Family-friendly organisations (FFOs): Policies, provisions, practices and organisational culture

Santha Fernandez

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This thesis is dedicated to the loving memory of my late father, C. P. Menon, and my mother Thankamma Menon who passed away just weeks before the thesis was submitted for examination.

I will forever honour, cherish and keep alive the selfless sacrifice, dedication, encouragement, and support that you gave us, your children, so that we would have better education, endless opportunities and promising futures.

I might not have understood it then but definitely do so now.

I shall always love you.
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your own.

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for ‘helping me see’ and for the many times you carried me when the going got weary.

People are always interested in how I balance full-time work, studies and family/life.
This journey has been a learning curve for me – in the beginning I used to overwork,
working through weekends and late nights to fulfil all responsibilities and obligations,
including unrealistic self-placed demands, to complete my thesis in four years. A health
problem, a major surgery and the deteriorating health of my mother forced me to re-
assess my life; I now believe the key to my balance is about being able to prioritise.
Through conscious reflection and a process of self-negotiation I have been able to work
out what aspects of life really matter to me and to keep that in focus always.

To me, my family and my spiritual needs are the most important aspects of who I am and
so work, studies and everything else must be planned around them. It also meant being
really flexible and learning to let go of tasks, routines, needs and wants that I could
sacrifice altogether or which I could schedule for another day or time.

For my own sense of peace I have learnt that “something’s got to give”. 
Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

(Santha Fernandez)
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................................ v  
LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................................... vi 
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ............................................................................................................... vii 
ABSTRACT ....................................................................................................................................... 1 

## PART I: INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................ 3 

### CHAPTER 1: STUDY ON WORK AND FAMILY/LIFE BALANCE ....................................... 4 

1.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 4 
1.2 Background to the study ........................................................................................................... 7 
1.3 Aim and scope of the study ....................................................................................................... 12 
1.3.1 Scope of the study ............................................................................................................... 13 
1.4 Research questions ................................................................................................................... 15 
1.5 Significance of the findings ..................................................................................................... 16 
1.6 Definitions ............................................................................................................................... 16 
1.7 Overview of the thesis ............................................................................................................. 17 

## PART II: BACKGROUND .................................................................................................... 19 

### CHAPTER 2: RHETORIC-REALITY CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .................................... 20 

2.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 20 
2.2 Discourse and rhetoric ............................................................................................................. 21 
2.2.1 Contemporary discourse ...................................................................................................... 22 
2.2.2 Contemporary rhetoric ........................................................................................................ 23 
2.2.3 Rhetorical analytical frameworks ........................................................................................ 26 
2.2.3.1 Policy sciences analytical framework ............................................................................. 26 
2.2.4 Gap analysis ....................................................................................................................... 28 
2.2.4.1 The SERVQUAL scale .................................................................................................... 30 
2.3 Argyris and Schon’s ‘Theory of Action’ ................................................................................... 31 
2.4 Conceptual framework ............................................................................................................ 33 
2.4.1 The family-friendly organisation (FFO) ............................................................................ 35 
2.4.2 Policies, provisions and practices ........................................................................................ 35 
2.4.2.1 Espoused (rhetoric) component: Provisions .................................................................... 36 
2.4.2.2 Theory-in-use (reality) component: Practices ................................................................. 36 
2.4.2.3 Rhetoric-reality discrepancy ............................................................................................ 37 
2.5 Contemporary organisational developments ......................................................................... 38 
2.5.1 Downsizing ....................................................................................................................... 38 
2.5.2 Rise in FFWs and FFOs ....................................................................................................... 41 
2.5.3 WF/L balance rhetoric ...................................................................................................... 41 
2.5.3.1 Gap contributors ............................................................................................................. 43 
2.6 Chapter summary ..................................................................................................................... 44 

### CHAPTER 3: WORK AND FAMILY/LIFE LITERATURE REVIEW ....................................... 45 

3.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 45 
3.2 Shift from work-family to work-life ....................................................................................... 46 
3.3 Work-family/life (WF/L) conflict ............................................................................................ 48 
3.3.1 Conflict: A gender perspective .......................................................................................... 51 
3.3.2 Gender and societal culture ............................................................................................... 52 
3.3.2.1 Gender egalitarianism .................................................................................................... 55 
3.4 The business case .................................................................................................................... 57 
3.5 WF/L balance in Australia ..................................................................................................... 59 
3.5.1 Developments in industrial relations .................................................................................. 60 
3.5.1.1 Enterprise bargaining ....................................................................................................... 61 
3.5.1.2 WorkChoices legislation .................................................................................................. 63 
3.5.2 From gender focus to family focus .................................................................................... 65 
3.6 External challenges confronting FFWs ................................................................................... 67 
3.6.1 Economic challenges - Increased business competition .................................................. 67
3.6.1.1  Casualisation of the workforce .......................................................... 68
3.6.2  Social challenges .................................................................................. 70
  3.6.2.1  Changing structure of households .................................................. 70
  3.6.2.2  Changing structure of families ......................................................... 71
  3.6.2.3  Changing fabric of society ................................................................. 73
  3.6.2.4  Towards a more feminine Australian society? ............................. 77
  3.6.2.5  Societal cultural influence in WF/L balance ................................. 78
3.7  Internal challenges confronting FFWs ....................................................... 80
  3.7.1  Work-family-life (WF/L) balance provisions ..................................... 81
  3.7.1.1  Awareness of provisions ................................................................. 82
  3.7.1.2  Need for provisions ......................................................................... 85
  3.7.1.3  Take-up of provisions ....................................................................... 87
  3.7.2  Organisational communication ........................................................... 89
  3.7.3  Power and control issues ..................................................................... 91
  3.7.3.1  Flexibility ......................................................................................... 93
  3.7.3.2  Control of technical aspects of work: Empowerment ..................... 94
  3.7.3.3  Control of ‘Employment’ aspects: Time at work ......................... 95
  3.7.3.4  Discretionary power ....................................................................... 96
  3.7.3.5  Power in the ranks .......................................................................... 98
  3.7.4  Organisational cultural issues ............................................................. 98
  3.7.4.1  Gendered notion of WF/L balance .................................................. 100
  3.7.4.2  Culture of long hours of work ........................................................ 103
  3.7.4.3  Culture of fear ................................................................................ 105
  3.7.4.4  Leadership and management support ........................................... 107
3.8  Chapter summary ...................................................................................... 108
PART III: THE RESEARCH .......................................................................................................................... 110
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ........................................................................................................ 111
  4.1  Introduction ............................................................................................. 111
  4.2  Philosophical assumptions ..................................................................... 112
  4.3  Paradigmatic issues ................................................................................ 113
  4.3.1  Positivist paradigm .............................................................................. 114
  4.3.1.1  Positivist aspects of the study ........................................................ 115
  4.3.2  Interpretivist paradigm ....................................................................... 116
  4.3.2.1  Interpretivist aspects of the study .................................................... 118
  4.3.3  Research questions ............................................................................ 119
  4.4  Research design ...................................................................................... 121
  4.4.1  Research strategy: Case study ............................................................ 121
  4.4.2  The case organisation: The FFO ......................................................... 124
  4.4.3  Research inquiry: Mixed methods ..................................................... 127
  4.4.4  Mixed methods in within-case analysis ............................................. 129
  4.5  Operationalising the rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework .............. 131
  4.5.1  Initial preparation ............................................................................... 131
    4.5.1.1  Ethical considerations ................................................................... 133
  4.5.2  Quantitative methods ......................................................................... 134
    4.5.2.1  Data collection ............................................................................... 135
    4.5.2.2  Data analysis .................................................................................. 136
    4.5.2.3  Measuring the discrepancy (or gap) .............................................. 137
  4.5.3  Qualitative method ............................................................................. 139
    4.5.3.1  Data collection ............................................................................... 140
    4.5.3.2  Data analysis .................................................................................. 141
    4.5.4  Mixing the two methods ................................................................... 144
  4.6  Chapter summary ................................................................................... 144
CHAPTER 5: RHETORIC-REALITY GAP ANALYSIS .......................................................... 146
  5.1  Introduction ............................................................................................ 146
  5.2  Document analysis ................................................................................ 148
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Categories of provisions</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Distribution of provisions according to categories</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Demographics of sample population</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Awareness (individual-level): Frequency distribution</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Awareness (individual-level): Descriptive statistics</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Awareness (individual-level): F-Test results</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Awareness (individual-level): z-Test hypothesis testing</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Awareness (macro-level): Overall</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Awareness (macro-level): Gender-based summary</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Awareness (macro-level): Gender-based descriptive statistics</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Awareness (macro-level): t-Test hypothesis testing</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Micro-level awareness (60% and over): Overall</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Micro-level awareness (60% and over): Gender-based</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Micro-level awareness (less than 20%): Gender-based</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Need (individual-level): Frequency distribution</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Need (individual-level): Descriptive statistics</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Need (individual-level): t-Test hypothesis testing</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Need (macro-level): Overall</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Need (macro-level): Gender-based</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Need (micro-level): 10% or more</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Need (micro-level): 10% or more, gender-based</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Take Up: Trail summary of ‘aware, need, take up’ experiences</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Summary of take up outcomes</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Successful take up (individual-level): t-Test results</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Successful take up (individual-level): Frequency distribution</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Successful take up (macro-level)</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Successful take up (macro-level): Gender-based</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Successful take up (individual-level): By employment rank</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Successful take up (individual-level): ‘family (child) friendly’ provisions</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Successful take up (individual-level): Has children aged 0-12 years</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Participant pseudonyms and key characteristics</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 - The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework ................................................................. 34
Figure 2 - Sequential exploratory design (11.2a)......................................................................... 129
Figure 3 - Case study incorporating the mixed methods strategy ................................................ 130
Figure 4 - Venn diagram illustrating ‘aware, need’ subset .......................................................... 177
Figure 5 - Successful take up (individual-level) ........................................................................ 181
Figure 6 - NVivo findings: WF/L balance index tree ................................................................. 195
Figure 7 - Rhetoric-reality gap challenges ................................................................................ 197
Figure 8 - Awareness issues underlying rhetoric-reality gaps .................................................... 198
Figure 9 - Key communication channels ................................................................................. 209
Figure 10 - Need issues underlying rhetoric-reality gaps ......................................................... 215
Figure 11 - Take up issues underlying rhetoric-reality gaps .................................................... 225
Figure 12 - Other WF/L balance challenges ............................................................................. 237
# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACIRRT</td>
<td>Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTU</td>
<td>Australian Council of Trade Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACCI</td>
<td>Australian Chamber of Commerce &amp; Industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>AWA</td>
<td>Australian Workplace Agreements</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Certified Agreements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALD</td>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEWR</td>
<td>Department of Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBS</td>
<td>Enterprise Bargaining System</td>
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<tr>
<td>FFO</td>
<td>Family-friendly organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>FFW</td>
<td>Family-friendly workplace</td>
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<tr>
<td>FSU</td>
<td>Finance Sector Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>HREOC</td>
<td>Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>WF/L</td>
<td>Work-family/life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contemporary interest in and demand for a healthy balance between work and family/life (WF/L) commitments has resulted in the proliferation of organisations commonly referred to as family-friendly workplaces (FFWs). Such a proliferation has been met with assertions that WF/L balance is as much organisational rhetoric as it is organisational reality. Such claims are damaging for organisations that are genuinely committed to providing WF/L-friendly work environments. Additionally, such allegations if true also indicate a more serious problem of organisational ineffectiveness. This study therefore perceives a way by which FFWs can test and evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts to provide employees with WF/L balance. Three research questions drive this study:

- Why are FFWs’ efforts to provide WF/L balance regarded as rhetoric?
- What is the gap level between WF/L balance rhetoric and reality in an organisation?
- What organisational issues and challenges contribute to the rhetoric claim?

In the absence of models or frameworks that can effectively test and measure rhetoric-reality gaps this research may be considered as ‘experimental’, since it introduces a new conceptual framework, ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’. The framework illustrates how gaps arise and highlights key underlying contributing factors. These factors represent organisational challenges that impede WF/L balance for employees, and indicate areas that organisations need to address if they wish to dispel claims that WF/L balance is more rhetoric than reality. The ‘experimental’ nature of this framework meant that a within-case approach was the obvious choice, as it allows for the thorough study of the research problem within one organisational setting. The study was based on a case analysis of an Australian organisation that promotes itself as and has achieved formal recognition as a FFW, through nominating itself for and subsequently winning national-level work and family awards.

The dual-centred nature of the research inquiry meant that a mixed paradigmatic approach was selected. A positivist approach was used to measure gap levels while an interpretivist approach was used to guide understanding of underlying contributors of these gaps. Additionally, the combined paradigm meant that the choice of research methodology was framed by a mixed methods approach. Quantitative tools such as a questionnaire survey and qualitative channels such as document analysis, personal interviews and participant observation were used. In line with Creswell’s Sequential Exploratory Design (11.2a), fieldwork commenced with the quantitative phase and on its completion was followed by the qualitative phase. SPSS software was the predominant tool used in the quantitative analytical phase while NVivo software was used in the qualitative phase. Three areas of employee experiences - their awareness of, need for, and take up of WF/L balance initiatives - were used to explore the magnitude of the rhetoric-reality gap, while the qualitative phase sought to understand what caused the gaps, what employees thought of their organisation’s efforts, and uncover emergent themes. The two methods were ‘mixed’
in the final stage of the study, and provided a rich and deeper understanding of the research problem.

The quantitative results showed that employees had less than satisfactory experiences in all three areas and further supported the notion that WF/L balance may be more rhetoric than reality. The qualitative findings identified a number of contributing factors, many of which could be broadly categorised under key themes in existing literature, such as poor communication, organisational culture, differential access, cost considerations, and managerial discretion. The study also uncovered other issues that could contribute to organisational rhetoric, such as implementation challenges. One such challenge involved an organisational need to cater for a diverse workforce and therefore to provide a broad range of initiatives. Another finding is that need for particular provisions is closely linked to employees’ life stage. Both these issues mean that while organisations should offer a wide range of provisions there is also the strong likelihood that a good number of provisions may have very poor take up or have no take up. An emergent theme, though linked to few participants only, was the set of WF/L balance challenges faced by first generation Australians or immigrant workers. Another finding which appears to contradict the gap level finding of organisational rhetoric is that a number of employees either specifically identified their organisation as being WF/L-friendly or identified that flexibility was a key ingredient of WF/L balance and acknowledged that their organisation provided such flexibility.

Keywords: work-family/life balance, rhetoric-reality gap, conceptual framework, culture (societal), organisational effectiveness
PART I: INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER 1: STUDY ON WORK AND FAMILY/LIFE BALANCE

1.1 Introduction

This study’s focus is on work and family/life (WF/L) balance rhetoric within the broad context of Western industrialised economies but based more specifically on a case analysis of an Australian family-friendly workplace (FFW). Strachan and Burgess (1998, pp. 250-1) define the FFW as “…one which recognises the non-workplace family responsibilities of its employees and develops and implements policies that allow employees to simultaneously fulfil work and family responsibilities”. Assisting and enabling employees to better manage both work and family/life spheres have led to the concept of ‘balance’ in WF/L discourse and the ensuing debate of what ‘balance’ means. Schneider’s (1985, p. 212) review of Spector and Kitsuse’s historical development of a social problem clearly supports the current controversy surrounding WF/L balance as a problem for contemporary society.

While Gambles et al. (2006, p. 4) refer to ‘balance’ more as efforts to ‘harmonise’ paid work and life matters, Rose (2006, p.16) prefers ‘work-life effectiveness’ to ‘work-life balance’, arguing that it is more acceptable because “[w]hen work is effective; life benefits and when life is working, work benefits” (p. 16). It is not the aim of the present study to debate this topic, and I will retain the use of ‘balance’ as per the argument that it is very much based on individual rationalisation of how one appropriates one’s WF/L interfaces.

The study is situated in the organisational studies discipline as the research problem of WF/L balance rhetoric is framed and argued on the basis of organisational effectiveness. If FFWs and FFOs profess and aim to help employees with WF/L balance, any notion that such organisational attempts are more rhetoric than real
represents an important allegation that needs to be investigated and corrected if and where true. There is, however, a lack of appropriate models or frameworks to measure the effectiveness of organisational approaches to WF/L balance, identified as “…one of the major gaps in the work-family area” (Russell in Russell and Bourke 1999 p. 240). There is also a lack of appropriate models or frameworks to evaluate organisational rhetoric. Considering that the present study began in late 2002, we can see that this thesis has struck the right chord as organisational effectiveness in providing WF/L balance has begun to feature in WF/L literature (Bardoel 2006, p 238). Rose elaborates, “In determining the effectiveness of work-life initiatives, it is important to match performance with the original objectives of the program” (2006 p. 62). She also calls on organisations to “walk the talk” and to create a culture that “puts its money where its mouth is” (2006 p. 13). In these two statements we can see that there are crucial gaps in work-family literature, which the current study has sought to address.

For the purposes of this study a distinct form of FFWs, referred to as family-friendly organisations (FFOs), is identified. An FFO is a FFW that has nominated itself for and has subsequently won prestigious national, state or industry level award(s) for its WF/L initiatives and programmes. By definition therefore, an FFO is presumed to have made its ‘family-friendly’ or WF/L balance stand very public, and consequently is argued to have used the WF/L rhetoric. This qualification is critical as rhetorical analysis is the basis by which an FFO’s effectiveness in delivering WF/L balance is analysed. Using Argyris and Schon’s (1974) ‘Theory of Action’ perspective, the study embarks on theory development and a conceptual framework to explain the link and relations between and among an FFO’s WF/L policies, provisions, and practices. The framework also illustrates the constituents of organisational rhetoric and reality in the FFO and how discrepancies between the two may arise. The research is based on a case study and uses a mixed methodological approach and data triangulation to explore these phenomena. The framework is crucial to the quantitative aspects of the study in terms of how discrepancies are measured, and also illustrates how the interpretive paradigm fits in with the study’s attempt to understand what causes the discrepancies.
The case organisation selected for this study had, on at least two occasions (prior to commencement of the research), nominated itself and won the ‘Work and Family - Large Business’ finalists’ awards in the annual competitions organised by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Commonwealth of Australia’s Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). By the definition provided above the case organisation is therefore an FFO. It is pertinent, at this early stage, to clarify and support the reasoning behind the study’s use of the all-embracing phrase ‘work, family/life’ instead of the more common ‘work and family’ and ‘work and life’ terminologies.

The advent of the FFW initially met with some organisational resistance because of the misperceived notion of it being applicable only to employees with family responsibilities (Bardoel 2006; Galinsky, Friedman et al. 1991; Rapoport et al. 1996). Employees without families as well as those with families, but without the implied family obligations or caring responsibilities perceived that they were being made to shoulder the work responsibilities of their colleagues who take up such family-friendly provisions. A common solution sought by a number of organisations to address this challenge, was to extend the concept of ‘work and family’ responsibilities to include the wider obligations, commitments and needs of all employees and, hence, the preferential shift to the notion of ‘work and life’ responsibilities. Gambles et al. (2006, p. 34) posit that this shift first began in the U.S and the U.K but is now embraced by many Western and some non-Western developed nations. While Australia has also used the terminology, Todd (2004) asserts that we have not fully embraced the transition to work-life balance, and appear to be focusing more on the work-family agenda. Additionally, an investigation of the case organisation as well as other FFWs and FFOs, reveals that despite the apparent shift in terminology, the majority of organisational efforts to provide ‘work and life’ balance still relate to those that concern family responsibilities. I have therefore opted to use the all embracing phrase, ‘work and family/life’ or WF/L to more adequately portray this reality that organisational work-life concerns are predominantly still about the family. Henceforth, the study will use this preferred terminology, except in those specific circumstances where it is cited from literature, when the use of ‘work and family’ or ‘work and life’ will be retained.
Similarly, where appropriate, all references to ‘family-friendly’ are substituted with WF/L.

1.2 Background to the study

Marriage and raising a family were traditional role expectations of women, and as a result many women devoted most of their time, effort and commitment to child care and domestic work, both of which are major components of the ‘unpaid work’ discourse. While women did engage in other forms of unpaid work, it was mainly in the context of family economies, and involved women working alongside male family members in farming, production, and services (Hunter 2005). Additionally, despite poor and discriminative recording keeping, significant numbers of women are argued to have undertaken, besides unpaid work, some form of paid work in the confines of their homes (ibid 2005).

Women’s formal entry into the paid workforce, outside the home, is generally credited to have begun during the Industrial Revolution (Cardinalli 2002). This is when women arguably ‘left’ the confines of the home and commuted to work. This trend in employment picked up momentum during the Second World War when women were relied upon to fill the roles left by men who joined the war, especially in the manufacturing sector (Aldrich 1989). Women’s entry into the formal workforce meant altered lifestyles, social changes and challenges, which were further compounded with the end of WWII.

The end of the WWII was a significant period for families in many ways. Firstly the euphoria surrounding the end of the war is generally attributed to the increases in marriages and births unprecedented ever before in human history and the generation of ‘baby boomers’. It was also a period of increasing consumerism and rising costs of living (Nankervis et al. 2004). To help support their families financially many married women continued in the paid workforce while others entered it for the first time (Hakim 2003). This movement of mothers into the paid workforce signalled the large scale emergence of dual income families. The 1960s “contraception revolution” and the 1970s legislation of equal employment opportunities further contributed to
women’s ease of access into the paid workforce (French & Strachan 2007; Hakim 2003), though their reasons for entering the paid workforce often differed fundamentally from those of men’s (Hakim 2000, 2002, 2005). Of special relevance to the present study is the substantial increase in the number of married women and women with children (Bardoel 2006) entering the Australian workforce. In August 1966 slightly over 25% of all married women were in the workforce; however, by 1994 more than half of all married women were in paid employment (ABS 1995), though many of them were in part-time employment (ABS 1994).

Coupled with this increase in numbers of people joining the paid workforce and in particular dual-income families was another parallel change, that of longer hours spent in paid work (ABS 1995; Nankervis et al. 2004; Russell & Bowman 2000). The end of WWII, earlier identified as having generated increasing consumption and spending, is also generally regarded as having triggered the current wave of globalisation and increasing business competition (Chase-Dunn et al. 2000). Worldwide, the onset of globalisation and increased business competition, especially since the 1980s, has been identified for the unprecedented increase in the average number of hours that is being spent at work (Fox 2002).

Here in Australia, in 1948 the standard working week for full-time workers was set at 40 hours (ABS 1995). Decades later, in the early 1980s many industries adopted union proposals of shorter working weeks, generally averaging between 35 to 38 hours. However, despite this effort, in 1982 workers were averaging 42 hours per week (ABS 2003) which exceeded not just the ‘adopted’ shorter week, but even the 1948 higher standard of 40 hours. More than ten years later, in 1994, Australian full-time workers were spending even longer hours at work, on average 45 hours. Since the late 1990s there has been a slight improvement; for instance, workers overall were averaging 44 hours per week (ABS 2003) but of concern is the fact that from 1993 to 2003 close to 25% of all full-time workers were working 50 or more hours per week (ABS 2004).

It is not just time spent in the place of work that keeps workers away from their families. Workers today spend a significant amount of time commuting to and from
work. Flood and Barbato (2005) found that the average Australian worker who commutes to and from work spends slightly over three and half hours in travel each week. However, they also found that full-time workers, because they generally work five days in a week, spent more time in travel; slightly under four and a quarter hours per week. Furthermore, they found that Sydneysiders registered the longest time commuting to and from work. Overlapping this evidence with the ABS(2004) finding in the previous paragraph it becomes clear that full-time workers who also commute to and from work would average in excess of 54 hours per week away from their home. For workers with families, the combined long hours, commuting to and from work and at work itself, means longer hours away from their homes and families.

These changes described so far, particularly the larger family sizes, increasing costs of living, and the subsequent increase in dual-income families, as well as globalisation and increased business competition leading to longer working hours and commuting times, have all contributed to the initial interest in how workers were managing their work and family responsibilities (Frame & Hertog 2003). From around the early 1990s there has been a steady increase in interest in work, family, and life balance worldwide, though it has generally been more intense in Western industrialised countries. This interest, expressed in academic research, has been and continues to be fuelled by other parties as well. Workers, employee and community groups, as well as various industry bodies and governments, at federal and state levels, have joined researchers in the debate on work, family, and life balance. The Australian government, under then Prime Minister John Howard, featured strongly in this debate on work, family, and life balance. Howard (2006) claimed that the government’s controversial Industrial Relations Reforms and the Welfare to Work Reforms would benefit employees’ quest for work, family, and life balance. However, there are those who claim that these very changes appear to negatively impact workers’ quest for work, family and life (Blandy 2005). In direct contrast to government rhetoric to provide workers with WF/L balance is the fact that Australia remains only one of two Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries that have yet to provide a government funded national paid
maternity leave scheme (Bardoel 2003; Charlesworth et al. 2002; Szego & Robinson 2002; HREOC 2005).

The general interest and awareness for a proper balance between employees’ work, family, and life needs has led to a number of organisations endeavouring to be ‘family-friendly’. Some authors (Arthur & Rousseau 1996; Mirvis & Hall 1994) have argued that 21st century employees are looking for jobs that can provide them with psychological success, such as jobs that provide greater WF/L balance (Mirvis & Hall 1994). The fact that employed managers are actively job-hunting for careers that can provide them with more WF/L balance (Bretz et al. 1994) highlights the significance of organisational efforts to adequately address employees’ needs for WF/L balance.

The efforts and focus of these organisations have generally been through the provision of associated workplace benefits, initiatives, and flexible working arrangements. Such efforts have resulted in a number of organisations being recognised, and in some cases self-designating their establishments, as being ‘WF/L-friendly’. While some critics have expressed doubts about the effectiveness of such organisational efforts (Gambles et al. 2006; Kiser 1998; Nankervis et al. 2004; O’Rourke 2001), others have been largely encouraged (Hochschild 1997). For example, government and industry bodies have formally recognised and publicly singled out organisations for their exemplary efforts and records it being WF/L-friendly. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), working in partnership with various other agencies, have held since 1992, annual nominations and award ceremonies to publicly recognize and award large, medium and small organisations, across various industries and sectors, for their efforts and commitment to being ‘WF/L-friendly’.

The concerns of critics of FFWs demonstrate that organisational claims, recognitions and awards for being WF/L-friendly, should not simply be taken at face value. Despite the continued emphasis and importance placed on work, family and life balance or the increasing numbers of FFWs and FFOs, there continue to be significant problems, challenges, and obstacles faced by workers and families in
balancing their work, family, and life commitments (Charlesworth et al. 2002). Strachan and Burgess (1998), for example, observed that Telecom Australia (now known as Telstra), despite winning two prestigious awards in 1994 for their family-friendly policies, and thus qualifying as an FFO in this study, still had significant groups of employees who were denied access to these policies (Strachan & Winter in Strachan & Burgess 1998). Additionally, a study commissioned by the NSW Labour Council found that about 25% of the 1000 workers surveyed at the University of Sydney expressed dissatisfaction with their balance of work and family life (O’Rourke 2001). In yet another example, Horin and Wilson (2001) noted that a study of families commissioned by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) found that the carers of these families continued to have problems balancing work and family.

Further compounding the validity of the FFW is the general notion that ‘family-friendly’ or WF/L-friendly is yet more organisational rhetoric, as is suggested by Gambles et al (2006) in the title of their text, *The Myth of Work-life Balance*. There has been much scepticism on the increasing popularity and rise in numbers of organisations claiming to be ‘WF/L-friendly’. Pocock (2001, 2005) notes, for example, the seemingly large discrepancies between organisational rhetoric and reality and is especially scathing of the Australian WF/L scene (Pocock 2005). She notes that the traditional perspective of work and care responsibilities rooted in gender regimes continue to be upheld by both work institutions and society. Thus, while Australian workplaces appear to cater for working women, much of the effort is rhetorical, focusing principally on drawing up WF/L policies. Pocock claims that the reality is that there are serious flaws in implementation leading to women having less than satisfactory experiences balancing work and care responsibilities.

Therefore, as far as FFWs are concerned, if their attitudes to and concerns about helping employees with WF/L balance are genuine, the rhetoric claims basically suggests that the organisations are ineffective in their management of WF/L initiatives. Providing WF/L balance has been promoted as a business case (Bardoel 2006; Bond et al. 2005; McDonald et al. 2005; De Cieri et al. 2005; Dex & Sceibl 1999; Johnson 1995; Benveniste & Leatham 1999; Rose 2006; Russell 1999; Wax
The business case is promoted because of its ultimate long-term benefits – satisfied employees, organisational savings through reduced absenteeism, turnover, stress etc., increased productivity, business performance and profits. Therefore any notion of organisational ineffectiveness suggests inefficiency, a serious management problem, for many reasons, but primarily because of underlying cost implications. These implications indicate the timeliness and need for an appropriate framework and methodology to trace and manage WF/L balance issues, obstacles and challenges within organisations and to help the organisation ensure that its efforts are not interpreted as an exercise in rhetoric.

The crux of this study is that FFOs, by nature of what they purport to represent, have the greatest onus of ensuring the claim to provide WF/L balance is not simply a business rhetoric. But while there is ample research and evidence on various angles of WF/L balance, there is a lack of empirical evidence to support or otherwise challenge claims of organisational rhetoric. More importantly, there is no existing framework or methodology by which FFOs might proceed to transcend the claim that providing WF/L balance is organisational rhetoric.

1.3 Aim and scope of the study

The aim of this study is to provide FFOs with a framework and methodology to monitor their WF/L programs, and to help them determine the nature of, and/or monitor the extent of the discrepancy between organisational rhetoric and the reality of providing such efforts. Invariably, the framework can help an FFO gauge its effectiveness in managing its WF/L program. To do this, the study uses the FFOs policies and provisions as being representative of organisational rhetoric. By investigating the organisation’s formal written policies on its WF/L-friendly obligations, the provisions that are in place can be more meaningfully analysed, to find if discrepancies exist between what is formulated and what is in actual effect put into practise, and those that are used by employees. If there are discrepancies, the reasons for their existence can be explored, and the FFO can take steps to address them and ultimately reduce the discrepancy and overcome the claims that WF/L
balance is rhetoric. This line of inquiry is consistent with Argyris and Schon’s “Theory of Action” (in Gummesson 2000, p. 21) and its two fundamental concepts: “[e]spoused theory, the way we claim that we think and operate” and “theory-in-use, the way we actually think and act”. This research deals with organisations that have been recognised as WF/L-friendly (espoused theory) and will look at the policies, provisions, practices and organisational cultures that effectively limit employees from a balanced work and family relationship (theory-in-use).

The study investigates the working state of an FFO to reveal its ‘espoused theory’. This is done through analyses of a) its organisational policies so as to develop an understanding of the WF/L balance image that is being portrayed to the public, and b) workplace provisions, so as to understand how the policies are being translated to, and the nature of benefits and features being offered to employees. Alternatively, the range of employees’ experiences with these provisions, such as their awareness of, and perceived need for the provisions offered, their attempts to use these, or the actual usage of the provisions offered, constitute the ‘theory in-use’ or the reality of WF/L balance in the FFO. Hence, the study investigates the FFO’s working practices and organisational culture in an attempt to understand the reality of what policies and provisions employees are actually using and/or entitled to, and why they are experiencing them. This type of framework and analysis can provide the FFO with valuable insights into the problem areas surrounding the discrepancy, which they can then proceed to address and/or minimise. In this way the FFO will be able to fine-tune its effectiveness in being WF/L-friendly. Ultimately, the framework can help the FFO transcend the claim that being WF/L-friendly is just another organisational rhetoric.

1.3.1 Scope of the study

The fact that the research investigates WF/L-friendly policies, provisions, and practices as a means of addressing the rhetoric versus reality claim means that there are three restrictions placed on the type of organisations to be studied. The first is the fact that it must be large organisations, since they can safely be assumed to have formalised policy statements (Wise 2003). A large organisation is defined as one that
has more than 100 employees (ACCI 2002). Secondly, this large organisation must have policies and provisions that support or appear to support employees’ needs and desires to balance WFL responsibilities. Thirdly, in order to analyse the rhetoric claim, this large organisation must have made a public statement of some sort that it is indeed a WFL-friendly organisation and be recognised as such. It is for these reasons that the case organisation was selected from among the ‘large’ business finalists of the 2002 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) ‘Work and Family Awards’. The self-nomination and winning of the award by the case organisation, is argued by this researcher to be representative of the highest level of organisation rhetoric of being WFL-friendly and makes it an ideal FFO. This last condition for selection of the case organisation fits in with “purposive sampling” (Berg 2004, p. 36).

The FFO’s WFL balance rhetoric is also explicit in the following statements extracted from the 2001 application form,

One of our main priorities is to make [The Bank] a great place to work for our people. … At [The Bank] creation of an environment for all our people to excel and realise both their personal and professional goals is an important feature of our business strategy. To achieve this, [The Bank] has initiated a range of family/lifestyle policies that enable more flexible work practices for all our staff. These policies...have enabled a large number of our people achieve their desired balance between work and family lives.

The selected FFO is in the banking and financial sector, generally claimed to be a less WFL-friendly environment (Finance Sector Union 2005 2005; Probert et al. 2000). At the time of the research the FFO operated a complex network of offices or branches ranging from very small (less than 10 workers), medium and large (more than fifty) in all eight Australian states and territories as well as in off-shore locations. In all there were 744 offices and close to 16,000 employees nationally. The wide geographical spread, as well as the unequal distribution of employees across offices and branches was instrumental in confining the investigation to the organisation’s large strategic business units (SBUs) which also tended to be in the larger capital cities and metropolitan towns. The research was conducted in the Sydney and Parramatta central business districts for specific reasons, the main one being that at the time of the research I was also a full-time lecturer and mother to
three young children. To minimise disruption to its business function the FFO specifically requested that all research be conducted only during off-peak business times. The off-peak business times coincided with the teaching weeks of the semester. Work responsibilities, however, meant that it was not conducive to take time off work to travel interstate during the teaching week. These reasons narrowed the study to the Sydney metropolitan area.

The case study involved using a mixed methods approach (Creswell 2003; Jennings 2001; Yin 2003). Hence, quantitative tools such as a survey instrument and qualitative techniques, such as in-depth face-to-face interviews, documentary analysis and observation techniques were used to provide more rigorous and reliable data. The case study was further supported by a broader tracking of debates, discussions, and policies on FFO taking place in Australia, to identify the level of complementarities between the organisation studied and current standards. The data collection methods using these various channels not only provided data triangulation (Jennings 2001), but also provide deeper understanding of the research questions. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS software while nVIVO was used to code and analyse qualitative data and to identify common themes.

1.4 Research questions

The main research question that drives the study is, ‘are the FFWs’ efforts to provide WF/L balance regarded as rhetoric?’ The research proposes to investigate and analyse such rhetoric from an FFO’s offer of WF/L balance policies and provisions and reality from the perspective of employees’ experiences with such an offer. Two further questions guide the analysis:

- What is the gap level between WF/L balance rhetoric and reality in the FFO?
- What are the organisational issues and challenges that contribute to the rhetoric-reality gaps?

Hence the specific research questions are:

i) Are all WF/L policies translated into appropriate workplace provisions with any added conditions and/or alterations?

ii) Are these provisions available to all staff, male and female?
iii) Are these provisions available to staff at all levels of the organisation?
iv) How are these provisions communicated to staff?
v) Are these provisions utilised (practised) by staff?
vi) If no, what are the specific challenges and obstacles faced that prevent the practice of these provisions?
vii) How do employees and the organisation respond to these obstacles?
viii) Why is the organisation incorporating WF/L initiatives in the workplace?

1.5 Significance of the findings

The significance of these findings is that, despite the current emphasis on WF/L balance, employees, families and organisations, even those that have been deemed as WF/L-friendly, still face challenges and obstacles with balancing work and family commitments. This study seeks to identify these challenges and obstacles, and to analyse their sources and impacts. Existing literature emphasises the need for a FFW to clearly practise what it professes, in terms of WF/L balance. Underlying this particular investigation are three basic premises that the study regards crucial if a FFW’s WF/L balance initiatives are to be effective:

i) The organisation’s WF/L policies must be fully translated to actual provisions in the workplace and employees must be able to practise them without any added conditions and/or alterations;
ii) Its WF/L policies and provisions must be gender neutral and equitable to not just groups of employees, but everyone on board, and,
iii) Its organisational culture must be positively aligned with the WF/L objectives and aims of the organisation.

1.6 Definitions

It is pertinent at this stage to clarify the use of specific terminology in this study. Firstly, the literature on WF/L balance has a variety of references to benefits and flexible working arrangements that organisations offer to employees. Some refer to these as practices, some as programs. To clearly differentiate between benefits and flexible working arrangements that are offered by organisations and those that are actually used by employees, this study uses the terms ‘provisions’ and ‘practices.’ Thus, the term ‘provisions’ refers to the various WF/L-friendly benefits and flexible working arrangements that an organisation provides to its employees, while the term ‘practices’ is used to identify employees’ experiences of the provisions. Practices are
gauged by any one of the following employees’ experiences: awareness, perception of need, attempts to use, or actual usage, of the provisions offered to them.

1.7 Overview of the thesis

There are four parts and seven chapters to this thesis. Part I comprises just one chapter, Chapter 1: Study on Work and Family/Life Balance. This chapter introduces and provides the background of the study, its aims and scope, the definitions and overview of the thesis.

Part II is concerned with all the background information required to understand the present study and comprises two chapters. Chapter 2: Rhetoric-Reality Conceptual Framework reviews literature on rhetoric and reality discourse and examines existing gap models before focusing on the design and development of a rhetoric-reality conceptual framework that will ultimately guide this study. Chapter 3: Work and Family/Life Literature Review provides a discussion of the extant literature on WF/L; since this is an extensive field of study, for the purpose of this thesis the discussion will devoted to the balance aspect of WF/L crucial to understanding the research problem of rhetoric-reality challenges.

Part III consists of three chapters. Chapter 4: Research Methodology is concerned with the overall research methodology. The chapter includes the rationale and justification for a case study approach. Data triangulation using both quantitative and qualitative methods is pursued, and these are explained. Chapter 5: Rhetoric-Reality Gap Analysis presents and discusses the quantitative results of the survey, which in the main is concerned with the establishing the magnitude of WF/L balance rhetoric-reality gap. The study uses three separate employee experiences as test variables to determine gap levels: their awareness of, need for and take up of the provisions that the FFO professes to offer. Then in Chapter 6: Insight into the FFO’s Gap Contributors the study presents and discusses the qualitative results of the research, which includes document analysis, participant observation and the individual interviews. The aim of this part of the research is two-fold. First, to gather insight into the possible causes and/or contributors of rhetoric-reality gaps in the three key
employee experiences: awareness of, need for and take up of WF/L balance provisions. The second aim is to obtain insight into other WF/L balance challenges that can implicate gap levels. Finally in Part IV there is the synthesis and analysis of quantitative and qualitative results. Thus, Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion analyses the combined findings in light of the extant literature and answers the research aims and questions. The limitations of the study and suggestions for further research are also discussed before the overall conclusions to the thesis are summed up.
PART II: BACKGROUND
CHAPTER 2: RHETORIC-REALITY CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

While Chapter 1 introduced the research problem and the aim, scope and overview of the research, here in Part II the extant literature essential to understanding the study is presented. There are two chapters devoted to this literature. Chapter 2 provides an overview of discourse and rhetoric theories. It also presents theory development and the conceptual framework, ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’, relevant to understanding organisational rhetoric, particularly with regard to the FFO. In Chapter 3, the study focuses on work and family literature, starting with the general background information relevant to understanding WF/L balance. It then explores the literature identifying organisational challenges that impede WF/L balance for workers, argued by this study as being the source of the discrepancy between WF/L balance rhetoric and reality.

Understanding rhetoric is important as the underlying theme of the research problem and the context of this study is to ascertain whether being ‘WF/L-friendly’ amounts to rhetoric in the case organisation, identified to be an FFO. To do so the study aims to identify the nature and extent of the discrepancy or gap between rhetoric and reality of the FFO’s WF/L balance programs and initiatives. Such an angle of investigation can not only help the FFO understand the complexities of the challenges faced in providing employees with WF/L balance but also, more importantly, help it identify areas where improvements are needed if it is to transcend the rhetoric claim. Although this is a case study, such findings can also contribute to a more critical understanding of FFWs generally.

The study embarks on theory development, and the formulation of a conceptual framework, ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’, shows the link between
the FFO’s WF/L policies and its provisions, as representative of organisational rhetoric, and employees’ experiences with the provisions (referred to as practices) as representative of organisational reality. Furthermore, the framework shows how a discrepancy or gap may arise between rhetoric and reality, and what would be the ideal or preferred state in an FFO.

Existing literature on WF/L balance provides vital clues of the probable nature of the sources of such discrepancy, referred to as ‘discrepancy contributing factors’ in this study. The study is based on a case organisation and relies on a mixed methodological approach; data triangulation from document analysis, quantitative questionnaire surveys, and qualitative interviews which are used to provide more robust and valid data and findings. Additionally, grounded research techniques (discussed in Chapter 4) will be used in the qualitative analysis of interview data. It is hoped that using this technique will reveal further, if any, more unique sources of discrepancy present in the organisation.

This chapter begins with a general analysis and discussion of rhetoric discourse in section 2.2. In section 2.2 the study explains how Argyris and Schon’s (1974) ‘Theory of Action Perspective’ and its two fundamental concepts, ‘espoused theory’ and ‘theory-in-use’, underlie the theoretical basis of the link between organisational rhetoric and reality. The theory is used to frame the conceptual framework, ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’, fundamental to understanding the rhetoric/reality challenge of FFOs’ claims to being WF/L-friendly and providing employees with WF/L balance. This framework is explained in detail in section 2.2. In section 2.2 the study explores general organisational developments in WF/L balance rhetoric. A summary of the chapter is provided in section 2.2.

### 2.2 Discourse and rhetoric

Understanding rhetoric discourse is fundamental to this study as it represents the underlying basis of investigation into the FFO’s claims to be WF/L-friendly. However, in contemporary settings, both discourse and rhetoric have newer meanings, which are crucial to the present study.
2.2.1 Contemporary discourse

Contemporary discourse analysis has transcended the strict boundary confines of traditional linguistic and semantic domains. It now includes the analysis of conventions used by particular fields of study and across varying contexts (Bullock & Trombley 2000). Therefore it is imperative that the context of any discourse is established before correct meaning and interpretation can occur. ‘Work’ and ‘family’ are examples of contemporary discourses, which have different meanings in different contexts. ‘Work’, for example, is seen, understood and tagged as ‘paid work’ in organisational or business context. Similarly ‘work’ in the domestic context is seen, understood and referred to as ‘unpaid work’. ‘Family’ is another discourse that has different meanings depending on context. Modern-day families are different from traditional families in many ways - composition, size, and upbringing being the primary examples.

The present study, on WF/L balance, a contemporary discourse, may be broadly contextualised into three contexts: organisational, family, or individual; the context of the present study is an organisational perspective. Additionally, while ‘work’ and ‘family’ were regarded as mostly separate discourses in pre-industrial times, it is now acknowledged that they are closely intertwined. Rosebeth Kanter (1977) was one of the earliest writers to dispel the myth that these two discourses, work, and family, function as distinctively separate spheres. Furthermore, these two discourses not only overlap, but they can also spill over from one domain to the other, in both directions, (Geurts et al. 2003; Kirby et al. 2003; Leiter & Durup 1996). Galinsky (2003) refers to the overlap specifically as ‘dual-centric’. WF/L domains can also compete with each other for resources (Hochschild 1997; Runte & Mills 2002; Kirby et al. 2003), such as time, money, and energy. Competition between work and family for any of these resources suggests an atmosphere abounding with tension and conflict (Charlesworth et al. 2002; Greenhaus & Beutell 1985; Kirby et al. 2003). In their deconstruction of ‘work and family’ discourse, Runte and Mills (2002) suggest that ‘work’ and ‘family’ are discursive fields because there are significant overlaps between the two discourses. Discursive fields, they argue, are characterised by power relationships and the contextual basis of the dominant discourse defines which, ‘work’ or ‘family’, holds the power base. The discussions presented thus far
not only show the complexities of the work and family domains but further suggest and confirm a dialectical relationship between them. In the present study on WF/L balance, the dominant discourse, or power base, presented is ‘work’ as viewed from a contemporary organisational perspective. The study is focused on ensuring that the FFO’s claim of providing a WF/L-friendly workplace, so that employees can experience WF/L balance, is not rhetorical.

2.2.2 Contemporary rhetoric

Hooper and Pratt (1995 p. 1) liken discourse to “…a set of linked and historically confined ideas, embedded in texts, utterances and practices, that concern procedures for finding, producing and demonstrating ‘truth’”. Inherently implied in this interpretations are two meanings; first, that discourse is context-driven, and second, that particular discourses tend to have particular rhetoric. While the first meaning, that discourse is context-driven, has been discussed in the previous section, the latter, that particular discourse tends to have particular rhetoric, is the focus of this section. Hooper and Pratt (1995), using ideas of Kelly’s (1998) work, suggest that, depending on context, discourse may shift to rhetoric.

Additionally, Bullock and Trombley (2000, p. 757) note that the term rhetoric also has developed a new meaning. Besides its classical meaning of “…study of effective or persuasive speaking and writing” in communication, rhetoric now also means understanding “…the processes underlying successful argument and persuasion”. The latter meaning of rhetoric is explicit in Gross and Walzer’s (1997) analysis of the Commission that was established to investigate the shuttle Challenger disaster. The Commission is said to have been directed to “review the circumstances surrounding the accident to establish the probable cause or causes” (PC I, p. 1 in Gross & Walzer 1997). The authors note that the Commission clearly complied with this directive by identifying “The Cause of the Accident” to be the faulty O-rings and the “The Contributing Cause of the Accident” as the flawed decision-making that led to the launch of the shuttle. However, Gross and Walter (1997) posit that the disaster was not an accident, as accidents are random incidents, and clearly the Challenger disaster was not. Therefore, they argue, the Commission’s focus and acceptance of
technical and procedural errors as the probable causes of the disaster is flawed. Instead, they claim, the Commission should have placed more emphasis on the human decision-making processes that ultimately let to the faulty O-rings to be deemed acceptable and for the shuttle to be certified fit for take-off. In other words, the Commission should have placed more emphasis on analysing the rhetoric surrounding the dynamics of the decision-making, or “…the processes underlying successful argument and persuasion” (Bullock & Trombley 2000). This is consistent with Gross and Walter’s (1997 p. 76) view that, “…contemporary organizations and contemporary scholars [need] to take the art of rhetoric seriously both as a vehicle for deliberation and a perspective for analysis”.

It is clear therefore, that analysis of rhetoric is significant not only to understanding the circumstances, processes and dynamics behind the decision-making that led to the Challenger disaster, but also in helping prevent such events in the future. Similarly, this study argues that rhetorical analysis of management’s decision-making to provide employees with WF/L balance, and particularly the notion of the ‘WF/L-friendly’ workplace, need to be better understood if FFWS and FFOs are to transcend the WF/L-friendly rhetoric. Academic research suggests that family-friendly rhetoric (or WF/L balance rhetoric in this study) is a primary concern to FFWs (Dex et al. 2002; Hudson Australia and New Zealand 2005; Lewis & Dwyer 2002; McDonald et al. 2005; O’Neil 2004; Pocock 2001). Understanding the gap between management rhetoric of providing WF/L balance and the reality as it is in the workplace is crucial to both employers and employees. If employees perceive that the rhetoric-reality gap is profound and unrealistic they are more than likely to leave the organisation in search of other more WF/L-friendly workplaces. To employers such actions can be costly, for example, in terms of recruitment and selection to replace lost workers. Additionally, these very organisations are more than likely, through word-of-mouth ‘advertising’, to become well-known in the industry for their WF/L balance rhetoric, and consequently will fail to attract the best prospective candidates.

Kallendorf and Kallendorf (1985) explored key rhetorical figures of speech used in business communication, specifically within the context of business advertising.
Three of their rhetorical figures, antithesis, metaphor and metonymy, are of particular relevance to the present study and will be used to evaluate the ‘WF/L-friendly’ rhetoric; a term increasingly used by many contemporary businesses as a way of describing themselves. Such descriptions often appear in very public documents, including organisation vision and value statements, industrial relations awards as well as workplace policies, and can be seen as a form of ‘advertising’.

First, is antithesis, which Kallendorf and Kallendorf (1985, p. 36) define as “[c]onjoining contrasting ideas”; a figure of speech that involves two concepts that are often paired together but which, on closer scrutiny, represents totally alien concepts. In the present study, ‘work’, and ‘family’ are deemed to be good examples of antithesis. Traditionally, work and family have been kept as separate and discrete entities. However, as noted earlier in the discussion of Kanter (1977), since the late twentieth century there have been increasing overlaps between these two traditionally separate domains. Consequently we have witnessed the birth of the ‘WF/L-friendly workplace’. The second rhetorical figure, metaphor, is defined as “[a]ssertion of identity rather than, as with a simile, likeness” (Kallendorf & Kallendorf 1985, p. 36). As a metaphor, therefore, workplaces are being projected as having ‘family-like’ values and identities. Third, metonymy is defined as “[d]rawing a suggestive expression from a closely associated object or idea” (Kallendorf & Kallendorf 1985, p. 37). Here it is suggested that the apparent closeness that workers have with their own families is being strategically used to send the message that the organisation is also very close to its employees, in terms of understanding their family/life needs.

It is evident that 21st century management is rife with the ‘WF/L-friendly’ rhetoric. Furthermore, it has been shown that the rhetorical form utilises one or more of three figures of speech, antithesis, metaphor and metonymy, as a way to project and emphasise the close connection between the two discourses, work, and family.
2.2.3  Rhetorical analytical frameworks

Howland et al. (2006) credit Lasswell (1972) as the pioneer of the two types of rhetorical analytical frameworks, content analytical framework, and the policy sciences analytical framework. The first framework, which uses a quantitative methodology, focuses on the linguistic and semantic aspects of rhetoric, and deals, for example, with the analyses of particular use of words and phrases. It is particularly relevant to media and advertising studies. Keiser’s (1998) studies, for example, use this analytical framework to study the usage and frequencies of particular words in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry.

2.2.3.1  Policy sciences analytical framework

The second framework is not concerned with linguistics or semantics but rather with interpreting the underlying meanings and implications of policies. It is based on a qualitative methodology. It is described by Clark (in Howland et al. 2006 p. 206) as “a set of integrated concepts or conceptual tools for framing thought and action and for guiding analysis, interpretation and resolution of any problem.” This study suggests that, consistent with this approach are studies which focus on the rhetoric-reality challenges of organisational policies (Cunningham et al. 2004; Lewis & Dyer 2002), public policies (Fawcett 1999; Howland et al. 2006), or research which acknowledges the possibility of rhetorical policies and takes precautions in the research design to avoid such bias (see Bond et al. 2005).

Though Dex et al. (2002) do not specifically state that their study is about the rhetoric-reality status of British FFWs, this study suggests that it otherwise is. Their paper is based on the 1998 British Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS). The authors compared employees’ experiences with, against employer’s account of, WF/L-friendly entitlements. The authors hypothesised plausible reasons for the “mismatch” (p. 1) or “discrepancy” (p. 9). The present study suggests that the measurement of mismatch or discrepancy and attempts to analyse why it happens amounts to studying WF/L balance rhetoric.
Alternatively, this study and other works (Hudson Australia and New Zealand 2005; Lewis & Dwyer 2002; McDonald et al. 2005; Pocock 2001) distinctively note the gaps between rhetoric and reality in Australian work-life balance policies and implementation. It is undeniable that the WF/L balance rhetoric is an increasingly significant challenge to organisations, and consequently any ideas on how to transcend the rhetoric would be timely and appropriate. Recalling Clark’s claims (in Howland et al. 2006 p. 206) claims, in particular, that the policy sciences analytical framework is useful for “… framing thought and action and for guiding analysis, interpretation and resolution of any problem” makes the framework ideally suited for fulfilling the needs of the present study. Recapping, the primary focus of this study is the analysis of the rhetoric and realities of an FFO’s claims to be WF/L-friendly. From the rhetorical angle, the initial point of reference of the FFO’s WF/L stance is its policies, since these documents represent the supporting basis and the foundations for the design of the relevant WF/L provisions (Charlesworth et al. 2002; Galinsky & Stein 1990). From the reality angle, the study collects and analyses employee experiences with using these WF/L provisions, or as is referred to by the study, the practices.

A mixed methodological approach is used to understand employee experiences of the gaps between rhetoric and reality. The details are provided in Chapter 4 but are briefly stated here. A quantitative study is used to measure the total organisational gap between rhetoric and reality. The number of WF/L provisions provided by the organisation to all employees is taken to represent the total ‘rhetoric’. Against this rhetoric are three possible types of reality situations, as experienced by employees: ‘awareness of provisions’, ‘need for provisions’ and ‘take-up rates of provisions’. Rose (2006, p. 60) note that employees’ awareness and take up (utilisation) experiences are key to evaluating effectiveness of work-life initiatives, while need was singled out as an important dimension in designing what initiatives to offer. The qualitative approach uses interview sessions to collect, analyse and interpret the WF/L balance experiences of individual employees. Such an approach allows for in-depth understanding of the sources of the rhetoric-reality gap, as well as providing opportunities to isolate and identify the nature of particular challenges and problems faced by employees and employers.
Cunningham et al.’s (2004) approach is singled out as being of particular significance to the present study. The authors posit that contemporary HRM practice is constantly shaped by debate on the dialectical relationship of worker and organisation. Because of such debate there is increased interest in analysing, isolating and understanding discrepancies between organisational policies (or rhetoric) and organisational behaviour. In line with this interest, Cunningham et al.’s research sought to investigate employee security by analysing the gaps between an organisation’s espoused occupational health and safety policies and its organisational behaviour, investigated from line managers’ compliance and treatment of employees who have been injured at work.

There are a number of similarities between Cunningham et al.’s study and the present study. Both studies use a case approach and a qualitative paradigm to understand and reveal the underlying reasons for the rhetoric-reality gap. However, they are fundamentally different in two important aspects. First, the current study relies on a mixed methodological approach to investigate the rhetoric-reality gap. It initially uses a quantitative approach, by applying a survey instrument, to monitor and measure the level of the rhetoric-reality gap. It then relies on qualitative approaches, namely in the form of semi-structured personal interviews as well as document analysis, in its attempts to understand why the gaps occur. Second, while Cunningham et al.’s (2004) attempt is to investigate reality from line-managers’ perspective, the current study attempts it from the employees’ perspective. The choice of employees as the base reference of reality is based on the premise that an organisation’s WF/L balance rhetoric is primarily targeted for this particular group, and consequently represents the source that can best attest if the rhetoric holds. Using a management perspective to test reality is deemed to be a futile attempt as their accounts of employees’ experiences in the organisation would still amount to rhetoric.

2.2.4 Gap analysis

As discussed in the previous section, gap analysis is central to investigating organisational rhetoric. Additionally, the discussion also centred on two analytical
frameworks, a content analytical framework based on the quantitative paradigm and which is concerned with frequencies of usage of particular words and themes, and a qualitative policy sciences analytical framework, concerned with interpreting the underlying meanings and implications of policies. Howland et al. (2006), in attempting to understand the rhetoric-reality challenge of the Montreal Protocol ozone treaty, were the first researchers to effectively combine both the quantitative news media analytical framework and the qualitative policy sciences analytical framework. However, their use of the combined framework methodology was solely for the purpose of one, the quantitative media analytical framework, to more adequately inform and guide in the understanding of how the Montreal Protocol ozone treaty compared with global approaches and trends. Using the media analytical framework the researchers scanned global news media and quantitatively coded occurrences of particular terms and concepts relevant to the ozone debate. They then used the resultant trends to analyse the policy developments of the Montreal Protocol ozone treaty and in so doing attempted to gauge the rhetoric-reality gaps of the latter.

The content analytical model, either in its original form, or in the combined form, as used by Howland et al. (2006), is inadequate for the purposes of the quantitative aspects of the present study. This is because the present study has two objectives. First, it is most concerned with monitoring and measuring the degree of the rhetoric-reality gap as it is, from within the FFO. To satisfy this purpose, it is imperative that the gap level be monitored, measured and investigated, using the FFO’s offerings as representative of the rhetoric and employees’ experiences (such as awareness of provisions, need for the provisions offered, and take-up rates of the provisions offered) as representative of the reality. Such an approach implies numeric comparisons as well as some fairly sophisticated statistical analysis, which the media analytical framework falls short of. Second, the study is also equally interested in understanding the reasons for the gap, which implies a solely qualitative approach to collecting and mapping employee experiences with the organisation’s WF/L balance rhetoric. The policy analytical framework appears suitable for this purpose. The requirements of the present study are therefore inherently for a mixed method approach; a quantitative approach to monitor and track the state of the organisation’s
WF/L balance rhetoric-reality gap, and a qualitative approach to understand the underlying reasons and sources for the gap.

As mentioned above, Dex et al.’s (2002) paper is about the discrepancies between employees’ awareness and take-up of WF/L provisions they were entitled to and employers’ perceptions of what entitlements were offered. The data used was extracted from the quantitative aspects of the 1998 British WERS. I have previously argued that their study could be read as tracing rhetoric-reality gap and therefore closely resembles this study. However, there are a number of reasons why the present study did not use this as a framework. First, Dex et al produced a working paper which was unavailable when the fieldwork for the present study commenced in 2002. Second, the authors did not formally link their paper to WF/L balance rhetoric-reality gaps, which is the crux of the present study. Third, their paper was based on data collected by the British WERS and hence lacked the necessary theory building to explain WF/L balance rhetoric gap. Fourth, their paper did not collect data to interpret the discrepancies but hypothesised the reasons based on literature.

2.2.4.1 The SERVQUAL scale

One of the most widely used gap analysis measurement tools is the SERVQUAL scale. This scale was originally developed in the 1980s by a marketing research team of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985). It has since undergone a number of modifications and improvements (Coulthard 2004; Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml 1990; 1991; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1988). The scale analyses the discrepancy or gap levels between a service provider’s perceptions, and their customers’ expectations, of what constitutes quality service delivery. Service quality is measured using twenty-two fields, and five-dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The SERVQUAL scale has been adapted for use in different service sectors, and now has many more fields to measure service quality (Heath et al. 2003; Jiang et al. 2000; Saleh & Ryan 1991). The scale is used to measure service quality in library services (Heath et al. 2003), information services (Jiang et al. 2000), hospitality services (Saleh & Ryan 1991), and financial services (Al-Tamimi & Al-Amiri, 2003; Waite 2006).
Many management texts do acknowledge that employees are a special type of customers, albeit internal customers. Additionally, an organisation’s WF/L balance programs and initiatives might be deemed by some to be a form of ‘services’ offered. Both these reasons might imply that the SERVQUAL scale is a suitable tool for the gap analysis required for the present study. However, there are two key reasons why the SERVQUAL scale, in its current form, fails. First, the SERVQUAL scale is specifically designed to measure a service provider’s quality of its service delivery to its external customers (Coulthard 2004; Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml 1990, 1991; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1985, 1988). In line with this focus on external customers, the scale relies on quite distinct fields and dimensions to measure the gaps between providers’ perception and customers’ expectations of what constitutes quality service delivery. Such fields and dimensions are unavailable in any WF/L balance settings. Second, as Coulthard (2004) points out, since the scale is based on customers’ perception of what constitutes quality service, it is therefore a very subjective assessment, and consequently does not present an objective assessment of service as it really is. Extending this argument to the present study, if the SERVQUAL scale were to be used to study the rhetoric-reality gap, the findings would be inconclusive since it would have been derived from employees’ perceptions of reality, which makes it still rhetoric, but from an employee perspective. These two reasons make the SERVQUAL scale inadequate for the needs of the present study.

In the absence of an appropriate gap analysis model, suitable for the purposes of studying rhetoric-reality gaps as is, this study embarks on theory development and proposes a new conceptual framework to address the rhetoric/reality challenge of WF/L balance in FFOs.

2.3 Argyris and Schon’s ‘Theory of Action’

The conceptual framework is based Lasswell’s (1972) policy sciences analytical framework as well as Argyris and Schon’s (1974) ‘Theory of Action’ perspective and its two fundamental concepts, ‘espoused theory’ and ‘theory-in-use’. ‘Espoused theory’ is defined as “the theory of action that is advanced to explain or justify a
given pattern of activity” while ‘theory-in-use’ is defined as “the theory of action which is implicit in the performance of that pattern of activity” (1996, p. 13). Gummesson’s (2000, p. 21) alternative to understanding ‘espoused theory’ as “the way we claim that we think and operate” and ‘theory-in-use’ as “the way we actually think and act” probably provides a clearer perspective of understanding Argyris and Schon’s theory of action. Either way what is evident is the fact that the while ‘espoused theory’ is tantamount to organisational rhetoric, and may be extracted from the written and/or spoken words or speech, the ‘theory-in-use’ or organisational reality is not so easily obtained; knowledge about it has to be observed, inferred and/or constructed from the behaviour exhibited (Argyris & Schon 1996).

The focus of Argyris and Schon’s original studies in 1974 was on changing human behaviour, principally by targeting improvements in the area of ‘theories-in-use’ to increase the professional effectiveness of the individual. However, later works by the authors extended and supported its application on organisations as well as individuals (Argyris & Schon 1996, p. 13). Hence, this study postulates that this latter application also includes studies of organisational behaviour.

