

## **A Framework for Work-Life Balance Practices in the Tourism Industry**

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### **Abstract**

This paper addresses the key issues surrounding the debate over work-life balance. It provides an overview of current thinking in the general work environment, with specific focus on the issue within the tourism industry. This paper presents the literature on work-life balance issues and presents a framework to examine ways to overcome the current lack of work-life balance, especially within Australia.

**Keywords:** Work-life balance; tourism industry; framework

### **1.0 Introduction**

Although there has been much research on work-life balance (WLB), it is still an area that causes concern for the industry. It is a difficult area for management to both track and to control. The issue has been examined from a range of perspectives including from a gender perspective (Lyness and Kropf, 2005; Roberts, 2007), a work status perspective (Alexandrov, Babkus and Yavas, 2007, Johlke and Duhan, 2000) and a work practices view (Iverson and Zatzick, 2007; White, Hill, McGovern, Mills and Smeaton, 2003). What is evident from the research findings are the consequences resulting from an imbalance between work and family life. Mauno and Kinnunen (1999), for example, found that psychosocial job stressors such as job insecurity and time pressures at work, influenced marital satisfaction via job exhaustion and psychosomatic health. Other research by Huang, Lawler and Lei (2007) found that having a work-life balance decreased employees' intentions to leave an organisation, while Guest (2004) suggests there are consequences of an imbalance of work and life that include increased stress, negative behaviour and performance at both work and home and an impact on others in both the work and home environments. With specific attention on the impacts on the work environment, Smith and Gardner (2007) suggest that conflict between work and home life is linked to job dissatisfaction and staff turnover.

The issue of work-life balance is inextricably linked, of course, to the research undertaken on the quality of life. Armstrong, Riemenschneider, Allen and Reid (2007: 143), for example, provide a detailed summary of some of the key elements relating to the quality of work life, using a definition of the quality of work life as being "satisfying an employee's needs via the resources, activities and

outcomes that arise from involvement in the workplace". The authors note the research on the spillover model (Jacobs and Gerson, 2001) which argues that satisfaction experienced in one aspect of life such as work, may have a positive or negative effect on other domains such as family life and vice-versa. Ponzellini (2006) argues that both unions and employers have a responsibility towards workers to ensure that there is quality of life but there is a resistance to changing the culture of workplaces to allow this. In summary, then, research into work-life balance implicitly, and often, explicitly, includes the impact that any imbalance in these two important domains has on the quality of both work and family life.