**Concept Note:**

**IWiM Awareness Campaign – Inclusive Workplace Design in Mining**

Definition of Workplace Design

Workplace design refers to the process of designing and organising a workplace to optimise worker performance and safety. An effective workplace design utilises a multidisciplinary approach.

Context/Rationale

Technology, automation, digitalisation, ESG, globalisation, demographics, climate change and geopolitical transformations are making a significant impact on the work landscape.

The economic background in most countries is one of decelerating growth, job disruption, rising inequality and a broken social contract which are creating unrest and instability.

According to the World Economic Forum “The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) upends current economic frameworks. Who makes money - and how - has changed. Demographics have changed. Even the skills that brought our society to where we are today have changed. Leaders must account for these transformations or risk leaving behind their companies, their customers and their constituents. The top three economic frameworks in most urgent need of a 4IR overhaul include income generation, labour force participation and gross domestic product (GDP) measures.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Against this macro backdrop, skills shortages and talent retention are a huge worry and risk for many mining CEOs. The current scenario brings a combination of having to manage current challenges in addition to long-term fundamental changes to the world of work, changes in society and politics in the countries we work in as well as the mine of the future.

How it applies to mining

Mining is undergoing a digital revolution and preparing for automation of mines. This in turn, forces companies to focus on workplace attractiveness, health, safety, mechanisation, automation, and work management.

In the last 20 years the practice of mining has changed significantly; equipment, tools and procedures have changed too. A lot of emphasis has been placed in recent years on safety and reducing accidents and ergonomics is becoming more integrated into overall work management systems.

The mining industry now faces the challenge of securing a future workforce. The current skills shortage is due to a number of factors: lack of skilled miners, drillers, mining engineers to name a few; lack of an appealing sector image; ageing workforce with little knowledge transfer; cyclical nature of the industry means people are let go rather than plans in place to retain the workforce; lack of students studying mining; competing with tech companies and other industries for new skills/jobs and mining companies find it difficult to recruit young people. Healthy and productive environments need to be put in place to attract the skills for the future.

“By making mining attractive, safe and healthy, mining is also made more productive, efficient and profitable. While safe and healthy workplaces should be a goal in itself, there are several other advantages as well. This includes lower costs, higher productivity, improved quality, and so on. The picture of health and safety as solely an expense, required by law, has long since been erased. In fact, health and safety is most expensive when it is ignored.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Safety is only one element contributing to a good workplace. The business case for diversity and inclusion clearly shows that diversity of thought brings better performance and has an effect on work environments.

Workplace Design not only has a positive impact on the Quality of Work Life (QWL) but has a big impact on Quality of Life (QoL) of employees.[[3]](#footnote-3) This in turn affects productivity, creativity, reduced absenteeism, employee loyalty and engagement and retention.

Applying modern technologies, providing fitting PPE, toilets and changing rooms, offering better shift design and more flexibility/agile working to employees will make work environments better and safer. It can also make a more diverse group of workers and genders that now form the mining industry welcome and engaged.

Inclusive workplace cultures create “safe” work environments where all people feel comfortable speaking up without fear of retribution, even when mistakes are made so everyone can learn from it. A further benefit of workplaces where people feel comfortable taking a risk, not fearful, is that this is a proven environment where creativity and innovation will flourish. Inclusive work environments are only possible when women are truly included.

This is an opportunity for the mining industry to make some changes in workplace design be that in the office or at mine site. The aim is increased employee engagement & retention and participation in advancing prosperous, inclusive and equitable economies and societies.

Objectives

* To discuss innovative and practical ideas to improve workplace design that benefits everyone working in mining. How can we make mining inclusive and accessible regardless of gender, ethnicity & race, ability, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic background, religion and ability?
* Share best practice and find solutions to achieve attraction to the sector, recruitment, retention and well-being of women and men working in mining
* Action-orientated outcomes - individuals and organisations to ask questions: why can't this be done, is there a better way, have conversations with female employees, devise policies, ask what other organisations do, innovate, find solutions.

Topics

Technology/Digital Transformation and Automation, Safety and PPE, Procurement & Supply Chain, Shift Design, Changing Rooms and Toilets, FIFO, Lactation, Menstruation & Menopause, Creches & Nurseries, Paternal Leave and Mental Health, Office Design and Pregnancy.

