends off, which is probably something where we are focusing on, on this job" —Non-management

Second pre-start meeting, early finish for site roles

The Waterloo OSD project enacted a second pre-start meeting at 2pm each day in addition to the 6.30am meeting, to allow engineers more flexibility. The second pre-start meeting meant engineers no longer faced a long commute every morning and the resulting long working days.

"... it's actually worked really well because you know what you're doing the next day anyway. And you can plan your day the afternoon before so you know what you're doing. And then everyone doesn't have to come at 6:15 in the morning." —Non-management

"Definitely, much more prepared by having it completed the day before." —Management

Additionally, engineers and supervisors on the Waterloo OSD site had a rostered afternoon off (from 3pm) once a week. The effect of these interventions was enhanced worker wellbeing, improved planning and greater cohesion within the team. Part of the intervention's success was due to site leadership supporting and encouraging adherence and role modelling the intervention. This intervention also enabled the upskilling of junior team members, as it gave them the opportunity to cover their senior team members one afternoon per week. Furthermore, the intervention built trust within the leadership team and gave them the confidence to step away from the site and switch off from work one afternoon per week.

"Got more freedom. Have a better interaction with the team [sic]. They're a lot more relaxed now that they can, you know, there's not, they don't feel dictated to. It's more they feel part, brought close together." —Management

"I think it improves the relationship [with co-workers] because I think there's something nice about you covering someone while they take their early day and vice versa." —Non-management

Trial 9

Trial 9 demonstrated a whole team approach to flex. It took a collaborative drive to make the trial a success.

No Meetings Monday was a critical step in the success of Trial 9 implementation because it enabled a consistent operating rhythm on the project and allowed a compressed nine-day fortnight to be implemented for most employees . Because the initiative had been well communicated to clients, workers felt free to take their rostered day off without worry.

Workers could also relax because they knew someone was covering them. The formal roster that split the team into Groups A and B, where workers were provided coverage from the other team, alleviated any concern about taking the rostered days off. For junior team members, the formalisation of this roster increased transparency around their roles and responsibilities, raised awareness of opportunities for job sharing and professional development and provided comfort that they were able to take their rostered day off. For leaders, the roster gave them the opportunity to switch off on their rostered day off and build trust in their team as they knew operational issues were covered and there was a protocol to follow should there be a critical incident. Critical to the implementation of the Trial 9 roster was the project manager's leadership. They took the intervention very seriously, and played a key role in ensuring it was adhered with.

"They've owned it. Everybody's owned it. There's a willingness to make it work and everybody's owned it." —Management

"Trial 9's basically made us look ahead. You know you've got the day [off work]. You know you've gotta make it work." —Non-management

"I feel like my planning has gotten so much better, I'll make sure everything is sorted out like Friday so I'm not asking someone on Monday, 'Give me this!'" —Non-management

"I found that Trial 9 has made my team more collaborative ... I am now more proactive to be more across their scope. And, if they are, if they are behind, I'll proactively help them out." —Non-management

Crucially, Trial 9 and No Meetings Monday allowed team members to take important fatigue days, thus improved fatigue management was an important by-product of the trial.

> *"... you start to feel like you're gonna burn out and it seems to be like a fortnightly reset. I reset on that day and I come back, seem to come back fresher than I would normally have come back."* —Management
>
> *"We don't seem as stressed."* —Non-management

Importantly, the client for Next Rail said they had not perceived any impact on productivity from Trial 9. A pulse check survey conducted by the Next Rail team found 84% of the team members reported their productivity had improved.

Trial 9 also resulted in changes to long-held norms and behaviours, including workers respecting team members' rostered days off and evaluating the urgency of their email and phone communications before sending them.

From the focus groups and the pulse check survey, there was an overall positive response from the project team. Feelings of guilt associated with taking an assigned fatigue day had reduced. Team members reported feeling recognised for their work and the hours they contributed to the project and company.

Most workers were in favour of Trial 9 continuing on all future rail jobs. Ideally the intervention would be iterated further, and extended to allow team members to have two days off every week, even when there are occupations/possessions. The survey confirmed that working hours did not increase or compress as a result of Trial 9.

Interestingly, the survey showed an increase in the proportion of respondents who had a preference for working a nine-day fortnight at M7-M12 Integration Project (from 0 at T0 to 17.7% at T2), as well as Next Rail (from 0 at T0 to 44.1% at T2). This may indicate that word about the success of Trial 9 was passing around project sites.

> *"It's been good for me. I spend Mondays now with my grandson, so it's really good. Don't really get a chance to see him that much on the weekends, really, and Trial 9 gave me the ability to spend some valuable time with him."* —Management
>
> *"You just wanna smash out the work. You just wanna get everything done. It doesn't matter if I have to work more than like I'm used to. I'm like, 'I'll do it. I don't care,' because I know I'm refreshed. I feel good. I don't have to feel like I have to rush home all the time to do stuff 'cause I've already done it. It feels good."* —Non-management

Flex boards and individual flex plans

At M7-M12 Integration Project, the adoption of flex boards, intended to show the types of flexible work that different workers were taking, was ad hoc. This suggested that flex boards had not been adopted by the entire site, nor enforced by project leaders. Some boards were completed and they listed the team members name, when they worked flexibly, the type of flex, and the person covering them when on flex. Some leaders actively participated and checked in with their team to see how the flex options were tracking. One construction manager who championed the flex boards made sure his team members had coverage when they were taking their flex. He made the flex board an 'all in' team activity, pushing back on those who resisted. His teams flex board was regularly revised and updated to accommodate changing needs of team members and the project.

At Waterloo OSD, the approach to the individual flex plans varied, depending on the manager's engagement with the project. One team, for instance, effectively implemented a working from home day for each team member, which was tracked with a shared online calendar that listed the individual's outputs for the day. The leader emphasised to their team that the flexibility arrangement was built on trust and communication. They noted that productivity remained high and emphasised the importance of increased perceptibility of communication via phone or Microsoft Teams on the working from home or hybrid working day.

Overall, the flex board and individual flex plans at M7-M12 Integration Project and Waterloo OSD were applied ad hoc. Management felt they needed to have more conversations with teams about the initiatives for there to be greater uptake. Improved role modelling and attention by leaders would likely improve the uptake and adherence of these interventions.

> *"The board just has added a layer of transparency, yeah; usefulness to us in that respect."* —Non-management



> 2.5 Outcomes

Given the duration of the study (6-7 months), the following short-term outcomes were observed:

- Improved understanding of flexible work and how it occurs in relation to time/location/process,
- Improved understanding of flexible work enablers (e.g. trust, leadership, role modelling, accountability, resource planning etc.),
- Increased practice and understanding of different flexible work options on site for different roles.

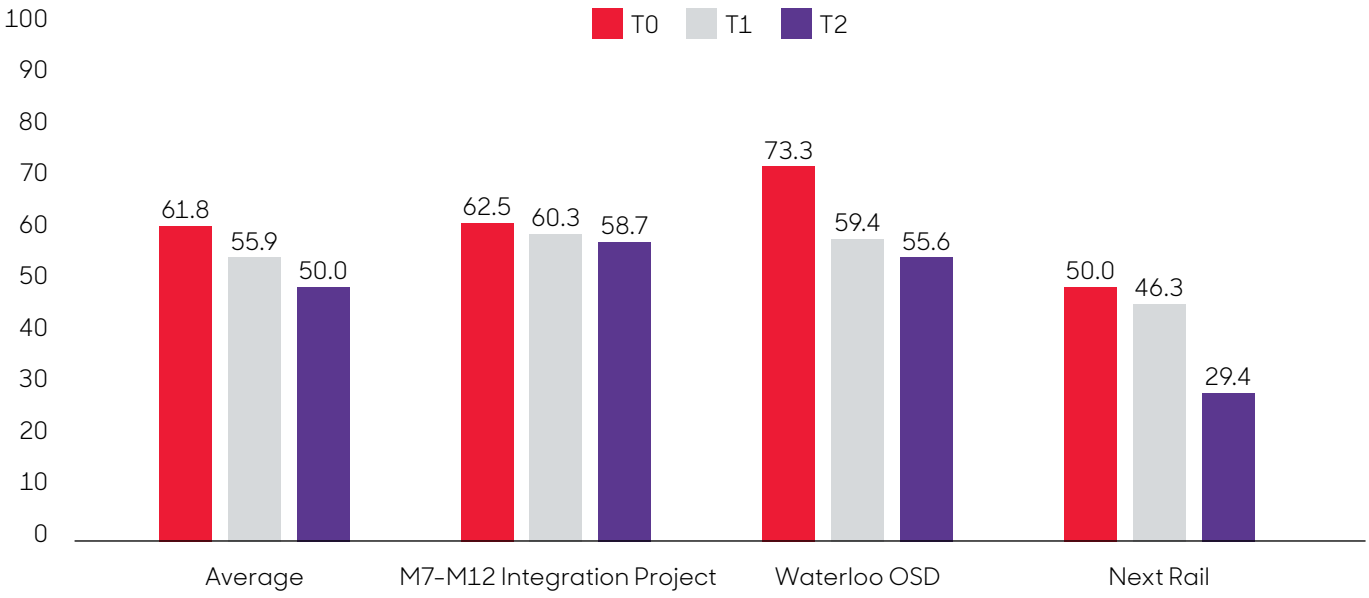
Due to the stickiness of mindset, norms, and practices, some of the project sites spent this evaluation period focused on raising awareness of the enablers to flexible work, rather than on the implementation of interventions.

The survey findings reveal some mixed results, with some positive outcomes. In other areas, the outcomes are less clear at this point in time, which may be the result of the strength of norms and behaviours within the sector.

One clear outcome was that across all three sites there was a reduction in the proportion of staff working 51 or more hours per week. As per Figure 5, this was particularly noticeable at Waterloo OSD and Next Rail.

Note: T0 represents the first data collection point, T1 represents the second data collection point and T2 represents the final data collection point (see the Addendum for more information on the evaluation and method).

Figure 5: Proportion of respondents who reported working 51 or more hours per week by site (%)



The reduction in long work hours was more pronounced among male respondents compared to female respondents, but this in part reflects the fact that men are more likely to work long hours compared to women.

Figure 6: Proportion of respondents who reported working 51 or more hours per week by gender (%)

