

Why We Need Flexible Working Hours Legislation



In 2005 Green MP Sue Kedgley's private members bill was drawn from the ballot and considered in Parliament. It would guarantee a right to request flexible working hours to parents with young or disabled children.

After considering public submissions the Transport and Industrial Relations select committee decided to ask for further research to determine the best way to introduce flexible working hours.

At the end of 2006 Government sought public feedback on the best way to ensure employees have the option of flexible working hours, where it is practicable for their workplace.

Parliament will decide whether to support the Flexible Working Hours bill in a few months. We need to show MPs that there is widespread support for legislation that would enshrine in law the right to request flexible working hours.

The Coalition For Quality Flexible Work is calling for the bill to be extended to all employees, giving everyone the right to request flexible working hours. The only way to guarantee the right to request flexible working hours for all employees is through legislation.

Does it work elsewhere?

Since 2003 working parents in the UK with children under six and children with disabilities under 18 have had legislation providing them with a legal entitlement to request flexible working hours and expect their request to be agreed to unless there are genuine business reasons for refusal.

- Nearly a quarter of those eligible have applied for flexible working hours since the law was introduced
- 90% of employers have agreed to the requests
- Many in the UK, including the Conservative Party, now want the right to request extended to all employees, because of the positive results

What are flexible working hours?

Flexible working hours means changing hours to fit other parts of your life. It can mean reduced hours, changing starting and finishing times, flexibility in emergencies, changing days of work and, where practicable, working from home.

Why do we need legislation?

New Zealand has a long hours culture compared to other OECD countries. Nearly 30% of New Zealanders surveyed by the Equal Employment Trust say their working hours undermine family life. Long and inflexible working hours make it hard to juggle the care of children and elderly dependants, to participate in the community, to volunteer and play sports. For older workers, inflexible working hours make it difficult to participate in the workforce at all.

Flexible working hours legislation would change this, giving employees the right to request flexible working hours and employers an obligation to consider the request seriously.

Is it difficult for employers?

Experience has shown there are considerable benefits for employers who introduce flexible working hours in staff recruitment and retention as well as increased productivity. Employers who have genuine business reasons for not being able to agree to flexible working hours will be able to refuse a request.



Let's follow the UK's lead and learn from their experience. Not only does flexible working hours work for parents, but it is a win/win situation for everyone.

Flexible Working Hours Good for everyone!

Good for employees

Gives employees more control over their patterns of work and balance in their lives. Surveys show employees who work flexibly are happier and more productive.

Good for employers

Research shows flexible workplaces result in better morale and productivity, less absenteeism and reduced staff turnover.

Good for families

Reduces the stress for parents juggling paid work and family life. Over 90% of parents recently surveyed identified flexible working hours as the workplace change they would most like to see.

Good for students

Enables students to vary their hours of work around classes, assignments and family commitments. It enables students to find regular quality work to help pay the bills and keep student loan debts at bay.

Good for older workers

Many more can participate in the workforce if flexible working hours are available.

Good for communities

Enables people to fully participate in community and voluntary responsibilities, such as school, sporting and other community activities.

Good for New Zealand

Because it means a larger workforce, improved morale and better productivity. It means more people contributing in their communities. It even reduces peak hour traffic and public transport problems, reducing the threat of climate change.

We can take these steps

to ensure
everyone has
the right to
request flexible
working hours



- Support Sue Kedgley's private members bill providing the right to request flexible working hours for all employees

- Ask your MP to support the bill when it returns to Parliament



This leaflet was prepared by the **Coalition for Quality Flexible Work**

a coalition of community groups promoting legislation to provide the right to request flexible working hours for all employees. Members include: Parents Centres New Zealand Inc., Parenting Council of New Zealand, The New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, NZ Federation of Business and Professional Women, Grey Power, Tertiary Women's Focus Group, YWCA, Zonta New Zealand, NZ National Playcentre Federation, Women's Studies Association, Coalition of Community Law Centres, Wellington Women Lawyers Association, Auckland Women Lawyers' Association, La Leche League, Rural Women NZ, Auckland Women's Centre, CEVEP, Women's Health Action Trust, Transport 2000, Peace Movement Aotearoa, Auckland Breastfeeding Network, Auckland Working Women's Resource Centre, Central Hawkes Bay Playcentre Association, National Women's Lawyers Consultative Group, New Zealand Nurses Organisation, National Distribution Union, Engineering Printing and Manufacturing Union, Rail and Maritime Union, Service and Food Workers Union Nga Ringa Tota, Auckland Tramways Union, UNITE, Finsec, PSA, Association of University Staff, Youth Union Movement, Maritime Union of NZ, Clothing Workers Union

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