



Catholic Women's League Australia Inc.

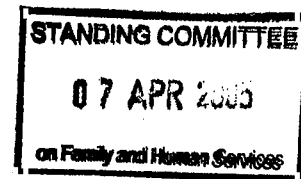
Member of World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations
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Submission on Work-Family Balance Inquiry

The Catholic Women's League of Australia Inc. (CWLA) welcomes the opportunity to present a submission on Work-Family Balance Inquiry

The CWLA is a national body with over eight thousand members. Between them they share a wealth of expertise as mothers and grandmothers and know first-hand the value of family and balancing work commitments.

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Summary of Points of CWL Submission for Work-Family Balance Inquiry

The Catholic Women's League has identified a lack of recognition of the importance and nature of early infant attachment as a major contributor to the culture that works against the establishment of family child bearing/rearing. We believe that this issue has particular application in the following areas:

Section one:

Social Disincentives

- Culture of abortion
- Solo Parents doing it tough
- Postnatal/prenatal depression
- Teenage Mums and Dads

Career Disincentives

- Increase in workload/family suffer
- Part-time /career suffers

Financial Disincentives

- High cost of housing

Section Two:

Making it easier for parents who so wish to return to the paid workforce

- Recognising current parenting choices and underlying motivations

Section Three:

The impact of taxation and other matters on families in the choices they make in balancing work and family life.

- Taxation and family income

"It is a peculiarity of the modern era that national debate has been framed, almost exclusively, in economic terms, ignoring the social, the cultural, indeed, the spiritual dimensions of national life."

Andrews, Kevin, 1999, "Developing a National Family Policy" Family Matters-Australian Institute of Family Studies, no. 54, p. 48

Introduction

The discussion of the disincentives to starting families could possibly be interpreted as a "dry argument" without consideration of children. It is the presence of children in families that inform families as to their choices and their presence is the essential arbiter of the work/family dichotomy.

How many singles have thought "I won't do that if I have children"? How many mothers have had plans for return to work and found the baby wanted a breastfeed every two hours? How many mothers or fathers fell so in love with their little one that they, without hesitation, gave their work/career second billing. What about parents of children with special needs? Maybe the choices made were brilliant with the 1st child but came crashing down with the 2nd or 3rd or 4th. How many Mums decide to stay home and find that it is too difficult?

Any discussion of the work/family balance needs to acknowledge the central role of the needs of the children, this has to be in line with their developmental needs. The work/family debate can be viewed very differently from an infants point of view (I want my mummy!!) than it is for a 16 year old child (I want my money!!)

Thereby active recognition of the developmental needs of children is essential for informed debate. Without this information decisions on starting a family are largely based on observation or opinion.

The factors that influence choice start with preconceptions and with added experience may change.

The types of experience that may allow for that change is for programs and policies that reflect early child rearing as an essential, high level task that deserves time, expertise and commitment from both parents. Our society demands positive role models where mothering/parenting is seen to be enjoyable, natural and supported in the financial, social and intellectual spheres. On the other hand where the importance of parental nurturing is undervalued or absent these are areas that should be targeted to ensure that the time, commitment, expertise and enjoyment are given absolute priority. This is currently not evident in the following areas of: abortion, solo parenting, prenatal /postnatal depression, Teenage Mums/Dads

Section One

I Social Disincentives to Starting Families

Culture of Abortion

To assume an obvious link between people deciding not to have children and the issue of abortion may be to simplify the issue. Certainly from our point of view nurture of infants begins at conception. We therefore point this out as the very first area whereby recognition of the importance of parent/child relationships is not evident in our society. The Catholic Women's League do not see the procurement of abortions as a solution to the work family dilemma but we see it as a harmful cultural practice that relegates as unimportant an intimate relationship. A society that does not respect the unborn baby does not have faith in its capacity to provide for the most vulnerable is sending a clear message that in order to survive you have to look after yourself. The presence of the act of abortion in our society is a denigration of the sacredness of the parent/child relationship and has multiple implications for any one in our society bearing or conceiving children.