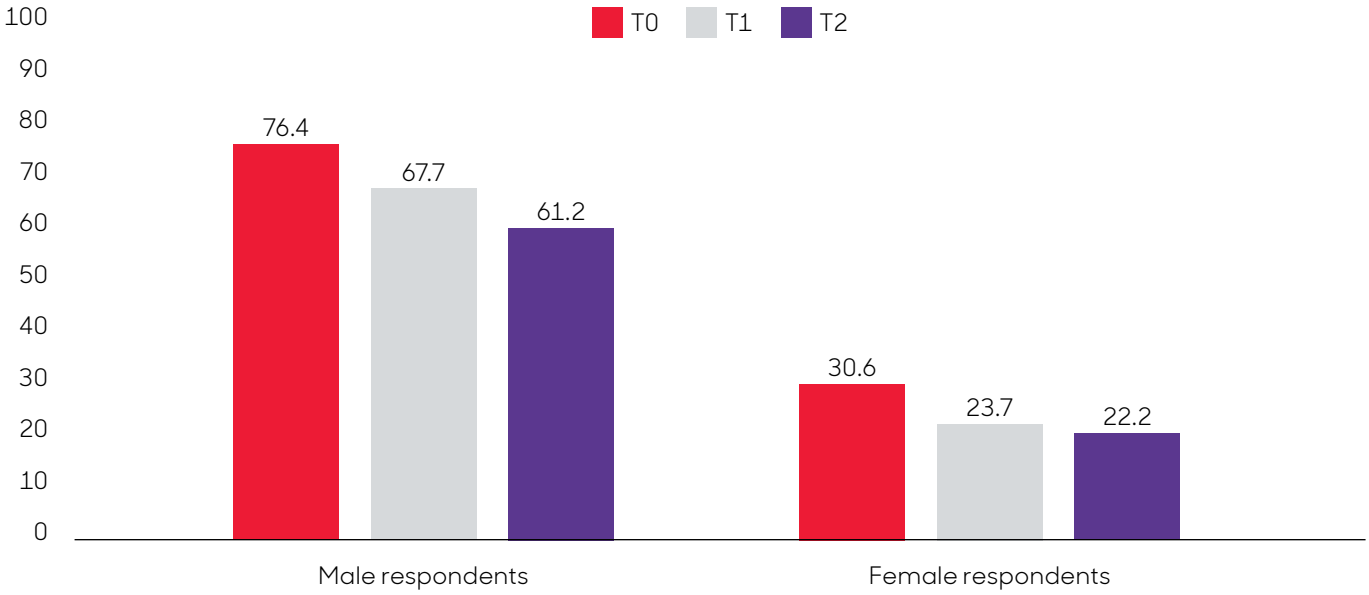
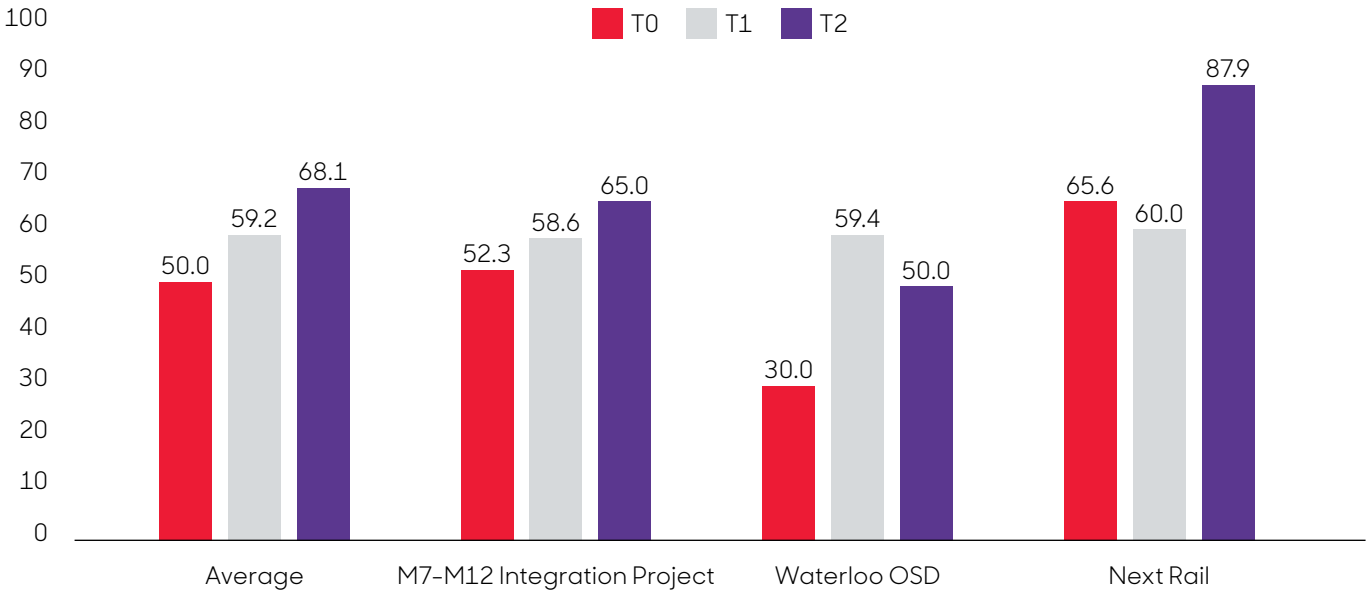


Figure 7: Proportion of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they feel genuinely supported if they choose to make use of flexible working arrangements by site (%)



Respondents were asked what their work hour preferences were, taking into account the impact this would have on their income. The findings here are mixed, with some project sites demonstrating an increase in the proportion of respondents who would like to work fewer hours (e.g. M7-M12 Integration Project).

Figure 8: Proportion of respondents who would prefer to work fewer hours by site (%)

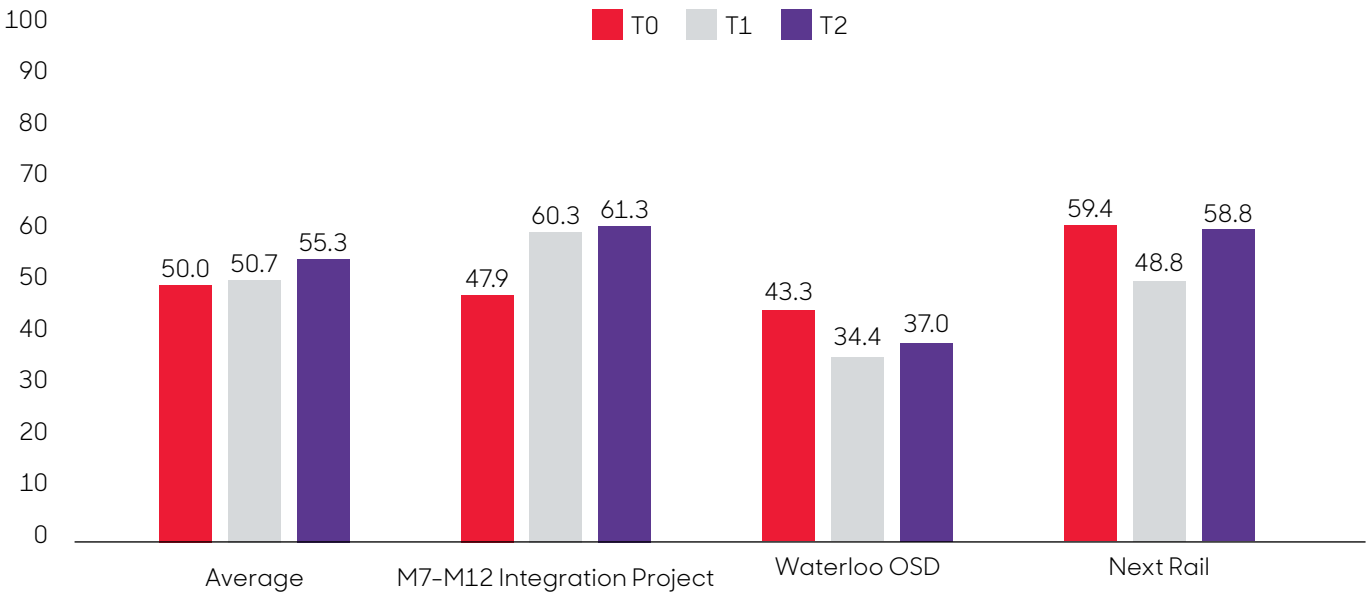
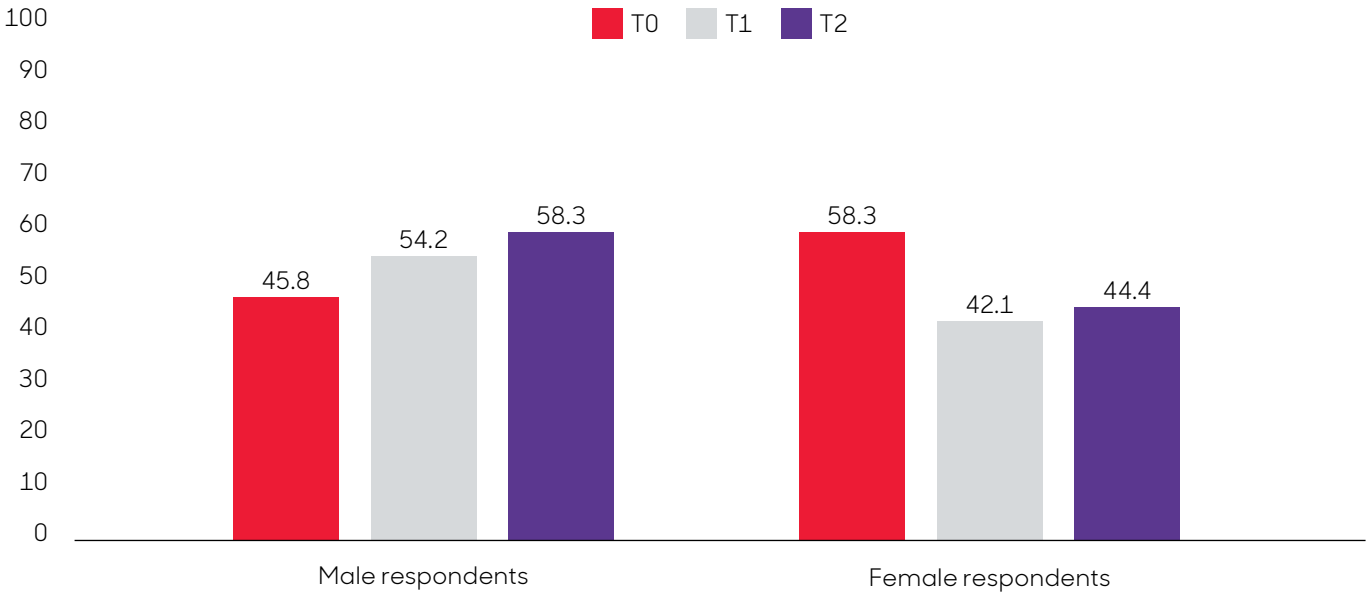


Table notes: Respondents were asked, taking into account how it would affect your income, would you prefer to work fewer hours than you do now, about the same, or more hours than you do now?

Working time preferences also varied considerably by gender, but this may be more reflective of gender norms than the impact of the flex interventions. It also may reflect existing work practices, where women may have greater access to flexible work.

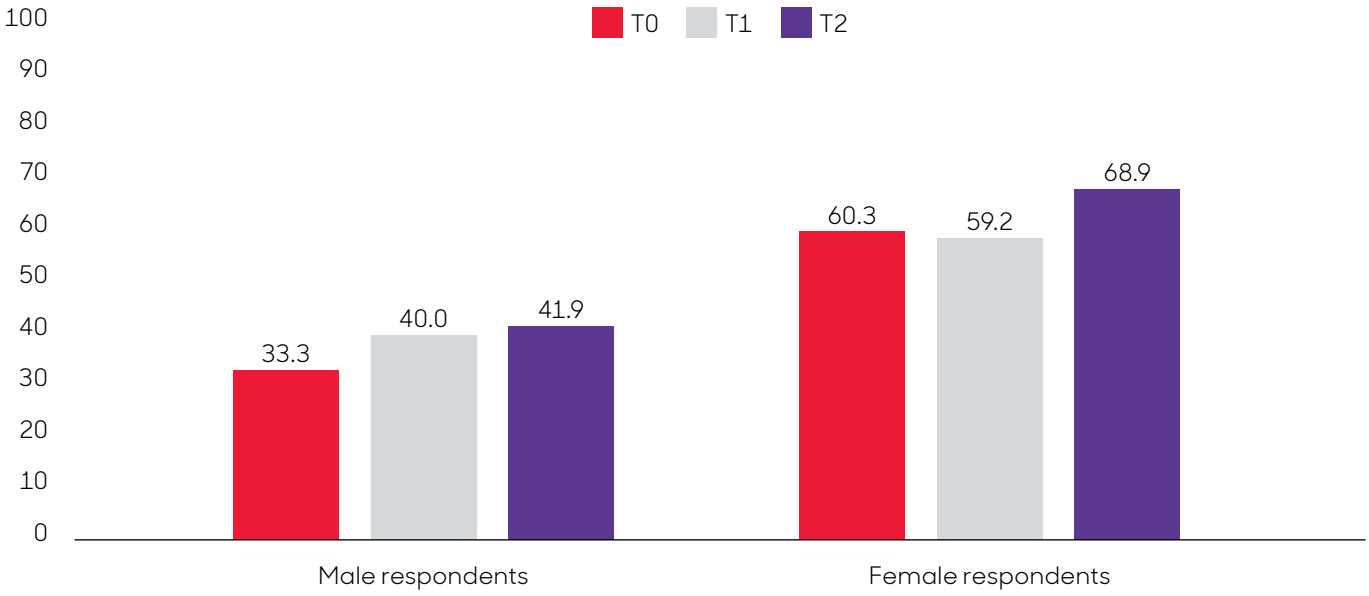
Figure 9: Proportion of respondents who would prefer to work fewer hours by gender (%)



While working at home was not an explicit focus of any of the flex interventions, the survey demonstrated an increase in the proportion of employees working from home (Figure 9).

Perhaps surprisingly, while those working fewer hours overall were less likely to prefer to work fewer hours overall, the desire to work fewer hours per week increased over the intervention period for both long hours workers (51 or more hours per week) and those working 50 hours or less (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Proportion of respondents who would prefer to work fewer hours by hours worked (%)



The proportion of respondents working any of their usual hours at home increased substantially over the course of the evaluation. While none of the interventions were focused explicitly on working at home, it is likely that other factors such as No Meeting Mondays, flex boards and individual flex plans contributed to this (Figure 11). Working at home particularly increased among women (Figure 12). Consistent with other research, women were more likely than men to work at home as a result of a formal arrangement with their employer. As women undertake the bulk of societies care and non-paid domestic labour, it may also suggest that the option to work from home enables women to balance paid work with their non-paid work commitments. To increase women's participation in construction work, it is important to normalise working from home and for managers to learn to accept, incorporate and manage it.