Participants

Stakeholders across mining sector: industry, supply chain, individuals, international institutions and associations, academia.

Location and Dates

Throughout 2020 and 2021, globally and virtually.

In 2020 we would like to host a number of round tables and do an awareness campaign via social media.

Towards the end of 2020 produce a report with some of the findings and some solutions that be implemented easily. In 2021, we would like to focus on putting forth more in-depth solutions from the analysis of the materials and write case studies or how to guides.

Activities & Events

1. Convene round tables to open up a dialogue among stakeholders around this issue.

**Topic**

Round table 1 at PDAC

Why Inclusive workplace cultures are critically important to the performance of an organisation?

Roundtable 2 during Expomin, Chile in April

Aspiration of gender equality on site: what are the challenges and how can they be overcome?

**Format**: 1 or 2 presentations/case studies followed by an interactive session.

**Participants:** up to 15 people with different backgrounds + 1 facilitator

More round tables are planned. Each one will have a different title and focus on different content.

1. Social Media awareness campaign to be launched in 2020.

The social media campaign will be virtual, on twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube mostly. We will raise awareness via stories.

Alongside, do an interview series on female entrepreneurs that have found solutions to overcome some of these challenges.

1. Write-up of Case Studies and share best practice

Partnership Opportunities

In addition to participating in a round table, organisations can join the initiative to work closer together with IWiM on tangible outcomes. Sponsorship will support individual events and campaigns for this project and your brand will be recognised as a valued contributor to supporting dialogue and collaboration on gender diversity and inclusion in the mining sector. We welcome the chance to chat with you about different options of support suitable for your organisation or business.

About IWiM

International Women in Mining (IWiM) is a volunteer-led international organisation committed to advancing women in the mining sector.

IWiM is the global voice of women in mining and supports members in advancing gender diversity and inclusion in the mining sector. For over 10 years, IWiM has been influential in progressing a global agenda for

women in mining and supporting associations. IWiM is the largest, most representative women in mining organisation in the world. IWiM has individual members i.e. over 10,000 people from over 100 countries and liaises/supports 40+ WIM groups in over 40 countries.

IWiM supports both women in artisanal and large-scale mining and supporting industries (e.g. finance, law, IT) as well as women who work in government, academia and civil society.

Our board of directors, team and activities are all global.

Our goals and our role:

1. To change the mining industry for the better for everyone via global initiatives – by enabling greater gender parity, diversity & inclusion.
2. Support and advocate 50+ local WIM chapters in 40+ countries. Be the connecting piece by helping women create WIM chapters, connect WIM chapters to each other, to members & opportunities.
3. Convene and facilitate knowledge sharing & learning on key topics which can contribute to enhancing women’s roles and participation in the sector and its benefits.

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Topic Categories

Technology, Digital Transformation and Automation

The workplace of the future is a shared sense of purpose and a culture of collaboration. It will empower and inspire people to do their best work – to communicate, collaborate and solve problems. It will deepen engagement and spur productivity. And though technology does not define the workplace of the future – it is a critical element, allowing an organisation to attract the right talent, bridge physical and digital workspaces, appeal to workers of different generations and integrate data into the decision-making process.

A hallmark of the workplace of the future will be human employees working side by side with digital ones.

Finding success in this new model this requires a holistic approach to digital enablement. As the future workplace connects platforms and integrates new digital products and services, it will require new systems, processes, and roles to support the digital landscape. Digital enablement is a structured way to constantly improve the user experience, increase digital competencies and promote business agility. Changing employee capabilities requires leaders to continuously identify gaps and up-skill and cross-skill employees so they are prepared to perform new job functions.

The mining sector will need to redefine roles so that work can be done anywhere, anytime by anyone (as long as they have the right capabilities & competence) – e.g. crowdsourced design, gig work, virtual teams.

A lot of the hands-on work still needs to be done on site. Technology enabling VR/AR for learning on the job and following procedures will make it easier to recruit people from developing economies to perform tasks previously done by qualified people – as long as they can read and follow instructions and have access to help.

Case studies: FMG, Roy Hill, Rio Tinto, BHP all have ROCs and autonomous equipment.

The workplace of the future must be an agile organisation that can transform processes and services in a strategic way to boost performance and reduce costs.

Safety and PPE

Many mining professionals’ roles and tasks require wearing personal protective equipment (PPE).