Cultural consequences of the presence of abortion in our society are:

- Women must subordinate their inner life (family) to their outer life (workplace)
- Violence to our own bodies is a solution to perceived lack of resources
- There is no protection for the innocent
- There is no care for those in need
- Women, alone must be able to provide for themselves or bear the consequences

Dr. Brigid Vout voices these concerns as follows:

"Most women undergo abortions with a heavy heart. Many women who have abortions say that something inside their hearts also dies when they have an abortion. Yet, too many women continue to report being pressured by their circumstances into having an abortion. Abortion promises to solve all of a woman's problems at once: difficulties with boy friends or husbands; problems with the boss or the bank; the need to face parents; pass exams or secure a promotion. But in reality abortion often simply covers up a woman's problems and hides too many losses: her child, her bodily integrity, and her dignity as a woman worthy of faithful love, support and workplace understanding. It's time to solve the problems. It's time to share the anguish and grief involved in abortion. Women who are pregnant in difficult circumstances need choices that do not demand that they decide between their own needs and the new life within them. The well being of a pregnant woman and her child cannot be separated. Too harm one is always to harm the other; to care for one always requires caring for both."

Solo Parenting

Choices for solo parents demand greater flexibility to enable them to adequately cater for the increased workload that they carry. Solo parents are not given adequate concessions for the extra burden placed upon them in being the sole carers for very young children.

In November 2002 the Federal Government's Household, Income and Labour Dynamics survey published results, which found that almost 30% of Australia's children are growing up in single-parent homes. About 40% of the youngest children in these families never see their other parent. In 2005 the same survey found that 13.5% of single parents found parenting stressful as compared with 7.6% of couples. The financial stress of solo parenting makes the need to be in the workplace pre-eminent and an early return to work can be a fraught solution for solo parents. The ties within the family need to be strengthened. Community support would lessen the isolation that is a significant factor for single parents. In fact solo parents need more support in the home and access to childcare when their children are young to alleviate the pressures of full-time care of young children. Workplace reforms

and childcare that can only be accessed if work related does not address the needs of this group at this time when their children are very young.

Armand Nicholi, a clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School has put over 40 years of research into this issue and concludes that what has been shown over and over again to contribute most to the emotional development of the child is a close, warm, sustained and continuous relationship with both parents and that the studies paint an unmistakable clear picture of the adverse effects of parental absence.

Common sense tells us that having less contact with one parent a young child's development is highly dependant on the presence of the other parent.

This is not necessarily the case when the children are beyond the infant years. If the first years are critical and the child's needs have been met then the solo parent would be in a position to re-enter the workforce. In fact they should have priority for this re-entry as they are responsible for the provision of more than one person.

As reported in the Australian a Howard Government study has found 60% of people on the Parenting Payment Single were still on welfare after their youngest child had turned 16. 450,000 people currently receive this payment and their average stay is for 12 years. "A decade of not being in the workforce can not only mean a reduction in skill levels, but also in self-esteem and confidence".ⁱⁱ

Furthermore low income solo parents are markedly affected by Australia's sharply tapered welfare system which can result in some single-income families losing money when the Industrial Relations Commission awards a wages increase for those on the lowest incomes. This means that earning extra income can cause a reduction in government parenting allowances and a corresponding tax increase on every dollar earned.