This study assumes that a discrepancy between the ‘espoused theory’ and the ‘theory-in-use’ components is equivalent to a discrepancy or gap between organisational rhetoric and organisational reality. This idea appears to be the basis of Cunningham et al.’s (2004) study; however, there is no discussion of its theoretical underpinnings. The current research aims to extend the usage of the theory of action perspective to the area of organisational behaviour, in particular that of organisational effectiveness in providing the WF/L-friendly workplace. More specifically, this research proposes using Lasswell’s (1972) policy sciences analytical framework in conjunction with Argyris and Schon’s theory of action perspective to assist organisations that have been formally recognised and awarded for their efforts in being WF/L-friendly, to continue and/or improve upon their commitment and responsibilities of being WF/L-friendly. Much of this formal recognition comes from the rhetoric, with organisations submitting completed application forms, and providing relevant documents to support their bid for the recognition awards, some of which include anecdotal evidence from employees.
The proposed framework can be used to determine how to help FFOs stay on track, and to ensure that their WF/L balance rhetoric (espoused theories) closely matches reality as experienced by employees (theories-in-use). At this point, it is important to note that in this study evidence for the rhetoric/reality challenge is sourced from two different and contradictory sources. Organisational rhetoric about being a ‘WF/L-friendly’ workplace is sourced from management’s perspective, since they ultimately, are the ones who have the power and resources to provide such an environment (Poelman, Chincilla & Cardona 2003). However, evidence of organisational reality is sourced from employees’ perspective, the reasoning being that WF/L balance is what is sought by employees and they ultimately are the ones who have the experiences, narratives, and perspectives as to whether their workplace is indeed WF/L-friendly. A mismatch between rhetoric and reality, that is, where employees’ actual experiences with the organisation’s offering of WF/L balance (reality) falls short of the organisation’s claims of being WF/L-friendly (rhetoric), can prove detrimental, since it is claimed that over time, an organisation’s theories-in-use (realities) is what gives it its identity (Argyris & Schon 1996, p. 14). Therefore, it is the employee’s overall experiences with the WF/L-friendly offerings of their workplace, which would ultimately provide concrete evidence of whether the ‘WF/L-friendly workplace’ is organisational rhetoric. Thus, if in an FFO, employees have negative experiences (theory-in-use) with regard to the organisation’s WF/L balance programs and initiatives, then the FFO will ultimately develop an identity that its family-friendliness is more rhetoric than reality.

This discussion shows that a conceptual framework to analyse rhetoric, as well as measure the discrepancy between rhetoric and reality, is required. In the next section, the study advances theory development to the design of a new conceptual framework, especially relevant to understanding organisational rhetoric of being WF/L-friendly.

### 2.4 Conceptual framework

Lasswell’s (1972) policy sciences analytical framework as well as Argyris and Schon’s ‘Theory of Action’ perspective provides the theoretical basis for the design
of the conceptual framework referred to as, *The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework* shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 - The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework**

This framework effectively illustrates the relationship between an FFO’s ‘espoused theory’ (rhetoric) and the ‘theory-in-use’ (reality), and how the rhetoric-reality gap or discrepancy arises. The framework is crucial to the quantitative study which aims to measure the discrepancy or gap level in an effort to evaluate if the FFO’s WF/L balance stand amounts to more rhetoric than reality. The remaining sections are devoted to describing the key components of the framework and to explaining the connections between them, starting from the WF/L balance-friendly policies right through to how rhetoric-reality discrepancies arise.
2.4.1 The family-friendly organisation (FFO)

Fundamental in the design of the framework and the basis of the current study is the notion of the FFO. The FFO is a large WF/L-friendly workplace that has nominated itself for and subsequently won one or more prestigious national, state or industry-level awards for its WF/L-friendly efforts. At this point, it is imperative that the special features of the FFO are identified. First, by having nominated itself and subsequently having won one or more prestigious awards, it is suggested that the FFO has made the WF/L balance rhetoric explicit. Second, it means that any interested party would have access to critical public evidence that is submitted in support of the rhetorical claim. Such evidence would be in the form of the FFO’s mission and value statements, workplace awards, submitted copies of award nomination forms, as well as organisation publicity documents and media publications. Third, by defining that it is a large organisation i.e. consisting of more than 100 employees (ACCI 2002), one can be reasonably assured that there will be relevant workplace policy statements (see A in Figure 1) in support of WF/L balance.

2.4.2 Policies, provisions and practices

This study posits that an FFO’s aims and objectives with regard to its commitment to helping employees balance their work/family spheres are reflected in its vision, mission and value statements. These statements are relied upon in the design of various workplace policies, including those that relate to WF/L balance. These policies (see A in Figure 1) provide the basis by which subsequent WF/L provisions are developed. These provisions are offered to employees in various ways but mostly as part of the formal, written individual contract of employment or as collective agreements. Increasingly many of these provisions are listed in the organisation’s official website.

The sum total of all WF/L provisions offered to employees may be regarded as constituting the ‘espoused theory’ since it represents what the organisation suggests it is offering (see B in Figure 1). Similarly, the sum total of all employees’ experiences (or practices - see C in Figure 1) with these provisions may be used to represent how the organisation actually operates and therefore can be regarded as the...
‘theory-in-use’ component. In this study, employees’ experiences are measured using three different perspectives: awareness of provisions, need for provisions, and take-up of provisions. Hence, an analysis of the ‘espoused theory’ versus the ‘theory-in-use’ components can be used to indicate the degree of overlap between the ‘espoused theory’ and ‘theory-in-use’. The degree of the gap in the overlap can be used as an indicator of the degree of discrepancies between what is formulated and what in reality is being practised by the FFO (see D in Figure 1). It is suggested that in an ideal FFO, employees would experience very little difference between provisions and practices and consequently such an organisation may be regarded as having a low discrepancy level. Organisations with low discrepancy or gap levels inadvertently lead to it building up a favourable identity as a FFW and/or ‘Employer of Choice’ (Bittman et al. 2004; Rose 2004) and/or ‘Employer of Choice for Women’ (Burgess et al. 2006).

2.4.2.1 Espoused (rhetoric) component: Provisions

The ‘espoused theory’ or rhetoric component (see B in Figure 1) can be sourced from documents and publications that the organisation uses to affirm and support its claims to being WF/L-friendly. Such materials include the WF/L-friendly statements and actions initiated by the organisation, such as the work and family policies, the supporting culture as expressed in vision and mission statements, the self-nomination for prestigious awards, as well as the range of WF/L-friendly benefits and initiatives offered to employees.

2.4.2.2 Theory-in-use (reality) component: Practices

On the other hand, the ‘theory-in-use’ or reality (see C in Figure 1) of the organisation’s family-friendliness can be construed by what actually occurs in the organisation. Specifically, the study is interested in how the organisation manages workers’ needs for WF/L balance, and therefore to avoid reliance on management rhetoric these are analysed from employee perspective using three key employee experiences. First, ‘theory-in-use’ or reality is analysed from employees’ awareness of the WF/L policies, benefits and initiatives that are offered as part of the organisation’s claims to being WF/L-friendly, referred to henceforth as
‘organisational offerings’. Underlying effective employee awareness is successful organisation communication. Second, reality can be investigated from analysis of employees’ need for organisational offerings. Again, underlying appropriate organisational offerings is effective communication. Organisational offerings must closely match employees’ needs, and not just be rhetorical, unwarranted features to ‘bulk up’ claims of being WF/L-friendly. The third and final employee experience is their attempts or requests to take up the provisions offered. Are employees’ requests rejected completely out-right, accepted subject to subsequent modifications or are they completely successful?

2.4.2.3 Rhetoric-reality discrepancy

It is clear that it is the discrepancy (see C in Figure 1), gap or mismatch, between the ‘espoused theory’ and the ‘theory-in-use’ components, that can be used to authenticate the presence as well as level of rhetoric. This study argues that the discrepancy be measured and monitored so that timely remedial actions can be initiated where required. Such a proactive approach can help the FFO transcend the WF/L balance rhetoric claim.

The discrepancy, its nature and measurement procedures are central to the design of the conceptual framework. The survey and interview data can provide both the clues and empirical evidence as to the nature, level and sources of the WF/L balance rhetoric in the FFO. Alternatively, the level of discrepancy may be used as a measurement ‘tool’ to gauge organisational effectiveness in being WF/L-friendly. It is suggested that there is a positive relationship between the level of discrepancy and the FFO’s effectiveness in providing a WF/L-friendly workplace. The size of the discrepancy or gap is a useful indicator of the FFO’s effectiveness in providing employees WF/L balance. It may be argued that the larger the discrepancy the less effective the FFO, and conversely the smaller the discrepancy the more effective it is.

This study proposes that an FFO aims to minimise the discrepancy to as low as possible, with no more than 40% in any one area. This figure was arrived at from findings of a related study on policy awareness. Awareness is a key employee experience since the other two experiences, need and/or take-up, cannot happen if
employees are unaware of provisions that are offered. Hence, employees’ awareness of WF/L provisions is the first variable that is used to monitor, measure and gauge the level of the discrepancy. The findings of Burke’s (1996) research on work-family policy awareness in a large professional service organisation showed that two-thirds (66%) of the sample were aware of provisions related to ‘flexible hours and part-time work option’. Based on this finding, a slightly lower level of 60% of awareness was sought for the present study since it monitored awareness across the full range of WF/L provisions offered. This figure was then used as a consistent cut-off for the other two variables, ‘need for provisions’ and ‘take-up rates’ of provisions.

This study posits that the conceptual framework provides two key benefits. First, it provides an FFO with a mechanism by which it might self-monitor and improve its attempts to provide employees a truly WF/L friendly workplace. Second, in so doing, it can help the FFO transcend claims that its WF/L balance stand is rhetorical.

2.5 **Contemporary organisational developments**

This section provides an overview of developments in WF/L balance (a detailed account is given in Chapter 3) and provides an understanding behind claims of WF/L balance rhetoric.

2.5.1 **Downsizing**

The 1980s was an especially trying time for workers and workers’ families right across the globe. It was the period that signalled the end of the previously prosperous post-WWII era (Atwood, Coke, Cooper & Loria 1995) and heralded the beginning of greater organisational uncertainty. As technological advancement (Appelbaum, et al. 1999) began to take a stronger hold on world economies, economic competition intensified, and many organisations sought to stay on top of competitors by opening for longer hours and demanding more of employees. The problem was exacerbated by recession, which hit many economies, Australia included. Post-WWII organisations tended to have characteristically large workforces. In an effort to reduce costs and to gain comparative advantage, organisations, led by those in the
United States, began to downsize (Appelbaum et al. 1999; Atwood et al. 1995). Downsizing, according to Shaw and Barrett-Power (in Appelbaum et al. 1999), refers to a deliberate organisational action to reduce the workforce in pursuit of organisational performance.

Such trends in organisational and structural changes are in response to environmental forces, which and can be explained using DiMaggio & Powell’s (1983) institutional theory. According to the authors, three types of forces influence organisations: normative, mimetic, and coercive. The first, normative, is when organisations systematically and strategically consider what ought to be the most appropriate actions and decisions in the best interest of their business. In the second, mimetic, organisations do not systematically decide what ought to be the best actions and interests for their organisational needs, rather they tend to copy or imitate the successful actions of others, in particular their immediate competitors, or those in the same industry. In the third case, coercive, organisations are pressured to follow a particular course of action, often by those in power. These may include government agencies and regulatory pressures to conform, and powerful stakeholders. Oliver (1991) proposes a number of strategies that organisations tend to adopt when faced with such pressures. Goodstein (1994) has applied Oliver’s model in his US-based study to explore how organisations respond to calls for WF/L balance. This study suggests that institutional theory, especially the second and third type, can quite easily explain why the WF/L balance rhetoric could be commonplace. Such a thought is also acknowledged by Reed and Blundson (2006, p. 137) and Tolbert and Zucker (in Poelman, Chincilla & Cardona 2003).

Appelbaum et al.’s (1999) findings, that many organisations lacked any form of strategic planning in downsizing, and merely used downsizing as a quick-fix method to improve business productivity, suggests that these organisations were following general business trends, or in other words, were victims of mimetic institutionalism. In the UK, Wise and Bond (2003) found that legislative imperatives and government pressures on organisations to pursue the work-life balance agenda in order to enhance business performance, have not quite achieved the intended results. Their research, on four organisations in the financial services sector, found that there was a
misfit between organisational intentions to promote work-life balance and the actual outcomes as experienced by the organisation or employees. The current study posits that such mismatches between organisational intentions to provide WF/L balance and the actual contrasting experiences and outcomes of employees, are suggestive of grounds for WF/L balance rhetoric.

As global competition for the provision for goods and services intensified, organisations, focused on improving organisational efficiency, resorted to placing organisational interests and needs above those of employees (Appelbaum et al. 1999). For example, organisations downsized so that they could, like everyone else, gain competitive advantage; many layers in middle management were shed as quick decision-making and fast response times were deemed critical for success in a globalised world economy (Appelbaum et al. 1999). Organisations outsourced non-core organisational functions so that they could concentrate on where they had comparative advantage; again departments were shed as jobs were sent overseas. In downsizing, employees who were retained were given additional work; managers, for example, were given larger spans of control and ordinary workers were placed in teams, and had more responsibilities, such as decision-making (Appelbaum et al. 1999). However, such organisational actions seldom provide long-term sustainability. Unchecked, long hours and more pressures at work can take their toll on workers and their families, although there is evidence that for some professionals, high-pressured work and long hours brings self-fulfillment (Hewlett & Luce 2006). As work and family needs compete, tensions mount and work-family conflict can erupt (Greenhaus & Beutell 1985; Hewlett & Luce 2006; Hochschild 1997; Poelman, Chincilla & Cardona 2003; Runte & Mills 2002). Barbara Pocock, a leading authority on work and family issues in Australia refers to this tension as a ‘collision’ (Pocock 2003).

This is what has occurred in the global scene; work-family conflict has become well known, and has led to intense debate and focus on the need for WF/L balance (Greenhaus & Beutell 1985; Hochschild 1997; Kramer 1998; Poelman, Chincilla & Cardona 2003; Runte & Mills 2002). Much of the challenge lies, not just in acknowledging the need for such a balance but, more importantly, in how
organisations might provide such a balance and still maintain critical business performance functions. Employees, employers, industry, community groups and various government bodies are constantly on the look-out as to how to effectively balance businesses’ as well as workers’ needs. As discussed further in Chapter 3, Australian governments, both at federal and state levels, continue to publicly commit themselves to ensuring that workplaces are WF/L-friendly.

2.5.2 Rise in FFWs and FFOs

This debate on WF/L balance has invariably resulted in a greater number of firms and organisations seeking and implementing FFWs. While some authors have reported doubts about the validity and effectiveness of such organisational efforts, further adding to claims of organisational rhetoric (Kiser 1998; O'Rourke 2001), others have been largely encouraged by organisational efforts to fulfil their obligation to be as WF/L-friendly as possible (Hochschild 1997). Many organisations have been praised for their efforts to provide FFWs; some have been officially recognised and awarded nationally, for their apparent commitment to being ‘WF/L-friendly’, referred to as family-friendly organisations (FFOs) by this study.

2.5.3 WF/L balance rhetoric

However, despite the increasing emphasis and importance placed on FFWs, and/or the recognitions and awards received by some, a number of studies show that many employees still have problems with WF/L balance. Arlie Hochschild’s (1997) book, *The Time Bind*, is based exclusively on research of Amerco, a pseudo-name given to a real-life Fortune 500 company that had been recognised not just by one, but three independent bodies, as one of the ten most family-friendly companies in America. According to this study Amerco can be classified an FFO. But even within this FFO, many professionals, more women than men, were leaving. Amerco enlisted the services of Hochschild to find out the reasons behind the apparent failure of their organisation’s work and family balance program. Her findings showed resistance from different quarters. First, top management, despite having the resources and the power, were not committed. This by itself is strong confirmation of the rhetorical
nature of Amerco family-friendly stance. Second, managers lower down the corporate ladder, who had the inclination to make it work, lacked the authority to do so. Finally, there were some managers and supervisors who were “overtly hostile” to the program. Overall, Amerco, an apparent FFO, appears to justify why many people continue to be sceptical of the WF/L-friendly organisation.

Burud and Tumolo (2004) recount the problems faced by U.S. based Baxter International. Despite being a leader in work-life balance programs, Baxter was shocked to find that workers still faced work-life conflicts. The conflict was severe enough to cause slightly less than half its workforce, more men than women, to look for new jobs. Subsequent evaluation showed that long hours of work and lack of personal control over work were crucial factors. The company had inadvertently thought that employees value money over all other matters, when in fact many employees were moving to jobs which paid less but allowed them flexibility and more control over their work. Baxter and Alexander’s (2008) Australian research found that for working mothers (single parent and in couple relationships), personal control over work and flexibility in working hours were crucial elements of job design paramount for their sense of WF/L balance.

There is compelling evidence that the WF/L balance rhetoric continues to be a significant Australian challenge. Towards the end of the 20th century, Kramer (1998) noted that Australian employees, despite organisational initiatives to facilitate employees’ work and family balance, continued to face work-family conflict. Years later, in 2001, O’Rourke (2001) reported that 25% of 1000 NSW workers surveyed expressed dissatisfaction with their balance of WF/L. Then in 2004, findings of research by the Australian Institute found that nearly 25% of Australian workers had downshifted, that is voluntarily changed their working life styles in ways that involved drastic reduction in incomes, in order to better accommodate their WF/L needs (Breakspear & Hamilton 2004; Hamilton & Mail 2003). McDonald et al.’s (2005) paper specifically studies the rhetoric-reality gaps in take up of WF/L provisions. It has a similar theme to the present study, but their paper is based on secondary research. Using empirical evidence from existing literature the authors
compiled five reasons, all related to non-supportive organisational culture, for the gap between work-life policy provision and utilisation.

The discussion provided in this section shows that despite the increasing rise in the number of FFWs and FFOs and despite the increasing take-up of WF/L provisions by employees, the WF/L balance agenda is still problematic for many workers. This study suggests that the notion of the WF/L balance rhetoric is due to a combination of negative reports of the overall shortcomings of organisational initiatives and efforts to provide employees with WF/L balance, and the less than adequate personal experiences of employees to effectively combine WF/L responsibilities. In the next section, the study explores the underlying reasons for the gap between the WF/L balance rhetoric and reality as experienced by employees.

### 2.5.3.1 Gap contributors

A wide range of reasons has been identified for the problems that employees encounter in having a balance between their work and family spheres. The reasons include a lack of legal requirement (Napoli 1998), employers’ discretionary power (O’Rourke 2001), nature of work (ACIRRT 2001), access to provisions (Gray & Tudball 2002; Strachan & Burgess 1998), organisational culture (Adams 1995; Adamson 2002; Belout et al. 2001; Bolen & Kleiner 1999; Broadbridge 1999; Gambles et al. 2006; Lewis 1996, 2001; McDonald et al. 2005), gender issues (Adams 1995; Adamson 2002), social needs and emotional support (Hochshild 1997) and personal control of work (ACCIRT 2001; Burud & Tumolo 2004). These reasons are reviewed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Despite the positive and welcoming trend that Australian workplaces have adopted towards various WF/L balance policies and initiatives, there is anecdotal and empirical evidence as well as public perception that the WF/L-friendly workplace is, often, rhetoric. This perception continues to reverberate in the popular media and among the public; this study suggests that this negative perception is due largely to the fact that FFWs and FFOs are currently unable to counteract such claims and/or to provide sound empirical evidence to the contrary. This inability to counteract such claims is in part due to the lack of relevant means to do so; whilst there is abundant
literature on WF/L balance, there is conversely little, in terms of effective models or frameworks, on how these organisations might attempt to investigate, and address where necessary, the notion that their claims of family-friendliness is rhetoric. This is where the current study hopes to make a valuable contribution. The study is focused on developing and testing, using a mixed methodological framework, a model that can be used to monitor, measure and uncover the sources of discrepancies between organisational WF/L balance rhetoric and reality as experienced by employees. Such a working framework is designed to help provide FFWs and FFOs with further insights as to the effectiveness -or alternatively ineffectiveness- of their WF/L balance programs.

2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided the background information relevant to understanding the central theme of the study; how to transcend the WF/L balance rhetoric in FFWs and specifically in FFOs. Such a line of investigation fundamentally helps an organisation evaluate its effectiveness in providing employees with opportunities to balance WF/L responsibilities and commitment. Effectiveness was gauged by analysing and measuring the discrepancy or gap between rhetoric and reality of the FFO’s WF/L balance programs and initiatives.

The chapter initially provided overviews of contemporary discourse and rhetoric as these are particularly relevant in post-modern organisational analysis. It then proceeded with discussions on previous work in rhetoric, analytical frameworks, and gap analysis, and provided compelling reasons that supported new theory development and also the design of a new conceptual framework, ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’. The chapter provided conclusive evidences as to how Lasswell’s (1972) policy sciences analytical framework, used in conjunction with Arygris and Schon’s ‘Theory of Action perspective’, provides the foundations of understanding organisational rhetoric and the development of the conceptual framework. The study uses this framework to test and measure the amount of overlap between organisational rhetoric and reality, as experienced by employees of the case organisation.
CHAPTER 3: WORK AND FAMILY/LIFE LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 provided a critical overview and evaluation of the extant literature relevant to understanding WF/L-friendly organisational rhetoric. It also provided the theoretical framework and the logical assumptions behind the design of the proposed conceptual framework, ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’.

Work and family is an extensive field of study and therefore here in Chapter 3 the focus will be restricted largely to the extant literature on WF/L balance studies. In particular the focus will be on literature that is relevant to understanding and addressing the research questions and the research problem, of how FFOs might transcend the WF/L balance rhetoric, is reviewed. This means that the primary focus of the study will be from an organisational studies perspective, namely on organisational issues and challenges that hinder the effectiveness of WF/L balance initiatives. While global literature is sourced to make the case, the application of the literature will be directed to the Australian context.

Overall, the chapter addresses six broad categories of literature. In section 3.2 the study briefly examines the international shifts in reclassifying the work-family domain to work-life, the trends in Australian work-life, and the arguments for this study’s preference for the all inclusive reference to it as work and family/life (WF/L). Then in section 2.2 the reasons why employees encounter WF/L conflict are explored. Conflict can originate from within the family or work domains but, as per the direction of this study, the discussion will be limited to the latter. Even from this perspective, work-family conflict is a study in itself; therefore in this study the examination of the phenomena will be limited to the extent that it provides a reasonable understanding in relation to WF/L balance. The section focuses on the
WF/L conflict and balance issues from gender perspectives, which essentially are shaped and formed by cultural viewpoints of appropriate roles of men and women. Section 2.2 focuses on the examination of the business case for providing WF/L balance while section 2.2 studies the trends in international WF/L balance and examines in particular the Australian scenario.

The next two sections focus on the challenges that test FFWs intent on pursuing the WF/L balance agenda. This study suggests that these challenges represent the core reasons how and why WF/L balance rhetoric occurs. Understanding the sources and nature of the challenges is therefore crucial to any attempt to narrowing the rhetoric-reality gap and transcending the WF/L balance rhetoric. While the discussion of challenges is generally confined to the Australian context, literature from non-Australian settings will be used, where relevant, to provide greater insight and understanding. This study suggests two broad categories of challenges, external and internal. In section 2.2 the challenges that arise because of forces in the external environment are explored; such challenges are likely to confront most organisations. In section 2.2 the challenges that originate from within the workplace itself are explored. Of primary interest to this study are internal challenges that tend to be recurrent themes among FFWs. Finally, in section 2.2 a chapter summary is provided.

### 3.2 Shift from work-family to work-life

There is consensus by various parties that the initial interest in work and family was fuelled by changing demographics of the workforce, notably the entry of women into the paid workforce (Bardoel 2003; Barnett 1999; Burgess & Strachan 1999; Campbell & Charlesworth 2004; Charlesworth et al. 2002; Johnson 1995; Kirby et al. 2003; Keene & Quadagno 2004; Rose 2006; Russell & Bourke 1999; Russell & Bowman 2000; Thompson & Beauvais 2000). Women’s entry into the workforce consequentially led to the increase in dual-income households (Burgess & Strachan 1999; Campbell & Charlesworth 2004; Charlesworth et al. 2002; Russell & Bowman 2000; Thompson & Beauvais 2000) or dual earners (Barnett 1999). Other demographic changes affecting work and family issues are the aging workforce and
shortage of skilled labour (Burgess & Strachan 1999; Campbell & Charlesworth 2004; Charlesworth et al. 2002; De Cieri et al. 2005). Kirby et al. (2003, p.2) highlight that technological innovations have also been implicated in the growing interest as the exponential growth in technology increasingly blurs the boundary between work and family.

Despite the overall increase in the total number of workers (both male and female) with dependent care responsibilities (Russell & Bourke 1999), organisational responses to this dilemma have tended to focus, by large, on the needs of women workers (Russell & Bowman 2000; Visser & Williams 2006). Many organisations developed supposedly gender-free WF/L-friendly initiatives and programs to help workers maintain some sort of balance between their responsibilities to work and their families, but in practice directed attention of take up towards female workers. Such organisational efforts, directed almost exclusively at a particular subset, were predictably problematic, and were therefore not well perceived (Drew & Murtagh 2005; Galinsky, Friedman & Hernandez 1991; Gilbert 1994; Kossel & Friede 2005; Rapoport et al. 1996). Male employees with dependent care responsibilities as well as other employees without dependents perceived that they were being required to shoulder the work and responsibilities of their female colleagues who took up these provisions.

In view of the narrow connotations implied of the term ‘work and family’ and the adverse reactions to it by some employees, there has been a global preference for the ‘work and life’ terminology (Hudson Australia and New Zealand 2005; Russell 1999; Thompson & Beauvais 2000). Today many Western developed nations, Australia included, use the work-life concept. However, an investigation of the case organisation as well as other Australian FFWs and FFOs, reveal that despite the apparent shift in terminology, the majority of organisational efforts to provide ‘work and life’ balance still relate to those that concern family responsibilities. Todd (2004) also observes that while Australia appears to have embraced the global shift to work and life balance, fundamentally her actions are still recognizant of the ‘old’ work-family balance agenda. This overt reference to ‘work and family’ is argued to be directly linked to the Federal Workplace Relations Act 1996 (WR Act) legislative
emphasis on work and family (Russell & Bowman 2000). Hence, to more adequately portray the reality of the Australian work-life scenario I have opted to use the all embracing new terminology ‘work and family/life’ in all aspects of this study, except in those specific circumstances, where it is cited from literature, when the use of ‘work and family’ or ‘work and life’ will be retained. WF/L balance is also known as the “overlapping-spheres model” (Barnett 1999, p. 144).

### 3.3 Work-family/life (WF/L) conflict

The WF/L discourse has different and often contradictory meanings for each of the three critical parties, i.e. the workplace, the family, and the worker. Each one of these parties has their own unique and often divergent vested interests and accordingly, may view the significance and importance of its own and other interests differently. Therefore to a worker, any combination of these divergent vested interests has the potential to cause conflict (Aryee 1992; Duxbury & Higgins 1994; Greenhaus & Beutell 1985; Voydanoff 2002). Theoretically therefore, a worker can experience conflicts at three levels, i.e. between work and family needs, between work and individual needs, and between family and individual needs. In the context of WF/L balance, only the first two levels, which directly relate to work, are relevant. The third level of conflict is non-work related (e.g. lifestyle clashes) and therefore irrelevant to the study. Additionally, this study argues that the second level, work-individual conflict, remains largely conceptual. The study projects this conflict as a natural outcome of the shift from work-family to work-life; however a search of the literature shows no studies in this area. Therefore in this section the examination will be largely limited to the analyses of work-family conflict.

Aryee (1992) argues that the conflict arises because a worker inherently has a number of different roles or identities. In his studies on the work-family conflict of professional married women in Singapore, he identified married women with children as having three different roles: spouse, parent, and homemaker, with the potential to cause three types of work-family conflicts: job-spouse, job-parent, and job-homemaker. In line with my argument in the previous paragraph I suggest that a fourth identity and conflict type exists. A worker is also an individual with his/her
own personal non-work related needs, and work can interfere with this. Therefore job-individual conflict is also possible.

The multiple roles a worker assumes have the potential to create interrole conflict (Aryee 1992) through role overload, and role interference or spillover (Aryee 1992; Glezer & Wilcott 1999; Keene & Quadagno 2004). An individual experiences role overload when (s)he perceives that one domain is exerting undue pressure at the expense of the other. The pressure can be in terms of either time or energy (Greenhaus & Beatell 1985; Glezer & Wilcott 1999). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985, p. 77) identified two further types. The first, “strain-based conflict” arises when pressure from one domain exerts strains on the other and the second, “behavior-based conflict” is when workplace behavior is incompatible with that in the domestic sphere and vice versa. From the workplace perspective, there are a number of factors which can serve to moderate role overload and reduce the amount of conflict experienced. They include, for example, appropriate WF/L policies and provisions, supportive organisational culture, and supportive superiors. Role interference occurs because of the substantial degree of overlap between the WF/L domains. For arguments sake, it is possible that if the WF/L domains were to be somehow kept as quite separate and distinct systems, each could function relatively clear of one another and consequently there should be little or no conflicting demands between them. However, it is a reality that while some aspects of each of the domains can be kept quite separate, there are significant other parts which cannot be. What in fact happens is that family matters and concerns spillover into the workplace and likewise, workplace matters and concerns spillover into the domestic domain (Anderson et al. 2002; Aryee 1992; Glezer & Wilcott 1999; Greenhaus & Beutell 1985; Keene & Quadagno 2004), which means that conflict is bidirectional. Hence, there are significant aspects of the two domains that overlap, and within which lay the greatest potential for conflict (Duxbury & Higgins 1994).

Anderson et al. (2002) suggest two distinct forms of work-family conflict, family-to-work conflict (FWC) and work-to-family conflict (WFC); both which have serious organisational implications, such as job dissatisfaction and turnover intentions. What
can be reasonably gleaned from the discussion so far is that the WF/L conflict can occur as a result of a combination of both worker- and workplace-related reasons.

While some attempts may be made to demarcate general patterns in WF/L conflict, it is neither practical nor feasible to fully embark on such a plan. This is because, at the most fundamental level, the amount and nature of conflict is an individual experience, based on one’s critical appraisal of what ‘balance’ means (Fredriksen & Scharlach 1999; Stevens et al. 2004; Thompson & Beauvais 2000). Such an appraisal is guided by one’s “life role salience” or personal assessments of role expectations (Amatee et al. in Aryee 1992, p. 815).

Since this balance is based on role perceptions, undeniably unique and personal to every individual, so too would be the nature and meaning of the conflict experienced. For example, a female worker with young children might assess that she should and would like to spend more time with her young family, and would like to work part-time. However, her financial predicament might mean that she work full-time. Additionally, a male manager might like to spend more time with his young family, and would therefore like to leave work promptly at 5:00pm, but might perceive that the organisational culture might not think it as appropriate.

Despite this, it is still possible to engage in some very broad generalisations using some of the more common employee demographic characteristics, such as gender, number, and/or type of dependents, marital status, age, household income, and cultural background. Such analysis can result in particular broad patterns of WF/L conflict behaviour. In particular, this discussion will focus on WF/L conflict from a gender perspective. However, since gender issues are shaped and informed by culture, the study will also examine gender from a cultural perspective. This study considers both these issues to be of particular relevance and significance in investigating the Australian WF/L balance scene.
3.3.1 Conflict: A gender perspective

A consistent thread in the WF/L literature is the notion that work and family conflict and balance issues, is very much a gendered discourse (Crompton & Lyonette 2006; Da 2004; Gustafson 2006; Kirby et al. 2003; Keene & Quadagno 2004; Roehling et al. 2005; Reed & Blundson 2006; Runté & Mills 2002; 2004; 2006; Sayer 2005). Gendered relations are manifested in the division of work and family responsibilities, which in turn is linked to society’s expectations of appropriate gender roles and responsibilities (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver 2007; Fredriksen-Goldsen & Scharlach 2001; Ho 2006; Keene & Quadagno 2004; Reed & Blundson 2006). It is generally acknowledged that work and family conflict and balance issues are experienced by both men and women, albeit similarly in some respects and differently in others (Aryee 1992; Barnett 1999; Greenhaus & Beutell 1985; Milkman 2006; Keene & Quadagno 2004). There is, however, general agreement that women are more greatly affected than men (ABS 2003a; Duxbury & Higgins 1994; Duxbury, Higgins & Lee 1994; Fredriksen-Goldsen & Scharlach 2001; Gustafson 2006; Hochschild 1997; Milkman 2006; Reed & Blundson 2006; Sharpe et al. 2002; Winslow 2005). The differential experiences are possibly due to their traditional roles as primary carers of their families and principal undertakers of domestic responsibilities (ABS 2003a; MacRae 2005). Breen and Cooke (2005) offer another view of this problem. The authors posit that in some dual-income families, women tend to take on the responsibility for domestic labour as a means of reinforcing traditional gender-based role ideologies, which in the main, are primarily focused on upholding male roles and allowing men to “…display masculinity and reinforce their structural and cultural power” (Sayer 2005, p. 287).

Russell and Bowman (2000) suggest that in Australia, the legislative implications of Workplace Relations Act (WR Act) provides further support for WF/L balance to be of more concern to female workers than male workers. Additionally, there is also a more pronounced differential pattern of behaviour in Australia than in other countries. Glezer and Wilcott (1999) provide evidence that male Australian workers have greater WF/L conflict than their female counterparts. Their analyses of the 1996 Australian Family Life Course Study data provide two contrasting findings that point to this one conclusion. First, that significantly more males (40%) than females (28%)
reported that ‘work interferes with home life’. Second, insofar as respondents with partners were concerned, 35% of female respondents compared to 28% of male respondents reported that their ‘partner's work interferes with home life’. This shows that male workers either perceive themselves or are perceived by others, to exhibit more work-to-family conflict (Anderson et al. 2002).

As mentioned above, many studies link the gendered division of work and family responsibilities to society’s expectations of appropriate gender roles. This study argues that WF/L conflict and WF/L balance issues, particularly for workers from dual income households and more so when dependent care responsibilities are involved, are firmly rooted in such societal expectations. House et al.’s (1999) principles of gender egalitarianism provide further insights. Gender egalitarianism refers to the extent to which gender roles are minimised in a society and consequently results in countries to be classified as high- or low-gender egalitarianism. High-gender egalitarianism implies overlapping of male and female roles, such as that which is involved in parenting and/or domestic (unpaid) work. This study suggests a correlation between gender egalitarianism and the effectiveness of WF/L balance programs in an organisation.

### 3.3.2 Gender and societal culture

The general conclusion from much of the literature is that the gendered notion of work and family is culturally driven (Berger et al. 1994; Blair-Loy & Frenkel 2005; Da 2004; Dale 2005; Lyonette et al. 2007; Shaffer et al. 2005; Roehling et al. 2005; Reed & Blundson 2006; Shafiro et al. 2003; Wall & São José 2004; Westman 2005). Desai (in Gambles et al. 2006, p. xiii) writes that although women are entering the Indian workforce in increasing numbers, and WF/L balance is being actively promoted, cultural values and traditions mean that the gendered separateness of roles makes WF/L balance something of a myth. Women born and accustomed to traditional values and customs face perhaps even greater challenges if they do migrate overseas, especially to Western countries. In her UK based research findings Dale (2005) argues that Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrant women workers “face
many more difficulties” with WF/L balance compared to the general white British women.

Although education of both sexes is a powerful enabler of gender equality, women are more likely to believe in these values (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver 2007), which could explain why women in contemporary developed societies are more empowered in defining their work and non-work needs (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver 2007; Reed & Blundson 2006). Arends-Tóth and van de Vijver’s (2007) comparative intracultural studies in The Netherlands, a country with significant immigrants, needs mentioning although their data validity is questionable. The authors found that the four immigrant groups (from Turkey, Morocco, Suriname and the Dutch Antilles) all had lesser egalitarian gender role perceptions than the ‘Dutch mainstreamers’, and that such perceptions tended to be higher for first-generation immigrants than second-generation immigrants, possibly because of acculturation mainly through education. However, the authors found no significant differences in behaviour between the immigrant groups and the mainstreamers in terms of shared household tasks and parenting or in their psychological well-being. However, there is a problem with data validity and therefore their findings (Jennings 2001; Hussey & Hussey 1997; Stake 1994). In finalising the immigrant sample, the researchers targeted various immigrant enclaves to pre-select (through local council registers) and post letters of invitation to households “which had at least one person born” or “one parent who was born” in the target country (p. 816). While this process is acceptable the subsequent processes are questionable. In their quest for maintaining randomness of interview participants, the researchers did not interview this initial person but sought to select a random family member within the household. They applied the “birthday rule”, i.e. “[t]he first person to have his or her birthday after the first time the household was reached” (p.816). This means that while the household was identified as belonging to a particular culture, the person they eventually interviewed need not necessarily have come from the same cultural background. Nevertheless this discussion exemplifies the importance of cultural influences in gender roles (real or perceived) and could explain Hakim’s (2005 p. 71) call for culture to be factored in any discussions of the gendered notion of work centrality.
Westman (2005) proposes that a dichotomy exists, alongside a traditional gender role ideology corresponding to a collectivist culture versus a liberal gender role ideology corresponding to an individualist culture. This dichotomy is explored further in this thesis in the context of the challenges faced by non-Western collectivist immigrant groups as they work and exist within their adopted Western societies such as Australia. Further support for the gender and ethnicity dimension to work and family issues and challenges can be found in the work of Berger et al. (1994). Their finding that for male and female Mexican-American workers, work- and family-related stress was different from that experienced by their Anglo-American counterparts is crucial to the central thesis of this current argument. Since gender role is central to WF/L issues and gender itself is shaped by societal culture, it follows that culture needs to be factored in any analysis of WF/L balance. One of the significant cultural issues that need to be considered is that of gender equality. Clancy and Tata (2005) suggest the use of House et al.’s (1999) ‘gender egalitarianism’ as an effective way of classifying countries by gender roles. This study suggests that it is therefore also useful to understanding work and family roles and WF/L conflict and balance. Gender egalitarianism, according to these researchers, refers to the extent to which gender roles are minimised in a society and classifies countries as high- or low-gender egalitarianism.

In the following section I examine and analyse the literature in support of my argument that House et al.’s (1999) ‘gender egalitarianism’ is equivalent to one of the meanings implied within Hofstede’s (1980) masculinity/femininity (M/F) dimension. This clarification is important for the arguments presented in section 3.6.2.4, that contemporary Australia, since Hofstede’s inaugural studies, has become more feminine, and effectively brings her in line with House et al.’s ratings of ‘medium’ gender egalitarianism rankings. This finding is critical in the context of the current directions in WF/L balance and the changing fabric of Australian society. On one hand, WF/L balance and gender egalitarianism are being actively promoted and encouraged, and on the other there is an increasing number of the migrant population arriving from masculine countries with lesser gender egalitarianism scores. These findings have serious implications for the effectiveness of Australian WF/L balance.
programs and initiatives and the WF/L balance rhetoric and the WF/L balance experiences for some employees, particularly recent immigrants.

3.3.2.1 Gender egalitarianism

House et al. (1999) are researchers of the renowned international project GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness). Project GLOBE studies cultures at three levels, society, industry and organisation and from two perspectives, practices (or actions) and values (or artefacts) (Triandis 2004). It uses nine independent variables or dimensions, six of which the researchers acknowledge as being directly related to Hofstede’s original IBM study. Hofstede (2006) however, emphatically maintains that the whole project GLOBE is in itself an adaptation and extension of his IBM studies.

One of the three remaining dimensions that GLOBE uses and of particular interest to this study in terms of implications for WF/L balance, is gender egalitarianism. GLOBE researchers maintain that while this variable is not directly related to Hofstede’s dimensions it is derived from his masculinity dimension. In measuring gender egalitarianism, GLOBE researchers split Hofstede’s masculinity dimension into two components, one that attempted to measure ‘assertiveness’ or gender emotions and the other gender egalitarianism or gender equality based on social roles. Hofstede (2006) however, maintains that his notion of masculinity is not so much about culturally defined social gender roles as it is about emotional gender roles. He asserts that the masculinity dimension is not so concerned with “gender equality” (Hofstede p.894) or ‘who does what’, rather, it is concerned about whether a culture is predominantly, “assertive, tough and focused on material success” (masculine) or “modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life” (feminine) (Hofstede G & Hofstede GJ 2005, p.120). Therefore, while Hofstede (2006) acknowledges similarities between House et al.’s assertiveness and masculinity, he denies any association between the masculinity dimension and gender egalitarianism.

Despite Hofstede’s assertion, House et al, and several other researchers and writers (Bardoel 2003; Browaeys & Price 2008; Deresky 2002; DiStefano & Maznevski 2000; Emrich et al. 2004; Francesco & Gold 2005; Konopaske & Ivancevich 2003;
Ogden & Shen 2005; Saee 2005; Schneider & Barsoux 2003), argue that the masculinity dimension does indeed portray two different meanings. The first meaning relates to a gender-based values aspect (i.e. emotional role) while the second meaning relates to a gender-based social role. This dilemma may be due to the fact that Hofstede’s reference to the term masculinity is at times rather vague and at other times contradictory. Many readers, authors, and researchers perceived, correctly or incorrectly, that Hofstede himself implied two different meanings. In solving this dilemma, we need to reconsider Hofstede’s notion of the masculinity dimension. In *Masculinity and Femininity: The Taboo Dimension of National Cultures*, he (1998, p. 11) states that masculinity, “…does not primarily concern the visible roles in society, such as men going out to work and women staying at home to care… [it] concerns first of all the emotional roles in the home”. And yet again in another part of the text (p. 80) he specifically notes that, “[t]he prevailing role distributions between husband and wife reflects that society’s position on the Mas/Fem scale”. (The Mas/Fem scale in this excerpt refers to the Masculinity index). And again, in another text (Hofstede 2001), he writes “Masculinity and femininity, in the sense in which I shall use these terms, refer to the dominant gender role patterns in the vast majority of both traditional and modern societies…”. Judging from these excerpts, it is easy to see why many authors and readers have interpreted Hofstede’s masculinity/femininity dimension as comprising two meanings. Two examples are given here.

Firstly, Emrich et al. (2004, p. 344) states, “[C]onceptually, masculinity/femininity … appears to encompass at least two distinct aspects of societal culture”. It has to do with, how societies regards and rewards “masculine” or “tough” values as well as how it regards appropriate male/female role behaviours. Ogden and Shen (2005), provide the second example of Hofstede’s audience who are confused with his masculinity dimension. They write (p. 1), “There seem to be two elements to this dimension…. The second aspect of this dimension has to do with what people in a culture expect of sex roles. In a very masculine culture, sex roles would be differentiated while in a feminine culture sex roles would be more similar.”
Given this dilemma, the stand taken by this study is to assume House et al.’s notion that the masculinity dimension also refers to gender-based social roles or gender egalitarianism. Hence, in Hofstede’s masculine cultures, such as Japan and the U.K, gender-based social roles would be prominent while in feminine cultures, such as Sweden and Denmark, there is a blurring of such roles (Anxo 2006; International Labour Organization (ILO) 2004). Furthermore, since national and societal cultures can pervade the workplace (Emrich et al. 2004; Francesco & Gold 2005; Warner & Joynt 2002) this study suggests that Hofstede’s masculine dimension (of the social gender role type) or House et al.’s gender egalitarianism has the potential to affect the effectiveness and success of WF/L balance programs. In particular, this study argues that high gender egalitarianism or feminine cultures are especially conducive to WF/L programs; the success of WF/L balance programs, as seen in the case of Swedish examples (Matz 2003), a highly feminine culture provides testimony to this claim. Such ratings could also explain and justify why women in developed societies are more empowered in how they manage their work and non-work spheres (Reed & Blundson 2006).

3.4 The business case

Besides the changing demographics of the labour market, another driver of the FFW is the acute awareness that being WF/L-friendly is good for business (Pocock & Charlesworth 2005; Di Cieri et al. 2005; Russell 1999; Wax 2002) in other words the bottom-line (Johnson 1995; McDonald et al. 2005; Zetlin & Whitehouse 1998) or business profits. However, despite this general awareness, as recently as the early part of the 21st century FFWs were said to be in “short supply” (Wax 2002, p. 6). One of the most important decisions facing organisations wanting to venture down the WF/L-friendly track is the evaluation of the potential costs and benefits, commonly referred to as the business case (Yasbeck 1994). There is a list of the potential business benefits of providing FFWs, which include tangible aspects such as better profits, higher stock prices, reduced labor costs as a result of less turnover and need for unnecessary recruitment and selections, and intangible aspects such as improved employee morale, job satisfaction and attracting high calibre workers. Alternatively, there are costs, both direct and indirect (Yasbeck 1994), which include
among others employee turnover, absenteeism, stress (including alcohol and substance abuse), job dissatisfaction, lower morale, and loyalty (Bond 2004; Kossek & Friede 2005). Hudson Australia and New Zealand (2005), a branch of the international human resources recruitment agency Hudson, argues that current skills shortage and the aging population are reasons why Australian and New Zealand businesses need to embrace WF/L balance now. There is a significant pool of untapped mothers, senior citizens, and minority groups that can be of benefit to businesses. De Cieri et al. (2005) notes that the aging population will mean that more employees will have elder care and therefore WF/L policies need to ensure that needs are met.

A FFW needs to ensure that its WF/L-friendly approach does not detract it from its primary objectives, arguably the business functions of productivity and efficiency (Kossek & Friede 2005; O’Neil 2004). At the fundamental level, the cost implications of not providing or providing particular provisions need careful assessment. It has to be conducted from the business as well as employee vantage point and must “…remain balanced and measured” (O’Neil 2004, p.10).

The business case is not to be regarded as a one model fits all (Johnson 1995; Kossek & Friede 2005; Yasbeck 1994); rather it is best used as a guiding principle. The one-size business model and a lack of adequate assessment of the organisational specific costs of being WF/L-friendly could explain why many organisations “downsized” their WF/L-friendly stand (Armour 2003). To avoid such reactive measures business should heed the suggestion of Russell and Bowman (2000) and include plans for WF/L balance as part of the overall business strategy.

Therefore, it is imperative that each FFW makes its own honest assessment of this area, arguably a very complicated one, to find out what the extent and nature of family-friendliness should be. Such an approach is consistent with normative institutionalism (DiMaggio & Powell 1983), and not to do so may potentially subject the FFW to possible rhetoric charges.
3.5 WF/L balance in Australia

While Australia is generally seen as being on par with other Western developed nations in her efforts to pursue the work and life balance agenda (Bourke 1999; Matz 2003), in practical terms the ‘iceberg’ metaphor more correctly describes the state of the Australian WF/L-friendly scene (Todd 2004). Basically, very few organisations manage to effectively provide workers with WF/L balance. Further compounding the problem is the fact that Australia has not quite embraced the Western developed nations’ foray into the ‘work-life’ balance agenda, preferring, instead, to retain attention on the work-family agenda (Todd 2004). As mentioned above, an investigation of the case organisation as well as other Australian FFWs and FFOs, reveals that despite the apparent shift in terminology, the majority of Australian organisational efforts to provide ‘work and life’ balance still relate to those that concern family responsibilities. Hence Todd’s evaluation further supports my preference for the WF/L terminology.

A problem inherent with Australia’s focus on work-family balance is that it carries the connotation of being a gendered issue. Despite the shift to shared parenting responsibilities within the domestic setting (Baxter 1998; Bourke 1999), work-family balance in the organisational setting, is still regarded as being of primary concern to female workers, perhaps because of their traditional caring responsibilities (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2003). Matz (2003) provides some evidence into the gendered state of Australian work-family agenda. She applauds Australia for some innovative strategies and initiatives for women, possibly she notes, due to positive developments in affirmative actions and sex-discrimination legislation. Authors Strachan and Burgess provide an alternative view (Burgess & Strachan 1999; Strachan & Burgess 1998). In tracing the origin of the “family friendly workplace” (FFW) in Australia, they suggest that the FFW is in effect ‘equal employment opportunity’ (EEO) presented from a different angle. They argue that while the EEO that we are generally familiar with has a very much gender-based focus, the FFW on the other hand, is in fact EEO with a family-based focus. What may be gleaned from this is that while there appear to be genuine attempts for Australian WF/L balance to function as a family concern, the reality is that it is still regarded as a gendered issue and of most concern to female workers. Such a
restrictive and continued view of work-family balance will only serve to hinder the effectiveness of any programs to promote WF/L balance in the workplace.

To better understand the state of the Australian WF/L balance agenda the study reviews two critical areas of development. The first concerns developments in Australian industrial relations, and the second concerns a shift in the notion of the FFW from a gender focus to a family focus.

### 3.5.1 Developments in industrial relations

It is no denying the impact of globalisation and increased international competition, and its overall ramification for governments and businesses in general. In Australia micro economic reforms resulted in radical changes such as the deregulation of the financial and labour markets and the pursuit of greater business productivity and efficiency (Commonwealth of Australia 2002; Deery et al. 2001, p.247; Morris 1999). Changes to the industrial relations legislature provided the impetus for the radical transformations to the traditional federal system of centralised industrial tribunal regulation of unions, wages, and working conditions. Two sets of noticeable changes were evident. The first change involved a shift to industry and occupational awards and the second, a shift to agreements made at the enterprise level (Commonwealth of Australia 2002, 2002a). The result was a revolutionary system of enterprise bargaining and a shift towards employer-employee involvement in setting wages and employment conditions (Commonwealth of Australia 2002, 2002a; Deery et al. 2001). In this climate, unions still played a key but reduced role (Deery et al. 2001).

In more recent years there have been further reforms to Australian industrial relations system specifically in the form of the Workplace Relations Amendment (Work Choices) Act 2005 (Cwth) (Hall 2006; Pocock & Charlesworth 2006; Walton 2006). This legislation paved the way for greater individual bargaining and even lesser union involvement. Various reviews of WorkChoices suggested it was the antithesis of the FFW (Australian Council of Trade Unions 2005; Pocock & Charlesworth 2006). If this was a valid observation it would have meant that FFOs would need to
work twice as hard to convince employees as well as other critical stakeholders, that in spite of the controversial legislation, it was still able to factor in employees’ needs and provide the best WF/L balance initiatives and programs possible. The WorkChoices legislation came into effect after the fieldwork for this study was completed, and this same legislation was revoked after a new government came into power in late 2007. Nevertheless the study will provide an overview of the WorkChoices legislation in section 3.5.1.2 if only to showcase its potential effects on WF/L balance.

Paralleling such a change in the economic environment was the increasing awareness by many of the dire consequences of new employment conditions on workers and their families. Such awareness resulted in the conscious attempts by business, society, and government to seriously consider the rights of workers to balance their business obligations alongside their family and life needs and responsibilities. The result has been significant labour market and employment relations reforms. One such reform, critical to Australian WF/L balance, is the enterprise bargaining system (EBS).

3.5.1.1 Enterprise bargaining

As noted by system Napoli (in Strachan & Burgess 1998) the heightened interest in, and the opportunity for a ‘harmonious marriage between work and family’ in Australia, can be traced to the early 1990s with the implementation of the EBS. The Law Reform Commission NSW (1993) describes the enterprise bargaining process as

…the decentralised process through which management and employees (and their organisations, including unions) negotiate and reach agreement about the pay and working conditions to suit the needs of people within the enterprise.

Prior to the EBS, Australian employees’ wages and conditions of work were set in award systems and centrally regulated by a system of conciliation and arbitration by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC). The global conditions and a shift in micro economic labour policy reforms in the late 1980s (Commonwealth of Australia 2002; Deery et al. 2001; Morris 2004) warranted a revamp of this
centralised manner of wage and conditions of work setting. The first federal enterprise bargaining agreement was certified in 1991, at a time when the Australian economy bounced back from the then recession and continued its upward expansion (Commonwealth of Australia 2002). This fact, as well as continued intense global competition, made employer flexibility a priority and the Industrial Relations Reform Act (1993) allowed for this through ‘enterprise flexibility agreements’ (EFAs). These provisions allowed employers, for the first time, to make legally binding agreements with non-unionised workers (Deery et al. 2001). Subsequently, the Workplace Relations Act 1996 (WR Act) further revamped the industrial system by making the parties in the workplace largely responsible for setting employment conditions. The Act also further wound back the role of the AIRC; its greatest role is to do with awards, while its least role is with Australian Workplace Awards (AWAs) (Commonwealth of Australia 2002; Deery et al. 2001).

The WR Act gave employees access to three types of formal employment negotiating instruments: awards, certified agreements (CA) and AWAs. Awards are a set of legally binding minimum standards in any one of 20 pre-set areas. Many of these pre-set areas are critical to WF/L balance such as those that concern leave matters, e.g. parental leave, including maternity and adoption leave; personal/carer’s leave including sick leave, family leave, bereavement leave, compassionate leave, cultural and other forms of leave, working hours, and wages (Deery et al. 2001). CAs are collective agreements between employers and employee groups and AWAs are agreements between employers and individual employees. Both these instruments provide, through the enterprise bargaining principle, greater powers for employee groups and individual employees and the ability to negotiate mutually beneficial terms and conditions of employment. Studies show a wide-range of WF/L provisions in agreements in the first five years since the inception of the WR Act. Furthermore, around 80 percent of all agreements certified in the period between 2000 and 2001 contained at least one WF/L provision (Commonwealth of Australia 2002). In this regard, the EBS and the WR Act, in particular, appear to have provided the impetus for the FFW.
The introduction of WorkChoices legislation makes it necessary to examine its implied impacts on the WF/L balance, a point that is also raised by Pocock and Charlesworth (2006). Of key concern are flexibility and its links to power relations. It has been previously acknowledged in this study that the EBS is generally credited with introducing workplace flexibility through the notion of shared power and control between employer and individual employees or employee groups in setting employment conditions. Work and family literature overwhelmingly highlights the importance of flexibility in effective WF/L balance (Booth & Frank 2005; Pocock & Charlesworth 2006; de Wolff 2003; Hetrick & Boje 1992; Houston 2005). So while legislative changes that promote greater flexibility may be regarded as positive and welcome step forward in WF/L balance developments, the same cannot be said of the WorkChoices legislation which is claimed to endow employers with even greater powers over workers (Stewart & Riley 2007).

3.5.1.2 WorkChoices legislation

The WorkChoices legislation was portrayed as the Howard Government’s major tool to improve the Australian economy; it promised greater business productivity and efficiency (Hall 2006). The reforms made it easier for employers to demand more time, effort, and commitment but with less financial rewards, from already over-worked employees. One of the key tenets of these reforms was argued to be greater workplace flexibility through individual bargaining and agreement-making. The federal government’s Department of Workplace Relations (DEWR) claimed WorkChoices would help workers balance their WF/L needs (DEWR 2006). However, WorkChoices also allowed employers to insist that employees “…sign individual contracts as a condition of employment (and as the sole mode of regulating their employment)” (Walton 2006). But unequal power-control relationship between employers and employees simply meant that the reforms would allow employers to have greater regulation and possibly manipulation of employees and their employment contract (Stewart & Riley 2007).

Pocock and Charlesworth (2006) assert that even before WorkChoices, Australia like many of her Western developed counterparts, still had outstanding challenges in addressing the WF/L balance agenda. However, while many other Western
developed nations, such as the UK, New Zealand, Germany and Netherlands had since then attempted to provide some positive recourse through appropriate legislature, Australia, on the other hand, appeared to have eliminated any attempts to improve the status quo, introducing instead the controversial WorkChoices legislation. In some instances, it appeared to negate some of the positive steps in addressing WF/L balance issues. For example with WorkChoices, small- and medium-sized businesses (less than 101 employees) were exempted from unfair dismissal laws. Though the reforms made it unlawful to dismiss employees on specified discriminatory grounds (i.e. sex, marital status, family responsibilities or pregnancy, and absence of work during maternity or other parental leave) (DEWR 2006) it still made it possible for employers to unfairly dismiss workers under other conditions. This made the reforms particularly devastating for workers with family responsibilities.

Fundamentally, WorkChoices provided new forms of flexibility, to employers as well as employees, to work out employment conditions. However, these very employment conditions functioned to effectively counter those required for appropriate balance between work and family/life needs. For example, WorkChoices provided greater flexibility to both employers and employees in terms of working hours. Employers could demand that employees (or employees may themselves exercise such options) trade in leave days (such as annual and public holidays) or set aside minimum working conditions (such as rest breaks, allowances and penalty, and shift and overtime loadings), all of which had the potential to negatively impact employees already precarious work and family balance (Pocock & Charlesworth 2006).

In late 2007, the Howard Government was defeated in the Australian polls and the new government led by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd initiated steps to end WorkChoices. New legislation passed on 17 March 2008 effectively bans new AWAs and requires new employment agreements to revert to pre-WorkChoices conditions (Davies 2008).
3.5.2 From gender focus to family focus

Paralleling the developments in Australian industrial relations in the 1990s was the evolution of work and family issues (Russell & Bourke 1999). During the early stages there was a tendency for Australia, as well as many Western countries, to use anti-discrimination and affirmative action legislations as a way of enforcing gender equality and promoting work and family balance. Such actions were often directed at women workers and could account for why work-family balance issues has been and continues to be seen as more of a “women’s issue” (Fredriksen-Goldsen & Scharlach 2001; Russell & Bowman 2000).


The Anti-Discrimination Act serves to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms and the provision of equal opportunity for all people (Law Reform Commission NSW 1993). Bourke (1999) asserts that until recently “…most anti-discrimination legislation only prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex, and discrimination on the basis of family responsibilities was perceived as an indirect way of marginalizing women”. The Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cwth), for example, covers the explicit discrimination of persons based on gender, however further reforms ensued that it covered indirect discrimination as well. Hence, a worker cannot be directly discriminated against just because she is a female, nor can she be indirectly discriminated against just because she fell pregnant while an employee. However, it remained that the legislation provided a loophole for some unscrupulous employers, who discriminated against some female workers not because of their gender but on the grounds of their family responsibilities interfering with work. This especially targeted female workers because, as research shows, despite both men and women
having dependent care responsibilities, in the majority of cases it is the female parent who has primary care and who typically takes time off work to care for dependent children and elders. Hence, if these women were to be terminated, they would not have been able to apply the SD Act, because directly or indirectly they were not being terminated on the grounds of gender.

Without the appropriate legislative framework to protect workers in such situations, work-family balance initiatives simply would not work. Subsequent amendments to the SD Act in the early 1990s have plugged this loophole and it is now unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of family responsibilities (Law Reform Commission NSW 1993). The *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999* (EOWW Act) in particular may be argued to be the legislation that is key to ensuring equal rights and fair treatment of women in the workplace (French & Strachan 2007). Additionally, there has been increasing societal emphasis on shared parenting, though while there have been welcoming trends in this regard in the home front, there is still the issue of gendered take up of WF/L provisions related to the family and caring responsibilities. Basically, while male employees technically have more access to these provisions than female employees, the reverse is true with take up of these provisions (see sections 3.7.4 and 3.7.4.1 for more on this).

This section covered the state of Australian industrial relations in the context of the evolution and trends in WF/L balance. There have been substantial industrial relations reforms that have led to work intensification and which have forced business, government, and society to address the work and non-work lives of workers. On one hand, the study showed how the EBS and the WR Act, in particular, have opened the way for flexibility and allowed employee groups and individual employees to negotiate their employment conditions. Such a climate of power sharing has meant the development of the FFW. The FFW has also been reaffirmed by other developments in legislature, notably Sex Discrimination and Affirmative Discrimination. These legislations have meant that the work-family agenda has recourse to transcend the gender domain; it is now illegal to discriminate workers on the basis of their family responsibilities. Despite this, work-family balance, in practice, particularly when it pertains to take up of provisions related to caring
responsibilities is still very much a gendered domain. The study also showed the generally negative implications of the now defunct WorkChoices reforms on WF/L balance.

3.6 External challenges confronting FFWs

External challenges are those issues that plague nearly all organisations. Their root causes tend to originate from outside the workplace. This study suggests that external challenges are implicated in the rhetoric because they feed into the fundamental stages of WF/L policy development. In large FFWs and FFOs, WF/L provisions are based upon the organisation’s policies. Policies in turn are framed using legislative guidelines, such as those which clarify meanings, for example family, spouse and casual employees. Hence it is suggested that to transcend the WF/L balance rhetoric, FFWs and FFOs will have to strategically evaluate limitations imposed by legislation, and come up with some truly innovative WF/L policies and provisions.

While three categories of external challenges, economic, social, and political-legal are significant to Australian based FFWs, only the first two are examined here since they are directly pertinent to the study’s data. The political-legal challenge is the WorkChoices legislation introduced in 2005. WorkChoices, which was briefly discussed in section 3.5.1.2, will not be examined here since the legislation was introduced after the fieldwork was conducted, and more importantly was revoked in 2008 by the newly elected federal government.

3.6.1 Economic challenges - Increased business competition

As previously mentioned, there has been a heightened interest in the interface between work and family ever since the third wave of globalisation (Chase-Dunn et al. 2000), that is the time that encompasses the period immediately after WWII, brought with it new forms of pressures and challenges on businesses. To businesses, globalisation in its simplest form may be generalised as more open and global markets and, consequentially, increased business competition. In their attempts to adapt and mould themselves to such harsh new realities of their business
environment, many firms resort to radical productivity, performance-enhancing, and efficiency models. These models, in the main, involve radical structural and operational changes, such as downsizing, outsourcing, multi-skilling and longer business hours as well as days of operation. Such too has been the in the case of the Australian business environment (Innes & Littler 2004). In many instances, these organisational strategies often result in work intensification, longer working hours, and stress for workers (Cameron et al. 1999; Gambles et al. 2006, p. 46). Bonné (2003) claims that many businesses initially found that their productivity did not suffer as a result of drastic cuts to workforce or the consequences of the extended hours for the remaining workforce. However, Jacobs (in Bonné 2003) argues against such practices in the long term, pointing out that workers’ productivity levels are not endless pits; there comes a point when stress levels and work-family conflict will be unbearable, and when productivity will suffer.