Figure 11: Proportion of respondents who work any of their usual hours at home by site (%)

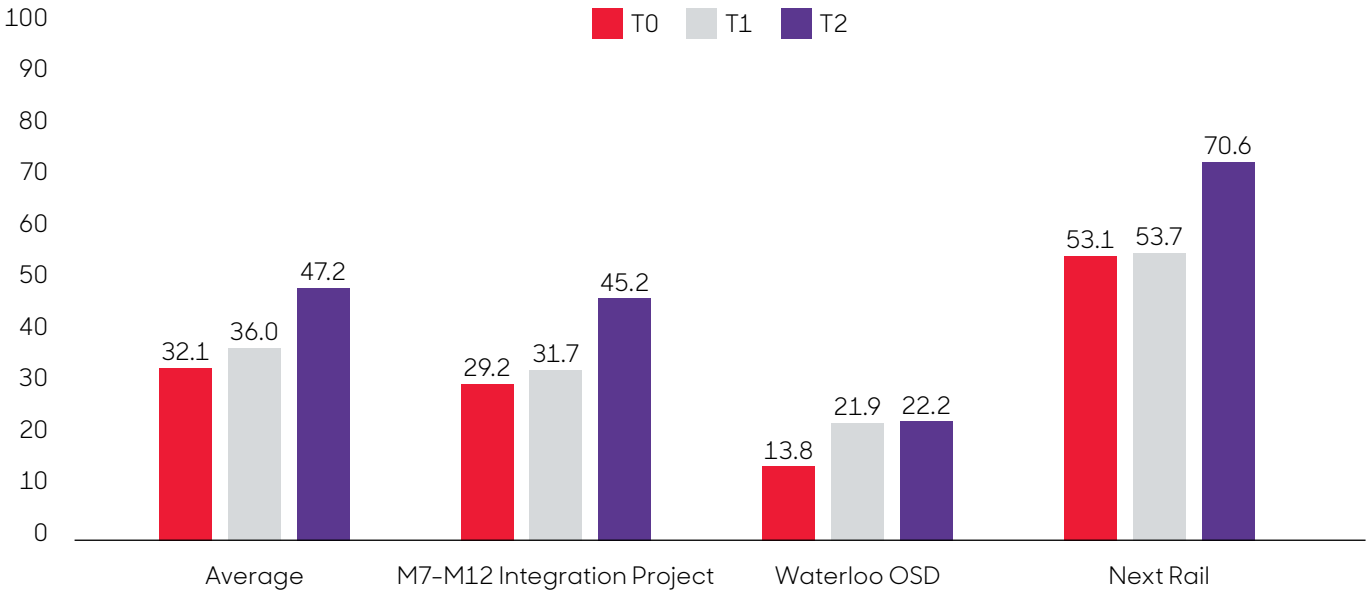
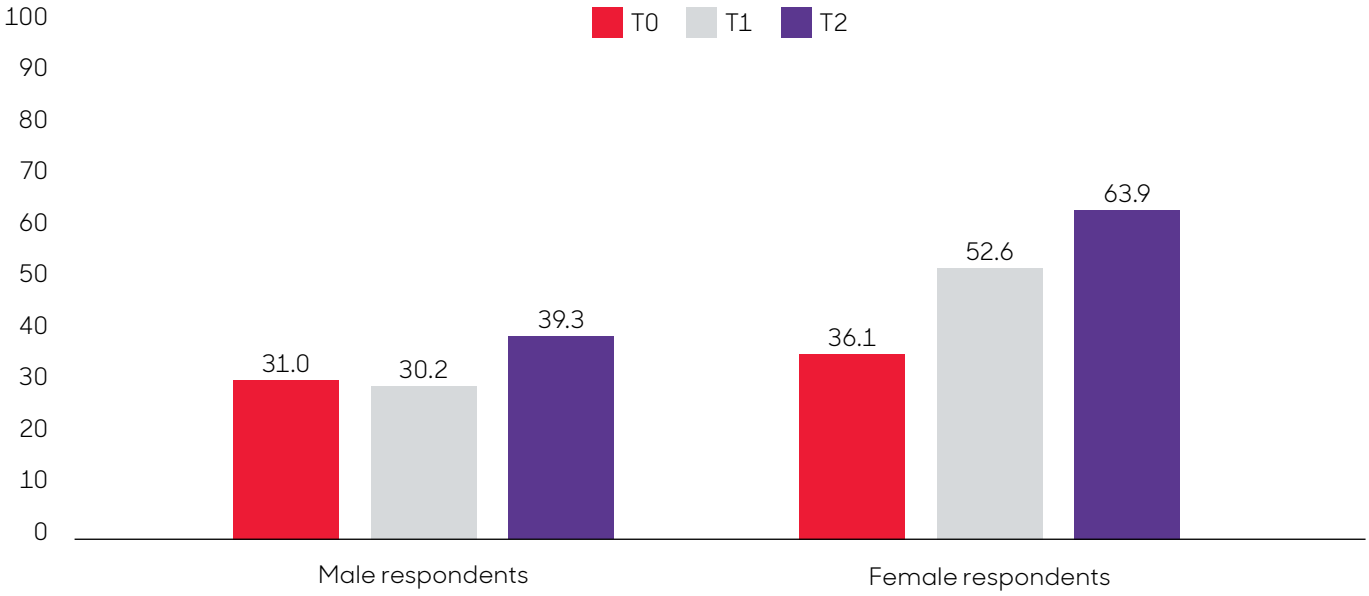
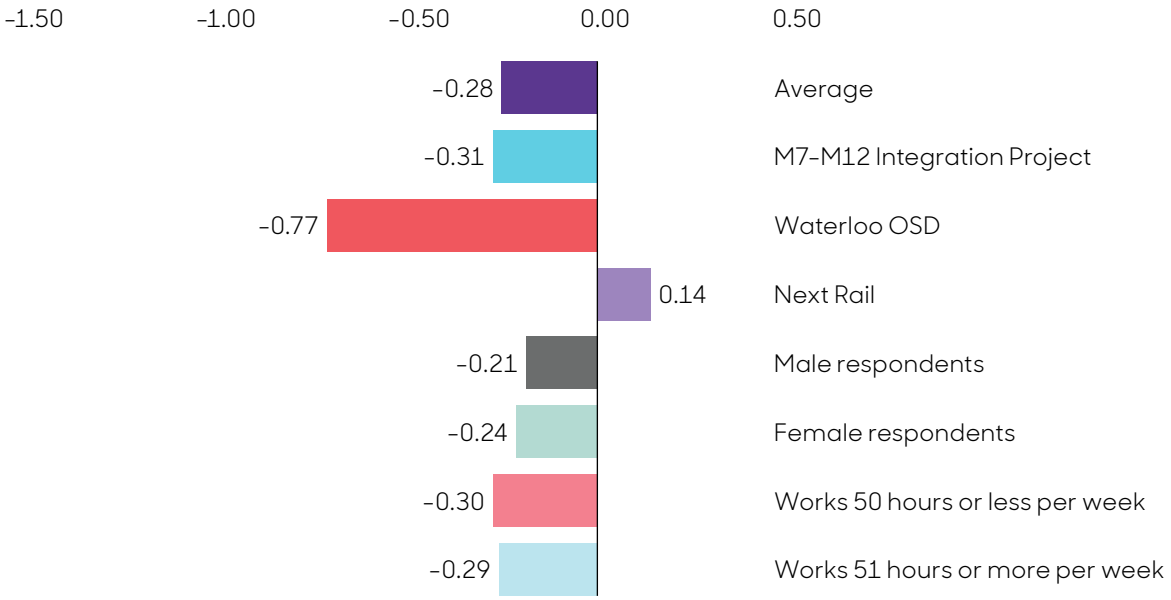


Figure 12: Proportion of respondents who work any of their usual hours at home by gender (%)



Despite these positive outcomes, overall job satisfaction decreased statistically very slightly on average across the evaluation period (as shown in Figure 13). This may point to some of the challenges experienced with the implementation of the interventions, as described in the qualitative findings, as well as elements of the work that are unrelated to the hours worked or flexibility available on site. The slight decreases in satisfaction may also relate to the interventions bringing issues such as job satisfaction to the fore, with respondents more actively reflecting on these issues at T2 compared to T0. It is also worth noting that while overall job satisfaction decreased the most at Waterloo OSD, job satisfaction was higher at T0 compared to the other sites (5.77 compared to 5.26 at M7-M12 Integration Project and 5.19 at Next Rail). Equally, these statistics should be viewed alongside focus group findings that describe the benefits of the interventions on staff members job satisfaction.

Figure 13: Change in mean overall job satisfaction between T0 and T2



Notes: Respondents were asked to rate their overall job satisfaction on a scale from 0 to 7, where 0 represented very dissatisfied and 7 represented very satisfied. Further information is available in the appendix.

Medium (12-month) and long-term (+12-month) outcomes were unable to be measured in this evaluation. However there was a sense that in the longer term, if more flexible work was not offered, people would likely grow dissatisfied and leave the business.

> *"I think what I'm really scared about is Trial 9 ending."* —Non-management
>
> *"... there's gonna be a mass depression happening [if Trial 9 ends] ..."* —Management

Unintended consequences

There may be some unintended consequences of the flexible work interventions.

- Transparency around flex, while positive, could perpetuate worker surveillance or observability, thus reducing the privacy of workers. For instance, flex boards that ask individuals to declare their reason for flex are done so to reduce the bias associated with flex. Yet an unintended consequence is that this transparency may open the individual up to ridicule and stigma or simply breach the individual's privacy. In other words, individuals should not need to declare why they need to work flexibly when flex is the norm.
- If team members are not convinced that flexible work is truly supported by leaders, publicly engaging with interventions like the flex board may seem like a career limiting move. These workers may feel that participation would expose them to ridicule or place their performance under the microscope.
- An important by-product of these trials is fatigue management, wellbeing and psychosocial safety. All of these need to be considered in the design and resourcing of projects and the application of flexible work. For instance, stigma associated with flexible work practices may result in psychosocial risks such as bullying.

> 2.6 What works and why

- Knowledge raising: Building knowledge of flexible work with project teams over a period of time allows team members and leaders to process the different ways of working that can be incorporated into the project working. This knowledge should also carry forward to be included in project design and establishment, and pre-contracts on future projects.
- An 'all in' approach to flex: Rather than flex being driven by the individual, shift the onus so that flex becomes part of the way sites work, integrated into the everyday running of the site. It's harder to shift entrenched norms by trying to change one person at a time.
- Enforcement and adherence by leaders: Without leaders' backing and enforcement, interventions are likely to be applied ad hoc and are unlikely to stick.
- Third party enforcement: For new practices to be embedded, teams must be held accountable. Having a third party involved - a senior leader, research team etc. - holds project leaders and their teams accountable for their action within a time frame.
- Applying a co-design and iterative approach: Designing interventions with the project team builds understanding and ownership. An intervention's design should be iterative, drawing on new knowledge and past experiences. Refining interventions, disregarding what doesn't work and applying what does leads to successful interventions.
- Permission to fail: Calling interventions a 'trial' or 'pilot' and being creative with the design allows for out of the box solutions, helps the teams learn what works and doesn't and gives permission to the team to finesse their intervention design. Calling the intervention a trial or pilot gives teams permission to fail and find the most appropriate solution.
- Research, tracking and reporting: Tracking the performance of the intervention through data collection aids the intervention design and tells the team what is working, what isn't and what can be tweaked.
- Communicating the reasons why: Storytelling and clearly communicating why flex matters to different cohorts is important to shifting norms and beliefs. Storytelling provides human stories that team members may relate to. It is important however, to recognise that team members will have different reasons why flex is important to them and these need to be communicated clearly.
- Communication and transparency: Clearly communicating the operationalisation of the intervention to all team members. Describe what is expected of team members and management, if it is a pilot etc.
- Substitutability and resource planning: Resource planning enables workers to be substituted or covered by another team member, releasing them from being totally available or present on the role. Substitutability makes transparent the interrelationship between team members in delivery of work and allows workers the freedom to engage in the flexible work intervention without concern about their work.

The following diagrams show how these factors contributed to each intervention.

Figure 14: No Meetings Monday Success Points Diagram

1. Identify	Leaders identified an intervention to manage employee fatigue on a Monday following a possession weekend.
2. Discuss	Leaders discussed the proposed "No Meetings Monday" intervention with clients/stakeholders as it would have impacts on existing standing meetings.
3. Communicate	Communicated the interventions in the Project-wide Toolbox held inclusive of Alliance partners to introduce intervention to team members.
4. Adherence	Intervention regulated by project PM to ensure critical project related meetings after a possession weekend take precedent over No Meetings Monday.
5. Launch	Every JHG Next Rail employee had their diary booked out by the project PM for a 4-month trial period.
6. Evaluate	Pulse survey seeking feedback from employees to evaluate the effectiveness and engagement with the intervention.
7. Extend	No Meetings Monday extended beyond the 4-month trial based on positive feedback and engagement with the intervention by employees.

