

## Transforming to a flexible work culture

### Key learning

- A people-led process is critical to transform work culture.
- Firstly, reach agreement on the ground rules of flexible work values and practices.
- Have supporting online tools in place to enable remote working and collaboration.

“Start from a place of trust.” This sums up what is fundamental to making flexibility in business work. It is also one of the ground rules that **Metcash** people put in place as they transformed to a flexible work culture.

Spurred on by the temporary rail closure, Metcash knew it needed to support a more flexible way of working for its 800-strong team at Macquarie Park. Flexibility would minimise the rail closure’s impact on its headquarters’ people and operations.

As program manager, Jennifer Mitchell led a team to bring the company along on this journey. Jennifer explains, “At the start we made sure we had a policy that was in line with Fair Work Australia but this took a backseat to how to put it into action. We focused on the process of bringing everyone on board”.

Jennifer and the HR team ran a series of team-member, manager and executive workshops to voice company work values and then co-develop options that would make flexibility work for everyone.

“Our process led to clear ground rules, or guardrails, for people to work within,” says Jennifer. Some of these were foundation values and work practices for the whole business, others were specific to different teams. ‘Flexibility cannot get in the way of relationships with customers’ and team members and people need to know where we are’, are just two examples of the company guardrails.

An output of the collaborative process was *Our Flexible Working Guide*. It is an accessible team-based approach to making flexibility work. Alongside this, Jennifer and the IT team ensured technology and tools such as Microsoft Teams were in place to support online collaboration.

This people-led approach was delivered over just a few months. Following the intensive project to encourage cultural change, team members identified flexibility as a clear benefit of working at Metcash. Its annual engagement survey found 20% of Macquarie Park people regularly work from home and 80% utilise online collaboration tools. Meanwhile productivity has increased.

**Often organisations get stuck on the policy of flexibility. But words alone do not change workplace culture. Metcash recognised this and ensured that all team members contributed to a people-led transformation to a flexible workplace.**