3.6.1.1 Casualisation of the workforce

Another impact of increased business competition has been the increasing casualisation of the workforce. These challenges means that FFWs have to strategically factor into their business plans, the dual tasks of ensuring business productivity and of meeting the WF/L balance needs of all employees, including the casual and part-time workers. Both these challenges are examined in the next two sub-sections.

The Australian workforce is made up of two types of workers, casual, and on-going (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, p. 170) and the basis of that differentiation is based on workers’ entitlements to paid holiday leave and/or paid sick leave in their main jobs. A casual worker has no such entitlements whereas an on-going worker has access to one or both types of leave. Of the 7.7 million in the workforce in 2004, 5.7 million or 74% were on-going workers while the remaining 2 million or 26% were casual workers. 55% of the casual workforce are said to have regular long-term employment relationships with their employers. Such a finding suggests a strong relationship between casual employment and part-time work (total of 35 hours per week) (ABS 2006, p. 171).
In the ten year period from 1994 to 2004 there was a 3% increase in the Australian casual workforce. There are two particular features about this increase. First, the proportion of female casuals remained relatively stable (around 30-31%) during this period, meaning that the overall increase was largely due to an increase in male casuals; from 16% in 1994 to 22% in 2004. Second, most of this increase occurred from 1994 to 1997 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006). The study notes that this period of significant increase in male casuals quite parallels the period of intense downsizing in Australia (Innes & Littler 2004).

However, despite the small increase in the number of male casuals, the fact is that the majority of casuals are still women. According to ABS (2000), a significant percentage (slightly less than 50%) of female employees in Australia are casual workers. This is generally because women who return to the workforce after their maternity leave generally prefer the casual or part-time appointments because it provides them with a degree of personalised flexibility to manage their work, domestic, caring, and private needs.

A further characteristic of the casual and part-time positions is that they are generally the lower ranking jobs within the organisation (ABS 2006). Many of the current WF/L-friendly workplace benefits such as sick leave, paid maternity leave, and family leave, as well as flexible work arrangements such as telecommuting, are generally restricted to use by full-time higher-ranking positions (Gray 2001).

By definition casuals and part-timers do not qualify for many of the associated non-wage benefits, such as sick leave and paid holidays, but as mothers and fathers they too have the need to balance work and family commitments, and as private individuals some access to opportunities to balance their work and personal lives. Such a challenge is especially prevalent for service industries such as the tourism and retail industry that traditionally depend on a very large casual workforce.

Overall, it is evident that the presence of casual and part-time cohort of employees in an organisation serves to further intensify the challenges that organisations would normally face when developing WF/L balance policies and provisions. If these
challenges are not solved access to WF/L-friendly initiatives can be problematic for cohorts of employees such as casual and part-time employees. This problem would be exacerbated for employees and employers in the tourism and retail industries that traditionally depend on a very large casual workforce. In these industries, an organisation that purports to offer a FFW or which identifies itself as an FFO, but does not adequately solve challenges faced by casual workers stands guilty of being charged with WF/L balance rhetoric.

3.6.2 Social challenges

The second type of external challenge, social challenge, is a direct consequence of changes to society. In addressing WF/L balance issues one of the fundamental challenges facing all organisations is defining the boundaries of who qualifies as family, spouse, and/or children. To answer this we need to look at the changing structure of the household and the family. The aging of the population is a significant issue for many Western democratic countries. It has been recognised as a critical issue by the Australian financial services sector and has resulted in concerted efforts to retain mature workers (Australian Government EOWA 2006). Another social change is the changing fabric of Australian society, in particular its multiculturalism, a direct result of its substantial immigration, and refugee and humanitarian programs. Though this challenge is not quite addressed in the literature as yet, this study suggests that the whole concept of WF/L balance can be a misnomer for particular cohorts of migrant workers for whom the concept of gender egalitarianism is highly questionable.

3.6.2.1 Changing structure of households

Contemporary family and household structures differs greatly from those of traditional families and it is axiomatic that these changes have important implications for work and family studies. The traditional work-family participation model is the male as breadwinner and female as homemaker. Campbell and Charlesworth (2004, p. A1-4) suggest that this model suited employers because it provided a clear demarcation of workers’ work and family domains and produced ‘unencumbered’ workers, workers with the freedom and ability to give their undivided self, time and
attention to the workplace. Burud and Tumolo (2004 p. 37) voice similar thoughts, “…instead of one employee the employer got two – the employee himself and a second invisible partner who managed the personal side of his life and made it possible for him to focus on work”. In a sense, all this ‘freedom’ from the caring and domestic responsibilities of the home environment allowed employers substantial power and control over workers’ time, energy and attention while they were at work, which then led them to be classified as the “ideal workers” (Campbell & Charlesworth 2004, p. A1-4). There are claims (Acker 1990; Barnett 1999; Berry & Rao 1997; Lewis 1997 2001; McDonald et al. 2005; Keene & Quadagno 2004) that most employers continue to organise work around the male breadwinner model which implies that for these organisations most women will never be ‘unencumbered’ workers and consequently would not be thought of as “ideal workers”. Such a scenario has been enacted in the findings of Drew and Murtagh (2005) in their study of the WF/L balance of senior male and female managers. Most of the male managers were older, married, had children and fitted the male breadwinner model. Women managers, on the other hand were younger, single, had fewer children, or were not married. Despite this difference in caring responsibilities both managers tended not to take up WF/L balance related provisions. Managers perceived that taking leave for extended periods would severely impact their careers. It appears that these women managers, in an attempt to present themselves as ‘unencumbered’ and “ideal workers” were not taking up provisions they were entitled to, and/or needed.

As previously mentioned, the third wave of globalisation, the period immediately after WWII, saw many women entering higher education and the labour force. One of the clear implications of this phenomenon was the beginnings of the erosion of the typically male breadwinner model of they way work was constructed (ABS 2003a).

3.6.2.2 Changing structure of families

A key challenge affecting contemporary societies, including that of Australia, which is pertinent to any discussion of the WF/L balance is the concept of ‘spouse’, ‘child’, and ‘family’. This definition of family used as a working definition for the fieldwork of the present study is “two or more persons, one of who is at least 15 years of age,
who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering, and who are usually resident in the same household” (ABS 1996, p. 1). However, it is clear that this definition is limited in the sense that it does not embrace the growing number of Australian households that comprise same-sex families.

More recently, however, Australian census studies have begun to acknowledge the increasing numbers of same-sex couples’, “…persons of the same sex living together in the same household and reporting a de facto relationship” (ABS 2005, p. 150). However, as far as employment and therefore WF/L balance is concerned, Australian federal legislation generally tends to discriminate against same-sex couples and their children (Millbank 2006) and ultimately therefore the very idea of who qualifies as ‘family’. The discrimination is not explicit because most of the clauses identify a couple to be made up “husband” and “wife” or a couple in a de facto relationship, who at any point in time are able to “marry” (Millbank 2006, p. 6).

Werner (2000) observes that though one of the principal objectives of section 3(i) of the Workplace Relations Act 1996 (Cwth) is to help employees balance their work and family responsibilities, its reference to family is specifically limited to that formed from a heterosexual union. Additionally the Act’s definition of ‘spouse’ very specifically requires that individual to be of the opposite sex to the employee, and to live with the employee in a de-facto relationship or marriage. Hence, the definition very clearly denies employees in gay and lesbian relationships access to any form of benefits and/or flexible workplace provisions that allow a balance between family and work.

Since 1996 there has been a 50% increase in the number of Australians who have identified themselves as being part of a same-sex couple relationship (ABS 2005), further highlighting the limitations of the WR Act. Prior to the 21st century only one Australian legislation, the Queensland Industrial Relations Act 1999, explicitly included same-sex couples in the definition of ‘spouse’ or ‘family’ (Werner 2000). However, since then a number of states have legally acknowledged the legitimacy of same-sex couple relationships in specified matters (ABS 2005; Millbank 2006). Many state laws have circumvented this contemporary challenge by redefining the
concept of “spouse” and “de facto” relationship. The preference is for terms such as “partner” and “marriage-like” relationships (Millbank 2006, p. 11). Furthermore, the researchers note that Australian Acts have generally been far more accommodating of the extensive possibilities of relations of children to adults.

Since the family is one of the core considerations of any WF/L balance programs, it is understandable how complex and complicated this issue of who exactly qualifies as ‘family’ member can be. A two-fold challenge is envisaged. Should FFWs apply the narrowly defined federal legislation in clarifying who exactly qualify as family members and in so doing deny the ‘rights’ of some of its employees? Or should FFWs follow more accommodating state laws and allow employees to define who exactly family is and face the consequences of the limitless possibilities of who exactly qualifies as a family member and therefore the prospect of unforeseeable costs?

3.6.2.3 Changing fabric of society

In section 3.3.1 the study examined the gender link to WF/L conflict and WF/L balance, and found that WF/L balance was of more concern to female workers while WF/L conflict was of more concern to male workers. Using Hofstede’s masculinity and House et al.’s gender egalitarianism dimensions the study then examined the relationship between gender and societal culture, and argued that a societal culture that is feminine or shows high levels of gender egalitarianism is most conducive for the success and effectiveness of WF/L balance programs.

Globalisation has highlighted the importance of cross-cultural considerations in the management of gendered issues (Da 2004; Deresky 2002; Francesco & Gold 2005; Konopaske & Ivancevich 2003; Saee 2005; Schneider & Barsoux 2003). Clancy and Tata’s (2005) cross-national study of eight countries and the impact of culture on work-family balance affirms that national cultural beliefs about the role of women do have important implications for the success of WF/L balance programs. The late twentieth century witnessed a huge influx of the global movement of people from the largely eastern, developing/newly industrialised into the Western/developed economies. The movement of people from home cultures distinctively different from
their Western host cultures would imply, as indicated by Clancy and Tata (2005),
that WF/L balance programs needs to be revisited in these Western countries. In their
critical review of WF/L literature Kirby et al. (2003, p. 29) are scathing of the ‘racist’
overtones of, and the absence of cultural discourse in WF/L research.

Therefore, in this section I examine the cultural implications for WF/L balance, in
the context of the changing fabric of Australian society. The investigation is taken
from the angle of Australia’s substantial immigration policies (Forrest & Richardson
1999; Forrest & Poulsen 2003; Jupp 2003) and the associated immigrant populations
coming from countries with lower gender egalitarian scores than Australia’s, or
different ‘gender regimes’ (Walby 2001). Walby conceptualises gender regime to be
“a set of inter-related domains of employment, unpaid work, the state, male violence,
sexuality, and culture”. Gender regime is said to operate on a continuum spanning
from domestic to public regimes, which means that various forms of gender regime
exist. On the left extreme, is the domestic regime, consisting of women who are
excluded from any form of formal roles, while the public regime is made up of
women who are on equal terms with men. She also acknowledges that different types
of gender regime exist. Of particular relevance to the present study is the role of
women in the labour market. This particular form of gender regime is akin to the
previously discussed notion of gender egalitarianism. This study suggests that gender
regime can be used to roughly demarcate the world into a developed world typically
Western and a developing world or newly industrialised economies mainly eastern
world.

Thus, the developed world, made up of largely Western societies, may be viewed as
displaying the full continuum of gender egalitarianism behaviour. However, as aptly
noted by Walby, Western women (or from the developed world) have yet to achieve
complete equality with men. She also did not quite accept that there would be any
Western women who would fall into the other extreme end of the continuum, i.e. a
truly domestic gender regime, preferring to acknowledge that were some women
who were “relatively excluded”. Therefore it is fair to assume that Western women
would fall somewhere within a very broad middle of the continuum. On the other
hand, a somewhat contrasting reality exists for the developing world/newly
industrialised economies. Here, there would be many more women who would fall under the extreme end of the domestic regime and very much fewer numbers in the more public regime.

The combined implications of gender egalitarianism and gender regime provide reasonable evidence for WF/L balance to be regarded as more of a Western phenomenon. It is suggested that the notion of WF/L balance has come about because of initial global and demographic challenges faced by the Western world. Aided by cultural underpinnings, the Western world has been able to absorb and implement, relatively easily, many of the necessary changes required to set the momentum for WF/L balance.

However, the global movement of large numbers of people from culturally different backgrounds into Western societies complicates the notion of WF/L balance, and can contribute to the WF/L balance rhetoric. Towards the end of the twentieth century, there was a significant shift in immigrant intake from the preferred business skills category or its equivalent (Wagner & Childs 2006) to one that included a more liberal intake of non-skilled category immigrants, including intake through family reunion, humanitarian and refugee programs (ABS 2007a; Kryger 2003; Metcalfe 2007; Teicher, Shah & Griffin 2002). This includes, besides Australia, countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand (ABS 2007b) as well as a number of other countries in Western Europe (Jupp 2003; Wall & São José 2004). Such efforts can impact on the makeup of national populations and demographics of Western industrialised nations through the presence of significant numbers of immigrants from a range of developed, developing, and under-developed nations.

In many instances the cultural background of immigrants, especially those from CALD nations, sharply contrasts that of the adopted land, and triggers perceived or real issues of acculturation (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver 2007; Forrest & Poulsen 2003; Ho 2006; Lewis 2005; Triandis 2003; Wall & São José 2004). Acculturation, according to Bhatia and Ram (in Lewis 2005, p. 96) and Shurupova (2007) is the learning and adaptive process to acclimatize to a secondary culture. While
acculturation can be bidirectional (Triandis 2003:17), in the sense that the meeting of two cultures can mean adjustments for both parties, Triandis suggests it is more pronounced for the minority group attempting to fit with a majority culture. Earlier in this chapter we noted the importance of gender roles in WF/L balance and we revisit it in the context of immigrant culture. Kirby et al. (2003, p. 11) argue that “[r]oles are treated as if they are properties of individuals that are clearly definable and unchanging rather than socially constructed” and consequently capable of change. This means that migrant views of ‘back home’ gender roles can and do change. However, acculturation takes time; for some such change may be in their own lifetime but for most it is would take root in future generations (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver 2007; Forrest & Poulsen 2003).

This means that the process of acculturation can in itself present minority migrant groups and their families with numerous challenges in their work, family, and personal domains, and these in turn could compromise their expectations of, and experiences with work and family conflict (Roehling et al. 2005) and balance issues.

As explained, the demographics of many developed economies such as Australia, the U.S, the U.K, Canada, New Zealand, and the Western countries of the European Union, include significant migrant populations. Many of these migrants come from the developing economies, from countries whose cultures tend to represent the contrasting low-gender egalitarianism or masculine cultures. If we were to apply Walby’s model of gender regimes analysis to the country of origin of migrant populations, we could reasonably expect some of them to fall into the extreme left, that is, from the domestic gender regime. Accordingly, it would not be unrealistic to suggest that even in their adopted Western homelands, such migrants would continue to practise their attitudes, values, and beliefs about gender roles. The reverse is also possible; there could be migrant groups from other Western countries that are situated further on the right of Walby’s continuum. Members of these groups could be expected to exercise and expect greater gender equality.
3.6.2.4 Towards a more feminine Australian society?

Australia was one of the countries in Hofstede’s initial research. Data was collected from between 1967 and 1973, and Australia’s masculinity index was calculated to be 61 and it was ranked 16/53 (Hofstede 1980). This means that between 1967 and 1973 Australian society was strongly masculine. However, much has happened in these past forty years, such as the setting up of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) in 1986. The commission has an important role in educating the public and ensuring that it adheres to principles of basic human rights, including principles of gender equality. Such increasing focus on gender equality would have affected Australia’s social fabric and the Australian way of life. Would the masculinity index be the same if Hofstede’s research was replicated today? I tend to think not, as do Leung and Moore (2003) who suggest that there would be a considerable amount of acculturation, and Yudhi et al. (2006), who provide some evidence that Australia is now more ‘feminine’.

The current Australian way of life suggests a tendency towards femininity, and is supported by anecdotal as well as empirical evidence. The WF/L balance agenda has been embraced not only by women but also by men (Anderson et al. 2002; Duxbury & Higgins 1994; Keene & Quadagno 2004). Additionally ABS (1998) findings that in 1997 more than half (63%) of all Australian men, aged 18 years and above, participated in housework activities that included cooking, laundry and other cleaning is further evidence of femininity or gender egalitarianism in the making. Empirical evidence is also provided by Ashkanasy et al. (2002) from their study on the Anglo cluster of Project GLOBE. Australia is one of seven countries in this cluster, the others being Canada, England, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, and the U.S. In gauging gender egalitarianism, the sample was subjected to two sets of question; one tested respondent values ‘as is’ and ‘as should be’. The ‘as is’ score for Australia is 3.4. (The complete scale is from 1 to 7, with 1 being high gender-egalitarianism or masculinity and 7 being low gender-egalitarianism or femininity. The Anglo cluster’s mean was 3.4). This means that Australia was the third least gender-differentiated culture, behind Canada (3.7) and England (3.67). It is important to note that many of the countries in this cluster support social migration.
The arguments presented so far are recapped here:

i) Interest and developments in WF/L balance are demarcated across a developed (Western society)/developing or newly industrialised economies (NIE) (eastern society) divide;

ii) Australia is today a more feminine society, one that actively promotes and encourages gender egalitarianism.

iii) Australia has a comprehensive immigration policy, with “culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)” (Wagner & Child 2006, p. 153) immigrants coming from the developing world or NIEs whose gender egalitarianism scores that are much lower than Australia’s.

The question we are now faced with is how does the Australian, typically Western, notion of WF/L balance fit in with the cultural expectations of CALD immigrant workers? Are there specific challenges and hurdles that employers and organisations need to be mindful of? Clancy and Tata’s (2005) proposition that societal cultural beliefs do impact the extent of WF/L balance experiences for men and women has important implications for the success and effectiveness of WF/L balance programs, as well as for transcending the WF/L balance rhetoric in Australia and other countries with similar demographics. Ho (2006) claims that the current WF/L literature focus is largely from an individualistic perspective. By failing to provide adequate coverage of the cultural contexts of immigrant households, and their predominantly collective and traditional gender ideology, the literature is unreliable in terms of explaining immigrants’ work and family experiences. More importantly, the fact that CALD immigrants may be a minority in the workplaces does not mean that their needs can be dismissed as unimportant. As Wall and São José (2004) unequivocally argue, WF/L balance programmes must consider and be aligned to the unique needs of immigrant workers. This study extends this call by stating that to ensure that WF/L balance initiatives are effective, Australia and other Western industrialised economies, with high immigration intakes from less industrialised societies, must seriously consider factoring in impacts of cultural influence in any discussions, analysis and developments of work and family balance.

3.6.2.5 Societal cultural influence in WF/L balance

The GLOBE project headed by House et al. (1999) provides solid theoretical foundations for such a call to consider culture in WF/L balance. Of particular
significance is the affirmation that culture drives gender egalitarianism (Emrich et al. 2004, p. 359) Gender egalitarianism has been previously argued in this study as being equivalent to Hofstede’s masculinity/femininity dimension. While findings from Hofstede’s early 1980 studies indicated Australia to be a masculine culture, this study posits, for the reasons provided above, that the Australian way of life has, since then, become more feminine. Further evidence for this proposition derives from House et al.’s gender egalitarianism dimension. Worldwide, gender egalitarianism scores range from a high 4.08 for Hungary to a low 2.50 for South Korea. Australia’s score is 3.40 which indicate a medium level of gender egalitarianism (Emrich et al. 2004). These figures are significant in light of Australia’s changing demographics.

The 2005 estimated resident population (ERP) shows that 4,829,501 of the 20,328,629 Australians were overseas-born (Commonwealth of Australia 2007a). The breakdown of the overseas-born groups, where feasible, were analysed for gender egalitarianism scores. The findings indicate that close to 30% of the overseas-born come from cultures with lower gender egalitarianism scores than Australia. In ascending order these countries are Republic of Korea (2.5), Egypt, Turkey, India, Iran, Peoples Republic of China, Austria, Germany, Taiwan, Japan, New Zealand, Italy, Indonesia, United States of America and Thailand (3.35).

These findings are even more crucial in light of two further facts. First, the 2005 ERP figures, though it includes many other highly represented overseas-born cultures such as, among others Vietnam, Lebanon, Fiji, Croatia and Sri Lanka, have yet to be ranked by House et al.’s gender egalitarianism scores. Nonetheless, judging from their geographical proximity to other countries in the region that have gender egalitarianism scores lower than that of Australia, it may be safely assumed that they too are likely to have lower scores than Australia. Additionally, Australia has a substantial number of permanent residents from the United Kingdom; however, there are no gender egalitarianism scores for the UK as a whole. Instead, there are individual scores for England and Ireland, which at 3.67 and 3.21, further complicates any meaningful analysis because one score is higher and the other lower than Australia’s. Second, in 2005-2006, the period immediately after the 2005 ERP figures, Australia had significantly increased its immigration intake by 19%
(Commonwealth of Australia 2007b). A sizeable 32% of this intake was from the countries (Republic of Korea, India, Peoples Republic of China, and New Zealand) previously identified as having lower scores than Australia. Another 2% was from Sudan, a country with no corresponding gender egalitarianism score but which may safely be assumed to exhibit cultures similar to other countries of the sub-Saharan African cluster (Gupta & Hanges 2004). Once again it may be safely assumed that, Sudan would exhibit scores similar to South Africa (black sample) (3.27), or Zimbabwe (3.04), or Nigeria (3.01) or Zambia (2.86), all of whose scores are lower than Australia’s.

In cultures with high gender egalitarianism, there is an overlap of male/female roles and therefore more acceptances of shared parenting and shared domestic work. In cultures with low gender egalitarianism there are very clear-cut gendered roles. Even though women in these cultures have successfully made inroads into the traditional male ‘paid work’ domains, they are still expected to undertake most aspects of the ‘unpaid work’ domain including care-giving and domestic work (Fu & Schaffer 2000). This study suggests that the gender-based WF/L conflict experienced by Australian immigrants from countries with low gender egalitarianism scores or Hofstede’s high masculine cultures would be more enhanced. Innate cultural tendencies means that Australian female immigrant workers, especially those from eastern and African cultures, might face greater WF/L conflict and consequently less WF/L balance than their counterparts who have Western or Anglo-Saxon backgrounds. Migrant groups do experience acculturation (Leung & Moore 2003) and embrace aspects of the Australian way of life, including its level of gender egalitarianism. It takes time, education, exposure, and experience, leading Forrest and Poulsen (2003) to believe that it is more likely to happen with the second or third generation offspring (children or grandchildren) of immigrants.

### 3.7 Internal challenges confronting FFWs

These challenges are identified as those that originate from within the workplace. This study acknowledges that there are many different types of challenges; many of which tend to be industry-, and/or sector-related. For example, one of the greatest
challenges facing the services industry generally is how to provide 24-hours customer service without unduly upsetting workers’ needs for WF/L-friendly working hours. Narrowing it down to sector level further isolates and amplifies particular challenges. To some sectors of the services industry, for example hospitality and nursing, a primary concern in enabling adequate WF/L balance would be the issue of shift work and how to develop workable solutions that consider the needs of all types of workers.

It is also possible that organisations will experience challenges that are unique to themselves, for example, an organisation may have very high numbers of immigrant workers such as those from Afghanistan or Sudan brought in specifically under Australia’s Humanitarian Scheme. In a new country, many of these workers often lack the traditional extended family support systems or kinship networks that they would normally have relied upon in undertaking many aspects of their daily life. They might not be aware or accustomed to the Australian way of life, for example, in family matters that emphasise and promote gender egalitarianism. On one hand, both partners might need to work hard to set themselves up to be financially and emotionally stable, yet on the other, domestic circumstances and cultural norms might hinder their ability to balance work and family responsibilities effectively. Such an organisation would need to get to the grassroots level, to cultural levels, in order to factor in such challenges and develop appropriate WF/L balance initiatives that ensure that the needs of the subgroups are considered.

In view of the breadth and depth of the possible challenges, the study will focus on challenges that represent recurring themes in all organisations. In particular the study will examine theses challenges under four broad categories, WF/L balance provisions, organisational communication, power-control issues, and organisational culture.

3.7.1 Work-family/life (WF/L) balance provisions

The first broad challenge faced by FFWs concerns their WF/L friendly provisions. As was discussed in Chapter 2, provisions are a critical component of the conceptual
framework ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’ developed to explain and analyse the WF/L balance rhetoric. Central to this model is the gap theory which can be used to understand and analyse the level of discrepancy between organisational rhetoric and reality. The framework uses WF/L provisions offered to employees as representative of rhetoric, and employees’ experiences with the provisions so offered as representative of reality. The study proposes three types of employee experiences as the test variables: awareness of the provisions offered, need for the provisions offered, and take up of the provisions offered. Each of the variables can be used to independently monitor and measure the gap levels and the significance of the problem. The gaps or discrepancies between, for example, provisions offered (rhetoric) and employees’ awareness (reality) can provide valuable insights about employees’ knowledge of provisions and if the gap is significant can indicate poor communication as an underlying problem.

3.7.1.1 Awareness of provisions

Employees’ awareness of the WF/L provisions offered is the first variable that the conceptual framework relies on to measure the rhetoric-reality gap. Awareness implies being adequately informed (Meager et al. 2002).

One of the direct consequences of the shift from the notion of ‘work and family’ balance to ‘work and life’ balance has been the expansion of the depth and breadth of flexible work arrangements and benefits offered to employees. Such a move invariably involves providing a wide range and variety of provisions. This means that employees need to be aware of what provisions there are, as well as the terms and conditions of eligibility and use. Further complicating this issue is that some workplaces offer provisions as “fringe benefits” (Russell and Bowman 2004, p. 26) which provides them with the flexibility of withdrawing it at any time. Additionally, there are some organisations that downsize their offerings when they are found to not fulfil the business case (Armour 2003). Failure to strategically plan WF/L balance measures causes organisations to resort to such actions (Russell & Bowman 2004). Legislative reforms to WF/L can also contribute to the changing nature of workplace policies and provisions (Meager et al. 2002). Such actions and events imply that it can be very difficult for workers to be aware of what is on offer and what is not at
any point of time. Ultimately, employees can find it very difficult to keep track of WF/L provisions that are offered by their organisation and subsequently their awareness of what they are entitled to is affected.

One of the earliest studies of employee awareness of work-family policies was conducted in a large Canadian professional service organisation (Burke 1996). The findings showed that both male and female employees generally had poor awareness of the four WF/L-friendly provisions. The highest employee awareness registered was 66% for provisions relating to ‘flexible hours and part-time work option’. Employee awareness of the three remaining provisions was significantly lower. Burke questions why 100% awareness is not attainable if it is the firm’s intention to offer such initiatives, and argues that this issue of awareness is a challenge that needs to be addressed if the workplace’s WF/L-friendly efforts are to be effective.

In the U.K. Meager et al. (2002) investigated British workers’ informed awareness of their rights following reforms to employment law. The reforms included general employment reforms as well as those concerned with work-life balance. Less than 5% of all respondents were aware of their rights related to work-life such as maternity, time off for dependents, paternity leave and parental leave, than they were to other aspects of employment reforms. Furthermore the awareness was found to be related to the demographics such as gender, age, and ethnicity white versus non-white. Generally, females were four times more aware than males, white respondents were two times more aware than non-white respondents, and the age groups, 26-35 and 36-45 were prominently most aware, justified by the authors as being those who would have the “greatest concerns with family issues” (Meager et al. 2002 p. 40).

Another survey (Stevens et al. 2004), a few years down the track, focused more on employees’ work-life balance experiences, showed improved signs of employee awareness to entitlements. However, the figures highlight that this is still a problem area. Employees tended to exhibit selective awareness of certain entitlements. The highest awareness (54%) was in regard to leave for emergencies; every other awareness rating was significantly lower. Awareness was highest among a particular subset of women with very definite profiles: full-time, parents of very young children.
(under two years of age), higher ranking staff (supervisors, managers, and professionals), and five or more years of service in the current employment. In a more recent study titled, ‘Work-life balance: Rhetoric versus reality?’, Visser and Williams (2006) found that members of UNISON, a UK public services union, showed a general lack of awareness about the existence or terms of their organisations’ WF/L balance policies. The authors argue that organisational communication is a challenge that needs to be addressed if its rhetoric is to match reality.

Dex et al.’s (2002) study found that access to and take up of flexible working arrangements are significant issues of contemporary British business environment. They found that employers’ and employees’ views are often at odds; there is a large discrepancy between what employers think they offer to their employees and what employees believe or are aware of what they are entitled to. Their study used a large British data set to investigate the extent of the mismatch between employers’ and non-management employees’ awareness of their entitlement to six specific WF/L provisions; three related to work arrangements (job share, telework and flexi time), two to leave arrangements (parental and emergency) and one to benefits (access to child care). Significantly, these six provisions are part of the flexible working arrangements of all the organisations in the British data set. The researchers found that though employees’ knowledge of these entitlements were more likely a result of individual characteristics than workplace characteristics, employee awareness of what was on offer was significantly higher when the communication was good. Dex et al. (2002) also found evidence that supported Budd and Mumford’s (2003) findings that unions were most effective, of all stakeholders, in communicating to employees what they were entitled to. In a subsequent paper Budd and Mumford (2004) attest a positive relationship between union presence and employees’ awareness of WF/L provisions. This finding provides further evidence that workplaces should not be completely absolved of any responsibility for employees’ lack or reduced awareness of entitlements.

This study argues that awareness is the first step to ensuring that organisational rhetoric matches reality and that it is a critical component of any attempts for
workers pursuits for WF/L balance. Problems encountered in this first step highlight serious issues for WF/L balance overall. The literature on awareness offers broad clues, such as poor communication (Burke 1996; Dex et al. 2002; U.S. Office of Personnel Management 1998), lack of knowledge/inadequate training of managers who have responsibility to inform others (Dex et al. 2002), and employees not needing the provisions (Burke 1996). The latter issue, lack of employee need, further exacerbates the problem; a report to the U.S. Congress highlights the challenges posed by management misinterpreting poor awareness to a ‘lack of employee need’ (U.S. Office of Personnel Management 1998, p. 17). Additionally, these three areas, poor communication, lack of knowledge/inadequate training and lack of need are very broad problem areas; it means that each organisation will have to delve deep within its own settings to find the underlying causes and fix the problem.

3.7.1.2 Need for provisions

The second variable used to investigate rhetoric-reality gaps is employees’ perceptions of whether they need the provisions offered by their FFO. In the study by Visser and Williams (2006) discussed in the section on awareness, employees also perceived that while their workplaces were actively pursuing the WF/L balance agenda, they were not providing solutions that were consistent with employees’ needs, and this organisational practise could thus also contribute to WF/L rhetoric-reality gap.

An issue that confronts FFW is the question of how realistically can all of the organisation’s policies and provisions satisfy and cater to the needs of everyone within the organisation. Since an employee’s need for a particular provision is dependent on individual characteristics, circumstances and life cycle (Burgess et al. 2006), it is likely, that at any point of time, there are bound to be some provisions that are highly likely to be of little relevance to the majority of employees in an organisation. For example, employees may have need for provisions related to child care only during the period of their lives when they have young children. Hence, lower levels of take up of the provisions related to child care are likely, and hence this type of moderately low need level within the organisation may be deemed acceptable. Another example is adoption leave. If employees perceive that they are
not inclined to adopt children at any point of their lives, they would be less likely to have any need for such a provision or to be aware that it even exists (Dex et al. 2002). Following on with Meager et al.’s (2002) findings that awareness is linked to employee demographics, this study suggests that needs too are dependent on demographics. However, the study suggests that the relationship extends beyond the gender, age and ethnicity characteristics identified by Meager et al. (2002) to include characteristics such as marital status, life-cycle phase, family types, industry sector and family income (Kodz, Davis et al. 2003).

It thus appears that employee awareness and needs generally dictate the level of interest that they have in a given provision. If an organisation relies on simply providing provisions that are of little interest to the majority of employees it will simply result in a long list of provisions. Employees are likely to have a general sense of apathy to provisions as whole and this in turn is likely to result in high levels of unawareness, and consequently very poor take up.

Employees’ need for the provisions is a potentially challenging situation and one that poses a dilemma for the organisation. On the one hand, the organisation needs to proactively address the diverse and changing needs (Tombari & Spinks 1999) of its employees, which mean that it needs to offer a wide range of provisions. The shift in focus from ‘work-family’ concept to the all embracing ‘work-family-life’ further complicates the dilemma. On the other hand, providing an extensive range means that employees’ awareness of what provisions are available can be problematic; it can also mean that many of the provisions potentially will be used relatively poorly. Both these challenges can significantly contribute to the impression that the organisation’s claims to provide work-family-life balance are more rhetoric than reality.

All of these issues and challenges suggest that organisations need to strategically plan their WF/L balance program as part of their overall business strategy. Additionally they must communicate with employees and investigate the full nature and extent of their needs. Burke (1996) argues that in providing effective WF/L balance programs and initiatives, organisations must first, evaluate the usefulness of
the provisions it offers to employees and second, ensure that employees are aware of
the provisions offered.

3.7.1.3 Take-up of provisions

A number of studies (Bond 2004; Campbell & Charlesworth 2004; De Cieri et al.
et al. 2002; Lewis 1997; Lewis & Campbell 2007; McDonald et al. 2005; Visser &
Williams 2006) have highlighted the problem of poor employee take up of WF/L
provisions. For example, De Cieri et al.’s (2005) research found that 50% of the
organisations surveyed had less than 20% employees taking up provisions that were
offered. Their study also found a positive correlation between the number of
provisions offered and the likelihood of take up; the more provisions available the
greater the chances of take up.

Poor take up of provisions poses a real challenge to FFWs intent on the effective
implementation of WF/L balance programs and initiatives. A less than favourable
take up of WF/L provisions by employees implies that the organisation is ineffective
in its aims to promote WF/L balance. Poor take up is particularly challenging and
damaging to FFOs; at its worst, it conveys the image that an FFO’s claims to
providing WF/L balance is rhetorical. Therefore, if take up of WF/L provisions is to
be improved it is crucial that it be well analysed and understood. However, poor take
up is not a problem in itself; rather it is a symptom. To solve poor take up it is
important that the underlying causes need to be examined.

Much of the literature identifies non-supportive organisational culture as the prime
reason behind poor take up (Campbell & Charlesworth’s 2004; Dex et al. 2002;
Gambles et al. 2006; Kimmel 1993; Kirby & Krone 2002; Kodz, Harper et al. 2002;
McDonald et al. 2005). Other reasons behind poor take include inadequate
organisational communications (Burke 1996; Doherty & Manfredi 2006; Kirby &
Krone 2002) and practices, including ineffective implementations (Kramar 1998). In
the Australian financial services sector (to which the case organisation belongs),
globalisation, increased business competition and the resultant mergers, takeovers
and acquisitions are argued to have led to intensification of work and longer working
hours (Bourke 2003; FSU 2005; Probert et al. 2000). Invariably such pressures are argued to make it increasingly difficult for employees to take up WF/L provisions (FSU 2005).

The findings of Campbell and Charlesworth (2003 in Campbell & Charlesworth 2004) and McDonald et al. (2005) are particularly useful to this study. Campbell and Charlesworth cite four limits to effective take up:

i) Technical constraints – which includes unawareness of the provision itself, or ignorance or uncertainty about the due process involved in its application.

ii) Management discretion – employee application for provisions are not vetted solely on the merits of the application itself, rather they are found to be subjected to the arbitrary decisions of superiors.

iii) Employee discouragement – rates of failure within the organisation as well as other informal but powerful means of assessment criteria.

iv) Management evasion – overt and covert forms of barriers that prevent employees from applying. Includes imposing overly strict adherence to set minimum requirements, for example denying a pregnant worker maternity leave because she falls short of the required tenure of service by one week.

This study suggests that of the four limits to take-up, the technical constraints are justified to be considered on its own as it stands apart from the other three. Technical constraints imply a breakdown in the organisation’s communication process. However, the remaining three limits may more appropriately be listed under the broad category of organisational culture. One of the simplest ways of looking at organisational culture is from the perspective of the way ‘we do things around here’, and the three reasons can be adequately explained using this approach. This is the approach taken by McDonald et al. (2005) which was briefly introduced in Chapter 2.

McDonald et al. (2005) specifically studied, using empirical findings from previous literature, the reasons for the poor rhetoric-reality gaps in take up of WF/L provisions. They found five reasons, “…managerial support, …perceptions of career consequences, …organisational time expectations, … the gendered nature of policy utilisation, and …co-worker support” (p. 41). They also noted that these reasons fundamentally relate to non-supportive organisational cultural issues.
Synthesising the findings of these two works shows two broad categories of reasons for the poor take-up, organisational communication, and organisational cultural issues, which will be further examined as two of the four challenges confronting organisations. There is another reason, where the locus of the problem resides not in the organisation but within the individual. Some employees, for personal reasons, do not attempt take up (Fernandez 2006), either because of general indifference or as a means of escaping the implications of the take up (Hochschild 1997), such as, avoiding child caring and/or other domestic responsibilities.

3.7.2 Organisational communication

The second broad challenge faced by FFWs involves their communications processes and channels (Campbell and Charlesworth 2004; De Cieri et al. 2005; Visser & Williams 2006; Waters & Bardoel 2006). As discussed above Campbell and Charlesworth (2003 cited in Campbell and Charlesworth 2004) make a noteworthy observation of the link between technical constraints and employees’ poor awareness and/or inadequate knowledge of the provisions itself as well as the due process involved in take-up applications. Additionally, it was previously established (in section 3.7.1.1) that poor awareness is a significant problem in organisations; many employees were totally unaware of many provisions. Studies show that poor awareness is linked to ineffective organisational communication (Visser & Williams 2006; Waters & Bardoel 2006).

In their research, Waters and Bardoel (2006) found poor communication to be the single most common reason why employees of a large Australian university did not attempt take up of their organisation’s WF/L policies. Participants generally had less than satisfactory knowledge, of the details of these policies and/or their entitlements to it. Furthermore, from their statement (p. 74) “[o]f those participants who had used the policies or had knowledge of them…” suggests that there were among the participants some who had absolutely no knowledge of some of the policies. This is understandable for the reasons provided in section 3.7.4 as well as the fact the WF/L balance policies and provisions are only one small component of an overwhelming large depository of organisational offerings.
In their study Lowe and Schellenberg (2001) found that employees with strong employment relations indicated good and open organisational communications as one of the key requirements. Closely linked to this finding, is that of Wood (in Scheibl 1999) who found that among 871 FFWs studied, there was a clear and positive relationship between the management of WF/L balance and the level of communication. The higher the communication ratings the higher the perceived management of WF/L balance. The fact that in many organisations, managerial and supervisory non-verbal communication cues tend to give employees “mixed messages” (Kirby & Krone 2002, p. 53) about their entitlements to provisions and/or if it is acceptable for them to take it up, may explain why good communication is critical.

The corporate intranet facility has been singled out as an effective and efficient medium of communication about an organisation’s WF/L balance programs, policies and provisions. It is well suited for both the information dissemination needs of employers as well as the information retrieval needs of employees (workplace.gov.au 2007; Waters & Bardoel 2006). Edelman Change and Employee Engagement (2006) study of 75 of the leading Fortune 500 companies found that 99% of them operated an intranet. Email (75%) and the intranet (28%) were the most common means of communicating to employees. However, 85% of these companies relied on the intranet to share information and promote best practice with employees; this study suggests that it would include matters relating to its WF/L balance programs if it had one. While the use of the intranet, as a site for dissemination and retrieval of vital information, is a commendable approach, Todd Thiessen, a intranet consultant, advises caution in its development and management. He argues that since the intranet is developed primarily for the workforce, it must meet satisfy their needs. Three of the most common problems employees encounter are, poor search capabilities, outdated information, and inconsistency in navigating through the various pages. He also argues that the intranet is part of an employee’s daily routine, which suggests that access to it must not be deterred. If employees encounter problems in its use or if the sites are not user-friendly, it is likely that they will not use it as much. Hence it is important that management market the intranet and its products as well as provide users with adequate, on-going support, and training every time a new phase is rolled out (Green 2004).
3.7.3 Power and control issues

The third underlying problem area that can give rise to gaps between the rhetoric and the reality of the FFW concerns issues of power and control. In section 3.3 the discussion established that the notion of balance is an individual experience (Fredriksen & Scharlach 1999) guided by one's “life role salience” or personal assessments of role expectations (Amatee et al. in Aryee 1992, p. 815). From an organisational perspective, it would seem that the ability of an employee to carry out this preferred balance will be highly dependent on the power-control relationships between the employee and the employer.

The traditional view of the relationship between power and control in the organisational setting is explained by Simpson (1985). This view sees control, or as Foucault asserts, domination (Boje & Rosile 2001), over workers confers power on managers/supervisors. Such power can come from two forms of control: control over the technical aspects of work (i.e. how work is done) and control over the ‘employment’ aspects of work (i.e. when it is done) (Visser & Williams 2006). Smith (2000) offers an alternative gendered perspective of power and control; she identifies a masculine and a feminine form of power. Masculine power is the form derived from Simpson’s ‘control over workers’; it is outdated and is based on domination. Such power, she claims, has a “zero-sum” net effect; the more one gets, the less the other. The feminine form is the notion of “power with others” (p. 39); instead of domination and control of work, there is a focus on relationships based on synergy, mutuality, and interdependence. This she argues is the most appropriate form of power in the context of WF/L balance management.

In this section the study examines power and control dynamics in contemporary labour management referred to as “post-modern control” (Boje & Dennehy 2000). Post-modern control acknowledges the notion of radical pluralism. Pluralism exists because there is the “…recognition of fundamental and inherent conflicts of interest between workers and employers of the workplace” (Deery et al. 2001, p.14). This so-called post-modern era encompasses the period of the third wave of globalisation (Chase-Dunn et al. 2000), the period after WWII. Reminiscent of this era are some of the, previously discussed, most profound changes to families and organisations in
general. From the family perspective, there have been, among others, more women in higher education and the workforce, increased spending, lifestyle changes, and changes to the structure of the family and the household. From the organisational perspective, it has been the period of some of the most radical structural and design changes. It has included, among others, strategies to cope with increasing business competition such as mergers, take-overs and acquisitions, leaner organisations, as well as increasing use of downsizing, outsourcing, and 24/7 production strategies; all of which severely hamper employees’ ability to exercise their preferred ‘balance’ options, and exacerbate the conflict between them and their employers.

Burud and Tumolo (2004, p. 46) refer to contemporary workers as dual-focus since the majority have both work and personal responsibilities. They also tend to prioritise their personal needs above those of the organisation’s (Kutilek et al. 2002). They are also “more mobile, better informed, more individualistic… and more confident in [their] ability to move” (Towers Perrin in Burud & Tumolo 2004, p.46). It appears that contemporary workers have considerable power in the workplace and therefore cannot be commanded or controlled at work because of behaviours that prioritise non-work needs. Burud and Tumolo (2004, p. 46) suggest that there has been a “[s]hift in the balance of power”, which has legitimatised and made prominent the need for WF/L balance and the advent of FFWs.

However, it is also equally important to note that not all dual-focus workers who prefer to prioritise their personal needs have the ‘balance of power’ in their favour. Not all workers are confident of their mobility, nor are they all individualistic. There are many other reasons that they cannot leave the workplace despite being unable to fulfil their preferred balance needs. If employers do not consider the needs of this category of workers and instead use their ‘balance of power’ to dictate strict terms, they run the risk of creating the dysfunctional workplace – dissatisfied staff, low morale, lower productivity, and high absenteeism. There is abundant literature on the business costs of not providing WF/L balance as well as the costs of a dysfunctional workplace.
Therefore, despite who has this balance of power, it is important that there needs to be careful management of all workers’ needs. Such an approach implies shared power and control over productive work, management and workers’ together deciding how best to serve the interests of both parties. Smith’s (2000) feminine power or “power with others” (p. 39), no doubt a post-modern perspective, appears to be ideally suited for such an approach.

Fundamental to shared power and control is the central role of choice, as well as the notion of shared responsibility and direction over work. Two of the key ways in which these can be manifested in contemporary workplaces are through flexibility (Hetrick & Boje 1992) and empowerment (Boje & Rosile 2001). Emerging from these two directions is the all important and fundamental need to allow workers to have some degree of control of flexibility in their work (de Wolff 2003). Another two aspects related to power and control issues are the ideas of discretionary power and power in the ranks. These topics are further discussed in the following subsections.

### 3.7.3.1 Flexibility

Flexibility as we noted in section 3.5.1.1 is crucial to any notion of WF/L balance and is further explored here. There are many different forms of organisational flexibility, and broadly speaking it can be categorized according to who voices it, employers, or workers. Their needs may diverge or converge. Employers, for example, might prefer a flexible and adaptable workforce, to cope with the needs of an increasingly competitive business environment. Workers, on the other hand, might prefer permanent jobs but with the added flexibility of fluid work times.

Goudswaard and de Nanteuil (2000) propose four categories of flexibility important to employers a) numerical flexibility, which is flexibility regarding employment, such as use of casual staff, b) productive flexibility, flexibility of production systems such as contracting, c) temporal flexibility, flexibility in working time such as staggered start and finish times, and d) functional flexibility, flexibility through work design such as job rotation, and multi-skilling. On the other hand Booth and Frank (2005, p. 15) identify four key types of flexibility important to workers, “temporary
work” and “working times”, which appear to converge with employers’ needs for “numerical flexibility” and “temporal flexibility” identified by Goudswaard and de Nanteuil. The remaining two types of flexibility available to employees are “place of work” and “number of hours of work”. Flexibility is applicable to many work areas but two of the most important areas in the post-modern era are administrative and manufacturing flexibility (Hetrick & Boje 1992).

3.7.3.2 Control of technical aspects of work: Empowerment

Where workers’ control of the technical aspects of their work, or the details of how they would go about doing the work, are concerned, flexibility of production and staffing are key areas. Significant to WF/L balance are flexible production in the form of, for example, flexible start and finish times, as well as flexible staffing, in the form of variations in the permanent and casual job positions.

Hetrick and Boje (1992) suggest that these ranges of flexibility demands in turn require flexible control systems; the authors cite Poster’s and Featherstone’s reference to “self-surveillance” or “participatory surveillance” as possible mechanisms. These mechanisms would include, for example, personal attempts to keep track of one’s own tasks and schedules. This implies that unlike the overt management control of the worker in scientific management, “self-surveillance” or “participatory surveillance”, in practice are covert forms of worker control. Central to workers’ control of the technical aspects of their work is the notion of empowerment.

However, empowerment and what it really means has been fiercely debated (Hetrick & Boje 1992) but it is not in the interest of this study to delve into this debate. While Daft (in Boje & Rosile 2001, p. 93) defines empowerment as “…power sharing, the delegation of power or authority to subordinates in the organization”, Hetrick and Boje argue that the power sharing is in effect limited. Workers do not have the power and authority over matters such as corporate governance issues, but rather only for task-related activities. In this regard post-modern workers could ideally, for example, be empowered enough to take the onus for their start and finish times, or the days that they worked or how much work they might put in on a particular day. Critics of
empowerment, however, argue that if post-modern workers were to be truly empowered they should be able to take on any aspects of corporate governance, task, and strategy issues (Hetrick & Boje 1992), including for example, their ability to manage their organisation’s WF/L balance.

Boje and Rosile (2001, p. 91) suggest that ‘co-power’, an extension of Mary Parker Follett’s work (of the human relations movement), as more relevant. They define co-power as “the co-relationship between the individual and the network of relations and systems that define the organization” (p. 110). Co-power seems to suggest that the two parties, workers and the rest of the organisation, work together, for example, in finding WF/L balance solutions that are in the best interest of both. This study suggests that co-power is akin to Smith’s idea of “power with others” discussed above.

### 3.7.3.3 Control of ‘Employment’ aspects: Time at work

The control of employees’ time at work in effect embodies both aspects of Simpson’s (1985) control over the technical aspects of work as well as the control of the ‘employment’ aspects of work. There is some overlap between these two areas as was evident in the previous discussion of workers’ control over the technical aspects of their work. Despite this, the discussion here will centre more on the need of workers’ to have some control of their employment conditions, namely their time at work.

WF/L issues in Australia parallel that of Canada. As in many developed economies, both these countries are experiencing cultures of long hours at work as well as increasing WF/L conflict. These issues have prompted calls for workers to have greater control over their time at work, such as shown in the findings of Baxter and Alexander (2008). Central to the notion of workers’ control over time at work is the issue of flexibility, discussed previously in section 3.7.3.1. In this present section the study examines de Wolff’s (2003) work on how flexibility and control over time can help workers manage their WF/L domains.
In, ‘Bargaining for Work and Life’, an assessment of ten years of work-life balance in Canada, de Wolff (2003) has, perhaps to denote the significance of workers’ control over time at work, devoted a whole chapter on this topic. In it she affirms unions’ arguments that if workers’ control over time at work is to be reality organisations need to address three critical areas: workload, overtime, and flexibility. Some of the proposals are radical yet appear pressing, including for example, “[l]imited mandatory overtime”, “[s]hort and long-term disability leave”, “[d]onated leave bank (from co-workers, and those leaving the workplace)”, “[r]educed work week during and after pregnancy”, “[p]referential schedule and holiday scheduling for parents, and particularly for parents with children with special needs, [s]hift swapping, and [p]aid caring responsibility leave that requires little or no notice”. One of the proposal concerns lay-offs where unions argue that in such situations, the remaining workers should not be required to work overtime. Most of the proposals are directed at helping workers with their work-family responsibilities. Additionally, the proposals indicate that flexibility is paramount to workers, which means that there needs to be a good employer-employee relationship, reminiscent of Smith’s “power with others” or Boje and Rosile (2001) co-power or power sharing.

3.7.3.4 Discretionary power

This study posits that organisations that value power sharing between employer and employee will enable both parties to work out mutually agreeable flexible working arrangements. This is exactly what Westpac’s philosophy is based upon; employees and their managers mutually agree on working hours and patterns. It could explain why more than a quarter of its workforce works part-time and why it was identified as one of the top two companies for women (Benveniste & Leathem 1999).

In the absence of such a mutually acceptable working relationship, employees simply have to rely on formal workplace policies largely in favour of business and very often on their immediate manager’s or supervisor’s discretionary power and support. An Australian survey showed that around 20% of respondents reported not being happy with their WF/L balance. This was because they simply had to work according to the terms and conditions set down by their employers and fit their family commitments around them (O’ Rourke 2001).
Discretionary power is adequately defined in legislative literature, however a perusal of the work-family literature found that while many works made direct reference to it (McPherson 2006; Woodland et al. 2003) or included indirect reference (Stevens et al. 2004; Wise 2005), there was none that actually defined it. However, in their research of British employers, Woodland et al. (2003) attempted to determine “…whether managers and supervisors generally have to follow set procedures or can apply their own judgement in relation to flexible working practices”. Using the latter query as a foundation and from the context of WF/L balance, this study defines discretionary power as the authority and control that a person in managerial or supervisory role has in being able to decide or approve whether or not a subordinate should be granted flexible working arrangements.

Two types of discretionary power can exist (McPherson 2004). The first type is when managers/supervisors have the power and authority to grant flexible working arrangements that are not part of the formal workplace policies. For example, the findings of ‘The second work-life balance study’ showed that even before the paternity leave legislation came into force in the U.K in 2003, 10% of employees reported they there was no written policy and they had to rely on managerial discretion to take time off during the birth of their child (Stevens et al. 2004).

The second is when managers and supervisors have the sole discretion of authorising workers’ requests to take up formal workplace provisions (Anonymous 1993; Appelbaum et al. 2003; Campbell & Charlesworth 2004).

Discretionary power suggests strong power-control dynamics. It implies that workers have to make a strong case for their non-work needs to be heard, which despite being valid to an average person can still run the risk of being denied, because it is solely up to the manager’s discretion. Hence, discretionary power can be abused, and can lead to marginalisation of workers (Wax 2002). There is also the risk that it can result in inconsistent treatment of employees and/or discriminatory practices, all of which can contribute to the dysfunctional workplace. Joan Williams (in Wax 2002, p. 4) notes that it is time that FFWs offered “…flexibility without marginalization”. Wise’s (2005) research paper comparing two U.K firms implementation of ‘time off
to care for dependents’, a right guaranteed under legislation, shows the full scale of discretionary power, and offers valuable insights into the challenges facing organisations.

3.7.3.5 Power in the ranks

Various researchers reveal that differential patterns of employee access or eligibility to policies and provisions (Duxbury & Higgins 2001; Gray & Tudball 2002; Keene & Quadagno 2004) is a huge area of concern (Gray & Tudball 2002). Employees in any one organisation do not all have equal access to family-friendly initiatives, rather there appears to be a definite pattern of eligibility.

By and large, employees’ eligibility for their organisation’s WF/L balance initiatives tend to positively correlate with their job ranking within the organisation (Keene & Quadagno 2004), although other studies show that this eligibility does not necessarily translate to take up, because internal forces, particularly organisational culture discussed in section 3.7.4, complicate the issue. The eligibility appears to roughly conform to a discretionary power divide based along the lines of full-time versus part-time and management- versus non-management staff levels. Based on this divide full-time management level staff would have the most discretionary powers. Duxbury and Higgins (2001) argue that studies show that professionals and managers are able to exercise greater flexibility for themselves because of power and control issues. This study suggests that in practical terms this means that at the very minimum, managers are able to take time out for themselves to handle their short-term non-work needs; permission is generally not required nor sought from others though they may inform their peers of their whereabouts.

3.7.4 Organisational cultural issues

While the WF/L balance agenda has become somewhat of an international priority and has led to an increase in the number of FFWs, there are still many problems in its implementation. This study has argued that the large discrepancy between FFWs’ intentions and their practices has been instrumental in developing the notion that WF/L-friendly is rhetoric.

A study commissioned by the NSW Labour Council revealed that many workers were dissatisfied with their balance of work and family/life because of organisational cultures (O’Rourke 2001). Some authors (Arthur & Rousseau 1996; Mirvis & Hall 1994) have argued that 21st century employees are looking for jobs that can provide them with psychological success which includes jobs that provide greater WF/L balance (Mirvis & Hall 1994). The fact that employed managers are actively job-hunting for careers that can provide them with more work-family balance (Bretz et al. 1994) highlights the significance of organisational efforts to adequately address employees’ needs for WF/L balance.

In some Australian workplaces, clearly identifiable groups of employees, such as men, career-minded employees, and women in management positions, fail to take up WF/L provisions because strong workplace cultures deem it as inappropriate for them to do so (Kimmel 1993; McDonald et al. 2005). Additionally, the Australian financial services sector, to which the case organisation belongs, is in a business environment that is highly competitive, hence organisational cultures tend to mimic the industry and be very competitive, making WF/L balance problematic for employees (FSU 2005).

Unsupportive organisational culture is not confined to the Australian setting alone; it is a universal phenomenon. Lewis’s (1996; 1997) studies showed that while many organisations in the UK and Europe acknowledged the importance of FF policies and initiatives, their attempts to implement them in the workplace were hindered by the strong organisational cultures. She observed that women were unable to effectively use their FFW’s policies and practices because the workplace culture tended to
define work according to the male breadwinner model (Lewis 1997; 2001). Such organisational behaviour provides justification for the WF/L balance rhetoric.

Researchers are unanimous in their contention that a supportive workplace culture is critical to providing the FFW (Bond 2004; Kossel & Friede 2005; Lewis 1996; 1997; 2001; Lewis & Dyer 2000; Thompson et al. 1999). A supportive culture will mean that employees from across the ranks of the organisation feel comfortable, supported and confident in taking up WF/L balance provisions that will help them to successfully manage their balance needs and experience less WF/L conflict. The organisation in return will be able to reap the benefits of a contented workforce, such as, through greater commitment and loyalty, better performance and greater inclination to stay with the organisation (Thompson et al. 1999). To the organisation providing a supportive work-family culture is significantly related to benefit utilization and work attitudes, such as organizational commitment, intention to leave the organization, and less work-to-family conflict—beyond the mere availability of work-family benefits (Thompson et al. 1999). Most importantly, this study asserts, a supportive workplace culture will help FFWs transcend the claim that WF/L-friendly is rhetoric.

Non-supportive organisational culture with respect to WF/L balance can be manifested in the workplace in a number of ways. It may include, for example, gendered norms regarding policy entitlements and/or take up, non-supportive staff (such as top management, senior management, managers, supervisors, or peers), and fear (e.g. of promotion prospects, other workers, work intensification, or long hours). The study will now examine these issues in greater detail.

3.7.4.1 Gendered notion of WF/L balance

Acker (1990) claims that, contrary to feminist theories gendered organisations have always been the norm. She describes (p. 146) a gendered organisation as one where:

...advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine...
Based on this reference it is clear that one of the earliest evidences of the gendered organisation is the organisation of work along the male breadwinner model (Acker 1990; Barnett 1999; Berry & Rao 1997; Burud & Tumolo 2004; Campbell and Charlesworth 2004; Lewis 1997, 2001; Keene & Quadagno 2004). Additionally, the reference also includes concepts such as “meaning”, “identity” and “pattern” which are vital components of organisational culture, and which suggest gendered-ness as an intrinsic component of organisational cultures.

Extending the argument, this study suggests that a culture of gender biased support for family-friendliness continues to exist in contemporary organisations. An organisation comes with its own established norms, rules, beliefs, practices and traditions regarding the policies and provisions it will support, when it will support them, and most importantly establishes the status quo of gendered entitlements to them. Hence, while society pushes for FFWs and encourages and supports gender egalitarianism in the home, at the organisational level ingrained beliefs and attitudes will mean that gendered practices will continue, unless the organisation embarks on a vigorous and sustained exercise of revolutionising such a workplace culture.

Overall, research shows that the general workplace expectations are that it is acceptable for working mothers but not working fathers to seek a balance between work and family (Adamson 2002). Thus even if WF/L-friendly benefits and flexible work arrangements are seemingly available to all employees; the organisational culture effectively discourages male workers from take up.

It is pertinent to note, however, that it is men’s take up rates of provisions, and not eligibility to provisions that is the issue here. Additionally, instead of ensuring that flexibility is not marginalised, and that all employees have access to WF/L balance, many workplaces tend to marginalise recipients, according to their job ranks. Edith Gray’s (2001) study ‘Colliding spheres: Work and family initiatives and parental realities’ clearly explains the situation. She notes that as far as employees with very young children were concerned, females generally have less access to WF/L-friendly benefits and workplace arrangements than their male counterparts. This inequality in access was traced to two principal reasons: firstly, WF/L-friendly benefits and
flexible arrangements generally require employees to be in full-time positions, and
secondly, these positions are more prevalent in the higher ranking jobs than in the
lower ranking jobs. Since there are more men in full-time positions and in higher
ranking jobs there are greater numbers of them who are eligible for the take up of
these provisions. Both these factors result in alienating working mothers, who
generally tend to opt for casual and/or part-time appointments, and those who are in
lower status jobs, in their attempt to blend their work and home life. Whatever the
underlying reason appears to be, the problem of differential access to WF/L balance
initiatives is a significant problem shown in a number of Australian researches on
work and family. For example, in the research conducted by the De Cierci et al.
(2005) team differential access was practised by more than half of the organisations
surveyed.

However, when it comes to take up of their organisation’s WF/L-friendly provisions,
the situation is completely reversed. This time female employees appear to take up
more provisions than male employees. The reason for this is that managers and
supervisors and organisational culture as a whole tend to display more clemency and
understanding towards female employees, especially in matters that involves the care
of dependent children. Pauline Frick, chairperson of the National Marriage and
Family Council, laments that Australian workplaces have on the whole neglected the
needs of working fathers (Adamson 2002), while O’Brien and Shemilt (2003) note
that while debate on work and family life has begun to include the role of fathers; it
nevertheless tends to be heavily focused on mothers.

Organisational cultures tend to have a rather subjective attitude to working mothers.
Adams (1995) found that the culture of organisations that fit the ‘critical mass
model’, i.e. organisations where women comprised the majority of the workforce, are
particularly sympathetic to the needs of working part-time female workers. The
culture, however, assumed that full-time female workers who placed career above
family should not be entitled to similar rights. Conversely, the same culture
perceived that part-time female workers who chose to balance their work and family
commitments should not be entitled to career advancements.
Another unique nature of organisational culture is that it is very accommodating of the short-term emergency needs of all employees, irrespective of gender or employment pattern (Adams 1995). So if an employee’s partner or close family member is ill or hurt, the organisational culture tends to take extraordinary efforts to ensure that the worker is allowed immediate time off to handle the emergency.

The study has so far examined the gendered state of WF/L balance and its workings within the framework of organisational culture. Next the study examines the culture of long hours and its impact on WF/L balance; as the discussion shows there is a gendered aspect to this as well.