Figure 15: Trial 9 Success Points Diagram

1. Identify	Leaders identified the what, the who and the why for trialing a 9-day fortnight.
2.Consult	Broad consultation with project internal and external stakeholders.
3. Design	Reviewed fatigue management, produced FAQ, design rostering system, analysed operational impact and systems management.
4.Consult	– Call for expression of interest. – Conduct commencement survey.
5. Communicate	Communicated the new roster system.
6. Empower	Leaders were empowered to manage their teams and ensure adherence to coverage rosters.
7. Evaluate	Pulse surveys was run mid-trial to evaluate feedback from the employees.

Figure 16: Second Pre-start Meeting Success Points Diagram

1. Identify	– Leaders recognised engineers were not attending pre-start on time, usually due to travel commitments. – Leaders identified that pre-starts do not only have to occur in the morning at 6:45am.
2.Design	Leaders discussed the options for a second pre-start each day at 2pm and who would attend.
3. Communicate	Communicate to the wider team a second pre-start at 2pm, what it involves, who it involves and the 'why' behind it.
4.Implement	Supervisors and rotating engineers attend a 2pm pre-start each day to discuss the planning and briefing items for the next day.
5. Evaluate	Leaders have identified the benefits to the pre-planning of the project and reviewing if some sub contractors should attend in the future.

Figure 17: Early Finish Time Success Points Diagram

1. Identify	Leaders identified a start late, leave early flexible working intervention for site based roles.
2.Design	A formal coverage roster was developed to ensure operations and safety requirements met on a leave early day.
3. Communicate	The roster and flex intervention was communicated to the site based teams (supervisors and engineers).
4.Implement	Weekly roster implemented with each site supervisor and engineer having a leave early day once a week at 3pm.
5. Regulate	Site leaders enforcing the uptake of the leave early day and site based roles supporting each other on their leave early day to make it achievable.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3. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the 18 recommendations are categorised into the following themes:

- Skill building
- Accountability
- Leadership
- Adherence
- Transparency
- Resource planning

Skill building

1. Develop leaders' skills in operationalising flexible work

John Holland should conduct ongoing education and design workshops to build knowledge amongst project leaders and team members, specific to construction sites and frontline roles. The education should cover what flexible work is and how it can be applied through flex in time, flex in location and flex in process on sites. Workshops could incorporate the information provided at the Flex from the Start workshop and case studies and experiences gained through Flex from the Start. Flex from the Start participants should be invited to deliver the workshops, ensuring they are authentic and fit for purpose.

2. Use inhouse expertise to roll out flex

An expert team should be established to scale the Flex from the Start interventions. This team, consisting of interested participants from the Flex from the Start pilot and other interested John Holland employees, would hold to account, monitor and guide Flex from the Start interventions across John Holland. The expert team could also guide and participate in ongoing education and train the procurement and pre-contract teams in flexible work to ensure they bid for projects with flex in mind.

Accountability

3. Act on work hours and presenteeism

Being clear about the key problem is critical; it is not solely flexible work but expectations of long working hours and the practice of presenteeism.

The research finds that long working hours remain a significant issue across all three construction projects. For flexible working interventions to be implemented and embedded within construction sites, there must be a serious attempt at reducing work hours.

Importantly, leadership needs to shift its mindset, role modelling and expectations on workers – from a focus on work hour surveillance and time spent on the job, to delivery of outputs as a performance outcome.

There is a need for truth in work hour recording and reporting to internal and external stakeholders. Project teams should be incentivised to record accurate working hours as a resource strategy. A traffic light system could be used to track excessive work hours. When work hours reach a risky level, project leaders are asked to explain whether more resources are needed. If individuals report high work hours, they should be pulled off the project and rested. This strategy rewards positive work hour cultures and places attention on the adequate resourcing of projects.

Leaders' KPIs should be linked to work hour targets and meet industry standards including the Construction Industry Culture taskforce and national employment standards.

At a project level, workers could be allocated 'buddies' who hold each other accountable for taking their flex time.

It is recommended that John Holland establishes peer mentoring within its leadership. Peer mentoring can occur within and between sites. An example of peer mentoring is managers sitting in on conversations with team members when negotiating flexible work practices. Peer mentoring aids to upskill leaders, particularly those struggling with the application of flexible work. It also assists in building the quality of flexible work interventions and adherence within teams.

For clients, including government clients, it is recommended that they monitor work hours of workers. It is recommended that they design and procure projects with work hours that adhere to the National Employment Standards.

Whilst the gyms introduced at two of the project sites have been well received by team members and encourage good health, leaders should ensure they do not exacerbate long work hours on the job.

4. Allow workers to rest on weekends

For construction sites that rely on regular weekend possessions, workers should be entitled to weekends in lieu to ensure they are adequately rested.

For the sites operating to a five-day work week, contingencies should be made for workers participating in weekend work. Project planning should include contingency in resource design when critical milestones are approaching and there is a temptation to work the weekends to meet project deadlines.

5. Manage and eliminate psychosocial risks

Many of the barriers to flexible working identified in this research are directly linked to psychosocial safety risks. These risks are work-related hazards that negatively impact a worker's physical and/or psychological health. They include working long hours, high job loads, lack of autonomy and poor support and isolated work tasks.

Australian employers have a positive duty to manage and eliminate psychosocial risks in the workplace.

Establishing and tracking targets on wellbeing of the workforce, including fatigue management, work hours etc. should be part of the KPIs for project managers and construction managers. Pulse check surveys capturing wellbeing metrics should be published and reported on at project review meetings internally and with external stakeholders.

Further research could be conducted into the effects of resistance to flexible work on employee turnover.

6. Align company values and leaders' behaviours

John Holland's company values (formal and informal) should be reviewed to ensure they are in alignment with inclusive work practices, including flexible work.

Informal values and their resulting norms that valourise long work hours, rigid work practices and traditional work practices in construction remain a barrier to flexible work and inclusive work practices. Informal values operate through behaviours such as banter, resistance to flexible work, work hour surveillance etc. Comments such as 'leaving early?!' or calling someone a 'part-timer,' which were evident across all sites, must be actively stopped. Whilst some banter may be appropriate within circles of people who know each other well, typically the banter describes and enforces informal rules in use and maintains stigma in relation to flexible work practices. Leaders should role model positive behaviours in relation to flex, advocate for the end to negative language and be held accountable for making bad behaviours harder and good behaviours easier.

7. Incorporate flexibility in the company values, action statements

Consider incorporating specific action statements in John Holland's company values.

Under Caring: "*We think deeply about what we do and how it affects lives of our people and workers on our sites*"

Under Empowering: "*We gain trust with our team through action*"

Under Imaginative: "*We push the boundaries to positively transform the wellbeing of our people*"

Under Future-Focused: "*We're in it for the long-term retention of our people*"

Leadership

Senior leaders and project leaders should be rewarded and/or recognised for role modelling flexible working interventions and building cultures of trust and transparency. Rewards and recognition can be built into internal performance management systems.

8. Lead by example

Leaders should actively communicate to the team why flexible work is important to them, the project and the company and what kind of (real) flex they are engaging with. In other words, leaders should walk the walk.

9. Develop people management skills

Leadership learning and development should focus on building skills in performance management, negotiating difficult conversations with team members and managing flexible work, especially remote work and resource management (rosters, substitutability). Being skilled in tough conversations would enable leaders to manage performance issues.

10. Empower leaders to work flexibly

This research found that flex was challenging for project directors and project managers to role model. People in these leadership roles either found it difficult to take advantage of flexible work because of their high workloads, or were unable or unwilling to try the interventions themselves. It is recommended that a further study into how project directors/managers can be supported to apply flexible working to their own roles. The study could investigate different role structures and aids such as technology to help project leaders work more flexibly.

Flexible working leadership should be considered throughout all levels of experience. Ambassadors within each team could advocate for and build awareness of these interventions when moving between John Holland sites. Leaders at the next level down from senior management should also be empowered with the tools and skills on how to innovate and implement flex interventions and embed them within projects. When any new employee is promoted into a management or leadership role, ensure flexible work training and education is provided.

11. Listen to leaders on how to support flexible work

Consider how the business is supporting project leaders to embed flex. Leaders at each site need to articulate the barriers and successes of the flexible working interventions to the senior leadership and corporate teams. The business needs to listen to these leaders on what needs to change and how the project can be supported in the successful implementation of an intervention.

Adherence

12. Take an 'all in' approach

There remained a common ethos that it was a choice to work flexibly. For flex to be normalised and to not have unintended consequences of advantaging some (those who don't work flexibly), and disadvantaging others (those who do work flexibly) everyone at all levels of the project need to work flexibly. In practice this means all team members and leaders should participate and adhere to the flex interventions. Flex cannot be an 'opt in' approach, it must be an 'all in' approach.

13. Move from the enabling to the implementing

Some of the project teams continue to be stuck, focused on the enablers to flex. This can be a form of resistance to flexible work. There is a need to enforce the 'doing' of flexible work interventions. This is a form of walking the walk.

14. Use pilots to encourage innovation

Sites should be encouraged to design different flexible work interventions. Labelling the interventions a 'trial' or 'pilot' encourages creativity in design, aids in adoption of the intervention and encourages participants to contribute to making a positive change and making the intervention work. Trial different resourcing plans during less intense periods of the program, where the interventions can be iterated, trialled and tested.

15. Monitor progress

Each site should continue to monitor the intervention's progress and continue to hold the project teams accountable for the interventions. It is important to assess how the interventions operate in different stages of a project's life cycle.

The timeframes for this research project were compressed, and consequently it is recommended to re-engage the research team to return in one year's time to evaluate, report on progress and provide further recommendations.

An economic evaluation of the flexible work interventions may be considered in the future as initiatives are rolled out across John Holland. An economic evaluation would address questions of value for money, cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit.

Transparency

16. Communicate widely

For flexible working interventions to thrive and operate without bias they need to be transparent. Participants and stakeholders should be reminded about the diverse reasons why flexible work is important for the effectiveness of the intervention. It is necessary to consider all the reasons why flex is important, particularly to non-believers and those resisting flex. It is important to communicate the importance of men participating in flexible work practices, to normalise flex and make work practices more inclusive for everyone, but particularly women and employees with caring responsibilities.

Other forms of communication necessary include:

- sharing individual human stories demonstrating the diverse application of flexible work to internal and external stakeholders
- communicating why and how the flexible working interventions work and their effect on participants
- communicating what 'good' looks like in relation to flexible working - often a combination of time/location/process flexible work practices
- researching the effects of flexible work on family members and friends of workers to demonstrate the effects of flexible work beyond the site, and to understand ways flexible work and work practices can be further improved
- conducting listening and learning sessions for leaders to listen to diverse perspectives of the team and then reflect, learn and iterate based on their feedback. By listening first, leaders are able to gain a deeper understanding of the individual experiences and demonstrate their commitment to the intervention
- communicate the role of flexible work in reducing psychosocial risks such as fatigue, burnout and anxiety

Resource planning and substitutability

17. Plan a workforce with adequate coverage

Substitutability enables flexible work practices in frontline construction roles as it provides necessary coverage when people step away from site. Resourcing plans at a project level should be designed to enable employee coverage. These plans might take the form of rosters or flexible work schedules. Importantly, planning of these resource plans, employee coverage and handover practices need to be developed ahead of the implementation of the intervention. Resource plans and associated practices (handover, communication) should be widely communicated, timely and visible to all team members with managers accountable for adherence.

Flexible work needs to be embedded in the project from the beginning, when the project is being tendered. This would ensure that adequate resourcing of people is allocated. The pre-contracts/bid team should be trained in flexible work interventions to ensure they understand how flexible work can be operationalised onsite for frontline roles. Pre-contracts/bid teams should work with flexible work experts to establish competency in resource planning and substitutability and flexible work processes.

18. Audit technology to find efficiencies

While technology can enhance flexible work practices, the research found that double handling and divergent digital platforms created inefficiencies within project teams, exacerbating long work hours. Conducting a technology and efficiency audit is necessary.

4. Conclusion

Despite the short time frame given, the Flex from the Start project had an outstanding effect on the John Holland employees and projects it touched. It built knowledge and developed skills and capabilities in flexible work in frontline roles on construction sites. It produced an array of applicable flexible work interventions that can be adopted across the business and construction sector broadly. It recognises that an important by-product of these flexible work interventions was fatigue management, wellbeing, psychosocial safety and employee retention.