Safety and production managers face many challenges concerning PPE compliance. While many decisions are made to ensure the health and safety of personnel, safety representatives must also develop programmes that focus on productivity and efficiency, which can often be a difficult balance to achieve. Creating a safe workplace environment involves the development of necessary procedures, communication and execution of training and inspection programs.

Effective protection can only be achieved by selecting suitable PPE, ensuring that it is correctly fitted, maintained and used appropriately for the required task. PPE can restrict the wearer to some extent by limiting mobility or visibility when carrying out certain tasks, thus creating possible additional hazards.

Suitable PPE should be identified to match the end user’s requirements with regard to fit, comfort, wearability and appropriate levels of personal protection. PPE must be comfortable to wear for long periods and not affect the health of the wearer. If employees experience discomfort when using PPE, they will soon stop wearing it, which could result in serious health risks and accidents. The effects on the wearer of non-compatible or unsuitable PPE can range from minor discomfort to more serious health problems, or possibly a very dangerous level of distraction from the task in hand.

## Why Women Need a Different Fit

When women’s work garment options are limited, the seemingly conflicting requirements of fit, durability and safety legislation can become an excuse for sacrificing one or more of these. One size does not fit all and neither does one shape, especially if specific tasks require certain movements which could be inhibited by unsuitable workwear.

Female employees across the mining sector need to be provided with fitting and appropriate PPE adapted to their morphology and their needs. This will boost employee engagement and retention as well as avoid safety risks, work place accidents and health problems. It will boost retention too as currently they are not made feel welcome or considered.

Providing ladies with men’s garments in smaller sizes isn’t a solution. A woman’s face is typically smaller than a man’s face. As a result, safety eyewear and respirators may leave vulnerable gaps if there is not a close fit. The same applies to female hands. Loose gloves can lead to poor grip and excess material which compromises safety, so hand protection must be the correct size. Boots: the female foot is shorter and narrower than a typical male foot so just going down men’s sizes does not provide correct fit and she can suffer consistent blisters and foot pain. If a belt fits incorrectly she suffers from muscle strains as they compensate for incorrect posture. If a hard hat is loose and her job requires a hat mounted lamp, she can experience severe and ongoing neck pain.

Although workwear has purposes other than just looking good, ill-fitting women’s workwear can look unprofessional and it may not afford the wearer the protection it is designed to provide. This is not to say that female workers are obsessed with their appearance, but looking and feeling smart is a basic expectation for any member of staff — male or female. People who feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about what they’re wearing will not perform as well and are less likely to remain in the job. They may even feel discriminated against — particularly if their employer appears to have made little or no effort to cater to their needs.

Some female PPE wearers in mining sometimes resort to buying their own PPE to fit them but this often means theirs won’t be laundered and maintained by the company and a number of companies won’t allow them to wear it.

Female-fit workwear and protective clothing is a step towards gender equality and helps women to feel they are cared for equally in the workplace. This encourages female talent when recruiting and removes any stigmas about the ability of women in the workplace.

The good news is that mainstream PPE providers are now offering a female range and the last decade has seen female-owned businesses of female PPE specialising in maternity wear, overalls, boots, gloves etc fill a gap in the market. Unfortunately, procurement and budgets in mining companies are complex and need to be reviewed to make sure each employee is kitted out with everything they need.

The workwear industry is evolving and it needs to continue to do so to meet the needs of an increasing female workforce in these sectors. Going beyond a style that simply fits to become a style that also lasts and performs, ensures women’s workwear is crafted to appropriate industry standards and regulations.

Shift Design/FIFO

Shift design, work roster and method of access to sites is integral to female participation in the mining industry. Poor design can lead to women not entering or prematurely exiting the industry as its not seen as harmonious with caring responsibilities that often fall upon female members of the family.

Not everyone leaving the industry or a FIFO role leaves for those reasons or is a carer even and we want to be careful not to stereotype. We welcome an open conversation about shift design, FIFO and DIDO roles to verify whether they are designed with inclusion for all in mind. This applies for all the topics/categories included in this campaign.

FIFO rosters mean individuals can be isolated and lack support from friends and family. The potential lack of flexibility around timing or onsite participation in work activities can mean caring responsibilities, team sports and other recreational activities clash with working hours. This can lead to FIFO workers feeling like they live two separate lives and they can struggle to switch from one to the other.