Prenatal/Postnatal Depression

Australian research by the National Postnatal Depression Program have found that one in five pregnant women are emotionally distressed and at risk of suffering postnatal depression. After giving birth 16% said they still felt distressed.ⁱⁱⁱ There is a transitional element here that could be addressed by acknowledging the tremendous changes that pregnancy and childbirth bring. The simplistic *work until 6 weeks prior to birth and then have 3 months off and return to work* does not adequately cover every mothers experience of this time. To be a fully participating member of the paid workforce and then 6 weeks later to classify mothers who work in the home as not working or unemployed (See 2006 census) is to deny the validity of the work they do. For example, due to a shortage of beds one of our members was sent home from hospital on the morning of day 4 following a caesarean. To be sent home to care for a new baby and 5 other children is to send her to her workplace! This practice has significant implications for postnatal depression. Sending a mother home so soon after a major operation with one child is equally unacceptable. Due to increased job related mobility a lot of mothers do not have access to extended family support and this should be taken into account. At the very least parental leave for the father should be mandatory. How many other "work places" would expect their employees to work under such conditions? Why is it acceptable for mothers?

The work of pregnancy and childbirth and breastfeeding is grossly underrated. The most under funded workplace is the home where mothers are working. The same level of commitment if it was demanded in the workplace would have a corresponding degree of support and rehabilitation. The lack of funding for facilities and support to help women with breastfeeding is amazing. The practice of encouraging women to leave hospital early (even before their milk has come in) is a very regrettable example of the lack of intellectual rigour being applied to the situation of the new mother. The fact that this same time frame when women are being "encouraged" to leave the hospital is the critical time for the advent of the 'baby blues' is further proof that the developmental needs of the mother and child are not even being recognised. Follow-up for mothers needs to be far more than one visit from the midwife and a referral to the child health. Physiotherapy classes, parenting skills programs, early childhood education and domestic help would all be beneficial and accessible if offered with childcare support. This rise of postnatal depression is an indicator of women being unsupported in their initial experiences of mothering.

Teenage Mums and Dads

Of all the parenting groups this group most deserves our recognition and support for the selfless and courageous efforts they demonstrate in keeping and bringing up their children. They need programs that reflect the degree to which they are in fact already showing commitment and affirm them in their natural abilities. Consideration of their particular needs such as parenting skills and the developmental milestones of their babies could be incorporated into their maintaining an education, developing relationship skills and finally, their entry into the workplace. Thought could be given to the lack of protection which has led to their early sexual experiences. A recent study of 2000 14-year-old girls by a teenage magazine (Bliss) in Britain found that more than 400 of them were sexually active and with an average of 3 partners.^{iv} The simplistic approach of blaming them for not using condoms^v does not really account for the underlying ethos that allows and condones early sexual experience. Very broadly, issues of nurture begin long before a child is conceived. This is a serious breach of the protection of our young men and women and a problematic introduction to family life. This is, by its very existence, a situation that discredits and demoralises the dignity of the parent/child relationship.

II Career Disincentives to Starting Families

Increase In Workloads

Increase in workloads in the workplace have polarised the family/work dichotomy. Increasingly to choose one is to negate the other. A study in men's role in parenting, commissioned by Jocelyn Newman shows that a significant number of fathers feel stressed and report that they don't spend enough time with their family and that the major barrier to being an effective parent is paid work^{vi}

Belinda Probert in her article Mothers in the Labour Force says that "A major national survey of the Australian work force asked workers about their satisfaction with the balance between work and family life. It found that very significant proportions of ordinary workers think it is getting harder to find a balance, and this is closely related to increased working hours and increased work intensification (Morehead et al 1997)"^{vii}

She also quotes an essay by Anne Manne (1999) who argues that "hyper capitalism has created economic conditions inimical to a flourishing family life among the overworked elites and the working poor".^{viii} For example Belinda Probert details "Interviews I conducted last year with young career-oriented women found extremely high levels of job satisfaction and ambition, with a realistic sense of the absence of children's needs from their industries and work places. The solution? It was hard for most of them to imagine how they might make space for the kind of focus and time commitment that they saw as central for good mothering."^{ix}

