

CHAPTER 3

ALL WOMEN WORK BUT ONLY SOME GET PAID

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The common understanding of 'work' involves the performance of labour or the provision of services for remuneration. Activities which are not remunerated may be regarded as work but generally such 'work' is not valued nearly as highly or given the importance of work for money.

3.1.2 For women, the notion of work as a paid activity tends to greatly undervalue the time and energy expended in caring for children and maintaining domestic situations. Women are major participants in the paid workforce and continue to undertake the great majority of 'work' within the home. The combination of both jobs, the so called double burden is a major issue for women in Australia.

3.2 Profile of Women in the Paid Workforce

3.2.1 The number of women in the workforce has grown considerably since the second world war. Women's participation in the labour force was registered at only 37 per cent in 1966 and 44 per cent in 1973, however there has been a significant increase in the number of women in the work force in the last decade. Since 1986, the percentage of women in the paid labour force in Australia has risen from 48.3 per cent to around 52 per cent in the last half of 1991. This figure has risen slightly to 52.4 per cent at January 1992. The number of men in the work force has been stable at around 76 per cent over the last five years however it has dropped over the past twelve months to register 74.6 per cent at January 1992.

3.2.2 Approximately 60 per cent of employed women work full time. This figure represents a small but continual decline in the percentage of women employed full-time over the last five years, from 62 per cent in 1986.¹ By comparison slightly less than 90 per cent of men are currently in full time employment.

Part-time

3.2.3 Of the approximately 52 per cent of women in the work force, 40 per cent work in a part-time capacity averaging 14 hours per week. Women comprise around 76 per cent of the part-time work force. While evidence suggests that part-time work is attractive to women, in that it provides for flexibility, it also lacks many of the terms, conditions and options which are available to the bulk of employed men and those women who are in full-time work. A proportion of women who work part-time, would prefer to work full-time, however, it is clear, as Denese Gray, EEO Officer at James Cook University argues, many women who work part-time are content to do so and do not wish to change their employment status. She notes that many women:

wish to balance employment with other responsibilities - frequently family or study. These are genuine part-timers not frustrated full-timers accepting second best.²

Unemployment

3.2.4 Historically, the female unemployment rate has been slightly higher than the male unemployment rate however over the last twelve months, the unemployment rate for women has dropped below that of males. The female unemployment rate at January 1992 was 9.8 per cent compared to the male rate of 10.6 per cent. It needs to be pointed out however that a large percentage of the females registered as employed would be working less than a full-time working week.

¹ Figures at October 1991

² Evidence, p.S3884

Under-employment

3.2.5 Several submissions alerted the Committee to the extent of possible under-employment amongst women. These are women who are currently working part-time but would prefer to work full time but are unable to take full time work for a either labour market or personal reasons.

3.2.6 Many women with children would prefer to work full time but are unable to because of inadequate child care, after-school or vacation care. Others may be working part-time because they cannot get full-time work. This is particularly relevant in the current recession where employers have sought to reduce worker's hours in an attempt to cut costs. All these workers are effectively underemployed. Alison Weeks, Assistant Secretary, Women's Policy, Income Support and Participation Branch in DEET warned that:

... the constraints on the kinds of jobs and the skill levels inherent in them may be hiding underemployment in terms of skills used and hours worked.³

Hidden Unemployment

3.2.7 The Implementation Report on the National Agenda for Women concluded that:

... about half of all women who were not in the labour force but would like to work indicated that they were not actively looking for work mainly because of family reasons. The equivalent proportion of men was less than 10 per cent.⁴

3.2.8 More recent figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on people with a marginal attachment to the labour force indicated that 80 per cent of women (some 247,000) who would like to work, were not looking for work because of family reasons. This compares to only 7,300 men.⁵ A further 103,700 women were not actively seeking work for labour market reasons. They believed they were considered by prospective employers as being too old or too young, had language or

³ Evidence, p.S4040

⁴ Exhibit No.104(iv), p.154

⁵ ABS Catalogue No. 6220.0

racial difficulties, lacked necessary training or experience or believed there were no jobs in their locality or line of work.

Women with Children

3.2.9 Of significance is the increasing participation of women with or without spouses but with dependent children in the paid work force. Research cited by Alison Weeks suggests that the increase in the number of women in the labour force can be attributed to an influx of married women, many of whom have young children. The following figures illustrate by comparison, the percentage of married males and females with children under nine years of age who are currently in the paid work force either full or part-time.⁶ These figures have implications for the provision of long-day, after-school and vacation care for children.

<u>youngest child under 5</u>		<u>youngest child b/w 5 and 9</u>	
males	96.5%	males	93.2%
females	47.6%	females	70%

3.2.10 It is notable that women with dependent children dominate the part-time work force, while the corresponding group of men work full time.

3.2.11 Research conducted by the Institute of Family Studies has established that 42 per cent of working women have children and 40 per cent of working men have children.⁷ The assumption about 'traditional' Australian families is challenged by such research as Helen L'Orange, First Assistant Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, clearly stated at the *Women and Employment* seminar:

However, many employers still take the view that women employees have the primary responsibility for finding solutions to family problems. There is little recognition of the fact that these problems result often from a work environment designed around a family structure which consists of dad going to work and mum staying at home full time with dependent kids. In fact, the June 1990 ABS data

⁶ Employment Seminar, p.17

⁷ Exhibit No.17

shows that fewer than 19 per cent of families are constituted that way now.⁸

3.3 Gender Segregation in the Paid Workforce

3.3.1 Australia has one of the most gender segregated workforces in the industrialised world. 55 per cent of women work in only two occupational groups, clerks and sales people and personnel services. This compares with the two largest employing occupations for males, tradespersons and labourers which together employ only 40 per cent of males.⁹ The tendency towards segregation appears to be increasing. Carol Mason, Director of the Women's Policy Unit and Women's Adviser to the Premier reported that in Queensland, the workforce is more segregated now than it was in 1961.¹⁰ Australia-wide, this segregation is effectively illustrated in the comment from the National Women's Consultative Council:

Women account for 98% of typists and 1% of tradespeople in the fields of metal fitting and machining, electrical and electronics and vehicles.¹¹

3.3.2 The submission from the Hon John Dawkins, then Minister for Employment, Education and Training summarised women's participation in the work force as follows:

Women are more likely to be in low paid jobs, without recognised qualifications and training, and working on a part-time basis. Around 85 per cent of women workers are concentrated in five main industries: community services, wholesale and retail trade, finance, property and business services and community service industries, which have historically employed a high proportion of women.¹²

3.3.3 Women dominate the ranks of school teachers, clerks, sales people and service workers while males far outnumber females in the engineering, building, science and trade fields.

⁸ Employment Seminar, p.166

⁹ Employment Seminar, p.18

¹⁰ Evidence, p.S4198

¹¹ Evidence, p.S2062

¹² Evidence, S1360

3.3.4 The Australian paid workforce also exhibits a high degree of vertical sex segregation where both men and women work in the same occupation but where males occupy primary positions and women the less important, less financially rewarding positions. In addition, in many female dominated areas of work, there are relatively flat hierarchies with few career opportunities.

3.4 Women as Employers

3.4.1 Women are less likely than men to be either employers or self-employed. Within the ranks of employers and self-employed people, women are overly represented in community services and sales and personal services and under-represented in all other occupational groups, especially finance, property and business services.

3.4.2 However the situation is definitely changing. The Department of Industry, Training and Commerce report *Small Business in Australia* reported that the number of women with their own small business is increasing at three times the rate of men. The fastest growth is in areas previously dominated by men - construction, transport and manufacturing. More than one-third of small business enterprises are now owned by women. The report suggested that women were particularly attracted to small business due to:

... the need to have more flexible working hours to juggle family and professional life; discontent with career opportunities in corporate life; and that more women are becoming the prime source of income for themselves and their family.¹³

3.5 Part-time, Casual and Home-based Workers

Part-time Workers

3.5.1 The Committee's attention was drawn to the particular disadvantage of part-time workers. There are effectively two categories of workers who are referred to as part-time. Permanent part-timers are those who work for less than

¹³ Exhibit No.139

the full-time week. The majority of part-timers however are not employed on a permanent basis but on an ad hoc or contractual basis. These are more accurately defined as Casuals. Workers who are employed on a part-time or casual basis are predominantly women.

3.5.2 Part-time jobs in the Australian Public Service (APS) and in industry are more likely to be restricted to the lower grades within occupations which are unskilled or for which the skills involved are basic and non-transferable. Part-time workers face more limited promotion prospects and receive less training than their full time male counterparts.

3.5.3 The Department of Industrial Relations statistics suggest that 3.16 per cent of employees in the Commonwealth Public Service work part-time in either a permanent or temporary capacity. 87.18 percent of part-time public servants are women. It may well be that the number of permanent part-time workers in the APS would be much higher but for the imposition of quotas. Under current industrial arrangements only 3 per cent of public sector positions are entitled to be part-time.

3.5.4 Jeff Harmer, First Assistant Secretary, Department of Health, Housing and Community Services, commented that:

... the present APS award conditions relating to part-time positions are seen by some women as a factor in delaying their return to work after maternity leave until they are in a position to resume full time. Many would prefer to return to work earlier on a part-time basis and lose less time from their careers.¹⁴

3.5.5 Lack of career structure for part-timers was noted on many submissions. Whilst permanent part-time work has been an option in the public service since 1986, it has not been taken up very readily. Advertised part-time positions are very hard to come by and most part-timers have to start in full-time positions and have them reclassified part-time, a cumbersome procedure. The same procedure occurs in securing a promotion. R L Marshman, Deputy Secretary, Department of Industrial Relations, described the procedure:

¹⁴ Evidence, p.S4315

The main avenue for career advancement for permanent officers working part-time is to apply for a full-time position and then apply to have this position converted to part-time.¹⁵

3.5.6 The result is that for many people part-time work is very static. While there may be room to move sideways, there is great difficulty in moving upwards as a permanent part-time worker, despite the operation of the reversion principle outlined by Brendan Priess, also a Deputy Secretary, Department of Industrial Relations.¹⁶

3.5.7 Dr Martin Watts, Senior Lecturer at the University of Newcastle, outlined the importance of providing equitable conditions for part-time workers as lack of provisions for part-time workers discriminates against women more than men, as women are more likely to be employed part-time for their entire working lives while for men part-time work is usually only a temporary phase.¹⁷

Casual Workers

3.5.8 The great majority of part-time employees are employed on a casual basis. Casual workers have no security of tenure and are less likely to receive the non-wage employment benefits available to permanent employees.¹⁸ They have poor access to leave provisions, including maternity, illness and long service leave as well as training opportunities and superannuation.

3.5.9 Casual workers are rarely protected by industrial awards. Whilst casual employees are generally paid a loading to compensate for intermittency of work, impermanency and loss of award benefits like holiday, sick and long service leave, lack of protection by industrial awards leaves them at the vagaries of their respective employers. Recent research conducted by the Department of Industrial Relations reported that while some casuals have been awarded benefits similar to other workers, the majority:

¹⁵ Evidence, p.S1634

¹⁶ Evidence, p.S4095

¹⁷ Employment Seminar, p.205

¹⁸ Evidence, p.S1360

... are denied many of those benefits of employment for which eligibility depends on continuity of service, including notice of termination and, hence, security of employment.¹⁹

3.5.10 Historically, casual employment was regarded as a supplement to, and not a replacement, of a permanent workforce. Evidence to the Committee indicated that casualisation of the workforce was increasing and in August 1990 represented 19.4 per cent of the total workforce. Most of these casual employees are women, and while casualisation has predominantly occurred in retail and service industries it is also occurring in other areas including the Australian Public Service.