The same happens for shift workers as caring responsibilities are more difficult to outsource outside of traditional 9/5 working hours, teams generally play and train weekly and many social gatherings are missed.

Flexible Working and Remote Working

Healthy and productive environments need to be put in place to attract the skills for the future.

This includes redesigning jobs to create more opportunities for remote/virtual work that can be done flexibly/shared easily. FIFO roles and roles requiring lots of travel could be broken down into what can be done on site and what can be done remotely.

Remote operations centres (and the virtual gig work it enables) facilitate an open learning culture where workers have line of sight of the whole system’s value chain and the cause and effect of changes along the value chain. This environment should promote a flat-structured, critical systems thinking workforce which is a major change to the structure of mining companies which have traditionally been hierarchical, command and control with siloed (need to know basis) employees.

The digital transformation of mining will enable this change. This culture change will improve acceptance of diversity in all its forms which will improve female participation in mining through all levels of leadership.

Changing rooms and Toilets

Women have different morphologies and needs to men.

Many mines still don’t have toilets or female changing rooms and when they do, they aren’t designed with women in mind.

The design of many mine toilets isn't that different from the portable ones you might see at an outdoor festival, but for an underground environment they can lack privacy and be unsanitary. A concern for companies is also the frequency with which underground toilet models currently need to be emptied and ensuring routine maintenance is undertaken.

Underground conditions are very challenging for women as they may have to walk far or don’t have access to a toilet and traditionally women need to sit down rather than stand up. Therefore, the priority should be to make provision for adequate toilet facilities or assist in allowing urination from a standing position with female urination devices.

Current limitations include:

• None or limited access to underground toilet facilities

• Unhygienic toilet conditions

• Unavailable hand washing facilities after using the toilets

• Underground toilets are unisex

• Inadequate access to sanitary bins (when they do exist, they are often filled with rags), to dispose of sanitary towels underground. Very often sanitary bins are not provided. This results in women avoiding changing sanitary towels or carrying them on their person until on the surface

• Incorrectly specified PPE can make it difficult when going to the bathroom

• Inadequate space

Pregnancy, Lactation, Menstruation/Menopause

There are many opportunities for improvement that are not identified because a minority female workforce is afraid to appear difficult, so silence and acceptance are easily the default.

**Pregnancy**

As the number of females participating in the mining industry increases, with that comes concerns with the health, safety and wellbeing of pregnant and breastfeeding employees. Workplaces need to understand the risks and hazards on those women posed by the mining work environment and understand the impacts on that female worker and her developing child. In many cases, minor adjustment of her work environment can lead to a significant reduction in risk exposure to such hazards.

The risks to women fall into three categories:

* Physical Hazards e.g. noise, vibrations, heat, radiation
* Chemical hazards e.g. Al, As, Be, Cd, CO, Ch, Cu, HS, Pb, Mn, Hg, Ni, Nitrates, NO, particulate matter, hydrocarbons, Se, Tl, Th, Ur, Va and Zn compounds.
* Other factors e.g. Ergonomic exposure (excessive standing, sitting), work hours and occupational stress

While pregnant, the female form undergoes a multitude of changes making her body more susceptible to those hazards due to alterations in her circulatory, respiratory, endocrine and musculoskeletal system. Women have a higher heart rate, the volume of blood in their bodies increase by at least 30%, she breathes in a higher total amount of air per minute and pregnancy hormones lead to softening of her ligaments tendons and other connective tissues.

A risk-based approach is required to ensure that these hazards are managed to reduce the impact on the female employees reducing the risk to as low as reasonably achievable.

**Lactation**

It is widely accepted that ‘breast is best’ if an individual female is able to do so. Many women discontinue their breastfeeding journey upon return to work as they believe it is unmanageable to continue.

Contaminants can inadvertently enter a mother milks through exposure to those contaminants. Upon return to work, women who chose to continue this journey need to continue to limit their exposure to certain hazardous environmental contaminants. An option is to monitor the level of contaminants in the employees’ milk upon return and frequently after, and if contamination is detected she can be advised, and the milk discarded as a precaution.

It is also important to ensure females are well hydrated, especially in warm environments and to avoid hot environments when possible.

Women also need to be provided with an area to express their milk while at work. This area is required to be lockable for privacy, have an electrical connection to plug in a breast pump, and there also needs to be access to a sink to wash equipment, a microwave for sterilisation of equipment and a fridge/freezer for safe milk storage.