This evaluation provides a clear guide to John Holland, the NSW Government and the wider industry, of the enablers and constraints to flexible work on construction sites. Importantly, some of the enablers and constraints are outside the control of the project team and John Holland.

Clients, including government clients, play an essential role in the procurement, contractual boundaries and design of projects. For instance, the projects and the interventions evaluated in this study were often constrained by contractual elements that limited how far the participants could push the envelope on innovation. For inclusive practices to be adopted in the construction sector, to enable more women and diverse cohorts to participate, business, government and trade unions must focus their attention on changing long-held exclusionary work practices and behaviours.

Like all research, this evaluation has its limitations. The short duration of this research project has had an effect on the survey results, and this evaluation has relied more extensively on qualitative responses which are not generalisable. Additionally, the research design underestimated the time needed to change mindsets, norms and practices, particularly amongst project leaders. Further, it overestimated the knowledge of flex and skill level in resource planning among site teams.

Building from this project, there is the opportunity to build the capacity of leaders and project teams around the understanding and application of flexible work. A focus on resource planning and substitutability (coverage) of employees will enable flexible work on construction sites. Alongside a significant reduction in work hours, flexible work practices can enable women's participation in frontline construction roles and aid the retention of existing talent.



Appendix A: Evaluation framework and methods

The evaluation is both summative and formative and combines elements of process and outcome evaluation.

Figure 1: Evaluation types

Process evaluation investigates how a programme is delivered, including efficiency, quality and customer satisfaction. May consider alternative delivery procedures. It can help to differentiate ineffective programs from failures of implementation. As an ongoing evaluative strategy, it can be used to continually improve programs by informing adjustments to delivery.

Outcome evaluation determines whether a programme caused demonstrable effects on specifically defined target outcomes. It identifies for whom, in what ways and in what circumstances the outcomes were achieved. Identifies unintended impacts (positive and negative). Examines the ways the programme contributed to the outcomes, and the influence of other factors.

Evaluation framework

There are several factors that can be measured to determine whether an intervention is successful. These include:

- Effectiveness: the extent to which the intervention attains its intended objectives.
- Efficacy: the ability to produce a desired or intended result.
- Efficiency: how economic resources are used to achieve results.
- Outputs: the direct products or services resulting from a program; for example, the number of people or activities a program has supported.
- Outcomes: the results or effects of a program and the changes that occur in attitudes, values, behaviours or conditions. Outcomes may be short, medium or long-term.
- Impact: the longer-term social and economic outcomes of a program. Impact may be positive, negative or neutral; intended or unintended.

Measuring these factors requires both outcomes measurement and evaluation.

Figure 2: Key outcomes measurement and evaluation terms

Outcomes measurement: A process to identify the way intended outcomes should be measured and the collection of data regarding those outcomes.

Evaluation: Periodic, systematic, and objective assessment of a program to make a judgement about its merit or worth. 'Systematic' implies that the evaluation asks critical questions, collects appropriate information, and analyses and interprets the information for a specific use and purpose.

Outcomes are the changes in individuals, groups, families, organisations, or communities that an intervention is expected to achieve. Outcomes can include changes in attitudes, values, behaviours, or conditions. They can be positive or negative and intended or unintended. For example, improved knowledge, reduced anxiety.

Outputs are the immediate products or services that result from an intervention. For example, the number of clients a service supported, or number of house visits made. A **theory of change** is an explicit model of how a programme will achieve its intended outcomes. It articulates the hypothesised relationships between a programme's activities and its intended outcomes and identifies how and why changes are expected to occur.

A **programme logic** or logic model is the visual representation of how a programme will achieve its goals, including the short-, medium- and long-term outcomes. It includes a detailed representation of inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact.

Indicators are measures that show whether progress is being made on individual outcomes or goals.

See also: Muir et al. (2014).

The combination of outcomes measurement and broader evaluation methods is important because outcomes measurement can only point to the contribution of an intervention to any change that occurs. Broader evaluation methods examine what else may be happening that influence outcomes, including macro level factors such as what is happening more widely in society (e.g. impact of COVID-19), as well as meso level factors such as organisational factors that may help to explain why (or why not) outcomes have been achieved.

Attributing improvements specifically to Flex from the Start will be challenging, as there are many other macro and meso factors occurring that may also be contributing to change, as indicated above, and as well as the fact that project sites were using more than one flex intervention at a time. However, the use of evaluation can help to understand other contributions and therefore also the contribution of Flex from the Start.

Understanding and articulating how an intervention intends to work is an essential part of programme design and outcome measurement. A clearly articulated theory of change and logic model are a key part of this, providing a foundation to guide the assessment of causal links and expected outcomes. The theory of change and logic model are not static documents and should be reviewed, tested and revised on a regular basis.

Figure 3: More key terms

Inputs: Resources put into or used for a programme or organisation; for example, money, time, partnerships, equipment, and facilities.

Activity: Actions or processes that produce the desired outputs and outcomes.

Output: The direct products or services resulting from an activity, usually presented as a numeric value. For example, the number of houses provided, or the supports or activities produced.

Outcome: The changes in attitudes, values, behaviours, or conditions as a result/effect of or expected by the activity. The changes can be short-term (immediate), medium-term or long-term.

Impact: The longer-term social, economic and/or environmental outcomes of an activity, programme, organisation, or policy. This can be positive, negative, or neutral and be intended or unintended.

Indicators: Measurable markers that show whether progress is being made on a condition, circumstance, or outcome.

Theory of change

A theory of change is an explicit theory of how an intervention will achieve its intended or observed outcomes. It articulates the hypothesised causal relationships between an intervention's activities and its intended outcomes and identifies how and why changes are expected to occur.

The Flex from the Start theory of change has been developed based on knowledge of the programme from key stakeholders and evidence about 'what works' from the literature.

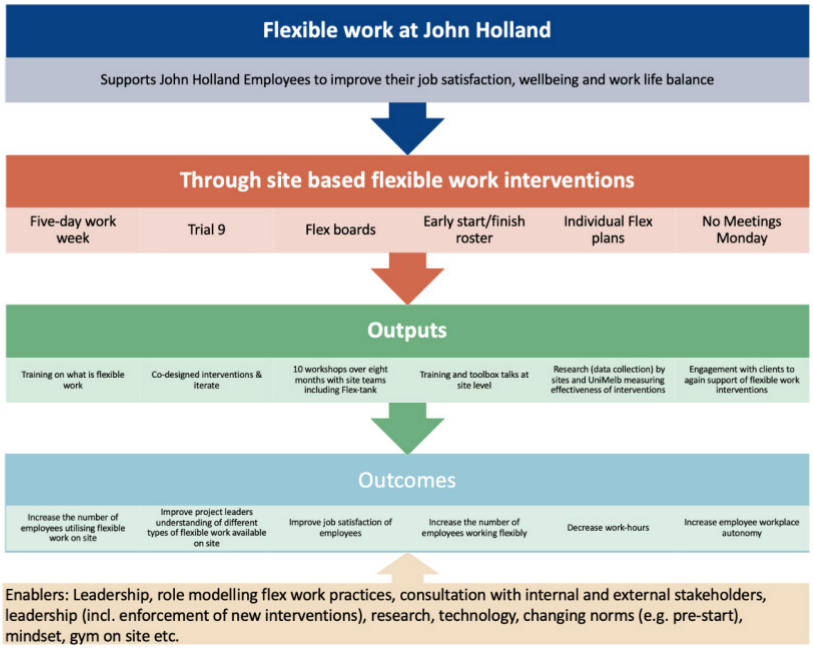
The theory of change also captures the enablers and assumptions that will support the delivery of Flex from the Start, and conversely the risks that could undermine its success. These are internal and external conditions which could affect the intervention's progress and success and may or may not be under the control of those implementing the intervention. Enablers or assumptions usually refer to condition(s) that must be met for the interventions' objectives to be achieved. They may be internal, such as the conditions or factors that need to be in place for Flex from the Start to work and are mostly within John Holland's control (e.g. relationships, quality of services). They may also be external, for example factors outside John Holland's immediate control and which describe the wider environment in which the intervention operates (e.g. social, cultural, political and economic factors). Understanding these assumptions and risks means that mitigation strategies can be put in place and these factors can also be considered when interpreting evaluation data.

Theory of Change (ToC)

An explicit theory or model of how a program or policy causes the intended or observed outcomes (Rogers, 2008). It consists of a change model and an action model.

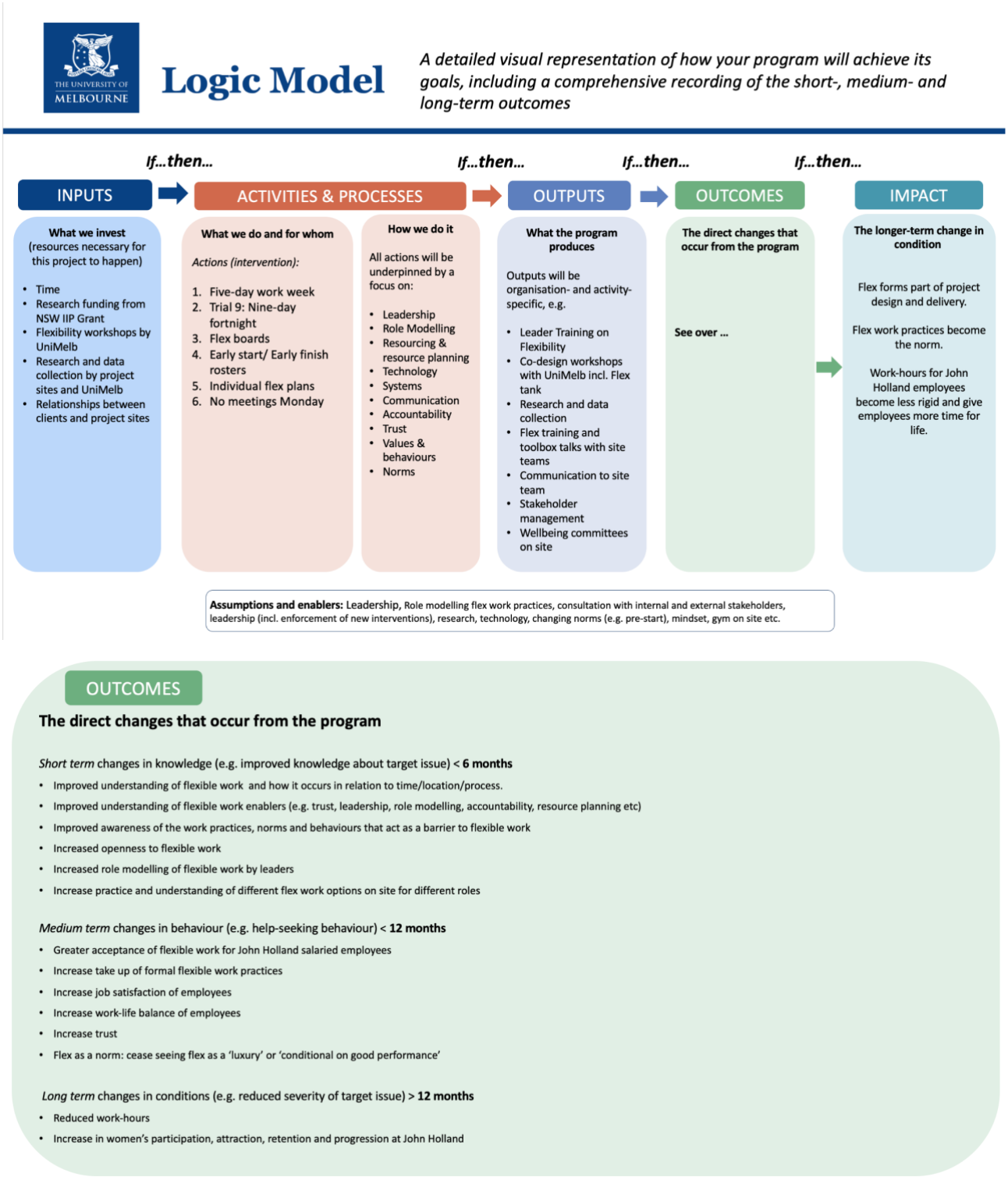
Easy steps to develop a ToC:

1. Define the **main activity** and **target population** for your program
2. **Develop the change model**: what changes are likely to be achieved through your intervention – think long term.
3. Articulate the main **processes** through which you engage with the target population to achieve those outcomes.