### 3.7.4.2 Culture of long hours of work

One of the consequences of globalisation and increased competition has been the intensification of work, and one of its direct consequences is the long hours work culture (Bonné 2003; Campbell & Charlesworth 2004; Lewis 1997; Lewis, Rapoport & Gambles 2003; Russell & Bowman 2000; Gray et al. 2004; Hewlett & Luce 2006). A study of 54 families, commissioned by the ACTU (ACTU 2005), found unreasonable working hours to be one of the factors that limited workers WF/L balance. Another important finding with regard to the Australasian scene is the second annual Mt Eliza Leadership Index survey of more than 500 Australian and New Zealand managers (Durant & Morley 2002). In the 2001 survey, work-life balance did not feature in the top five current leadership challenges; however, it notched second place in the corresponding 2002 period. In the 2001 survey, managers perceived that “achieving a reasonable work-life balance” would feature as the second most prominent leadership challenge two years down the track, while in the corresponding 2002 survey the same challenge topped manager’s priority issue. The authors ponder the fact whether Australian Government census findings of Australians generally, as well as anecdotal evidence that managers are working longer hours, bear any significance for the forecast challenge of achieving reasonable work-life balance. The culture of long hours is especially characteristic of businesses in the Australian financial sector (French & Strachan 2007; FSU 2005; Probert et al. 2000), and is evident right through the organisations, affecting men and women,
management and non-management, and full-time as well as part-time staff (FSU 2005; Probert et al. 2000).

There is a gendered pattern to this too. Many organisations tend to have work cultures that associate long work hours with employees in managerial positions. Such a work culture has systemically disadvantaged females which explains why there are more men in these positions, and why long hours are associated more with male rather than female employees (Adamson 2002; Campbell & Charlesworth 2004; French & Strachan 2007; Galinsky, Kim & Bond 2001; Galinsky, Bond et al. 2005; Gray et al. 2004; Russell & Bowman 2000).

In recent times however, probably due to the increasing number of women at management levels, and the promotion of gender equality and affirmative action, long hours appears to be expected of female employees at management and senior management levels (French & Strachan 2007; Huber 2004). Kodz, Davis et al. (2003, p. 112) in their paper reviewed international trends in long hours at work. They found that although Australian statistics reflect international trends that men work longer hours than women, it does on the other hand mask the true nature of the trends. What they found was that there was increasing numbers women also who were working longer hours. Australian trends show a substantial increase in the number of full-time women who worked in excess of 48 hours per week in the 10 year period from 1984-1994. Kodz, Davis et al. (2003, p. 14) also note that Australian is one of the four countries (others being the U.S, U.K and Japan) in the world with long hours work culture for women, particularly at the managerial level.

There is a possible dilemma here; whichever way it is approached, the employer may be found guilty of applying the male breadwinner model. If these women in management positions were to take advantage of WF/L provisions and instead spend more time with their families, one group of people could claim that these female workers had to leave work early because work was structured according to the male model. On the other hand, if she stayed back and worked the same long hours as her male peers, the employer could still be charged with applying the male model for her inability to have sufficient WF/L balance. Theoretically speaking then, the only
workplace model that can effectively satisfy the need for both male and female workers not to spend long hours at work would be a shared breadwinner model. Such a model would recognise that men and women have active roles to undertake on the home front. Such a model would also mean a cultural change in the workplace, a shift from the notion that spending long hours at work is seen as being more committed to work (Gray et al. 2004; Kodz, Davis et al. 2003) and a fast track for promotion prospects (Gray et al. 2004).

### 3.7.4.3 Culture of fear

This is yet another negative aspect of organisational culture, whereby employees, despite having a need for WF/L provisions that can help them better manage their WF/L interfaces, do not even attempt take up out of fear of possible repercussions (Campbell & Charlesworth 2004; Gary & Tudball 2002; Gary et al. 2004; Harker 1995; Lewis, Rapoport & Gambles 2003; Perlow 1995; Thompson et al. 1999; Zetlin & Whitehouse 1998). A review of the literature suggests four types of repercussions that employees generally fear.

The first repercussion concerns implications for current job (Gary & Tudball 2002; Gary et al. 2004; Lewis, Rapoport & Gambles 2003; Perlow 1995; Thompson, et al. 1999; Zetlin & Whitehouse 1998). McDonald et al. (2005, p. 42) aptly summarises such concern with the use of an economic metaphor “opportunity cost”. In other words there will be potential ‘costs’ incurred, such as loss of rewards, benefits and entitlements, should employees avail themselves of these provisions. Allen and Russell’s (1999) research provide some justifications for such workplace fears. Their research found that participants who had taken up leave were regarded as being less committed and were given less rewards. On the whole male participants suffered more when compared to females. Lewis, Rapoport & Gambles (2003) argue that globalisation, and organisational dependence on downsizing and outsourcing as methods to improve productivity, are increasingly contributing to an insecure workforce. Such insecure workers will no doubt perceive that their job is always at stake, and any signs that the business needs are not given top priority could potentially cost them their jobs.
Fitzpatrick (2007) notes the dilemma Asian men are increasingly finding themselves in. Since the late 1990s the Asian economic scene has been dotted with retrenchments, business failures, and radical business strategies. In the face of such uncertainty these men fear that just to hold on to their jobs they must show that they are indispensable and work longer hours to justify that. On the other hand contemporary social expectations and the fact that many men have working partners have meant that they are increasingly expected to take on more active parenting roles and responsibilities. Hence, these men are increasingly finding that there is less of themselves that they can give and consequently end up having enormous work-family conflict. The implications of job insecurity in work-family conflict have been noted by Barling (1995).

The second repercussion concerns fears in relation to career progression. Many studies (Campbell & Charlesworth 2004; Harker 1995; Lewis, Rapoport & Gambles 2003; Perlow 1995; Thompson et al. 1999) show that employees generally fear that take up of WF/L balance provisions are potentially harmful to promotion prospects. Perlow (1995) found that both male and female engineers of a Fortune 100 company feared that their take up of WF/L provisions would be at the expense of their future career advancements. The organisation’s emphasis on uninterrupted career histories as an indication of commitment and as a basis of promotion was the source of this general sense of fear among employees. Another example is provided by Finkel et al. (in Thompson et al. 1999). Their study found that 77% female members of a university faculty feared take up would negatively impact their future careers. The fear rhetoric was supported in reality; only 30% who had given birth took up the full extent of the leave provisions that they were entitled to. Such a fear is also evident in Australian workplaces. In a newspaper article titled, ‘A nation of work, stress and no play’, Horin and Wilson (2001) claim that employees are not accessing WF/L provisions because of an inherent fear that their promotion prospects will be affected. Other studies (Campbell & Charlesworth 2004; Zetlin Whitehouse 1998) also highlight this challenge.

The third type of fear of taking up WF/L balance provisions is associated with work intensification for the person undertaking the provisions. This is mostly related to
provisions related to leave or time off from work. Many organisations might allow workers access to such leave and time off. However in reality it just means that there is unfinished work to complete on return, as well as normal daily work, which means there are longer hours to work.

The final type of repercussion is fear about what others think or to gain “workplace respect” (Zetlin & Whitehouse 1998, p. 13). Campbell and Charlesworth argue that fear of facing the wrath of supervisors is one reason employees put on hold any attempts to take up provisions, while Drew and Murtagh (2005) suggest that fear of a hostile response from sub-cultures, specifically non-carers, is a huge driver of non-take up by those with legitimate reasons to do so.

3.7.4.4 Leadership and management support

There is overwhelming agreement that top leadership and senior management support is crucial for the success of FFWs (McCartney & Evans 2005; De Cieri et al. 2005; Hogarth et al. 2000; King 1995). However, the reality is that there is instead a general lack of top management and/or organisational support for workers WF/L balance needs (Kimmel 1993; WorkplaceInfo 2003). A survey conducted by the Business Council of Australia found two barriers that prevented that effective WF/L balance for employees: unsupportive organisational culture, and management resentment. Basically employers resented the idea that they had to do more than simply providing a range of WF/L provisions (WorkplaceInfo 2003).

Bourke (2002) analysed the findings of the Mt Eliza Leadership and specifically noted the gap between managers’ rhetoric and their actions concerning the importance of providing WF/L balance. On one hand, managers acknowledge that WF/L balance is a current challenge but on the other their general inaction suggests a culture of apathy and inaction. Bankert and Googins (1996) suggest that the rhetoric at corporate level is being unmatched at the user level. They stress that a successful WF/L balance program requires three factors: top management support, pursuing the program as a business case, and supportive organisational culture.
The best way to promote their organisations WF/LB programs is for leaders and senior managers to become strong ‘practitioners’ themselves (Glubczynski et al. 2003), and to lead by example. This means refraining from excessive working hours, taking up the various entitlements when the need arises and encouraging employees to do the same.

3.8 Chapter summary

Before proceeding to Chapter 4, it is important to re-establish the intentions of the previous two chapters and to illustrate the link between them.

Chapter 2 provided first, the literature relevant to understanding the rhetoric-reality challenge of the FFW and second, the literature underlying the logic behind the development of the conceptual framework, ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’. The first literature examined contemporary discourse and rhetoric. The work and family discourse is examined from an organisational perspective while the rhetoric is examined from the workings of the FFO, an organisation that has been publicly acclaimed for its family-friendliness. In the second the literature included examination of Argyris and Schon’s theory of action as a means of understanding gaps between espoused theory and theory-in use or rhetoric and reality. The discrepancy model was developed using these constructs. The study suggests that organisational rhetoric of being WF/L-friendly can be gauged from the WF/L balance provisions offered. Alternatively, organisational reality may be gauged from employees experiences with the provisions offered. The gap level between these two may be used to measure the level of rhetoric.

This chapter examined the extant literature on WF/L balance to understand FFWs in general and more specifically in the Australian context, and where possible with information about the finance services sector. The literature focus was on identifying the issues and challenges that could contribute to significant gaps between organisational rhetoric-reality of providing employees with opportunities for WF/L balance gap. The study classified the contributors of the gap into two broad areas external and internal. External challenges are in relation to forces in the external
environment; it has the ability to affect all organisations. Internal challenges are deemed to be those that arise from within the organisation and may be industry-, sector-, or organisation-specific. Since these can be of numerous types the study’s focus is more on internal challenges that are of concern to all organisations. Four broad areas were examined: a) the organisations provisions offered in relation to employees’ experiences, needs and take up, b) organisational communication processes and channels c) issues of control and power because of its role in the notion of flexibility and shared control of work and d) organisational culture issues.

In the next chapter, the study provides a detailed account and the rationale behind the case study methodology.
PART III: THE RESEARCH
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 examined and evaluated contemporary literature on rhetoric and work-family discourse in order to understand and transcend organisational rhetoric of being WF/L-friendly. The information gleaned provided the context and support for the design of the conceptual framework, ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’. This model illustrates the vital links between and among the FFO’s WF/L balance policies, its associated provisions to employees, and the practices of the workplace, from the perspective of employees’ experiences with provisions provided. Most importantly, the model illustrates how the discrepancy or gap between provisions and practices can arise and how it can therefore be used to monitor and measure the extent and level of organisational rhetoric. Furthermore, the discussion in Chapter 2 established, through the model, that three key variables; awareness of provisions, need for provisions, and take-up of provisions may be used to investigate workplace practices or employee experiences. Then, in Chapter 3, the study examined the extant literature on WF/L balance to uncover the key issues and challenges that confront FFWs, as well as other emergent issues which arguably could contribute to significant WF/L balance rhetoric-reality gaps.

Here in Chapter 4 the four broad objectives of the thesis are presented. In section 4.2 the philosophical underpinnings that drive the study in the context of ontological, epistemological, and methodological considerations are discussed. In section 4.3, the study discusses the features of the two main paradigms, positivism and interpretivism, and justifies their appropriateness and relevance to the present study. The research question, the framing of which is guided by my philosophical underpinnings, is then discussed. Section 4.4 discusses the research design, particularly the underlying rationale to use the case study approach, using a single case organisation, and mixed methods to investigate the WF/L balance rhetoric.
Finally, in section 4.5, the study discusses how, guided by the conceptual framework ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’, the research process was executed. The chapter is then summarised in section 4.6.

4.2 Philosophical assumptions

Any intellectual inquiry, such as research, can be viewed in various ways. Each person’s view of the world, how it functions and consequently how it should be approached, studied and understood, is informed and shaped by basic underlying assumptions and belief systems or thought paradigms (Guba 1990; Jennings 2001; Schram 2003). Hussey and Hussey (1997, p. 47) note “[t]he term paradigm refers to the progress of scientific practices based on people’s philosophies and assumptions about the world and the nature of knowledge; …about how research should be conducted”. Management research can be pursued using any one or a combination of different paradigms, among others, positivist, interpretive, critical theory, feminist, and postmodern (Jennings 2001). Accordingly, I realise that my views of the world are not necessarily those of, or shared by others, but at the same time I do recognise that research gives me the opportunity and the platform to share my views with them. Therefore I need to explicitly state my position in this research as well as clarify the stance and perspectives that I have adopted in the inquiry process. Such an approach will allow others to use my ‘lens’ (Schram 2003, p. 29) in their efforts to engage with, understand and judge the phenomena, arguments and conclusions presented in my study.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 22) argue that “[a]ll research is interpretive” and that “[a]ll qualitative researchers are philosophers”. Each researcher is guided by his/her own thought or interpretive paradigm, which is shaped and generally thought to be guided by three philosophical considerations: ontology, epistemology, methodology (Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Girod-Seville & Perret 2001; Gummesson 2000; Jennings 2001). Ontological consideration deals with the notion of how the researcher perceives the world; whether it is “objective and external” and therefore not a part of the researcher’s world, or is a “socially constructed” world which implies the intricate role the researcher plays in deciphering the ‘messages’ of the participants.
Epistemological consideration is concerned with the relationship of the researcher to that or those being researched (Jennings 2001), and deals with constructs such as the status, value, and creation of knowledge and the nature of reality (Girod-Seville & Perret 2001). Finally, methodological consideration is concerned with the techniques that the researcher should use, or chooses to use, to gather data (Jennings 2001). These three considerations are discussed in relation to the paradigmatic issues in the following section; however, the fourth consideration, axiological (ethical) consideration will be dealt with separately.

4.3 Paradigmatic issues

This thesis is fundamentally a research about business. Cavana et al. (2001 p. 5) describes business research as “…a systematic and organised effort to investigate a specific problem or opportunity encountered in the work setting that needs a solution”. The business problem at the heart of this present study is that the WF/L-friendly efforts of organisations continue to be regarded as rhetoric. This study aims to help such organisations or FFWs, as they are commonly referred to, transcend the rhetoric claim.

Implicit within this rhetoric claim is an assumption of organisational ineffectiveness, arguably, a serious business problem. Ineffectiveness points to a detrimental gap between a preferred state and the present state. Using arguments posed by Philips and Moutinho (1999) this study suggest that FFWs must look within their own organisations to investigate the gap. Furthermore, this study argues that gap analysis must include two aspects of investigation, first, an investigation of the extent of the gap and second, an investigation of the reasons for that gap. The researcher believes that such a dual-centred inquiry will allow for a sustained approach to organisational effectiveness in providing the FFW with a means to transcending the WF/L balance rhetoric. The dual-centred inquiry means embracing a pluralistic approach to understanding organisations, and therefore includes approaches from management sciences as well social sciences, and humanities. The dual-centred nature of the inquiry makes it apparent that two different paradigms, a positivist and an interpretivist, are required for the study. While typically considered and presented as
mutually exclusive, the research problem identified by this thesis and the subsequent research strategy justifies such an innovative and inclusive integrating approach.

4.3.1 Positivist paradigm

Though the positivist paradigm has been traditionally linked to research in the natural sciences it has also found its place among the social sciences (Cavana et al. 2001; Hussey & Hussey 1997). In this newfound form the paradigm is concerned with scientific explanations for the causal effects of social phenomena (Hussey & Hussey 1997; Jennings 2001). Organisations are increasingly viewed as socially constructed entities (Aldrich & Rueff 2006) which means that workers’ inability to have adequate WF/L balance may, accordingly, be regarded as social phenomena, and the positivist paradigm, consequently, as an ideal perspective to research the phenomenon.

The ontological assumptions of the positivist paradigm perceive that the social world, in this study the business world, is governed by universal rules, laws, and truths (Jennings 2001). Such a vision of reality implies that consistency is paramount and suggests the over-riding reliance on measurement, objectivity, precision and logic in establishing casual relationships (Jennings 2001) as well as a tendency to rely on quantitative data (Cavana et al. 2001; Veal 2005). Additionally, there is a reliance on deductive reasoning to explain the causal relationships, which is a theoretical perspective is established prior to it being tested in the real world (Cavana, Delahaye & Sekaran 2001). The paradigm also assumes that once the causal relations are established, change in organisational behaviour can be initiated and should bring about the desired changes (Jennings 2001).

The epistemological assumption of the positivist paradigm emphasises objectivity and precision which requires the researcher to assume a passive value-free role in the research process. The idea is to take a ‘sanitised’ approach to the whole research process so as to not contaminate the data, results or findings. The researcher embarks on “discovery” to generate knowledge (Girod-Seville & Perret 2001, p.15).
The methodological consideration for this paradigm is the need for consistency in data generation and interpretation should the same research be conducted by another; it is partly augmented by the fact that the research is conducted by an outsider who takes a neutral and objective stance to the research. This paradigm takes a deductive approach to research, in that theory, frameworks, or models are tested. Other aspects of the methodological basis include generalisability which requires large sample numbers, non-bias selections of sample populations, and good return rates. Finally, there need to be appropriate statistical tools and analyses. The common research instruments are surveys and questionnaires (Cavana et al. 2001; Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Jennings 2001).

4.3.1.1 Positivist aspects of the study

The positivist paradigm fulfils the need of the present study for a number of reasons. The first is provided by the definition of business research as the “organised, data-based, critical, objective, scientific inquiry or investigation into a specific problem or issue with the purpose of finding solutions to it or clarifying it” (Cavana et al. 2001 p. 5). These characteristics are congruent with the expectations of the paradigm as discussed above. The second reason is that the first step in the dual-centred inquiry required, and discussed above, involves the investigation of the extent of the gap in organisational WF/L balance rhetoric. This means that some form of quantitative data needs to be collected, monitored, and evaluated so that gap levels can be recorded, stored, and compared over time. The third reason is that the research is dependent on gap levels to show the reality of organisational WF/L balance rhetoric. This means deductive reasoning and consequently the reliance on some theoretical framework or model to apply to the organisation to test organisation reality of the WF/L balance rhetoric.

Cavana et al. (2001) list four shortcomings of this paradigm; a) superficial problem solving; b) failure to engage with people on personal level; c) the myth that the researcher is objective, and d) research is based on a sample population and consequent generalisation to the larger population is problematic. It also means that the experiences of individuals and/or minority groups tend to be ignored. Knowing the extent of the rhetoric-reality alone merely informs us whether or not there is a
problem; it does not provide insights on the underlying causes of the problem or how to solve the problem. These limitations have meant that additional approaches are needed to find out why the research problem exists and how it may be solved.

4.3.2 **Interpretivist paradigm**

This paradigm is traditionally associated with social science research (Veal 2005) because social science disciplines are fundamentally concerned with the world of people. The paradigm is therefore concerned with deconstructing, interpreting, and understanding human experiences. The interpretive paradigm is referred to in various ways: critical (Veal 2005), constructivist (Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Jennings 2001) and phenomenological (Hussey & Hussey 1997), but all regard it as sharply contrasting with the positivist paradigm (Hussey & Hussey 1997; Veal 2005). The underlying difference lies in the basic premise of the interpretivist that no aspect of the social world should or can be treated in exactly the same way as can the natural or physical world (Cavana et al. 2001; Veal 2005).

The ontological assumption of this paradigm is that there are numerous realities; the social world is a constructed world, and therefore the meanings and interpretations of a particular situation or problem depend on the actors in a given situation (Cavana et al. 2001). Data is collected from the actors’ (“insider”) perspective rather than from the researchers’ (“outsiders”) perspective (Jennings 2001, p.38). However, it is also possible that the interpretivist paradigm provides possibilities of a fusion of insider and outsider perspectives of the reality of a particular situation, a point also suggested by Schneider (1985, p. 224). Such a fusion can arise from the two levels of interpretations and therefore meanings of a situation. At the first level are the actors or insiders; individuals who have been directly involved in, or are ‘witnesses’ to a situation and who interpret and provide accounts of their experience. There can be significant subjectivity and variance in this. At the second level are researchers, the outsiders, who “tries to get inside the minds” and “…see the world” from the insiders’ perspectives (Veal 2005, p. 25). Again, there can be substantial subjectivity and variance because it is highly dependent on the intellectual and philosophical orientations, as well as experiences and skills of individual researchers; how data is
gathered and interpreted. Subjectivity is a crucial aspect of this paradigm; the various possibilities of actor (insider) and researcher (outsider) combinations further complicate this issue. It means that while the research method itself may be replicated in the exact situation, the findings need not necessarily be so, it all depends on the insiders and outsiders; the interpretivist paradigm is capable of, depending on actor/researcher combination, producing multiple realities of any given situation, and so can complicate the issue of “what is real”.

Because the paradigm is concerned with deconstructing, interpreting, and understanding human experiences, the epistemological assumption is that there needs to be a close relationship between researcher and the researched. The researcher must be able to observe and/or engage in deep-level dialogue and elicit meaning from the encounter (Jennings 2001) or as Veal (2005) puts it, enter the minds of the participants. Hence, since knowledge is generated through interpretation (Girod-Seville & Perret 2001, p.15) the better the relationship the better the data gathering process and the more reliable and richer the findings.

The methodological basis for the interpretivist paradigm is a qualitative approach that basically is inductive for fact-finding. Such approaches mean that the “…personality of the scientist is a key research instrument” (Gummesson 2000, p. 4). Elaborating on this, Gummesson (2000 p. 15, 57) proposes that research involves two interrelated aspects, “preunderstanding” or “input” and “understanding” or “output”. Preunderstanding refers to a researcher’s insights into a specific problem before the commencement of the study into such a problem, while understanding refers to insights gained from the actual study. Gummesson argues that understanding provides preunderstanding for the next related task. In this context, besides the knowledge from literature sources, my personal efforts to integrate work, family and studies, would contribute to “preunderstanding”.

While this paradigm is associated with text-based data (Jennings 2001; Veal 2005) other types of data, such as pictures, websites, cultural artefacts and advertising material are increasingly being used in contemporary research (Denzin & Lincoln
Common forms of data collection methods are in-depth interviews, participant observation, and focus groups.

There are at least three criticisms levelled at this paradigm (Cavana et al. 2001). First, is the general accusation of it being highly subjective. This is possibly due to the two-layered subjectivity argued above. However, this study suggests that since all research and formal publications are subject to scrutiny and peer reviews, there is a process to ensure reliable and meaningful information. The second criticism is that the paradigm focuses on “local, micro-level or short-term events” (Cavana et al. 2001 p. 9) and third, that it fails to bring about change. The latter two criticisms can be disputed by the discussions in Chapter 2 on the Challenger shuttle disaster. The Commission established to find ‘The Cause of the Accident’ and the ‘The Contributing Cause of the Accident’ and using a positivist paradigm identified a causal relationship between the faulty O-rings and the accident. However, using an interpretivist paradigm and using rhetoric theory, Gross and Walter (1997) argue that the Commission merely followed the directions to identify the cause of the accident and the contributing factors. The authors argue that the flawed decision-making was in fact the underlying reason why the disaster occurred. Clearly, a micro-level investigation into the underlying causes has provided deeper meaning of the reality of the situation, and a review of the decision-making process can bring about desired change. In the case of the Challenger disaster, timing was an issue that compromised the decision-making.

4.3.2.1 Interpretivist aspects of the study

Organisations are increasingly being recognised as socially constructed entities (Aldrich & Rueff 2006), which means that the interpretivist paradigm fits in well with contemporary business research. The present study is therefore well suited to this paradigm. As mentioned above this study is a dual-centred inquiry, centred on evaluating organisational effectiveness in providing the FFW as well as finding out a way to transcend the WF/L balance rhetoric. In the previous section the study established that the first aspect of the inquiry is particularly suited to the positivist paradigm as it accommodates the research’s need to capture and keep track of the gap levels. While this paradigm can provide some basic clues to some of the
problems from the variables used in the data collection, for example, lack of employee awareness, need and/or take up of provisions, it cannot, however, provide more in-depth knowledge about the problems. For example, while the paradigm may indicate high rhetoric-reality gap due to lack of employee awareness, it cannot provide many more details. However, the interpretivist paradigm allows me to probe the lack of employee awareness more fully and help uncover if it is due to underlying problems associated with, among others, poor technology, poor employee expertise levels, lack of training, or poor communication. Unlike the positivist paradigm that requires large sample sizes and produces overall findings, this paradigm allows for smaller samples and, most importantly, allows the voices of individuals and minorities to be heard.

4.3.3 Research questions

Despite the increasing numbers of FFWs, the concept of ‘WF/L-friendly’ and consequently WF/L balance continues to be widely regarded as organisational rhetoric (Pocock 2001; Dex et al. 2002; Lewis & Dwyer 2002; O’Neil 2004; Hudson Australia and New Zealand 2005; McDonald et al. 2005). The research therefore aims to answer the question, ‘why are the FFWs’ efforts to provide WF/L balance regarded as rhetoric?’. The rhetoric perception is particularly damaging to FFOs, identified by this study to be FFWs that have self-nominated themselves and won prestigious awards recognising them for their WF/L-friendly efforts. This study perceives that the self-nomination, the award presentation and subsequent media coverage, in totality constitutes the highest form of WF/L balance rhetoric an organisation can make and provides an ideal unit for the research.

There are a number of research approaches that can be used to address the research problem; however there is a close relationship between the choice of research approach and the type of information that the research intends to produce (Hussey & Hussy 1997; Jennings 2001). Three research approaches most relevant to the present study, in increasing complexity are, exploratory, descriptive, and analytical or explanatory. Exploratory research is needed because there is a lack of empirical research that can offer insights on how to approach the problem. Descriptive
approaches fulfil the “what” aspects of the research problem (Buckley et al. 1976; Hussey & Hussey 1997; Jennings 2001). Analytical approaches attempt to answer the “why” aspects to the research problem (Hussey & Hussey 1997) while the explanatory approaches fulfil both the “how” and the “why” aspects (Jennings 2001). An empirical approach involves the use of observation- or experience-based data of the phenomenon as it exists (Buckley et al. 1976; Hussey & Hussey 1997; Jennings 2001) and is suitable for all three research types. All research types can feature in the one research but exploratory research is typically done first, followed by descriptive and then analytical/explanatory. Exploratory and descriptive data are generally quantitative, can be used to explain causal relations, and are generally subject to statistical interpretations (Hussey & Hussey 1997). Explanatory research can also take on a similar stance or it can be solely qualitative (Jennings 2001).

The main research question that drives the study is analytical/explanatory in nature, ‘why are the FFWs’ efforts to provide WF/L balance regarded as rhetoric?’. To help answer this question two descriptive questions are framed:

- What is the gap level between WF/L balance rhetoric and reality in the FFO?
- What organisational issues and challenges contribute to the rhetoric claim?

The research questions outlined in section 1.4 are designed to provide greater understanding of the overall research problem. An exploratory research, in the form of a pilot project, (Hussey & Hussey 1997) is useful in fine-tuning and finalising the research questions. From the discussions in this section it is evident that both descriptive and analytical approaches are required to solve the research problem. The descriptive approach attempts to describe the WF/L balance rhetoric-reality gap levels from within the FFO, while the analytical approach continues the investigation by attempting to analyse and explain the reasons why gaps arise. The descriptive approach fits in with the positivist paradigm; the focus is on the quantitative, value-free objective collection, measurement, analysis and reporting. On the other hand, the analytical approach clearly reflects the interpretivist paradigm; the focus is on a close relationship between investigator and actors to obtain rich qualitative text-based data, which are subsequently interpreted by the researcher. It produces deeper
understanding of the phenomenon; however, as explained in the section on interpretivist paradigm, it is subjective, on two levels, actors and researcher.

4.4 Research design

It is said that the choice of research strategy is dependent on the theoretical paradigms that underpin the research, which must, in turn, be congruent to the strategies for the inquiry and the instruments that will be used to collect the data (Creswell 2003; Denzin & Lincoln 2005). The correct decision regarding the research design is crucial; it will enable the researcher to move into the “empirical” world and be confident of the resources and instruments that are needed for data collection, as well as skills, tools and expertise needed to make sense of the data (Denzin & Lincoln 2005).

4.4.1 Research strategy: Case study

The characteristics of the present study may be summarised as embracing aspects of descriptive/analytical research types, quantitative/qualitative data requirements, positivist/interpretivist paradigms, and inductive/deductive reasoning. The investigative needs of the study are complex, embracing somewhat contradictory features. This means that the ultimate choice of which research strategy to pursue is dependent on a design that can accommodate the complexity of seemingly contradictory requirements.

Yin (2003) argues that a decision on which research strategy to pursue rests on three conditions, a) nature of the research question, b) degree of researcher control over phenomena to be studied, and c) whether the phenomenon is being investigated from a historical or contemporary perspective. He asserts that case study is the preferred strategy if a) the research questions hinge on “how” or “why”, b) the researcher has minimum control over the phenomenon to be studied, and c) the phenomenon investigated is contemporary and in real-life settings, especially when the “boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.13). Yin also asserts that the case study is useful for research that seeks to explain, explore, or
describe these real-life phenomena. Another insight is offered by Stake (2005), who posits that the subject of the case study must be a self-functioning system.

The present study fulfils all the conditions of Yin (2003) and Stake (2005), and therefore supports a case study approach. As discussed in the previous section, the main research question is a “why”: ‘why are the FFWs’ efforts to provide WF/L balance regarded as rhetoric?’ The issue of WF/L balance is a contemporary real-life phenomenon and the WF/L balance rhetoric is something over which I have little control. Additionally, while this study aims to investigate WF/L balance from an organisational context, the fact that the work and family domains overlap and spill over means that there is no clear boundary between them. According to Yin (2003), this last feature of the phenomenon provides the strongest justification for the case study approach. The study seeks to explore and describe WF/L balance from an organisational perspective and analyse and explain if the WF/L-friendly rhetoric is justified.

However, Gerring (2007) notes that case study strategy is problematic because there are so many different definitions of it. He compiled from the literature a list of the various core concepts in the definition and found eight. He argues and disputes almost every one of them but is most comfortable with the eighth “…the research investigates the properties of a single phenomena [sic], instance or example” (p.17). Gerring defines the case study as “…an intensive study of a single unit or a small number of units (cases), for the purpose of understanding a large class of similar units (a population of cases)” (p. 37). He also asserts that “[t]he product of a good case study is insight” (p. 7) of that which is previously unknown. The present study fulfils many of the core concepts of the compiled definitions as well as Gerring’s definition of the case study, and agrees that its use is a window of opportunity into further understanding of WF/L balance rhetoric.

Other reasons which support the choice of the case study as the preferred strategy for the present study are: a) it can be used in management and organisational research, b) offers flexibility – allows mixed methodologies (quantitative and qualitative approaches) (Gerring 2007; Gummesson 2000; Yin 2003), c) allows data
triangulation (different techniques to provide evidence), and finally d) allows research to be pursued as a single case study (Gerring 2007; Gummesson 2000; Stake 2005; Yin 2003). However, both Yin (2003) and Gerring (2007) advise caution in its use. Gerring (2007) in particular, advises integrity and due diligence in all aspects of the research process: design phase, data collection, case management, case documentation, analysis and interpretation. Such an approach, he argues, will prevent the case study strategy from being regarded as a “…synonym for free-form research” (Maoz in Gerring 2007, p. 6).

Gerring’s (2007) use of the study of house building as an analogy to case study research provides a useful defence for the choice of the ‘within case’ (or case study) strategy. He argues that knowledge about house building can be gleaned from studying the construction of many houses (or cross-case) or the in-depth study of one house (or within case or case study). He defines a case study (or within case) as “…the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population)” (p. 20). Cross-case studies have been used to study WF/L-friendly rhetoric in the context of organisational culture (Lewis 1997).

The within case approach is particularly useful for this study for two main reasons. First, this is a “case history” (Gummesson 2000 p. 84) using new theory development to test organisational rhetoric. It therefore makes more sense to investigate it from within the one case. Second, the research problem, as discussed previously, contains characteristics of descriptive/analytical research types, quantitative/qualitative data requirements, positivist/interpretivist paradigms and inductive/deductive reasoning. The single case approach is ideal for addressing such varied needs as it will allow the researcher to utilise mixed methods and data triangulation approaches to study the phenomena more closely with the one FFO and in so doing shed light on WF/L balance rhetoric in the wider population, that is, FFOs in general. Three common advantages of using case studies (Jennings 2001 p 178; Stake 1994 p. 115) are:

i) The phenomenon being studied is real-life and conducted in actual setting;

ii) It allows in-depth analysis of the phenomenon, and;
iii) It is ideal for data triangulation and hence improves validity.

Stake provides a fourth advantage, that case members (observations) are able to verify data ‘accuracy and palatability’ (Stake 1994, p. 115) and hence remove researcher bias. On the other hand, there are several recognised shortfalls of using a case study approach and in particular a single case approach. One of the main concerns is the issue of generalisability of findings (Jennings 2001 p. 179). It is evident that the findings from this one case cannot be generalised to the population of FFOs, as the findings are very specific to the case organisation. However, despite this shortcoming, there is the advantage that the findings can in fact broaden understanding of the phenomena being studied. For example, the findings are relevant to the issue of how organisational culture impacts employees’ pursuit of WF/L balance, or how use or misuse of managers’ discretionary power impinges on workers’ access to WF/L provisions. Another problem with case studies in general is that they traditionally tended to be largely qualitative. Even if data triangulation was involved it tended to rely on qualitative data gathering. Such an approach can introduce researcher bias in data analysis and interpretation and impinge on the credibility of the overall findings. However, such a problem is significantly reduced by the emphasis in contemporary case studies on utilising mixed methods in the case inquiry (Creswell 2003; Jennings 2001; Yin 2003).

4.4.2 The case organisation: The FFO

Gerring (2007 p. 19) observes that confusion can arise with nomenclature used in case study approach and in research generally; therefore it is pertinent the critical terms are clarified. Heeding this advice, the ‘case’ in this study is an organisation, specifically an FFO, hence population = 1, sample = 1 and case = 1. The FFO’s WF/L balance rhetoric is investigated using multiple (within-case) observations (N). In conjunction with his requirement for integrity and due diligence in all aspects of the case study approach, Gerring (2007) calls for a systemic approach and documentation of the case selection. Therefore, the following section outlines the procedures in the selection of the case organisation.
To begin with it is necessary to establish that the case organisation was “purposefully selected” (Creswell 2003 p 185). This refers to the deliberate selection of cases and/or observations i.e. actors or participants in case studies (or qualitative studies in general), guided by the premise that it first and foremost would deliver the best understanding of the research problem and its questions. Therefore the selection is subjective but not without reason. Miles and Huberman (in Creswell 2003) have identified four aspects of purposeful selection: a) the setting or place where the research will be conducted; b) the observations, actors; c) events i.e. the subject matter of the interview, and; d) the process, because actors accounts of events can change and the researcher can decide the focus. Most contemporary workplaces offer employees some initiatives to balance their work and family interfaces. Hence the study needed to focus on those workplaces that had well established and sustained programs of WF/L balance. However, the precise aim of the research is to investigate the rhetoric-reality distinctions of FFWs’ claims to providing employees WF/L balance. Hence, one of the key requirements is evidence that such rhetoric has been made. Evidence for rhetoric can come from a number of sources, either orally and/or in text format.

One of the best ways to track organisational rhetoric for the purpose of this study was by way of national, state or industry awards acknowledging organisations for providing exemplary WF/L balance programs. The rhetoric is more pronounced when organisations self-nominate for the awards, enabling the researcher to obtain documented evidence for the rhetoric. Another source of organisational rhetoric is from an organisation’s stated WF/L balance policies and provisions. However it is generally larger organisations that implement such policies and so these were targeted. The start of my doctoral research coincided with the tenth anniversary of the ‘Work and Family Awards’ and the conference titled ‘Taking Stock – Looking Forward’, organised by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Federal Department of Employment and Workplace and Relations (DEWR) (ACCI 2002). Hence, I was able to observe and participate in the conference and shortlist large organisations from that year as well as previous years as potential cases for the study. A total of ten large organisations that had won ACCI/DEWR awards were identified as potential cases. The case study was further supported by a
broader tracking of debates, discussions, and policies on FFOs taking place in Australia, to identify the level of complementarities between the organisation studied and current benchmarks in WF/L balance. The data collection methods using these various channels not only provided data triangulation (Creswell 2003; Jennings 2001) but also a deeper understanding of the research problem, and insights into potential research questions. Again in accordance with the advice by Creswell (2002) that it is important to clarify concepts used in the mixed methods strategy, this study identifies an FFO to be a large organisation that has made public its mission to allow employees embrace WF/L balance; a large organisation being identified as one that has more than 500 employees (ACCI 2002).

The selection of the potential cases was also purposeful, and is attributed to other compounding events. At the time of the field work, I was myself balancing work and family responsibilities along with my doctoral studies; I was a casual academic, a spouse, and mother to three children, aged between 12 and 17 years. Additionally, I am a recent immigrant without any extended family support. In order to effectively combine and balance these roles and responsibilities, it was crucial that the case organisation be situated or had representation in the Greater Metropolitan Region (GMR) of Sydney (NSW Government 2004). Fortunately, many of the large business finalists (2002 and 2001) readily fitted into this category. I was able to shortlist ten organisations and letters of information and invitation were sent to all ten; one gave approval for the research. I was very apprehensive about being granted approval as I recognise that the study in itself can be regarded as controversial. However, as I mentioned in the letters of invitation to the organisations, the study can help them improve their WF/L balance efforts.

The selected case organisation is a large international business in the financial services industry, with a complex network of operations in all eight Australian states and territories. The organisation, at the time of application, operated a total of 1000 establishments (close to 75% were in Australia) and had over 18,000 employees. The average age was 37 years; there were more females than males (1.58:1 ratio). However, the vastness of the Australian landscape means that, in general, organisations in the finance industry tend to operate a range of business types, from
very small, mobile, and/or periodical services in the less populated areas, to medium and larger offices/branches in towns and cities. This pattern of distribution was also instrumental in the purposeful selection (Miles & Huberman in Creswell 2003 p. 185) of the study’s setting being limited to the strategic business units (SBU) in the two largest central business districts in the GMR of Sydney i.e. Sydney CBD and Parramatta.

4.4.3 Research inquiry: Mixed methods

The advent of mixed methods as a research inquiry is credited to Campbell and Fiske, who in 1959, used a number of different methods to confirm the notion of psychological traits (Creswell 2003). Encouraged by their intellectual discovery they spurred other researchers on to use the same methodology. The fundamental premise underlying this innovative approach to inquiry is that all methods have limitations. Mixing methods in a single study allows the possibility that the problems of bias of any one method might be overcome by the other(s) (Creswell 2003, p. 15), or as Kelle (2006, p. 307) notes, by the limitations of relying solely on “mono-method” qualitative or quantitative research. Inherent in the mixing of the methods is the concept of data triangulation, i.e. using different instruments or tools to determine if there is convergence of findings (Creswell 2003). This study proposes that the mixed methods approach provides synergy to the research process. Synergy is generally interpreted as ‘the whole [being] greater than the sum of the parts’ (Bullock & Trombley 1999). In terms of research, mixing methods and the in-built data triangulation features may provide greater reliability and authenticity of the research and its findings.

There is abundant literature that acknowledges the legitimacy and popularity of mixed methods as a research approach (Creswell 2003; Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Kelle 2006; Yin 2003). Creswell (2003 p. 4) even claims that the credibility of contemporary research of the socially constructed world is questionable if it does not use this the mixed methods approach; meaning that deep understanding cannot be obtained if one relies only on ‘mono-method’ inquiry. Besides ‘mixed methods’, the approach is also referred to as ‘multi-method’, or multiple method’ but the
preference in this study is for the more commonly used ‘mixed methods’. A formal definition of the mixed methods approach is, “one in which the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds, e.g., consequence oriented, problem-centred, and pluralistic” (Creswell 2003 p. 18). Such a philosophical approach is related to empiricism; an inquiry that is concerned with establishing reality and meaning, of whether something is true or false (Bullock & Trombley 1999). The present study fits in well with such an inquiry and indirectly therefore, the mixed methods approach.

In the previous section we examined and provided evidence supporting the choice of a case study strategy for the present study. The use of a mixed methods inquiry within a case study approach has been accepted by a number of researchers (Creswell 2003; Jennings 2001; Yin 2003). The need for a mixed methods approach, i.e. mixing quantitative and qualitative methods, for the present study arises from the need to use both positivist and interpretivist paradigms to explore the research problem. As mentioned above, to fully understand why the efforts of FFOs to provide WF/L balance continue to be regarded as rhetoric, the study needs to engage in a dual-centred inquiry. First, the researcher has to explore and describe the state of the FFO’s WLB programs and initiatives, and measure the extent of the rhetoric-reality gap. This means that some form of quantitative data needs to be collected, monitored and evaluated so that gap levels can be recorded, stored, and compared over time. Second, the researcher needs to analyse the underlying reasons for rhetoric-reality gaps, i.e. why the efforts of FFOs to provide WF/L balance continue to be regarded as rhetoric.

There are three broad types of mixed methods, concurrent (no sequence), sequential – quantitative first, and sequential – qualitative first (Creswell 2003; Kelle 2006) that are particularly suited to this study. Creswell proposes that the decision about which of these strategies to adopt is dependent on three factors, a) the priority needs of the two methods; b) the point in the project when the two will be brought together, and c) whether there is a implicit or explicit theoretical framework that guides the research.
The requirements of the present study are in line with Creswell’s (2003 p. 213) Sequential Exploratory Design (11.2a) illustrated here in Figure 2.

**Figure 2 - Sequential exploratory design (11.2a)**

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A theoretical model, ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’ was developed to explicitly guide this inquiry. This model, discussed in detail in section 2.4, effectively represents, and can be used to test the relationship between an organisation’s ‘espoused theory’ (rhetoric) and the ‘theory-in-use’ (reality), and to measure the gap between them. The model requires that the quantitative aspects of the inquiry be conducted first, followed by the qualitative. Both dimensions are equally important in this study, as the quantitative dimension allows the study to establish the level of the rhetoric while the qualitative aspects allow deeper examination and understanding of why the gap has arisen. The integration of the data is at the final interpretation stages, though some integration might also be needed in the data analysis stages to enable the development of themes for the qualitative data.

The mixed methods approach poses a number of challenges to the researcher (Creswell 2003; Kelle 2006). Firstly, the researcher is effectively embracing two methods. This means double the time, effort and work in the preparation of the inquiry. It also requires good decision-making skills to work out the ideal mixed methods strategy. There also need to be skills, familiarity, and confidence with the tools and instruments of both methods for data collection and interpretation. And finally, because of the extensive data collection there must be excellent time management and project management skills.

### 4.4.4 Mixed methods in within-case analysis

In line with calls for proper accountability and documentation of the case approach (Gerring 2007; Yin 2003) and the need for a visual representation of the mixed
methods implementation strategy (Creswell 2003), a visual of the relationship between the methods within a single case study (or within case) is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 - Case study incorporating the mixed methods strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase I - Initial Preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher to attend a major ‘work-family’ awards function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select potential ‘cases’ for the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply for ethical clearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft letter seeking organisation consent for research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send out letters, establish contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalise case study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase II - Quantitative Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compile WFL balance policies and provisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Survey Instrument – structured questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run pilot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalise Survey Instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyse data using SPSS software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculate Gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyse preliminary reasons for gap</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase III - Qualitative Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document Analysis – analyse supporting documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use quantitative finding, design interview questions – semi-structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Personal interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcribe interview scripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create FOC Project in nVivo; Import data files</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code data, analyse data, emergent theory, theory construction</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase IV - Mixed Methods Integration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Synthesise and integrate results from both methods; review results in light of existing literature, and emergent findings using grounded theory principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write up findings, noting limitations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The model conforms to Creswell’s (2003) Sequential Exploratory Design (11.2a) and includes four phases in the research inquiry, from ‘Phase I – Initial Preparation’, to ‘Phase II – Quantitative Method’, to ‘Phase III – Qualitative Method’ and finally to ‘Phase IV – Mixed Methods Integration’. The arrow in the figure represents the general direction of the research flow. The four parts will be discussed further in the relevant sections of the chapter; however, the main events as well the research
instruments and tools for data collection and analysis are provided within this figure as an overview.

4.5 Operationalising the rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework

This section discusses how the study operationalises the conceptual framework, ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’, developed in Chapter 2, to measure the discrepancy or gap between the rhetoric and reality of the FFO’s claims to providing employees with WF/L balance. It is important to note at the beginning that the study measures rhetoric from the provider’s i.e. the FFO’s perspective and reality from the ‘users’ or employees’ perspective.

4.5.1 Initial preparation

The first part of the research comprised document analysis, principally the case organisation’s formal submissions to the ACCI ‘Work and Family’ awards, the ACCI National Work and Family Awards Initiatives Checklist, as well as other supporting documents. From the evidence tendered in the submission document, a total of fifty WF/L balance provisions were identified as being offered at the time of application or by the time of the field studies were identified. The study posits that these provisions offered by the case organisation (or FFO) may be taken to represent WF/L balance rhetoric. Since there were so many provisions the researcher felt the need to re-categorise them to understand more deeply their nature and role.

In their study, Bardoel et al (1999) short listed 36 common types of organisational offerings of work and family policies and practices, categorised into five groups:

i) ‘Child and dependent care benefits’ (12 items)
ii) ‘Flexible working conditions’ (7 items)
iii) ‘Leave options’ (7 items)
iv) ‘Information services and personnel policies’, (7 items) and,
v) ‘Organizational cultural issues’ (3 items)
The ACCI checklist, on the other hand, identified four categories and 55 work/life policies. Applicants were required to tick the appropriate ones and specify other (non-listed) arrangements that the organisation provided, including pertinent information regarding them. The categories were:

i) ‘Working Hours and Leave Arrangements’ (25 items)
ii) ‘Child and Elder Care Initiatives’ (11 items)
iii) ‘Initiatives for Older Worker’ (11 items), and
iv) ‘Other Initiatives’ (8 items)

Comparing the two, it was clear that Bardoel et al.’s framework was more effectively grouped than the ACCI’s framework, especially with regard to the rather ill-defined category ‘Other Initiatives’, which could be re-grouped under the authors’ ‘Information services and personnel policies’ category. However, the ACCI framework’s ‘Initiatives for Older Workers’ category reflected recognition of the aging workforce and represented a proactive approach to managing and retaining the mature workforce. Therefore in this study a revised framework was used, based on all five of Bardoel et al.’s (1999) categories (with some modifications to nomenclature) and adding to it a sixth category, ‘Initiatives for Older Workers’ from the ACCI (2002) framework. Some of the names of the provisions were modified to fit in with the needs of the study and the conceptual framework. The categories used in the present study are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Categories of provisions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Category Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Child and dependent care initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flexible working conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Leave options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Information and personnel services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Organisational cultural issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Initiatives for older workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, from the WF/L balance literature, the study uncovered four themes, all related to internal organisational dynamics, that can hinder employees’ experiences with WF/L balance provisions. They are a) WF/L balance provisions, b) organisational communication, c) power-control issues, and d) organisational culture. The first theme relates to: employee awareness of, perceived need for, and take up of
these provisions. Similar to how the study equates organisations’ WF/L balance provisions offered with organisational rhetoric, the study posits that employees’ experiences of the FFO’s WF/L balance provisions offered (or organisational rhetoric) represents organisational reality. Organisational rhetoric and organisational reality can be studied using positivist paradigms and quantitative methods; in other words, they can each be independently observed, counted, measured, and tracked, and they can be expressed in percentages and subsequently compared. This discussion is continued in section 4.3.1.1. The remaining three themes of challenges, organisational communication, power-control issues and organisational culture, are better understood from an interpretivist paradigm or qualitative methods, since they allow the researcher to obtain first-hand information from employees themselves. This discussion is continued in section 4.3.2.1.

4.5.1.1 Ethical considerations

Because the research project involved human participants, another preliminary activity involved the submission of a formal ethics application to the University’s research office. The application stated that the research process would be conducted with utmost care to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants. No effort would be made to reveal the identity of any of the participants. The questionnaires would not require any personal information such as names and/or addresses, and the observation and interview sessions would not require revelation of actual identity of participants. Participants were also provided the option to withdraw from the project at any time. On completion of the project, all records would be submitted to the Principal Supervisor for safe-keeping within UWS premises for five years in a locked cabinet. This initial application received conditional approval. The original application provided only one general information statement and one consent form with separate tear-out sessions for each one of the proposed research instruments, survey questionnaire, interview session and focus group sessions. However, the committee felt that more specific accountability was required for each of the three proposed instruments. Therefore three separate covering letter/information statements and consent forms were developed and full approval (HERC Protocol No. HEC02/199) was granted before the first life run in 2003.
However, Creswell asserts that ethical considerations are also critical in the following aspects of the research process, for the reasons identified:

i) Identification of the research problem – since the research fundamentally must benefit the participants.

ii) Data analysis – protect anonymity of participants, and case organisation; ensure accurate reporting;

iii) Writing up of the findings – refrain from use of biased language, e.g. no discriminatory, sexist, or derogatory words.

iv) Release findings – to the organisation as well as to general public. A copy of the final thesis will be given to the case organisation and a copy will be lodged with the University’s library, which is linked to the Australasian Digital Theses Program, to ensure that the public has access to the findings.

Where relevant, aspects of the ethical considerations will be further discussed in the appropriate sections in the remaining chapter. The researcher also attended a number of workshops and training sessions to enable her to be an effective and ethical researcher. The sessions included EndNote Workshop, Statistics & Quantitative Methods Workshop, Data Analysis in SPSS Workshop, N5/Nvivo Workshop, Qualitative Research Approaches and Techniques Workshop. Finally, the researcher also presented and published many aspects of her work in the hope of receiving critical reviews and improving the quality of the research.

4.5.2 Quantitative methods

The quantitative method involved primarily the use of a survey instrument or questionnaire. In finalising the questionnaire a pilot run was first conducted. A self-administered questionnaire, accompanying information statement, consent form, and return envelope was designed to gather employees’ demographic data as well as their experiences in relation to awareness of, need for, and take-up rates of the organisation’s fifty WF/L balance provisions (organisational rhetoric). With the help of the same organisational representative who provided the initial clearance for the study, a pilot run was conducted in another major Australian city, so that there would be no risk of repeat participants. The responses and comments provided by the participants and the contact person were used to fine tune the information
statement/consent form (see Appendix A) and the final questionnaire (see Appendix B).

4.5.2.1 Data collection

From June to August 2003, in a four-stage approach, a set of documents comprising the amended questionnaires, information and consent form, and a self-addressed envelope, were distributed to all 252 employees from four purposefully selected SBUs from across the Sydney GMR. A contact manager and a contact administrative officer were provided by the FFO’s head office for establishing contact and for the distribution of the questionnaires via each of the unit’s internal mailing systems. Each SBU was provided with two sealed collection boxes, to be placed in the mail room, one for the signed consent forms and another for the completed questionnaires. The separation of the two documents and the collection in the mail room helped ensure participant confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were given 1-2 weeks turnaround for the return of the documents, and at the end of the two week period I personally collected the sealed boxes.

Ninety-two completed questionnaire sets were collected giving a return rate of 36.5%. One of the questionnaires collected was largely incomplete and was deemed unusable. Some participants did not provide responses to all the questions; and these are reflected in the tables provided as ‘missing entries’ and are taken into account in the relevant calculations.

An attempt to conduct a re-run to improve the return rate proved to be unsuccessful. The reason for the poor response rate can be partly attributed to the specific nature of work practices in one of the SBUs. Many of the employees in this SBU spend considerable time in fieldwork and consequently spend very little time in the office; hence, communication and participation proved to be a challenge. Coincidentally, this SBU also happened to be the largest within the sample population, and negatively impacted the otherwise high response rates obtained from the other three SBUs.
However, as previously mentioned, the survey constitutes only one part of a mixed methods strategy. Thus, it is proposed that the collection of further mainly qualitative data, via previously arranged face-to-face personal interviews and focus group sessions will help compensate for the limitations of the survey findings as well as contribute towards more meaningful findings overall. The fact that this study is based on a single organisation case study has both positives and drawbacks. The positive is that certain otherwise limiting variables such as type of organisation, industry sector, and context are eliminated in the analysis, though the drawback is that the findings from this one organisation may not be generalised to other organisations. Generalisability, however, is not the primary intent of this research. The research aims to showcase the fact that any organisation that wants to provide employees with WF/L balance must seek to investigate the extent, depth, and breadth of the gap between rhetoric and the reality, and to analyse and address the underlying reasons for it, within its own setting. Such an inquiry represents a learning that each FFO must undertake; findings from other similar inquiries can provide insight but will not solve individual rhetoric problem, therefore generalisability is not of paramount value or importance.

4.5.2.2 Data analysis

In the discussion in Chapter 2, the study argued that the FFO’s WF/L balance provisions offered may be regarded as constituting organisational rhetoric, while employees’ experiences with the provisions offered may be regarded as constituting organisational reality. Employee experiences relate to issues of, awareness of, perceived need for, and take up of, these provisions. This means that rhetoric and reality can be empirically studied using positivist paradigms and quantitative methods. In other words, they can be observed, counted, measured, tracked and statistically analysed.
In the questionnaire four questions related to employees’ specific experiences with WF/L balance provisions were posed:

i) Awareness of each one of 50 provisions
ii) Need for each of these 50 provisions
iii) Whether they chose not to take up needed provision (reasons were sought)
iv) If they chose to take up needed provisions, what were their success rates? Did they have (a) complete success, i.e. were able to take up a provision as per the original terms and conditions of usage, (b) partial success, i.e. were able to take up a provision with amended terms and/or conditions of usage (reasons were sought), and (c) unsuccessful, i.e. their application was rejected (reasons were sought).

The discrepancy or gap measurement was conducted for all but the third experience. Since the data collection was extensive it was analysed using the software SPSS. The software allowed data management as well as allowed cross tabulation studies for example employees awareness of provisions by gender or take up by management/non-management staff.

4.5.2.3 Measuring the discrepancy (or gap)

The rhetoric-reality discrepancy or gap can be measured on a macro or micro level. A macro level discrepancy refers to the evaluation of the discrepancy based on all employees’ experiences against all 50 provisions for awareness and need (or first 47 provisions for take up). On the other hand, a micro level discrepancy measurement refers to the evaluation of the gap by using all employees’ experiences against any one of the 50 (or 47 provisions).

To illustrate the computation of the rhetoric-reality discrepancy, using employees’ awareness as the variable, a scenario of an FFO is provided. The following assumptions are made:

i) Total number of provisions is 50;
ii) Total number of observations (n, or actors or participants) is 40;
iii) Total missing awareness entries (i.e. choice of ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ not selected for any one provision) is 5.
This means that, on a macro level, there are a total of 2000 (50 x 40) awareness provisions offered to all participants. Taking into account the missing entries the adjusted provisions offered or rhetoric counts ‘A’ is 1,995 (2,000-5). The actual awareness counts, of all 40 actors across all 50 provisions, are tallied. This total is a measure of the reality counts ‘B’; for illustrative purposes we assume this to be 500. The overlap (C) between rhetoric and reality, using the awareness variable, is therefore 25.1% (B/A x 100 or 500/1995 x 100), which means the macro-level rhetoric-reality gap is 74.9% (100% -C).

In his study of a large Canadian professional service organisation, Burke (1996) found that the highest level of employee awareness was 66% for provisions relating to ‘flexible hours and part-time work option’. Based on this finding this study sets, for an FFO, a slightly higher cut-off of 70%. This makes the rhetoric-reality gap in the case scenario above very significant. Similarly, it is possible to compute the micro-level rhetoric-reality discrepancy of employees’ awareness for each of the 50 provisions. Using the same scenario as above, we will consider the case of the ‘Subsidised Gym Membership’ provision. Again assuming 5 participants left the box blank, means that the FFO effectively offered a total of 35 of these provisions (rhetoric counts X). If there were 25 counts of employee awareness (reality counts Y), it means that rhetoric-reality overlap for the provision (Z) is 71% and consequently rhetoric-reality discrepancy is a low 29%. Such an exercise can help the FFO learn more specifically which of its fifty provisions have been effectively communicated, and, or alternatively, those that have not.

From the discussion it is evident that the quantitative approach, through the use of the survey questionnaire, is especially useful in providing objective information. Such information include, for example, the extent of rhetoric-reality gaps, levels of employee; awareness, need for, and take up of provisions; and the nature (identity) of provisions that employees are most or least aware of, have a need for, or take up. It is also useful in producing cross-tabulated findings, for example, any of the previously mentioned information can be computed against demographic characteristics, for example, gender and management/non-management. The survey questionnaire can also have some semi-structured questions to gather qualitative data, as the present
study did, but the data collected is minimal and therefore does not provide deep understanding. This data was, however, effective in providing some idea of the nature for the underlying reasons of the gap.

### 4.5.3 Qualitative method

Gummesson (2000 p. 5) argues that while the qualitative methodology in social setting is similar to that used in the business setting, “…their application, emphasis and significance can vary considerably”. This is because while organisations are socially constructed and the people component therefore is an important aspect, so too are the settings, purposes and the different perspectives that can be used to study the business phenomenon itself. Most importantly, Gummesson contends that the focus of qualitative business research is on understanding of how to improve business performance. The effective management of resources, including human resources, and its links to business performance makes the qualitative approach of value to the present study. The use of qualitative methods in business and management research is commonplace; one of the well known traditional examples is the Hawthorne studies; its findings introduced the notion of organisational behaviour.

As established in the discussion in the previous section, of the internal challenges that hinder employees’ experiences with WF/L balance offerings, only one theme, employees’ experiences with provisions, could be approached using the positivist paradigm or quantitative methods. The remaining three themes, organisational communication, power-control issues and organisational culture, are better understood from an interpretivist paradigm or qualitative methods.

The qualitative study initially targeted two qualitative tools; an interview followed by a focus group session. Many studies show that there is generally a differential experience, based on employee ranks, in access to and take up of WF/L balance provisions (Duxbury & Higgins 2001; Gray & Tudball 2002; Keene & Quadagno 2004). Based on this I decided to conduct two separate focus group sessions, a management- and a non-management based. Grbich (1999, p. 109) advises careful consideration to the selection of focus group participants; the idea is to maximise
interaction so that the facilitator is able to earn the confidence and trust of members and ask probing questions. The separation of the focus groups into management and non-management sessions comprising ten employees each is intended to heed this advice. However, despite a number of attempts to recruit participants, as well as attempts to ‘downsize’ the focus group to a minimum of four participants in each, I was able to get only two participants for the management group and three for the non-management group. Nevertheless, given that I was able to have a good mix of management and non-management participants for the interview phase, I was still able to gather some information regarding the differential reality experiences. The principal aim of the interviews was to gather rich data with regard to the reality of the FFO’s WF/L balance rhetoric.

The qualitative phase was run after the completion of the quantitative phase. During the latter phase two events helped enhance my “preunderstanding” (Gummesson 2000 p 15) of the state of WF/L balance phenomenon in the case organisation. First, I was able to observe, firsthand, critical aspects of the internal dynamics of the FFO that could potentially impact employees’ efforts at WF/L balance. Second, the survey questionnaire included structured short-answer response questions. Some of the responses provided a glimpse of the problem and this “preunderstanding” helped me frame the interview questions.

4.5.3.1 Data collection

As was outlined in section 4.4.2, the organisation controlled the parameters of the study in terms of designating me selected SBU's in the central business districts of the greater metropolitan region of Sydney for the fieldwork. A further restriction was that I could not personally access and seek out potential candidates. The organisation perceived that to do so would mean that I gain access to all employees’ email addresses and/or contact telephone numbers, and that this would in effect amount to breach of employee privacy. I was therefore assigned, within each of the SBU's, a contact manager and an administrative staff who liaised on my behalf. They distributed the various ethical interview information statements to all employees in the SBU's and informed interested parties to contact me personally (from contact
details provided on the information statement). The underlying assumption from such an exercise is that the sample is random and representative of the designated SBUs.

Participants were given the options to meet me at either the FFO’s premises or in my office (University premises) or alternatively in any other location. A total of twenty participants consented; all interviews, except one, were held in specially allocated rooms within each SBU’s premises. The odd interview was held in my office, to cater for the WF/L balance needs for the participant. In one SBU a few participants specifically requested lunch-time slots for the interviews; the reasons behind this request are dealt with in Chapter 6. Before the interview was conducted participants were provided with copies of information statements as well as consent forms to sign (see Appendix C). The interviews were targeted for between one and one and half hours. All interviews were done by me and were tape recorded; some unique observations were also noted on paper (see Appendix D for the interview questions). For record keeping purposes all tapes were tagged and in keeping with ethical considerations, pseudo- names and other codes were used where relevant to identify details such as participant identity, interview time, dates, and venues. After the interviews participants were given the option to hear the tape and request removal of any aspect that they were unhappy with. Two participants requested to review the tapes but none requested removal of any aspects of the recording. An overview of the key points of the interviews as well as other observations was recorded on immediate return from the session, so that the richness of the interviewer-participant encounters was not lost.

4.5.3.2 Data analysis

The taped interview recordings were transcribed, printed, and cross-checked against the original recordings, and corrections were made. Contemporary researchers frequently rely on ‘Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software’ (CAQDAS) to assist in the management, coding, and analysis of large volumes of qualitative textual data (Bringer et al. 2004, 2006). In line with such trends, one such CAQDAS program, commonly referred to as NVivo (QSR 2002), was used in the present study. However, while CAQDAS programs do provide tremendous assistance in the management and organisation of the coding process as well as the
coded data, the authors further note that human intervention is ultimately necessary for the actual painstaking processes of coding, analysis and any theory development.