3.5.11 Alison Weeks, Assistant Secretary, Women's Policy, Income Support and Participation Branch in DEET stressed the ramifications of increased casualisation:

The large number of 'regular casuals' suggests that casual employment has been extended beyond the concept envisaged by the common law (i.e. persons employed on a temporary basis, as and when required). Given the low access of casual workers to non-wage benefits and career and training opportunities, expansion of the casual labour force is a cause for major concern.²⁰

Home Based Workers

3.5.12 Working from home offers benefits to some workers, but the submissions which canvassed the position of women working from home identified a number of concerns. These concerns stemmed mainly from the experience of women working in the textile industry, many of whom come from non-english speaking backgrounds. The problems raised included below-award pay rates and conditions, long hours, lack of leave entitlements and workers compensation coverage and the risk of no payment at all.

¹⁹ Evidence, p.S3986

²⁰ Evidence, p.S4038

3.5.13 The working conditions and rates of pay for women outworkers in the clothing and textiles industry, estimated in 1987 to be approximately 60,000, were described by Justice Riordan, Deputy President of the (then) Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission as:

... a very distressing situation which has no place in a society which embraces the concepts of social justice ... the existence of widespread and grossly unfair exploitation of migrant women of non-English speaking background who are amongst the most vulnerable persons in the work force.²¹

3.5.14 Home based work is not confined to textiles and has become an increasing trend in clerical work as computers and word processing technology makes home based work attractive on the grounds of cost and flexibility. In 1989 the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated that over 43,000 women were engaged in home based clerical and word processing work. However, as other evidence indicates, this figure may be masking a much greater number of women who regard themselves as independent contractors and not employees.

3.5.15 For those enterprises contracting home-based workers, there are significant savings in office/factory overheads and pay structures, which do not include a loading in lieu of provision of leave entitlements. While home-based work is attractive to some women workers, in that it negates the need to find child care and can provide for flexible hours and manipulation of taxable income, other reports suggest that many of these home based workers may be disadvantaged. Many work excessively long hours in poor conditions and are paid a pittance on a piece work basis.²² A study of home-based clerical workers found that pay rates were poor even before costs incurred or award conditions forgone were taken into account.²³

3.5.16 There is an unquantified number of women who work at home in white collar jobs, small businesses or creative industries, as self employed persons or indeed in co-operatives. Many submissions argued that this style of work contained many benefits for women and with advanced communications technology, could become a force in the future. Margaret Berman, private citizen, while supporting the development of home based work noted the need for provision of low interest,

²¹ Exhibit No.143(iv)

²² Women Outworkers, 1986

²³ Dawson and Turner *When She Goes to Work She Stays at Home - Women, New Technology and Home Based Work*, DEET 1989

low risk loans to women wanting to set up businesses at home. Business training programs catering to this group would also be of advantage.²⁴

3.5.17 The potential of home based work facilitated by communications technology was also noted by Lorraine Haydon and Linda Barker from the Workforce Action Group of the Women's Electoral Lobby WA. However they cautioned that home based work should not mean 'isolation and restricted work opportunities'.²⁵ Susan Bastick from the Australian Family Association also saw potential in this form of work.²⁶

3.5.18 Whilst attempts have been made to regulate conditions for textile workers through the 1987 Textile, Clothing and Footwear industry award, most home-based workers are not covered by specific awards. Furthermore, the diverse nature of home based work makes enforcing compliance with awards extremely difficult. Victorian Premier Joan Kirner made the following observation:

Due to invisibility of home-based work and the ambiguity associated with the legal status of home-based work, government agencies and unions have experienced enormous problems in locating home-based workers and examining employment conditions associated with this kind of employment.²⁷

3.6 Women in Non-traditional Employment

3.6.1 Access for women and girls into non-traditional fields of employment such as the trades, engineering and science has been the focus of recent attention by both Government and industry. Of particular note is the setting of targets by universities, at Government initiative, to increase the number of female enrollees in non-traditional subjects (excluding engineering) to 40 per cent by 1996.

3.6.2 In the formal school sector, introducing girls to non-traditional careers has attracted attention. Several states have introduced pilot programs to show girls the opportunities within some traditionally male dominated careers. One example

²⁴ Evidence, p.S3903

²⁵ Evidence, p.S3948

²⁶ Evidence, S4016

²⁷ Evidence, p.S4216

is the Northern Territory version of the Commonwealth-State 'Tradeswomen on the Move'²⁸ project in Darwin which introduced girls at primary and secondary schools to non-traditional careers. Recognising the importance of role models, the program focussed on trades where girls had been successful.

3.6.3 The preconception that women do not enter non-traditional fields merely by free choice was challenged by the more than 400 female applicants for jobs at the Argyle Diamond mines in Western Australia. Joan Eveline's report on the experiences of the 60 women eventually employed at the site, raises interesting questions about recognising difference in the workplace.²⁹ Whilst the Management and the largely male work force felt the addition of female staff was highly successful in promoting job satisfaction, it was not without difficulties for the women.

3.6.4 The women in the mine reported a great deal of harassment particularly in the mines and processing area. They also felt that their femininity was totally ignored in the practice of 'normalising' the workforce which in effect meant that the women were expected to behave exactly the same way as the men.

3.6.5 The contradiction in some male workers' attitudes was also evident:

While there were many men who said women could not, or should not, be doing the work as they, most men (98%) said they preferred to have women working on site rather than work in an all male camp.³⁰

3.6.6 Ms Eveline concludes that it was not surprising that women have a higher attrition rate at the mine than the men.

3.6.7 Similar problems encountered by women working in a male dominated workplace were illustrated in the evidence presented by Stan Heuston in respect of women in the NSW Fire Brigade.³¹

²⁸ Evidence, p.S2341

²⁹ Evidence, p.S2439

³⁰ Evidence, p.S2446

³¹ Evidence, Submission nos 253, 313, 373, 483 and 561

3.6.8 Of interest was the evidence of the Australian Maritime School in Tasmania. The School's Personnel Officer, James Gray commented that while the engineering course attracts one or two females each year, the school has never had a female engineering graduate. This is the case notwithstanding that the female students who have enrolled have generally been considered by staff to be academically, amongst the top ten per cent of the intake.³² The Committee was concerned that there was no clear analysis by the Australian Maritime School of why *this situation had persisted and the absence of an action plan to redress the status quo.*

3.6.9 Attempts to encourage girls into non-traditional areas of education require significant attitudinal changes, not just from girls but from the wider community as well. Dr Gretchen Poiner's³³ evidence, supported by the evidence of Ms Joan Trewern from the Women's Electoral Lobby, Cairns, detailed the indelible influence early socialisation has on career aspirations of girls.³⁴ Coupled with the unavailability of many non-traditional subjects in curriculum available to girls, it is clear that girls still have enormous hurdles to jump in search of full careers in non-traditional areas. Dr Gillian Polack, Co-chair of the Status of Women Committee of the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia argued that:

Widening the perceived options for women about to enter the workforce is only going to succeed in the longer term if those options are made to seem socially acceptable. That is to say, they have to seem realistic options for the women, their siblings, their friends and their parents.³⁵

3.6.10 Further factors militating against women attempting non-traditional work training relate to student and teacher preconceptions, lack of prior training, parental attitudes and possible harassment still operate to discourage women and girls from moving into non-traditional areas of employment in large numbers.

3.6.11 A word of caution was sounded by representatives of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association who felt that there was a possibility of devaluing women in traditional female jobs in an attempt to gain access to non-traditional employment for women.³⁶

³² Evidence, p.772

³³ Employment Seminar, p.28

³⁴ Evidence, p.S389

³⁵ Evidence, p.S3941

³⁶ Evidence, p.1064

3.7 Undervalued and Underpaid - Housewives

3.7.1 Labour force statistics reveal that slightly less than half of all women in Australia (approximately 3.2 million) are not involved either part-time or full-time in paid work. Many of these women would be over 60 or girls over 15 years of age who are still students. A significant number would be occupied in unremunerated work, either caring for children or the elderly and/or maintaining families. Approximately 193,000 would be heads of single parent households for whom social security payments would be their sole source of income.

3.7.2 It is clear that these homemakers make a substantial contribution to the economy. This has been estimated by Dr Duncan Ironmonger, of Melbourne University, to be worth \$90 billion per year.³⁷ Despite this contribution to the economic and social well-being of the nation, many submissions raised the issue of the low status ascribed to these women who currently operate outside the paid workforce, particularly those involved in home duties. There was however, little consensus on how to address the issue.

3.7.3 Rosemary Gillespie from the Campaign for Economic Justice, in her evidence to the Committee suggested that:

... child rearing, an activity which takes up many women hours, is not considered to have economic value. This has fallen outside the ambit of economic policy. Payments for children have been treated as welfare - as a cost rather than a benefit to society.³⁸

3.7.4 Susan Bastick, the NSW Secretary of the Australian Family Association, attempts to ascertain community attitudes in her question:

Do we recognise unpaid work as work which has a parity of value - and equal dignity with paid work - or have we still got some sort of the hierarchy of work which places unpaid work as lesser work that has to be fitted around the demands of 'real' paid work? Do we still think of paid workers as greater contributors to our society than unpaid workers and

³⁷ Evidence, p.S428

³⁸ Evidence, p.909

think of needing to minimise unpaid work so that we can all spend more time participating in real paid work?³⁹

3.7.5 Similarly, Phyllis Boyd of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Family Association asks the somewhat rhetorical question:

Is it because the market economy in the past has been dominated by men and the household economy by women that the latter has stayed largely unpaid and not given suitable recognition legally or socially?⁴⁰

3.7.6 The National Women's Consultative Council concur with this view in their submission:

... one reason why voluntary work undertaken by women at home is undervalued may be that economically the person carrying out the voluntary work is viewed as being dependent on either the spouse or the state (both of which are perceived as having greater economic value) and not as a separate social entity.⁴¹

3.7.7 Judith Balzan J P, private citizen, highlights the dichotomy between unpaid motherhood and paid child care provider in her example:

I was recently quoted \$600 per week to get a live in nanny. It seems ludicrous that my work in the home has no worth, but it costs \$600 to replace it.⁴²

3.7.8 The need to recognise the contribution of the homemaker and accord her status accordingly was further developed by Susan Bastick who argued:

By providing parity of esteem to wage earning and working within the home, we significantly boost our recognition of women working in families. Because we confer status on unpaid work, which we certainly are not doing at the moment, we make the prospect of sharing this household work equitably more attractive to husbands and children, something which we should be continuing to work towards. After all, if we are continually downgrading unpaid work in

³⁹ Recognition Seminar, p.136

⁴⁰ Evidence, p.S95

⁴¹ Evidence, p.S2060

⁴² Evidence, p.S2222

the home and encouraging women away from it, can we really be surprised that husbands and children are not racing in to take up the slack? We either confer greater status on this work, make it more attractive for all members of the household to share in it, or eventually we will develop a model where the family will be subcontracting out all of the work that is considered too menial to be done by those in the family. Employing a class of menials to do the work that nobody within the family feels sufficient status attaches to for them to be bothered doing it themselves, is a dangerous social prospect.⁴³

3.7.9 Peta Andeson, Acting Co-ordinator of the Western Australian Women's Information Referral Exchange, requested more appropriate recognition for home makers by the new nomenclature, 'Administrator and Manager of Home Affairs and Future Generations.'⁴⁴ In the same vein, Paddy Cowburn, private citizen of the Northern Territory suggested:

I think the term 'housewife' should be traded in, perhaps upgraded to 'home-maker', with a proper image of well occupied, multi-skilled, caring and intelligent women who have chosen unpaid work, out of the paid workforce, and who don't like being looked down upon as 'just housewives'.⁴⁵

3.7.10 Further discussion on appropriate recognition for unpaid work appears in Chapter 7 of this report.

3.8 Women the Volunteers

3.8.1 Many women, both those in paid and unpaid work, volunteer a great deal of their time in specific unpaid work in the wider community, in schools, hospitals, churches, self-help groups, sporting clubs and non-government organisations. Due to shortfalls in current data collection procedures, it is impossible to accurately assess women's voluntary contribution, however evidence to the Committee has provided some very interesting estimates.