Logic model

The Flex from the Start logic model (or programme logic) illustrates the steps involved in progressing from actions to impact. It is another visual representation of how Flex from the Start will achieve its short, medium and long-term outcomes and impact. Outcomes are based on assumptions that include the resources available to support the delivery of intervention in the medium to long term, that employees use and engage with the intervention, that leaders value and enforce these interventions and that interventions are fit for purpose, for example. The logic model has an underlying 'if-then' relationship, linking a programme's inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact. Inputs are the necessary resources for an intervention to run e.g. staff, funding, technology, equipment. Activities are what the intervention is doing and how e.g. type of flexibility in place. Outputs are numbers or counts of things that result from the programme e.g. number of participants in the intervention.



Evaluation questions

The evaluation of Flex from the Start is designed to answer a number of questions about the programme. The evaluation will use quantitative and qualitative research methods and multiple sources of information to assess processes and impact, i.e. to measure change over time and provide information that can contribute to programme improvements. Table 1 below summarises the questions guiding the evaluation and proposed methods for capturing data.

Table 1: Evaluation Questions Table

	Methods					
Evaluation questions	Survey	Focus groups	Shark Tank	Literature review		
1. What have been the challenges and successes in establishing Flex from the Start?		X				
2. What have been the challenges and successes in implementing Flex from the Start?		X				
3. What activities and outputs has Flex from the Start produced or achieved?		X	X			
4. What are the strengths of Flex from the Start? What is working well?		X	X			
5. What improvements should be made to Flex from the Start?		X				
6. What other (internal/external) factors may be affecting the implementation of actions and achievement of outcomes?		X		X		
7. Are the intended Flex from the Start outcomes being achieved? For whom?	X					
8. How has Flex from the Start contributed to achievement of outcomes?		X		X		
9. What, if anything, are the unintended outcomes/consequences of Flex from the Start?	X					

Research Ethics

The research was conducted in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and was approved by the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics (approval number: 27797). Participants were provided with a plain language statement (PLS) and consent form for the workshops, survey and focus group. A sample of the focus group PLS and consent form is provided in Appendix B.

Workshops

Workshops were held at critical points throughout the project. The first workshop attended by project leaders aimed to build participants' knowledge of flexible work, why it is important in the construction sector and different types of interventions that could be implemented on project sites (See Appendix C for workshop one's overview). In the second workshop participants iterated their intervention designs based on baseline data findings. The third workshop known as 'Shark/Flex Tank' gave the participants the opportunity to reflect and share lessons learnt with the other sites. The final workshop presented research findings to the site teams and John Holland executives. The Shark/Flex Tank gave researchers the opportunity to clarify the process adopted by site teams, what worked for site teams and what did not and the effect interventions had on individual team members and the project. This valuable workshop gave researchers new data that was synthesised with focus group data in analysis.

Survey

Outcome analysis

By examining data on specific measures at multiple time points - for example job satisfaction at the start of an intervention (T0) and at the end of an intervention (T1) - it is possible to examine how much change an individual has experienced. By collecting demographic data as part of the survey, we are also able to measure whether Flex from the Start is more effective for particular cohorts (e.g. men vs women).

By asking the same questions before and after the intervention, we are able to compare responses to find out how much change individuals or organisations have experienced.

To examine whether such changes occurred by chance or as a result of Flex from the Start, we can also compare some outcomes (where data is available) between those who participated in the intervention and those who did not (the latter group are called the control group).

We received a total of 434 responses to the survey, with 133 at T0, 157 at T1 and 144 at T2.

Table 2: Summary of responses by site and gender

		Time point		
		T0	T1	T2
All 3 sites	Total	133	157	144
	Male	84	112	96
	Female	47	43	44
M7-M12 Integration project	Total	62	77	74
	Male	39	52	45
	Female	22	24	25
Waterloo OSD	Total	32	35	30
	Male	24	26	23
	Female	7	8	7
Next Rail	Total	39	45	40
	Male	21	34	28
	Female	18	11	12
		Time point		

		T0	T1	T2
All 3 sites	Total	133	157	144
	Male	84	112	96
	Female	47	43	44
M7-M12 Integration project	Total	62	77	74
	Male	39	52	45
	Female	22	24	25
Waterloo OSD	Total	32	35	30
	Male	24	26	23
	Female	7	8	7
Next Rail	Total	39	45	40
	Male	21	34	28
	Female	18	11	12

Table 3: Demographic characteristics of survey respondents at T1 (%)

Demographic characteristics		**M7-M12 Integration project**	**Waterloo OSD**	**Next Rail**	**Total**
Gender	Male	67.5	74.3	75.6	71.3
	Female	31.2	22.9	24.4	27.4
	Prefer not to say	1.3	2.9	0.0	1.3
Age	24 years or younger	13.0	11.4	6.7	10.8
	25-29 years	19.5	17.1	20.0	19.1
	30-39 years	40.3	40.0	42.2	40.8
	40-49 years	15.6	22.9	20.0	18.5
	50 years or over	11.7	8.6	11.1	10.8
	Single person	23.4	23.5	26.7	24.4

Family structure	Couple without children	23.4	35.3	31.1	28.2
	Couple with child/children	49.4	41.2	37.8	44.2
	Single parent	2.6	0.0	4.4	2.6
	Other	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.6
Type of pay	Salary: same pay each week irrespective of hours worked	93.4	97.1	93.3	94.2
	Wage: paid for standard hours plus overtime worked	6.6	2.9	6.7	5.8
Contract type	Full-time	90.8	100.0	93.3	93.6
	Other	9.2	0.0	6.7	6.4
Length of time worked at JH	Less than 6 months	17.1	11.4	6.7	12.8
	6 months to 1 year	23.7	22.9	17.8	21.8
	1 year to 3 years	19.7	37.1	22.2	24.4
	3 years to 5 years	18.4	11.4	11.1	14.7
	5 years to 10 years	9.2	11.4	22.2	13.5
	More than 10 years	11.8	5.7	20.0	12.8
Length of time worked on site	Less than 3 months	25.0	5.9	0.0	13.5
	3 months to 6 months	30.3	11.8	8.9	20.0
	6 months to 1 year	42.1	26.5	17.8	31.6

	1 year to 3 years	2.6	55.9	48.9	27.7
	3 years or more	0.0	0.0	24.4	7.1
Promotion in last 12 months	Yes	36.0	17.1	31.1	30.3
	No	64.0	82.9	68.9	69.7

Table 4: Mean overall job satisfaction (where 1 represents very dissatisfied and 8 represents very satisfied)

	Time point		
	T0	T1	T2
Average	6.52	5.88	6.07
M7-M12 Integration project	6.26	5.87	5.95
Waterloo OSD	7.31	5.94	6
Next Rail	6.19	5.85	6.33
Male respondents	6.42	5.86	6.09
Female respondents	6.61	6.03	6.16
Works 50 hours or less per week	6.54	6.03	6.11
Works 51 hours or more per week	6.52	5.78	6.03

Waged workers and workers who did not work full-time have been excluded from the analysis due to the small number of respondents.

Focus groups

Focus groups were conducted at the same three time points as survey data was collected. For each site, there were two focus groups consisting of management and non-management employees. The focus groups enabled the research team to capture processes and outcomes that can be challenging to quantify or are less tangible. By collecting data across three states of the research project, the research team was able to share research findings with the site team, enabling the site team to iterate and alter their intervention design and implementation.

Focus group questions for management focused on:

- existing flexible work interventions on site
- access to flexible work arrangements for themselves and their team
- decision making around flexible work requests
- how flexible work is implemented on site
- advantages and disadvantages of flexible work arrangements
- managers ease in relation to flexible work

Focus group questions for non-management employees focused on:

- existing flexible work interventions on site
- access to flexible work arrangements
- barriers to accessing flexible work
- support for flexible work

Appendix B: Human ethics plain english statement and consent

Plain Language Statement

Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning

Project: Flex from the Start: Flexible Work on Australian Construction Sites

Project Supervisor: Dr Natalie Galea
Email: natalie.galea@unimelb.edu.au
Additional Researchers: Professor Abigail Powell (E: powell@lincoln.ac.uk), Ms Alison McFadyen (E: alison.mcfadyen@unimelb.edu.au)

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research project. The following few pages will provide you with further information about the project, so that you can decide if you would like to take part in this research.

Please take the time to read this information carefully. You may ask questions about anything you don't understand or want to know more about.

Your participation is voluntary. If you don't wish to take part, you don't have to. If you begin participating, you can also stop at any time.

What is this research about?

This research investigates what types of interventions can be successful applied to construction sites to improve flexibility for all workers, by co-designing and evaluating three flexible work activation trials on three different construction projects within the John Holland's businesses. Results from the project will inform flexible work initiatives scalable across the John Holland business.

What will I be asked to do?

Should you agree to participate you will be asked to take part in three focus groups that will be conducted over a 12-month period. In the survey, you will be asked about your experiences with flexible work options at your workplace (phase 1) and to evaluate the flexible work activation initiatives being trialled (phases 2 and 3). Each focus group will take approximately 60-90 minutes to complete.

What are the possible benefits?

By participating, you are contributing to the development of effective flexible work initiatives scalable to all John Holland business projects, which will also help inform the construction sector in Australia.

What are the possible risks?

We will make every effort to de-identify you in research publications should you decide to participate.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is completely voluntary. You can withdraw at any time.

Will I hear about the results of this project?

The results, findings and recommendations of this study will be disseminated via email to participants following the conclusion of the study.

What will happen to information about me?

We will take every step to protect your confidentiality. Your information will be stored electronically or physically at the University of Melbourne for five years after the study. Only the research team listed above will have access to your data. Your information may be used for future research by members of the research team. You will be provided access to publications by emailing the research team (details below).

Is there any potential conflict of interest?

To avoid any conflict of interest, we will ensure that access to the data is restricted to the research team from the University of Melbourne only, responsible for the unbiased interpretation of data.

Who is funding this project?

This research is funded by John Holland Pty Ltd.

Where can I get further information?

If you would like more information about the project, please contact the researcher Dr. Natalie Galea, natalie.galea@unimelb.edu.au.

Who can I contact if I have any concerns about the project?

This project has human research ethics approval from The University of Melbourne 27797. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Research Integrity Administrator, Office of Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 1376 or Email: research-integrity@unimelb.edu.au. All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence, please provide the name of the research team and/or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.

Consent Form

Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning

Project: Flex from the Start: Flexible Work on Australian Construction Sites

Project Supervisor: Dr Natalie Galea
Email: natalie.galea@unimelb.edu.au
Additional Researchers: Professor Abigail Powell (E: apowell@lincoln.ac.uk), Ms Alison McFadyen (alison.mcfadyen@unimelb.edu.au)

Name of Participant: _____

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.
2. I understand that the purpose of this research is to investigate *what types of interventions can be successfully applied to construction sites to improve flexibility for all workers, particularly women.*
3. I understand that my participation in this project is for research purposes only.
4. I acknowledge that the possible effects of participating in this research project have been explained to my satisfaction.
5. In this project I will be required to participate in *focus groups.*
6. I understand that my participation may be audio taped.
7. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw from this project anytime without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data that I have provided.
8. I understand that the data from this research will be stored at the University of Melbourne and will be destroyed 5 years after publication.
9. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements; and accessible only by the named researchers.
10. I understand that given the small number of participants involved in the study, it may not be possible to guarantee my anonymity.
11. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form, it will be retained by the researcher.

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix C: Workshop one overview

> Workshop One

Next Rail, M7–M12 Integration Project and Waterloo OSD (Southern Precinct)

October 2023

Flexibility from the Start

Workshop One

Next Rail, M7-M12 Integrated Project and Waterloo Over Station Development

October 2023

JOHN HOLLAND

Why are we here and what is the objective



- The objective of the Women in Construction Industry Innovation Program (IIP) grant is to support industry initiatives that will encourage female participation and retention in the construction industry throughout the whole supply chain by:
  - Creating inclusive workplace cultures, including by improving employee wellbeing and supporting flexible working arrangements;
  - Increasing the number of women entering and staying in the industry; and
  - Supporting female leadership and female employees.

- John Holland is one of 21 recipients of a grant which came from the $5M allocation. Another round will be run in 2024

Why Flex from the Start?

- Considered what will change the industry to support women and men so it impacts greater participation and wellbeing of women.
- We wanted an impactful project that gets tested and evaluated to see if it worked and to be something we weren't already doing.
- Took inspiration from our existing strategies like our GESP and the forthcoming DE&I Strategy that has a focus on flexibility.
- ***Flex from the Start*** so we could consider it from- the start of the day or shift, the start of a career or the start of something else in the employee's life.
- This overall project is for the whole project, all JH employees are eligible for the activations.

"To increase the number of women in the industry, you need to be willing to change the behaviour of men"

Flex from the Start



Welcome!