Bringer et al. (2006) note concern among the research community that some researchers fail to adequately demonstrate their understanding of how CAQDAS programs are used in qualitative research using grounded theory framework. They argue that such research needs to demonstrate “credibility, plausibility and trustworthiness” in the “research process” as well as in the “research product”, and suggest that it can be demonstrated by clearly articulating the methodological assumptions and the criteria used to evaluate findings. In an earlier paper the authors argue the case for providing transparency when using CAQDAS and demonstrate how to be provide accountability in using such software, by showcasing Bringer’s doctoral thesis (Bringer et al. 2004). In the present study, their advice and suggestions are incorporated.

The corrected interview transcripts and other relevant documents, such as the case organisation’s publications and ACCI’s checklist documents were imported into NVivo. The first step in qualitative analysis involves examining each of the interview transcripts in a systematic way (Strauss & Corbin 1990). NVivo helps researchers to code or “…label passages of data according to content” (Williamson 2002) and to store and retrieve all data at specific codes as and when it is needed. Furthermore, NVivo helps researchers organise codes into categories and identify recurring as well as emergent themes (Williamson 2002; Beazely & Lyn 2000).

The study relied on two different techniques to analyse this extensive qualitative data, however, it was the conceptual framework, ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’, specially developed for this study that guided the process of data analysis. The two techniques have their origins in grounded theory which essentially is a research methodology (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Locke 2001) that focuses on enabling researchers to use their intellectual creativity and sense-making capabilities to develop theories about the phenomena they are investigating (Locke 2001). The use of grounded theory principles can help in the identifications of themes emerging
from the data being analysed, and can lead to theory building (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Locke 2001; Strauss & Corbin 1990).

Grounded theory and qualitative research are compatible, and both can immensely contribute in management and organisation studies; grounded theory is especially useful in capturing complex organisational dynamics and can therefore enhance understanding of the phenomena being studied (Locke 2001). On this basis, grounded theory will be used to capture the complexity and help make sense of employees’ experiences with WF/L balance in an FFO, which in turn, will allow for a deeper understanding and sense-making of the extent and nature of the rhetoric-reality status of the FFO’s WF/L balance programs and initiatives. Such an approach to the research is consistent with the Miles and Huberman’s (1984) preferred method of qualitative study, also referred to as the constructivist approach to grounded theory (Charmaz 2000; Strauss & Corbin 1990). There are two ways to undertake grounded theory using the constructivist approach. First, an objectivist approach in which theory is allowed to emerge from the phenomena being studied without intervention on the part of the researcher, and second, a subjective approach, in which preconceptions such as the use of conceptual frameworks, hypotheses, methodological techniques and analytical questions are brought into data analysis (Charmaz 2000). Both of these approaches are used in the study.

The subjective approach is discussed first. It is worth noting that the qualitative study was purposely targeted to commence after the analysis of the survey questionnaire. The survey collected mostly quantitative data and a small amount of qualitative data (short structured questions). The quantitative findings provided information on the levels of and gaps in, employee awareness of, need for, and take up of WF/L balance provisions offered by the FFO. The survey’s qualitative data provided some preliminary insights into possible problem areas. These findings were analysed in light of the current literature on WF/L balance in an effort to uncover some of the major themes for the probable causes of the levels and gaps, and to guide in the design of the interview transcripts, as well as the subsequent coding of the interview transcripts. Additionally, the objectivist approach was used during the coding and analysis of the interview transcripts. Special attention was directed to reveal new and
emergent themes, concepts, and issues (Grbich 1999, p. 113) to be analysed and displayed and to help in subsequent theory development.

4.5.4 **Mixing the two methods**

In a mixed methods approach it is important to specify the point at which the analysis and findings from the two separate approaches will be integrated to provide more robust meaning (Creswell 2003). In this study, the findings from the quantitative data analysis does feed into the qualitative data analysis phase as described in the previous section, but despite this link, both approaches do still ‘stand alone’. The quantitative methods provide the crucial evidence for whether or not the FFO’s organisational rhetoric of providing employees with WF/L balance is matched by the reality of employees’ experience. The quantitative results, i.e. the extent of the WF/L balance rhetoric-reality gap and its discussion is covered in Chapter 5. The qualitative data provides insights into the organizational challenges that employees face as they attempt to balance their WF/L commitments. Grounded theory techniques provide the means to distinguish whether these challenges are similar to what is already in the WF/L literature or could be emergent, whole new theories, concepts, and issues. This is discussed in Chapter 6. The point in the study when the two approaches really converge and provide a combined effect is covered in Chapter 7. In this chapter, the study relies on the qualitative findings to provide insight into the probable underlying causes for the FFO’s WF/L balance rhetoric-reality gaps from employees’ perspectives in three in three critical areas: awareness of provisions, need for provisions offered and take-up of the provisions.

4.6 **Chapter summary**

This chapter has provided an account of, as well as the rationale for the research process and design of this study. Fundamentally, the researcher’s philosophical assumptions were instrumental in the design of the conceptual framework; ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’ introduced in Chapter 2, and continued to play a key role in establishing the paradigmatic frameworks that would be used. Two paradigms are relevant and appropriate for this study, but each on its own is unable
to provide a complete understanding of the business phenomena of WF/L balance and organisational rhetoric. Together, however, the positivist and interpretivist paradigms complement each other and provide synergy to the research process. The need for a combined paradigm design refined the choice of research strategy to the case study. The decision on which case study strategy to pursue, the within case or cross-case, was dependent on the nature of the research. This research may be regarded as ‘experimental’, since it is based on a new conceptual framework, ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’, to test and measure WF/L balance rhetoric-reality gaps. This meant that the within-case approach was the obvious choice, as it allows for the thorough study of the research problem within the one organisational setting. Additionally, the combined paradigm meant that the choice of research methodology was ultimately reduced to the mixed methods approach. In line with Creswell’s (2003) Sequential Exploratory Design (11.2a), the field work would commence with the quantitative phase and on its completion, the qualitative phase would commence. SPSS software predominates in the quantitative analytical phase while NVivo software is used in the qualitative phase. The two methods are ‘mixed’ in the final stage of the study; the qualitative findings provide insight into why the rhetoric-reality gaps exist and in this way a rich and deeper understanding of the research problem may be gleaned. The chapter also discusses the full ethical implications of the study from design stage to reporting.
CHAPTER 5: RHETORIC-REALITY GAP ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the discussions, rationale and justifications for a mixed methods approach to understanding the FFO’s WF/L balance and organisational rhetoric. In the main, it was shown that the approach to the study was principally influenced by my philosophical assumptions, the nature of the research problem and the objectives of the inquiry. In Chapter 2, the study provided, in the absence of previous research and/or adequate models, the justifications for theory development and a new conceptual framework to guide the study. Argyris and Schon’s (1974) ‘Theory of Action’ perspective and its two fundamental concepts ‘espoused theory’ and ‘theory-in-use’ was used to develop ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’. The model showed the link between, an FFO’s WF/L policies and its provisions as representing organisational rhetoric, and employees experiences with the provisions (referred to as practices) as representing organisational reality. It also illustrates how a discrepancy (gap) may arise between organisational rhetoric and reality, as well as the ideal or preferred state of rhetoric-reality gap in an FFO.

Such a study means that both positivist and interpretivist paradigms are needed; the former to monitor and measure the rhetoric-reality gaps and help establish the level of organisational rhetoric, and the latter to understand and explain the underlying reasons for the significant rhetoric-reality gap levels. Such a dual-centred inquiry in the one study made the case studies approach the ideal research strategy. Furthermore since the study is fundamentally maiden research or “case history” (Gummesson 2000 p. 84), it made the ‘within case’ (or case study) (Gerring 2007) approach the obvious choice; the in-depth study using just one case can provide powerful insights to understanding the problem in the larger population. Finally, the study established that in line with the positivist/interpretivist paradigmatic
approaches, both qualitative and quantitative research methods would be needed. The research tools and instruments would include document analysis, observation techniques, survey questionnaire, in-depth one-to-one interviews, and focus group sessions which unfortunately was aborted due to low response rates from the sample population.

In section 4.4.3 the thesis explained and justified the choice of Creswell’s (2003) ‘Sequential Exploratory Design’ (quantitative followed by qualitative) to guide the overall investigation of the case study. The focus of this chapter however is the first. The research inquiry began with document analysis, principally collecting and analysing the FFO’s submission documents for the ‘Work and family Awards’ as well as the ACCI checklist. This inquiry involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques as there was a need to first score and tally the FFO’s WF/L balance provisions offered, and second, to analyse each of these provisions to develop deeper understanding of its nature and potential value.

The completion of the quantitative aspects of document analysis signals the start of the next stage of the inquiry, the quantitative data collection, and analysis before proceeding to the next stage, the qualitative inquiry. Such an approach enables me to use the learning and knowledge from the quantitative stage to guide and inform the design of the interview questions as well as provide the thematic framework for qualitative data analysis. The study will present the quantitative and qualitative results in two separate chapters (this chapter and the next, Chapter 6). Then in the last chapter, Chapter 7, the study will mix the two analyses and discuss the overall findings, implications, and recommendations.

The aim of this chapter therefore, is to provide the results of all quantitative analyses and their discussions. The study provides three groups of results. In the first section, 5.2, the study provides the FFO’s WF/L balance provisions using the categories developed for this exercise (see Figure 3 in Chapter 4). Then in section 5.3, the demographic characteristics of the population sample is presented. In Chapter 4 the study illustrated the ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’ and how it could be operationalised to monitor and measure the discrepancy or gap between
organisational WF/L balance rhetoric and reality. Four types of employee experiences were used as test variables to measure the gap:

i) Awareness of each one of 50 provisions  
ii) Need for each of these 50 provisions  
iii) Chose not to take up needed provision (reasons were sought) and  
iv) Success with take up had three further options (i) complete success (no changes to terms and conditions of usage), (ii) partial success (i.e. amended terms and/or conditions of usage - reasons sought), and (iii) unsuccessful (application rejected - reasons sought).

Section 5.4 discusses the results and analyses of these experiences. Two types of analyses are produced; a broader macro-level analysis (all provisions considered) and a narrower micro-level analysis (individual provisions). Macro-level analysis is available for all four variables however, but only significant results are provided for the micro-level analysis. Additionally, these variables can be cross-tabulated against demographic characteristics, such as gender and management/non-management employee ranks, but this will be provided only where the data is significant and where such documentation is relevant. The chapter ends with a summary in section 5.5.

5.2 Document analysis

From the FFO’s formal submission documents the study collated a total of fifty WF/L balance provisions. The list included existing provisions, as well as new ones that would have been in place by the time fieldwork commenced. Using the revised category developed for the present study, (discussed in section 4.5.1) the study sorted the FFO’s provisions to see how their distribution compared with Bardoel et al.’s (1999) findings as well as the ACCI (2002) checklist. Table 2 in the following page shows the distribution of provisions within the categories.
Table 2 - Distribution of provisions according to categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Category Description</th>
<th>Bardoeel et al (1999) Study</th>
<th>ACCI</th>
<th>This Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Provisions</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No. of Provisions</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No. of Provisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Child and Dependant Care Initiatives</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flexible Working Conditions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Leave Options</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Information and Personnel Services</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Organisational Cultural Issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Initiatives for Older Workers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Provisions</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that more than a third (38.0%) of the FFO’s WF/L balance provisions fell within category 4, ‘Information and Personnel Services’. This category consists of provisions that are more in line with ‘life’ needs such as, counselling, life management, and fitness schemes. In stark contrast, at 33.3%, the highest number of provisions (or practices) in Bardoeel et al.’s (1999) study was on category 1 ‘Child and Dependent Care Initiatives’. This category featured quite poorly in the FFO, constituting only 8.0% of all provisions offered. The second highest represented category in the FFO was category 3, ‘Leave Options’ at 24.0%. The FFO and Bardoeel et al.’s study both have similar numbers of provisions if the combined categories 2 ‘Flexible working conditions’, and 3 ‘Leave Options’ were to be considered together (38.8% versus 40.0%). These figures are slightly lower than the 45.5% in the ACCI (2002) checklist.

5.3 Survey results: Demographics of sample population

As mentioned in section 4.5.2.1 the response rate was 36.5%. Of those returned, one questionnaire was largely incomplete and could not be used, resulting in the sample population, N = 91. The demographic profile of the sample population is provided in Table 3 in the following page with incomplete data acknowledged as ‘missing’ scores.
## Table 3 – Demographics of sample population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male (N1)</th>
<th>Female (N2)</th>
<th>Total (N)</th>
<th>N1 %</th>
<th>N2 %</th>
<th>N %</th>
<th>N%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>91</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age Group:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>18.7</td>
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<td>25-34</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>35-44</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>19.6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>19.6</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
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<td>65 and over</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>91</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time fixed hours</td>
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<td>74</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Full-time shift</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Part-time fixed hours</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time shift</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment Status:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management level</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-management level</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Living With:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Partner</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Children</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner and Children</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>36.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extended/Blended Family</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friends/Others</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Care for anyone?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>47.3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Care involving:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>79.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elders (family)</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>34.9</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
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<td>Disabled</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yes for care involving children and at least one child in age groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>N%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>47.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 – 18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data shows that were more females (56%) than males (44%) in the sample which is consistent with the profile of the prudential sector (French and Strachan 2007), however, an overwhelming number of males (37/40 or 92.5%) compared to females (40/51 or 78.4%) were aged less than 45 years. The most represented age group was the ‘25-34’ group with 40.7% of the sample falling with this category. Males are more highly represented in the ‘18-24’ (9/40 or 22.5%) and very significantly represented in the ‘35-44’ (13/40 or 32.5%) age categories, while females are very significantly represented in the ‘25-34’ age category (22/51 or 43.1%).

As far as years of service was concerned, more than 70% had been with the FFO for less than 10 years with the vast majority (64%) having had less than five years of service. Another crucial finding was that approximately one third of the males (13/40 or 33.3%) had ten or more years of service compared to females (10/51 or 20%). Almost three-quarters of the sample were in full-time permanent positions, with not much variance in gendered distribution. As far as employment ranks were concerned, there were no significant difference between males (16/31 or 51.5%) and females (21/51 or 42.0%) in management positions, although this finding is not necessarily reflective of the finance industry (French & Strachan 2007).

More than fifty per cent of the sample lived with their partner and children and/or external/blended family households. Another significant group was the couple only families, with more than a fifth of the sample falling under this category. There was also a very small percentage that lived in a single-parent household arrangement.

Close to half (47.3%) of the sample population had some sort of care responsibilities; care for disabled family members, or care for children, elders or other family members, living with them or elsewhere. A significant number (79.1%) had care for children and care for elder family members (34.9%). Males reported only slightly higher care commitments (20/40 or 50%) than females (23/51 or 45.1%). In contrast, gendered studies of the specific types of care show more significant variations. First, significantly more males (18/20 or 90%) than females (16/23 or 69.6%) had care for children. Second, significantly more females (12/23 or 52.2%) than males (3/20 or 15.0%) reported having care for elderly family members. Third, such a pattern also
emerged with care for disabled family members; only female participants (4/23 or 17.4%) reported any care for disabled family members.

The last aspect of the demographic characteristics concerns the specific age groups of the predominant type of care i.e. care for children. There were four age groups and the data is not mutually exclusive; participants could have care for one or more children in and across all age groups. Of the 34 respondents who had care for children, 47.1% reported care for at least one child in the ‘6-12’ age category, followed by another 38.2% who had care for at least one child in the ‘0-5’ age category. Further analysis showed that 82.4% of respondents who had care for children had care for a child less than 12 years of age. In the Australian context, a child who is 12 years old would be in the final year of primary education, which means that these respondents are parents who have high levels of caring responsibilities.

5.4 Survey results - employee experiences

As mentioned in the introduction to the chapter, organisational reality is measured using employees’ experiences of the FFO’s provisions offered (rhetoric). In particular three types of employees’ experiences, a) awareness, b) need and c) take up, are used as test variables. The survey questionnaire listed all 50 provisions that the FFO stated as being offered at the time of the survey, and respondents (N=91) were asked to tick the relevant yes/no boxes in relation to their experiences with each of these variables. The data analysing software, SPSS, was used to capture the data; all responses were coded with 1 for ‘yes’ and 0 for ‘no’ and entered into the database. Where appropriate, items that required responses but which were left blank were coded with ‘9’ to denote missing entries. In calculating rhetoric-reality gaps, employees’ experiences of the three test variables represent reality; hence, the SPSS code 1 equals an employee score for a test variable. The rhetoric component in any test situation is represented by the maximum provisions offered to the sample (i.e. sample size multiplied by the number of provisions offered). However, the missing respondent entries must be removed from this total so that the true measure of the
rhetoric situation is not compromised. The study incorporates this limitation by adjusting the maximum rhetoric scores with the missing scores, and refers to this adjusted total as the ‘Adjusted Maximum’ (or ‘Adj. Max’ in the tables).

Employees’ experiences can be analysed using two approaches, individual-level and FFO-level. The individual-level involves analysing each of the 91 respondent’s scores to all 50 (or 47 in the case of take up) provisions. Such an approach inevitably means extensive data tables (91 x 50) and can be quite cumbersome. It can however, provide useful information regarding individual experiences for e.g. awareness, and therefore this approach will be briefly discussed. An alternative approach involves using the FFO as a base which is the principal approach used in this study. Here, the focus is on the sum total of all respondents’ scores to each one of the 50 (or 47) provisions, which invariably means a smaller data set to work compared to the first approach. Another reason is that the focus of this study is the notion of organisational rhetoric which strongly indicates the need for an overall FFO based approach to measuring employees’ experiences (or reality) to each of the three test variables.

Additionally, there are two types of analyses that can be used to measure rhetoric-reality at the FFO-level. The first involves a macro-level analysis, whereby the whole set of respondents’ responses (of a specific test variable) is examined against the total FFO’s provisions offered them; it represents the one firm measure of the FFO’s rhetoric-reality gap level. The second is a micro-level analysis involving all respondents’ responses to each of the 50 (or 47) provisions and can provide useful insights; it allows the FFO to identity those provisions which have exceptional, moderate, or weak experience scores. Additionally micro-level analysis can provide the impetus for further analyses to examine, understand, and learn underlying organisational processes and dynamics.

Additionally where appropriate the study has undertaken studies of employee experiences based on gender and/or management levels. Since it is cumbersome to provide frequency distribution across all 50 provisions, the option taken in this study is to provide a categorised version of the results, though where relevant and appropriate the detailed results of some provisions will be shown and/or discussed.
As far as possible the study retains the above framework for each of the three test variables, awareness, need and take up of provisions. Therefore the study wishes to clarify that a thorough discussion of the common descriptors and rationales as well as the mathematical and statistical computations involved will be provided in the first instance, in the section on awareness. In all subsequent references, and where the same mathematical and statistical computations are relied upon, the study will merely provide a discussion and analyses of results. In the event where there is a need to present newer forms of statistical analysis, the study will continue to provide the rationale and/or the procedures involved.

5.4.1 Awareness of provisions

The first of the three variables used to measure employees’ experiences is their awareness of the FFO’s provisions. The premise of this study is that ensuring that employees are aware of what WF/L balance provisions are on offer, represent the minimum responsibility expected of an FFO. Burke’s (1996) study of employees’ awareness of work-family (WF) policies in a large Canadian professional service organisation (discussed in section 2.4.2.3) found highest awareness at 66%, which he claims is low. Since this study is based on an FFO, one would, arguably, expect higher awareness. However it is also true that the present study, with a focus on WF/L balance, has significantly more provisions (50) than Burke’s WF study (4) and this fact is assumed to have a moderating influence on the level of employee awareness. Additionally, this study represents a first attempt at operationalising the WF/L balance rhetoric-reality challenge. These reasons have made it necessary to claim a modest 60% awareness as the population mean (µ) and as the foundations of any hypothetical testing conducted in this section.

5.4.2 Awareness (individual-level)

This approach involves tallying the total awareness counts (dependent variables) of each one of the 91 respondents (independent variable) across the 50 individual provisions. Table 4 shows the distribution of individual awareness in the FFO.
Table 4 – Awareness (individual-level): Frequency distribution

The chart shows that the average individual awareness was between 21 and 30 provisions, with an average male being significantly more aware (50%) than a female (35.3%) of the FFO’s provisions. The results of the descriptive statistics, presented in Table 5, and statistical test (z-test) provided more details of individual awareness.

Table 5 – Awareness (individual-level): Descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Error</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Variance</td>
<td>125.4096</td>
<td>107.0925</td>
<td>91.5700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>0.3021</td>
<td>0.5364</td>
<td>0.1719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>-0.2205</td>
<td>-0.1389</td>
<td>-0.0524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>961</td>
<td>1201</td>
<td>2059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largest(1)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smallest(1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence Level(95.0%)</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean awareness of an individual of the sample was 22.6 ± 9.6 with a standard error (SE) of 1.0. The range was 50, and the median and mode were both 24. At 95.0% confidence level, the average number of provisions that an individual was
aware of was between the upper limit of $22.6 + 1.99$ (or 24.6) and a lower limit of $22.6 - 1.99$ (or 20.6). Attempts were made to investigate if the gender-based similarities in awareness (mean of 24 and 23.5) were statistically significant, using the null hypothesis ($H_0$: there is no difference in the means), and the alternate hypothesis ($H_a$: there is a difference in the means). Two different hypothesis testing tests are available, the z-test and the paired t-Test, but their suitability is dependent on the differences in sample variances. The z-test requires the sample variances to be similar and consequently, the differences to be small. As shown in the descriptive statistics in Table 3 above there appears to be vast gender-based differences in sample variances, 125.4096 for males versus 107.0925 for females. The F-test can be used to accept or reject the null hypothesis, $H_0$: that there is no difference between the variances of the male and female sample. Table 6 shows the summary results.

### Table 6 – Awareness (individual-level): F-Test results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F-Test Two-Sample for Variances</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>24.025</td>
<td>23.54901961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>125.4096154</td>
<td>107.092549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1.171039596</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P(F&lt;=f) one-tail</td>
<td>0.296821981</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Critical one-tail</td>
<td>1.637941338</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the test statistic $F = 1.17104$ is less than the critical one-tail value for $F$ of 1.6379, $H_0$ is accepted, that is the two variances are statistically similar. By logical extension, the Z-test can be used to confirm or reject the null hypothesis that is no difference in the mean awareness of an individual in the male or female samples. The results of the z-test are shown in Table 7 on the following page.
Table 7 – Awareness (individual-level): z-Test hypothesis testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>z-Test: Two Sample for Means</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>24.025</td>
<td>23.54901961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Known Variance</td>
<td>125.4096154</td>
<td>107.0925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesized Mean Difference</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>0.208030421</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P(Z&lt;=z) one-tail</td>
<td>0.417602635</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z Critical one-tail</td>
<td>1.644853476</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P(Z&lt;=z) two-tail</td>
<td>0.83520527</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z Critical two-tail</td>
<td>1.959962787</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rejection rule for this test is $z < -1.96$ or $z > 1.96$. Since, the value of the test statistics $z = 0.2080304$ lies within these two limits the null hypothesis is accepted, i.e. there is no difference between the sample means and consequently no difference in the FFO’s population of the average awareness of males and females. As mentioned above, this study assumes 60% overall awareness for the FFO, which on an individual basis translates to an awareness of 30 (0.6 x 50) provisions. There are some sample members who had such awareness. A test of hypothesis was carried out to see if such a mean is reflected in the population. The null hypothesis, $H_0: \mu = 30$ and the alternate hypothesis, $H_a: \mu \neq 30$ were used, and the test statistics, was computed using the formula $t = (X-Bar - 30)/SE$. The value of the $t = -7.3506$ ((22.6-30)/1) fell well outside the acceptance range of -1.990 to +1.990 (from t table, where $\alpha = 0.05$ and the degrees of freedom (df) is 90). Therefore there is very strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis, that there is a mean awareness of 30 provisions in the larger FFO population.

5.4.3 Awareness (FFO-level)

The focus here is on using awareness to analyse the rhetoric-reality scenario in the FFO. Both, macro-level and micro-level analyses was conducted.

5.4.3.1 Macro-level awareness

The macro-level analysis is designed to investigate the overall rhetoric-reality awareness and gap levels of the FFO.
Table 8 shows the state of the macro-level awareness of the sample population (N=91) to all 50 provisions (categorised).

### Table 8 – Awareness (macro-level): Overall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Nos in Category</th>
<th>Actual Scores</th>
<th>Maximum Scores Possible</th>
<th>Missing Entries</th>
<th>Adj Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Child and Dependant Care Initiatives</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flexible Working Conditions</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Leave Options</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>1092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Information and Personnel Services</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>1729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Organisational Cultural Issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Initiatives for Older Workers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2059</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>4550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Average Awareness (as % of Total Adj Max)**

|                | 45.6 |

**Discrepancy (Gap)**

|                | 54.4 |

Overall, the sample population was at 34.1% (703/2059) most aware of provisions within Category 4 ‘Information and Personnel Services’. However, because the number of provisions within each category varies from 3 to 19, it is more important to know that, on average, the sample was most aware of provisions in category 5 (70%), i.e. the three provisions related to ‘Organisational Cultural Issues’.

Descriptive statistical analysis showed that the mean awareness (using adjusted maximum) to be 45.6% ± 28.3, with a standard error (SE) of 4.0. The minimum was 3.3% (for ‘Access to counselling services for older workers’ a category 6 provision) and the maximum was 92.1% (for ‘Rostered Days Off’, a category 2 provision). The range was 88.8, the median 49.1, and the mode 83.5. At 95.0% confidence level, the sample’s awareness of each provision was between the upper limit of 45.6 + 8.0 (or 53.6) and a lower limit of 45.6 - 8.0 (or 37.6).

The computations involved in establishing the macro-level discrepancy was previously provided in section 4.5.2.3 and the same arguments are applied here. There is a theoretical maximum possible awareness score of 4550 (91 x 50). From
this the 32 missing scores are subtracted, which gives an adjusted maximum provisions offered or rhetoric scores (A) of 4518. There were a total of 2059 actual incidences of awareness or reality scores (B). Thus the overlap (C) between rhetoric and reality, or mean awareness of the sample, is 45.6% \( (B/A \times 100 \text{ or } 2059/4518 \times 100) \). This means that the sample population was aware of slightly less than half of the FFO’s WF/L balance offerings. Conversely, the study proposes that it means that the macro-level rhetoric-reality discrepancy or gap is 54.4% \( (100\%-C) \).

The fact that the rhetoric-reality mismatch (from an awareness perspective) is greater than the match suggests that the FFO’s WF/L balance program is rhetoric. A two-tailed test of hypothesis was carried out to see if the 60% cut-off established as the minimum awareness for an FFO is reflected in the population mean. The null hypothesis, \( H_0: \mu = 60 \) and the alternate hypothesis, \( H_a: \mu \neq 60 \) were used. The test statistic, \( z = -3.6090 \) (well outside the acceptance range of -2.012 to +2.012 (from \( t \) table, where \( \alpha = 0.05 \) and the degrees of freedom (nf) is 49). There is therefore, very strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis that there is mean population awareness of 60% for the FFO’s provisions. The study found that the null hypothesis would be accepted if a cut-off of 50% was used; it means that the sample population is highly likely to have at least 50% awareness of the provisions. In the next chapter the study analyses the qualitative data in an attempt to reveal the probable underlying causes for the low awareness, which if addressed, can help the FFO increase its awareness levels, up from the current 45.6% to the targeted 60%. However, it does not stop here; it is suggested that each FFO, in the quest for the effectiveness and success of its WF/L balance program, proactively work towards improving awareness. Such an attitude will ensure that rhetoric-reality gaps are kept at a minimum.

5.4.3.2 Macro-level awareness: Gender-based

To investigate if there were gender-based differences in the sample’s overall experiences with the FFO’s WF/L balance provisions, the awareness scores were tallied against the specific provisions, and cross-tabulated against gender criteria. The summarised results are presented in Table 9 in the following page.
Gender-based macro-level rhetoric-reality overlaps and gaps can be computed in a similar way to that described for overall macro-level awareness. The male sample had an average awareness of 48.7% compared to 43.1% of the female sample. Conversely, it also means that the rhetoric-reality gaps are 51.3% and 56.9% respectively. Table 10 shows the descriptive statistics for gender-based macro-level awareness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Male (N1=40)</th>
<th>Female (N2=51)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provisions/Category</td>
<td>Male (N1=40)</td>
<td>Female (N2=51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nos in Category</td>
<td>Male (N1=40)</td>
<td>Female (N2=51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Scores</td>
<td>Missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Child and Dependant Care Initiatives</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flexible Working Conditions</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Leave Options</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Information and Personnel Services</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Organisational Cultural Issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Initiatives for Older Workers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>961</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There appears to be vast gender-based differences in sample variances, 778.8490 for males versus 845.2926 for females.
The study investigated if these gender-based macro-level awareness differences were statistically significant (null hypothesis, $H_0$: no gender-based differences in awareness, and the alternate hypothesis, $H_a$: there are gender-based differences in awareness). These differences in variances were confirmed by hypothetical testing ($H_0$: variance male = variance female sample) using the F-test. Since, $F = 0.9214$ was greater than the critical value for $F (\alpha = 0.05)$ of 0.6222, the null hypothesis ($H_0$) that there are no gender-based differences was rejected.

Because of the variances in the samples the Z-test was unsuitable for comparing sample means and so the paired t-Test statistics was used instead. Table 11 shows that the test statistics $t = 4.9383$ (df = 49, $\alpha=0.05$) is greater than the t critical two-tail value of 2.0096.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 11 – Awareness (macro-level): t-Test hypothesis testing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesized Mean Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t Stat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$P(T&lt;=t)$ one-tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t Critical one-tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$P(T&lt;=t)$ two-tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t Critical two-tail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This means males are significantly more aware than females of the provisions offered by the FFO. Since awareness is taken to represent the level of rhetoric, by logical extension it can also be argued that organisational rhetoric (using awareness as a variable) is significantly more real to female employees than it is to male employees in the FFO.

5.4.3.3 Micro-level awareness (60% and over): Overall

The micro-level analysis is designed to investigate the rhetoric-reality scenario from the perspective of the sample’s awareness of each of the FFO’s 50 provisions. The computations of employees’ awareness of each of the 50 provisions was undertaken
and sorted in descending order. In line with the 60% awareness benchmark, only those provisions that satisfied the criteria were extracted for further analysis. The details of these provisions are shown in Table 12 (in ascending orders of percentages within categories).

Table 12 – Micro-level awareness (60% and over): Overall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Nos.</th>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Adj %</th>
<th>Missing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flexible work schedules/hours</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to single days annual leave</td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rostered Days Off</td>
<td></td>
<td>83</td>
<td>91.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Salary sacrifice options</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paternity leave</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bereavement leave</td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leave without pay and career break schemes</td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Study leave/Financial assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maternity leave</td>
<td></td>
<td>79</td>
<td>87.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Health insurance benefits for employees</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home Computer Purchase scheme**</td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer training programme**</td>
<td></td>
<td>82</td>
<td>91.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Support by top managers to work/life balance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vision statement**</td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CEO’s commitment to work/life balance</td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1194</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Adj Max = (No of Provision x 91 less Missing)**

Average Awareness (as % of Adj Max)x

To illustrate, the steps in the computation of the micro-level awareness of the first provision ‘Flexible work schedules/hours’ (66.7%) are provided here. The FFO offered a total of 91 of these provisions to the sample population. Adjusting for missing cases (1) means that the FFO effectively offered a total of 90 provisions (rhetoric scores X). There were 60 scores of employee awareness (reality scores Y) to this provision, which means rhetoric-reality overlap (Z) for the provision is 66.7% (60/90 x 100) or that the rhetoric-reality discrepancy is 33.3%.

Less than half (17/50 or 34%) of the provisions registered awareness of over 60%, however the awareness of these provisions constituted 27.0% of the adjusted maximum provisions offered by the FFO to the sample. The 17 provisions were confined to four categories, Category 2: Flexible working conditions’ (4 provisions), ‘Category 3: Leave Options’ (6 provisions), ‘Category 4: Information services and
personnel policies’ (4 provisions) and ‘Category 5: Organisational Cultural Issues’ (3 provisions). Provisions in ‘Category 1: Child and Dependent Care Initiatives’, and ‘Category 6 (Initiatives for Older Workers)’ were not among any of the provisions that registered awareness of 60% or more. The average awareness (as a percentage of the adjusted maximum) across these 17 provisions was 77.7% and far exceeds the 60% cut-off proposed by the study; there were also a number of provisions that had micro-level awareness of over 80%. These findings, the study suggests, indicate good reference points for the FFO to learn from, in their efforts to not only improve organisational effectiveness in providing WF/L balance programs and initiatives but also as a means of transcending the rhetoric claim.

5.4.3.4 Micro-level awareness (60% and over): Gender-based

To further understand the nature of the awareness, micro-level awareness i.e. awareness for individual provisions by gender was undertaken. The study used two different awareness levels. The first, 60% awareness and over, is based on the minimum satisfactory cut-off used by Burke (1996) in his awareness study is shown in Table 13 in the following page.
Table 13 – Micro-level awareness (60% and over): Gender-based

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>No of Provisions</th>
<th>Male (N1=40)</th>
<th>Female (N2=51)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No of Provisions</td>
<td>Scores</td>
<td>As % of Adj Max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flexible work schedules/hours</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>76.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job sharing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part-time work for childcare</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rostered Days Off</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to single days annual leave</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>89.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Maternity leave</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pro-rata access to long service leave</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>64.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bereavement leave</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Study leave/Financial assistance</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salary sacrifice options</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>67.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wealth Management Planning seminars</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer training programme**</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home Computer Purchase scheme**</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health insurance benefits for employees</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Vision statement**</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CEO’s commitment to work/life balance</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support by top managers to work/life balance</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average Awareness (as % of Adj Max&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;)</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>77.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adj Max<sup>b</sup> - Adjusted Maximum = (N1 (or N2) x no of Provisions) less Missing

The shaded areas represent awareness levels of the gender sample that did not meet the 60% cut-off. In this table it is confined to the female sample. Both male and female samples had awareness of the same four categories, but males were aware of five more provisions than the female sample and even exceeded the 17 provisions of the overall population as shown in Table 12. The male sample was aware of 21/50 provisions (or 42%) of the FFO’s provisions compared to the 16 (or 32%) of the female sample. Despite having lesser numbers of provisions that met the 60% cut-off criteria, the female sample had statistically similar average awareness (as % of adjusted maximum) of 77.5%, as the male sample, 76.1% (p-value = 0.7011, α = 0.05).
5.4.3.5 Micro-level awareness (less than 20%): Gender-based

The second type of micro-level analysis was for awareness levels that were less than 20%. The study suggests that such figures represent possible sources for WF/L balance rhetoric and therefore the analysis can provide the FFO with the foundations for deeper understanding of the nature and sources of the problem. The results are presented in Table 14 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Provisions/Category Description</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Child-care program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family/Carers/Breast-feeding room</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Elder care program</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Before/after work child contacts</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Telecommuting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Initiative for breastfeeding woman returning to the workplace</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Parental-on-leave communication scheme**</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Elder-care kit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Child-care kit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Parental leave tips for both line managers and parents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Family support groups</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Managing older workers’ health/performance issues</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Phased retirement</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Access to counselling services for older workers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>‘Keep in touch’ scheme for older workers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average Awareness (as % of Adj Max)</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the FFO’s 50 provisions offered, the male sample had 11 (or 22%) which met the ‘less than 20%’ awareness criteria compared to the 15 (or 30%) of the female sample. The difference, of the four provisions, is represented in the table by the shaded areas. Two categories are conspicuously missing from this table. The first is category 5, ‘Organisational Cultural Issues’. In the previous table it was established that all three provisions in this category had awareness levels of 60% and over. The second is category 3, ‘Leave Options’; all 12 provisions here had awareness levels exceeding 20% (6 of which made it in the ‘60% and over’ list as shown in Table 10). Four of the six (66.7%) provisions in category 6, ‘Initiatives for Older Workers’ registered awareness levels of 10% and under; the female sample fared particularly poorly in this area. There was no significant difference (p-value = 0.1924 α=0.05)
between average awareness of males and females in this lower end of awareness levels.

5.4.4 Summary of awareness assessment

One of the fundamental premises of this research into WF/L balance is the need for effective communication of the entire range and details of the organisation’s WF/L-friendly policies and provisions. This study suggests that ensuring awareness is the minimum expectations required of an FFO. Such an expectation is reasonable given the special status of the FFO; an organisation that has self-nominated itself and won prestigious awards for its WF/L balance programs. It is deemed to have made the WF/L balance rhetoric, and therefore the expectations of high awareness within the organisation as a whole (macro-level) is deemed by this study to be, accordingly, not unreasonable. Therefore, we have used Burke’s (1996) 60% as a reasonable and relatively low benchmark for minimum awareness in the FFO.

The findings in this study are consistent with those of Meager et al. (2002) and Kodz, Davis et al. (2003) that awareness is linked to demographics. The fact that the average percentage awareness of all respondents on a macro level, as well as by gender breakdown was in the forties shows that awareness is a critical area for the FFO. Another crucial finding is that female respondents are generally less aware than their male counterparts, and this has resulted in the lowering of organisational awareness at the macro-level. Another critical finding is that despite the fact that close to half of the sample population had care for children and/or elders, none of the provisions in ‘Category 1: Child and dependent care initiatives’ ranked among the ‘60% or greater’ awareness list. This issue is further investigated in relation to the ‘take up’ experience in the latter part of this chapter. Even more surprising is the fact that all the provisions in this category made it in the ‘less than 20%’ awareness category for the female sample. Such poor results trigger the value afforded by the interpretivist paradigm in attempting to understand why the female sample are less aware of the FFO’s WF/L balance programs and initiatives. The inquiry in the next chapter provides some insight into this problem.
5.4.5 Need for provisions

The second of the employee experiences used to represent organisational reality and which feature in the computation of the rhetoric-reality gap is employees’ need for the FFO’s WF/L balance provisions offered (rhetoric). Burke (1996) argues that awareness and need are two important considerations in the design of WF/L balance programs. Employees were asked to tick yes or no if they needed any one, or more of the 50 provisions. The survey posed the need query to all respondents, irrespective of whether they were previously aware of the provisions listed, hence respondents who were previously unaware could respond with a yes to a perceived need. This means that the responses include both ‘actual needs’ as well as ‘perceived needs’

5.4.6 Need (individual-level)

The sample’s need for the each of the FFO’s provisions offered was tallied. Table 15 shows the distribution of the summarised individual needs.

Table 15 – Need (individual-level): Frequency distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numbers of Provisions (Intervals)</th>
<th>% Need</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chart shows that there is consistency in the numbers of provisions expressed as needed by both male and female samples. The consistency is so close that it has resulted in a high degree of overlap with the overall expressed needs. The highest individual need in all three cases was for between 1 and 10 of the FFO’s provisions offered. The outliers were four males reporting need for none of the provisions while
four females reported need of between 21 and 30 provisions. The results of the descriptive statistics are presented in Table 16.

Table 16 – Need (individual-level): Descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>8.875</td>
<td>10.843</td>
<td>9.978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Error</td>
<td>0.843</td>
<td>0.860</td>
<td>0.613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>5.335</td>
<td>6.142</td>
<td>5.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Variance</td>
<td>28.471</td>
<td>37.734</td>
<td>34.266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>-0.534</td>
<td>0.318</td>
<td>0.397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>0.892</td>
<td>0.629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largest(1)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smallest(1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence Level(95.0%)</td>
<td>1.706481704</td>
<td>1.727711881</td>
<td>1.21909771</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, on average there was a need for 10.0 ± 5.85 of the FFO’s provisions offered (SE = 0.61). The median was 9 provisions while the most represented need was for 8 provisions. At 95.0% confidence level, the average number of provisions that an individual had need for was between 8.79 and 11.2 provisions. The F-value of 0.7545 was higher than the F-critical values of 0.5996 confirming that the differences in gender variances are significant. Therefore the t-Test (Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances), shown on Table 17, was used to accept or reject the null hypothesis that the mean needs of the two gender-based samples are the same.

Table 17 – Need (individual-level): t-Test hypothesis testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>8.875</td>
<td>10.843137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>28.471154</td>
<td>37.734902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesized Mean Difference</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t Stat</td>
<td>-1.633504</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P(T&lt;=t) one-tail</td>
<td>0.052968</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t Critical one-tail</td>
<td>1.662354</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P(T&lt;=t) two-tail</td>
<td>0.1059361</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t Critical two-tail</td>
<td>1.9872914</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since the p-value 0.1059361 is higher than $\alpha=0.05$ there is no significant difference in the average gender-based need for the FFO’s provisions.

### 5.4.7 Need (FFO-level)

The aim of investigating need on an overall level is to investigate the relationship between the FFO’s provisions offered and employees’ needs for them. Hence, similar to the studies of awareness, both macro-level and micro-level analyses are conducted.

#### 5.4.7.1 Need (macro-level): Overall

The logic of the computations involved in establishing the macro-level need discrepancy is the same as that provided in the awareness section 5.4.3.1. In these computations, it is important that the missing entries are removed from the pool of the total provisions offered so that the rhetoric-reality figures are more accurately presented. A summary of the overall need of the sample population for the various provisions grouped in categories is provided in Table 18.

**Table 18 – Need (macro-level): Overall**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Nos in Category</th>
<th>Actual Scores</th>
<th>Need</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Scores</td>
<td>% of Total Scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Child and Dependant Care Initiatives</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flexible Working Conditions</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Leave Options</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Information and Personnel Services</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Organisational Cultural Issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Initiatives for Older Workers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Average Need (as % of Total Adj Max) = 20.2
- Discrepancy (Gap) = 79.8

$Adj\ Max = (No\ of\ Provisions\ x\ 91)\ less\ Missing$

The table shows that the sample population expressed most need for provisions in category 4, ‘Information and Personnel Services’. However, because the number of
provisions vary within categories, the average need per category is more useful in understanding the nature of the need. On the whole, respondents reported the highest need (52.0%) for provisions in category 5, i.e. the three provisions related to ‘Organisational Cultural Issues’. The overall macro-level need of the sample is 20.2% (i.e. 908/(4550-65) x 100) of the FFO’s entire provision offerings. Conversely, using the ‘need’ variable as a measure of the FFO’s WF/L balance rhetoric indicates a very large gap (79.8%) between organisational rhetoric and reality.

5.4.7.2 Need (macro-level): Gender-based

Gender-based studies were conducted to investigate the patterns in need levels between males and females in the population. Table 19 provides a summary of the findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Nos in Category</th>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Male (N1=40)</th>
<th>Female (N2=51)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Child and Dependant Care Initiatives</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flexible Working Conditions</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Leave Options</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Information and Personnel Services</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Organisational Cultural Issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Initiatives for Older Workers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>355</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>553</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avergae Need (as % of Total Adj Max)</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discrepancy (Gap)</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adj Max = (N1 (or N2) x no of Provisions) less Missing

Both samples had highest need for provisions in category 5, ‘Organisational Cultural Issues’. The next highest needs for both groups were for provisions in category 2 ‘Flexible Working Conditions’ and category 6, ‘Information and Personnel Services’. The z-Test confirmed that at 18.2%, the male sample has significantly lower need.
levels than the female sample (21.9%) \( (z = 0.8641 < z\text{-critical } -1.96, p\text{-value } = 0.3875, \alpha = 0.05) \).

Hence, in contrast, to the situation in macro-level gender-based awareness (see Table 8 and 9) here it is the lower needs of the male sample that has caused the overall macro-level need to drop to 20.2% (see Table 17).

### 5.4.7.3 Need (micro-level): 10% or more

This study acknowledges that the FFO needs to provide a wide range of provisions because of, a) the diverse needs of employees and b) to accommodate the shift from work-family to the all-embracing work-life. Hence on a micro-level basis, the study assumes a much lower level need cut-off or benchmark than the 60% used in awareness. In the absence of any prior studies on employee needs for provisions, this study looks to the results of the macro-level need findings for establishing a reasonable cut-off.

The study found that the macro-level need was around 20%. Theoretically, the maximum number of provisions that the FFO can offer to the sample is 4,450 \((91 \times 50)\). Twenty per cent of this is 910. Dividing this total by the sample size of 91 gives an average of 10 provisions. Since this is a maiden study, and acknowledging the need to cater for diverse needs, a modest level of 10% (or 5 provisions) is proposed as an initial cut-off. It is envisaged that the FFO will adopt a proactive stance to progressively increase this cut-off as it attempts to provide more effective WF/L balance and reduce its rhetoric-reality gaps.

In the micro-level analysis of the need levels in the FFO, the responses of the sample to all 50 provisions is tallied and sorted in descending order. Using the 10% cut-off for need all provisions that met the criteria was extracted. A summary of the results is provided in Table 20 in the following page.
### Table 20 – Need (micro-level): 10% or more

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Nos.</th>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Adj %</th>
<th>Missing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Child-care program</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rostered Days Off</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to single days annual leave</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible work schedules/hours</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bereavement leave</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Study leave/Financial assistance</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salary sacrifice options</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial counselling/information services</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carer’s leave</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maternity leave</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer training programme**</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home Computer Purchase scheme**</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health insurance benefits for employees</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Superannuation and other retirement provisions</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health and Fitness program</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wealth Management Planning seminars</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial counselling/information services</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work and Personal Life Training Program**</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stress management program</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family orientated events</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schemes to help older members of community</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Childcare kit</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CEO’s commitment to work/life balance</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support by top managers to work/life balance</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vision statement**</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total | 26 | 792 | 38 |

Adj Max² - Adjusted Maximum = (No of Provision x 91 less Missing)

It is clear that no provisions in category 6, ‘Information and Personnel Services’ met with the modest cut-off of 10% need cut-off. The table shows that slightly more than half (26/50 or 52%) of the FFO’s provisions had micro-level needs that exceeded 10%. The highest micro-level need was 91% for ‘Computer training programme’.

#### 5.4.7.4 Need (micro-level): 10% and more, gender-based

Using the same 10% or more cut-off as in the overall micro-level need, gender-based analysis was conducted on the sample population. As long as there was a 10% or more need for any one provision by both or either gender, the data was included. Where a criterion was met by one sample only, the other sample was shown in the table as a blank shaded entry. The summarised details are shown in Table 21.
### Table 21 – Need (micro-level): 10% or more, gender-based

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Male (N=40)</th>
<th>Female (N=51)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No of Provisions</td>
<td>Scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Child-care program</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Before/after work child care contacts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flexible work schedules/hours</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rostered Days Off</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to single days annual leave</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>64.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Maternity leave</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid parental leave</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care’s leave</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time in line</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bereavement leave</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Study leave/Financial assistance</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salary sacrifice options</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Parental-on-leave communication scheme**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Childcare kit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stress management program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work and Personal Life Training Program**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relocation assistance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family oriented events</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schemes to help older members of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wealth Management Planning seminar</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer training programme**</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>89.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home Computer Purchase scheme**</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health and Fitness program</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Superannuation and other retirement provisions</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial counselling/information services</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health insurance benefits for employees</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vision statement**</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CEO’s commitment to work/life balance</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support by top managers to work/life balance</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing older workers’ health/performance issues</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Average Need (as % of Adj Max)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adj Max = Adjusted Maximum = ((N1 (or N2) x no of Provisions) less Missing)

There were two main observations. First, while all six categories of provisions were needed by at least one sample, the male sample required only four compared to all six by the female sample. Second, while the overall micro-analysis of need levels in Table 20 showed 26 provisions that registered micro-level needs of 10 per cent or more, here in the gender-based micro-level analysis, there were considerably more (32) provisions that fulfilled the criteria. Of these, 18 were identified as being needed by both male and female samples; three were needed by males alone, while females identified need for the remaining 11. Thus males identified need for a total of 21 provisions compared to the 29 by females. This differential need, lesser by males, is what has driven the overall micro-level need down.
This result is significant as it provides empirical evidence that male and female needs for provisions that matter in their quest for WF/L balance clearly differ. It also supports the need for FFOs to provide a wide range of provision types. The most needed provision by both sexes was the ‘Computer training programme’; 98.7% by males and 92.0% by females. The second most needed provisions by both samples came from category 2 ‘Flexible Working Conditions’. However, the provision most needed by the male sample was ‘Access to single days annual leave’ (64.1%) while that which was most needed by the female sample was ‘Rostered Days Off’ (72%). The fact that the male sample identified need single leave days is congruent with Kimmel’s (1993) finding that some men, because of the prevailing organisational culture, opt to take sick and annual leave to look after, for example, their sick children, rather than avail themselves of the WF/L-friendly provisions that have been formulated for these very occasions.

5.4.8 Summary of need assessment

Burke (1996) argues that in providing WF/L balance initiatives organisations must a) ensure that employees are aware of provisions offered and b) evaluate the usefulness of the provisions offered to employees. Employees’ need for the FFO’s WF/L balance provisions is a potentially challenging situation and one that poses a dilemma for organisations. On the one hand, the FFO needs to cater to the diverse WF/L balance needs of employees, which mean that it needs to provide a wide range of provisions. On the other hand, such an approach can mean that awareness of what is available can be problematic; it can also mean that many of the provisions potentially will be used relatively poorly. Both these challenges can significantly contribute to the impression that the FFO’s WF/L balance program being rhetoric.

The low need levels point to, once again, a need for improved communications between the FFO and its workforce. Visser and Williams (2006) caution that organisations must ensure that their WF/L balance provisions offered are aligned with workers’ needs. However, because the external environment is dynamic, it is likely that workers’ needs and priorities can also shift. If the FFO does not want to face the prospect of its provisions being unused and accusations of rhetoric, it
appears that there must be a proactive approach to assessing workers’ needs. Effective WF/L balance programs mean timely provisions, hence a systematic assessment of workers’ current, medium and long-term needs.

This study suggests that similar to the link between awareness and demographics (Meager et al. 2002; Kodz, Davis et al. 2003) the demographics of the workforce can also be linked to need level. Around half the sample population had care of dependents, especially care for dependent children ‘aged 12 years and under’. However, the very low need levels for category 1 provisions suggest a larger problem. Even more worrying is that there were more males than females who had care for this group of children but who had less needs for these very provisions. It would be useful for the FFO to engage with this group to find out why this is so and alternatively what type of provisions they would welcome. The gender-based differences in the type of provisions needed are another important factor that needs to be considered. There can be significant rhetoric-reality gaps if employees perceive that a) their needs are not being met by the FFO or b) the FFO is providing provisions that are not needed by the employees.

5.4.9 Take up trail

The third and last of the variables that the study uses, to investigate the FFO’s rhetoric of providing WF/L balance, concerns employees’ experiences with take up of provisions. The take up investigation is based only on those provisions in categories 1 to 4, and 6. Therefore, instead of the total 50, only 47 provisions are used (see Table 2); all three provisions in category 5, ‘Organisational Cultural Issues’, are omitted in the investigation. The reasoning underlying this decision is that while employees are able to express awareness, and need for these three provisions, they cannot potentially apply to take it up. Hence while all 50 provisions were used in the previous two investigations awareness and need, here only the other 47 provisions are used.
5.4.9.1 ‘Aware, need, take up’ subset

Before any investigation and discussion of the sample’s take up outcomes can be conducted it is essential that the process, by which the final sample was derived, is explained. To begin, with the study clarifies the two types of per cent representations used in this trail. The first type uses the actual scores of each experience as the denominator, as shown under the ‘Scores’ column. The second type of per cent computations uses the FFO’s theoretical maximum provisions offered less the missing entries as the denominator i.e. the ‘Adjusted Maximum’, or ‘Adj. Max’ in the tables. Table 22 provides a summarised account of the outcomes of the trail process.

Table 22 – Take Up: Trail summary of ‘aware, need, take up’ experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample's Experiences (47 Provisions)</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scores Missing As % of Adj Max</td>
<td>Scores Missing As % of Adj Max</td>
<td>Scores Missing %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>870 29 48.7</td>
<td>979 3 38.4</td>
<td>1849 32 40.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>292 38 14.9</td>
<td>460 13 18.1</td>
<td>752 51 16.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>251 13.8</td>
<td>325 13.6</td>
<td>576 13.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 1.0</td>
<td>37 1.6</td>
<td>56 1.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>232 12.8</td>
<td>288 15.5</td>
<td>520 28.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 0.3</td>
<td>15 0.8</td>
<td>20 1.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>227 12.7</td>
<td>273 11.7</td>
<td>500 12.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>96.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first two experiences ‘Aware’ and ‘Need’ were previously analysed and discussed in this chapter; however, they were both investigated from the perspective of the 50 Provisions. In take up, as previously discussed, only 47 provisions are used, hence the figures for ‘Aware’ and ‘Need’ in the table reflect only these. These figures are used as the starting point in this trail, but as argued previously, the ‘Need’ responses includes both ‘actual’ needs (i.e. responses from those who were previously aware of the provisions) as well as ‘perceived’ needs (i.e. responses of those who became aware of the provision as a result of the survey). Therefore, to isolate scores based on actual needs, from the other, and to identify these scores for the subsequent trail of the take up investigation, the SPSS software was used to
extract all scores (by gender) which were ticked with ‘yes’ (value 1) to ‘aware’ and ‘yes’ (value 1) to ‘need’. Figure 4 on the following page shows the diagrammatic relationship between ‘Aware’, ‘Need’ and the presentation of the ‘Aware, Need’ subset of entries; the intersection of the ‘Aware’ and ‘Need’ constitute the ‘Aware Need’ subset and is the focus of the present discussion.

**Figure 4 - Venn diagram illustrating ‘aware, need’ subset**

In chapter 3, the study discussed the challenges and the reasons for the generally low take up of WF/L balance provisions (Campbell & Charlesworth 2004; De Cieri et al. 2005; Drew & Murtagh 2005; Dex et al. 2002; Hochschild 1997; Lewis 1997; McDonald et al. 2005; Visser & Williams 2006). This study has so far shown two predominant reasons for poor take up; issues of awareness of the provisions offered, and employees’ lack of need for the FFO’s provisions. The results, in Table 22 above, suggest these two problems are responsible for the low numbers (576 or 13.7%) of the ‘Aware, Need’ provisions that were potentially available for take up. However, the researcher is mindful that despite being both aware and expressing need for a particular provision, members of the ‘Aware Need’ subset might still not attempt take up.

**5.4.9.2 Aware, need BUT chose not to attempt take up**

The present study provides empirical evidence for yet another reason for the low take up, i.e. employees’ inclinations to not attempt take up despite an expressed need for them. This finding is centred on the ‘Aware, Need BUT’ experience in Table 22. Of the total 576 potential ‘Aware, Need’ provisions, 56 (or 9.7% of this potential pool)
were intentionally not pursued by the sample. At 11.4%, the female sample was significantly more likely than the male sample (7.6%) to not pursue take up. Overall, in the FFO, this meant that there was slightly less than 1 in 10 probability that a respondent would not follow through with their perceived need for a provision. The issue of employees’ intention not to pursue take up despite needing the provisions is further discussed in section 7.2.1.5.

5.4.9.3 Aware, need and attempted take up

Next, the study will use data from the sample data, from Table 22 above, to explain how the final pool of ‘Aware, Need, Take Up’ respondent scores were obtained. In the male sample there was a total of 251 ‘Aware, Need’ actual scores. Theoretically, there is a total maximum of 1880 (40 x 47) take up that the FFO can offer to the male sample. Accounting for all missing ‘Aware’ and ‘Need’ scores (of these 47 provisions) results in 1813 (1880 – 29 - 38) adjusted maximum. This means that 13.8% (251/1813) of the male sample were aware of, and in need of the FFO’s adjusted maximum. Recognising that respondents may not attempt take up of particular provision(s), despite being aware and having need(s) for them, the study posed a further question, ‘Needed it, but chose not to apply or use?’ against each provision. A ‘yes’ response to this question means the sample can be narrowed down to the subset that are aware of and needed the provision, and who would attempt take up.

7.6% (19/251) of respondent scores’ or 1.0% (19/1794) of the adjusted maximum were for a ‘Yes’ to the question i.e. these respondents chose not to attempt take up of certain provisions. Effectively, it meant that the balance 92.4% (232/251) of the male sample or 12.8% (232/1794) of the male adjusted maximum remained in the ‘Aware, Need, Attempted Take Up’ category. There were five missing take up details and this meant a further readjustment of the adjusted maximum, down from 1794 to 1789. Ultimately, this meant that the final pool of male sample scores in the ‘Aware, Need, Take Up’ category numbered 227 (or 12.7% of the adjusted maximum). The same rational is applied to obtain the figures for the female sample and the overall sample population. Overall, within the sample population there were 500 actual take up attempts (or 12.1% of the total adjusted maximum scores).
5.4.10 Take up outcomes

The next step of the investigation was to trace the outcomes of this subset’s take up attempts. Three types of outcomes are relevant. First, ‘Successful’, pertains to all attempts, where the terms and conditions of usage attached to provisions, were approved as it were. The second type of take up outcome is referred to as ‘Partially Successful’; it refers to the FFO’s approval of the take up being subjected to some changes to the original terms and/or conditions of usage attached to the provisions. The third and final outcome is ‘Unsuccessful’, where the respondent’s take up attempt is not approved. Table 23 shows all possible outcomes of this final pool of respondent entries.

Table 23 –Summary of take up outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aware, Need, Take Up’ Outcomes (47 provisions)</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scores</td>
<td>Scores as % of Adj Max</td>
<td>Scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Successful as % of Total Attempts</td>
<td>96.9</td>
<td>94.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partially Successful</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partially Successful as % of Total Attempts</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsuccessful</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsuccessful as % of Total</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Attempts</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, there was a very high level of ‘Successful’ outcomes; 479/500 or more than 95% of all take up attempts made were approved as per the terms and conditions of the usage. Based purely on the outcomes of this successful take up alone there appears to be exceptional levels of rhetoric-reality overlap. However, if we are to consider successful take up as a per cent of the ‘Adjusted Maximum’, we see that it is a low 11.6% (479/4118). As is evident from the table, ‘Partially Successful’, and ‘Unsuccessful’ were not significant outcomes, and therefore will be omitted from further analysis or discussion. The remainder of the chapter will analyse successful take up outcomes from an individual and FFO-level.
5.4.10.1 Successful take up (individual-level)

The null hypothesis is that there is no difference between the mean take up of the two gender sample populations. The t-test results are shown in Table 24.

**Table 24 – Successful take up (individual-level): t-Test results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.3333333333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>1.647058824</td>
<td>9.266666667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pooled Variance</td>
<td>6.182539683</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesized Mean Difference</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t Stat</td>
<td>-7.939781042</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P(T&lt;=t) one-tail</td>
<td>4.00239E-12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t Critical one-tail</td>
<td>1.663197509</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P(T&lt;=t) two-tail</td>
<td>8.00478E-12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t Critical two-tail</td>
<td>1.988610165</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were 35 males with successful take up, the remaining five failed to indicate their take up outcomes. On average, a male had 3 successful take up of provisions compared to the 7.3 by a female. The t value of -7.934 is significantly less than the t Critical of -1.9887, which means that the null hypothesis is rejected; there is a significant difference between the mean take up of a male and a female sample member ($\alpha = 0.05$). Table 25 on the following page shows a frequency distribution of successful take up rates by individuals.
Table 25 – Successful take up (individual-level): Frequency distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of Provisions</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;11&lt;18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that a significantly higher proportion (91.4%) of individuals in the male sample had between 1 and 4 successful take up (lower end of the distribution scale). In contrast, 86.3% of individuals in the female sample had 5 and 17 take up (higher end). The chart in Figure 5 shows more clearly the impact of the gendered distribution on the total distribution of successful take up.

Figure 5 - Successful take up (individual-level)

The chart clearly shows that take up by the male and female samples are congregated on opposite ends of the distribution scale. A high number of male respondents had 3
successful take up, though the highest by a male member was 7 provisions. Female respondents had a wider range of successful take up attempts. It is also evident that the lower numbers of successful take up by the male sample has resulted in moderating the average number of successful take up in the FFO generally.

5.4.10.2 **Successful take up (macro-level): Overall**

From Table 23 above, it is evident that overall, the 500 take up attempts were highly successful (479/500 or 95.8%). From the table it can also be computed that the total ‘Adjusted Maximum’ scores is 4106 (i.e. 91 x 47 or 4277-97-56-18). Hence, while the successful outcomes of the take up attempts are significantly high at 95.8%, at the macro-level this take up represents just 11.6% of the FFO’s total provisions offered. Table 26, provides the macro-level successful outcomes experienced by at least 10% of the sample (approximately 9 scores minimum) along with their per cent value (against the total attempts).

**Table 26 – Successful take up (macro-level)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>No of Provisions</th>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>As % of Total Aware, Need, Take Up (500)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Access to single days annual leave</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rostered Days Off</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flexible work schedules/hours</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bereavement leave</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Salary sacrifice options</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Study leave/Financial assistance</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Carer’s leave</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Time in lieu</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Computer training programme**</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Home Computer Purchase scheme**</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Superannuation and other retirement provisions</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Health insurance benefits for employees</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Wealth Management Planning seminars</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Take Up (As % of Adj Max) 9.1

Adj Max\(^5\) - Adjusted Maximum (= 4379)
14 of the 47 provisions were successfully taken up by at least nine of the sample. These 14 accounted for 80% of all successful take up. The highest overall successful take up (14.8%) was for ‘Computer Training Programme’.

### 5.4.10.3 Successful take up (macro-level): Gender-based

Finally, in Table 27 the study presents the same investigation but this time presenting only successful take ups of at least 10% by gender. In the event where only one gender group met the criteria the data fields of the other gender is blanked out and shaded.