⁴³ Recognition Seminar, p.140

⁴⁴ Evidence, p.S569

⁴⁵ Evidence, p.S426

3.8.2 Dr Janet Irwin, Founder of the Women's Place movement outlined the value of women's voluntary contribution to *Expo* in Brisbane in 1988:

75 per cent of the volunteers on the Expo site were women. They worked very hard and, of course, were unpaid. At the end of Expo they were given an afternoon tea party and a \$2 souvenir badge that they could have bought at one of the shops. All the men, the city, the government, everybody, patted themselves on the back and said what a wonderful success Expo was. Nobody acknowledged the work of the women.

The Queensland University of Technology did research looking at tourism, bed occupancy, number of people buying tickets, and all that sort of thing, and worked out that the women actually contributed between \$14m and \$15m to Expo.⁴⁶

3.8.3 Similarly Margaret Timponson, immediate past president of the Business and Professional Women's Association provided further evidence of the significance of women's voluntary work:

The South Australian survey showed that nearly three out of 10 people aged over 15 years undertook some form of voluntary work and that those volunteers gave 15.6 million hours to the community in the three-month period ending October 1988. According to the Arts Industry Training Council, the amount of work done in its industry by volunteers would total something like \$350m to \$400m annually. The National Council of Women in its survey into women's unpaid household work and voluntary work outside the home, which was done in South Australia, estimated the value of voluntary work per week done by the women to be \$280 using a labour cost of \$15 per hour.⁴⁷

3.8.4 Similar evidence was provided in respect of the work of Parents and Citizens Associations, most of which is done by women, as illustrated by these figures provided by Janet Irwin:

... do you know that the women of Queensland - and I will say the P & C are the women, since ... there would

⁴⁶ Recognition Seminar, p.23

⁴⁷ Recognition Seminar, p.148

be no P & C without the women - in the 1989-90 financial year raised \$40m. That level of money raising has been going on for years, inflation taking it up, of course. That sum and that contribution of women to the education coffers of the Queensland Government is not acknowledged anywhere and it is not written down in the Government accounts.⁴⁸

3.8.5 Volunteers are often thought to comprise elderly or retired people, however many Australians of all ages make regular voluntary contributions of time to a variety of workplaces and organisations. Dr Geulah Solomon, Victorian President of the National Council of Jewish Women provided an overview of volunteer workers:

Unpaid voluntary work is no longer the exclusive realm of the affluent, the retired or the elderly. Many women in full-time employment devote free time to voluntary services and many women not in paid employment work full-time and even over-time hours in voluntary unpaid work, often at great cost physically, emotionally and financially to themselves.⁴⁹

3.8.6 Many submissions argued that voluntary work has far more than an economic value to society. Ros Madden, private citizen from Canberra, among others, highlighted not just the economic value of voluntary work in the community but the significant social contribution made in the very act of doing something without financial remuneration, the experience of building a sense of community, the value of co-operative effort, the sense of belonging. In analysing the labour intensive fund raising effort of a school fete, Ms Madden questions:

How would it be possible to place a monetary value on these benefits? Yet in the long term these benefits may be just as important as the money raised.⁵⁰

3.8.7 Barbara Hadkinson, private citizen from Melbourne, in her discussion of voluntarism in Australia, raises the issue of the lower status of women even within the volunteer community itself. She argues that women have tended to run 'auxiliaries' while the men did the 'real' work. She notes:

⁴⁸ Recognition Seminar, p.25

⁴⁹ Evidence, p.S296

⁵⁰ Evidence, p.S979

Inevitably most of the women's auxiliaries were fund-raising groups. It gave the women more control over the use of their time but usually only token control over how the results of their labour were spent.⁵¹

3.8.8 Evidence to the Committee suggests that voluntary labour should be accorded far greater recognition, given that it makes a significant contribution to Australia's economic and social life. Some argue that this would require greater financial and infrastructural support for those organisations which operate with volunteers. Barbara Horsfield, National Secretary of the Girl Guides Association commented:

Australian society needs more resources to be put into supporting volunteers making a contribution as community workers, youth workers and youth leader trainers. We need financial sponsorship for the training of volunteer leaders. Child care needs to be available for people working as volunteers.⁵²

3.9 Superwomen - Workers on all Fronts

3.9.1 While half the female population is involved in unremunerated work, the other half is in the paid workforce, either on a full or part-time basis. There is a concern over whether these women are recognised as 'women the workers' or 'women the mothers' or for what they are in reality - both.

3.9.2 Michael Bittman, the author of *Juggling Time*,⁵³ a report based on the 1987 ABS Time Use Survey noted that despite the time spent in paid employment, women still did by far the majority of housework. He concluded:

... unpaid work falls disproportionately to women regardless of wage rates, education, or husband's income.⁵⁴

3.9.3 Bittman noted the implications of this load on women's capacity to participate more fully in society. He continued:

⁵¹ Evidence, p.S3573

⁵² Evidence, p.S216

⁵³ Exhibit No.104(vii)

⁵⁴ Recognition Seminar, p.131

... although women are increasing their participation in the public world, their private responsibilities for the care and well-being of their children and their spouses have not diminished.⁵⁵

3.9.4 Constance Bennett, Chair of the Tasmanian Catholic Women's League's Social Questions Committee, among others, raised the very real concern about undue stress being experienced by working mothers.⁵⁶

3.9.5 Society's double standard which allows men to hold down successful jobs and have a harmonious family life, while women are not really supposed to have both was highlighted by media presenter, Geraldine Doogue. In the face of this, she argued for 'Equal Opportunity in Family Life'. She explained:

If we want our best and brightest men to aim for creative and full lives with families that nurture them and provide balance in order that they may extend their talents and develop them to their fullest for the optimum health of the country, then that is exactly what we ought to be aiming for with women. But we do not, and I think we barely ever state it. We either directly believe, or we subtly imply by our work practices, that you cannot have it all as a woman; you cannot have power and influence - particularly power - and family life.⁵⁷

3.9.6 The combination of work and family responsibilities and their impact on equal opportunity and equal status is elaborated on further in Chapter 4.

3.10 Summary and Recommendations

3.10.1 The role of women has changed dramatically since the Second World War, particularly in the last 25 years. This is most evident in the steady increase in the number of women in the paid workforce.

⁵⁵ Recognition Seminar, p.134

⁵⁶ Evidence, p.S162

⁵⁷ Recognition Seminar, p.198

3.10.2 Notwithstanding this change, little has altered in the division of labour within homes. Women remain principally responsible for child care and other household duties. Further, women continue to comprise the majority of the volunteer workforce serving community and charitable organisations.

3.10.3 While a majority of women are participants in the paid workforce, the pattern of their participation is very different from men. Women comprise the vast majority of the part-time and casual workforces and they are concentrated in a relatively limited range of occupations.

3.10.4 The implications of the change in the composition of the paid workforce are wide-spread. It is evident that women's capacity to contribute and succeed in paid employment is limited by their excessive share of domestic and community responsibilities and the lethargy of forces in the labour market to respond to women's specific needs.

3.10.5 In this regard, women find part-time and casual work particularly attractive as it allows the opportunity to combine paid work with domestic responsibilities such as child care. Given this, it is essential that work which is less than full-time enjoys adequate training and promotion opportunities and job security.

3.10.6 In the light of these issues the Committee makes the following specific conclusions and recommendations.

3.10.7 The Committee was alarmed at the increasing trend towards casualisation of the workforce and particularly its impact on employment prospects for women. It believes that casualisation in some industries is being seen as a substitute for employing permanent full-time and part-time workers. The Committee is concerned that it creates an underclass of workers in those industries who are not covered by the same wage and non-wage benefits received by permanent employees. Under the current Industrial Relations system, the best way to address these difficulties is through amendments to awards.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Committee recommends that the Department of Industrial Relations initiate a process which will result in all industrial awards being amended to:

- (a) include permanent part-time clauses with associated pro-rata preferences;
- (b) ensure that casual employees are entitled to the same non-wage benefits, on a pro-rata basis, afforded to permanent staff.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Committee recommends that every Government department review the special circumstances under which they justify recruitment of casual staff and in particular the non-payment of loadings to casual employees.

3.10.8 The Committee is particularly concerned over the situation of home based workers who are not aware of their rights, who have no formal contracts and who because of economic necessity will continue to accept an unreasonable situation. While no one should deny the right of women to work at home should they choose, there is concern that these workers in a deregulated market are open to abuse.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Committee recommends that:

- (a) relevant awards be varied as to extend to all home-based workers, as a minimum, the regulation of wage rates and working conditions as provided to workers conducting similar work within regulated workplaces, as exemplified in the Outworkers provisions in the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Industries Award;
- (b) in addition, the development of an information program directed at home-based workers, advising them of their legal status and rights.

3.10.9 Improving opportunities for girls in non-traditional areas is heavily dependent on access to appropriate training. Despite initiatives to encourage girls into non-traditional areas of work, the Committee noted that previous programs to

boost employment opportunities in vocational trades have appeared to benefit boys rather than girls. Similarly, initiatives to benefit girls must have the commitment of Ministers and Departments to ensure effective implementation. The Committee believes that resources allocated to improving trade training generally must take account of the special requirements needed to encourage and accommodate girls.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Committee recommends that:

- (a) further initiatives be undertaken to recruit girls and women into non-traditional areas of work in addition to the effective implementation of existing strategies such as the 'Women in Apprenticeship Report' and that this be monitored and evaluated by the Department of Industrial Relations and the Department of Employment, Education and Training.
- (b) the Commonwealth, through the Council of Ministers for Vocational Education Employment and Training encourage the providers of technical and vocational training, to develop strategic plans to ensure greater enrolment of young women. These would involve adequate training of trainers and supervisors to accommodate female students and workers.
- (c) the National Plan of Action for Women in TAFE be monitored by DEET to ensure its effectiveness.
- (d) DIR in association with employers and unions involved in the employment of women in non-traditional areas be required to develop strategies designed to support women to remain in non-traditional environments, encompassing training courses as well as job sites.

