**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: 34**

**Part C Submission Response**

In 2010 I commenced maternity leave (combined with long service leave) for a period of 12 months. I had been the Sponsorships Manager for several years and a new manager had just begun prior to my leave. When I contacted my manager in 2011 to discuss returning to work, he told me that my position had been filled permanently and that he didn't have another position for me in that team (it was very specialised). He was going to ask around, but when I contacted my General Manager to confirm, I was encouraged to cold call other managers to see if they had a position for me.

In addition to not being returned to my pre-maternity leave position, the manager had told the team that he did not want me to return to work as he expected I was "just going to go off and have another baby", as well as telling the team that I would be "calling in sick all the time because of the baby". He also instructed my colleagues not to take any phone calls from me and that I had instigated legal action against him (which was blatantly false). I was humiliated and became quite distressed by the situation.

In addition to trying to comprehend what was happening to me and where I was going to work after returning, my child was very sick and the stress and anxiety of the work worries and having to attend interviews played a damaging role in my ability to enjoy what time was left of my leave with my baby. I eventually secured a position in another division. I had no experience in that area and my ability to be productive at work (something I attached strongly to my self worth) was completely destroyed.

I sought support from my manager and HR and received none. I am still in a position where I am not adding value and my career prospects have all but evaporated. I am no longer happy at work and the experience continues to take a toll on my health.

I was in constant contact with a lawyer from [a legal service] but was not able to get a straight answer from any one agency about whether what happened was legal or not. Given that I fell pregnant shortly after returning to work and I was still dealing with a sick baby, there was no chance I was going to have physical or emotional capability to make the HRC's submission deadline of 12 months from the date of discrimination. As such, the Department got away with what they did, and I am stuck in a dead-end job. My ability to find another job is limited given that I haven't been able to add value in an area where I have no experience or skill set and my only references before that are from pre-maternity leave in 2009.

I have been severely disadvantaged by the experience and I am grateful that there is a review into this as no woman should have to go through what I did on top of coping with a sick baby.

In terms of outcomes, I would like to see the option for women to file a complaint even after the 12 months as it was next to impossible for me to do with a sick baby, working full time and pregnant.