



**Further Submission to  
House of Representatives Standing Committee  
on Family and Human Services  
Inquiry into Balancing Work and Family**

**by the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists  
and Managers, Australia (APESMA)**

**August 2005**

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**Re: House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services Inquiry into Balancing Work and Family**

**1. AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS ON PART-TIME WORK**

In an article published in Labour Force, Australia (Cat No. 6203.0) the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that the proportion of total employment represented by part time work had risen from 22% in October 1991 to 28% in October 2001.

**2. APESMA STATISTICS**

The Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers, Australia (APESMA) is an organisation registered under the Workplace Relations Act representing over 25,000 professional engineers, scientists, veterinarians, surveyors, architects, pharmacists, information technology professionals, managers and transport professionals throughout Australia. This membership includes approximately 3,200 professional women.

Each year APESMA undertakes comprehensive member surveys, this data and additional data from a survey of all professional women members is gathered together in the APESMA Women in the Professions Survey Report. The 2004 Report found very low levels of part-time work were reported by members in the professions, with the exception of Pharmacy where the level of part time work was more consistent with community norms. Where part-time roles existed, we also found that they were most likely to be held by women.

	Engineering		Science		Computing		Pharmacy	
	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %
Full Time	86.7	86.3	86.9	68.8	76.8	73.9	36.1	35.9
Part Time	0.8	2.1	1.7	10.6	2.4	6.8	16.6	32.5
Hourly Contract	3.4	2.1	2	4.4	8.5	7.2	16.1	14.8
Other	9.1	9.5	9.4	16.2	12.3	12.1	31.2	16.8

The lack of available part time roles in many of the professions directly impacts upon the capacity of parents to balance work and family. This in turn reinforces our concerns about the loss of professionals, and particularly of women who still take on the majority of child rearing responsibilities, from these professions.

Given the widespread nature of lack of access to part time work in key professions it is considered that this reflects traditional preconceptions of work and job design. However, it is recognised that this will not be the case in all roles and that the requirements of each role would need to be viewed on their merits. Our experience of roles in these sectors leads us to conclude that with good will, creativity and support the proportion of roles available part time in the professions could align more closely with the experience in the general community.

The incentive is already present in the shape of a skills shortage and the needs of both working parents and the aging professional workforce.

Professions with low levels of part-time work need government intervention through targeted programs to encourage, assist and support the introduction of part-time work and to communicate "success stories".

A whole of community educational process about the many benefits of part-time work is also required to ensure the job design reflects job requirements rather than traditional preconceptions of work.

### **3. Family Provisions Case**

Since our submission the Australian Industrial Relations Commission has handed down its decision on the Family Provisions Case. This decision was a test case that will enable Federal Awards to include the new provisions to provide the capacity to request extensions to parental leave and to return from parental leave part-time as follows:

*"P. Right to request*

*P.1 An employee entitled to parental leave pursuant to the provisions of clause [ ] may request the employer to allow the employee:*

*P.1.1 to extend the period of simultaneous unpaid parental leave provided for in clause [ ] up to a maximum of eight weeks;*

*P.1.2 to extend the period of unpaid parental leave provided for in clause [ ] by a further continuous period of leave not exceeding 12 months;*

*P.1.3 to return from a period of parental leave on a part-time basis until the child reaches school age, to assist the employee in reconciling work and parental responsibilities.*

*P.2 The employer shall consider the request having regard to the employee's circumstances and, provided the request is genuinely based on the employee's parental responsibilities, may only refuse the request on reasonable grounds related to the effect on the workplace or the employer's business. Such grounds might include cost, lack of adequate replacement staff, loss of efficiency and the impact on customer service."*

It was the Commission's intention to review the application of these provisions after a period of time.

These new provisions are significant improvements in the minimum terms and conditions to apply across the community. Whilst this decision only goes part way to providing the type of work flexibility that parents need, we are concerned that these improvements are not lost in the processes of industrial relations change.

The new provisions that have resulted from the Family Provisions case 2005 should either be retained in a meaningful award system or included in legislation.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS FROM FURTHER SUBMISSION**

- A whole of community educational process about the many benefits of part-time work is required to ensure the job design reflects job requirements rather than traditional preconceptions of work.
- Professions with low levels of part-time work need government intervention through targeted programs to encourage, assist and support the introduction of part-time work and to communicate "success stories".
- The new provisions that have resulted from the Family Provisions Case that provide for a right to request a return to work part-time after parental leave and the right to request additional parental leave and an obligation that requests be reasonably considered by employers, should be retained in a meaningful award system or included in legislation.