3.10.10 While it is clear that voluntary workers are not paid for their labour, ways need to be explored to ensure that benefits which apply to paid workers can also be made available to unpaid workers. This involves ensuring job satisfaction, appropriate training and appreciation of effort as well as day to day benefits which apply to paid workers. The relationship between paid workers and volunteers clearly needs to be clarified to avoid the possibility of at best, under-utilisation and at worst, exploitation of the volunteer workforce.

RECOMMENDATION 6

In an attempt to provide greater recognition for volunteer work, the Committee recommends that:

- (a) volunteer participation be included in the National Accounts as a supplementary report.
- (b) a major study be undertaken by the Department of Employment, Education and Training into the nature and extent of voluntary work. The study should cover such issues as:
 - (i) where do women predominate in voluntary work?
 - (ii) age of women who participate in voluntary work and reasons
 - (iii) accurate estimation of the monetary value of women's voluntary contribution
 - (iv) the extent of involvement in policy making for women in voluntary work and
 - (v) the skills gained in voluntary work and the extent to which these skills can be utilised in and are recognised by the labour market.

CHAPTER 4

ISSUES AFFECTING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN IN THE PAID WORKFORCE

4.1 Promotion and Structure of Employment

4.1.1 Analysis of labour force participation statistics reveals that women's participation in almost all occupations appears to resemble a pyramid, with the majority congregated at the lower levels and very few in senior management positions. Denise Conroy from the Faculty of Business at the Queensland University of Technology commented:

Women currently comprise 9.12 per cent of SES employees, 6.1 per cent of Members of the House of Representatives, 22.4 per cent of the Senate, (or 11.4 per cent of all Parliamentarians in Australia) 91.4 per cent of nurses, 63.5 per cent of school teachers, 76 per cent of clerks and 65.4 per cent of sales and service workers. Where numbers exceed 50 per cent they do so because women hold the majority of the lower paid positions; rarely do women dominate or form a majority in the senior positions.¹

4.1.2 Babette Francis, National and Overseas Coordinator of the Endeavour Forum explained women's predominance in lower level positions as an extension of the natural order, exemplified in this case in the teaching profession:

With the unisex ideology promoted by feminism, males have been encouraged to apply for these jobs, and they will naturally gravitate to the higher positions, including that of principal, because they are more ambitious and are willing to put in the longer hours required by the principal's job as distinct from classroom teaching. Many female staff have family responsibilities which they are trying to combine with their teaching job - they choose teaching because of its

¹ Evidence, p.S165

shorter hours and because they want to be home when their children come home from school. Many do not want administrative jobs which require longer hours.²

4.1.3 The vast majority of the evidence contested such an explanation. Many submissions focused on the lack of promotional opportunities as being the consequence of the so called glass ceiling, whereby women can see a career path but they are unable to progress beyond a certain level for a variety of reasons.

4.1.4 The experience of glass ceilings was identified by submissions as occurring in a wide range of occupations, but particularly in the professions and academia where men and women generally enter the field with equivalent qualifications and often in similar numbers. Despite this, the higher status and better remunerated positions are overwhelmingly held by men.

Women in the Professions

Law

4.1.5 Several submissions referred to the specific difficulties of women progressing through the ranks of the legal profession. Despite the fact that equal numbers of men and women are enrolling and graduating with law degrees, the number of women renewing practicing certificates is much lower than for males. Furthermore, women are not becoming partners in firms or obtaining senior positions at a rate proportionate to their membership of the profession.

4.1.6 In Queensland, for example, women make up only one-third of the total number of principals in law firms. Delma Osborne of the Women Lawyer's Association of Queensland commented:

... though the number of females entering the profession is on the increase, the percentage of females becoming partners of firms has decreased. Since 1975 there has been an increase from 37 females holding Practising Certificates to 511 females holding Practising Certificates in 1989. However,

² Evidence, p.S4033

the percentage of females holding practicing certificates has gone down from 50 per cent to 23 per cent.³

4.1.7 A frequently mooted explanation for women's lack of progression through the legal profession is the fact that women bear responsibility for children. Jennifer Mattila, President of the Women Lawyer's Association of New South Wales argues that this is not borne out in the statistics:

*Women without children face the similar problems in relation to promotion as those women with children.*⁴

4.1.8 The Women Lawyers of NSW submission goes on to suggest that there is a form of systemic discrimination working against women being selected for partnerships in law firms. Partnership selection methods are, in their view, problematic. Elizabeth Nosworthy, then Chancellor of Bond University argued that male partners are reluctant to appoint women due to a perception that women will leave to have children, thereby wasting the investment in training and resulting in the loss of goodwill to the firm. While Professor Nosworthy recognises the possible short-term costs to the firm, she maintains that society generally has not come to grips with these issues and recommends 'structured discussions of these problems as part of the formal education process'.⁵

4.1.9 One factor pertaining to advancement in the legal profession which is no doubt applicable to others, is the use of the mentor system and the informal network which helps people get ahead. Moira Rayner, Victoria's Equal Opportunity Commissioner, pointed out that this informal system did not work well for women, despite the fact that it worked very effectively for men.⁶ This was also noted by Elizabeth Nosworthy.⁷

³ Evidence, p.S60

⁴ Evidence, p.S3913

⁵ Employment Seminar, p.203

⁶ Evidence, p.S2518

⁷ Employment Seminar, p.202

Medicine

4.1.10 While women comprise some 45 per cent of medical students around Australia, women doctors are under-represented in the ranks of specialists and administrators and more likely to be found in general practice. While several Medical Colleges pointed out that they have specific training programs for part-time training of female graduates,⁸ Dr Sue Harbison from the Queensland Medical Women's Society explained:

All specialist Colleges claim to have provision for part-time specialist training in place. The Queensland Medical Women's Society is very pleased to note these changes. We would however point out that because there is so much pressure and competition for the few training posts that part-time positions are essentially hard to come by, and that the situation for women is largely unchanged. This inevitably means that women doctors with family commitments are likely to enter general practice.⁹

4.1.11 Failure to accredit part-time and interrupted experience is a disadvantage to many women doctors who have interrupted practice to have children and who have chosen to return to work on a part-time basis. The Royal College of Surgeons has accepted interrupted and part-time experience however the duration has to equal that of the full-time doctor. It is therefore likely that many female doctors would be much older than their male colleagues before they qualify as surgeons, a possible disincentive to women.

4.1.12 Despite initiatives to attract qualified women to specialist fields, Jeff Harmer, First Assistant Secretary in the Department of Health, Housing and Community Services explained:

... the general perceptions are that the commitment required by doctors doing specialist training is such that it makes no allowances for either family or child-rearing duties expected of most women.¹⁰

⁸ Royal Australian College of General Practitioners in NSW and Royal College of Surgeons

⁹ Evidence, p.S137

¹⁰ Evidence, S4316

Health/Science

4.1.13 While women dominate the ranks of para medical fields such as speech pathologists and occupational therapists, they too, appear to be unable to crack the glass ceiling. Advancement for women seems to be particularly difficult. In Queensland, for example, in 1988, only 3 per cent of occupational therapists were men, yet they occupied 61 per cent of the administrative, academic or senior clinical positions in the profession.¹¹

4.1.14 *Evidence suggests that women who pursue careers in Science have a higher unemployment rate than male graduates. They also tend to be congregated in the less well paid and often untenured jobs. Margaret Robson, Secretary of the Women in Medical Science group suggested that there appears to be a:*

... wide based pyramid, with many women employed as 'workers' in science but few achieving the higher ranking positions associated with greater social and financial benefits.¹²

4.1.15 Dr Sandy Thompson's submission personalised some of the issues for women in scientific research. Having completed her basic medical degree, Dr Thompson was offered a prestigious post-graduate fellowship in another state. With the birth of her first child imminent, she accepted the fellowship but was unsuccessful in her attempt to have it deferred. The unavailability of full-day child care saw Dr Thompson juggling her time and tiny baby, daily, between two occasional care centres and her demanding research work.¹³

Education

4.1.16 Perhaps the clearest dichotomy in women dominating the numbers, but men the senior positions, exists in the teaching profession which is dominated by women in the classroom and men in administration. In Tasmania, where women comprise 60 per cent of the teaching profession, men occupy 66 per cent of the

¹¹ Evidence, p.S556

¹² Evidence, p.S638

¹³ Evidence, p.S1394

promotion positions.¹⁴ The South Australian Department of Education reported that while women comprise 61 per cent of the teaching profession, they:

... generally remain under-represented within leadership and promotional positions.¹⁵

4.1.17 Similar statistics were provided for the Commonwealth Teaching service by Eric Wilmott, then Secretary of the Department of Education and the Arts in the ACT.¹⁶ This under-representation of women at senior levels of the profession appears to be common to all state education departments.

4.1.18 Even sex segregated private schools for girls tend to have male administrators. The Catholic system in particular has registered a decline in the number of women principals due to the replacement of nuns with male lay principals, over the past two decades. As Lyn Rolley from the Independent Teachers Federation using NSW statistics explained:

In 1977 80% of Catholic primary schools had female Principals; in 1986 this percentage had decreased to 65. This statistic needs to be viewed in the context of 90% of primary teachers in 1975 being female and in 1985 82%.¹⁷

4.1.19 In respect of career prospects, women academics have similar experiences. Despite the fact that higher institutions are required to report to the Affirmative Action Agency and have EEO programs, women academics are far less likely to hold tenure positions than their male colleagues.

4.1.20 Dr Gretchen Poiner from the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney summarised the situation for women in academia as follows:

- . the relatively low representation of women on academic staff;
- . the under-representation of women in senior academic positions;

¹⁴ Evidence, p.S104

¹⁵ Evidence, p.S630

¹⁶ Evidence, Submission No.469

¹⁷ Evidence, p.S803

- the clustering of women in junior academic positions which are insecure, of relatively low prestige and poorly paid;
- the control of knowledge exercised by men in academic fields where the majority of students and hence subsequently, the majority of practitioners in employment are women;
- the under-representation of women undertaking research at the post graduate level;
- the lesser value accorded to those fields to which women are attracted in numbers, whether this be as cause or consequence of women's presence.¹⁸

4.1.21 Women are under-represented on University Boards, in Professorial appointments and tenured lectureships. They hold few positions in certain faculties, particularly engineering and some sciences.

4.1.22 Concern was expressed that amalgamation of universities and teachers colleges appears to have had the effect of reducing the status of women staff members. Research positions in universities generally have a higher standing than the teaching focus of the old Teacher Training Institutions and Colleges of Advanced Education. This case was argued strongly by both Di Bretherton and Julie Roberts from the Association of Women on Campus at the University of Melbourne¹⁹ and S Carlos and J Gill from the South Australian College of Advanced Education.²⁰

4.1.23 The ranks of women with prospects for promotion in academic life are limited by several factors. For instance, more men than women go on to post-graduate studies resulting in a smaller pool of women eligible for senior academic jobs.

