**Supporting Working Parents: Pregnancy and Return to Work National Review**

Submissions from women and men who have experienced discrimination at work while pregnant, or while on or on return to work after taking parental leave

**Submission Number: 145**

**Part C Submission Response**

During my pregnancy, I had very little difficulties; in fact most people were very helpful and very accommodating. The one concern I had was when I advised my Principal that I was pregnant and intended to return to the workplace on a part time basis, he was very clear to point out that it was only if it was financially feasible for the school and he didn’t believe in shared classrooms.

I had no information voluntarily provided to me regarding my entitlements or rights, I had to actively go looking for them. I had my first child in 2011 and at the end of 2011, after realising that I needed to return to part time work for financial reasons, my Principal said that there were no part time opportunities at my school for 2012. My union initially advised me that there was nothing they could do I therefore spent the next six months looking for part time work.

I obtained a casual position at a [retail] store chain. This didn’t provide much relief as the hours were irregular. I advised my Principal that I would like to return to work in 2013, but again was advised, no part time positions.

I then fell pregnant with my second child. Because I was working casually at a different workplace, I was not entitled to paid maternity leave. I did, however, after 3 months of negotiation with Centrelink, manage to gain access to paid parental leave from the Government.

In early 2013, for the third time, I requested a return to work, part time for 2014. After receiving the same response, I decided to take advice from the Union again. This time, they were extremely helpful and very apologetic for the original, incorrect advice.

After several months of negotiation, I lodged a grievance with the Merit Protection Board. Before the hearing, my Principal called a meeting to offer me a Part Time position for 2014.

The offer was made verbally and it was clearly stated that no special treatment was to be given to myself (or my returning colleague). No additional assistance would be provided and that School Council, the parent community and many staff members were against the proposed shared classroom.

Throughout the preparation for returning to work, no support was given. We were told to attend a 10 day PD over the Christmas break, in which I had to negotiate payment. I had to get more advice from the Union as to my rights to payment and how the Principal could organise it, as he was clearly either unaware how to or not willing to.

In general, the attitude of my Principal and Vice Principal in the lead up to my return is extremely negative and unsupportive. I am currently experiencing great stress and anxiety as I currently do not wish to return to this workplace, given the current atmosphere, but I have to for the sake of my family.

Because I was not able to return to work as I originally wished to, I suffered financially as I was not able to obtain further paid maternity leave. My superannuation was not contributed to, I obtained casual work which did not pay enough/as much as my teaching job would have and I was put under undue financial and emotional stress.

I believe it should be mandatory that each expecting parent, male or female, be given a handout by the immediately employer stating their rights, the procedures in which to obtain those rights and useful contacts, groups and websites to obtain further information. Employers should also be required to undertake professional development to learn about procedures surrounding employees wishing to return to work.

Employers not following these procedures should be held accountable in some fashion, as there will be no repercussions for my employer after causing me financial and emotional distress and hardship. I believe this to be unfair and unjust, especially as this distress is continuing well into my return to the workplace.