**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 323**

**Part C Submission Response**

My traditional role at my level is as a team manager - and I had large teams with clear responsibilities pre-pregnancy. As a government agency, my organisation is well supported in terms of official entitlements and returning to work on flexible arrangements. However, in terms of career management once returned there is still a big gap. I have not had a line-team responsibility since I left for pregnancy with my first child (who has just started school - so a period of 6 years). I was at work for 2 year between my two children - initially part-time but eventually full time - and during this period I was shuffled around a range of "special projects". While in many cases these were not unchallenging, in most cases I had to fight to get to handle difficult projects. In one sense my managers felt that they were being highly supportive in allowing me the flexibility and not giving me the pressure of a team - and to a point that was true. However, many of my teams in the past could have operated well with me part time, with strong staff to delegate to and long term project plans I could manage around. On raising this option I was basically told I "couldn't do it" part time. This issue seems partially specific to my area - in that other women returning to work in other divisions have not had as much of this experience as I have and have well demonstrated that I could manage my teams part time.

The net outcome is that on limited project without any capacity to delegate in my absence, my productivity is very low compared to my pay level and my career is in limbo until they start taking me back into mainstream roles. I have now been back a year from my second child and am full time but it is not yet clear that I will be put back into the "main stream" and am currently fighting for it - now partially because I have been gone so long but also given timing of budget cuts and restructuring. As a manager without staff it may also leave me badly exposed in upcoming budget cuts. I appreciate that in many cases my managers believed they are doing the right thing by me by limiting pressure on me - but this approach remains paternalistic and career limiting when there is little evidence offered that I'm incapable of doing my job.