4.1.24 Several submissions addressed possible explanations. Brian Wilson, Vice-Chancellor at the University of Queensland observed that women were either reluctant or badly counselled to apply for promotion positions.²¹

¹⁸ Evidence, p.S701

¹⁹ Evidence, p.S545

²⁰ Evidence, p.S683

²¹ Evidence, p.S4140

4.1.25 Dr Gillian Polack, Co-chair of the Status of Women Committee of the National Council of Jewish Women explained that lack of career prospects, failure of the mentor system and limited job prospects had led many talented women away from academia and into other professions. She continued:

... many young women with high academic qualifications are currently leaving the education sector for a variety of reasons (eg pay, prestige, security, wish to have management position). It is not simply that women are not achieving promotion in relation to their numbers in the field, it is that some of those who might, in other economic or social climates, expect to become senior academics, see it as not being a viable career alternative.²²

4.1.26 Victorian Premier Joan Kirner directed some of the blame at the institutions themselves:

Much systemic discrimination arises from poor recruitment and selection procedures, poor organisational management and incorrect notions about what qualifications are required to undertake certain jobs.²³

The Public Service

4.1.27 Lack of career advancement for women was recognised to exist in the Public Service as John Bowdler from the Department of Social Security explained:

At present, at the ASO5 level there is a glass ceiling that recognises the lack of experience and the lack of opportunities to gain experience to be competitive on merit, and that is why our strategies are targeted to give people that experience and developmental opportunities.²⁴

4.1.28 The Public Service Commission reported that while there were more women in the Senior Executive Service now than there were in 1985:

... women still tend to be at lower levels than men who have the same educational qualifications and length of service, and

²² Evidence, p.S3944

²³ Evidence, pS4213

²⁴ Evidence, p.676

in these terms the situation has not changed very much at all.²⁵

4.1.29 The same submission also recorded that surveys completed in 1989 showed only marginal increases in career and salary opportunities from earlier research data compiled in 1986 when 45 per cent of women in the public service were employed in clerical and keyboard jobs and 46 per cent of women had prospective maximum salaries of below \$18,000.

4.1.30 A higher proportion of women than men at the top SES level have degrees, and graduates have a significantly higher chance of promotion to the SES as evidenced in the submission from the Department of Industrial Relations.²⁶ A subsequent submission from the Department of Industrial Relations reported that at December 1990, 11.85 per cent of senior management positions were being filled by women, a steady increase in the number of women in the Senior Executive Service.²⁷

4.1.31 The difficulty of women gaining promotion in the public service was also emphasised by the analysis undertaken by Geraldine McNamara from the Public Service Union, using data provided by the EEO Unit of the Public Service Commission:

*If women and men with the same qualifications and length of service had reached the same levels, there would be about 60 per cent more women in the ASO6 to 8 level and almost twice as many in the Senior Executive Service as at June 1989.*²⁸

4.1.32 Another area of concern is the appointment procedures adopted for senior positions in the public service. Helen Styles, then Director of the Overseas Information Branch of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Sydney, herself a protagonist in a protracted case involving indirect discrimination, maintains:

*The lack of transparency in closed shop procedures that are not open to scrutiny operates to protect elitism.*²⁹

²⁵ Evidence, p.S3185

²⁶ Evidence, p.S1614

²⁷ Evidence, p.S4094

²⁸ Evidence, p.S181

²⁹ Evidence, p.S1191

4.1.33 Indirect discrimination in public sector employment was noted in several submissions. This occurs when an ostensibly neutral criterion or condition has a disproportionate and unreasonable impact against either sex.

4.1.34 Officers Byrne, Bramley and Hammond from the Evaluation and Statistical Services Branch of the Department of Finance recounted a specific example of indirect discrimination affecting a female economist within the Department:

When attempting (at the end of 1986) to resume her career as an economist after several years absence because of child rearing, she was confronted by the following request from an all male interview panel in the Department of Treasury:

“we need two reports of recent work performance”

The Treasury's referee forms still emphasise recent work performance (the past 2 - 3 years).³⁰

Women in Industry

4.1.35 While women are making inroads into industry, they are still more likely to be found in the lower paid repetitive jobs where they have less option for advancement.

4.1.36 Clive Speed, Assistant Director of the Business Council of Australia profiled the position for women in the manufacturing industry, the main employer for women in industry:

The bulk of women in manufacturing are in unskilled or semi-skilled positions, concentrated in a few industries where access to skilled or management positions is limited. The lack of skills, the low skill status and the relatively high numbers of women part-time workers mean that women in manufacturing earn on average only 70 per cent of male earnings ... Only 27 per cent of women in manufacturing have post-school qualifications; the comparable figure for men is 50 per cent. Only 3 per cent have a degree. Some 21

³⁰ Evidence, p.S3917

per cent have a diploma. The corresponding figure for men is much higher.³¹

4.1.37 In response to Equal Opportunity initiatives and Affirmative Action requirements, some companies have developed programs to improve equality of access for women. Colgate-Palmolive and L M Ericsson are two companies whose achievements have been noted by the Inquiry.³² However, it is significant that women in management in industry are more likely to be found in the Human Resources and Personnel areas than the more typically male line-management positions, an area Elizabeth Nosworthy suggests does not involve client interface and therefore does not put at risk the goodwill of the company should staff leave.³³

4.1.38 Lynette O'Reilly, National Development Officer for Squash Australia, illustrated the disadvantaged position of women working in the sports industry where:

- many of the management positions, whether paid or voluntary are held by men;
- the promotional structure for women is very limited;
- a general lack of award structuring and union support;
- general problems associated with child care are also common; and
- leave provisions eg for maternity leave may be difficult because of contract like employment.³⁴

4.1.39 It is significant that women currently predominate in industries which have little union representation. The Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey, undertaken by the Department of Industrial Relations, reported that very small numbers of union members were employed in recreation, personal services and wholesale and retail trade, sectors which employ very large numbers of women.³⁵

4.1.40 One industry where women have experienced greater levels of management roles is hospitality. The ratio of males in the industry to females is currently 60:40 in favour of females and Bert Zanetti, Assistant Secretary, Portfolio

³¹ Evidence, p.159

³² Two of the winners of the 1991 Triple A Awards

³³ Employment Seminar, p.199

³⁴ Evidence, p.S3831

³⁵ Exhibit No.49(vi)

Division of the Department of Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories indicated that:

Women are now well represented in senior or executive positions within the industry, such as hotel management, although there are a number of occupations which are still male dominated, such as professional food preparation and transport services. In the case of management positions in accommodation establishments, women accounted for 37 per cent of full-time management positions in 1987. Overall, female management represented 38 per cent of all management positions.³⁶

4.2 Parental Responsibilities

4.2.1 Discussions regarding women's participation in the work force are dominated by women's role as mothers and workers. Given that 70 to 80 percent of Australian women will have children in their lifetimes, their careers will therefore always be interrupted in some way by the birth of their child. While mothers have traditionally been the carers in Australia, it is clear that they are now also the workers and as such should not have to bear a double burden while fathers continue to escape their domestic responsibilities.

4.2.2 An EEO Officer within the Systems Technology Division of the Department of Administrative Services emphasised the impact of family responsibilities on career prospects for women in the comment:

In many jobs it is necessary to work far beyond the standard eight hour day in order to both participate in discussion in the workplace, and to be seen to have the necessary commitment for promotion. Additionally there is often the need to travel extensively, sometimes at short notice. Both demands limit the input women can make to reach management positions.³⁷

4.2.3 Denis Ives, the Public Service Commissioner provided a pragmatic perspective on the need to accommodate family responsibilities:

³⁶ Evidence, p.S1087

³⁷ Evidence, p.S3919

If the APS and other employers do not respond by taking account of family commitments of their staff they will be at risk of missing out not only on recruiting and retaining able women, but also some men.³⁸

4.2.4 In acknowledgment of this changing situation, in May 1990, the Australian Government signed International Labour Organisation Convention No. 156. While ILO 156, as a United Nations Convention, is not legally binding, it commits signatories to provide a climate which enables workers with family responsibilities to exercise their right to work without discrimination and as far as possible without conflict between their employment and their family responsibilities. It could be argued that the commitment of the Government in the signing of this covenant effectively acknowledged that the work force is no longer made up of people whose family responsibilities are being undertaken by an unpaid partner. It also recognises that both fathers and mothers have responsibility and consequent rights in respect of the members of their families, young and old.

4.2.5 Representations to the Inquiry applauded the Government's commitment to the ILO 156 convention.

4.2.6 Brendan Priess, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Industrial Relations outlined the issues considered relevant to workers with family responsibilities. He cited supply and flexibility of child care arrangements; flexible working arrangements (such as permanent part-time and casual work; job sharing; home-based work; flexi-time), leave arrangements such as career break schemes, maternity, parental and adoption leave.³⁹

4.2.7 The Committee received evidence on the Inter-departmental Committee responsible for development and implementation of the strategy in association with the Work and Family Unit of the Department of Industrial Relations and the Office of the Status of Women. The work of the Remuneration and Conditions Division of the Department of Industrial Relations in implementing ILO 156 in the public sector was also noted with interest.

³⁸ Evidence, p.S3188

³⁹ Evidence, p.S4094

4.3 Flexible Working Hours

4.3.1 Inflexible working hours enforce a rigidity in the management of domestic life. The way most full time jobs are currently structured makes it very difficult for working parents to share family responsibilities. This is particularly the case for men who make up the majority of the full time labour force. Dr Thiele from Murdoch University summarised the situation:

The crucial problem is the way that labour is organised, which does not facilitate men taking a share of domestic work.⁴⁰

4.3.2 Provision of flexible work patterns are increasingly being seen to have some important benefits for industry. The potential of flexible work patterns was highlighted by Denis Ives, the Public Service Commissioner:

By creating a more flexible work environment, staff may be more easily retained and thereby the investment in staff development and training is not lost.⁴¹

4.3.3 Dr Martin Watts, Senior Lecturer in Economics from Newcastle University reported that recent research into the implementation of flexible working hours indicated that it was not incompatible with second tier agreements made under the Restructuring and Efficiency Principle. He contended that in many cases normal working hours can be adjusted.⁴² Indeed, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission has incorporated flexibility clauses and facilitative provisions in industrial awards under the Structural Efficiency Principle.

4.3.4 Evidence suggests that increasing opportunities for employees to become permanent part-time would be taken up by many workers, particularly women, without risk to productivity. For instance, the experience reported by Liz Darben from the Office of Women's Affairs of the Northern Territory government is a positive one. The Northern Territory public service, which encourages the use of part-time positions has found that job sharing and part-time employment opportunities have been taken up especially by professional women:

⁴⁰ Evidence, p.1619

⁴¹ Evidence, p.S3192

⁴² Evidence, p.S3930

Librarians, town planners, laboratory scientists and research scientists take up this opportunity quite a bit in the service.⁴³

4.3.5 However, Val Marsden, immediate past-Convenor of the National Womens Consultative Council warned that flexible working hours could lead to greater casualisation of the female workforce if it meant only employing people on a demand basis.⁴⁴

4.3.6 Lorraine Haydon and Linda Barker from the Workforce Action Group of the Women's Electoral Lobby WA similarly cautioned that without education programs, women may be the only ones taking advantage of new flexible employment structures with the effect of entrenching traditional occupational segregation in the workforce.⁴⁵

4.3.7 Similarly, Helen L'Orange, First Assistant Secretary, Office of Prime Minister and Cabinet warned that flexibility should not put hard won working conditions at risk:

*A flexible work force should still be able to provide workers with skills, job security, realistic pay rates and adequate payment for working difficult hours.*⁴⁶

4.4 Leave Provisions

4.4.1 Developing the potential of women workers and retaining them in the labour force depends on access to a range of appropriate working conditions. Given the potentially truncated working life of women, particularly mothers, one of the key conditions which has a primary impact on their capacity at work, is knowledge of, and access to, appropriate leave provisions.