#### Table 27 – Successful take up (macro-level): Gender-based

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>No of Provisions</th>
<th>Male (N1=40)</th>
<th>Female (N2=51)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flexible work schedules/hours</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Part-time work (for reasons other than childcare)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rostered Days Off</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Access to single days annual leave</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Maternity leave</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Paternity leave</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Carer’s leave</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Time in lieu</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bereavement leave</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Study leave/Financial assistance</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Work and Personal Life Training Program**</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Relocation assistance</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Family orientated events</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Wealth Management Planning seminars</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Computer training programme**</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Home Computer Purchase scheme**</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Health and Fitness program</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Superannuation and other retirement provisions</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Health insurance benefits for employees</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Average Successful Take Up (as % of Adj Max)**: 10.8%

Adj Max\(^{a}\) = Adjusted Maximum = (For \(N1 = 1784\) and for \(N2 = 2322\))

There were 21 provisions that had at least one or more successful take up by either one or both genders. The provisions for which the male sample had successful take up differed from the ones of the female sample. Gender-wise, there was no
significant difference between the mean take up of the two samples ($z = -0.38116$, $z$ critical two-tailed $\pm 1.955963$ p-value = 0.7031).

### 5.4.11 Successful take up (individual-level): Other studies

In this section the study presents the results from two further investigations. First, the study sought to follow up on claims that employees’ experiences with WF/L balance, from an organisational context, are dependent on their employment ranks (Kimmel 1993; McDonald et al. 2005). The second investigation was aimed at those in the sample with child care responsibilities. A number of authors (Adamson 2002; O’Brien & Shemilt 2003) suggest that workplaces tend to be more supportive of working mothers. Hence, the study sought to investigate the link between successful take up of child-care provisions by working parents.

#### 5.4.11.1 Successful take up (individual-level): By employment rank

Data pertaining to the individual successful take up of respondents along with their employment group level were extracted, sorted, and tallied. Employment group levels 1 to 4 constitute the management rank, while group levels 5 and 6 constitute the non-management rank. There were 10 missing data (employment groups) and these were omitted in the computations. The results are presented in Table 28.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of provisions</th>
<th>By Management</th>
<th>By Non-Management</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequencies</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;11≤18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There were 37 management and 44 non-management respondents. The mean successful take up by the management sample was 4.7 provisions compared to the 5.9 by the non-management sample. The mode was 3 successful take up by the management sample and 2 for the non-management sample. The highest successful take up by the management sample was for 12 provisions compared to the 17 by the non-management sample. Statistical computations accepted the null hypothesis that there is no difference in the mean successful take up the two sample groups ($t = -1.5176 < t_{Critical} = 1.99$, $\alpha = 0.05$) in this particular FFO. Statistical analysis of successful take up using various combinations of gender and management type failed to reveal, in all cases, any significant differences (at $\alpha = 0.05$).

5.4.11.2 Successful take up (individual-level): Child care provisions

To remove the influence of confounding variables, the investigation was limited to a) respondents who came from dual-parent households and b) those that identified that they had care for children (aged 0 to 12 years). In the Australian context, a child in this age bracket would include children who have not yet started formal school as well as a majority of those in primary school. This study assumes that at the minimum, this group of children would require some parental care. There were 18 males and 16 females in the sample who had care for children, however 15 males and 12 females had care for children aged 12 years and under.

Next, again to remove the impact of confounding variables, the study culled the fifty provisions to those that were firstly gender-free, and secondly, those that could potentially influence respondents’ time spent in child care and associated domestic responsibilities. These provisions, referred to as ‘family (child) friendly’, are shown in Table 29 on the following page.
As is evident from the table, very specific gender-biased provisions such as ‘Maternity Leave’, and ‘Paternity Leave’ were excluded but the more general non-gender biased provision; ‘Adoption Leave’ was included. The table shows that the exercise resulted in only two categories, ‘Category 2 – Flexible Working Conditions’, and ‘Category 3 – Leave Options’ for the investigation. There were a total of thirteen ‘family (child) friendly’ provisions. Next, the study investigated the gender-based successful take of these 13 ‘family (child) friendly’ provisions by the sample. Of the 15 male parents and 12 female parents who had care for children under the age of 12, 75% of both samples only (12 males, 9 females) successfully took up any one or more of these provisions. The results are shown in Table 30 in the following page.

### Table 29 – Successful take up (individual-level): ‘family (child) friendly’ provisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Category Description</th>
<th>Provisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2        | Flexible working conditions | 1. Flexible work schedules  
   2. Jobshare  
   3. Part-time work for child-care  
   4. Telecommuting  
   5. Rostered days off  
   6. Access to single days annual leave |
| 3        | Leave Options | 1. Adoption Leave  
   2. Paid Parental Leave  
   3. Parental leave without pay  
   4. Leave without pay/Career Breaks  
   5. Pro-rata access to long-service leave  
   6. Carer’s Leave  
   7. Time in Lieu |
Table 30 – Successful take up (individual-level): Has children aged 0-12 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Provisions</th>
<th>Successful Take Up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male (n1=13)</td>
<td>Female (n2=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Flexible working conditions</td>
<td>Flexible work schedules</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jobshare</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part-time work for child-care</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telecommuting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rostered days off</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to single days annual leave</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Leave Options</td>
<td>Adoption Leave</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid Parental Leave</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parental leave without pay</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leave without pay/Career Breaks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pro-rata access to long-service leave</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carer’s Leave</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time in Lieu</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Counts</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean successful take up of a provision</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean take by an individual</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean take by an individual with child under 12 years of age</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On average, each one of the 13 provisions was equally taken up by both genders. A female, however was on average slightly more successful; she took up 3 provisions compared to the male’s 2.2, but statistically there was no significant difference, \( t = -1.0857 > t \text{ Critical} -2.1315, \alpha = 0.05 \). This study found that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean successful take up of provisions and the gender of parents with young children. However, if the whole cohort of parents (15 males and 12 females) who had care for children under the age of 12 years are taken into account, the average take up works out to be 1.9 for a male, which is slightly lower than the 2.3 of a female.

5.4.12 Summary of take up assessment

To recap this section it is important to keep in mind that the take up investigation is based on the sample population that has transcended the rhetoric-reality hurdles posed first, by the ‘aware’ experiences and second, by the ‘need’ experiences. Hence, this is an exclusive subset of the sample population. If the FFO’s rhetoric-reality challenge was to be judged solely on the outcomes of this sample’s take up attempts, it passes with astounding results. 95.8% of this subset was successful in their take up attempts, i.e. there were no amendments to the terms and conditions of usage
attached to provisions. It means that the rhetoric matches the reality or alternatively that the rhetoric-reality discrepancy is a low 4.2%. These figures improve even further if the ‘Partially Successful’ outcomes (take up subject to some changes to the original terms and/or conditions of usage) are considered as part of the overall success; the rhetoric-reality match is 97.4%. A gender-based investigation showed that the mean male take up of 3 successful provisions was significantly less than mean female take up of 7.

Unfortunately though, organisational rhetoric is gauged overall and not simply on the basis of the experiences of some exclusive subset. Hence, the macro-level measurement, represented by the per cent figures using the ‘Adjusted Maximum’ as denominator, is deemed more significant. The macro-level take up was found to be 11.6% and fits in with De Cieri et al.’s (2005) study’s findings that 50% of the organisations surveyed had less than 20% of their employees taking up provisions.

The investigations showed that only 14 of the 47 provisions (29.8%) had take up values that met with the 10% (i.e. by at least 9 sample members) established cut-off for successful take up. There was no significant macro-level difference between male and female take up in this area. On average 17 male members and 16 female members took up one of these 14 provisions. Contrary to suggestion by Duxbury and Higgins (2001) that management level staff have more take up than non-management staff, this study found no such case in this FFO. There was no significant difference in average take up although there was a distinct pattern in the distribution. Many more of the male sample took up lesser provisions (four and less) while lesser numbers of the female sample took up more provisions on the higher end (5 and more provisions); the net effect overall was that males and females had similar average take up of provisions (2.2 and 2.1 respectively).

The investigation of successful take up by those who had care for children aged 12 years and under, of the exclusive set, showed that there was no significant difference in the average take up of the ‘Family (Child) Friendly Provisions’; on average a female took up 3 provisions and a male 2 of these provisions. However, this finding needs to be considered in light of the significantly poor awareness of the sample...
overall and particularly by the female sample, for provisions in ‘Category 1: Child and dependent care initiatives’. Poor employee take up of WF/L balance provisions has been highlighted by a number of authors (Campbell & Charlesworth 2004; De Cieri et al. 2005; Drew & Murtagh 2005; Dex et al. 2002; Lewis 1997; McDonald et al. 2005; Visser & Williams 2006). The next chapter present the results and findings of the interview transcripts which provide further insights into the probable causes for the poor take up.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided the results and discussions into the first stage of the multi-method study of WF/L balance in the case organisation. This study was based on a quantitative study of the case organization using a survey instrument. The basic aim of this stage was to apply the conceptual framework and measure the rhetoric-reality discrepancy. Three areas of employee experiences, awareness, need for, and take up, were used to explore the nature and extent of the gap between rhetoric and reality of organisational efforts to provide employees with WF/L balance. In all three cases the study has been able to confirm the critical aspects of existing literature, that employees’ experiences with their organisation’s WF/L balance offerings is generally poor.

First, poor employee awareness of the FFO’s provisions is a problem. Despite using a low 60% awareness as the cut-off, the study found that overall the FFO managed to obtain only 45.6% awareness. Micro-level analysis of the 50 provisions showed that some of the provisions far exceeded this cut-off and the study suggests that hold vital clues on how awareness can be improved in other areas. In line with Burke’s (1996) proposition this study argues that the FFO, should aim for a higher cut-off and begin by looking at its communication channels and processes. The study also confirmed the findings of Meager et al. (2002) and Kodz, Davis et al. (2003) that awareness is linked to demographics; specifically females have lesser awareness. The study found that awareness for category 5 provisions, i.e. provisions related to organisational cultural issues was generally high. Second, there was generally a very poor macro-level need of around 20% by the sample for the organisations total offerings
(Adjusted Maximum). However most of this need was concentrated for a few select provisions. A micro-level analysis showed that the need levels across the 50 individual provisions were very uneven with only a few meeting the overall average of 20%, hence a much lower level of 10% cut-off was used. Only 26 provisions met with this reduced cut-off. Again, need for category 5 provisions, i.e. provisions related to organisational cultural issues were very high. Third, poor take up is a problem in the organization; at macro-level the take up was a low 11.6% and in line with the literature (De Cieri et al. 2005). The study acknowledges that poor take up is a result of the flow on effect of poor awareness and poor need, and is possible that if these two are addressed there would arguably be improvements in take up.

In the next chapter, Chapter 6, the study presents the results and findings from the qualitative study, i.e. the in-depth interview. The qualitative aspect is designed to uncover the reasons for the rhetoric-reality gap. In Chapter 7, the study brings together the findings from the quantitative and qualitative aspects.
CHAPTER 6: INSIGHT INTO THE FFO’s GAP CONTRIBUTORS

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4: Research Methodology, it was established that to develop a more complete understanding of the FFO’s efforts to provide employees with opportunities for WF/L balance, it was necessary to use a multi-methods approach to the case study. That chapter also included a discussion of the reasons underlying the decision to use both quantitative and qualitative methods in the one study; the fundamental reason being that the combined approach permits data triangulation and in the process also produces richer and more robust findings. Creswell’s (2003) Sequential Exploratory Design (11.2a) was adopted in executing the combined approach. Consistent with this specific design, the field work approach was a tiered one. The research commenced with the quantitative phase and on its completion, the qualitative phase was conducted.

The results of the quantitative phase were discussed in Chapter 5. The focus of the quantitative investigation was the measurement of the level of discrepancy or gap between the FFO’s rhetoric of providing employees with policies and provisions that could help them with their WF/L balance attempts, compared with the reality as experienced by employees in their attempts to use these very policies and provisions. Such an investigation, with its focus on gap measurement, aligns this phase with the positivist paradigm. While rhetoric was measured on the basis of provisions offered by the FFO to employees, reality was measured using three types of employee experiences: awareness of, need for, and take up of the provisions offered. Overall, the findings showed that there were significant gaps between organisational rhetoric of providing employees with opportunities (via provisions offered) for WF/L balance, and the reality of employees’ experiences with these very provisions. However, knowledge regarding the degree of the rhetoric-reality gap level only
provides an insight into the extent of the problem and as a gauge to evaluate organisational effectiveness in providing WF/L balance. Thus, while knowledge of the gap levels is quite useful in helping determine the size of the problem, it is inadequate in providing insight into the nature of the problem, particularly as to why the gaps exist.

A qualitative study, on the other hand, allows for a detailed examination of the probable causes for the gap levels. It is clear that each approach, quantitative or qualitative, on its own is inadequate in fully understanding the extent and nature of the problem, and it is for this reason that the mixed methods approach was used. The mixed methods approach may be regarded as synergetic – each approach on its own provides a view of the problem but together provide a more complete picture of the extent and nature of the problem.

In this chapter, the results of the qualitative stage of the within-case study are provided. In the main, the qualitative study involved in-depth semi-structured interviews of twenty employees of the FFO, as well as content analysis of the FFO’s documents that explicitly stated and promoted its WF/L balance stance. In section 4.5.3.2, the study discussed the contemporary trend to use ‘Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software’ (CAQDAS) programs to manage, organise, code and analyse qualitative data, and also identified that the present study will use NVivo, version 2.2, software (QSR 2002). The section also detailed that qualitative data analysis would be guided by a grounded theory framework to theory development using a social constructivist approach and that both subjective and objective approaches would be used. The subjective approach, in the main, involves the application of the conceptual framework, ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’ as well as the findings from the quantitative aspects of the study, namely the survey findings, to inform and guide the qualitative data analysis. The study also relies on the objective approach, whereby the researcher uses little or no pre-conceived ideas to guide the data analysis, preferring instead to rely on the data to ‘speak’ to the researcher and reveal new ideas and concepts or emergent findings, and for this to provide the impetus for subsequent theory development.
This study heeds Bringer et al.’s (2004) calls to ensure transparency and accountability when using CAQDAS programs to analyse qualitative data and to report its findings. The authors offer a number of ways to achieve this, such as through the use of journals, memos, and ‘snap shots’. It is worth noting that their paper was based on Bringer’s doctoral thesis, which was fundamentally qualitative in nature and thus the study’s use of various types of tools to provide transparency and accountability is noteworthy. The present research, however, utilises a mixed methodology. In particular, this study predominantly relies on the use of ‘snap shots’ of data and results as a means of providing evidence of the “electronic audit trail” of the qualitative analysis (Bringer et al. 2004, pp. 253-54).

### 6.2 Social constructivist approach

The qualitative aspect of the research, namely the interview transcripts, provides vital clues to identifying the nature of the possible contributing factors of the significant rhetoric-reality gap. NVivo software was used to organise and analyse the sheer volume of qualitative data. As mentioned above, the qualitative analysis was guided by grounded theory principles to theory development using the social constructivist approach, and both branches of this approach, a subjective and an objective approach (Chamaz 2000) are used.

The rational for a dual-centred approach, i.e. incorporating both subjective and objective approaches to the qualitative data analysis is explained in detail in section 4.5.3.2. Briefly, the subjective approach may be regarded as the situation whereby a researcher uses prior knowledge regarding the issue being studied to guide the analysis. It could be argued that such a reliance on pre-conceived ideas and concepts is limiting, as it may provide a narrow or ‘tunnel vision’ view of the problem being analysed. However, being subjective and relying on pre-conceived ideas, particularly when it is framed by experience, is not necessarily negative; Gummesson (2000 p. 15, 57), as discussed in section 4.3.2 refers to this form of subjectivity as illustrative of “preunderstanding”. The argument is that prior understanding can be beneficial as it allows the researcher to use initial knowledge to build a more complete understanding of the phenomena being studied.
On the other hand, it may also be argued that if the subjective approach is the only mode of analysis then there is a possibility that new and emergent strands of ideas and insights might be overlooked and the potential for deeper meaning ultimately lost. This is where the objective approach provides crucial advantage; the researcher embarks on the analysis with little preconceived ideas guiding the exercise. The aim of such an exercise is for the data to ‘speak’ to the researcher, and to help reveal new and emergent themes, concepts, and issues (Grbich 1999, p. 113), so that the researcher can embark on subsequent theory development.

Before any further discussion of the findings take place it is necessary to outline the procedures taken to protect the identity and confidentiality of participants as well as that of the case organisation. Consistent with the care taken in other chapters in protecting the identity of the case organisation, the same care is exercised by replacing all named references to it in the transcripts to ‘The Bank’. The case organisation also has a special designated name for its staff intranet website, and the same due care is exercised; all references in the interview transcripts to the named intranet site are replaced with the pseudonym, ‘XYZ’. Additionally, the identities of participants were similarly preserved with the use of pseudonyms. The entire list of participant pseudonyms and their key characteristics, relevant to the ensuing discussion in this chapter, is provided in Table 36 in the following page for subsequent reference.
The NVivo coding and analysis resulted in four broad areas of findings (in no particular order of importance or discussion), shown as ‘Tree’ nodes in Figure 6 here.

**Figure 6 - NVivo findings: WF/L balance index tree**

The four parent tree nodes: ‘Rhetoric-Reality Gap Challenges’, ‘Other WF/LB Challenges’, ‘Employees’ Views of WF/LB’ and ‘Emergent Themes re WF/LB’, feed into the four aims of this chapter. The first aim is to present the data and findings into the probable causes for the significant rhetoric-reality gaps. The second,
to present data and findings of other more general organisation-related issues and challenges that could have impacted the FFO’s overall effectiveness in providing employees with WF/L balance. The third, to provide an insight into employees’ views of WF/L balance in general, and more specifically of their organisation’s WF/L balance efforts. The researcher believes that such awareness of employees’ views and insights can help the FFO (and other organisations) channel their efforts into harnessing, addressing, and/or improving crucial areas. The fourth and final aim of this chapter is to present any new and emergent ideas and themes not addressed in the current WF/L balance literature, that are crucial to understanding WF/L balance in general. Essentially, the nodes addressed in the first two aims were constructed using the subjectivist analytical approach while the latter two were constructed using the objectivist analytical approach.

The subjective aspect of grounded theory development means that pre-existing ideas, hypothesis, theoretical frameworks, methodological techniques, and questions are used to guide the analysis of data to construct meaning (Chamaz 2000; Miles & Huberman 1984; Strauss & Corbin 1990). In this study the subjective approach is evident at three levels.

First and foremost, the qualitative study was purposively planned and designed to be conducted after the completion of the quantitative phase. The aim of the quantitative study was to reveal the state of the FFO’s WF/L balance efforts by measuring the rhetoric-reality gaps in three key areas, employees’ awareness of, need for, and take up of the WF/L balance provisions. The nature and extent of the qualitative study was to be informed and guided by the results of the quantitative phase. The quantitative findings showed low levels of employee awareness of, need for, and take up of the provisions said to be offered by the FFO, which supported the need for an extensive qualitative study.

Second, the quantitative findings influenced the design and nature of the interview questions. As a result of the quantitative findings, the interview questions were constructed around attempts to understand why there were these significant rhetoric-
reality gaps. It therefore introduces the second level of subjectivity into the qualitative study.

Third, and finally, the subjectivity arises from the researcher’s reliance on existing literature for vital clues on underlying causes to inform and guide the analysis. In this instance the clues were centred on the same three test variables, employee’s awareness of, need for, and take up of the WF/L balance provisions. Thus in the main, this aspect of the qualitative data analysis is well within the subjective social constructivism paradigm.

6.3 Insights into rhetoric-reality gaps

This section is concerned with the underlying reasons for the significant rhetoric-reality gaps that were found in the quantitative studies. Hence, as shown in the right frame of Figure 7 the qualitative analysis used similar constructs to those used in the quantitative study, namely the parent nodes, ‘Need Issues’, ‘Awareness Issues’ and ‘Take Up Issues’.

Figure 7 - Rhetoric-reality gap challenges

These three nodes appear in the order stated in this figure because of nVivo design constraints. There is a precise order to any attempts to study these three variables; the order of events is governed by the fact that before participants can avail or take-up the FFO’s provisions’ offered, they needed firstly to have an awareness of what is offered and secondly, to make personal assessments if they needed the provisions
offered. Hence, this same order, awareness, need, and take up issues, is used in presenting the findings of the qualitative data analysis.

6.3.1 Challenges to awareness of provisions

Before the awareness issue is explored any further it is appropriate to note that the topic is a contentious issue to investigate, as is implied in the observations of Alan, a senior male manager:

Maybe they [staff] wouldn’t recognise that there is flexibility that they are enjoying, such as, some of them do come in early and finish early. They may not recognise, may not be aware of it.

What Alan appears to imply is that employees’ lack of awareness could in effect be just a perception. Some employees were, in reality, availing themselves of the FFO’s WF/L balance initiatives but without realising that they were in effect utilising such provisions. This observation, or caveat, is crucial to the study and will be taken into consideration in subsequent analysis and interpretation of awareness. The analysis revealed six broad categories of issues, shown as nodes in Figure 8, which could explain the overall low awareness for the provisions offered.

Figure 8 - Awareness issues underlying rhetoric-reality gaps

The FFO has a named staff intranet site, referred to as XYZ in this thesis. The FFO’s 2000 Annual Report provides a very complimentary account of XYZ and its powerful features, including the search tool. In 2005, in a submission to the Parliament of Australia on balancing work and family, the FFO clearly highlights and promotes XYZ as a prime feature of its WF/L initiatives. Overall, the findings show that nearly all participants were aware of XYZ. The following interview extracts reveals more of their awareness. Alan states:

We have an intranet site called XYZ and most new initiatives are published on there. And if it was, say a particularly large initiative and one which I can readily think of as an example is the family-friendly joint venture that ‘The Bank’ is going into around child-care. It’s been published on XYZ quite widely so that’s one way in that you can find out. Now as things become more accepted, that’s also the place where all our policies etc. are kept. So if you want to look up any of those things you can get in, get into those.

Alan’s statement seems to suggest that the FFO goes to great lengths to ‘advertise’ on XYZ prospective WF/L balance initiatives, such as child-care, that are particularly significant to staff. There is also the expectation that as staff become more aware of new initiatives; they would need to personally conduct further searches on XYZ for the various related policies, and to personally assess their suitability and eligibility. However, the following account by Rosemary provides quite a different perspective of the functioning of XYZ.

Normally we’re updated within our division; they send out an email every week to update everything that’s going on. I do check them out just to see what the highlighted links are, and to see whether it’s any added value. Everything on there … it is the nature of my work that I need to know these things…. you’re just clicking to see because they highlight the things that are coming up, you just can look at the screen. …on the front page of it, it actually got icons and they give you, they say that ‘… announcing annual results’. And they’ll tell you that there is a new product. You can click on it,…they got quick links that tell you.

Her account shows XYZ as a general staff site, and used as a communication medium to alert staff to anything of significance occurring within XYZ, including for
example, when annual reports become available or when a new banking product is released. The implications of this finding will be further explored under the issue of ‘Poor communication’. Rosemary’s job specifications require her to keep herself informed of the latest company policies and provisions, just as Rosa’s does:

To start with, I’ve been doing admin work for the past four years, so therefore I have to update myself with all the policies and all that stuff and how it works, it is part of my own work, the policies and what the bank offers you and what you can and can’t take. The policies and everything is on the system [XYZ] for anyone to have access and have a read.

The following two extracts provide more understanding of XYZ and the expectations required of staff. Mark’s narrative is provided first, followed by Andy’s before they are discussed:

The bank has a website call XYZ, where you can go and get information, about everything that is happening in the bank - even people who don’t know things can go. And rather than people coming and telling you this is what we have, you can go in to a search and you can find so many.

(Mark)

Our XYZ site, and that’s pretty good, because anyone, in any level, can go and view the same information and get details about whatever it is that interests them; parental leave or if that was flexible work hours and all those sorts of things. You can go in and find out what the policies are, and what you can and can’t do. If you want career breaks, if you want to take extended leave for some particular reason, how you go about arranging that.

(Andy)

A key concern regarding awareness is that management and employees perceive provision of WF/L balance differently. Many of the accounts of WF/L balance are by management; three of the above comments were made by male managers and two by females in non-management roles that required them to be knowledgeable with the policies. There was however, general concurrence from all those interviewed, that while XYZ is available to all staff, individuals had to take responsibility to personally access and search XYZ for policies and provisions that are particularly relevant and applicable to them. This means that individuals must have the time, put in the effort, and have the necessary skills to search through XYZ to find out more
about the policies and provisions and to work out individual entitlements. Thus, while participants’ awareness of the presence of XYZ intranet site as an invaluable resource is noteworthy, their actual experiences with the site could provide the vital clues for the generally poor awareness for the FFO’s WF/L balance policies and provisions. More specifically the analysis revealed three categories (nodes) of awareness challenges to do with the XYZ intranet site: ‘Lack skills’, ‘Lack time’ and ‘Lack “space”’.

6.3.1.1 Lack of technical skills impacts awareness

The first node, ‘Lack skills’ is used to group poor awareness through not having the appropriate technological skills to either access XYZ, or to search it for information regarding particular WF/L balance policies and provisions. The following transcript extracts highlight the challenges in this area. That of Olga is provided first:

*They said there’s [XYZ]. We are quite busy, and I’m not very computer literate, so I don’t know how to quickly scan the computer. ... in the old days, memos used to come around to inform everyone - things that are available, things on offer. It would be a lot easier for us “oldies” who don’t really know how to get it. ... I wouldn’t know how to go and actually find what that carer’s leave is about.*

From Olga’s narration, it appears that she has very limited knowledge of XYZ and its functions and openly acknowledges her limitations to her lack of computer literacy. She tries to explain this lack of knowledge and her inadequate technological skills, in part, by a lack of time. Her comments are suggestive of those who were used to times when memos were an important form of communication, and who have been left behind in the transition to a computerised business environment. She is unaware of the FFO’s carer’s leave policy; something that could help her with her WF/L balance needs, given that she has a young child. The next account by Jean suggests that lack of awareness due to lack of technological skills is commonplace in the organisation.

*I know some of the things, ...but most of the people don’t. Last month I was showing one of the staff members, about carer’s leave...have a look through XYZ, you can have carer’s leave [under] those circumstances, but they don’t know how to search. One of the staff members [management] too didn’t know that.*
It appears that Jean considers herself comparatively better off when compared to others, in terms of awareness of provisions and her technological competence. Her account also highlights that the lack of skills is not confined to non-management staff. It is possible that some managers are unaware that not all staff have the necessary computer skills to browse and search the XYZ site, for example Paul, a manager claims, “… everyone is very well versed in using computers”. To a probing question whether XYZ is user-friendly, Alan, a senior manager, commented:

*It’s reasonably user-friendly. The search functions I don’t find particularly helpful. If I type in something, if I type it into ‘Google’, you know, pretty good chance the first five [results] would be what I’m looking for. It [XYZ] tends to not be particularly, not good at finding things.*

Alan’s comments suggest that the lack of technological skills is further compounded by the poor design of the intranet site. To a probing question whether ‘The Bank’ provided staff training in how to use XYZ, Olga said a clear “No” while Max, a manager said:

*I don’t think so. No one trained me, and I’ve learned everything of the internet by myself by following…*

However, as the passages above indicate, even among management there was not complete agreement with the views expressed by the organisation in its 2000 annual report of the exceptional features of XYZ, including its search capabilities as mentioned in section 6.3.1. In other words, the annual report contained a degree of rhetoric that was contradicted by interview participants’ discussions of their lived experiences.

### 6.3.1.2 Lack of time impacts awareness

The ‘Lack time’ code was used to group together comments of participants who explicitly or implicitly attributed lack of time to access XYZ for the generally poor awareness of WF/L balance policies and provisions. While this lack of time was attributed to both the office and home environments, by and large, it was the lack of time during office hours that most participants lamented. Participants reported being unable to access XYZ, compromising their ability to adequately keep themselves
abreast of the FFO’s WF/L balance provisions and policies, and/or take advantage of special offers. An important observation is that this particular form of ‘lack of time’ was voiced only by non-management participants. This finding is further explored here. The first extract is from Sally, who is in a supervisory role in Department X,

*That layer [non-management] is the problem. They are so busy, …. just doing their work that they don’t have time to do that - go on to XYZ and to read about it and find out what their rights are really. …People on the phone, people who are constantly preparing documentation and things like that, where they have to meet certain criteria like doing data entry, you need to enter say, 12 lots everyday, and 12 will take you a long time.*

In Sally’s view it is the constant, demanding and time consuming nature of the work of non-management staff that is responsible for their general lack of ability to access XYZ during office hours, and consequently their incomplete awareness of their rights to their organisation’s WF/L balance provisions and policies. Thus the lack of time appears to be driven very much by the nature of work. The demanding nature of the work in Department X is further supported by Grace’s narrative:

*When I was involved with [Department X], I was in an operational role, and I would’ve said I had no time there to really look at XYZ…In this one, [Department Y], I have time yes, my dead lines run over usually weeks or months, whereas in an operational role deadlines runs in minutes, hours, or a day.*

Grace’s experience confirms that it is the particular nature of the type of work non-management staff engage in that affects their ease and ability to access XYZ during office hours. Grace’s experience was that her previous more demanding job in Department X was one which had very short deadlines, which effectively precluded her from accessing XYZ. In her current job in Department Y, there are comparatively longer deadlines, which she perceives as crucial in allowing her time to access XYZ. Jean provides another angle into this problem of lack of time:

*… you know we have a staff club that gives you …accommodation at Batemans Bay area, Gold Coast and some other places. Because I am a staff club member, I would like to know, because it’s cheaper. Sometimes they give $100 for one week [accommodation] or something like that. Nowadays, you don’t have time to go in and check where you can stay. Sometimes they have some sales and things like that, and then you don’t get it; unless it pops up in the email. You don’t get into those [XYZ], even though there is a full webpage*
Jean’s account shows that a lack of time and the freedom to peruse XYZ during working hours has compromised her and other employees’ ability to take full advantage of some of the organisation’s incentives and opportunities for WF/L balance. Alan, a manager, who is not from either department, provides further insight into the nature of the work of non-management staff, which could explain their lack of time.

Perhaps with non-management staff their tasks are much more task-based and therefore if you finish the task then we give you another task to do; so we keep you fully employed.

From the narratives presented here it may be concluded that the nature of the work that non-management staff undertake is one of the issues underlying the lack of time. Non-management staff are generally assigned work that has to be completed within a given timeframe, either on a daily or hourly basis. However as indicated by Alan’s observation, when the assigned work is completed ahead of the set timeframe, the staff are delegated more tasks to complete. Such a workplace culture provides some insight as to the differential experiences with XYZ, and awareness of policies and awareness by management and non-management staff. Inherent within Alan’s observation is another critical challenge, lack of ‘space’; an issue which further compounds the awareness of non-management staff.

6.3.1.3 Lack of ‘space’ impacts awareness

Closer reflection on Alan’s account, in the previous section, points to close monitoring of non-management staff. How else can those in a supervisory or managerial position be aware that assigned tasks have been completed and staff be delegated more work? Being so closely monitored is the precise point raised by Jean:

No time, nowadays they are monitoring us. Like they go around … Trust us, don’t come and look over our back, which stream are you in, are you on the phone, are you looking at the web…
Jean’s account suggests that supervisors are closely monitoring workers and their activities by walking around and observing their actions. When probed why she thought that staff were being closely monitored Jean said:

…some staff members are misusing [the system]…they are on the phone for a long time [on] private matters.

While Jean’s account of being monitored might appear as an isolated occurrence, the next few accounts suggest that it is a systemic problem in the FFO. Sally states:

…once they had this thing called ‘ten minutes of XYZ’, it’s like they give you a voucher, and you can use it everyday ten minutes on XYZ. So you can just go, and if your manager came up said “what are you doing?” You can say “I’m ten minutes on XYZ right now”. And so they had the opportunity to go in there and look what’s on the front page and read the stories, search a few things, and not feel guilty. But then that was kind of phased out after a while.

Sally claims that FFO originally had a practice whereby non-management staff were issued with ‘vouchers’ which guaranteed them ten minutes daily access to XYZ. As a supervisor, she felt that this voucher system was particularly useful to her and to the other non-management staff under her care, as it meant that they could have unobtrusive use of XYZ. When probed further, Sally said that she did not know why the voucher system was suddenly dropped but laments that it was removed without any due consultation with non-management staff. The underlying implication of the voucher system and its subsequent removal is the presence of a clear system of differential access to XYZ during office hours. Management and non-management staff had different liberties in terms of accessing XYZ and these experiences are clearly noticeable in some of the narratives presented so far. On the other hand, Peter’s view was that:

People are not so much ignorant; it’s just that they don’t know what’s there, it’s not available to all.

Peter works in the same department as Sally and Jean. To a probing question on whether he had the liberty to log onto XYZ anytime during office hours, Peter’s response was in the affirmative. The one outstanding point of differentiation between these two contradictory accounts of non-management experiences is gender. Could a
differential experience of being closely monitored and consequently perceiving a lack of ‘space’ or the liberty to peruse XYZ, bear a relationship with gender? That is could it be that female staff are more closely monitored than male staff? If this be true, what are the underlying causes and possible implications?

6.3.1.4 Personal attitude impacts awareness

Personal attitude refers to an individual’s approach to one or more of their organisation’s work-family/life provisions and policies. Such an approach, which includes awareness, may be argued to be unique to an individual and may bear a close relationship with how relevant a particular policy/provision is to the individual. A number of participants have referred to this link between awareness and relevancy in their interviews. Rosemary, for example, perceives:

If nothing is relevant to you, you wouldn’t go into it [the WF/L links in XYZ]

While Paul suggests:

…you might hear things; people talking about it and say it’s interesting, you might want to check it out. At the end of the day if it doesn’t have a bearing, I don’t really look in to it, unless it really affects me

It appears that if employees perceived that the broad criteria of particular policies or provisions were irrelevant to them it was unlikely that they would further pursue the appropriate links and this could result in their poor and limited awareness of the policies/provisions. Alan’s comments further elaborate this point.

…if you haven’t got children, and you’re not worried about childcare, you probably have no idea about the bank does, because you just overlook it, it’s just ignored.

What Alan is stating is very relevant; employees who have no children are not likely to take an interest in policies and provisions related to children, such as child-care facilities, or care leave, and would therefore have either very limited or lack complete awareness of such policies and provisions. To a question, why she uses
XYZ, Holly, a mother of two young children, reinforces this relationship between awareness and personal attitude framed by life experiences and needs:

... because I recently had 2 children, I had to become aware ... I didn’t always have kids. I was always very interested in the study leave [because] I have a team of people reporting to me, so I need to look at the provisions that they have an interest in.

In this comment it is evident that Holly’s and employees’ attitudes to their organisation’s policies/provisions is dynamic, and shifts according to life experiences. Additionally, as a team leader Holly was very interested in the ‘study leave’ policies and provisions as it was a key area of interest to staff under her supervision; she felt that it was her duty to be aware of them. Later, when she had children, she had a personal need to be also aware of policies and provisions related to children and her entitlements. Thus, at different times during their employment in an organisation employees can have different needs and accordingly display different attitudes to the policies/provisions offered. Therefore awareness is very much dictated by personal attitude which in turn is framed by life experiences and related needs. There is also a strong sense of some staff’s commitment to keep themselves aware of policies and provisions because of their supervisory roles and the need to communicate to others. Holly’s comment above, and Rosa’s comment provided in section 6.3.1 bears testimony to the efforts of some staff to be effective communicators.

6.3.1.5 Communication challenges impact awareness

The link between inadequate communication and low awareness of WF/L policies and provisions is well established in the literature and has been discussed previously in section 3.7.1.1. Hence in this section the nature and challenges of the FFO’s communications of its WF/L policies and provision will be analysed. However, before the interview data is individually analysed and interpreted the overall challenges in terms of organisational communication is discussed.

The FFO, as required in the 2001 ACCI awards submission, provided a total of six key communication channels by which staff were kept informed of WF/L balance
policies and provisions. These channels included: XYZ, the human resources call centre, Enterprise Agreement negotiations, hard-copy circulars, discussions by line managers, and monthly periodicals. However, the broad findings of the interview narratives showed that participants and the FFO did not completely concur on the communication channels which helped raise their awareness. Most of the participants concurred with the FFO that their awareness was raised by the staff intranet site XYZ, but some also mentioned other means including word-of-mouth, emails, and circulars. Barring the email channel, the remaining two channels could be argued to have a direct or indirect link with those cited by the FFO. However, it is surprising that three of the channels cited by the FFO, human resources call centre, Enterprise Agreement negotiations, and monthly periodicals, were not mentioned by any participant. This last finding could be construed as providing the crucial evidence for the FFO’s rhetoric that staff are kept informed through various channels. The reality, as may be gleaned from participants’ perspective, is that the ‘grapevine’ plays an equal, if not more important, role in raising awareness compared to some of the other FFO cited methods. Another broad difference has to do with the ‘discussions by line managers’ cited by the FFO. While participants did acknowledge the role line managers played in raising their awareness, both management and non-management also gave due credit to fellow staff.

Figure 9 on the following page shows the results of data analysis. There were six key channels participants relied upon to keep abreast of the FFO’s WF/L balance policies and provisions.
The particular challenges associated with each of these channels will be discussed. The first key communication channel is the staff intranet site XYZ. While both the FFO and participants in general acknowledge the vital role that XYZ play in helping raise awareness of WF/L balance policies and provisions, they also reveal a number of inherent communication challenges associated with it, as shown by the following data:

I think some awareness of initiatives is perhaps there when [first] launched, and then after that they, sort of get forgotten about… I mean apart from family-friendly initiatives, … there’s all the other information you got to absorb,...it [XYZ] is also the place where everything comes through, from a credit policy point of view, human resources, absolutely everything. …I mean there is a bit of a joke, that if you want to keep something secret, you know, you put it on XYZ. …There’s so much information out there… if you want to find it, you can go and find it but ....

There is much that can be gained from Alan’s observations here. First, that it is quite likely that there could be initial awareness of a policy/provision when first implemented but it is very unlikely that employees are able to sustain such awareness over time. Second, there is the prospect of information overload; XYZ as the staff intranet site, besides containing links to the WF/L site, also contains links to policies, documents, materials and links relevant to other aspects of organisational life such as human resources, and banking matters. Third, the implicit message is that it is not that easy to use XYZ to search the information sought, and the joke that it is in fact a
good hiding place. This last point about XYZ’s search facility has been reiterated by Alan and analysed in section 6.3.1.1 above.

The second communication channel was the ‘direct – people’ method, i.e. when someone else helps raise awareness. A number of participants spoke about individuals who first made them aware of or alerted them to particular policies/provisions. There are two aspects to this. First, there are the narratives from participants about their roles which required them to keep themselves abreast of WF/L policies and provisions so that they could duly inform others under their care, such as in the case of Jean (non-management) in section 6.3.1.1 and Holly (management) in section 6.3.1.4. Second, there are also the accounts from individuals on the important role some staff (both management and non-management) play in helping them built up their awareness. Nick, a non-management participant states, “I guess from the word of mouth”. A sentiment similarly echoed by Paul:

*Email and word of mouth by senior management …. [Alan] mentioned that… the other week; I didn’t know about it, and [Alan] said it was on XYZ.*

It is important to note that though Paul is himself a manager, he was unaware of some of the provisions until he was alerted to them by a colleague. As a manager, Paul has staff under his supervision, and his lack of awareness is revealing given that the FFO attests to ‘discussions by line managers’ as one of the principal ways by which staff were kept informed of WF/L balance policies and provisions. This narrative also shows aspects of the differential awareness among managers themselves. Mick’s account, for example, provides further insight into the vital role that managers play, not only to non-management staff but to other managers as well.

*My regional executive when he holds his weekly regions meeting; if there’s something that needs to be communicated …he will communicate it to us.*

Alan’s comments on this matter provide crucial clues as to how other staff can help improve individual awareness.
I still think that most people get far more out of face to face, hearing from someone. And one thing I did hear recently, only a few weeks back was, in our staff survey it came out, that the people really didn’t understand a lot of the people processes, including the family-friendly ones.

Alan’s experience is that staff preferred to hear about policies and provisions as they were introduced, and that there was clear evidence from staff surveys that employees did not quite understand the WF/L processes that were in place. The following narrative from Alan shows how the FFO attempted to address the poor awareness.

... we actually had an hour-long presentation at a very high level saying, if you want to find out about salary this is where you go; superannuation, this is roughly how it works, and if you want more information this is where it is. We covered things like parental leave and lot of the staff said, they got far more out of that than leaving it on their own to go and do it.

What the FFO did was to conduct face-to-face sessions with management staff to help raise and build their awareness of what is available and links/places to go and search for further information. Such sessions were done in the belief that it would be communicated down the line. However, there are challenges associated with conducting such sessions, as is further revealed by Alan:

But it physically took them away from their desk; it got them all in a group together where they couldn’t be distracted. It’s hard to get them together …especially when you’re so scattered. …in [our division] we got six or seven sites in NSW, it shouldn’t be too hard to cascade [the information] back down. It’s the people out in the branch, how much they know which is far more challenging.

Face-to-face sessions appear to help raise awareness of managers. The managers are, in turn, able to help pass the knowledge learnt onto others in their departments and branches. The problem, however, is the logistics of organising such meetings given that the departments and branches are physically separated by vast distance (see section 4.4.2). There is also the problem that such meetings would need to be organised on a regular basis so that managers are kept informed. Alan perceives that awareness levels at the branch-level are more worrying than that at divisional level, which is where he is. Participants identified that a third principal channel of communication was surveys. Staff acknowledged that the FFO’s regular staff surveys
to gauge satisfaction with WF/L policies and provisions actually helped them become aware of some of the policies and provisions. For example Rosa states:

... they survey it, they ask questions like “are you happy, not happy, what would you like”? We have a big survey every year, and some smaller ones, about 2 to 3. It is not compulsory, but they want to know how you feel.

And Mick similarly expresses:

...each year, I think it’s every 12 months, there’s a staff survey. There are questions … I’m pretty sure they ask you things like “are you aware of this sort of things”, “what’s your view on the bank’s work life”...

However, raising awareness of what is available via a survey does not necessarily mean that one understands how the policy or provision works. This point was previously emphasised by Alan and has been discussed above.

The fourth communication channel that participants identified was email. As mentioned above, the FFO did not identify this channel in the submission documents, but Paul comments, “We usually get an email and they usually have a link to a page“. When probed further on what type of policies/provisions employees are alerted to via email, Paul responded, “You get more emails about the bigger picture stuff”. Max’s account provides further evidence that email alerts are not the norm:

... sometimes we get emails coming out from HR and a perfect example is that we’ve all been offered a reduction in interest rates from our credit cards, effective today.

Inherent in Max’s narrative is a fifth channel of communication, identified as the node ‘self-motivation’ in Figure 4 above. This channel refers to an individual’s own motivation and drive to keep him(her)self well informed of available policies and provisions and their entitlements. Max continues:

If it was something I wanted to know, I’d go out of my way to find out how to use it. Now there is someone sitting out there and they know these things, and if you want to know about it, find a way… I’d go to my boss and say, “I need to access XYZ, how do I go about it?”. I’d ring IT people and say, “give me the
new IP driver address that I need to put in so I can access XYZ from home.

From the discussions so far it is evident that XYZ is the principal storage site for access to and information related to the FFO’s WF/L balance policies and provisions. From Max’s narrative it is quite evident that he is both self-driven and computer savvy; these combinations of skills appear to be crucial to his sense of being in control of and being able to manage his own WF/L balance needs. However, while such skills are exemplary, it cannot be assumed that everyone else in the FFO has the same skill sets to articulate and manage their own WF/L balance needs.

The sixth and final communication channel, the hardcopy circulars, was mentioned by two participants. Mick states:

*We get the key sort of circulars...The Regional Executive may send out of operations in Melbourne; all of corporate and small and mini enterprises get weekly notification of certain circulars.*

Jean too mentions the organisation’s use of circulars:

*...but later on they passed a notice [circular] and said they want a [medical] certificate [in reference to changes to terms of conditions whereby employee’s sick leave entitlements be used to cover their carer’s leave applications]*

Despite the emphasis by the FFO to the awards committee that hardcopy circulars are one of the principal communicating methods, the limited recall by participants is suggestive of inherent challenges associated with this medium and accordingly not entirely an effective means of raising awareness.

6.3.1.6  Awareness among non-management staff

The analysis regarding awareness has so far shown that where managers are concerned, most reported considerable awareness of the WF/L balance policies and provisions. Additionally managers acknowledged positive experiences with the principal communicating channel, the staff intranet site, XYZ. In this section the focus is on the experiences of non-management staff, particularly their often limited
awareness, and the underlying reasons for these, as contained within the narrative. Two types of evidence are provided. The first piece of evidence is insights from participants who supervise non-management staff. This has been discussed previously, such as Sally’s account discussed in section 6.3.1.2. Sally deemed that it was the hectic pace and the demanding nature of the work of non-management staff that inhibits their overall access to knowledge regarding WF/L balance initiatives, consequently causing them to have comparatively lower awareness. The second piece of evidence is provided from accounts from non-management staff themselves. In this first narrative, Olga, who has a really young child, says:

*I really don’t understand what carer’s leave is. I had three days sick off with my son, and when I put down [submitted] my leave, I saw carer’s leave there and I thought, should I put that or what? It’s never really been explained what carer’s leave is.*

Another insight is that of Peter’s:

*I ask my boss and manager or someone, I just ask, quite often I just ask. There is nothing really that I know, that I am aware of, that and this, and this is how it works. I know there is carer’s leave and stuff like that.*

Both these narratives are from non-management staff; in comparison, management staff did not show any such general lack of knowledge of the crucial elements of the FFO’s WF/L balance offerings. It is such insights that have led us to conclude that awareness is much more of a problem for non-management staff. Inherently tied up within this finding is the realisation that awareness therefore becomes a gendered issue. How so? Just looking at Table 31 shows a clear disparity in gender distribution of management participants; of the ten management participants, only one was a female. More importantly, we have previously established that management staff have unlimited and unencumbered access to the staff intranet site, XYZ, that contains all information pertaining to the organisation’s policies and provisions including those that concern WF/L balance. This explains why awareness of the FFO’s WF/L balance offerings emerges as a gendered problem.

With this discussion the thesis concludes the qualitative findings related to poor awareness as a possible explanation for the quantitative findings that significant
rhetoric-reality gaps exist between the FFO’s offerings of and employees’ experiences with WF/L balance. In the following section the focus shifts to the qualitative analysis of need issues as another of the possible reasons for the rhetoric-reality gaps.

6.3.2 Issues regarding provisions that are needed

In the previous section the study analysed factors related to awareness which could cause significant gaps between the FFO’s rhetoric of providing employees with WF/L balance against employees’ practical experiences with it, from an organisational context. In this section, the focus shifts to the second variable, need issues, and examines participants’ narratives for insights into the possible contributory factors for the gaps. Figure 10 below shows that the analysis resulted in two broad findings represented by the nodes, ‘Individual nature’, ‘Unaligned needs’.

**Figure 10 - Need issues underlying rhetoric-reality gaps**

![Node Explorer - XXX's WF/L Project](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Passages</th>
<th>Created</th>
<th>Modified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual nature</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7/06/200...</td>
<td>29/04/20...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaligned needs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2/08/200...</td>
<td>29/04/20...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The contexts of these two nodes are described and explained in detail before the analysis and the results are discussed in the sub-sections. The first node, ‘Individual nature’, is used to categorise aspects of the narratives that support the notion that the rhetoric-reality gap arises due to variances in employees’ need for the 50 provisions offered by the FFO. The variances arise out of two fundamental aspects of the
provisions offered. First, it is clearly evident that no one employee will require all 50 provisions. There could be a number of plausible explanations for this. A predominant reason, though, is the fact that in any organisational attempts to provide WF/L balance there will always be provisions that are gender based, such as maternity and paternity leave, and thus it is unlikely that an employee will be eligible to both. Second, it is also highly unlikely that an employee, at any given point of time, will seek to use every one of the provisions that he/she is eligible to use. The reason being, as was discussion in section 3.7.1.2, that many of the provisions that employees may be eligible to take up are particularly relevant to them at different stages of their working life. For example, provisions related to retirement are particularly relevant to employees in the latter stages of their working life. This shows that provisions related to retirement are unlikely to be heavily needed in an average organisation, and such provisions could accordingly negatively implicate the rhetoric-reality gaps.

The second node, ‘Unaligned needs’, is used to capture and categorise participants’ narratives that indicate some degree of non-alignment between their needs for provisions and that which the FFO perceived as employees needed. It is important to note that this second node is dealt with only after the first node is explored and extracted, and therefore the two nodes are quite separate. ‘Unaligned needs’ in essence captures all those instances, over and above the reasons addressed in the first node, why employees’ perceive that they have no need for the remaining balance of the provisions offered. In the following sections, the thesis presents and discusses participants’ narratives in terms of these two broad issues, argued to be responsible for the significant gaps in WF/L rhetoric-reality, from a needs perspective.

6.3.2.1 Individual nature of employee need

The individual nature of employee need for the provisions offered can significantly impact the WF/L balance rhetoric-reality gaps. This was discussed in the preceding section where two crucial facts regarding need were established. First, that not all provisions are needed by all employees, by virtue of one or more inherent personal characteristics that obviate the need for some of the more specific provisions. Thus, male employees could possibly have a need for paternity leave but never that for
maternity leave, while female employees, accordingly, would exhibit reversed needs for these two same provisions. This means that, as far as the organisation is concerned, the need levels for these two provisions would in the main be influenced by its demographic characteristics, for example its gender balance. To illustrate the extent to which employee demographics can influence need levels and consequently give rise to significant rhetoric-reality gaps, the category of provisions related to child and dependent care is used as an example. The focus on this category of provisions is crucial to this discussion on need as it clearly exemplifies the point being made, that not all employees of an organisation have children or elders under their care or otherwise. The quantitative study (see section 5.4.7.1) showed that the FFO had four of its fifty provisions in this category, yet there was a need of only slightly more than six per cent overall. Hence, if only a few of the FFO’s employees consider themselves as having care duties, it is possible to foresee that for many, the reality is that they have no need for any one of these provisions.

Many of the accounts addressed in section 6.3.1.4 under the awareness discussion, for example, that of Alan and Holly are also relevant here in this present discussion. The underlying meaning of their accounts is that not all employees need provisions related to children. Andy’s account makes a precise note of this issue of need:

*Personally I do not need many of them. But, I have to say that as a line manager, I need [to know] just about all of them, because I have a team out there that have so many family issues that impose on their work life.*

Andy perceives that though he personally does not need many of the provisions he does need to know about them because employees under his management require nearly all of them. Thus, while individual needs might be restricted to a few provisions at any point of time, the reality is that on an organisational level the sum effect of the various individual needs can mean that the whole spectra of provisions are required at that same point of time, albeit poorly in some and highly in others.

The second issue of low need arises because the reality is that employees need access to particular provisions at different stages or particular times of their work life. This means that while the FFO has to offer a wide range of provisions, it is also extremely
likely that the need levels across this full range of provisions offered will waver because of variances in employees’ life experiences during the course of his/her work life. Thus, for example, while every organisation has to make available provisions, such as employee assistance programs, maternity leave, paternity leave and adoption leave, the reality is that its applicability and usefulness is potentially relative and will vary according to employee circumstances at different stages and times of their work life. This further means that, from an organisational context, there is likely to be significantly low level of need across these types of provisions and at any point of time. Alan’s narrative, from a managerial perspective, provides valuable insights into the shifting needs of employees under his care:

[A] number of staff, probably close to the number of pregnancies we’ve got, asked the question “What is ‘The Bank’ doing about childcare?” … The biggest challenge I sometimes face is, some event happens in some person’s life and they need additional time off or whatever.

This shows that pregnant staff perceive child care provisions to be an integral part of the FFO’s commitments to their WF/L balance needs. Alan also highlights the fact that employees’ needs are also driven by their present needs and flexibility is therefore paramount. On the other hand, Andy’s account shows how, as a manager, his own personal needs have changed according to circumstances:

I’m getting financial support for my study, ok that means, I’m getting paid more than somebody else, because that’s there for a brief period of time, that’s there for a reason.

Andy perceived a need for the study leave provision because it was part of his work requirements but it was for only a short duration of his work life at the FFO, and it was a compulsory aspect of his career management. In this final example, Lee, a manager speaks about his specific needs for a provision that is still in the pipeline in the FFO:

I’d like to be able to package our childcare cost, as an item I can incorporate part of my salary package, fringe benefits.
This point concludes the discussion regarding the highly individual nature of need and the resultant organisational implications, i.e. the FFO in a bid to cater to diverse employee needs is faced with the fact that it has to provide a wide range of provisions. Such an approach inadvertently also demonstrates that at any particular point of time it is highly likely that not all the organisation’s provisions offered will be needed; this in turn is likely to cause significant rhetoric-reality gaps in WF/L balance. In the next section the discussion diverts to unaligned needs between employees and the FFO’s provisions as another aspect of the need variable that can negatively impact WF/L balance rhetoric-reality gap.

6.3.2.2 Unaligned needs - employee and the FFO

As emphasised previously this node captures all those instances, over and above the reasons addressed in the first node, why employees have no need for the provisions offered. Data analysis revealed two broad categories of findings regarding employee needs and how these match with the FFO’s offerings. The first category represents the situation where employees perceive a need for a particular provision, and the FFO does provide it, but there is non-alignment between the nature of the offering and employees’ expectations of them. In other words, employees perceive that the very nature of the offered provision as unappealing or inadequate to pursue. The types of provisions referred to here are, generally, those that involve the provision of service products such as health and fitness programs, health insurance benefits and child-care programs. In all these instances, employees have a choice of taking up similar offerings from external providers. This freedom to choose the needed product/service from a third-party can significantly impact the rhetoric-reality scenario in the FFO. Alan’s narrative provides more on this issue.

*I certainly don’t [use the health insurance]. I think it, many years ago, was sort of launched. I haven’t seen anything into it since and it wasn’t advertised very well either. But when it was launched at the time, I investigated and no, it wasn’t competitive. It didn’t match what I already had, so I didn’t change. But there’s been no ongoing dialogue that I’m aware of, short of publishing of it [health insurance]. In actual fact, staff benefits like, what cheap accounts you can get etc. etc., are poorly understood and information on it is very complex or difficult to find.*
Alan’s account illustrates his personal awareness of, and need for a health insurance provision. However, his personal assessment of the provision as offered by the FFO was that it was not as attractive as some of those offered by industry, or the insurance he already had at that time. It appears that while he felt a need for the health insurance provision, he did not need the version provided by the FFO. Another insight from this narrative is the strong sense of a lack of employee consultation and input in organisational efforts to draw up WF/L balance policies and provisions. Alan’s account also reinforces the awareness challenges discussed in section 6.3.1.

The interview findings are crucial in light of some of the revelations of the quantitative study which showed that participants expressed relatively higher need for many of these service-, and product-type provisions offered by the FFO. In other words, as far as particular type of provisions were concerned there tended to be closer alignment between that which was needed and that which was offered by the FFO. This gives an illusion of relatively lower rhetoric-reality gap levels. For example, the health insurance provision was among one of the top ten provisions that had more than 39% need levels. On the surface the need for this provision looks promising; it appears that sufficient numbers of the FFO’s employees perceive a need for the health insurance provision. This in turn points to a reasonable alignment between the organisation’s rhetoric of providing employees with WF/L balance and the reality of employees’ perspective, albeit in terms of this particular provision. However, Alan’s last narrative shows that such results on their own can be quite misleading and indicate that caution needs to be exercised when examining, analysing and reporting such gap levels. Alan’s interview shows the underlying reality of other deeper level issues which exist despite the relatively good match between provisions needed and those that are provided by the FFO.

The second category of findings refers to the case when employees perceive that some of the provisions offered are generally insignificant in terms of their portrayed value or the conditions of take up. In discussing this category the researcher bears in mind the findings of the previous section where it was established that the FFO needed to provide a wide range of provisions because of diverse employee needs, and so it is natural that the provisions offered will not be to everyone’s satisfaction.
This is, however, a complicated problem, one which does not solely lie with individual demands but more with the rigidity of the structure and terms of the provision itself, as is evident from the following narratives. Alan states:

But there’s been say some flexible leave arrangements where you can take an additional time off or whatever else. Where in many respects that’s already covered by already existing policies, they just been re-branded or relaunched. And you look at some of these things and you say, well big deal, or something comes out and sounds great, you can take off additional time to do study or whatever else, but you can’t have any accrued leave, you can’t have any long service leave etc. etc. etc. And so people say, well by the time I use all that, why would I want that? So I think, particularly in some of the flexible leave arrangements, some of those are lots of different varieties of it and perhaps you could just cover up by one general policy.

Bobby offers another view:

And more flexibility in the leave policy in the sense, not make it compulsory, you have to take 10 working days at one stretch.

Both Alan’s and Bobby’s accounts are suggestive of a strong sense of rhetoric undercurrent in some of the flexible leave provisions and policies. Also evident from Alan’s insights is that some of these policies/provisions appear to be redundant and could be viewed as organisational efforts to bulk-up WF/L balance offerings in terms of numbers. The following narratives provide further insight into this relatively high employee needs for the FFO’s flexible start/finish policy and provisions said to be on offer to employees Nicky, a non-management staff offers her views:

Some people have tried to, for instance, get more flexible hours, however the type of work that we do here, doesn’t really allow it, because our working hours pretty much start from 8:00 to 5:00. And our customers know that the office opens at 8:00 o’clock, and quite a few of them would ring at 8:00 o’clock and they do expect somebody to answer the phone, and given if you are not there to answer, you are pretty much not doing your job right. That’s part of your job, you need to be there to meet your client, clients’ need. So it’s really hard for us to change much in terms of the hours that we are working, and that’s I guess, in terms of flexibility that’s probably the main issue... everyone would like to have flexible hours,... but that’s what’s expected of you, eight to five, you are excepted and you live with it.

Nicky’s viewpoints are based on third-party observations and she appears to rationalise why flexibility is not practical in her department. On the other hand
Bobby, a manager, expresses personal frustrations with not being able to access the flexible start/finish work provision:

*I can’t have any flexibility of timework and etc, I’m required to be in the job during office hours every day of the week, unless I have annual leave, or there is some leave arrangement in place. So I wouldn’t have that flexibility to for example, start 8 or 9 and finish up at 4 o’clock and start the day at 6 o’clock and finish at 3 o’clock. …depends again by division by division, and unit by unit….in the corporate banking sphere….there is not enough scope for flexibility as far as time etc are concerned because any assistance, you want them there, at that time to do the job. You don’t have the luxury of allowing them to have flexible timeframe unless you are on the relief staff or something on that nature.*

Yet again both these narratives indicate employee experiences are suggestive of strong undertones of organisational rhetoric. Both show that in some instances despite employees need for particular provisions matching organisational offerings of them, the reality of the workplace is that employees are unable to access them. Such negative experiences can contribute to their perceptions that the FFO’s WF/L balance efforts are more in line with organisational rhetoric. As a final example, Nicky’s narrative is used to highlight the gap between employees’ and the FFO’s perceptions, in terms of provisions that are needed:

*… I would love to have rostered days off because, given that we have the 8 to 5 hours we don’t really get much time to do things, like pay bills and do other stuff. You can pay bills over the intranet nowadays but those that you need to do during the working day, during working hours, which you just don’t get a chance to do during work. Go to the post office pick up a parcel, you can’t do that during the day, because you are at work, stuff like that, I guess it would nice to have that.*

It is clear that Nicky, who is an Assistant Manager (a non-management position), perceives a strong need for rostered days off (RDO) provision. However, her first sentence suggests that it is not available to her. But how can this be when RDO is clearly stipulated in the Work and Family Awards submission documentation. Or how is it that most other staff in the same job role and/or position are able to take RDO as a day off? To more clearly understand Nicky’s predicament we need to refer to Rosemary’s account of the RDO:

*We now have market rate… Assistant Managers get their RDO component and a market allowance all put into their salaries.*
What we learnt is that while the RDO in its original form was previously offered to all non-management employees, an amended version of the provision had subsequently emerged that was applicable only to new assistant managers, Nicky included. Instead of days off work for the extra hours worked, the assistant manager was financially compensated for the extra hours worked. This is what Nicky is unhappy about; she clearly perceives a need for the well-earned time off work. The controversy surrounding the amended RDO provision provides damaging evidence of the FFO’s WF/L balance rhetoric.

RDO is featured as one of the listed provisions in the FFO’s Work and Family Awards submissions in 2001 and 2002. However, the submissions make no mention of the changes to this provision. A document submitted by the Finance Sector Union (FSU) to the Australian Parliament, obtained well after this study’s interviews were conducted, sheds more light on this issue. For reasons of safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of the case organisation the referencing details of this document are omitted. The document notes that in 2001 the FFO amended its official working week for a certain category of non-management workers from the original 38-hour week and 13 RDO to 40-hour weeks with no RDO. New employees were given the option to work 38-hour week across 20 days without RDO or 40-hour weeks across 20 days without RDO but with single payments for the extra hours worked. After a long conflict, which involved both the Australian Industrial Relations Commission and the Federal Court, the FSU and the FFO came to an agreement whereby employees would be given the option to either receive their RDO entitlements as per se or to receive them as payment in lieu. This issue of RDO is further discussed in sections 6.3.3.1 and 6.3.3.2 and can offer some insights as to why the FFO adopted the changes.