Making the decision to move to a part time status in order to moderate the workload is a common response to this juggling. In terms of career this often means you are out of the loop. The advent of enterprise bargaining and the replacement of awards with individual contracts have had a negative impact on part-time workers' access to family friendly work practices. Somehow employer interests have come to the fore. This is particularly relevant to workers on the lower pay scales. The reality is that these provisions allow employers to change hours around on a daily or weekly basis, rather than being required to provide regularity. There is no indication that such provisions give the workers involved any flexibility at all. Women in our organisation have experienced that awards that prohibit minimum or maximum hours can be used to extend the normal span in which workers are expected to be at work. Such as night fill staff who are on call 6 out of 7 nights for 10 hours work. See Attachment 1 Or a high school teacher who had a contract for a day and 1/2 but due to timetabling was required to teach at the school some part of every day.

People with higher status jobs are able to negotiate to a higher level There has been a number of high profile female politicians advocating babies in the office and senior executives in job-share positions. For example, just five weeks after the birth of her second child, Tanya Plibersek (Shadow Minister for Employment) is back on the job juggling a three quarter workload and full-time family life.^x These scenarios are only possible within the very narrowest of constraints. This situation would presuppose a very quiet baby, a hands free work place, a certain level of acceptance and compliance within the organisation and at home.

Any one who has experienced the crèche run with one or two or even three children will attest to the myriad demands that are placed on parents who are combining paid work and parenting. They are

often shouldering an unreasonable number of working hours. The necessity for this can often be due to career. For instance sometimes there isn't significant financial gain for the working parent? Anecdotal evidence had shown that women can be as little as \$5 ahead in their weekly income after the costs of work and childcare are deducted. If one was to question what the basis for work is if it is not financial we may find that social and career considerations are the main motivator.

All of this career pressure in no way benefits the pre eminent claim that a young child has on its parents. In the end often after some soul searching it is often the career that takes the back seat.

III Financial Disincentives

High Cost of Housing

The Sunday Telegraph quotes demographics expert Bernard Salt that starting a family is a key factor in the decision to buy a home "The reason to invest in a piece of dirt is a commitment to each other and a commitment to your family and the next 30 years or so. Whereas the rent option is no commitment at all. And doesn't allow you to plan for the medium or long term, especially if you want to start a family". Dr. Alan Morris of the Social Policy Research Centre of the University of NSW says the high rents paid in Sydney would preclude many from saving for a home deposit. In Sydney it has been cheaper to rent than to buy for the past five years. The paper quotes Australian National University public policy Professor Glenn Withers who says that first homebuyers have halved in number since 2001. He states that: "There are two forces at work. One is social change. The old expectation to marry young, buy a house and have three children has given way. Many young people are enjoying their freedom and consumption but many are also less secure in their relationships and their jobs. The result either way is renting rather than buying. The second force at work is the collapse of housing affordability. Despite higher incomes, good federal government grants and low interest rates, house prices have been pushed sky high. Escalating State Government charges, slow release of land and poor planning and regulation have caused house prices to more than double relative to income over the last decade."¹¹

Section Two

Making it easier for parents who so wish to return to the paid work force

In the nurture of children for the first 3 years the family friendly workplace initiatives and the child care centres could be regarded as providing supplementary assistance to the most important work that is being done by parents in the home. There needs to be a greater appreciation of the significance specifically for the under threes of time spent with parents. In this developmental period it can be argued that certain experiences are critical and the close nurturing relationship with their parents is not negotiable.^{xix}

Acknowledgement of this in government planning would significantly simplify the struggles currently experienced by parents as they juggle family and work. Family friendly workplace practices and current support for highly accredited childcare centres are very important for the parents of the over threes but in the case of infants it is possible that this support is misplaced? Would it be far more effective to support parents looking after young children in the home? Care of children needs to be of the highest quality. The recent findings of research into stress levels of children in care call into question the blanket acceptance of institutional childcare specifically for toddlers. Researchers found significant stress in toddlers who attended centres rated as satisfactory under the national accreditation process. Only in centres rated as high quality did stress levels, measured by cortisol levels in the blood, go down.^{xv}