⁴³ Evidence, p.479

⁴⁴ Evidence, p.S4271

⁴⁵ Evidence, p.S3947

⁴⁶ Recognition Seminar, p.168

Maternity Leave

4.4.2 Many full-time workers in the public and private sector have been able to benefit from maternity leave provisions since 1979. Most private sector maternity leave is unpaid, however employees in the Commonwealth, NSW and Victorian public sector are eligible for paid maternity leave. The take-up rate has been varied. A study conducted by the Institute of Family Studies between 1985 and 1987 revealed that 44 per cent of women employed during pregnancy take maternity leave, 32 per cent are not eligible for leave and 24 per cent are eligible but do not take leave.⁴⁷

4.4.3 The ACTU's submission reported that the provision of maternity leave by employers was found to be effective in retaining female staff who remained on the job longer prior to the birth.⁴⁸

4.4.4 Of note was the degree of ignorance of employees in the private sector regarding rights to maternity leave. Dr Don Edgar stated:

... there was a huge inequality in women's information about maternity leave and their use of maternity leave when you compare the public system with the private system.⁴⁹

4.4.5 The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) requires the availability of paid maternity leave. Australian Governments have not acted on this requirement and in some instances, notably the NSW Government Insurance Office, existing maternity leave provisions were removed upon the privatisation of the instrumentality. This was seen by Steven Mark, President of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board to be:

... a questionable business practice and it directly discriminates against women.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Exhibit No.17(i)

⁴⁸ Evidence, p.2125

⁴⁹ Evidence, p.104

⁵⁰ Sex Discrimination Legislation Seminar, p.78

4.4.6 The question of provision of paid maternity leave to all women workers was argued in several submissions although it is unclear as to who would pay for it. Susan Hartley Co-convenor of WEL WA argued strongly for wide consultation to ascertain a solution to the provision of paid maternity leave:

... It should not be the cost of the woman alone, as it often is today with the loss of independent income and career prospects. A universal payment from a national insurance scheme or a government scheme which may be topped up by individual employers could be a possible solution. Considering that in many respects women have been underwriting the larger superannuation payments that males claim on retirement it is conceivable that it could be paid out of that same scheme, given the legislative changes.⁵¹

4.4.7 Evidence also pointed to the inter-relationship between maternity leave and the ability to return to paid employment on a part-time or job-share basis. This improves the flexibility of the system and enhances the effectiveness of maternity leave. The Committee noted the introduction of re-entry procedures within the Commonwealth Public Service for staff who previously resigned for child care reasons as an example of this.

Family/Parental Leave

4.4.8 Parental leave provisions have the potential to enhance employment opportunities for women while allowing men to share in family responsibilities, as R L Marshman, the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Industrial Relations suggests:

... although existing maternity and adoption leave provisions undoubtedly assist women to combine motherhood and participation in the labour force, they continue to assign family responsibilities primarily to women.⁵²

4.4.9 Following the Parental Leave Test Case of July 1990, unpaid parental leave is now available in the Commonwealth, NSW, Victorian and South Australian public sectors. The ACTU has supported the flow-on of the decision and

⁵¹ Evidence, p.S3907

⁵² Evidence, p.S1629

applications have been made to have it inserted in other industrial awards.

4.4.10 However the take-up rate has been very slow as indicated in these figures provided by the Public Service Commissioner, quoting Department of Finance Statistics:

... in the calendar year 1988-89, fifteen men took three months or more parental leave and two men resigned after parental leave, while one thousand five hundred women took maternity leave, four hundred resigning after this leave.⁵³

Leave to Care for Families

4.4.11 Balancing the demands of children and the labour force has always been an issue for parents. This is especially so with the changes in womens workforce participation levels. Adding to family responsibilities is the aging of the Australian population which will impact on the size and composition of the labour force and on the need for care to elderly relatives.

4.4.12 The Committee received evidence from Dr Don Edgar on the experience in Sweden where workers are allowed 60 days family leave to attend to children, the elderly, or other special family requirements. On average, Swedish workers take six or seven days annually of such leave.⁵⁴

4.4.13 Provisions of this nature are rare in Australia, and a normal occurrence would be for a parent to take their own sick leave to attend, for instance, a sick child. The Australian Institute of Family Studies is conducting research into family leave and related matters, which has the potential to become a major social and economic issue.

⁵³ Evidence, p.S3188

⁵⁴ Evidence, p.109

4.5 Child Care for Paid Workers

4.5.1 The paramount issue identified by the vast majority of submissions which dealt with women and employment was that of child care. The submissions almost universally argued that good quality, affordable child care was the basic necessity for women to have a realistic choice as to their life options.

4.5.2 Evidence suggests that access to child care affects a woman's decision to re-enter the work force, the number and range of hours she is available to work, and the likelihood of her being able to make longer term commitments to the work through seeking promotion opportunities. It also affects the amount of time women can devote to meetings, work commitments and extra activities outside of official work hours.

4.5.3 Inadequacies in the availability or cost of child care impacts greatly on many families. For instance, Dr Gay Ochiltree from the Institute of Family Studies outlined research which showed that many parents are working shift work in an attempt to manage child care themselves at the expense of any family life at all.⁵⁵

4.5.4 Patricia Kelly from the Department of Social Security, in evidence to the Committee, spoke of the impact of child care on advancement of women in her Department:

Speaking from my Division's perspective, we are probably not losing people but it may be holding people back in terms of their ability to seek promotion and to take on bigger responsibilities because of the *inconvenience perhaps of child care not being located where people are located and, therefore, it cuts into people's time every day.*⁵⁶

4.5.5 The fact that inadequate child care impacts so greatly on women rather than men in terms of workforce opportunities is a stark reminder of how society and largely parents see mothers as the prime carers of children. Given this, there is a temptation to portray child care as a 'women's issue'. The evidence to the Committee strongly rejects this proposition and argues that child care is an economic and productivity issue as well as a basic test of the community's commitment to equity.

⁵⁵ Evidence, p.107

⁵⁶ Evidence, p.680

Key Issues in the Delivery of Child Care

Location

4.5.6 Location of child care facilities is a major issue in the child care debate. While many submissions argued for work-based child care facilities, others saw merit in community based centres and in the expansion of appropriate family day care programs. It would appear that there is clearly a need for all three.

4.5.7 There is a substantial demand for more work-based child care places. While a number of large enterprises have developed in-house child care programs, there is clearly demand for many more employers to provide work-based care.

4.5.8 Several submissions addressed disincentives operating to prevent business initiatives in the provision of child care, despite the obvious benefits for employers if the child care obstacle for female employees was removed. As most Australians work for small and medium sized businesses, the cost to employers to provide child care is clearly the major obstacle.

4.5.9 Current regulations governing child care facilities appear to be a disincentive to business to provide in-house facilities as Dr Gail Tulloch from the Women's Electoral Lobby explained. It would be prudent to encourage state governments to amend legislation regarding provision of child care centres on the ground floor of buildings, given the tremendous disincentive that this offers existing businesses to convert prime street-front real estate.⁵⁷

4.5.10 Lack of access to subsidies for Australian Public Service providers was also raised. The 'Dependants and Departments' initiative in June 1991 has not achieved better work related child care facilities for APS workers due to the difficulties experienced by Departments in finding funds to cover capital costs within existing budgets.

⁵⁷ Evidence, p.79

Special needs

4.5.11 Child care needs to cater for the full range of employment options including those parents who work part-time, on a casual or out-work basis. Part-time workers, students, researchers and shift workers, all needing irregular hours care or occasional care, expressed difficulties gaining access to child care, given the preference to provide places for children needing full-time care. Universities, in particular expressed concern that they were not able to offer enough places at appropriate cost to generally low-income student parents. Students need child care for short periods often at irregular times and find it difficult to access regular long day care centres. *It should be noted however that dedicated child care centres purely for University students may result in the facilities being seriously under-utilised outside of the academic year.*

4.5.12 Provision of quality, affordable child care is essential for children of all ages. While children under three are seen by some as a priority target group, after-school care and school holiday programs are also needed for older children. There was also an expressed need for access to emergency care and care for children who are mildly ill, services which are almost non-existent currently.

Staffing

4.5.13 Operating good quality child care centres is expensive and will remain so given the need to obtain adequately paid, trained child care staff. The status currently associated with child care work is very low as the anecdote of Susan Biggs, Director of the New South Wales based Child Care at Work demonstrates:

I was speaking to a child-care worker last week who said that when she was working with a group of nought to threes, a three-year-old came up to her and asked, 'When you finish here, where do you go to work?'. I think that is indicative of how people, even three-year-olds, feel about women who are child-carers.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Evidence, p.186

4.5.14 Submissions argued for a upgrade of the status of child-care workers through adequate training opportunities, award rates and career opportunities. The Committee noted the recent salary gains for child care workers following the application of the Minimum Rates Adjustment process to the child care award in the ACT and Northern Territory.⁵⁹

Cost

4.5.15 The question of funding for child care is a vexed one. While the Federal Government initiatives in increasing child care places and subsidies were commended in much of the evidence, the need to increase places was reinforced. Any one party, whether it be employer, parent or government clearly cannot meet the demand alone.

4.5.16 While parents expected to make a contribution to child care costs, fee relief was seen as essential for those parents on comparatively low incomes. However, the two tier system mooted by the Commonwealth did not have wide-spread support.⁶⁰ This is currently being reviewed, along with operational subsidies by the Department of Health, Housing and Community Services.

4.5.17 There was some argument for the provision of tax deductibility for child care given that it is clearly a work-related expense for those working parents who use child-care facilities. Current government policy however does not reflect this view. Dr Don Edgar, Director of the Institute of Family Studies, illustrated the dichotomy between current legislation administered by the Federal Tax Commissioner and the parent view of child care:

Subsidised child care is seen by the tax department as a fringe benefit but in relation to women's access to employment it is really a central blocking point in gaining access to the system.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Evidence, p.S4299

⁶⁰ Evidence, p.S4271

⁶¹ Evidence, p.111

4.5.18 Dr Edgar argued for flexibility in applying tax guidelines. Despite recent changes to guidelines which more clearly define eligibility for tax deductible child care there is still no capacity for companies to write off subsidies for child care unless they are providing it themselves. However many employees would prefer to have make their own child care arrangements which they believe should still be subsidised by the employer.⁶²

4.5.19 Tax subsidies were generally supported although there was not agreement on the form they should take. However there is clearly a need to apply *uniform exemptions from fringe benefits tax for all employer supported child care* where the employer retains control over the service.

4.5.20 One option noted by the Committee is the idea of salary sacrificing whereby the employee has the cost of employer sponsored child care deducted from her/his pre-tax income. While this is attractive to the employee, it has important implications for revenue and presumably the child care budget which funds fee relief to those families where tax deductibility is a limited advantage.

4.5.21 The National Women's Consultative Council argued against tax deductibility in any form on the grounds that it is regressive and will do nothing to increase the number of places. The NWCC supports:

... greater encouragement by government of joint ventures or co-operative arrangements between employers, community based centres and local government with shared contributions towards capital costs.⁶³

National Guidelines

4.5.22 A major deficiency in the operation of child care in Australia is the plethora of rules and regulations which currently apply. While the bulk of submissions saw a regulated industry as paramount, the current situation sees Federal, State and Local government regulations often competing with one another and making the area somewhat of a mine field. Currently there is no legislative basis for national regulations as historically children's services have been state

⁶² Evidence, p.111

⁶³ Evidence, p.S4271

based. As a result child care programs have developed in an ad hoc way responding to particular needs flowing from state provision of education as well as to specific needs of local communities and regional and state labour markets.