A positive is example is BMC South Walker Creek (BHP) which became an accredited Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace by the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) in December 2019. the site created a dedicated space where mothers could express and implemented a breastfeeding policy outlining lactation break entitlements.[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Menstruation**

Women menstruate for a large period of their life. Dealing with this uniquely female challenge in a male-dominated industry is often not considered and not spoken about. However, it poses a significant challenge for women as shifts can be long, and their chosen form of menstrual management rarely extends for that period of time.

Some of the issues faced are below:

* Tampons can’t be used for longer than 8 hours without changing
* On a heavy day any form of menstrual management is likely to need changing
* Mining work can often be dirty, and if there isn’t access to hand washing facilities hygiene is difficult, as is disposal of single use sanitary items

Possible solutions to this are:

* Using a higher volume menstrual cup (this is not recommended for long periods of time if a female has experienced toxic shock syndrome before)
* Pair the menstrual cup with period undies or a pad to extend the adequate timeframe
* Use contraception to manage when/if a period takes place
* Provide adequate facilities for the changing of menstrual management and hygienic hand washing facilities

[She’sFreetobe](https://www.shesfreetobe.com) provides packs with female urination devices, menstrual cups and period underwear in a discreet waterproof neoprene bag for women in industry.

**Menopause**

Menopause is a change in hormone levels within the female body, usually between the ages of 45 and 55, with some symptoms being:

* Cognitive disruption and brain fog, poor concentration
* Hot flushes and night sweats
* Sleeplessness
* Irritated skin
* More frequent urinary incontinence and urinary tract infections (UTI’s)
* Low mood
* Increased risk of osteoporosis and bone fractures
* Anxiety and lack of confidence

These symptoms can lead to significant productivity losses for organisations, and be a cause of anxiety and distress for the women.

The scale of the issue via statistics from the United Kingdom:

* Menopausal women are the fastest growing demographic in the workforce.
* The average age for a woman to go through menopause is 51. It can be earlier than this, naturally or due to surgery, or illness. And symptoms may start years before menopause, during the perimenopause phase (7-14 years).
* According to the [Faculty of Occupational Medicine](http://www.fom.ac.uk/health-at-work-2/information-for-employers/dealing-with-health-problems-in-the-workplace/advice-on-the-menopause) (FOM), nearly 8 out of 10 of menopausal women are in work in the UK.
* 3 out of 4 women experience symptoms, 1 in 4 could experience serious symptoms.
* One in three will soon be over 50, and retirement ages are now 68
* There have already been successful employment tribunals against employers.

All women experience menopause differently.

The majority of women don’t feel comfortable talking about menopause with their line managers. It could be the current negative perception of menopause and some women being embarrassed to talk about it. And/or the general lack of accurate knowledge and women not being aware that what they are experiencing is due to fluctuating hormones during the menopause.

When women do understand the symptoms and ways to manage them, their lives (and work) can get back to normal quickly. Alarmingly, in some cases menopausal symptoms can lead to women leaving their jobs.

Many line managers don’t feel confident talking about menopause. They don’t know enough about it or how they can help, unlike maternity where there usually is a clear process.

What employers can do is creating the environment to talk about menopause openly and without embarrassment. It is a natural phase in every woman’s life that needs to be normalised.

To support and value female employees during this time the following can be implemented:

* Write a policy or guidance document and make sure it is well publicised
* Introducing a range of reasonable adjustments. These are usually simple to implement, such as a desktop fan or temperature-controlled offices, an extra uniform, or even flexible working.
* Training, processes and information so all employees have a clear understanding of menopause
* Informal support employee network

Considering the relatively small investment in activity, the financial payback would be quick considering the following:

* **The cost of recruitment** to replace women who leave the business and bringing a new member of the team up to speed.
* **Cost of absence.**
* **Cost of employee relations issues or tribunals** which doesn’t include the cost of any awards or the claimant’s legal fees, if won. On top of this is the distraction in the business and reputational risks.

These are clear, compelling reasons for supporting menopausal women in the workplace. It supports an inclusive culture as many women continue working through their menopause and for many years beyond. We believe supporting them through the menopause transition should be considered best practice by all employers.

Mental Health

Definition by the World Health Organisation: *“A state of well-being in which the individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community.”*

Mental health is as important to address as physical health, as humans thrive on connection.