In the article *Make Mothers Matter* child psychiatrist Peter S. Cook quotes the Early Child Care Network of the US National Institute for Child Health and Development showing that the more time that children spend in any type of non maternal child care, regardless of its quality, the more assertiveness, disobedience and aggression they showed with adults, both in kindergarten and at home. These studies also found that when children spent more time in childcare, their mothers displayed less sensitivity when interacting with them at 6, 15, 24, and 36 months of age. Early childcare also precludes longer breastfeeding, which, besides providing better health is known to have many excellent outcomes for the mother and the baby.^{xvi} Peter Cook then goes on to say that healthy mothering includes breastfeeding, holding, carrying, attachment bonds, and making infants feel loved. These basic needs are not easily met in a day-care setting where a staff ratio of one carer to five infants is the standard.^{xvii} Dr. Burton L. White, concurs, "Some families are better equipped to educate young children than others. But assuming the most common situation of a loving, reasonably well put together family, and a child under three years of age, what about day care? It is my considered opinion that attending just about any day-care installation *full time* is unlikely to be as beneficial to the child's early educational development as his own home during these first three years. Notice that I say *full time*, because in the case of half-time day care or less, I think the likelihood of the child's early education being adversely affected is limited. Indeed, I think for certain kinds of families such an arrangement is preferable to one where no day care is involved. This is because there are benefits to be had when the full-time responsibility for rearing a child is periodically relieved by the opportunity for a woman to pursue a career interest or to simply be away from responsibility for a baby for several hours at a time. I personally believe that a person can be a better child-rearer if he or she has regular time off from the job"^{xviii}

These opinions are further substantiated by a study that looked at the actual number of hours worked by Australian mothers with preschool children. This study found that 62% were at home with their children. 26% were in part-time work and 12% were in full time work.^{xix} When asked about their ideal preference **Monash University researchers Evans and Kelly report that the great majority of mothers, 71%, think that it is right to stay home when children are under pre-school age**^{xx}

In looking at the realities of the struggles of the "many Australian parents[who] are faced with financial and other family and social difficulties when attempting to return to the paid work force"^{xxi} is it because the structures are not there for people who in deference to their infant's needs only want to work an average of 6.4 hours a week?^{xxii}

Section Three

The Impact of Taxation and Other Matters on Families in the Choices They Make In Balancing Working and Family Life

Taxation and family income

In regards to taxation and family income families are disadvantaged in three ways:

The first is by ignoring the worth of work in the home in terms of contribution to the community. Work in the home is worth at least 50% of the market economy. How can such a vast amount of production be omitted from our National Accounts? To put it in economic terms:

Dr. Duncan Ironmonger of Melbourne University has calculated the value of work in the home on the basis of the actual value of the production that occurs there. He finds that work in the home is worth at least 50% of the 'market' economy. Australian households actually produce about three times the output of Australia's manufacturing industry; or ten times the GDP of Australia's much-publicised mining industry.^{xxiii}

This is an obvious area where families can rightfully claim some encouragement and support from the Government to enable them to fulfil their roles adequately.

The second is in the area of foregone income. The major cost of childrearing is forgone income: the time spent in childrearing that would otherwise have gone into earning an income and furthering ones career. Is this contribution made by families adequately acknowledged by our tax system?

The third is in the area of spending inequity between those with children and those without. The CWL supports changes in tax, which reflect the inequality of spending power between people with children and those without. Increased costs for raising children can be directly related to key decisions taken by the Federal and State Governments. Cuts to services particularly in health and education combined with the tax on consumption mean that families who consume the most bear the brunt. Singles and couples on high incomes with out children are very well placed by comparison.