4.5.23 Lack of nationally approved guidelines may provide a disincentive to a business trying to follow guidelines to set up a child care centre for pre-schoolers. It has also allowed after-school care programs to be set up, in all states and territories except the ACT, without regulation. While the Design Manual on Child-Care Centres sets out information on state standards, it does not deal with the difficulty of companies having to accommodate different standards in different states. Anne Sherry, General Manager of Victoria's Office of Preschool and Child Care, cautions that while a national policy is commendable, there is still a need to be flexible.⁶⁴

4.5.24 Concern was also expressed regarding the establishment of the Work and Child care units announced in the 1991 Federal budget. Susan Biggs, Executive Director of Child care at Work argued that the allocation of resources for these units would be better spent extending existing services by providing more places rather than providing free child care consultancy advice which is currently offered successfully on a fee for service basis, by companies like hers. She concludes:

It is now generally accepted that child care consultants cost money. To provide these services for free may, one: deter employers from paying in the future and two, present child care as a soft and easy issue and therefore not worth much.⁶⁵

4.5.25 Ms Biggs recommends government funds be targeted towards a national information network documenting all child care services.

Co-operative Ventures

4.5.26 Alternative models of funding generally encompass some kind of co-operative venture between user, employer and local or state government. Clive Speed from the Business Council of Australia felt that firms should be encouraged to seek solutions which will make capital investment in child care centres pay.

⁶⁴ Evidence, p.S3788

⁶⁵ Evidence, p.S3911

Parents should share recurrent costs and take the prime responsibility, with input from community and firms, for the management of child care facilities. He also recognised that low income earners may require public subsidies to be able to use child care facilities.⁶⁶

4.5.27 Co-location of child care centres with other child centred facilities like primary schools is another possible cost effective initiative being explored in some states, particularly the ACT.

4.6 Industrial Issues

Award Restructuring

4.6.1 Changes in economic realities in recent years have resulted in policies designed to restructure much of Australia's manufacturing and industrial base. Despite the sex segregation of Australian industry, Val Pratt, the Director of the Affirmative Action Agency, among others sees great potential benefit for women:

As industry undergoes major restructuring and demographic changes restrict the supply of skilled workers it is predicted that work patterns and better opportunities could benefit women in particular, because women represent a huge largely untapped resource of under-utilised skills and education.⁶⁷

4.6.2 Evidence to the Committee suggests that the restructuring of industrial awards offers scope to redress discrimination in the work place provided that the parties to the restructuring have consulted with women as part of the process. If significant restructuring is to benefit women then it will need to be accompanied by a re-evaluation of required skills, new training opportunities and the removal of traditional boundaries and barriers which previously excluded women.

4.6.3 Other submissions identified difficulties. Jill Gientzotis from the National Pay Equity Coalition, highlighted several potential problems associated with award restructuring in the provision of training, classification systems, skills recognition, job design and conditions of work. She warned that models of

⁶⁶ Evidence, p.175

⁶⁷ Employment Seminar, p.10

restructuring may not be transferable to the service industries where most women work and that women may miss out on any proposed benefits.⁶⁸ While there is no one model, Carol Mason, Women's Adviser to the Queensland Premier also noted the particular difficulties in translating the manufacturing based model of award restructuring to areas dominated by women - services and processing.⁶⁹

4.6.4 Award restructuring can also be problematic as Judith Rich from the Economics Faculty at Monash University cautions:

... restructuring could be synonymous with increased managerial control in the form of work intensification, less sociable hours, deskilling of work and a greater dependence on contract and casual labour.⁷⁰

4.6.5 Such an outcome will have a serious detrimental impact on women working in areas of low pay and with little current recognition of existing skills. Evidence before the Committee indicated that employer and employee representatives recognise the need to define skills carefully given the restricted recognition of women's traditional skill base.

4.6.6 Rosemary Hunter, Lecturer in Law, argued for the development of a more sophisticated model for award restructuring which would include evaluation of current paradigms (i.e. broadbanding, multi-skilling), new notions of "skill" and careful monitoring by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission to avoid possibly inappropriate translations from old awards.⁷¹

4.6.7 The dilemma offered by the award restructuring process is perhaps best summed up by Heather Carmody representing the Business Council of Australia and the Confederation of Australian Industry who warned:

If structural efficiency turns out to be in many enterprises a skills audit before a pay rise, that is limited enough in itself, but then if the skills audit is based on traditional understandings of skills and is carried out by people who don't know how to think more laterally about it, all you will do is reinforce the past stereotypes and the past rigidities. I think that is really a very significant and quite a probable

⁶⁸ Evidence, p.S359

⁶⁹ Evidence, p.S4199

⁷⁰ Evidence, p.221

⁷¹ Evidence, p.S4134

danger in many enterprises in this country and it would be a great shame because it will be the biggest opportunity lost that there has been for some time.⁷²

Enterprise Bargaining

4.6.8 The Australian Industrial Relations Commission endorsed enterprise bargaining in the National Wage Case decision of October 1991. However, Mary Galloway of Business and Professional Women's Association,⁷³ among others, expressed concern regarding the capacity of enterprise bargaining to protect conditions for women, particularly maternity or parental leave, part-time provisions, flexible working hours, child care and pay equity. Vivian Griffin, Industrial Officer with the Queensland Nurses Union, in her presentation to the *Employment* seminar registered similar reservations:

I believe that the reality is that women do not have industrial strength in the workplace, and that therefore industrial tribunals represent the major industrial avenue for economic equity for women. Further, that the current thrust for enterprise bargaining is a recipe for economic inequity for women workers.⁷⁴

4.6.9 Evidence to the Inquiry suggests that the success of enterprise bargaining for women will depend on their interests being adequately represented. This may require training in confidence building and negotiating skills in order to ensure that their interests are incorporated into their Union's policy on enterprise bargaining and in some instances represent themselves in direct negotiations with employers. Relevant industrial awards and the Industrial Relations Act must include minimum conditions to protect rights and conditions for women workers.

⁷² Evidence, p.174

⁷³ Evidence, p.S4185

⁷⁴ Employment Seminar, p.113

Pay Equity

4.6.10 Women's wages are currently on average, 83 percent that of men, however when we take into account over-award payments, overtime and bonuses generally earned by men, women earn only 67 per cent of average weekly earnings.⁷⁵ The gap between men's and women's wages can be explained largely by the fact that women are congregated in occupations and industries which attract lower salaries. The portfolio submission presented by The Hon J.S. Dawkins, then Minister for Employment, Education and Training, further explained:

Industrial areas in which women predominate, such as the retail trade, textile, clothing and footwear and finance and business services, have the lowest average weekly earnings. Women in manufacturing tend to be clustered in clerical positions and in unskilled, process and machining work. These women are particularly vulnerable to job shedding.⁷⁶

4.6.11 The incidence of women experiencing lower incomes is replicated in specific professions and industries. Jennifer Mattila of the Women Lawyers Association of New South Wales commented on lower pay scales for women lawyers:

Recent research has shown women law students tend to achieve higher marks than male law students and when applying for their first job, are offered similar salaries to their male counterparts. In each succeeding year of practice, women receive a progressively lower salary than men.⁷⁷

4.6.12 She reported that 72 per cent of women lawyers earn less than \$50,000 per year compared to 48 per cent of men earning less than \$50,000 per year. Female lawyers' incomes increase with experience at a lesser rate than male lawyers' incomes increase with experience. The most pronounced difference is with lawyers with more than 10 years experience.

4.6.13 A specific example of this intra-occupational differential occurs in nursing. Leena Sudano, Secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation, South Australian Branch, reported that males make up only 7 per cent of the total nurse work force, however, within the service itself, female nurses earn only 94 per cent

⁷⁵ ABS Average Weekly Earnings, August 1991

⁷⁶ Evidence, p.S1360

⁷⁷ Evidence, p.S3912

the salary of their male counterparts. Overall improvements have been achieved through union activities rather than legislative change.⁷⁸

4.6.14 Carol Mason, Women's Adviser to the Queensland Premier noted similar discrepancies in pay in the food processing area in Queensland where women earn \$30 per week less than men for the same work. This is largely due to *increased over award payments for men, due to overtime and shiftwork.*

4.6.15 The Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association raised doubts about the impact of desegregation for women. More important they suggest, is the establishment of equal pay to ensure that women are not disadvantaged. Quoting the work of Dr Rimmer:

Unless these within-occupation earning differences are eliminated, attempts to improve women's economic welfare through desegregation of women's employment must fail. Reshuffling the occupational composition might actually reduce female average earnings. For example if women lost their jobs in some of the better paid professional occupations where their employment shares are high, and gained jobs in some of the skilled trades, process work and labouring occupations at the bottom of the pay structure, an overall loss of earnings may occur.⁷⁹

4.6.16 Mr Collins from the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association concludes:

We need to fix the intra-occupation discrimination before we send women into other areas where they will face the same intra-occupation discrimination. They are going from reasonable positions in some of the traditional feminine occupations to others where they will be right at the bottom of the ladder.⁸⁰

4.6.17 Dr Martin Watts, Senior Lecturer in Economics at Newcastle University supported this view:

Calculations undertaken by myself and others suggest that intra-occupational wage differences, from discrimination,

⁷⁸ Evidence, p.S655

⁷⁹ Evidence, p.1068

⁸⁰ Evidence, p.S1081

vertical segregation etc., are the major source of the overall male/female wage differential rather than occupational sex segregation.⁸¹

4.6.18 Pay inequity can also be attributed to flatter career paths in areas which traditionally employ more women. Limited access to industry training for women workers and reduced access to over-award payments, allowances, bonuses and other employment benefits all contribute. Broken work patterns and the failure to accommodate workers with family responsibilities are also significant in ensuring lower incomes for women.

4.6.19 Job status correlated strongly with remuneration as indicated by the situation for women welfare workers, in particular women counselling women in crisis. Amma Buckley, Co-ordinator of the Women's Information Referral Exchange, Cairns, described the situation for these counsellors who are relatively poorly paid, earning only \$16,000 per year.⁸²

4.6.20 The lack of union representation for women is also a significant factor in keeping women's wages low as Val Pratt explained:

All these factors are accentuated by women's restricted bargaining power in the industrial relations system. It is also noteworthy in this respect that women are severely under-represented in industrial relations decision making which is not conducive to rectifying and eliminating wage discrimination against women.⁸³

4.6.21 Gay Thompson from the Department of Labour in South Australia also targeted unions. She argued that the absence of women in influential positions in unions has resulted in a failure of unions to develop not only wages but conditions and training packages that are more appropriate to the needs of women.⁸⁴

4.6.22 Any attempt to do away with a centralised wage fixing system puts pay equity at risk if Australia follows the example outlined in a comparative study of OECD countries which showed that centralised wage systems were far more efficient

⁸¹ Evidence, p.S3931

⁸² Evidence, p.444

⁸³ Evidence, p.15

⁸⁴ Evidence, p.S4035

in implementing pay equity.⁸⁵ While the Committee recognises the role of the Minimum Wage Adjustment Process in protecting wage rates, the dependency on skills evaluation is still problematic.⁸⁶

4.6.23 The Committee noted the current work of the Pay Equity Bureau of the Department of Industrial Relations in monitoring the effects of enterprise bargaining, flexible working hours and possible discrimination resulting from over-award payments, on women. It also noted the current inquiry being conducted by HREOC into possible sex discrimination in over award payments.