Overview of the day

Time	Agenda Item
10:00am	Introduction
10:05am	Context setting and expectations
10:10am	Flexible work, barriers and enablers
10:45am	Vision and impact
10.55am	Site Team Activity 1 - Activities & Processes
11.50am	Research - Case studies on flexible work
12.00pm	Site Team Activity 2 – Prioritise intervention + Inputs
12:25pm	Lunch
12.45pm	Site Team Activity 3 - Outputs + Outcomes
1:05pm	Share intervention and logic map
1.55pm	Next steps
2.00pm	Close

Context Setting + Expectations

Overview of the project

The aim of the project is to provide a novel response to a persistent structural barrier to women's successful participation in the Australian construction sector.

While flexible work is understood to be a critical lever for women's participation in the construction sector, there is a research gap in evaluation of different applied flexible work interventions.

The project's objectives are to investigate, co-design, implement and evaluate three flexible work activations on three different construction projects in New South Wales (NSW).

The research will be based on three John Holland sites trailing the flex interventions, which are Next Rail (Rail Project), Waterloo Over Station Development (Building) and M7-M12 Integrated Project (Road).

The project aims to address the following main research question: *what types of interventions can be successful applied to construction sites to improve flexibility for all workers, particularly women?*

Results from the project will inform flexible work initiatives scalable across the John Holland business.

Aim + Objectives

- Each site will design a flexible work intervention that will be evaluated and can be iterated on throughout the next 10months.
- The intervention should be something you can implement quickly, scalable, adaptable and focused on a specific cohort or the entire site.
- While designing a flexible work intervention is our aim for today, our objective is to be creative and to challenge our thinking, values and existing work practices and norms, to drive new behaviours.
- You will be asked to share your intervention to the group at the end of this workshop and discuss other interventions you considered.

Flexible Work and Gender Equality

‘To increase the number of women in construction, we must be willing to challenge the work conditions of men.’

(Galea et al. 2016)

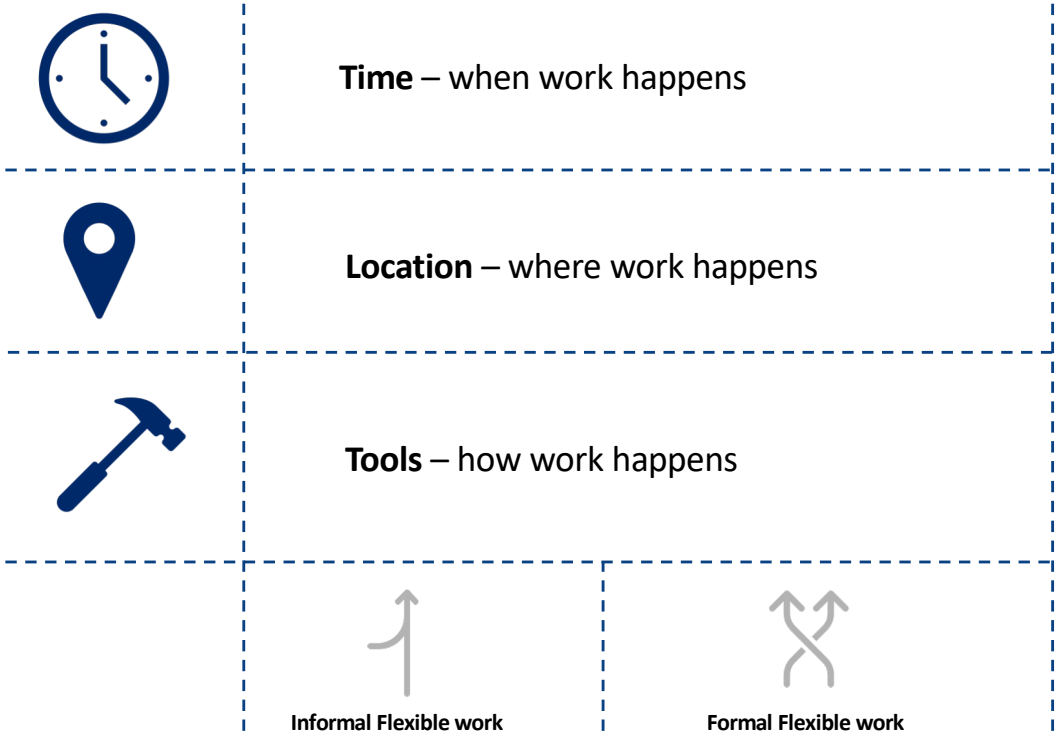
What is the key purpose of flexible work?

…to provide an opportunity to employees to manage their own work-life balance by increasing their autonomy, and subsequently to improve wellbeing in the workplace.

What is flexible work?

- an employee's ability to define alternative time, place and processes within an established company's guidelines and agreement,
- to manage and perform work requirements in ways that are not conflicting with life requirements,
- therefore supporting workplace wellbeing, efficiency and productivity.

Types of Flexible Work



Types of Flexible Work: Time, location, process

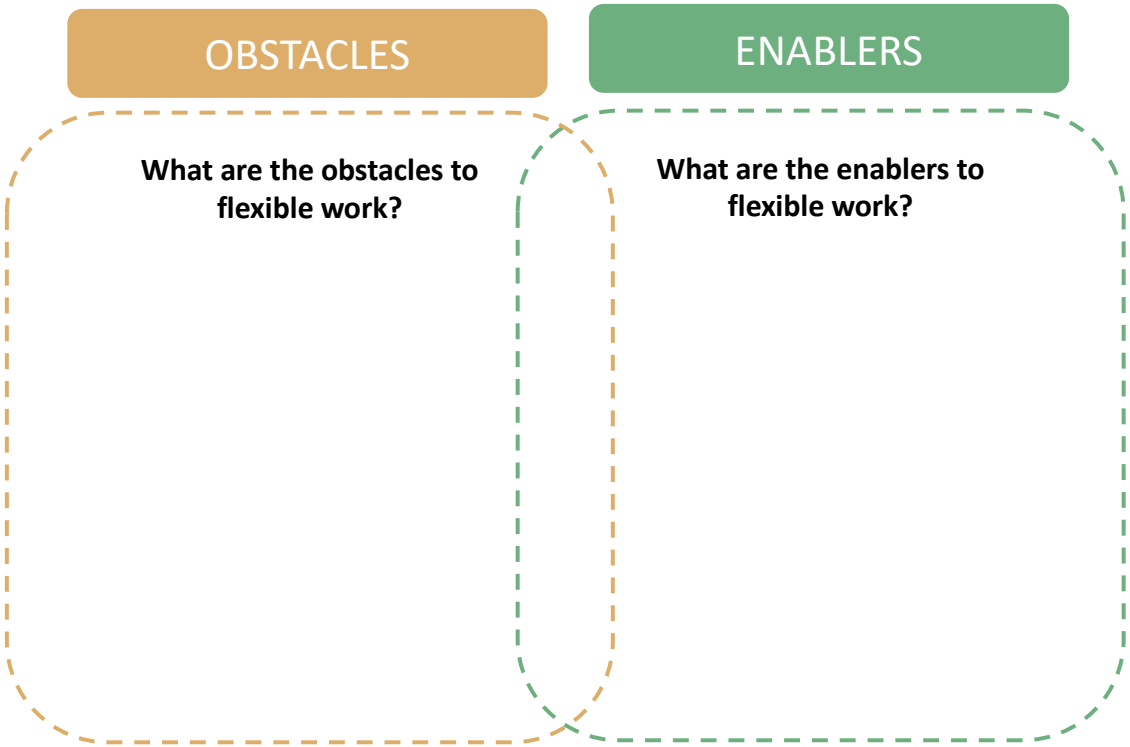
Flexibility in time	
Part-time	Options of work hours that are less than traditionally full-time work hours
Flexi time	Ability to change arrangement of daily hours. Informal flexi time refers to taking part of a day off to deal with personal matters. Formal flexi time allows variations to start and finish times, within a fixed range of hours. Daily flex time allows to change start and finish times on a daily basis.
Compressed hours	Working the same number of weekly hours, focused or compressed into a shorter period of time, such as the four-day work week
Staggered hours or split shift	Working blocks of hours separated by a longer than usual break
Time in lieu	Working extra hours to complete objectives when required, reclaimed as time-off
Collaborative hours	Managers, departments, or teams determine fixed collaboration hours within each person's flexible schedule
RDO	Time in lieu and formal rostered days off
Parental leave	Paid leave for caring of born child/adoption/foster child/surrogate
Purchase leave	Take more days of leave per year for a reduction in full time payment
Tailored use of leave	Using annual leave time in different periods to meet life demands.
Career break/unpaid leave	Ability to request unpaid career break with indicative period and time of return
Staged leave or phased retirement	Allowed for a slower process of retirement, where work hours are progressively less.

Flexibility in location	
On site	Employees always work in the official place of work, within their other arrangements.
Telecommuting	Ability to work from home, informally when necessary, or formally with structured days at home and in the office.
Hybrid	Ability to split the time of working between locations, in the office or at home.
Scheduled locations	Managers, departments, or teams determine on-site days

Flexibility in process	
Bid rostering	Lines of work and shift are generated, bid for by team members
Flexible rostering	Employees submit requests for the shifts and rostered days off, based on which the roster is built trying to accommodate requests where possible and practical.
Job share*	A full-time role is taken by two or more employees, paid on a part-time basis according to the part of the role they complete. • twin model – where 2 employees share a role and accountabilities. • islands model – where 2 employees split a role and are responsible for different parts of the role (equivalent to 2 part-time roles) • hybrid model – a mix of both the twin and islands model, where 2 (or more) employees share a role with some shared responsibility and some divided responsibility to play to each other's strengths.
Shift-swapping	Allow shift workers to trade their shifts

New South Wales Public Service Commission (2019), Diversity Council Australia (2012), Bain & Company (Coffman and Hagey, 2010)

Enablers and Obstacles to Flexible work



What are the obstacles and enablers to flexible work on-site?

Flexible Work

What flexible work have you been trialing?

- *In time*
- *In process*
- *In location*



Drivers + Enablers / Obstacles + Challenges



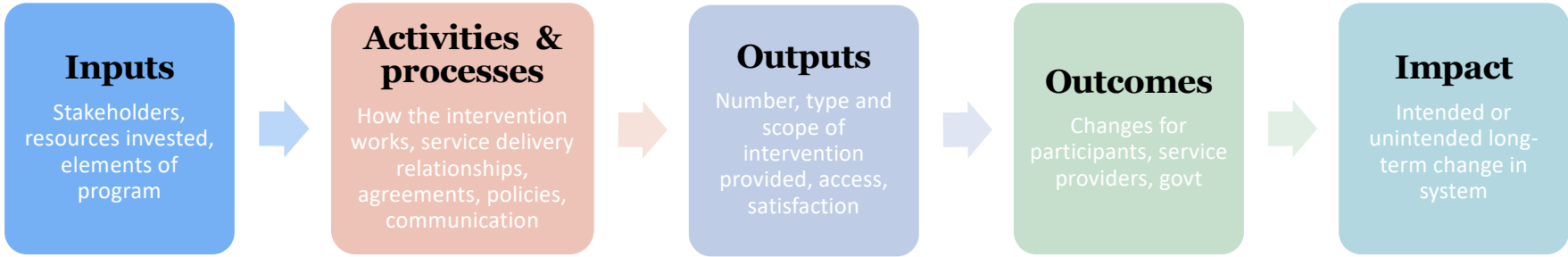
Flex in Construction

“to date, very limited research has been conducted (or at least published in peer-reviewed outlets) that evaluates working time reduction or modification interventions in the construction industry”. (Lingard et al. 2021)

Aims + Objective

- Each site will design a flexible work intervention that will be evaluated and can be iterated on throughout the next 10months.
- The intervention should be something you can implement quickly, scalable, adaptable and focused on a specific cohort or the entire site.
- While designing a flexible work intervention is our aim for today, our objective is to be creative and to challenge our thinking, values and existing work practices and norms, to drive new behaviours.
- You will be asked to share your intervention to the group at the end of this workshop and discuss other interventions you considered.

Logic Map


Inputs
Stakeholders, resources invested, elements of program
Activities & processes
How the intervention works, service delivery relationships, agreements, policies, communication
Outputs
Number, type and scope of intervention provided, access, satisfaction
Outcomes
Changes for participants, service providers, govt
Impact
Intended or unintended long-term change in system

Example Logic Model: Wellbeing



Inputs

What I am investing:

- Time
- Money
- Coaching
- Trust
- Consistency



Activities & processes

Actions:

- Invest in a health coach
- Gym / app membership

Actions underpinned by:

- Consistency
- Mindset
- Learning
- Moderation
- Honesty



Outputs

- Walk daily +10,000 steps
- 2 – 3 weights sessions a week
- Track calories & sleep daily
- 1 session per week with health coach
- Body measurements 1/week



Outcomes

Be a healthier version of myself.

