

Open letter to business community from Ann Sherry, AO, Chair of UNICEF Australia and Patron, Family Friendly Workplaces

I am delighted to introduce you to the Family Friendly Workplaces initiative, a collaboration between UNICEF Australia and Parents At Work.

This important initiative presents the first ever National Work and Family Standards in Australia. It provides the practical tools and framework to support businesses to continually improve their offering and experience to employees, and to benefit from the positive flow on effects of being a family inclusive workplace.

I'm proud to support Family Friendly Workplaces, first in my capacity as Chair of UNICEF Australia. Across the globe, we continue to hear that parents and caregivers are struggling to balance responsibilities at home and at work. We know that workplaces becoming more inclusive of families will allow children's wellbeing to be optimised, with parents able to provide more responsive care-giving. It's so pleasing to see Australia leading the way as part of a global movement to strengthen the capacity of workplaces to support families.

Secondly, this initiative resonates strongly with me as a business leader. I have always been driven to progress gender equality, and championed the importance of work/life balance and staff wellbeing in the organisations I have led. More than ever, flexibility has become a key need for working parents, to ensure children's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing is met.

The Family Friendly Workplaces initiative will address inequalities through the social and economic empowerment. The increased workforce participation of women coupled with improved capacity for men to access parental leave to engage in greater care-giving roles will bring significant productivity gains. Increasing the capacity of parents to more fully participate in the labour force results in efficiencies for employers and the Australian economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus, challenges and opportunities about the way we work in Australia and around the world. The initiative provides the tools, frameworks and support organisations need to become more inclusive and supportive of employees' competing work and family needs.

I encourage Australian businesses to work with us on this important initiative.



Ann Sherry AO

Board Chair, UNICEF Australia