The narratives and findings thus far clearly show that the FFO appears to be faced with a key dilemma. On the one hand, the FFO needs to offer WF/L balance in terms of a wide range of provisions for the diverse needs of its employees, and additionally because many of these provisions are relevant to employees during different stages and periods of their work life. On the other hand, such an operative decision also means that many of these provisions may potentially not be required by any
employees at a given point of time and this can result in large gaps between employee needs and employer’s offerings and give the illusion that the FFO’s WF/L balance efforts are more rhetoric than reality. This means that it is quite likely that there will be significant gaps between rhetoric and reality when employees’ need for provisions is used as a test variable to measure gap levels.

This also means that FFO must take a proactive approach and ensure that such dilemmas are adequately anticipated and factored into the design and implementation of their WF/L balance programs and initiatives. It needs to make certain that it communicates with employees and ensures that the provisions it offers are those that employees actually need, rather than, as one participant (Andy) stated, “not an item on the cafeteria shelf left to collect dust”. Additionally, if significant numbers of employees do not need the versions of the provisions (products/services) offered by the FFO, it appears that the FFO might need to reassess its offerings and find out why they are unappealing, or if other provisions should be offered in their place.

6.3.3 Issues regarding take up of provisions

As previously outlined, analysis of the rhetoric versus reality of organisational attempts to provide employees with WF/L balance is approached by using the subjectivist constructivist approach. Effectively, this meant that the first part of the qualitative analysis was very much guided by the conceptual framework, ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’, and the quantitative study was framed around the three variables, awareness, and need and take up of provisions offered by the FFO. In this section the findings of the third and final variable, take up of provisions, is presented. Figure 11 on the following page shows that the nVivo analysis resulted in four broad areas of concern, represented by the nodes ‘Discretionary power’, ‘Conflict with work’, ‘Cost implications’ and ‘Conflict with family’, that impaired employees’ bid to take up needed provisions.
The context of each node is discussed before the detailed analysis of each is provided in the following sub-sections. The node ‘Discretionary power’ encapsulates all instances whereby managers or supervisors were able to directly or indirectly intervene and thereby prevent employees’ requests for and/or attempts to take up needed provisions. ‘Conflict with work’ refers to instances whereby employees did not take up needed provisions because work needs clashed with personal needs. In most cases such conflict situations were perceived by participants themselves and could have been real or imagined, i.e. participants themselves could have incorrectly deduced that work needs would pre-empt their ability to take up needed provisions. The third node ‘Cost implications’ includes those occasions where employees were denied take up of provisions offered because it would have been too costly to implement and thus provide. The fourth and final node, ‘Conflict with family’, refers to a few rare occurrences whereby participants did not take up needed provisions because to do so would have meant some amount of conflict in other areas of their family life.

6.3.3.1 Discretionary power impacts take up of provisions

There were a number of narratives in the interviews that pointed to discretionary power, therefore only a selected few are provided here. In the first of the narratives,
manager Lee provides an account of one non-management staff’s attempt to take up the telework provision to help her with her WF/L balance needs:

We got a situation at the moment, where we have an assistant manager who has a child who asked if she can telework two days a week, and work here three days and that has been rejected.

Lee’s narrative provides the evidence and insight into one of the potential underlying causes for the significant WF/L balance rhetoric-reality gaps, namely managerial discretion. It is clear that the staff concerned perceived a need for the FFO’s telework provision, but her request was declined as a result of managerial assessment of her merits to the provision. Two participants provide crucial insights into the logic of the decision-making surrounding managerial discretion. Andy offers views on the decision-making and rationale that he and other managers embark upon in deciding whether or not to award subordinate requests to take up the study leave provision.

Thankfully in my term I haven’t had someone come to me and be knocked back on study leave, but I suspect there may be in other parts [of the bank]. The bank will only support various types of courses, obviously....The organisation will provide study support to people that they perceive to be people who will progress and people who are even managerial or will progress to managerial. That has to include some perception as well. If you are not already management, will you actually stay with the organisation after you finish studying?....If you got someone who applies and the feeling amongst those who have to make the decision is that the bank doesn’t have stacks of money to hand out for study assistance all over the place.

But if you make a perception that the person may not reach management, really if you support them through their studies the organisation doesn’t stand to benefit anything terribly much. That’s really a perception that the people making the decisions have to make. You have to knock them back and that’s not always easy, because people feel that I’ve been underdone or something like that....

Andy’s rationale and decision-making in granting requests to take up the study leave provision is framed by two key considerations. The first is his strong conviction that the bank does not have the financial means to approve all study leave applicants. The second is that to honour the first he is bound to apply certain criteria to evaluate the suitability of applicants. His account clearly shows him relying on three key criteria:
the type of course, the type of applicants (managerial or non-managerial), and finally the prospects of the applicants’ continued presence within the bank. Andy continues,

But someone somewhere needs to make a decision about it. If we support this person through study, it will be good for the person, but it will also have to be good for the organisation. If the organisation’s going to pay for it, the organisation has some right I believe to get something out of it. Not saying because I’m a manager in the organisation, but logically if you going to help someone get through something, what’s in it for the organisation? If there’s a view that really there isn’t much in it for the organisation, why would the organisation offer up support if it was really no additional benefit….

We would look for someone who has been with the organisation for a period of time first. And where we have a number of people who are competing for limited resources, so the bank might say “well … we’re not going to support everybody, we got this much cash available to support people” I’ve never seen numbers, I don’t know that happens. You might make a decision around that person’s potential within the organisation before you allocate.

What the narrative clearly shows is that managerial discretion is based on the manager’s perception in two key areas. The first perception involves the manager’s discretion or call that the course the employee intends to pursue benefits the organisation. The second instance is when the manager uses his/her discretion to decide the suitability of the employee seeking the provision. In the case of management staff seeking the provision, the decision is grounded in the perception that the staff will stay on, and contribute to the organisation on completion of their study. In the case of non-management staff, the manager’s perception extends to deciding whether the staff concerned are potentially managerial material. The discretion, clearly, is individually based and subjective; there are no criteria or guidelines and the assumption is that it is a role expected of managers as decision-makers. It also appears to be evident that perceptions of merit and contribution are strongly coloured by the position the person requesting the provision holds in the organisation, with such perception strongly demarcating between management and employees.

In the following narrative, Ivan a manager outlines the reasons why he declined a subordinate’s request to take up the ‘career break’ provision.
I had someone a while ago, who wasn’t performing too well in the role and she wanted six months off. She’s only been here for about eighteen months. She wasn’t performing, she wanted 6 months off as a career break, to finish some study, and I understood her predicament, and that was a hard decision to make. Because really what she wanted to do was something that she’d already been doing and if she just finish this it could be good for her personally, but I had to say, look you have to be performing here, it has to be two-way. If we give you 6 months off, but we’re not going to hold the position open when you aren’t performing anyway. One of the issues for us at that time was, we’ve had huge amount of business volume coming through, we couldn’t really afford to let someone go and not sort of replace. I couldn’t guarantee a spot for her; I wasn’t willing to say ‘yes, we’ll allow you the career break’.

Ivan’s perception is that the staff concerned is under-performing and is therefore not entitled to such a provision. This decision is despite acknowledging that the staff concerned has requested a career break to help her complete her studies in an area related to her work. What seems to be a paradox here is that it is possible that the staff considers the completion of her studies to be necessary to improve her performance, either through being able to devote more time, energy, and effort to work or through the knowledge gained through the formal education. Clearly, Ivan is in a position to grant her the short career break, one that could be temporarily filled and held until she returned. Sally, a non-management staff, offers a different angle to the issue of managerial discretion in an employee’s take up of the RDO provision. To probing questions on staff’s take up of their RDO entitlements, Sally provides the following insights:

…it has to be cleared by your manager; you have to be approved by your manager to take it. You could accrue them, so you don’t lose them. If you just can never ever take them, you can have them paid out. They will pay you for those eight hours, rather than you taking that leave. … some, certain period of the year you can’t [take the RDO], because it’s just so busy and even having one person go off, its hard. You got especially before Christmas time, when clients are trying to settle their property before that time… and you’ve already got people on annual leave, and gone, and families and what not, so you got to make that sacrifice. Because there are less people doing more work, if you can avoid taking a day off …

Sally’s narrative shows that managerial discretion is crucial to employees’ ability to take up accrued entitlements to RDO. Plainly, while employees are entitled to as many RDO earned, they appear to not have the right to use it as and when it suits them. Employees can lose their RDO entitlements to have days off work because the FFO considers it more important that these entitled workers turn up for work and
instead pays them their RDO entitlements in lieu. This finding is crucial in clarifying and further understanding the reality of the rhetoric-reality gap levels. In this case, take up of RDO includes an employee taking the day(s) off work as well as the situation when managerial discretion dictates that the employee be paid in lieu of the traded-in RDO. The discussion in section 6.3.2.2 illustrates that the FFO had exercised high-handed discretion in the case of the RDO provision for new assistant managers. Without due consultation, those in power designed and implemented a revised form of the ‘RDO’ that required this subset of employees to work 38-hour or 40-hour week with the days off option replaced by a financial payment for the extra hours worked.

One of the strongest messages coming from all these narratives is that managerial discretion is often exercised in good faith, in overwhelming support for the organisation’s needs. Fundamentally, such support is grounded in the belief that some of these provisions are costly and that the bank receives more requests for these types of provisions that it can possibly, financially, afford. In Andy’s case it is not clear what he means by ‘benefit’ to the organisation but it does appear to be material benefit. In all these narratives, subordinates’ requests to take up the various provisions - study leave, career break, and RDO - more often than not have meant that managerial discretion primarily involves placing the FFO’s needs ahead of employees’ work and family balance needs. While it may be argued that it is the actions of few individuals (managers or supervisors) that exercise managerial discretion that can negatively contribute towards the rhetoric-reality gap, it does not necessarily alleviate any due responsibility from the FFO.

6.3.3.2 ‘Conflict with work’ impacts take up of provisions

As mentioned in section 6.3.3, ‘conflict with work’ relates to participants’ real or imagined perceptions that their take up of much needed provisions interfered with workplace needs and resulted in non-take up. In discussing how work itself can influence potential applicants’ decision not to take up needed provisions, we need to refer to the last narrative in the preceding section. Here, Sally suggests that employees are often unable to utilise their earned RDO entitlements because exercising their rights to such entitlements conflicts with the needs of the workplace.
In such instances of potential or perceived conflict, employees were obliged to accrue their RDO, or in other instances trade in their RDO and be paid in lieu. It was also outlined in section 6.3.2.2 that at the time of participating in the Awards submission process the FFO had initiated an Awards clause that effectively prevented certain categories of non-management workers’ access to RDO. We subsequently learnt that the FSU was successful in negotiating with the FFO to rescind their decision and to leave the choice of either taking RDO or getting paid in lieu, up to individual employees. Such an approach by the FFO to reduce employees’ take up of the RDO provision strongly supports the notion that workplace pressures or even mere awareness of workplace needs, does interfere with and inhibit employees’ attempts to take up needed provisions. In another example, Nicky, a non-management participant, provides insight into the plight of co-workers in terms of undertaking the flexible start/finish provision. The FFO does have provisions that provide employees with flexible start and finish times, but Nicky’s account on p. 220 demonstrates that employees’ use of flexible times can sometimes clash with department and client needs.

Nicky’s account also shows inconsistency in the way WF/L balance provisions operate across the organisation. To the FFO, it is quite impossible for some workers to have flexibility in their starting hours because of the nature of the work that is involved. Nicky’s account suggests that employees’ needs for flexibility are superseded by clients’ needs for service on demand. Paul provides another reason why and how take up interferes with work and inhibits take up:

*A couple of years ago when I was relief manager, one of my jobs was relieving certain managers, within another area. I wanted to take a holiday at a certain time, but I couldn’t, because I had to relieve a manager.*

Paul’s job designation as ‘Relief Manager’ means that he cannot really plan to take his annual leave because the nature of his job is that his services may be required at short notice. Similarly, Rosemary’s account shows how work impacted her take up of RDO:

*I get RDO so I can pop in then [to see and care for her mother who has a disability];… normally I go on a weekend, but you do need to take her shopping*
and do things for her.... [It is] a bit hard though, because the nature of this environment, you have to be here, and you got to get certain amount of work done in a certain time. They are flexible like I’m taking a RDO on Tuesday… but I was flexible in saying I only need to take 1/2 day because it’s quite a lot of reporting this time of the month. It’s a bit hard because the environment you’ve got to be seen, it’s very hard to explain, I am normally here say from sometime 7.30 to say 6.30 or it varies. Sometimes I get in at 8 and don’t have a lunch break because I need to leave around 5.30. My hours are 8 to 5, but you are always putting in the extra time, it’s the nature of this work....

Clearly, Rosemary depends on RDO to devote some time and care for her disabled mother but finds it hard to do because of the nature of the work environment and the type of work she does. It also appears that to take up the RDO provision she needs to demonstrate flexibility for the organisation’s sake, in that she has had to negotiate to take up only half of the RDO. This finding is paramount - the need for non-management employees to negotiate with, and demonstrate flexibility towards the FFO in order to take up some WF/L balance provisions. It is important to note that all but one of the negative experiences whereby work effectively hinders take up have been that of non-management staff. The narratives have either come from these staff themselves or have been recounted by management staff. Alan, a manager, attempts to provide some rationale as to why there is differential experience of flexibility and access to WF/L balance provisions in the FFO:

I think managers probably do enjoy a greater deal of career flexibility and that’s partly their role. I mean as a manager you have a job to do, if it takes you this long to do it or you know if you can do it in a shorter time, then well and good. Perhaps with non-management staff their tasks are much more task-based and therefore if you finish the task then we give you another task to do. So we keep you fully employed.

Alan acknowledges that managers have greater flexibility than non-management staff because of the different roles and the associated tasks and responsibilities. Basically, managers have responsibility for entire jobs and have total control of them which means that they are able to exercise a good degree of flexibility in how and when they complete it. On the other hand, the nature of non-management staff work is task oriented - they are assigned bits of tasks and more tasks are piled on them as they complete the work. The basic assumption is that non-management staff cannot afford to be idle; and it is this attitude towards non-management staff that hinders their ‘rights’ to flexibility.
Thus far the discussion has focused on how work interferes with, and prevents workers’ take up of need provisions. Next, the analyses and discussion shifts to the FFO’s consideration of cost constraints and how such rationale can severely impact employees’ prospects of taking up needed provisions.

6.3.3.3 Costs considerations impact employees’ take up of provisions

As much as the potential benefits to organisations, there are also costs involved in providing employees with WF/L balance, as is raised by Alan in the following excerpt:

… it is probably the company which has to balance, because there is a cost to doing these things and the organisation has to determine the level of cost that it can bear.

Alan’s awareness of the business cost implications is in essence the logic of the business case of providing a FFW, with the central argument that ideally benefits need to far outweigh costs. Such costs to organisations can be of two types, direct costs, where there is clear allocation of funds to finance provisions such as study leave and childcare, or indirect costs such as when the organisation loses time off work to providing employees with flexibility to take some time off during the working day to attend to family emergencies. It is beyond the scope of this study to deal with financial analysis of costs or to discuss indirect costs; hence the focus in this discussion will be on qualitative analysis of narratives that deal with direct costs. Andy provides the first glimpse into the issue of direct costs in the case of the study leave provision:

When there’s a limited budget available for supporting study, you can’t. I don’t know how many people in the organisation [make such requests] .... you can’t support everyone through studies, you’ll go broke overnight...And where we have a number of people who are competing for limited resources, so the bank might say “well, we are going ... we’re not going to support everybody, we got this much cash available to supporting people”. I’ve never seen numbers, I don’t know that happens. You might make a decision around that person’s potential within the organisation before you allocate.

Clearly, Andy’s comments here suggest that his notion of ‘limited budget’ and ‘you can’t support everyone through studies’ appears to be based on his own perceptions
and assumptions about what the Bank does. This can be deduced from his own admission, ‘I don’t know that happens’. He continues to provide more insight into his perceptions stating:

_It may be that you don’t give them 100% support, that’s actually fairly rare. Maybe they’d say, “we will cover 50% of the course costs, or even the 25% of the course costs to do something like that. And that will allow more people to benefit with the available resources, the decision making maybe that it’s not full support, it’s partial support or maybe it just, with the greatest respect, the organisation has some right to say “yes or no” to the studying support, so they will assess them individually before agreeing to it. That’s probably the best way to look at it. There is an assessment to make of that person._

There are a number of significant revelations in Andy’s narrative. First, there is a general assumption that there are limited funds available for study leave. Second, this perceived lack of funds implies that employee eligibility to the provision is highly competitive. Third, the competitive nature of the provision means that some other criteria need to be factored into the decision-making of who is to be awarded the provision, and from the narrative this seems to be set arbitrarily. Finally, the selection of the best employee fit to the chosen criteria is dependent on managerial discretion, as outlined in section 6.3.3.1. Paul’s insights show the link between cost constraints, staffing issues and management attempts to leave work at 5:00 pm to satisfy personal needs for WF/L balance.

_The business unit is restrained by cost, so they can’t afford to put another manager on. And me knowing what the structure is, it would be nice to have another manager, but with the cost restraints where we got to operate within the budget, we got a fixed number of FTE [full-time executives] operating within it, each can’t say lets put another FTE because I want to go home at 5 o’clock._

It is apparent that Paul, a manager, realises that his unit ideally requires another management staff, but is also aware that his unit’s allocated budget effectively precludes such an arrangement. Paul’s unit also services corporate clients meaning that his staff must be frequently available to such clients beyond the traditional hours. This often means that management staff are unable to take up the flexible start and finish provision hours.
One of the FFO’s provisions that have significant cost implications is the telework provision. A number of narratives indicate that telework is only available to management staff but even among this category not all managers have ready access to it, as Lee suggests:

*I know there is a cost involved in this [telework], but not all staff - there is a system out there where staff can access their email, access the work systems from their home PC or from a lap to. Its very difficult only senior staff and certain cases can get access to those systems. I know there’s a cost involved, but someone like myself if I’m staying at home with my son who is sick, I could work from home.*

Clearly, Lee perceives a need for it but organisational costs effectively prevents him from being able to take up the telework provision. Bobby’s comments provide more insight into how cost implications are implicated in staff’s request to take up the FFO’s telework provision:

*… I think due to cost implications of having laptop computers for everybody as well as line access, remote access and everything, I don’t think they [the FFO] have progressed with this any further. Because you need access to the business LAN [Local Area Network], you need some sort of broadband connection; you need a lap top computer.*

What seems apparent is that while the FFO has formally stated that it provides employees with possibilities to telework, the findings show that in effect it is only select few management staff that have access to them. This narrative shows that the FFO does not appear to have thought through the cost implications of enabling such a provision, even if only to management staff. The reality is that only a select few management staff have been successful with taking up telework, as is illustrated by Ivan, a manager:

*I know one of my counterparts, who is in another state, works from home two days. He’s got 3 children, he’s in a smaller operation in a much more established environment. Probably not something we are quite ready to do here just based on that.*

Andy appears to suggest that the type of environment a branch, office or SBU is in an important factor for telework consideration. A smaller more routine kind of operation might be more conducive. Therefore, the environment of the operation is
also a factor to consider. Another reason would be privacy and security concerns (Ernst & Young LLP 2008) and arguably would be more risky for businesses in the banking industry. To set up telework infrastructure in these businesses would potentially cost more than in other businesses as highly sophisticated hardware and software would be required to secure highly sensitive data, client information and access to files and there would need to be increased monitoring of the telecommuters (Ernst & Young LLP 2008).

The discussions so far indicate that the financial costs impede effective take up of some provisions, such as study leave, telework, and flexible start and finish times. In all these instances it appears that it is the potential direct costs to the organisation to provide such provisions that makes it difficult to fulfil its rhetoric to provide WF/L balance. Such costs include, among others, costs of providing tuition, books and/or time off for exams in the case of the study leave provision, initial costs of infrastructure setup in the case of the telework, and costs to recruit one more manager in the case of managers’ take up of flexible hours. In the next section the last of the issues which effectively pre-empt take up of some of the FFO provisions and results in its low take up rate is discussed.

6.3.3.4 Conflict with family needs pre-empts take up

At the outset it needs to be made clear that there was only one participant, Jean, who offered any insight into family needs which can effectively prevent take up of provisions. Nonetheless, there are important lessons in it:

*Management is trying to put some new measures to work,... to become family-friendly but probably there is a gap between their thinking and our practical needs... [T]hey ask us to come this Saturday or Sunday to this park, we are having a game of, or we are having a walk, we are doing some fundraising thing... come with our family and have a good time, but I know about 75% staff members we don’t get involved in that. Really, we [people with family obligations] are not into that fun thing; we would rather utilise that time for some other purpose.*

Jean, a mother of three, perceives that her personal (family) needs take precedence over organisational attempts to provide provisions such as ‘Family oriented events’ on the weekends, especially for staff with families of their own. She does
acknowledge that the FFO attempts to provide a ‘WF/L-friendly’ environment but perceives that there is a gap between workers’ views and the FFO’s ideas of what this means. A clear signal from this narrative is a breakdown in communication.

The narratives and findings presented in this sub-section provided vital clues as to the nature of, and the underlying reasons behind poor take up. Four key issues were identified:

i) Managerial discretion in approving employees’ requests to take up certain provisions, such as study leave
ii) Work needs and priorities conflicting with employees’ ability to take up needed provisions, such as the RDO
iii) Cost considerations specifically the direct costs involved in enabling the provision, such as telework, means that some provisions are approved for use by key personnel only
iv) Workers’ family and personal needs prevents them from taking up some provisions, such as family events scheduled for the weekends.

This discussion also concludes the qualitative analysis and findings into the three factors, awareness, need for, and take up of provisions, identified in the quantitative studies, as the key contributors for the significant rhetoric-reality gaps between the FFO’s offerings of and employees’ experiences with WF/L balance. The powerful insights from these three areas are useful in understanding why WF/L balance is generally regarded as organisational rhetoric. In the following section, the thesis analyses participants’ narratives to present other challenges crucial to understanding and improving efforts to provide WF/L balance in the FFO.

### 6.4 Other WF/L balance challenges

This section provides an account and analysis of WF/L balance challenges within the FFO as perceived by its members, not previously addressed elsewhere in the thesis. Two broad categories of challenges were identified as shown here in Figure 12.
These two broad challenges, ‘Implementation problems’ and the ‘FFO’s culture’ have the potential to impact on organisational efforts to provide WF/L balance initiatives, and/or hamper employees’ opportunities and experiences for personal WF/L balance. These challenges are addressed in the following sub-sections.

6.4.1 Challenges associated with implementing provisions

The ‘implementation problems’ category is used to encapsulate all findings from narratives that highlight problems in the way that policies and provisions are managed and implemented at ground level. The category includes problems faced by managers as well as subordinates. The problems faced by managers are addressed first. In the following excerpt, Alan, a manager, states:

…[A]t the management level it can be quite challenging sometimes to manage it. So if you have a large group or a group of employees who want to change their hours and the policy says this is what they can do, you then have to somehow work that into how you make that work in business and I think at times there, there is probably I won’t say rejection of it but frustration around the way its implemented.

What Alan is implying is that while it may not be a problem to consider individual or even small numbers of request to access particular provisions, it becomes very
difficult when managers are faced with simultaneous significant numbers of multiple requests. In this particular example, Alan is actually referring to the flexible start and finish times, one of the fifty stated provisions under the WF/L balance banner. For example, the department Alan manages has an official start of business as 8:00 a.m., but a number of staff request a later start. Such requests present Alan and other managers with a difficult situation and a dilemma. On the one hand managers would very much like to accommodate subordinates’ request for such flexibility but on the other they also have a department to manage and external clients to satisfy. The problem is further exacerbated because while the relevant policies state that employees are eligible to these provisions, the reality of the workplace is that business needs often take precedence and managers have to exercise discretion and decline some employees’ requests for flexible start and finish times. This is a decision-making process that managers find challenging and subordinates find frustrating.

As mentioned earlier, the flipside of this dilemma is the impact on employees. If employees were to constantly feel or be told that they have been denied access to provisions because of associated implementation problems, they are likely to feel totally frustrated and disillusioned about the organisation’s attempts and claim to be WF/L-friendly. Ultimately, it can contribute to their notion that WF/L balance is organisational rhetoric. Alan provides yet another example of the difficulties and frustrations with implementing policies at the ground level. Referring to the parental leave policy, as an example, he states:

*Someone coming back from parental leave can ask to come back for part-time hours and you then have to leave their job open for five years, I think it is. So you have to do that but on the other side I might have a budget on my FTE [full-time executives] which is such that I could employ someone else to do the job on those days that they are away. But you know there’s some other policy which says I can’t do that or something else and I run the risk that I might either be short of someone or have too many people and you know there is conflicting policies.*

Here, Alan’s particular dilemma is that a full-time executive at the end of their parental leave of up to 12 months can choose to work another four years on a part-time basis. Under the terms of the part-time work policy that employee’s full-time
position must be left open for that duration for her possible eventual return to full-time duties. In the meantime, Alan still has a department to run and needs someone else to fill the remaining days of the working week at least for the next five years. Despite having the financial resources to do so, other policies, such as recruitment, state that he cannot do this, i.e. employ someone on part-time basis (acting roles) long term. As a manager, he personally experiences the hardships of such conflicts of policies, as it compromises his ability to effectively operate his department and wholeheartedly embrace the bank’s notion of WF/L balance.

A key point of this narrative is that managers are faced with the prospect that staff on parental leave could decide at any point of time during their parental leave that they want to return to work on part-time basis. There is much governmental support for working mothers to take up such leave and the literature also highlights that this is a preferred option for many mothers. While this option for part-time work is a welcome move for parents, children and society in general, such uncertainty with staffing issues presents critical challenges for managers such as Alan. Andy, another manager, provides further insight into the challenges associated with policy implementation; in his case it concerns maternity leave:

I have two employees currently on maternity leave, one who commenced today her first day on maternity leave, she left yesterday, and the other one had her baby last week, so she only started maternity leave. That’s actually an interesting point, because I’ve got two people now on maternity leave and I am obliged to take them back in 6 or 12 months, one is taking 6 months and one is taking 12 months off, and the rules of the game are they don’t just come back to a similar post, they actually have to come back to that post, and that’s fine with me. So my point of view, what am I going to do over that period of time to fill a post where I want to lose whoever is in that post in 12 months time, because I got to bring someone back in.

There is clear indication of managerial as well as organisational dilemma in sorting out the logistics of providing parental-, maternity- and adoption-leave initiatives. The organisation wants to do the right thing by employees taking up such leave, that their rights to their previous jobs will be protected, and designs the policy to reflect this. But by the same token, managers are faced with another dilemma altogether, how to fill the temporary position and what to do with the incumbent worker. Andy continues:
We have all sorts of ways, which we recruit internally...I put the case to the organisation and to my boss and said I want to go to a temp agency and get someone who’s looking for that kind of work. This prevents problems with temporary internal applicants - so that we don’t have issues in 12 months time when the internal replacement doesn’t have expectation that she [person on maternity leave] will never come back, and I’ll get to stay on. It becomes quite a tense time when you say to the person “look I got to push you out” and you got to deal with the people wherever they came from and say you got to take them back now, and they’ve moved on, and it is really horrible, but I think we’ve grown up a little bit. I’m now dealing with a temp agency to bring me a flexible... someone from the flexible workforce. Park them here and let’s do the job for a period of time and they’re not going to feel resentment or uncomfortable when we say, “Sorry, your time’s up, you need to go back and go and work with someone else”.

Andy seems to have the maternity leave replacement quite sorted out – unlike parental leave, maternity leave does not stretch over a year. Hence, he is able to find temporary replacements, either internally or externally. His obvious preference is for the latter. This is because women on maternity leave sometimes opt not to return to work, and therefore temporary internal replacements often harbour the thought that the temporary position may lead to a permanent position. Hence the manager can have quite a hard time dealing with the incumbent when the person on maternity does decide to return to her previous job. To a probing question on what he personally needed from the organisation to help him execute WF/L balance, Alan commented:

[I]t's about giving me, as a manager, greater help in implementing this [parental leave]. I have a commitment that I have got to allow people to do this [take parental leave] because, you know the policy says we have to but how do I implement it? How do I deal with the fact that I am going to, in twelve month’s or two year’s time, have this person turn up on my doorstep who has been on a career break for five years? And what am I going to do with them? Or even worse still if I have moved on in my career, somebody who takes after me don’t even know that this person was going to arrive! I don’t think we [should] introduce a policy but don’t give people the tools to implement it.

It is once again important to bear in mind that while the issues of parental leave is applicable to all staff, Alan’s focus is mostly directed at his full-time executives or management staff. These staff are invaluable to the business as they undertake highly specialised work and so it makes good business sense to retain them by assuring them their ‘previous’ jobs on their return from leave. However, what do managers do in the meantime? Short-term replacements are not a problem, as Andy highlighted
earlier, and managers have two available options. First, according to Bobby, they can access relief managers:

\[ Y \text{ou have a relief person, you had somebody who’s acting up in that job for a six months or one year or whatever.} \]

The FFO has permanent full-time staff whose designated role as ‘relief manager’ requires them to move around various departments and take on the acting role of the absent management staff. The second option is to take on internal permanent staff who wish to take on new short-term roles, this is the internal replacement that Andy spoke about in his comments on maternity leave replacement staff, which we also found is not his preferred option. Holly provides more information on the internal replacement option:

\[ I \text{ know people who have gone through the ‘Opportunity Bank’ and tried other areas of the bank, rather than stay at the current department. It’s like job vacancies; their option is to work in different area of the bank, just for three months or something. Somebody might be going on long service leave, ok, here’s an opportunity to go and you know manage it, the international Department for three months. Get that experience then go back to your old job.} \]

Both these internal replacement options are temporary acting roles with the expectation that there is an end date when you have to relinquish the temporary position. However, as previously mentioned there is always the off-chance of exceptional circumstances when the acting role could lead to a permanent role. Alan’s dilemma is exacerbated by the fact that there will be some management staff who wish to take up the extended parental leave and career break provisions; in some cases these employees only opt to return to work after their new-born goes to formal school. Meanwhile, Alan still has a department to operate and manage but faces the added challenges of recruiting, selecting, and retaining equally qualified replacement staff, which for all intents and purposes will only be ‘temporary’. This issue appears to be the fundamental basis of Allan’s frustrations with the parental leave policy. He perceives that policymakers have paid inadequate attention as to how the parental leave policy is implemented on an operative level, and so there are many unsolved problems and challenges.
There are many questions that Alan and other managers need to be addressed. How do they keep such ‘jobs’ open for an extended period of time, in the hope that the leave applicant will return to the same job, and at the same time cater to the business’ needs for productivity? And what about the incumbent worker, hired to temporarily replace the management worker on parental leave? Alan could not possibly hire a temporary worker or a contract worker for up to five years and then wave them goodbye? What about their WF/L balance needs? Alternatively, what would happen if the current manager were to leave and a new manager took over the department? What do managers like Alan do, when faced with such problems? As mentioned earlier, managers have two options to hire internally, but we saw that there are restricted numbers available and these intakes are generally useful for short term (one year or less) use only.

In another section of the interview Alan implied that overall these challenges effectively meant that he is forced to operate an inadequately staffed department, and staff who characteristically put in longer hours at work. He commented:

[...]he organisation is very lean, there’s no fat in the organisation which means that every time you take a person out or do something, it has a real impact. I think most people in corporate banking work long hours and I’m sure if you asked most people if they would like to work shorter hours, I think they would probably say yes.

This statement shows the escalating challenges managers face as a result of a lack of foresight or inadequate attention paid to how WF/L policies, such as the parental leave, are implemented.

The discussion now shifts to staff’s experiences and frustrations with the challenges associated with how provisions are implemented in the workplace. One contentious issue is the ‘carer’s leave’ provision. There were eight narratives from different people concerning this provision; some of these will be discussed. Before analysing this provision it is prudent to analyse the FFO’s take on it. In a official 2002 document promoting its WF/L initiatives, the FFO clearly stipulated that employees can have unlimited access of their accrued sick leave to use as carer’s leave. The reality of the workplace however, as is evident from the following narratives, is that
there are conflicting experiences and lack of knowledge about its implementation. Alan states:

Staff can take their sick leave as carer’s leave. If one of my staff came in to me and said they had a call from childcare centre and so and so is sick, I just tell them to go. I have no doubt about that.

Alan’s perception of the provision and his expected managerial obligations appears to be well aligned with the formal organisational decree, and it would seem that that staff reporting to him would have no problems taking up carer’s leave. However, it does not seem to be quite the experience of his subordinates, as is evident from Holly’s comments:

I don’t understand why you can only use, as a full timer, you can only use four days of your sick leave as carer’s leave. I don’t understand why we can’t use our sick leave for carers leave… I don’t understand why they restrict it to four days; has a direct impact on me, because kids get sick all the time… part timer gets pro-rated down. I end up with 2.4 days to look after sick children in a year and I’ve got so many days sick leave, I’ve got more than three months of sick leave…. I am not like a person who goes on sick leave for the sake of it. Just giving you four days; it feels like they don’t trust you or something.

Holly’s experiences may be somewhat unique; she is a permanent, part-time management staff who works three days a week, and is supposedly entitled to only 2.4 days carer’s leave. In effect she claims to have about ninety days of accumulated sick leave. She perceives that by allocating only four days of sick leave as carer’s leave, it appears that management mistrust employees in how they might dispense their own accrued sick leave. To probing questions whether she had requested anyone in the organisation, for example Human Resources personnel, as to why employees were only allowed four days of sick leave as carer’s leave, Holly said she had not. To another probing question as to what would happen if she exhausted her 2.4 days carer’s leave entitlements and if her children were to fall sick, Holly thinks that she would have to take time off from her annual leave. Holly’s pro-rated annual leave works out to 12 days. When further probed as to how she would care for her children once her annual leave was exhausted, Holly replied:

You have to rely on your partner, you can’t rely on yourself. I don’t know what you would do if you are a single mother or something. It must be really, really,
This is a real problem for staff with more than one dependent child. Children do tend to fall sick and if on average one child were to fall sick three times a year, then parents with two or more children would need more carer’s days than the allotted four days. In this next narrative, Jean, a non-management employee in another department speaks of her experiences and attempts to take up the FFO’s carer’s leave according to the policy. Jean has three dependent children. We started off this conversation with a probing question from me to Jean as to what organisational changes would personally help her balance work and family.

Jean’s comment shows the considerable precautions some employees take to preserve their sick leave so that they may better fulfil their care responsibilities to their sick children, should the need ever arise. The FFO’s carer’s leave issue also becomes much clearer in the above narrative. The policy does appear to indicate that employees can take carer’s leave off their accrued sick leave; the catch however is a sub-clause. Employees can only take four of the accrued sick leave as carer’s leave without the need for any supporting medical leave documentation. Once that quota is reached, employees can only access their personal sick leave as carer’s leave if they have supporting documentation. But as Jean has expressed, not every sick child warrants a visit to the doctor and/or a medical certificate. What makes the issue more frustrating perhaps is that Australian child-care and primary school policies require parents to retain a sick child at home to safeguard the health and wellbeing of other children in their immediate environment. This is a dilemma facing many working parents, in particular those who have more than one child. The issue is more complicated for single parent families, especially if there is no support network; the lone parent must take leave from work to provide such care. Jean continues with her narrative:
There is a provision for the supervisor to grant the carer’s leave without the certificate, why don’t they use it, use the authority.

This appears to be exactly the position that Alan posited his stand would be, in the first narrative listed above, “…I just tell them to go. I have no doubt about that”. There were a number of narratives which suggest that employees are very confused about carer’s leave and are unhappy that carer’s leave is not separate from their own sick leave. In section 6.3.1.6, Olga narrated that when her son fell sick, the doctor issued him three days medical leave, and she stayed home to look after him. She subsequently submitted the certificate and applied for carer’s leave and was shocked to find three days deducted off her sick leave entitlements. She said:

We need to know about carer’s leave. If we are off work for our child and we have a certificate we shouldn’t be putting it down on our sick. I don’t understand why they haven’t told us that? …Nobody knows about this carer’s leave. What if we were actually sick, we are actually getting time off because we are sick. Our children are likely to fall sick too and we have to save our sick leave for our children; that is not convenient.

Olga raises a valid question about the implementation of carer’s leave. Why should carer’s leave, especially when such leave is supported by relevant medical, be deducted from an employee’s own sick leave entitlement. Here we see that Olga, like Jean discussed earlier, speaks of having to conserve her sick leave entitlements to care for the future needs of their children. Both also appear to be confused about the provision. On the other hand Rosa, who as mentioned in section 6.3.1 previously worked in Human Resources, is aware of many of the organisation’s policies and provisions, including the carer’s leave policy; she believes it is a good thing:

[There] are a lot of parents where I work, and I think they are happy because … you got the time off now that you can take as carer’s leave for your sick child or husband. Before there was no such thing like that unless you are sick yourself, you were able to take a day off, but now they are included in your sick leave to take care of them.

In summarising this discussion on the carer’s leave policy, a key question keeps surfacing. Why is there a need to have a separate carer’s leave policy when in effect it is considered as part of an employee’s sick leave entitlement? Why not just expand the terms, conditions, and entitlements to sick leave? The unclear distinction between
the two policies, as well as the apparent overlap between them, could contribute to employees’ general confusion and additionally could contribute to their perceiving that the FFO’s WF/L balance efforts are more rhetoric than real. In the next section the thesis explores the prevalent culture of the FFO in so far as WF/L balance is concerned.

6.4.2 Organisational culture: Insights into WF/L balance

In the introductory chapter, the thesis argued and established that the case organisation is an FFO, mainly on the grounds that it had won major national awards for its efforts to provide employees with WF/L balance. It was also established that the organisation had nominated itself for this national awards competition. Together, the self-nomination for the awards and the subsequent winning of national awards, provide the necessary strong evidence for the organisation’s WF/L-friendly rhetoric. In section 6.3 the thesis analysed organisational reality of WF/L balance from three key perspectives of employee experiences: their awareness of, need for and take up of the associated provisions. In this section, we again attempt to understand the organisational reality of WF/L balance from employees’ perspectives, but this time we attempt to do so by analysing and evaluating their interview scripts for constructs of the organisation’s WF/L balance culture, either implicit or explicit. In order to remove bias, two major nVivo nodes were created to capture and analyse both positive and negative constructs of such culture. At this point it is pertinent to point out that the data analysis revealed that employee experiences with WF/L culture are divided along management/non-management lines, with management participants generally having more positive experiences compared to non-management participants. The section will conclude with an attempt to conclude the predominant organisational WF/L balance culture.

6.4.2.1 Signs of supportive WF/L balance culture

Before attempting to study supportive WF/L balance culture from the perspective of employees, it is appropriate to analyse its form as portrayed by the FFO and as sanctioned by top management. To do so we turn to content analysis of some of the key documents and manifests of the FFO. In the same official document mentioned
in section 6.4.1, as well as a number of other public-relations type documents, the FFO explicitly states that it has initiated a cultural change program congruent with its position on WF/L balance; this program will be referred to as Timeout in this thesis. Timeout is a strategic attempt by the organisation to improve the overall well being of all employees by enabling a balanced approach to work and life (or work and family/life, WF/L, the preferred terminology of this thesis); the focus of Timeout is people and values. The rationale behind the program is that a workforce that embraces WF/L balance will lead to improved employee performance and ultimately business productivity. Timeout allows staff to initiate organisation-sponsored work groups designed to help members and other interested employees balance work and family/life, as well as provides for solely management-driven support programs and initiatives. Across the interviews a common thread of thought was clearly visible – participants openly acknowledged and concurred that there exists a workplace culture supportive of WF/L balance. A noticeable outcome of the FFO’s overall strategic attempt and cultural transformation has been the increasing use of a number of organisation-specific phrases and terminology. This was clearly evident in the interviews; nearly all participants referred to these specially constructed terminology with ease and familiarity, fulfilling the notion that language is a cultural artefact (Robbins et al. 2004) or a visible or objective manifestation (Francesco & Gold 2005) of organisational culture.

Additionally, there is also documented evidence of a top-down culture of management support for WF/L balance, although there is emphasis, both from within the document and from the participant interviews, that the CEO is the key driver of such a cultural change. In one other text, the same CEO stated:

_To assist staff manage their work and their life, I expect ‘The Bank’ to require only what is reasonable from staff. I tell staff to work ‘smarter, not harder’ and to ‘bring the whole person to work’. I truly believe your work and your life should not be incongruous with one another._

These comments provide some idea why many participants openly acknowledge that it is the CEO who is the driver of the cultural transformation – the critical role of the CEO is well established in the literature on change management, including cultural transformation (Daft 2008; Myllys 1999; Schein 1998). The remainder of this section
will present some of the more persuasive evidence from employees that a positive
WF/L balance culture exists, as well as provide testimonies of the key role played by
the CEO. Max, a manager states:

[T]he whole concept of Timeout … [the CEO] has put in…. there is a
realisation that staff are major resource in the organisation, and as part of that
processes of trying to lift our culture, he said, “that you got to have happy
people to get results”. You got happy people, you get results, and you got happy
committed, enthusiastic people.

Max’s account of Timeout, is just one example of the ease and familiarity that
participants have with Timeout. Many other participants similarly acknowledged
Timeout, which indicates effective communication of the cultural transformation
program. Additionally, there is explicit mention of the CEO in the overall change
effort. Andy, a manager, provides further insight:

The cultural change stuff that we’ve been through means that the way the
organisation is articulating these days is a ‘want’. We want people to feel good
about themselves and outside work. And we understand when you come to work,
you bring in some of that outside influence with you, so it make sense for us to
want you to be a whole person and be happy both within and outside work. And
it [has] probably taken a while for the organisation to realise that. When we
started down the cultural change program, scepticism ruled supreme and count
me amongst the most sceptical. And as an example, we went off and did this
Timeout program, that’s now three or four years old and its even turning my
own words against me.

We’ve gone from perhaps being want to be seen [as being family-friendly], to
be seen to be interested in our people and we want to be seen in the community
to be good corporate citizens.

Andy’s account suggests that he and other employees were initially sceptical of the
cultural transformation efforts. By his own admission, he acknowledges that he erred
in his outlook and that there has definitely been a positive change in the workplace.
More importantly, Andy perceives that the organisation is sincere in its efforts to
cultivate a workplace WF/L balance culture which focuses on employee needs. Andy
further perceives that the organisation has progressed from adopting WF/L balance
as merely a rhetorical stance to one that reflects a more real and practical attempt,
and posits that there is a genuine attempt to want to help employees achieve balance.
Holly provides further testimony about the FFO’s WF/L balance culture:
[I]t’s I want to help, I want to help my employees - I want to sincerely help you to do the right thing. I’m keeping you here at work because one of the key values of ’The Bank’, one of the things they tell you is that they want you to bring your whole self to work. That’s a key phrase around here. They just don’t say it, they mean it. So if you are going to leave, your family behind, that is the heart of every person, isn’t it? If you want somebody to bring that whole self to work, they do have to bring all those family type issues to work.

Once again, there is familiarity, ease and understanding of the specific language constructs of WF/L balance of the FFO. For example, the ‘whole self to work’ construct may be regarded as one of the FFO’s WF/L balance metaphors. This metaphor projects an employee as an intricately bound package, made up of work, individual and family needs. In order to embrace this ‘whole self’ it is necessary that the FFO makes a genuine and concerted attempt to encompass and cater to employees’ diverse needs. Like Andy in the previous narrative, Holly too perceives that the FFO has transcended the rhetoric claim to providing employees with WF/L balance. A different perspective of supportive culture is provided by Mick:

[The CEO] communicated that message and he certainly seems quite genuine in getting that right. ...He is probably thinking from a business perspective, but that’s his business, but it also has the value added personal benefit. Like some of those comments I mentioned before about if you improve someone’s work life balance, if it’s too much work against life, they are obviously going to be very stressed in their job, and productivity is not going to be as high at certain times. So if you are promoting a good balance, you are going to have more productivity.

Mick’s comments again show the critical role of the CEO in bringing about a new culture and a new way of thinking about employees and work. However, Mick’s account does seem to overwhelmingly suggest that the prime motive is about increasing business productivity. This is unlike the previous comments in this area that suggest a genuine attempt to help employees balance their work and non/work spheres. The following narrative regarding supportive culture is provided by Ivan:

[O]ne of our biggest cultural thing is around values and ethics; operating with integrity, being part of the community, those sorts of things. So I mean if you look at it, the biggest thing is about its people. I think in terms of, you know, good culture, managing some, a team that is prepared to come to the organisation’s need, when it need some extra ‘oomph’ for it, you know, do extra work to put out something. If you want that, you got to go the other way. Look at it, it just feels good, I think. Just at the end of the day, you know, I think for me, the reason for me being with the organisation for so long is that, its ethics
and approach suit my needs, and I’m able to work within this environment and live by my ethics in that way. So it’s a mutual thing.

Like Mick, Ivan also suggests a strong link between a positive WF/L balance culture, and the strong relationship between satisfied employees and productivity. However, unlike Mick, Ivan makes a crucial observation that the positive culture is all about establishing a mutual values-based relationship. A workplace culture where the organisation recognises, values and caters to employees’ non-work needs, and where employees are also able to recognise, appreciate and readily respond to the exceptional over and above daily needs of the organisation. What Mick’s account suggests is that a positive and supportive culture is one that offers dual flexibility; employees and the workplace offering mutual flexibility, a ‘give and take’ culture.

Paul provides further insight:

It [WF/L balance initiatives] is pretty much accepted. I don’t think the singles have complained, people understand. Lots on our floor are people with children. They have to pick them up from school care after work. They live out west; they have to be out of here by certain time otherwise it causes problems for them. It [flexibility] doesn’t create a problem; people don’t sit there thinking “Why is that person going home early?” To them at the end of the day it’s a balance. Personally, I haven’t come across any resistance or problems with people leaving early … it’s a bit of flexibility, give and take on both sides. Doesn’t create disharmony.

Paul provides a link between WF/L balance culture, flexibility and a ‘give and take’ attitude. A crucial observation is that all the narratives presented thus far have been explicit accounts of positive or supportive aspects of culture by management participants. While, the only evidence of supportive culture by non-management participants was provided by Sally, it does not necessarily imply that non-management staff are not recipients of such positive workplace culture. Sally states:

[Although I have flexible time I still don’t have the opportunity to go to lunch properly and do that type of things. I’d like to see more, given the impression that, it’s ok for you to come in late and leave early, on occasions.]

Here we note that Sally’s account of a positive or supportive culture is largely implicit; it needs to be deciphered, nor was it as highly rated as those provided by management participants. Sally’s comments while suggesting that the WF/L balance
culture does include and promote flexibility also insinuates that, as far as non-management staff are concerned, this same culture maintains quite strict control on its use. This topic is further explored in the following section.

6.4.2.2 Signs of non-supportive WF/L balance culture

The focus of this section is to present evidence from interview data which indicate that some elements of the FFO’s culture tends to contradict its widely held position and rhetoric on WF/L balance. As mentioned in the introduction to this section (section 6.4.2) the overall analysis showed that non-management staff tended to have generally less positive accounts of experiences with the FFO’s WF/L balance culture. Hence, while the experiences of both management and non-management participants will be provided to illustrate that non-supportive culture is felt right across the board, the focus here will be on the experiences of the latter group which, as mentioned, appear to have more negative experiences. The narratives of Rosemary, a non-management staff, provide the first such perspective:

[T]he nature of this environment [corporate] is you have to be here, and you got to get certain amount of work done in a certain time. They [the department] are flexible, like I’m taking a RDO on Tuesday,…. but I was flexible in saying I only need to take 1/2 day because there is quite a lot of reporting this time of the month. It’s a bit hard because in this environment you’ve got to be seen, it’s very hard to explain. I am normally here, say from sometime 7.30 am to say 6.30 pm or it varies. Sometimes I get in at 8:00 and don’t have a lunch break because I need to leave around 5.30. My hours are 8:00 to 5:00, but you are always putting in the extra time. If I were to leave at 5:00 they’ll make a comment, “You are already going?”.

Next, the narrative of Paul, a manager in the same department:

I try to leave at 6:00 and there’s a couple of managers still there… When you are dealing with customers there’s an expectation that you hang-on, there’s other managers who work back, why aren’t you working back?

Both Rosemary’s and Paul’s comments indicate an organisational culture that firstly requires employees to be ‘seen’ and secondly, to work beyond the traditional office hours. This culture could be unique to this department (and other similar departments) that are very much driven by external customer needs and expectations.
and consequently are highly customer-focused. In this context there is the expectation that employees need to be physically available when and where clients want them. This could be one of the reasons that employees generally start work early and finish late, and why the work culture could be seen as contradicting the FFO’s official position on WF/L balance. We see that despite the fact that Rosemary regularly arrives at least half an hour early to work, there is an apparent cultural fixation that it is not ‘right’ to leave work at 5:00 pm, the official end to the working day. As Paul’s comments reveal, such expectations are not necessarily limited to non-management staff. Another issue here concerns the RDO non-management entitlement. Rosemary wants to take her RDO (to care for her elderly parents) but has to illustrate flexibility and eventually compromises by taking only half the RDO. Despite this and the workplace’s attitude to her needing to leave at 5:00 pm she still posits that the department is flexible. What is evident is that while she routinely provides flexibility to the organisation, she does not appear to receive due flexibility from it. The ‘give and take’ flexibility mentioned by many of the management participants in the previous discussion on supportive workplace culture seems to be relatively one-sided, in management’s favour.

In section 6.3.2.2 we discussed the issue of the RDO in detail and noted that it is a very contentious issue. We noted that RDO is one of the 50 provisions listed in the FFO’s awards nomination form. It is also a favourite provision among many of the non-management staff, as it means extra days off work to undertake personal chores and spend time with family. Olga states:

…RDO is the main reason why I love this place; ... an extra holiday and that extra time with my family as well... Holidays are very important to people with families. We are lucky that we got RDO that adds up, mine add up to another two weeks.

However, as Sally mentioned in her narrative in the same section, as well as Rosemary’s experience discussed above, the organisational culture, in regards to RDO, is such that management prefers workers to exercise flexibility by turning in their RDO either wholly or partly. This means that employees turn up for work and get paid in lieu rather than use the RDO for its intended purpose, to take time off work. In that earlier section the discussion also revealed that the FFO had taken
unprecedented steps to change the RDO policy for new staff but was subsequently forced to rescind the policy when the FSU took legal action. In this next example, Lee, a manager, provides further insights into the FFO’s business practices and culture which appear to counter its WF/L balance rhetoric.

“At the moment, this business is very focused on business objectives, business growth, and profitability. Everyone has been, as I suppose at the moment, motivated by the carrot, you perform you will be rewarded. So it’s all very... there’s a lot of monitory reward incentives and that sort of push for performance. So in that sort of a focus it is not as a balanced approach to work.

It is quite apparent to Lee that whilst the organisation appears to want to encourage and promote a balanced approach to work and life, its actions and focus seem to somewhat contradict such intentions. Lee perceives that the organisation’s aggressive pursuit of business needs, growth and productivity, and the resultant strategies that focus attention on and link employee performance to financial rewards, counters reasonable attempts for employees to pursue a balanced approach to work and life.

Rosemary spoke of high turnover of assistant managers in the corporate department. When probed for the reason, he stated:

I suppose the job role, and the pressure. I don’t know whether there is, sometimes, if they go out to the market they can get more money, so normally it’s about salary. ... They got to a stage where they want to do something else, I suppose because they are doing quite a lot. I suppose they got to do sales, they got to do the writings for the deals like the credit site, they may do all the administration and the next level is management and that’s what they are aiming for, but it’s quite pressured and it is performance based.

Here again, we see a department culture that appears to be inconsistent with the FFO’s overall approach to WF/L balance. This thesis argues that there is a mismatch between department and organisational culture which arises because of four key characteristics of the department. First, while the assistant manager roles are non-management roles, many of these staff are university graduates without corporate experience, hence the position is the only entry point to future management roles. Second, these employees are typically required to take on high amounts of, and often stressful workloads. Third, the salaries of assistant managers are generally inconsistent with their qualifications and their workload. Fourth and finally, their promotion is limited because assistant managers routinely outnumber managers and
there is generally limited scope for promotion to managerial roles. Hence, promotion is very much performance based and leads to employees working long and often stressful hours. Hence, the workplace culture is in not closely aligned to the WF/L balance needs of these workers, and this mismatch leads to very high turnover. Incidentally, turnover is very high for women; this perhaps is one of the reasons why there are very few female managers in the corporate department. Lee provides some figures regarding the glass ceiling in his corporate (relationship) department and why it occurs:

*Out of the numbers in NSW may be ten if you are lucky... if you look at the assistant managers, there is a lot female....[T]o give you an example, on this floor [with] nine relationships sets, there's one female manager*

On further probing why there are so many female assistant managers and comparatively fewer female managers, Lee continues:

*Because they haven't had babies yet. In this business you have to be able to work full time, because it's what our customers expect. They expect to be able access you five days a week. ....If you want to become a relationship manager... you have to be able to work full time, because it's what our customers expect. They expect to be able access you five days a week.*

These comments suggest that the glass ceiling is mainly due to women opting to work part-time after the birth of their babies. Women’s choices for flexible work appear to counteract customer expectations for timely service and the FFO’s focus on effective performance and productivity.

The discussions provided so far lead us to the final evaluation of the FFO’s WF/L balance culture. Flexibility, which is paramount to WF/L balance, is inconsistently applied both throughout the organisation and across the types and ranks of workers. In the case of the former, we see that flexibility is a key issue in some departments, such as the corporate division, where there is heavy focus on customers. A culture akin to ‘customers are most important’ means that ensuring prompt delivery of services and timely resolutions of problems take precedence. As Lee states:

*When you are in corporate business, where we look at transactions that can*
even flow at night, if it’s a management buy out. And you look into documents and settlements and credit approvals and if it’s a live deal, it has to be settled in three weeks time, you don’t have the option to just come in from 8:00 and leave at 5:00.

Lee perceives that such an intense business climate means exceptionally long working hours can effectively compromise employees’ access to WF/L balance. This point was also raised by Nicky, a non-management participant, and discussed in section 6.3.2.2. The second observation regarding the organisation’s WF/L balance is that flexibility appears to be positively related to job ranks, with management staff generally having greater access to flexibility than non-management staff. This issue has been explicitly singled out by Alan, himself a manager:

*I think managers probably do enjoy a greater deal of flexibility and that’s partly due to their role. I mean as a manager you have a job to do, if it takes you this long to do it or you know if you can do it in a shorter time, then well and good. Perhaps with non-management staff their tasks are much more task-based and therefore if you finish the task then we give you another task to do. So we keep you fully employed.*

The underlying message in this narrative is that flexibility is very much dependent on the freedom and responsibility to plan and execute one’s work. Managers, by Alan’s account, have job roles and specifications that provide them with the liberty and responsibility to undertake and complete their tasks on hand. Such freedom permits work and family matters to be better considered and effective solutions designed and executed and for individuals to achieve personal balance between both. Conversely, non-management workers do not have such freedom and liberty to take ownership of their work in a similar fashion. Their tasks are distributed to them and if they are to organise and effectively complete the set tasks, more work is provided.

In summary, we can conclude that, overall, a positive WF/L balance culture is prevalent in the FFO. This is because most participants believe and perceive an overt presence and attempt by top management, particularly the CEO, to ensure that employees are able to personally balance their work and non-work needs and demands. Additionally, they are also able to illustrate through various examples how the concept is being embraced within the organisation. However, there are also some areas within the FFO where WF/L balance is problematic and in these areas there are
clear sub-cultures. In most cases the variant culture is defined and framed by some erosion of flexibility, in the sense that mutual flexibility is essentially lop-sided; employees very often are required to exercise flexibility in favour of customers and the organisation.

In the next section the thesis aims to analyse and learn from employees’ insights into WF/L balance. The study proposes that their insights can contain important lessons for understanding rhetoric-reality challenges and issues.

6.5 Employee insights into FFO’s WF/L balance

This section provides employees’ views of WF/L balance in general and, more specifically, the reason that their organisation is providing them with such balance. Such awareness of employee perspectives can help the FFO uncover contentious and challenging issues and assist it to ensure that its WF/L balance offering is more representative of reality. The responses to three specific questions, as well as the key themes arising from their conversations, are analysed and presented here.

6.5.1 Participants’ understanding of the FFW

One of the questions posed to participants sought to seek their account of the meaning of a FFW. A key theme that appeared in sixty-five per cent of participant responses was the notion of flexibility. Flexibility, as we note, was raised by many participants and discussed previously in many sections of this chapter. In this present discussion however, flexibility was identified as a key ingredient of a successful FFW; a sample of views are presented to illustrate this point:

...recognises that people do have commitments outside of work, and is allowing those people to have some degree of flexibility to meet those commitments.
(Alan)

...work in an organisation that is flexible......flexible when you need to be.
(Andy)
...it all centres around two-way flexibility. (Ivan)

...gives you that flexibility in time to take care of those things [non-work commitments]. (Sally)

give you the flexibility to work out with your family as well as be responsible at work. (Rosa)

family-friendliness ... may be not necessarily be for something to do with family, but something to do with flexibility...(Max)

... when my daughter was sick, having a chance to have the day off or taking [her] to the doctors, coming a bit late, a bit of flexibility sort of thing. ... opportunity to take care of them [mother and daughter] and do whatever is necessary to make sure that it is sorted out....[A]n understanding that ‘we understand’ [the organisation].[Peter]

These narratives all indicate that workplace flexibility is crucial to any sense of, or attempts by employees to balance their work and non-work commitments. More importantly these narratives illustrate that to participants, the notion of workplace flexibility is what clearly sets apart a FFW from other organisations.

6.5.2 Is the case organisation a FFW?

Participants were asked “Which organisation comes to mind, when you think of the term family-friendly, and why?”. More than fifty percent of participants, of their own accord (i.e. without any probing), readily identified the case organisation as family-friendly. This result is good news in terms of the rhetoric-reality issue; it provides some crucial support and conclusive evidence that the organisation’s rhetoric of providing WF/L balance matches reality as perceived by some employees. Those who did not readily volunteer their organisation as being WF/L-friendly were subsequently probed with “Does ‘The Bank’ qualify as WF/L-friendly, why or why not?” While fair numbers of participants were quite inclined to agree to such suggestions there were some who strongly objected to any such suggestions. The narratives of participants who were probed are included here to show the full range of their views:
Not particularly, no. I haven’t seen anything like that on a general basis... I don’t think it will ever happen. (Olga)

I don’t say that it is NOT [to denote emphasis], but it actually does not come into my mind. No, not really [family-friendly] but it is flexible with the hours, maybe that is all. (Jean)

[Family-friendly?]...Depending on what work you are doing...To me personally, not flexible enough. (Bobby)

I think we are. I think we are increasingly so in most areas of the bank. (Andy)

I believe [it] does that [family-friendly] fairly well to a certain extent, but there's room for improvement, areas to improve on. (Mick)

Yes [but] I wouldn’t say fully, not yet fully. (Lee)

The findings indicate that those who did not readily identify the case organisation as being WF/L-friendly either openly disagree with any suggestions that it is or offer qualified statements about it. Their statements suggest that WF/L-friendly rhetoric does not quite match reality in some instances in the organisation.

6.5.3 Why is the case organization being WF/L-friendly?

The third and final question posed to participants in this set of questions was confined to those who acknowledged that their organisation was WF/L-friendly. They were queried as to why their organisation was offering employees opportunities for WF/L balance. There were common themes, much of which focussed on the business case such as improved productivity and attracting potential employees, as well as it being a contemporary business requirement, a way of honouring mutual flexibility and as part of business conscience. Some of the narratives are provided here:

[I]f we are working under stress situation, we wouldn't produce; our productive grade [level] would be low...they want high productivity ...they know pretty well they have to look after the other side. ...Then globally you know nowadays how they rank [organisations], they [XXX] wanted to project themselves as a family-friendly organisation, so that they can get these best people.
Jean’s earlier accounts of the organisation’s WF/L-friendly efforts were quite dismal. In the narrative here she suggests two reasons why the organisation is attempting to be WF/L-friendly: to improve employee productivity and to attract/recruit the best people. Bobby offers a similar insight:

*I guess it’s become a public issue, it’s become part of normal business environment that you attempt to become family-friendly. It’s like saying why do companies wish to become environmentally friendly, because everybody needs to be environmentally friendly. Family friendliness is one of the norms nowadays and it’s one of those things you want to get right. Also I guess from a point of view attracting new staff you have to say you are family-friendly in kind.*

To Bobby, WF/L-friendly has become a public agenda and organisations have no choice but to embrace the culture and be seen as doing the right thing. He also has made the link between benefits of such programmes to attracting new staff. Alan, a manager concurs with the business requirement perspectives but also offers a slightly different take on it:

*I think on the other side of it, yes we can feel good about what we are doing for the employees and that, that’s good for the organisation overall. But I think first-off it’s a business requirement.*

In Alan’s account there is a trace of business conscience about doing the right thing by employees, and indirectly benefiting from such moral actions. Holly’s comments reaffirm the notion of business conscience:

*At first, its like I want to help, I want to help my employees. I want to sincerely help you to do the right thing. I’m keeping you here at work … Because, one of the key values of The Bank’, one of the things they tell you is that they want you to bring your WHOLE [emphasis added] self to work. That’s a key phrase around here. They just don’t say it, they mean it. So if you are going to leave, your family behind, that is the heart of every person, isn’t it? If you want somebody to bring that whole self to work, they do have to bring all those family type issues to work.*

Like Jean, Mick has also made the link to productivity:
I think it’s productively issue because if you are here, there are those odd few
days you have to do 12, 13 and 14 hours in a day because of some time critical
activity. When you start to work to 12, 13 and 14 hours a day your productivity
isn’t at its optimum. You just physically can’t continue to work those sorts of
hours, so the more you run down the employee, the less productive they are
going to be over time. You need that sort of family time or home time, balance
with your work, so the time you are here at work, it is productive.

