

## Returning to Work After Maternity Leave

Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc



A supportive and flexible return-to-work approach helped ease the transition from maternity leave back into the workplace. Through open communication, gradual reintegration, and ongoing flexibility, this experience highlights how organisations can successfully support working parents, particularly within industries that are predominantly part-time and female.

### The issue

Returning to work after maternity leave marks a significant point of transition from sole care giving, to balancing the act of parenthood and employment. Adjusting to life with a newborn, new routines, and ongoing responsibilities at home, while reintroducing work, requires careful planning.

In an industry that is predominantly part-time employees and over 50% female, these challenges are not unique. With evolving sleep routines and the additional demands of breastfeeding, it has become essential to establish a sustainable balance between professional responsibilities and home life. Many employees are navigating these circumstances with their employees. Adopting supportive, flexible approaches that recognise both professional and caregiving responsibilities is the key to a successful return.

### The solution

Approaches that support gradual returns to work, with casual check-ins throughout maternity leave to stay connected with the team, occasional visits to the workplace and regular updates via a group chat helps maintain these relationships.

A well-planned meeting on the first day back into the workplace helps sets clear expectations around hours, workload, and flexibility. Flexibility around hours, days worked, hybrid work environments, are shown to help with a smooth and manageable transition.

During this initial transition phase, workload is thoughtfully adjusted, with changes to expectations and key responsibilities managed in line with availability and manageability. This included changes to the number of Landcare groups managed, frequency of travel, workshop facilitation, and attending evening meetings only where necessary or switching to online. This allows for more predictable, home/office based work and reduced time away from family.

Regular check-ins every few weeks for the first 3 months and each month after that ensures the workload remains appropriate and supports the entire team also. These conversations create space to assess capacity, adjust expectations, and gradually increase responsibilities over time as circumstances change.

### The impact

In a broader industry context, this type of supportive and collaborative re-entry is highly significant. A gentle and flexible transition allows working mothers to re-engage with their roles while still maintaining strong family connections. It reduces disruption to family dynamics and enables parents to contribute financially without compromising



### Key facts

- Gradual return to work
- Regular check-ins and planning meetings
- Flexible work options and hrs



This initiative is made possible by the NSW Landcare Enabling Program, a collaboration between Local Land Services and Landcare NSW supported by the NSW Government.