**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 206**

**Part C Submission Response**

Challenges;

\* Whilst on parental leave for 12 months my employer did not include me in any regular emails or invite me to keep in touch with the workplace. This resulted in me not accessing opportunities for professional development, promotion vacancies or keeping abreast of changes in the workplace and industry. I tried to maintain contact through colleagues and attended functions such as the office Christmas party in order to introduce myself to new staff. It would be good if workplaces could include staff on leave and give them the opportunity to volunteer to participate in professional development, planning meetings and be involved in decisions which will affect them when they will return to work. This would result in a smoother transition back into the workplace and more informed staff.

\* When I returned to work there was still opportunity for me to utilise up to 12 months further parental leave. After being at work for a few weeks our child care was not working out for my child and our family. Unfortunately I was not able to change my mind and return to unpaid parental leave as my employer would not grant me another period of parental leave as I had returned to work. This caused great pressure on my family as we could not find suitable child care and the option of having mum stay at home for a longer period of time was no longer available. More flexibility in when and how parental leave is taken.

\* Since returning to work after parental leave I have accessed part time work at the same pay level as I was at prior to maternity leave. However a condition of all the promotional opportunities advertised in my office has been strictly on a full time basis. If I wish to seek career advancement I cannot do it as a part time working mother but have to revert to full time hours and put my kids in daycare 5 days per week.

\* When I returned to work six months after having a child I was granted part time hours 3 days per week but refused my application to work some of these hours from home. I sought some home based work so I could minimise my commute time and reduce the length of the days my baby spent in child care which was 6.30am to 5.30pm. Arguably these long days were a harder separation for mum and bub but they also had a practical ramification of affecting breastfeeding with me having to spend lots of time expressing. Combined this with some compulsory interstate travel and my breastfeeding journey was complicated, stressful and almost impossible. Expressing in public toilets and in airplane toilets is embarassing and stressful. There are many examples of home based workers for my large employer and technology is available to support this. Home based work should be available as part of flexible arrangements for parents returning to work.

Good practices that assisted you;

Good practices I have used are: Part time work for both parents. Breastfeeding breaks as paid leave during the day. Paid personal leave to care for a sick dependant child. A combination of paid and unpaid parental leave. Option to take paid parental maternity leave at half pay rate. Ability to continue superrannuation contributions whilst on parental leave. Access to child care rebate and benefit whilst on maternity leave, ie; for older children in the family.

Recommendations for the National Review Report;

I would like to see employers supporting parental leave and parents returning to work as a valuable resource. Part time workers offer their many years of experience and corporate knowledge at a smaller (part time) wage rate – what a bargain.