Tax benefits for families could embrace equity by placing family incomes on a scale that discriminates in terms of the number of people supported. There could be allowance made for the first, second or only income. The minimum tax threshold could be adjusted according to family size. There could be tax deductions for some childcare. Mothers at home could be accruing tax benefits that they could access when back in the paid workforce. Tax benefits would also be targeted to organisations that directly help the family. Perhaps volunteers could earn tax benefits. For example Evans and Kelley propose such a scheme in their research article:

Policies such as directing payments to childcare centres (which favour employed mothers over homemakers and favour institutional care over personal care) should be replaced by payments to the mother. The mother could use these as a partial substitute for income forgone by her withdrawal from the labour force, or as payments to a grandmother, babysitter, or day care centre for childcare while she is at work, or for some combination of these options.

In Sweden, the government has adopted such a scheme whereby mothers are given a payment that is equivalent to the amount the government would pay for a subsidised child care place (around \$12,000). The result has been that many women have chosen to use it to assist them to stay at home, rather than pay it to a child care centre.^{xxiv}

Conclusion

The central goal for families in balancing work and family responsibilities is to provide nurture. Nurture is the purpose of family life. The Catholic Women's League believe that family stability through secure strong emotional bonds between parents and children is the strongest counter balance and will consistently mediate between all financial, career and social disincentives, therefore the Government's policy should target programs that fulfil this aim.

We need to, as a society, affirm women in their choice to care for their own children. Acknowledge the trials and the triumphs. Pretending that looking after ones own children is not a valid occupation does an extreme disservice to the everyday heroics of child rearing. It has been the experience of our members that time at home with their children, be it full time or part time, has been the most rewarding choice.

Endnotes

Identity issues

For the children involved there are a number of identity issues at stake within same-sex marriage/adoption. They will be deprived of gender identity in their formative years, as well as biological identity and genetic inheritance. The problem for them is compounded by the fact that their parents' homosexuality is itself primarily a "gender identity problem".¹³

A girl's relationship with her father is critical to her development of self-esteem during her teenage years and it has been shown that those girls with a close relationship with their father are less likely to be involved in early sexual behaviour and have a lower rate of teenage pregnancy. On the other hand studies have shown two critical stages where gender identity is critical for boys. The most obvious also occurs at puberty, but unlike girls, another critical period has been identified at the age of two or three when boys gradually pull away from their mother and sisters in an effort to formulate a masculine identity.

When a young child (typically at 18-24 months of age) begins to show a deep need to understand and make sense of his/her embodiment, the child's relationship with mother and father become centrally important. Both the same-sex parent and the opposite-sex parent play vital roles as gender identity continues to develop and is deeply influential throughout the life cycle.¹⁴

Studies reveal that children brought up in same-sex unions are at a greatly increased risk of becoming homosexual. Twelve percent of the children of lesbians become active lesbians themselves, a rate which is at least four times the base rate of lesbianism in the adult female population.¹⁵ Sixty four percent of young adults raised by lesbian mothers reported considering having same-sex relationships. Only 17% of young adults in heterosexual families reported the same thing.¹⁶

Teachers have also reported that sex identity is a problem for some children of homosexuals describing them as "more confused about their gender" than children of heterosexual couples. In one study it was found that these children seem to be less happy at school than other children and achieve markedly lower grades in language and maths.¹⁷

While several studies have been put forward appearing to indicate that homosexual parenting either has no effect or else is favourable in the development of children, they have serious flaws in that they are either very limited in longitudinal design, show bias or lack proper controls.

On the other hand, there are numerous studies into child development that are scientifically unbiased, have been subject to rigorous controls and have been conducted over many years. In fact, these childrearing studies, have consistently indicated that children are more likely to thrive emotionally, mentally, and physically in a home with two heterosexual parents as opposed to a home with a single parent. Therefore, the burden is on the proponents of homosexual parenting to prove that moving further away from the heterosexual parenting model is appropriate and safe for children.¹⁸

Conclusion

We applaud the Government's initiative in introducing this Bill to strengthen the definition of marriage as to mean "one man and one woman for life."