In highlighting these unusually high expectations placed on some employees in his
department, Mick is reiterating the important role of dual flexibility, discussed
previously in section 6.4.2.1, as being a key point in this whole issue of being WF/L-
friendly. The organisation appears to be critically aware of its role and
responsibilities in the balance of this mutual flexibility and more importantly,
according to Mick, is aware that a slip-up can impact employee productivity and
consequently business performance.

We will see in Chapter 7 that many of the participants’ accounts of why their
organisation is offering WF/L balance are in line with current literature on this topic.
We now address some other key themes that have emerged from participants’
accounts of their organisation’s stand on WF/L balance.

6.5.4 WF/L balance rhetoric should match reality

The narratives of two participants in particular centred on the need for FFWs having
to ensure that their WF/L balance rhetoric matches workplace reality. For example,
according to Holly,

…an organisation that is supportive of the day to day needs of families. Not just
saying that they are going to be supportive, but the doing. The results are where
it counts. So what actually happens when you have a sick relative that you have
to look after. What actually happens when you have a death in the family and
you got to put some things in place. When you say ok that is a family-friendly
organisation because they were empathetic. Doing is what defines which ones
are and which ones aren’t. A lot have policies but don’t actually do it.

Holly’s narrative shows that the rhetoric-reality debate is a real concern to employees
and more importantly that they rate FFWs as those that follow-up rhetoric with
actions. Holly’s perspective mirrors the central crux of this thesis. One participant who expressed such concern is Jean. She offers the following observation:

They are becoming not [less] family-friendly nowadays. Even though they were practically... every time they were telling, “we have to be family-friendly”, and they try to demonstrate that before, but nowadays it’s become less....

By her statement Jean seems to suggest that the case organisation’s WF/L-friendly stance has become more rhetorical in recent times, and echoes Holly’s concern that rhetoric should match reality.

### 6.5.5 Employer-employee relationship

A number of participants suggested mutual understanding, leading to a good working relationship between employer and employees, is the core foundations of a FFW. Mark, for example, states:

Family-friendly organisation is ... where we... should be able to work without too much stress and be able to balance the family commitments and work. So there should be a equality of life. I would say is where you can fully care for your family and you can also work hard. But those in need should understand the purpose, they should have the liberty but also the attitude to work ethics....

An FFO lays the foundations for a balanced approach to work and family and in doing so minimises employees’ undue stress levels. Such a view was also expressed by a number of other participants. The key point raised was that employees should not abuse the system and should contribute by working hard in return. Mark’s sentiment is consistent with WF/L balance literature - that employees who are satisfied with their WF/L balance will perform better and increase business productivity. This view raises the importance and implications of mutual integrity and trust in the workplace.

This section concludes the analysis and discussion of data from a social constructivist perspective to theory development using the subjective approach (Chamaz 2000). This approach meant that prior literature and pre-understanding (Gummesson 2000), of WF/L balance provided clues and themes that guided the
investigation. In the next section the thesis provides the discussions and findings from the alternative objective approach of social constructive theory development. In this approach the narratives of the group are objectively and critically analysed to uncover new themes and patterns in organisational behaviour and employees’ experiences with WF/L balance. Such an approach is crucial and necessary if we are to uncover newer and yet to be challenged issues that are important to understanding WF/L balance, specifically in culturally diverse societies. While existing WF/L balance literature was not used to provide the emergent themes, pre-understanding of the issues from a personal perspective, being an immigrant myself, provided greater depth in understanding them. Additionally, the analysis actively refers to other relevant literature, as and where applicable, to support and build up the case for the emergent themes. Such an approach - where findings and literature feature side by side - means that the thesis essentially deviates from the approach taken so far in this chapter where the results of the analysis are discussed on their own merits.

6.6 Emergent finding regarding WF/L balance

Initial data analysis resulted in the generation of some novel themes which presented the possibility of producing ‘emergent’ findings. However, due to a lack of substantial credible support and evidence coming from, and provided by other narratives, the researcher was forced to abandon all but one theme. The one emergent theme - that which dealt with immigrant experiences – provided sufficient evidence and merit for further analysis and discussion. In stating this, it must be clarified that neither participants’ ethnicity nor their citizenship was intentionally sought out in this research. Any findings related to participants’ ethnicity or nationality were ascertained purely during the course of conversations in the interview process. Such an approach lends itself to the social constructive (subjective) paradigm.

Ten of the 20 interview participants were immigrants or first-generation Australians (ABS 2003b; Forrest & Poulsen 2003; Khoo & Birrell 2002) with the majority (8/10) originating from ‘Non-English Speaking Background’ (NESB) countries. Overall analyses showed that the latter subset’s WF/L balance experiences were uniquely different from the rest. In the main, these challenges could be attributed to a
combination of organisational-, personal-, and family-related features. While their individual experiences may appear to be isolated and perhaps not significant, the findings of this thesis suggest that the cumulative experiences represent an emergent finding for WF/L balance literature. Their overall experiences represent a focal point for theory-building grounded in the contributing role that cultural background plays in immigrants’ expectations of and experiences with WF/L balance in Australia. A number of themes identified within this emergent finding will be discussed in greater detail. Before embarking on the narratives of individual immigrants, it is essential that the particular use of the term ‘back home’ by immigrants is explained. This phrase routinely appeared in immigrants’ narratives and was typically used to refer to and differentiate their country of origin from their adopted country or current domicile or ‘home’ country. Buchanan (2007) and O’Reilly (2007) note that this phrase has become an accepted terminology in immigrant literature.

### 6.6.1 Issue of qualifications and job role

The first experience described here is that of Mark, a qualified legal professional who sought and was granted Australian residency under the skills immigrant entry category.

> I’m in Australia only for last 4 years... I was a solicitor back in my home country... I am doing the law bridging course in Australia. ... I’m qualified ... I worked overseas ... and coming here, I’ve so much experience, but they first placed me in non-management... they should place me rather in a senior management position, in a high level. I will be happier... I was earning very much more before, so it’s very hard.

Despite his qualifications being recognised by the migration authorities and obtaining approval to enter Australia on that basis, Mark was not recruited to a management position; one which he perceived and rated that would be on par with his previous employment. He further perceives that his non-management role inevitably affects his earnings and consequently results in his less than satisfactory WF/L balance experience. Mark’s experience is similar to that documented of Sri Lankan immigrants in New Zealand by Basnayake (1999), for the Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) Trust of New Zealand. One of the main findings of the report was the difficulty that many highly qualified professional men and
women faced in obtaining jobs that were on par with their qualifications and previous work experiences. Powell and Butterfield (in D’Netto & Sohal 1999) note that, similar to the ‘glass ceiling’ for women in management positions, there is a ‘glass ceiling’ for immigrant representation in management positions. In the Australian context, Wagner and Childs’s (2006) research found that CALD workers faced unprecedented challenges in recruitment and selection. Lack of “right skills” (D’Netto & Sohal 1999), a code for Australian experience, is often used to justify the reason why immigrants are unsuccessful in their attempts to find gainful employment. This focus on the ‘Australian experience’ presents a catch-22 dilemma to newly-arrived immigrants. Invariably, such obstacles cause many immigrants to take up lower-level jobs completely unrelated to their professional skills - grounds under which they were granted permanent residence (Wagner & Childs 2006). However, it is only CALD skilled immigrants who experience such challenges. Wagner and Childs note that skilled immigrants from native English-speaking nations, such as the U.K and New Zealand, have no problems finding employment befitting their advertised skills. The authors have expressed fears that such disparate treatment of CALD skilled immigrants could be regarded as discriminatory and tantamount to racism.

6.6.2 Filial obligation

Another challenge faced by Mark is his filial obligation to provide for the needs of his extended family ‘back home’. de Valk and Schans’s (2008) Dutch-based study on care-giving found that ethnicity strongly correlated to elderly first-generation immigrants’ sense of and expectations of filial responsibility. These authors cite other researchers in building up a case that these immigrants’ expectations of filial responsibility are higher than those of native Dutch. Using Hofstede’s ‘Individualism-Collectivism’ cultural dimension they argue that native Dutch are traditionally individualistic and filial obligation does not feature in such a society. Conversely, filial responsibility is a critical aspect of collectivist societies and such responsibility extends to providing financial help (de Valk & Schans 2008; Lo & Russell 2007). The present thesis argues that this notion of filial obligation has equally, if not more relevance, to the discussion of Australian WF/L balance, because of its higher immigrant populations. Mark narrates:
I do care for my mother in Australia and I care for my in-laws back home in Sri Lanka, and also my wife’s grandmother, she’s very old. We support her financially …she’s in a wheelchair because she had a fall, and she’s old … so somebody has to look after her full-time and she needs financial support for that. … I was earning very much more before so its very hard.

Mark’s inability to obtain a position befitting his professional qualifications and his previous job status (discussed in the previous section) means that he also loses out on the remuneration that goes with the position. This in turn compromises his ability to adequately financially support his immediate family in Australia and his extended family ‘back home’, and therefore affects his sense of WF/L balances. The remittance of money ‘back home’ is a filial responsibility undertaken by many foreign migrants (Faini 2007; Kambac 2007; Maggard 2004), especially those from non-Western cultures and non-developed countries (Faini 2007). These are societies where there are no national systems of social security welfare payments. The culturally based societal expectation is based on an embedded reciprocity of parent/elder and children relationship in care-giving. While they are able-bodied and financially able, parents and elders look after the needs of their children and their children’s families (Lo & Russell 2007; Wall & São José, 2004). When the time comes that they - parents/elders- are no longer able to fulfil this role, there is a reversal of roles, – the children are expected to take on the responsibility of looking after their parents and elders. Such a pattern continues to be fulfilled even when the children leave their country of birth. A point made by Kermode and Tellei (2004, p. 11) is the evolution of a new pattern of cultural behaviour of immigrants. The general inability of immigrants to provide direct face-to-face care and assistance to family members back home is increasingly replaced and/or substantiated by increased financial assistance. Thus if immigrant workers earnings are compromised by their inability to hold positions commensurate with their qualifications and previous standing, their caring responsibilities and their sense of WF/L balance are likely to be negatively affected.

Despite the majority of NESB immigrant participants readily acknowledging that they do not have any form of constant caring responsibilities for their elders, they all identified with some level of filial obligation for members of their extended family.
Their obligations included making weekly visits, providing financial help, taking them out, doing their shopping, and taking them to the doctor. It must be emphasised that filial obligation is not an exclusively immigrant attitude; some non-migrant participant narratives also contained accounts that could be interpreted as aspects of filial obligation.

6.6.3 Days off – special circumstances

This theme concerns immigrant workers’ special need for days off to observe significant religious events and ethnically-based festivals and emergency leave to go ‘back home’. Jean wanted a day off to observe a significant religious event stating:

I did not explain to them - one of the religious things, religious day. I wanted to have a day off, but then they said, “no”. I could have told and explained to them that it is a religious day, I need that day off – I told them but not in so much depth….In fact after that (last year) I made sure the people knew one month before, I put that day for leave.

She was denied the leave, although she apportioned some blame on herself for not emphasising the importance of the day. We see that she had learnt from the negative experience and had applied for annual leave for the event in the following year. On another occasion she wanted a day off to celebrate her culture’s New Year.

I wanted a holiday for that [New Year] but then there were two other people; they put the RDOs as well. I was wondering and I thought (to myself) - for me it is New Year, it is only on that one day. So I explained and got the day off.

Here, it is evident that Jean has learnt from her past experiences, and realises that she has to be assertive if her work and family needs are to be fulfilled. Dan narrated an occasion when a fellow Filipino worker had to suddenly take time off work and go back home, to the Philippines, because his father was very ill. Dan commented, “…they were fine with that, they let him go”.

Milkman (2006) claims that in America, with its vast numbers of immigrant workers, it is common practice for these workers to take extended periods of leave to go back home, to care for sick family members, or to simply take a break. Milkman argues
that employers must therefore have an array of possible alternative arrangements so that there is minimum disruption to work, but ensure that they are also able to provide workers with flexibility for their own sense of appropriate WF/L balance.

6.6.4 Distinctive gender roles

Similar to Dale’s arguments raised in section 3.3.2 this thesis suggests that first-generation Australian immigrant workers, especially those from non-Western countries, face particularly challenging times coping with work and family responsibilities. The problem is exacerbated by different cultural norms - workers have to grapple with dual identities - ‘back home’ and ‘adopted country’ identity. Jean’s experiences provide some insight:

Around 8:30 p.m. they (spouse and three children) sit down to dinner. I clean up the kitchen, and the house. Sometimes I join them for dinner. Often I eat after them, after I have finished my work.

Jean and her spouse are first generation immigrants from a CALD South Asian country. They have three children aged between nine and thirteen. Despite working full-time Jean does all the domestic work, cooking and cleaning, as well as helping the children with their school work. Her spouse works full-time and studies part-time, but though the breadwinner role is shared, he subscribes to the more traditional or cultural male role representative of cultures with low gender egalitarianism scores. Upon returning from work, he reads the newspaper and watches television while she does the cooking, cleaning, and other domestic work. She, as we note, does not often have the time to sit with and have dinner with the rest of the family. While Jean has learnt to adapt somewhat to the Australian workplace, she typifies the assertions made by Roehling et al.’s (2005, p. 842) that

among the more traditional cultures, the expectation that women, even if employed, should be responsible for the home, will place women at risk for role overload and higher levels of work-family spillover.

Jean sums up her experience of work-family conflict and spillover with the following:


Jean perceives a gap between the organisation’s views, and her views of what is practical help to promote WF/L balance. She is especially critical of the FFO’s efforts to organise weekend family fun-days for employees and their families in the Sydney CBD.

Jean’s narrative shows that despite the FFO’s best intentions to promote WF/L balance, the expectations and experiences of CALD minorities, especially those of women, can be overwhelmingly different. Their WF/L balance experiences are very much tied up with the notion of gender egalitarianism. The gender egalitarianism scores of her ‘back home’ culture are marginally lower than that of Australia. Her experience may be instrumental in her perception that the FFO’s work-family policies are not really helping her. These examples from the research have shown the range of issues and challenges that CALD immigrants experience, and give some insight into immigrants’ expectations of the FFO. In the next section, with this awareness of the range of issues, the paper discusses background literature to understand the complex relationship between work and family, gender and culture.

6.7 Chapter summary

The previous chapter, Chapter 5, showed the results of the quantitative phase of the research into WF/L balance in the FFO. Using a survey instrument and drawing strength from the conceptual rhetoric-reality framework, the study sought to investigate the reality of WF/L balance from employee perspectives. Three test variables: employees’ awareness of, need for, and take-up of relevant provisions were used to study the reality of employees’ experiences and attempts at WF/L
balance as provided by the FFO. Below average results in all three areas provided crucial evidence as to why the FFO’s offerings of WF/L balance may be regarded as more rhetoric than reality. However, as was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, rhetoric-reality gap levels merely provide insights into the magnitude of the problem, and we need qualitative studies to capture and understand the contributing forces and their impacts.

The primary objective of the qualitative phase was to gather greater insight into, and develop further understanding of why WF/L balance is more rhetoric than reality for employees, while a secondary objective was to investigate other generic challenges faced by the FFO. To enable such an analysis, the qualitative phase included not only interviews of employees - as users of the WF/L balance provisions efforts - but also content analysis of various documents and publications of the case organisation - the ultimate planners, designers, and implementers of WF/L balance initiatives. Both branches of the social constructivist approach to qualitative data analysis were used. In the main, the first branch, the subjective approach, relied on literature to guide the analysis and to narrow down forces which contribute to poor rhetoric-reality gap levels in two areas: awareness of, and need for, the FFO’s WF/L balance initiatives.

The findings show that while individual attributes, such as indifference and lack of technical skills and confidence to independently and efficiently navigate the staff intranet site, XYZ, do compromise awareness, by and large it is organisation-specific forces that contribute to poor awareness. These forces include the great divide between the ‘freedom’ afforded to management and non-management staff to peruse XYZ unencumbered; the findings in this study are consistent with those of the literature, that non-management staff have comparatively poorer awareness than management staff. Management staff have the liberty, in terms of freedom of time and space, to peruse information as and when they want. On the other hand, non-management staff are closely monitored and under tremendous pressure to complete assigned work in a given time. Poor awareness is also a result of poor communication. There is some discrepancy between organisational rhetoric of the methods by which employees are made aware of new policies and provisions and participants’ accounts.
The findings also established that employee need for the FFO’s set of WF/L balance provisions is a very complicated domain. Firstly, the complication arises because FFO, or any organisation for that matter, has to cater for the diverse needs of its workforce, and this typically means providing a very broad range. Secondly, workers’ needs for particular policies/provisions shift across their life stages. A worker with young children will have a particular need for provisions related to children, but after some years this same worker will no longer need these provisions and might need something altogether different. So while the quantitative findings demonstrated significant rhetoric-reality gap in terms of need, the qualitative findings showed the harsh reality of this gap and the associated challenges. What the findings imply is that it is quite acceptable that need levels in an organisation will be poorly represented in some provisions and contrastingly well-represented across others at any given time. It is highly dependent on the characteristics of the workforce, which means the FFO, must constantly monitor its workforce and update needed provisions and policies to more closely reflect workforce needs.

While the survey findings indicated excellent take-up of provisions by those who attempted take-up, the findings indicate that, in the overall scheme of things, not many in the FFO attempted take-up. Hence, the subjective approach was also used to provide insights as to why employees might not attempt take-up. The findings indicate that in the main, it is organisational practices which effectively pre-empt employees’ take up of much needed provisions and which provide the crucial evidence of what contributes to the gap between the rhetoric and the reality of WF/L balance. Issues such as managers’ discretionary powers, the pressures of the work environment, and business cost considerations that limit employees’ expectations of and experiences of much needed balance, were widespread.

Subjective analysis also involved investigating the FFO’s workplace culture in terms of its WF/L balance. While there were signs of some elements of non-supportive culture, these were by far isolated incidences. Overall employee experiences and perception was that a supportive culture exists; one that was largely credited to the efforts of one person, the CEO.
The second branch, the objective arm of the social constructive approach provided fresh employee insights into WF/L challenges for the FFO. Nearly all participants perceived workplace flexibility as a fundamental requirement for WF/L balance. A number of participants identified the FFO as providing some degree of flexibility while others perceived that more flexibility was needed. Some participants emphasised that flexibility requires a dual approach; employers and employees needed to demonstrate mutual flexibility. There was also the reminder that the FFOs needed to actively ensure that its WF/L-friendly stance did not merely translate to having policies in place, but included practical realities for employees. One participant observed that the FFO’s family-friendly efforts had declined over the years, suggesting that the rhetoric-reality relationship is dynamic and reality can quickly shift to rhetoric. An emergent finding was the unique experiences of first-generation Australians or immigrant workers, particularly those from CALD cultures where the notion of WF/L balance sharply contrasts with that of Australia. Though the actual numbers of such workers were few, their experiences should not be regarded as minimal. This study perceives that their cumulative experiences have important implications for the wider discussion of WF/L balance in countries such as Australia that have significant immigration.

In the next chapter, Chapter 7, the thesis draws together the quantitative and qualitative results and findings and discusses them in terms of the research questions and the literature.
PART IV: SYNTHESIS AND FINDINGS
CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

In an attempt to understand if the efforts of family friendly workplaces (FFWs) to provide employees work-family/life (WF/L) balance are largely rhetorical, this research used a within-case approach to study a large FFO. The study was guided by the author’s conceptual framework, ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’. The model was operationalised as a dual-centred inquiry using Creswell’s (2003) Sequential Exploratory Design (11.2a). The focus of the first phase of the inquiry was to measure the discrepancy or gap levels between rhetoric and reality and therefore involved a predominantly positivist paradigm, while the second phase sought to understand organisational factors which could contribute to such gaps, which meant that it was essentially guided by the interpretivist paradigm. The positivist phase used a largely quantitative survey questionnaire to measure the magnitude of rhetoric-reality discrepancies, using three employee experiences, awareness, need for and take up of provisions as test variables. The results of this phase of the study were presented and discussed in Chapter 5.

The second phase of the research inquiry used a number of qualitative tools including document analysis, personal interviews, and observation techniques to gather data on employee experiences with the FFO’s WF/L balance provisions. The results of this second phase were presented and discussed in Chapter 6. Creswell (2003) argues that in a dual-centred approach, such as that used in this research, there must be an effort to bring together the outcomes of the two approaches. This therefore is the primary objective of this chapter; the results of the two phases are consolidated and summarised to obtain an overall understanding of the rhetoric-reality context of the FFO’s WF/L balance program. This objective is addressed in section 7.2, and will be guided by the research questions and supported by reference to literature in the field.
A second objective, dealt with in section 7.3, is to summarise and recap three significant contributions of the study, the conceptual framework, the methodology used to operationalise the framework and guide the investigation, and finally the emergent findings regarding the WF/L balance experiences and challenges of immigrant workers. The third objective of this chapter, covered in sections 7.4, is to discuss limitations of the research and the fourth and final objective, discussed in 7.5 is to suggest possible areas of future research. The chapter ends with a final conclusion to the study in section 7.6.

7.2 WF/L balance rhetoric-reality challenges of the FFO

The quantitative study used the full set of the FFO’s WF/L balance provisions offered to the entire sample population versus the sum of the sample’s experiences with these offerings as a means to explore the rhetoric-reality gap levels. Three types of employee experiences were used as test variables of WF/L balance ‘reality’ – participants’ awareness of, need for, and take up of provisions - and featured in the measurement of rhetoric-reality gap levels. As the results and discussions of Chapter 5 show, the sample’s experiences across all three variables were generally poor.

First, using Burke’s (1996) 60% awareness (conversely 40% gap level in terms of this study) as a reasonable figure, the study found that the overall (macro-level) awareness to be much lower at 45.6% (or gap level of 54.4%). This finding provides the first piece of empirical evidence suggesting organisational rhetoric. Second, there was very poor need overall for the provisions offered with a gap level at 80%. Finally, take up was a problem, with gap levels at a high 88.4%. Based purely on these findings we may be quick to conclude that the FFO’s efforts to provide employees options for WF/L balance appear to be more of organisational rhetoric. However, caution needs to be exercised – it must be acknowledged that such findings do not necessarily imply that the FFO’s intentions were purely to mislead employees. The quantitative findings have only the power to show the extent of the problem but not why it arises, and additional subjective constructive analysis was needed.
Further analysis of this data however shows that poor awareness has a direct flow on effect on need and take up of provisions. In a sense therefore, awareness of, and need for provisions are critical antecedents for take up (Fernandez & Teal 2007). Awareness is a key employee experience because logically the other two experiences, need and take up, are not only dependent on it but obviously cannot happen without it. The results show overwhelming support for the reverse, that is high awareness produces high take up, for example, in section 5.4.12 the subset of the sample that expressed being aware of and in need of particular provisions, had an overall very low gap level (4.2%) in take up. This finding therefore indicates that poor awareness might be a key problem or more likely symptomatic of a larger problem, and the qualitative findings can provide further clues.

However, before we do so it is important to look at some other challenges of diagnosing poor awareness. As one manager astutely pointed out in section 6.3.1, lack of awareness in some instances could be purely a matter of misguided employee perception. For example, some employees may routinely come to work early/late and/or leave work early/late without explicitly realising that they were in fact using the flexible start/finish provision that is part of the organisation’s WF/L balance initiatives. Such a perception could happen because there is no formal application to use the provision; rather, employees just need to make such arrangements with their managers or team leaders. However, there are also provisions where employees are required to submit formal applications in a bid to attempt take up, and poor awareness of these types of provisions would be of primary focus here.

Additionally, there are other reasons why high gap levels in the area of need and take up must also be interpreted with caution. As has been discussed in various sections of this thesis (see sections 3.7.1.2 and 5.4.7.3, for example) effective diversity management means that the FFO has a responsibility to provide a broad range of provisions. It implies that below average scores for need and take up across some provisions are to be expected and consequently that high gap levels would be expected. It was also pointed out in the summary in section 6.7 that employees’ need levels for particular provisions are also very much related to their life stage; the needs of employees with primary-school age children are quite different from those
who only have secondary-school age children. Hence, again, high gap levels across some provisions may be expected if the demographics of the FFO are heavily skewed in the opposite direction. If the FFO can adequately justify high gap levels in this area it should be able to effectively contest and counteract any rhetoric claim. However, it does mean that the FFO must actively monitor its demographic profile and routinely update its WF/L balance offerings as and when the profile changes substantially. The importance of these two employee experiences, awareness of and need for provisions offered, have similarly been stressed upon by the Victorian state government as ways in which employers can ensure that their firms provide FFWs (Industrial Relations Victoria 2007).

7.2.1 Answers to the research questions

The underlying reasons for poor awareness, need or take up must also be investigated before any conclusive findings can be derived. This investigation is guided by the research questions, the findings of the qualitative study and the extant literature.

7.2.1.1 Communication of provisions

In the introduction to this chapter three key points regarding awareness were made. First, that poor awareness is a key employee experience with possible flow-on effects on need and take up. Second, poor awareness in some instances may only be employee perceptions, and third, poor awareness is in itself not the root problem, but rather a symptom of a larger problem within the FFO. The link between poor awareness and inadequate communication is well documented (Burke 1996; Dex et al. 2002; Industrial Relations Victoria 2007; U.S. Office of Personnel Management 1998; Visser & Williams 2006), with Visser and Williams (2006) making the positive correlation between inadequate communication and unacceptable rhetoric-reality discrepancies.

Therefore, the research question, “How are these [WF/L balance] provisions communicated to staff?” can help in determining if poor communication is the underlying cause of the high rhetoric-reality gap level, using the awareness variable. The answers to this question lie in the analyses in section 6.3.1 and its sub-sections.
A key finding is that the FFO and the interview participants did not completely concur on the communication channels that are used to inform organisational members’ issues pertaining to WF/L balance. While both sides concurred on the important role of the staff intranet site XYZ, discussions by line managers, and hard-copy circulars, three of the exclusively cited channels by the FFO - human resources call centre, Enterprise Agreement negotiations and monthly periodicals - were not mentioned by any participant. Rather, both management and non-management participants relied on the ‘grapevine’, which included not just line managers but fellow employees as well, to keep them informed. However, contrary to the research findings that unions play an important role in communicating awareness of WF/L balance provisions to employees (Budd & Mumford 2004; Dex et al. 2002), this channel of communication did not play any role in this study. This channel therefore represents a possible means of increasing awareness in the FFO.

The study also found a range of other organisational challenges regarding awareness, three of which were directly or indirectly related to the primary communication channel, the staff intranet site, XYZ. These challenges which were mostly expressed by non-management staff (see section 6.3.1.6) included, lack of technical skills to effectively use XYZ (see section 6.3.1.1), and inability to use XYZ during office hours either because of pressures of work (see section 6.3.1.2), and/or lack of ‘space’ (see section 6.3.1.3). Another challenge was personal attitude (see section 6.3.1.4), in the sense that awareness is closely linked to individual perceptions or judgements of whether a particular provision or category of provisions is either relevant or appealing.

7.2.1.2 Policies to provisions

One way of testing if an organisation’s WF/L balance initiatives amounts to rhetoric is to understand how these policies are translated to provisions. Hence, one of the research questions was, “Are all WF/L policies translated into appropriate workplace provisions without any added conditions and/or alterations?” The underlying meaning behind this question is the assumption that the FFW’s rhetoric is transparent and that there is neither a direct nor indirect intention to misinform or misguide employees into believing that alternative versions of the provision exist.
This research question is particularly relevant in terms of evaluating employees’ experiences with needed provisions and take up attempts. Insights into this particular challenge are drawn from the results in sections 6.3.2 and 6.4.1.

As shown in Table 23, 1.2% of all attempts by the sample subset to take up provisions were ‘Partially successful’, i.e. employee applications to take up provisions were subjected to secondary conditions or the original terms of the conditions were amended. The interview narratives provide further insight into this problem, but one specific example needs to be highlighted. The RDO policy is assessable only to non-management employees, and appears to be a very popular provision. As detailed in sections 6.3.2.1 and 6.3.2.2 this policy is explicitly stated in the FFO’s ‘Work and Family’ award submissions, and hence any attempts not to honour the policy amounts to, as well as provides the necessary evidence for organisational rhetoric. The FFO, as we saw, made formal changes to this policy without any prior consultation with the union or staff. This move was contested by the Finance Sector Union (FSU) at the Australian Industrial Relations Commission and the Federal Court. The FSU even brought up the FFO and this particular policy to demonstrate the case against WorkChoices in a submission to Parliament. After a prolonged conflict, the FFO ultimately revised the policy, retaining the original version almost in its entirety. Though policies/provisions are in themselves not legal instruments they must not contravene the terms and conditions stated in awards and agreements (Industrial Relations Victoria 2007). More importantly it is clear that any untoward attempt to alter previously advertised policies/provisions not only seriously undermines take up by employees but also contributes to the notion that the FFO’s WF/L balance is rhetorical. It is therefore important that the FFO heeds the advice of Industrial Relations Victoria (2007, p.9) that any amendments be conducted via a “recognised and transparent consultative process”.

7.2.1.3 Access to provisions: Gendered?

The gendered notion of employee access to WF/L balance provisions in FFWs is well documented (Gray 2001; Adamson 2002; Gray 2001; Lewis 1997; 2001), with organisational culture (Adamson 2002; Lewis 1997; 2001) as well as workplace demographics (Gray 2001) being the key contributing factors (see section 3.7.4 and
3.7.4.1. The research question, “Are these provisions available to all staff, male and female?” was posed in an attempt to understand the FFO’s position on this issue.

The study conducted gender-based take up analysis of the survey data in sections 5.4.10.3 (macro-level) and 5.4.11.2 (micro-level). The findings show no statistically significant difference in the average number of successful take up by males and females in the organisation, although as would be expected they did on average differ in the types of provisions they took up. This finding that take up is gender-neutral is contrary to that of the literature cited above.

The second relevant issue is the quantitative finding discussed in section 5.4.9.2 that the female sample, more significantly than the male sample, reported that they intentionally did not pursue take up despite being aware and acknowledging a need for specific provisions. The underlying reasons for such employee behaviour will be further explored in section 7.2.1.5.

7.2.1.4 Access to provisions: By employee rank?

This study concurs with other researchers (Duxbury & Higgins 2001; Gray & Tudball 2002; Keene & Quadagno 2004) that differential patterns of access to provisions is a huge area of concern. In particular, the study posits that it especially worrying and unacceptable for FFWS especially in terms of the rhetoric-reality debate. In the previous section it was established that while there are no gender-based differences in access in the FFO, there are gender-based differences in overall awareness, and the possibility of a link between gendered awareness and management/non-management dichotomy was alluded to.

Section 3.7.3.5 discussed the findings of Keene and Quadagno (2004) of a positive relationship between access and job ranking. The authors attribute differential access to discretionary powers, while Duxbury and Higgins (2001) link it to flexibility of those in management positions. Therefore the research question, “Are these provisions available to staff at all levels of the organisation?” is necessary to determine the relationship between these two variables. The quantitative findings in
section 5.4.11.1 provide part of the answer, and showed that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean successful take up of the two sample groups or between gender and management. However, employee insights from the interviews suggest that differential access alongside employment rank does exist and the findings indicate a number of challenges (see concluding paragraph of section 7.2.1.1) which could be categorised under discretionary powers (Keene & Quadagno 2004) and flexibility (Duxbury & Higgins 2001).

7.2.1.5 Take up of provisions: Challenges and obstacles

This section summarises the findings in relation to three interrelated research questions:

i) Are these provisions utilised (practised) by staff?

ii) If not, what are the specific challenges and obstacles faced that prevent the practice of these provisions?

iii) How do employees and the organisation respond to these obstacles?

As outlined in the quantitative findings in section 5.4.10 the subset of the sample population that was aware of particular provisions and who professed need for them proceeded to demonstrate very high ‘successful’ take up rates of 95.8%. Successful take up denote that participants were able to utilise these provisions in their original form, i.e. there were no further modifications or improvised terms of conditions. However, as was referred to in the discussion in section 5.4.10, while this percentage is commendable on its own, it is not reflective of the experiences of the entire sample population. The fact is that the overall successful take up was only 11.6%, a finding consistent with the literature (Campbell & Charlesworth 2004; De Cieri et al. 2005; Drew & Murtagh 2005; Dex et al. 2002; Lewis 1997; McDonald et al. 2005; Visser & Williams 2006). Earlier in this chapter it was highlighted that two antecedents, poor awareness and poor need for these provisions, could account for such low take up, and a summary of these was provided.

Additionally, the interview narratives (see sections 6.3.3 above and 6.4) revealed a number of other challenges and obstacles; the major ones are summarised here. A key challenge revolves around considerations of financial cost (see section 6.3.3.3)
of approving employees’ requests to take up certain provisions. The provisions referred to here are typically the more popular provisions which also have direct costs implications, such as the study leave/financial assistance and telework. Limited budget allocations meant that not all, especially non-management, applications for study assistance or telework were approved and managerial discretion (section 6.3.3.1) played a critical role in rendering the suitability of potential candidates, and therefore the outcome of their applications for take up.

While cost considerations may also be reflective of challenges in the way policies are implemented, managers have highlighted other challenges more closely aligned with policy implementation (see 6.4.1) that appear to be more problematic and frustrating for both parties – the implementers and the potential users. Managers generally are entrusted, as the first or ground level decision-makers and implementers of employees’ requests to take up provisions. In instances where providing employees with WF/L balance means their temporary absence from the workplace, managers have the added responsibility of ensuring that the business functions and delivers as normal. Managers have been forced to grapple with the negative side effects and repercussions of poorly designed policies or, in some cases, the consequences of contradictory policies/provisions. Two specific policies were raised; first the flexible start and finish times which some employees desperately need to balance work and the needs of their young families versus highly valuable corporate clients’ needs and their expectations of instantaneous customer service from their dedicated relationship managers.

The second cited challenge involves the maternity leave policy that requires the absent staff member’s position to be left ‘open’ for their eventual return, which can be up to five years. Taking the maximum scenario it means that the manager must find a replacement staff; in terms of business needs, it would be ideal to appoint someone for that duration. HR policy however makes it very clear that replacement staff cannot be hired on long-term basis, for fear that the incumbent will appeal/contest a case for a permanent position. Additionally, as one manager clearly observes, five-year timeframes means that it is highly likely that there will be a couple of staff on maternity leave at any given time, which can further exacerbate the
issue. This is the dilemma confronting managers: on one hand they have to fulfil organisational rhetoric of providing WF/L balance to permanent employees (in terms of maternity/paternity leave), yet on the other hand they are forced to behave in totally contradictory manner by employing casual/part-time replacement staff on short-term periods. Confounding this dilemma is the organisational expectation that the department will continue to operate efficiently and effectively.

A third challenge can be traced to organisational culture. As discussed in section 6.4.2 the FFO appears to have embraced WF/L balance - to the extent that it had nominated itself and been awarded national level awards, and implemented Timeout, a cultural change program aimed at making such a transition work. Participants overwhelmingly tend to concur that a climate of new beginning is evident, with several openly crediting the CEO, and thereby concurring with the literature on the critical role that the CEO plays in change management including cultural transformation (Daft 2008; Myllys 1999; Schein 1998). However, as the discussions in section 6.4.2 (see also section 6.5.2) indicate, some aspects of the organisational culture appear to fall short of the expectations of the CEO, and hence may be construed as contributing to the notion that WF/L balance is still quite rhetorical in the FFO. For example, while the CEO has openly expressed, “I expect [The Bank] to require only what is reasonable from staff. I tell staff to work ‘smarter, not harder’”, employee experiences and perceptions seem to show that this is not an accurate portrayal in some areas of the bank.

There is, unsurprisingly, an overt focus on business growth and profitability, and linking this to employee performance and ultimately their remuneration. Participants also perceive that their department is understaffed and as a consequence staff are overworked and stressed. Further negative aspects of the culture include the emphasis on employees’ need to be ‘seen’ and to work beyond the traditional office hours. There is also the huge emphasis that customer needs always come first, such as managers scheduling meetings at 8:00am or after 5:00pm. Employees respond to such pressures by typically working long hours, a finding that is consistent with the nature of contemporary work (Bonné 2003; Campbell & Charlesworth 2004; Lewis 1997; Lewis, Rapoport & Gambles 2003; Russell & Bowman 2000; Gray et al. 2004)
and that of businesses in the Australian financial sector (FSU 2005; Probert et al. 2000).

Flexibility, as we note, is what participants typically identify a FFW with and such expectations seem to match the organisation’s rhetoric, as is evident in the submission documentation discussed in section 1.3.1 above, about offering “flexible work practices”. Participants readily acknowledge that flexibility needs to be two-way, between employee and employer; but their experiences suggest that it often tends to tip in favour of management. One such issue involves the RDO; while employees want to use RDOs as time off work to attend to non-work matters, the workplace’s preference (culture) is for users to trade it in as ‘time in lieu’ (payout), and the reality is that many employees end up doing just that. Earlier we noted the RDO controversy - the FFO attempted to remove new employees’ rights to RDO as days off work by incorporating RDO payout into their salary package. Such organisational behaviour is contrary to their rhetoric of providing “flexible work practices”. Finally, in section 6.3.3.1 managers confessed that in approving subordinate requests to take up provisions they tended to exercise discretion in favour of the FFO, which implies that the workplace culture regards employees’ WF/L balance needs as secondary.

The narratives show that employees are aware of the obstacles to particular provisions and have become quite cynical of their availability, to the extent that some perceive that it is futile to even apply for them despite being aware of and needing particular provisions such as telework, job share and study leave. The fact that the corporate department has very few female relationship managers and that there is high turnover among female assistant relationship managers perhaps bears the best testimony to an ineffective WF/L balance culture and more evidence for challenging its WF/L balance rhetoric.

7.2.1.6 WF/L balance: The FFO’s objectives

The final research question, “Why is the organisation incorporating WF/L initiatives in the workplace?” is aimed at understanding the FFO’s objectives in providing WF/L balance programmes. We will discuss the FFO’s objectives from the
perspectives of the organisation and its members. First, we turn again to the explicit statement the FFO made in its ACCI application, as noted in section 1.3.1 above, in an effort to understand its objectives,

...creation of an environment for all our people to excel and realise both their personal and professional goals is an important feature of our business strategy.

This statement implies that the FFO’s objective is to create a workplace culture that understands and caters to employees’ work and non-work needs so that they are ultimately able to perform well. An official (2002) document outlines how the FFO embarked on Timeout, a cultural transformation program aimed at closing the gap between the bank’s values and employees’ personal values. The objective of the program is to improve the well-being, happiness, and performance of employees so that they in turn produce satisfied customers, business performance, and growth. In other words the FFO is very much aligned to the business case argument for WF/L balance (Yasbeck 1994; Johnson 1995; Dex & Sceibl 1999; Russell 1999; Wax 2002; Zetlin & Whitehouse 1998; Benveniste & Leathem 1999; Varuhas et al. 2003; Bond et al. 2005; McDonald et al. 2005).

Section 6.4.2.1 summarises participants’ perceptions of the FFO’s motives in providing WF/L balance and we turn, in particular, to their accounts of Timeout. Max, Andy, and Holly all echo similar thoughts – that the FFO views employees as valuable human assets whose welfare and happiness is paramount to their productivity and ultimately business performance.

With this summary the thesis concludes the discussion on the research questions that have driven this study on the investigation of the rhetoric versus the reality of WF/L balance in the FFO. In the following section the contributions of the study are summarised.
7.3 Contributions of this study

The contributions of this study are three-fold: the rhetoric-reality framework, the methodology, and finally the emergent findings of the cultural implications for WF/L balance. These three issues will be recapped in the following sections.

7.3.1 Contribution 1: Rhetoric-reality framework

Faced with the inadequacies of existing gap models to study the state of WF/L balance rhetoric-reality, the study embarked on new theory development which then led to the design of a new conceptual framework, ‘The rhetoric-reality discrepancy framework’. Lasswell’s (1972) policy sciences analytical framework, used in conjunction with Arygris and Schon’s (1974) ‘Theory of Action Perspective’ provided the foundations of understanding organisational rhetoric and the development of the conceptual framework. The underlying premise of this framework is that the FFO’s WF/L balance policies guide the structure and design of WF/L-friendly provisions and hence can be used to represent organisational rhetoric. The framework uses employees’ experiences with these provisions as being representative of organisational reality. Three types of employee experiences are used as test variables: awareness, need for and take up of the provisions on offer. The framework illustrates how a discrepancy or gap may arise between rhetoric and reality, and what would be the ideal or preferred state in an FFO.

The study used this framework to test and measure the degree and nature of overlap, and alternatively the gap, between the FFO’s rhetoric of providing employees with WF/L balance and reality, as experienced by employees.

7.3.2 Contribution 2: Research methodology

The second contribution is the research methodology. Guided by the conceptual framework the study established the need to use both positivist and interpretivist designs to provide a complete understanding of the business phenomena of WF/L balance and organisational rhetoric. The combined paradigm design made the case study the ideal research strategy and the ‘experimental’ (because of the new
conceptual framework) nature of the research made the within-case approach the obvious choice, as it allowed the thorough study of the research problem within the one organisational setting. Additionally, the combined paradigm meant that the choice of research methodology was ultimately directed to the mixed methods approach based on Creswell’s (2003) Sequential Exploratory Design (11.2a). With this approach the study commenced with the quantitative fieldwork and analysed and established gap levels. Its completion signalled the qualitative phase where the focus was on attempting to understand participants’ accounts of WF/L experiences.

The results from the quantitative phase provided insights into what issues to examine and what questions to ask in the qualitative phase. In the final stage the qualitative findings provided insights into the probable causes and challenges that could explain the rhetoric-reality gaps. This methodology is therefore a significant contribution of the study – it allows a rich and deeper understanding of the research problem. As such, this methodological framework may also be productive of further and other research on WF/L balance.

7.3.3 Contribution 3: Emergent finding – cultural implications

In section 6.6 the study discussed the outcomes of the social constructive theory development approach that led to an emergent finding linking culture (societal) and WF/L balance. Hence, the third and final contribution of this study is the potential role that culture (societal) plays in employees’ experiences with WF/L balance, especially in the case of first generation Australian immigrants from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) countries. An important finding from this study was the unique experiences of participants from CALD cultures; though the actual numbers of such workers were few, their experiences should not be regarded as minimal or marginal. This study demonstrates that their cumulative experiences have important implications for the wider discussion of WF/L balance in countries with significant immigration, such as Australia.

One of these implications concerns the notion of gender equality. The study had previously argued (see section 3.3.2.1) that society’ expectations of and experiences
with WF/L balances are inherently linked with its gender egalitarianism scores and had supported it with evidence from the literature. Basically, the higher a country’s score for gender egalitarianism the greater chances of successful WF/L balance programs within that society. However, first generation immigrant workers from CALD countries may well WF/L balance based upon a culture that emphasises shared parenting and housework far from reality and especially challenging.

This call for culture (societal) to be factored into any discussion of WF/L balance is similarly reflected in more recent literature (e.g. Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver 2007; Clancy & Tata 2005; Dale 2005; Hakim 2005; Ho 2006; Reed & Blundson 2006; Wall & São José 2004). Cultural implications can have crucial bearings on the design of and effectiveness of WF/L balance programs, especially in multicultural societies such as Australia.

### 7.4 Limitations of the study

The findings would have been more reliable if in the survey, a random sample had been drawn from the entire FFO. The fact that the organisation was spread over 744 locations across Australia would indicate that an alternative research design, perhaps involving email questionnaires and/or telephone interviews, might have been more plausible. While this might have been more appropriate, the restrictions by head office on where the survey could be conducted, as well as the limitations placed on me as a researcher were the practical constraints. An associated limitation was the return rate. Despite having distributed over 250 questionnaires to the designated sites and despite repeated requests for participants to return the completed forms, the return rate could not be improved beyond the 36.5%.

The third limitation is associated with the survey instrument. The demographic questions could have been better framed. There should have been attempts to establish the economic situations of partnered households, for example asking if it is single-income or dual-income household, as well as the employment pattern of the partner. Another improvement could be to capture data on union membership; this information is relevant since the literature shows that unions play an important role
in raising members’ awareness of workplace entitlements (Budd & Mumford 2003; Dex et al. 2002). These data would have contributed to deeper understanding of participants’ WF/L balance. Some of these limitations have, in part, been addressed through the interview sessions. The fourth limitation was that the multi-method research strategy originally included a focus group session of two separate groups: management and non-management. This plan, if it had been successful, would have provided further evidence for data triangulation. Another limitation arises from the fact that the study investigates reality from the perspective of employee experiences. Such experiences, arguably are dynamic and can differ from day to day, and therefore the research findings might be seen to resemble single point of time occurrences. In retrospect, however, any research that attempts to investigate employees’ experiences may also be argued to represent single point in time findings, including any findings from longitudinal studies. Additionally, in recalling their experiences with the FFO’s WF/L balance-friendly provisions, respondents were clearly advised to recall events in their past one year, and so are not solely confined to capturing single point occurrences of events.

The sixth and final limitation may be attributed to the use of a single case study, and the fact that the findings cannot be generalised to other FFWs or FFOs. The merits of using the single case organisation were justified in section 4.4.1. As mentioned previously this study may be regarded as ‘experimental’ in terms of using the rhetoric-reality model, and thus a single case using the within-case approach is justified because it allows an opportunity to thoroughly investigate and develop deeper understanding (Gerring 2007) of the problem of WF/L balance rhetoric. Additionally, other steps have been taken to minimise the limitations of a single case approach, such as using mixed-method strategy and careful choice of the case organisation. As stated the case organisation is an FFO, i.e. a FFW that has made WF/L balance rhetoric by its self-nomination to, and subsequent winning of Australia-wide ‘work and family’ awards.
7.5 Future research

There are three key contributions of the study, the rhetoric-reality model, the research methodology and the emergent finding of a possible link between societal culture and WF/L balance experience. Hence, the study projects these three contributions as drivers of further research possibilities.

The study suggests that the rhetoric-reality framework and the related methodology be used to test other large organisations in the financial sector so that comparative WF/L balance findings can be drawn and lesson learnt. Alternatively, it could be trialled across other types of organisations to test the rhetoric-reality framework and to make broader comparisons.

Next, the study proposes more research examining the link between societal culture and WF/L balance. Given that a number of developed, mainly Western countries have comprehensive immigration policies and as a result take in substantial numbers of immigrants from CALD countries, such research is timely. The gender egalitarianism scores of Western countries are typically lower than the ‘back home’ CALD countries of many immigrants. Additionally, gender egalitarianism is a key assumption not only in the design of WF/L balance programs but also in employee experiences. Hence, a study that deliberately sets out to explore immigrant experiences of WF/L balance in Western organisations is not only timely but actually essential. A few countries have already begun work in this area (see section 3.3.2) and studies in the Australian context should similarly be undertaken.

7.6 Conclusion

While worldwide interest in WF/L balance has been increasing, there are also the perceptions and claims from some quarters that it is more organisational rhetoric than organisational reality. These claims are particularly damaging to FFOs since they have made their WF/L balance stand very public. Additionally, from an organisational studies perspective such claims also signal organisational ineffectiveness in managing such initiatives. In the absence of an adequate model to
study WF/L rhetoric-reality phenomenon, the study relied on rhetorical analysis to analyse the FFO’s effectiveness in delivering WF/L balance. Using Argyris and Schon’s (1974) ‘Theory of Action’ perspective the study embarked on theory development and a conceptual framework to explain the link, and relations between and among an FFO’s WF/L policies, provisions, and practices. The study not only successfully established a new model to test WF/L balance rhetoric-reality, but also provided a methodology based on a combined positivist and interpretivist paradigm, structured along Creswell’s (2003 p. 213) Sequential Exploratory Design (11.2a).

Three sets of employee experiences: awareness of, need for and take up of provisions featured in the first phase of the research, the quantitative phase. The findings were that WF/L balance was in many ways rhetoric. The next stage, the qualitative phase, used content analysis, observation and interview techniques to explore whether employees’ experiences with the WF/L balance differed from the FFO’s versions of these offerings. Then in the final stage, these two sets of findings were synthesised and analysed to gain a better understanding of the positivist finding that WF/L balance is more rhetoric than reality in the FFO. The qualitative findings implicated the following three issues: poor communication, implementation problems, and organisational culture. The qualitative phase also led to an emergent finding that culture (societal) has significant implications, not only in the design of WF/L balance programs but also in terms of WF/L balance experiences by immigrant workers. The thesis suggests that this finding is critical for Australia and other Western developed countries with significant immigrants from CALD countries. Indeed this study has, I believe, pointed towards avenues for further valuable research into WF/L balance relationships between employers and employees in Australia.
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APPENDIXES
Appendix A – Survey Information Statement

(PRINTED ON OFFICIAL LETTERHEAD)

INFORMATION STATEMENT
Research Project
‘Family-friendly organisations: Policies, provisions, practices and organisational culture’

My name is Santha Fernandez and I am a postgraduate student at the University of Western Sydney, undertaking doctoral research on “Family-friendly organisations: Policies, provisions, practices and organisational culture”. The study is on a large organisation that has been formally recognised as being family-friendly. As a large business finalist of the 2002 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) ‘National Work and Family Awards’, your organisation fulfils this requirement. The research will be conducted under the principal supervision of Dr Gregory Teal of the University of Western Sydney, Australia.

My research proposes that family friendly organisations (FFOs), guided by their organisational policies develop appropriate family-friendly provisions, such as family-friendly benefits and flexible workplace arrangements that allow their employees to effectively balance their work and family lives. The research further proposes that in FFOs, the family-friendly practices, that is those family-friendly benefits and flexible workplace arrangements that have been sought and utilised by employees, should closely match the family-friendly provisions offered, and hence the FFO would exhibit a ‘very low level of discrepancy’ between provisions and practices. Existing literature on family-friendly organisations however has revealed a number of limiting factors that can contribute to high levels of discrepancy between provisions and practices. The findings of this study will be potentially useful to your organisation as well as to other organisations wishing to establish the family-friendly workplace.

I have invited you to participate in this survey as I am interested in finding out about your awareness of the various family-friendly provisions offered in your organisations, your personal attempts in applying for some of these provisions, as well as your experience in actually utilising them. Your participation is entirely voluntary and your anonymity will be protected as no form of incriminating evidence and/or personal information will appear on any raw data or published reports. Additionally please be assured that there will be no threat to your ongoing employment if you choose not to participate in this research. All data collected will be kept secure in a locked cabinet at the University of Western Sydney for 5 years after the study is completed. After this period it will be destroyed.

If you agree to participate in this survey please complete and sign the attached consent form and place it separately from your questionnaire in the folder marked ‘CONSENT FORMS ONLY”. Should you have any questions or require more
information on any aspect regarding your involvement in this study, please do not hesitate to contact me on 9852 4147 during business hours or via email s.fernandez@uws.edu.au. Alternatively, you may wish to contact my supervisor:

Dr Gregory Teal (Principal Supervisor)
Tel. 02 4620 3247 (office); 0407 063 291 (mobile)
e-mail: greg.teal@uws.edu.au
University of Western Sydney
College of Law & Business
School of Management

CONSENT FORM
(Questionnaire Survey)

Research Project
‘Family-friendly organisations: Policies, provisions, practices and organisational culture’

I, …………………………………………………(please print name) understand the purpose of this research and hereby voluntarily agree to participate in this survey. I understand I am free to withdraw from this survey at any time.

Signed Date
……………………………              ……………………………

………………………………..                                    ……………………………
Appendix B – Survey Questionnaire

Introduction
This survey is to increase my understanding of how your organisation undertakes its commitment to help employees balance their family/life and work responsibilities. To do this I need your help. I would be very grateful if you would answer the following questions by ticking the appropriate spaces and/or providing where relevant, a short description.

Your responses will remain anonymous and confidential. To ensure anonymity please:

1. Do not write your name or staff number on any part of this questionnaire or the envelope.
2. Seal your completed questionnaire in the envelope provided and place it in the designated box.

Thank you.

Questions – Part A

In this section of the questionnaire what I would like to know is some details about you and the nature of your caring responsibilities.
Q1. What is your gender?

☐ Female  ☐ Male

Q2. How long have you been an employee of this organisation?

[ ] years [ ] months

Q3. What is your age? (tick one)

☐ 18-24 years
☒ 25-34 years
☐ 35-44 years
☐ 45-54 years
☐ 55-64 years
☐ 65 or older

Q4. What is your employment level?

☐ Group 1
☒ Group 2
☐ Group 3
☐ Group 4
☐ Group 5
☐ Group 6

Q5. What is your employment status?

☐ Full-time fixed hours
☒ Full-time shift
☐ Part-time fixed hours
☐ Part-time shift
☐ Casual

Q6. Who do you live with?

☐ Alone
☐ Just partner
☐ Just children
☐ Partner and children
☐ Extended/blended family
☐ Friends
☐ Other

Q7. How many children in the following age ranges (living with you or elsewhere) do you have care for? (leave blank if not applicable)

☐ 0-5 years ___ children
☐ 6-12 years ___ children
☐ 13-18 years ___ children
☐ 19 and over ___ children
Q8a. Do you have caring responsibility for any elders in your family (living with you or elsewhere)?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Q8b. If yes, please provide short description:
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Q9a. Apart from children and elders do you have caring responsibility for any other people you consider to be family (living with you or elsewhere)?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Q9b. If yes, please provide short description:
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Q10a. Do you have caring responsibility for any disabled members of your family (living with you or elsewhere)?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Q10b. If yes, please provide short description:
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Questions – Part B

This section relates to the family-friendly initiatives and benefits provided by your organisation. What I would like:

a. Your awareness if such initiatives/benefits are available.
b. Your need to use the initiatives/benefits (not what the organisation deems that you are eligible for, but that which you

c. Your actual attempts to apply to use the initiatives/benefits.
d. Your application to use them, the success rates, terms of conditions for usage.
e. Reasons for being denied usage (if available).

Please note: Where areas are shaded, no response is required.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q</th>
<th>Initiative/benefit¹</th>
<th>Aware of it?</th>
<th>Needed it?</th>
<th>Needed it, but chose not to apply or use.</th>
<th>Success Rate w</th>
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<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
<td>(Please state reason).</td>
<td>Successful (no change to terms of usage).</td>
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<td>Q11a</td>
<td>Child-care program</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
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<td>□ Yes</td>
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¹ Initiative/benefit marked with ** have been renamed in the thesis to protect the identity of the case organisation.
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<td>☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
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<td>Elder care program</td>
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<td>☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
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<td>Before/after work child care contacts</td>
<td>☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
<td>☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
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<td>☐ Yes</td>
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<td>Part-time work (for reasons other than childcare)</td>
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<td>Rostered Days Off</td>
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<td>Q13h</td>
<td>Carer’s leave</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Q13i</td>
<td>Time in lieu</td>
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<td>Yes No</td>
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<td>Q13j</td>
<td>Bereavement leave</td>
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<td>Q13k</td>
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<td>Q13l</td>
<td>Salary sacrifice options</td>
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<td>□ Yes □ No (If ‘No’ go to Q14a. If ‘Yes’ continue with current question).</td>
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<td>[Parental-on-leave communication scheme]**</td>
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<td>Needed it?</td>
<td>Needed it, but chose not to apply or use. (Please state reason)</td>
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<td>□ Yes</td>
<td>□ Yes</td>
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<td>Childcare kit</td>
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<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
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<td>□ Yes</td>
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<td>Q14d</td>
<td>Parental leave tips for both line managers and parents</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
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<td>Superannuation and other retirement provision above industry standards</td>
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<td>Financial counselling or information about available financial counselling services</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
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<td>□ Yes</td>
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<td>Q15c</td>
<td>Schemes on managing older workers’ health/performance issues</td>
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<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
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<td>Phased retirement</td>
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<td>Q15f</td>
<td>Access to counselling services for older workers</td>
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<td>CEO’s commitment to work/life balance</td>
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<td>Q16c</td>
<td>Support by top managers ensuring success of work/life balance</td>
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Appendix C – Interview Information Statement

(INFORMATION STATEMENT)

My name is Santha Fernandez and I am a postgraduate student at the University of Western Sydney, undertaking doctoral research on “Family-friendly organisations: Policies, provisions, practices and organisational culture”. The study is on a large organisation that has been formally recognised as being family-friendly. As a large business finalist of the 2002 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) ‘National Work and Family Awards’, ANZ fulfils this requirement. The research will be conducted under the principal supervision of Dr Gregory Teal of the University of Western Sydney, Australia.

My research proposes that family friendly organisations (FFOs), guided by their organisational policies develop appropriate family-friendly provisions, such as family-friendly benefits and flexible workplace arrangements that allow their employees to effectively balance their work and family lives. The research further proposes that in FFOs, the family-friendly practices, that is those family-friendly benefits and flexible workplace arrangements that have been sought and utilised by employees, should closely match the family-friendly provisions offered, and hence the organisation should exhibit a ‘very low level of discrepancy’ between provisions and practices. Existing literature on family-friendly organisations however has revealed a range of general limiting factors that can contribute to high levels of discrepancy between provisions and practices. The findings of this study will be potentially useful to your organisation as well as to other organisations wishing to establish the family-friendly workplace.

I am inviting you to participate in this individual face-to-face interview to gather information about your personal views on a range of family-friendly issues as well as your personal experiences in balancing work and family. The interview will be tape-recorded and you will have a chance to review the tape before it is transcribed. Your participation is completely voluntary and your anonymity will be protected as no form of incriminating evidence and/or personal information will appear on any raw data or published reports. You are free to withdraw at any point during the participation. Additionally please be assured that there will be no threat to your ongoing employment if you choose not to participate in this research. All data collected will be kept secure in a locked cabinet at the University of Western Sydney for 5 years after the study is completed. After this period it will be destroyed.

If you agree to participate in this interview session please complete and sign the
attached consent form. Should you have any questions or require more information on any aspect regarding your involvement in this study, please do not hesitate to contact me on 9852 4147 during business hours or via email s.fernandez@uws.edu.au. Alternatively, you may wish to contact my supervisors:

**Dr Gregory Teal (Principal Supervisor)**
Tel. 02 4620 3249 (office); 0407 063 291 (mobile)
E-mail: greg.teal@uws.edu.au

**Dr Pheroza Daruwalla (Supervisor)**
Tel. 02 9852 4146 (office)
E-mail: p.daruwalla@uws.edu.au
University of Western Sydney
Collage of Law & Business
School of Management

CONSENT FORM
(Individual face-to-face Interview)

Research Project
‘Family-friendly organisations: Policies, provisions, practices and organisational culture’

I, ………………………………………………… (please print name) understand the purpose of this research and agree to participate in this study. I also understand that I have the right to hear the taped interview before it is transcribed and can withdraw the use of my information at any time. I understand I am free to withdraw at any point during the participation.

……………………………              ……………………………
Signature of Interviewee  Signature of Researcher

……………………………           ……………………………
Date    Date
Appendix D – Interview Questions

Four categories of semi-structured questions (A-D) were posed to respondents in the interview sessions:

A. Demographics.
   - Gender, age, marital status, partner’s work status
   - Dependent care (young children, older children, sick members, elderly etc)
   - Job rank/grade (to establish management from non-management staff)
   - Job status (permanent full-time 9-5 (F/T), permanent part-time (P/T); casual F/T, casual P/T; permanent shift, casual shift)
   - Length of employment in the organisation.

B. Understanding of and insights into the FFO’s work and family/life (WF/L) balance initiatives.
   - What in your opinion is a family-friendly organisation (FFO)?
   - Which organisation(s) comes to mind when you think of the term ‘family-friendly’? Why this organisation?
   - Does your organisation qualify as an FFO? Why/why not? If yes - Why do you think your organisation is helping employees balance their WF/L responsibilities?
   - Do you think it is right that organisations have initiative to help employees balance their WF/L responsibilities? Why/why not?
   - What can you tell me about the attitude in the workplace regarding initiatives to help employees balance WF/L? Request examples.
   - How do you find out about the organisation’s initiatives to help you balance your WF/L responsibilities?

C. Respondent’s specific experiences and knowledge of others’ attempts to balance work and family/life responsibilities.
   - Walk me through a typical day at home/work/home (e.g. yesterday or the first working day before this interview).
   - Are there ways in which the organisation has been responsive to your specific needs to balance WF/L responsibilities? Request examples.
   - Are there ways in which the organisation has NOT been responsive to your specific needs to balance WF/L responsibilities? Request examples.
   - Are there ways (that you know of) that the organisation has been responsive to the needs of other employees in the organisation? Request examples.
   - What are some (that you know of) that the organisation has NOT been responsive to the needs of employees in the organisation? Request examples.

D. Suggestions for further organisational improvements in work and family/life initiatives.
   - What are some of the current working conditions that you would change to better suit your specific need to balance WF/L responsibilities? Why?
• Have you or people you know proposed ways in which the organisation can further help employees balance WF/L responsibilities?
• How would you propose your organisation can further help employees balance WF/L responsibilities?
• Is there anything else you would like to add about the organisation’s family-friendly policies, provisions and practices?
• Is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences balancing WF/L responsibilities?