



## Fertility benefits help employees with their parenting journey

**Inclusive employee fertility benefits bring value to businesses and their people, right from the very start of the path to parenthood.**

Just as every family is different, so too is every person's journey unique to building a family.

The current focus on progressing family-friendly workplaces, including enhanced parental leave entitlements and flexibility at work, is welcomed. So now is a great time for forward-thinking organisations to realise the benefits of providing comprehensive and inclusive fertility support for their employees. This signals support for all families, including those who might need help at the beginning of their parenting journey.

### **Why fertility? And why now?**

One in six couples in Australia experience fertility issues at some point during their child-bearing years. The desire for parenthood is independent of sex, sexuality or gender identity and there are many different paths to parenthood.

In any sizeable workplace there will be people whose hopes and dreams to create a family of their own will be facing real challenges. Without you knowing it, they might be struggling - emotionally, physically and financially

- while also trying to do and be their best at work.

The growing focus on employee health and wellbeing is an opportunity to align fertility health with holistic health and wellness initiatives, and also to build understanding and support for a range of health and other important issues, including miscarriage, stillbirth, and menopause, to name a few. If they're not recognised and visible, they will continue to be misunderstood, neglected, and an opportunity missed.

### **International experience**

Supporting employees on the pathway to parenthood is a rapidly growing focus for employers internationally.

Leading global brands along with an increasing number of companies in the USA, now offer fertility benefits to support their inclusion and diversity goals and objectives to attract and retain top talent and improve employee engagement and productivity.<sup>1</sup>

A recent report by Maven and Great Place to Work™, surveyed 440,000 parents from 1,200 companies and found 81% of Best Workplaces provide reimbursements for fertility treatments.

*"Not only are the Best Workplaces for Parents™ providing better leave, they are supporting employees throughout the entire journey of planning and raising a family. From fertility coverage to return-to-work coaching after parental leave and support finding childcare, the Best Workplaces are investing in benefits that provide continuous care and holistic support for parents at every stage of the journey."*<sup>2</sup>

Fertility coverage is a new concept in Australia and the USA model may not be immediately transferable to our own business landscape. However, there are some very practical things employers can do to help, and which can make all the difference to someone's fertility journey and how they present at work - allowing them to maintain career focus, reduce stress, save time and money and increase the chances of a successful outcome sooner.

### **Employer support for the fertility journey**

Dr Devora Lieberman, City Fertility's NSW Medical Director and fertility specialist, agrees there is great potential for employers to support their staff through the fertility journey, as part of a broader array of inclusive family-friendly initiatives and health and well-being benefits.

“I think we need a greater understanding in the broader community about just how challenging it can be to get pregnant. We human beings are very inefficient at reproducing and we tend to overestimate our fertility,” Dr Lieberman says.

“For a lot of people who may have experienced success in other part of their lives, who usually set their minds to do something and achieve it, bumping up against infertility can be quite confronting. Feeling like your body has failed you, or you have failed it or you’re failing your partner - can be particularly painful.

“Businesses can support their staff right from the very start of the path to parenthood and offer inclusive benefits for all family types. This will also help progress more open conversations and a broader understanding in the community about fertility health generally, diverse family arrangements, career aspirations, and what it takes to give families a good start in life,” Dr Lieberman said.

### Inclusive family recognition and support

Indeed, there are all kinds of families and workplace family and carer policies should explicitly include statements of inclusion, recognising that fertility treatments can be an important avenue, sometimes the only avenue, for LGBTQ+ families to plan and start their families.

Employer support sends an important signal to staff that their experience matters, no matter the family makeup

or where they are on the parenthood path. At the Out Leadership Australia Summit in 2020, Ashley Scott, Rainbow Families CEO, summed this up neatly:

*“A good experience sets a family up for a good start in life and employees are going to want to stay with that business. They want to be there because they have been valued as an employee and want to give back and do their best for the company.”<sup>3</sup>*

The value of employee fertility benefits has proved to be tangible for both businesses and their employees, including attracting and retaining diverse talent and increased employee engagement, productivity and overall improved health and wellbeing.<sup>4</sup>

Employee health and wellbeing has scaled to the top of the list of business priorities in the last year. Is your business interested in championing fertility health for your employees? We recommend six practical steps to take inclusive family and health benefits to the next level.

*Authors: Judith Kingston (City Fertility) and Lin Surch (Beyond Gender)*

<sup>1</sup> Willis Towers Watson 2017, Maternity, Family and Fertility Survey

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mavenclinic.com>

<sup>3</sup> “This Week in Leadership: The Future of Employee Benefits, LGBTQ+ Inclusion, Fertility Health and Planning for Families” Agenda | Out Leadership Australia Summit ([bizzabo.com](http://bizzabo.com))

<sup>4</sup> Adamson, Dr David More Employers Offering Fertility Benefits Means Happier Employees Who Stay | HuffPost

### Six steps to support your employees start their families

1. Review and revise your business policies and practices to ensure fertility health is identified and covered, including access to leave and flexible hours during treatment. Ensure explicit recognition for LGBTQ+ employees, including Partner IVF, donor programs, fertility preservation, adoption and surrogacy.
2. Make a list of high-quality, compassionate and caring fertility providers and their locations for your staff intranet and/or workplace enterprise platform. You want your employees in good hands!
3. Explore a partnership arrangement with a fertility provider. City Fertility offers employees a range of confidential fertility services at a generous corporate rate\* and easy access to expert specialists, patient-centred care and advanced treatments.
4. Check your health and wellbeing program offers tailored information about fertility health and boosts understanding of the many aspects related to infertility, including age, weight, exercise, diet and nutrition, smoking, alcohol and other drugs, and more. Can you include fertility health in your next staff wellness expo?
5. Share information with employee resource groups and seek their input. City Fertility has specialists ready to engage with your staff, to help them make informed decisions and choices for their future families.
6. Engage an LGBTQ+ consultancy, like Beyond Gender, to access comprehensive resources, health and wellbeing training and referrals on how to best support your LGBTQ+ employees.

