**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: 195**

**Part C Submission Response**

When I first announced I was pregnant my male boss made the comment "when you come back we can find some projects for you to work on". At this point I was a team leader and had 5 staff under me, however, the implication was that I would not be coming back to a team leader role or a full time role. I attempted to convince him that I indeed intended to return to my role, however, I was informed that it was not good for children to be in care, nor was it good for husbands to go to "mother's groups" (when I had suggested that maybe it was my husband would stay home). Five years later despite my best efforts and returning to work full time I was not able to gain my team leader role back, and indeed a male who used to report to me, now takes that role. Several things contributed to that from the organisations efforts.

Firstly I was demoted weeks before I was to go on leave, secondly I was not back filled, thirdly people who reported to me were farmed out to report to others and lastly, when all of this was undone (the team leader was promoted, the team put back together and things were exactly as it was when I went on my first maternity leave), I was told that because I had been away having another child that I had lost my right to the role and was sidelined into a random projects role without a PD and without any formal role. I decided to resign as my position was untenable.

Complaints to HR came to nothing, if anything I was 'labeled' difficult by attempting to have this redressed. There was no way for me to continue my career and have children. This was for a Local Government Organisation. I had specifically chosen to work for local government thinking that when it came to having children it would be the most supportive environment. I get the impression that everyone bending over backwards offering flexibility in the work place, while being a good thing, labels women into the Mummy Track - which some may not want to be in. It affects the careers and expectations of those who are going on maternity leave in ways that aren't helpful for those who want to continue in their careers or who are in management positions.

I have contacted my Union and drafted a stat dec with them that outline my experiences, however, I believe that the Union has not been able to present it to the Council. It would have been very useful to have an independent body to contact and to help me work through wether I had an issue or not. I attempted to contact the Union when I decided to resign, but it was long past the point of me being able to stay in random 'project' roles. Having a contact line - somewhere to provide advice much earlier on in the piece would be very useful. HR it seems was not there for me, and the Union relations between council and them were acrimonious and the union seemed to have their broader point to score which was not helpful to me in my exact moment of need.

I am about to start looking for a job again after my 'mummy break' and I will not be mentioning the number of children I have had or their ages so as not to bring this discrimination on myself. My request to the nation al Review Report is: by all means promote flexibility, but also promote the idea that the request for flexibility is a choice of the woman not an expectation that they will want to be a part-timer and therefore only presumed to be "half committed". Dinosaurs like my boss I hope are far and few between but some management education about what is acceptable to say to a pregnant lady (yes we can drive cars when we are pregnant) might be useful as well.