

Today most adults are employed. Work is pressured – we have more work than hours to do it in – and few of us have the time or energy for much else.



Many of us have too much on our plates to take part in community activities like voluntary work, cultural and sports clubs, children's groups or churches. Our homes are ruled by the workplace clock.

If we are to have a decent work/life balance then the Council of Trade Unions believes that we must be able to choose work arrangements that let us take a full part in paid employment and in family, social and cultural life.

The good news is that we have a new statutory right to help many of us do that. You may be entitled to flexible work arrangements to pick up children after school or crèche, to care for them during school holidays, to help care for an elderly parent or anything else a care-giver might do.

What's changed?

An amendment to the Employment Relations Act (Flexible Working Arrangements, July 1 2008) allows workers who care for others to ask for flexibility in their hours, days or place of work – arrangements such as flexi-time, home-working, career breaks, term-time working, altered hours or job sharing.



The process is simple



Provided that you have responsibilities of care for any person, you have worked for your employer for at least six months and there is nothing in your collective employment agreement that clashes with your request, you may write to your employer requesting flexible work arrangements. You will need to include the following information:

- The date and your name
- That the request is made under the Employment Relations Amendment Act 2007 Part 6aa, Flexible Working Arrangements
- The change you would like, whether it is permanent or temporary and, if temporary, when it should end
- How the change will help you to provide care
- Any changes you think your employer would need to make to workplace arrangements if your request was approved.

The CTU recommends that union members involve their union delegate in this process.

If your employer turns you down

Your employer has to consider your request. If your request is turned down you may try to reach a compromise with the employer - your union can help you. If you think your employer has not complied with the Act you may ask the Department of Labour for help.

Go ahead and ask – it's your statutory right!

Don't be afraid to ask. Your employer may be open to changing your work arrangements. An employer who has not listened in the past must listen now.

The new right to request should particularly help low paid workers who hold down more than one job and Maori and Pacific workers with heavy family, community and cultural responsibilities.



Help to tip the balance

This entitlement can help you establish a healthy work/life balance. Flexible working arrangements can also have wide-ranging effects as workers have more time to parent, be involved citizens and enthusiastic workers and employers discover the improvement this brings to staff morale and productivity.



Not a care giver? Ask anyway!

All of us benefit from recharging our batteries. Do you want to do voluntary work, coach a sports team or study? There is nothing to stop you from asking for work arrangements that make it possible.

Information and resources

Find your union: <http://union.org.nz/findyourunion>

NZ Council of Trade Unions (CTU):
<http://union.org.nz/campaigns/get-a-life>

Department of Labour: www.dol.govt.nz/worklife

Download a pdf copy of the Act: <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2007/0105/latest/contents.html>

CTU guide to work/life balance:
<http://union.org.nz/policy/its-about-time>

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Such a
great place
for families...

...so hard to find
time