Short-term

- Better mobility, fitness & self esteem

Medium Term

- Weight loss
- Improved BP
- Improve sleeping



Impact

- Longer life
- Prioritising me!
- Relationship with food + exercise
- Access to new sports / activities
- Reduced stress
- Improved wellbeing

The Big Picture – Outcome

OUTCOME

The longer term change in condition

Wider effects, e.g.

- What is the **end game** we are trying to achieve through these interventions?
- What are our **desired outcome and impact** from the interventions? (Short term, medium term, long term)
- What changes do we want to achieve in short term, medium term and long term from the intervention?

Activities + Processes

Activity 1: Description + Objectives

ACTIVITIES & PROCESSES

What we do and for whom

Actions (intervention):

Stakeholder groups:

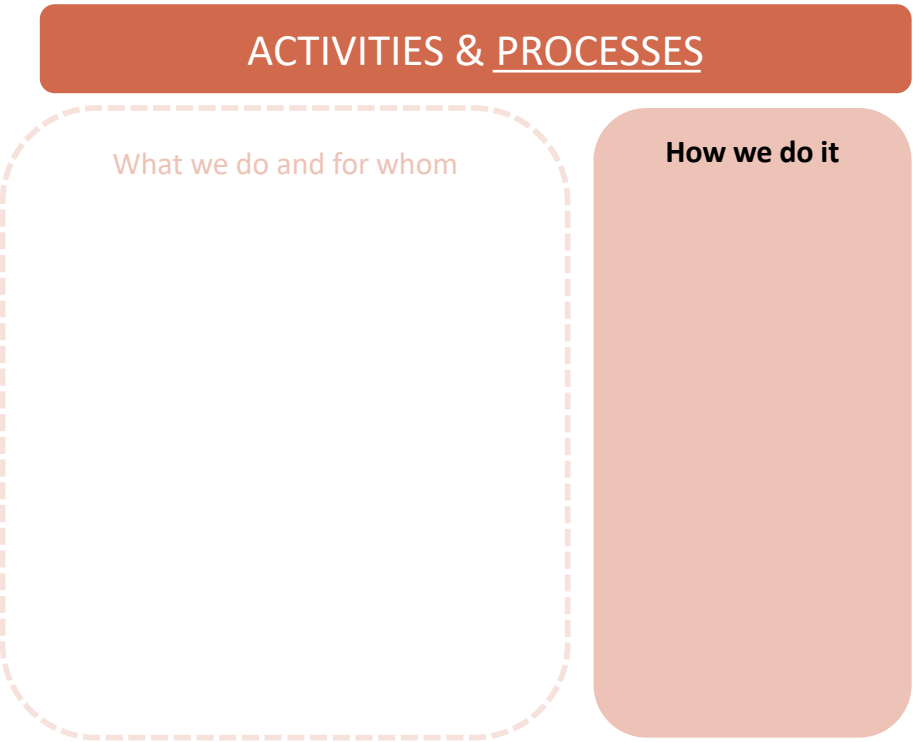
How we do it

- Activity 1. Brainstorm - What are the barriers and enablers to flexible work on your site? (10min max)
- Activity 2. Brainstorm flexible work ideas activities and processes that together will be your intervention. Get down as many ideas now! Group activities into interventions (20min)

  Remember… interventions must be implemented quickly, specific to a role, section, group of people, iterated on (altered and adjusted if needed – not set in stone), scalable and focused on **salaried** JH Employees.
- Activity 3. Vote (each member of the team has two red dot). Select two or three top interventions. (5min)

Activities + Processes

Activity 2: Prompt Questions



Activity 4. Execution and scope

- How are we going to do it?

What/Who/How

- What is involved in your intervention?
- What actions do we want to occur?
- Potential activities we might try.
- How will the intervention work?
- Who will be involved? Who is this intervention focused on?
- What assumptions are we making?
- What budget/resources do we need?
- What external support will be needed and by whom?

- Is what you are proposing achievable?

Case Studies

Designing pilots	**In consultation with leaders, managers and stakeholders at all sites, there was an agreements for desk-based workers to have increased working from home. For site-based workers, there were variations:**
	BAM CONSTRUCT: ongoing consultative method for shift setting, work with site operation hours, meet contractor's commitment. Weekly meeting was held to check on deliverables and changes to preferable flexible arrangements. Introduction of new technology, such as online calendars and improved contact supported the process.
	BAM BUTTALL: accumulate hours for exchange of one day off, and split team into two pods, to rotate the flexi-day.
	SKANSKA UK: There were two sites. On one, given its more homogeneous nature, it followed the preference for start earlier and finish earlier, with schedule organised by objectives. The second, due to longer operating hours, applied the start and finish earlier every fortnight, with a choice of break times.
	WILLMOTT DIXON: the company already had an 'agile working' approach in place and wanted to continue with modifications proposed by Timewise. The options adopted were: introducing flex rotas, operating two teams on site and home working swapping every week, home working initiatives due to pandemic.

(Timewise 2021)

Case Studies

- Gain workers input into working patterns
- Identified possibilities for desk-based site workers included the implementation of home-working.
- Consider options for flexibility in every role (frontline workers as well as knowledge workers) to ensure fairness and inclusivity.
- Identified possibilities for frontline workers:
    - Compressed/shortened weeks, for those who work away from home
    - Late starts/early finishes for those who need them,
    - Facilitating staff to cover for each other,
    - The ability of salaried employees to take back unpaid overtime in less busy periods of the project cycle.
- Monitoring and reporting including input collected before and after the pilot regarding:
    - sense of wellbeing, job quality and work-life balance
    - culture and perception regarding flexible work

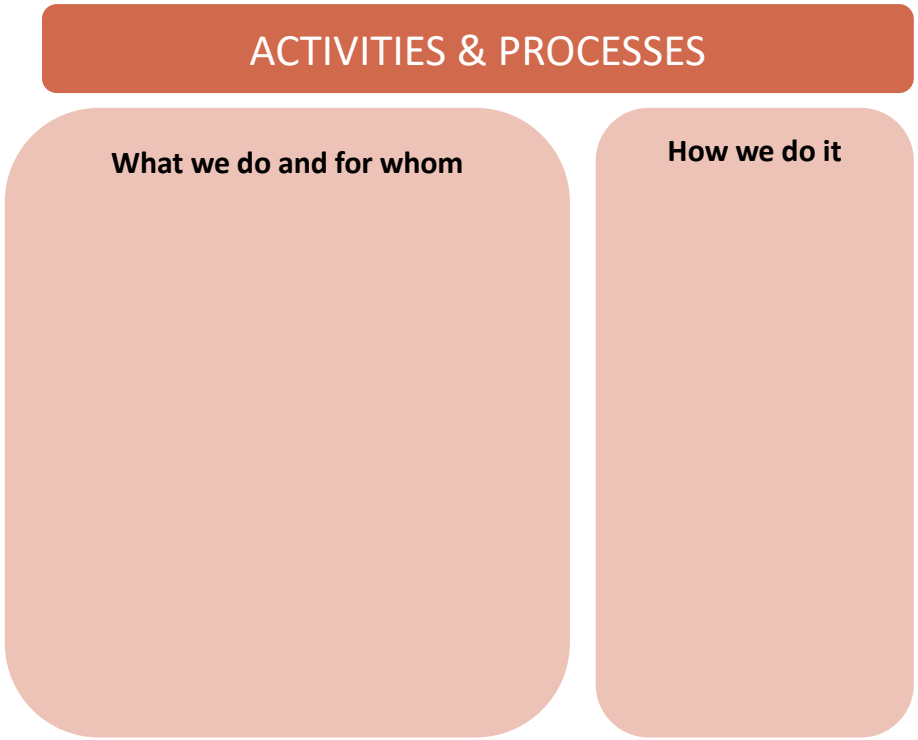
Case Studies

- Changing cultural attitudes and behaviour
  - Promoting the long-term business case for flexible working
  - Redefining flexible working – it's not just for one-off needs.
  - Changing the language
  - Addressing trust issues
  - Making it safe to discuss flexibility needs at work
- Improve managers capabilities to implement flexible work
  - understanding flexible job design: what's possible, given the site constraints, and how can both individual and organisational needs be met?
  - how to have proactive, open conversations about flexibility needs
  - ideas for how to deal with objection handling, for example on issues of trust and performance
- Advertise roles with flexible working from the point of hire, to attract a more diverse pool of skills and talent.

Other Case Studies

- **Multiskilling of frontline** workers at the Melbourne airport (including refuellers and tanker drivers) was tested and involved up-skilling and multi-tasking across a range of roles through training which resulted in better staff engagement and provided the flexibility requested. (CCC 2023)
- VIVA Energy Australia explored job share opportunities for their operators working in the 24/7 oil refinery. A team of operation managers created job share roles which included a new part-time shift within the Enterprise Agreement. **The role redesign to incorporate part-time job share included extensive consultation with all workers, open communication, support for the new roles, and extensive training on diversity and the implementation of part-time rosters.** The role redesign over four years increased women's participation from 9% - 23% of operator roles. (CCC 2023)
- The trialled interventions applied at the organisational level considered the following flexible work options:
  - Reducing the work week or compressed week
  - Reducing daily work hours
  - Reducing the work month
  - Reducing the work year with additional leave (Lingard et al. 2021)

Prioritise Activities + Processes



- Activity 5. Finalise intervention (15min)
- **Prioritise and decide on the activities and processes that form your intervention**
  - Who are the stakeholders?
  - What will the intervention be underpinned by?
  - On the flipside, what must we overcome or make sure doesn't happen for our intervention to be implemented?

Consider core values and behaviours for success

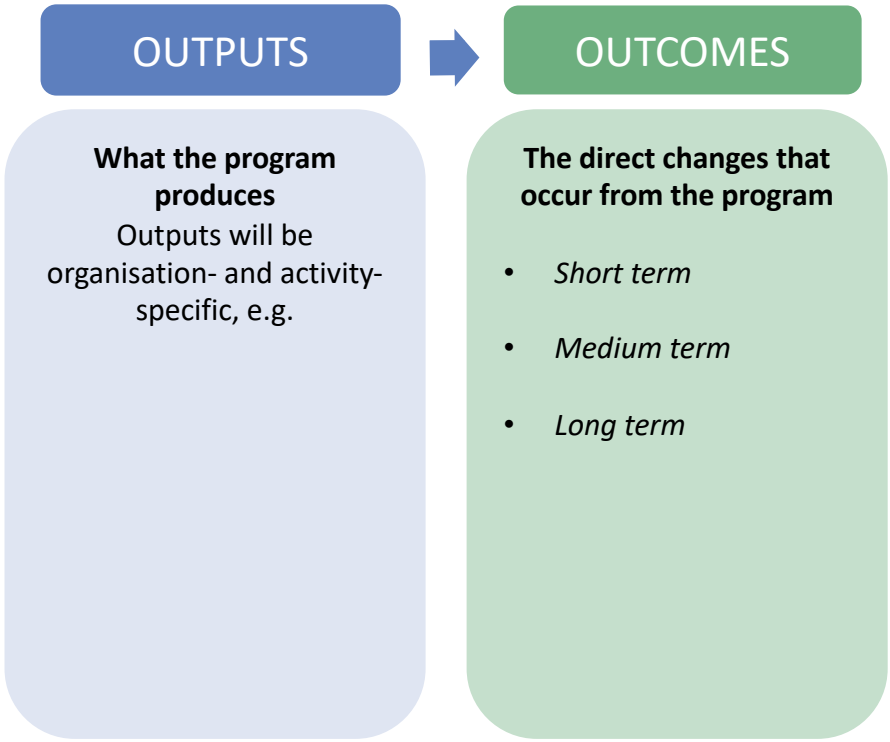
Inputs Activity

INPUTS

What we invest
(resources necessary for this project to happen)

- Activity 6. Add inputs (10mins)
  - What are the **resources** we need for a flexible work intervention to work?
  - **Consider** people/ stakeholders/ resources/ money/ communication styles /values and behaviours
  - **How** will stakeholders need to behave/respond for the outcomes required? How might they respond?

Outputs + Outcomes



- Activity 7. Outputs and Outcomes (20min)
  - When we do these activities, what do we expect to happen?
  - What does success look like?
  - How are you going to know if it works?
  - What are you measuring/what are you counting?
  - What might different groups get out of the activities/events/processes?

Flex from the Start



Let’s share!

What next

- More survey data collection needed
- Findings shared with each team in December 2023
- Data collection and workshop in February 2024
- Share insights with clients and colleagues, to improve their understanding of the positive benefits of flexible working and unlock barriers to its implementation while the contract is in process.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