

# Setting Global Standards of Family-Friendly Working

This week, business leaders gathered at Australia House to explore the future of family-friendly policy and how employers can drive meaningful change on a global scale.

Sponsored by QBE and chaired by Richard Basil-Jones from the Australia-UK Chamber of Commerce, the roundtable followed the journey of the Family Friendly Workplaces certification, from its development in Australia to its recent launch in the UK.

Attendees heard from early adopters including QBE, Deloitte, Westpac, and Commonwealth Bank of Australia, all of whom are embedding family-friendly practice into their organisations to attract and retain top talent.

## Meeting Workforce Needs and Driving Social Impact

Emma Walsh from Family Friendly Workplaces Australia and Jane van Zyl from Working Families spoke about the growing need for businesses to support employees with caring responsibilities, whether through parental leave, flexible working, or a culture that recognises work and care are not mutually exclusive.

In both countries, it's evidence-led approaches that have driven real change. Research from Save the Children has highlighted the rise in in-work child poverty in the UK, which underpins the need for stronger support for working families. The certification gives employers a practical, structured way to take action.

## A Smart Move for Business

Being family-friendly isn't just good for people, it's also good for business. Deloitte's research shows that 9 in 10 working parents say family leave is a key factor when choosing a new role, and other leading employers are taking notice.

For businesses, certification helps to benchmark progress, attract skilled employees and build a resilient workforce. It also encourages a 'race to the top', raising standards across sectors and strengthening employer brands.

## Shared Challenges and Opportunities

The UK and Australia face similar workforce challenges: rising childcare costs, an ageing population, and growing care responsibilities. In Australia, for example, half of over-55s live with a chronic health condition, a glimpse into the future for many nations.

The solution? Embedding family-friendly practices that unlock access to skilled but underutilised talent. As a family-friendly employer, Westpac is now a go-to brand for working parents. Proof that doing the right thing can drive reputation and results.

## **Informing Policy, Strengthening Business**

The discussion also informed representatives from the Department of Business and Trade, highlighting the key role employers play in shaping practical, effective policy.

In just four years, Family Friendly Workplaces has built an evidence base showing what works. That insight helps employers make strategic decisions grounded in data, driven by values, and aligned with business goals.