Mental health is determined by factors both internal and external. The problem is that mental health is more fluid than physical health – it is less static, and it changes more often.

In the mining industry, there are numerous hazards that can contribute to eroding an employee's mental health (external factors).  These include workload, workplace harassment, lack of support services, stigma associated with a male-dominated workforce and fatigue to name some.

Until recently, there hasn't been much information available about mental health in the mining industry.

Australia's mining industry has conducted some research, but the rest of the world is lagging behind.

Vale put some effort into trying to close the gap. In April 2019 the Centre for Research in Occupational Safety and Health (CROSH) at Laurentian University, presented the findings of a five-year, $500,000 study called [Mining Mental Health](http://www.vale.com/canada/EN/aboutvale/communities/health-and-safety/Documents/Mining%20Mental%20Health%20Summary%20Report.pdf).

Roughly 56% of participants in the study were experiencing some kind of symptom that warranted attention.

8% displayed symptoms of depression, and 10% experienced thoughts of suicide without a plan to follow through.

Men are less likely to talk about mental health and are less likely to seek help. It is also a question of age. The average age of a person working in the mining industry is ca. 43. Younger generations are far more likely to openly discuss mental health than older generations.

Tackling these issues in the workforce is becoming increasingly necessary as the skills shortage is a real challenge for companies and they can’t afford losing talent or loss of production and down time.

In mining many operations are in remote locations meaning less access to health-care services. There is also a list of additional hazards and challenges associated with fly-in, fly-out operations.

Mental health risk factors for FIFO workers

* extended working hours and changes in shift rotations;
* the large number of consecutive days worked, and the ratio of ‘on’ to ‘off’ periods;
* the lack of control over aspects of accommodation arrangements;
* exposure to extreme temperatures and poor air quality;
* adverse natural events, such as cyclones or bushfires, that can restrict travel and create uncertainty for workers and their families;
* isolated working conditions, with limited access to recreational facilities or communication technology;
* lengthy travel times;
* mental and physical fatigue; and
* the use of alcohol and illicit substances.

With over 600 participants, AUSIMM’s survey conducted in February 2019 compared answers given by women to the answers provided by their male counterparts during AusIMM’s Professional Employment and Remuneration Survey. Of the 21% of women who indicated they held a FIFO/DIDO role in the sector, five times as many women indicated that health care services were below average when compared to their male counterparts.

The Western Australian Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, in conjunction with the Commission for Occupational Safety and Health and the Mining Industry Advisory Committee, has released a Code of Practice *“*Mentally healthy workplaces for fly-in fly-out (FIFO) workers in the resources and construction sectors*”*.[[5]](#footnote-5)  The Code recommends implementing a risk-based approach to prevent and manage harm from psychosocial hazards and risk factors in the workplace.

The Code is the first of its kind in Australia, and follows on from a research report provided to the WA Mental Health Commission in September 2018.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The aim is to provide guidelines for establishing, monitoring and maintaining the mental health of FIFO workers. Although it is targeted at the resources and construction sectors in Western Australia, the Code is relevant to any employer with a FIFO workforce or a long-distance commuting workforce, and therefore provides a useful model for many employers in the mining sector.

The Code also highlights the importance of a mentally healthy workplace and the importance of leadership and workplace culture in developing and maintaining a mentally healthy workplace.

Companies should be focusing on developing a mental health strategy (in the same ways physical health is approached) that actively tries to identify psychological and social hazards in their workplace, puts in place early intervention services, and allows for return-to-work arrangements.

They also need to actively, consistently work to decrease stigma. The goal is to normalise conversations about mental health and to equip workers with the tools to be able to identify someone struggling.

Crèches, Nurseries

Globally, women spend approximately three times the amount of time spent by men on unpaid work, which includes childcare[[7]](#footnote-7).

If a mother chooses to work, her children need to be cared for while she is attending her workplace.

Common forms of childcare:

* Home with father or family members caring for children (becoming more commonplace)
* Daycare/Family Daycare/Kindergarden/Crèche/Nursery
* Before and after school care
* Nanny/Au Pair/Childminder

Some organisations offer on-site or subsidised childcare for their workforce to access as an incentive. This takes the potential stress of organising care for your child/ren away.

This is still uncommon, but would be a real draw card to allow mothers a seamless transition back to working life and help with family logistics and time planning.