Marriage is not a government invention and governments should not have the power to dismantle it through changing laws at whim, especially in order to appease a minority. The truth is that the homosexual movement's intention, is manifestly ideological: to weaken, split and finally eradicate the very meaning of marriage, by deforming it with simple simulations, and so destroy the family, the reality of which proclaims inexorably the radical truth about man.¹⁹

It will be stated that there are heterosexual marriages that fail to uphold the best interests of children. But, if individual marriages are in crisis, the correct inference cannot be that social policy should institutionalise this failure rather than counteract it.²⁰

Likewise, we totally support this Government's opposition to same sex couples adopting children. We concur with the following warning issued by the American College of Paediatricians:

The environment in which children are reared is absolutely critical to their development. Given the current body of research, the American College of Pediatricians believes it is inappropriate, potentially hazardous to children, and dangerously irresponsible to change the age-old prohibition on homosexual parenting, whether by adoption, foster care, or by reproductive manipulation. This position is rooted in the best available science.²¹

Ultimately, any marriage contracted between men and women of the same sex will always remain a caricature of this noble institution.

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- ^{xviii} White B.L. The First Three Years of Life Prentice Hall U.S.A 1975 pp 253-256
- ^{xix} Dr. Mariah Evans, Dr. Johnathan Kelley International Social Science Surveys 2001 Results in People and Place Vol 9 No. 3
- ^{xx} Ibid
- ^{xxi} Media release for Standing Committee on Family and Human Services Inquiry into balancing Work and family
- ^{xxii} Dr. Mariah Evans, Dr. Johnathan Kelley International Social Science Surveys 2001 Results in People and Place Vol 9 No. 3
- ^{xxiii} Ironmonger Dr. Duncan "Australian Households: A \$ 90 billion industry" p2 Paper delivered at 'Changes in the Household: Implications and Future Strategies', 1989 Summer School University of Melbourne
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The Manager
Purity Supermarket
Main Rd.
NEW TOWN 7008

Dear Sir,

For the past twelve months I have been employed as one of the nightfill staff members at Purity New Town.

Recently it was suggested to me by the management that I have asked to be unavailable for work on too many occasions. This has prompted me to inquire further as to how I can possibly combine the demands of this company with my family commitments.

Is it possible to devise a roster system for the 'on call' staff which would minimise the detrimental cost to the family of constantly being 'on call'? I would appreciate your reply in writing as other nightfill staff have expressed interest in this proposal. There is already a precedent for having 'on call' staff who already have been granted regular Rostered Days Off in this company.

To illustrate how unfair is the charge that I have not given the company my priority is borne out by my work history. During my year at Purity, I have requested to be unavailable for these times:

- 4 days in between weekends to go away with family
- 2 nights mid-week for husband's work commitments
- 1 night mid-week for child's First Communion
- 1 Friday and 3 Saturdays for personal reasons
- 2 nights for childrens' birthday celebrations

On the converse side, whenever Purity have requested me to work, I have responded sometimes with only two hours notice. In the twelve months there have been a number of times that I have had to be available when I could easily have been rostered on at any other time. These can easily be verified, for example; my birthday, my mother's birthday, and countless social occasions. This does not include outings, children's events and others.

During the time I have been at Purity, I have seen a number of casuals forced out of work against their wishes due to this inflexibility or because they have had a regular commitment each week (e.g. Tafe). It is not acceptable that people should be required to be on call for six nights a week in order to be given one or two (possibly 3 or 4) nights of work that is for just a few hours.

Another area of inflexibility on the company's part is that employees are required to telephone at their own cost (time and money) to inquire every day about whether they have to work or not. There are many problems with the ringing in system for employees. For example, you could be ringing in for weeks with out any work.

Outside hours work requires a greater degree of flexibility on the part of both employer and employee. In my twelve months of employment , Purity has consistently shown an unreasonable degree of inflexibility in regard to nightfill work.

As a mother of five children, it has been at great personal cost to keep this position.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Maria Fracalossi