Maternity and Parental Leave

There is a wide range of possibilities for parental leave from country to country, and company to company and pay rate over time for both father and mother. They range from no government mandated leave in the United States where it is up to the company to decide if they offer it, to over a year of full pay – predominantly for mothers.

Due to medical/personal reasons mothers will take time off prior to the birth, and communicate to their workplace the intended period of leave. Organisation have policies and procedures which underpin this and should provide a clear vision of what to expect. This is not always the case, policies may be unclear, policies often don’t include a terminated or stillborn child or health reasons and a woman’s inability to work each side of childbirth can be poorly addressed leaving mothers unduly stressed trying to navigate the system.

The need to recover from childbirth and breastfeeding are key drivers for longer female parental leave as these can take some time.

A leading reason for females not being hired is because of the need for longer parental leave, as traditionally male-dominated industries haven’t needed this before. It’s perceived as more complicated due to the mother’s choice around how long to take off and whether to return to work at all.

The return to work after having children, losing a child or terminating a pregnancy is also a challenge. The workplace has changed from that which you left, you may not feel as connected to it, people may make assumptions about what work to give you and mother guilt can be overwhelming. It is no surprise that this lifechanging time for a woman is when many women drop out of the Mining Industry never to return taking their skills with them.

For men, the leave period is most commonly far shorter at a week or two, although some companies generously offer the same parental leave as for women. This allows men to easier participate as a primary carer for their children and shares the care.

To highlight best practice in this area, in 2017 Rio Tinto developed a global standard for parental leave across all offices and operations, valid for all employees which provides 18 weeks of paid parental leave at full pay following the birth or adoption of a child.

Office Design

The fight for top talent has generated a rapid transformation in workplace design. **Knowing how modern office design stimulates collaboration and engages employees has become key.**

Today, the office is no longer viewed as an inflexible cost centre but rather a space that can have a huge impact on productivity, staff retention and also attracting the very best talent. Office design has shifted towards flexible working, with spaces to suit different needs, such as co-working and collaboration, socialising and private research. Increasingly, companies strive to create work environments that cater to the needs of all staff, be they functional, personal or even emotive. This concept has gained such traction that a recent study by Deloitte[[8]](#footnote-8) cites 79% of executives rated workplace experience as a critical issue to improve productivity and enable growth.

It’s not difficult to understand why this is the case as home and work lives continue to intertwine coupled with technological advances that further blur any pre-existing boundaries separating the two.

Businesses will assess air quality, carbon-dioxide levels and temperature, and analyse them alongside staff happiness and productivity. They will source more sustainable materials for furnishings, as well as investigate which synthetic products, such as paint and plastics, emit chemicals and how this impacts people’s health.

Experts also say that there will be a shift towards multi-purpose buildings that cater for a whole community, rather than only the people who work there.

A global study by Steelcase[[9]](#footnote-9) found that one-third of workers across 17 of the world’s most important economies are actually disengaged. As engagement is so demonstrably linked to business-critical outcomes such as employee retention, productivity and even profits, this is worrying. The study found a strong correlation between high workplace satisfaction and high employee engagement, with employees who have greater control over their physical workplace – including access to private spaces – also reporting the highest

engagement levels. Workers who have the ability to choose where they want to work in the office based on the task at hand are much more engaged in the work they do.

Organisations looking to improve employee engagement might be surprised to learn nearly one-third of workers are neither engaged nor disengaged but fall somewhere in the moderate middle. These workers might not be actively hurting an organisation, but they are not benefitting it, either. As they make up such a large portion of the workforce, just a small improvement in their engagement levels could have a significant impact on business performance. One way of doing this is to make some important changes to their work environment.

1. How is the Fourth Industrial revolution Changing our Economy, WEF, 26/11/2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
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3. The Effect of Workplace Design on Quality of Life at Work, Jacqueline Vischer and Mariam Wifi, 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.bhp.com/community/community-news/2019/12/south-walker-creek-accredited-as-a-breastfeeding-friendly-workplace/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.dmp.wa.gov.au/Documents/Safety/MSH_MHW_FIFO_COP.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.mhc.wa.gov.au/media/2548/impact-of-fifo-work-arrangement-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-of-fifo-workers-summary-report.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. McKinsey Global Institute 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 2017 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. https://info.steelcase.com/global-employee-engagement-workplace-report [↑](#footnote-ref-9)