Skills Recognition

4.6.24 One of the major factors underlying pay inequity is the lack of recognition for the skills generally ascribed to women. Many submissions referred to the multiplicity of skills obtained by women outside the paid work force. As full-time carers and home makers, women develop excellent management and negotiating skills, handle budgets and devise operationally efficient work models. Coupled with experience in the voluntary sector, many women exhibit skills and adaptability which are highly appropriate in the paid work force. The difficulty is that these skills are rarely recognised by employers who fail to credit unpaid experience. Women are also reluctant to recognise these talents and experience as marketable skills.

4.6.25 Alison Weeks, from DEET further extrapolated that low skill valuation has significant repercussions in respect of industrial conditions for women.⁸⁷ Lower pay and lower job classifications are a corollary of low skill valuation of characteristics and jobs done predominantly by women.

4.6.26 Helen Leonard and Eva Cox from Women's Economic Think Tank, argued that men and women have a very different notion of what is a skill and that skill is seen by women as largely a male concept. Their research highlighted two clear implications related to skill evaluation:

⁸⁵ Exhibit No.47(vi)

⁸⁶ Evidence, p.S4299

⁸⁷ Evidence, p.S4041

... women are likely to substantially under-report their skills because of female non-recognition of the word; that the workforce skill base will be deficient because defined skills will omit many derived from female household experiences which are crucial to effective workplace functioning.⁸⁸

4.6.27 The Committee noted with interest, the several initiatives which are being developed to ensure better accreditation of these broader skills. P Heinneken, Executive Director of the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission reported on a 'training grid'⁸⁹ being developed by VEETAC to recognise skills regardless of where they have been acquired. Rod Pickette, Chief Executive of the ACT Vocational Training Authority described their new program designed to recognise skills developed by individuals as a result of their work experience and training undertaken informally or overseas.⁹⁰

4.7 Summary and Recommendations

4.7.1 Despite the fact that women comprise 42% of the paid workforce, they remain poorly represented in upper management positions in both the public and private sectors. This is the case in skilled and unskilled occupations and even in professions such as education where women comprise a majority of the workforce.

4.7.2 While cases of overt discrimination continue, the evidence suggests that it is indirect discrimination which contributes more significantly to the existence of the so-called glass ceiling.

4.7.3 Unlike men, the career pattern of women is substantially influenced by the assumption of parental responsibilities. The structure of the workforce makes little allowance for non-work responsibilities and is still based on a model of the family unit where one partner is in paid employment and the other has sole responsibility for the household.

⁸⁸ Exhibit No.94(vii), p.20

⁸⁹ Evidence, p.S4098

⁹⁰ Evidence, p.S4196

4.7.4 Such a unit no longer represents the majority of Australian families. As a result, the flexibility of the workplace to accommodate competing non-employment related demands is both a major equity issue for women and an economic issue for business.

4.7.5 In the light of these issues, the Committee makes the following specific conclusions and recommendations.

4.7.6 The Committee was particularly concerned regarding the inequities in promotion prospects for women in professions in the private sector. There is a clear need for public attention to be drawn to the systemic discrimination which is impacting on women in the professions.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Committee recommends that the Office of the Status of Women work with employers and professional bodies to develop policy and proactive affirmative action strategies to redress gender imbalance in senior positions. This would involve:

- (a) *examination of policy and procedures to ascertain instances of procedural and structural discrimination;*
- (b) *examination of selection criteria to ascertain possibility of gender inclusiveness; and*
- (c) *training of selection panels.*

4.7.7 Evidence suggests that indirect discrimination is rife in both the public and private sector. While the operation of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) programs and related sex discrimination legislation had achieved much in improving women's equality of opportunity, the Committee however had expected far greater gains in the Australian Public Service given the apparent successful implementation of EEO programs.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Committee recommends that attention be drawn to both direct and indirect discrimination operating to prevent both resumption of careers and promotion of women in the public sector. Departments of the Australian Public Service should

provide evidence of strategies designed to address indirect discrimination and to regularly report evidence of success, in their annual reports and as part of their regular EEO reporting to the Public Service Commission.

4.7.8 The Committee believes that the current changes in industrial relations offer great potential to improve opportunities for women, however, there is concern that women's interests and needs may be side-lined or overlooked. The Committee notes whether flexibility clauses and facilitative provisions will benefit women as women's interests are not always adequately represented at the negotiating stage. This is a particular concern for women in small enterprises and industries, outside the professional high earning bracket.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Committee recommends that the Department of Industrial Relations monitor the impact of new classification structures on women's promotional prospects under the Structural Efficiency Principle; in particular the provision of formal and on-the-job training opportunities and the impact of productivity and enterprise bargaining on affirmative action. This information should be made available to the Industrial Relations Tribunal, peak employer, industry and union bodies.

4.7.9 Given the dual responsibilities of working parents, the Committee acknowledges an increasing need to provide for flexibility to balance work and family duties. This will be of advantage to individual workers and economic productivity.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The Committee recommends that DIR:

- (a) encourage employers, unions and professional bodies to amend industrial awards and work practices to allow for flexible working hours for workers, particularly those with family responsibilities; and
- (b) develop and implement workplace education programs to ensure that both male and female workers take advantage of flexible working hours.

4.7.10 The Committee believes that access to maternity leave is absolutely essential if women are to have equal access in the paid workforce and was alarmed at both the variations in maternity leave under award provisions and the lack of publicity regarding worker's eligibility resulting in less than expected take-up rates. The Committee noted with interest the research currently being undertaken under the auspices of the Office of the Status of Women, into current provisions and ramifications of universal maternity leave.

4.7.11 The Committee notes the role of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission in facilitating workplace negotiations and approving workplace agreements. In achieving workplace agreements, the Committee was alarmed that no mention was made, by the Commission of protecting maternity leave provisions. Foreshadowed legislation currently being prepared by the Minister for Industrial Relations however appears to be redressing this omission.

RECOMMENDATION 11

The Committee, recognising the poor understanding of existing maternity leave provisions, recommends that Commonwealth and State Industrial Relations Departments publicise maternity leave provisions to employers and employees.

The Committee notes the inclusion of the protection of ordinary time earnings, annual and long-service leave and minimum standards of hours of work in foreshadowed National Legislation. The Committee recommends the protection of maternity leave in such legislation also be included.

4.7.12 A more even division of labour in the home is an essential pre-requisite for improving women's life options. While Government cannot legislate to achieve this, it can go some way towards implementing structures which allow for a more equitable sharing of domestic responsibilities. One such measure is allowing families the choice of which parent takes leave to care for young children.

RECOMMENDATION 12

The Committee recommends that the provision of parental leave be incorporated in all industrial awards and that it be given protection of national legislation.

4.7.13 Given changing demographics and the contribution women are now making in the paid workforce, the Committee recognises the special need for workers to be able to take leave to care for sick family members. The Committee believes that the provision of special leave would legitimise what is already happening informally, more accurately reflecting parents dual family/work responsibilities. It would also result in less absenteeism, worker retention and a better industrial climate.

RECOMMENDATION 13

The Committee recommends that more flexible leave provisions be included in awards and enterprise bargaining agreements. This would allow workers to take special leave to care for sick children or elderly relatives, without risking career prospects or job security. The Committee believes that provision of special family leave in industrial awards is consistent with Australia's expressed commitment to workers with family responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATION 14

The Committee recommends that the parties to award restructuring incorporate measures that recognise the position of women workers and ensure equality of opportunity. This may involve access to training, career paths and skills valuation. 'Best practice' within industries should be used as models for other enterprises. Furthermore, mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that all workers with family responsibilities are not discriminated against in the assessment of productivity or in assessments for performance pay and promotions.

4.7.14 The notion of equal pay for women was ratified in 1972 yet 20 years on, statistics reveal marked inequities in take-home pay for men and women. While equal pay for equal work has been achieved in many areas, men are able to avail themselves of shift-work, overtime and other benefits which result in higher earnings.

RECOMMENDATION 15

The Committee recommends that all parties to award restructuring and enterprise bargaining agreements be cognisant of the differential between male and female earnings and ensure, at the very least, that attempts be made to close the gap.

4.7.15 The Committee recognises that the provision of quality, affordable child care is a major issue affecting women's capacity to contribute in and out of the labour market, and that accessible child care should be a right for all women whether employed or not. The Committee is keen to see co-operative child care ventures which will result in appropriate services at the most reasonable cost. Fee relief is regarded as essential and should remain as a principal Commonwealth form of financial assistance in this area. While the Committee acknowledges that child care is a cost incurred in earning of income, the Committee is concerned of the consequences of its introduction. In particular, tax deductibility benefits high wage earners disproportionately. Further evidence suggests that demand for child care is still not being satisfied and hence providing more places should remain to priority and this may be prejudiced by the revenue forgone through tax deductibility.

4.7.16 The Committee noted the particular child care needs of women not in the labour market and believes that these needs should be afforded a higher priority, both in terms of available places and the criteria for fee relief. The needs for child care for children with disabilities is of particular concern.

4.7.17 Any co-ordinated national planned child-care policy should recognise the need for equity and flexibility. It should cover full day child care for pre-schoolers, vacation care, after school care, occasional care and long day care. A national policy should be complemented with nationally consistent regulations, nationally consistent training for child care workers and a national accreditation system for services, based on the highest, not lowest standards which are currently common in states.

RECOMMENDATION 16

The Committee recommends that the Department of Health, Housing and Community Services, in conjunction with other relevant Commonwealth agencies examine initiatives which would improve provision of child care in Australia including:

- . co-location with other children's services, eg. preschools and primary schools;
- . assistance to campus based child care to ensure that student needs can be met;
- . development of a funding model which recognises the resourcing required to offer extended hour services to meet shift work needs, and services to students;

- . further research into issues of salary sacrificing in meeting the government's principles on justice and equity;
- . child care needs for special interest groups, children with disabilities, children from particular cultural backgrounds, should be met;
- . publicising good practice as a positive encouragement.

Continued encouragement to business and the public sector to provide child care by:

- (a) sponsorship to provide funds or land in return for guaranteed places;
- (b) clear interpretation and explanation of the regulations
- (c) consistent taxation treatment; and
- (d) elimination of duplication between all three levels of government in respect of funding, regulations and service provisions.

4.7.18 The Committee is concerned at the relatively slow response of industry to the needs of workers with families. The establishment of the Commonwealth funded Child Care at Work Units was noted as an important initiative.

RECOMMENDATION 17

The Committee recommends that the continued funding of the Child Care at Work Units be reviewed if they have not substantially increased the number of employers providing work based child care.

RECOMMENDATION 18

The Committee recommends that the Department of Health Housing and Community Services:

- (a) reassess the criteria for fee relief for women not studying or involved in labour market related activities; and
- (b) ensure that child care services be expanded to take specific account of the needs of women and children with disabilities.

CHAPTER 5

WOMEN AND INCOME SECURITY

5.1 Womens Economic Position

5.1.1 There is little information available on the distribution of wealth in Australia. What is known is that the wealthiest 1 per cent of Australians own 19.7 per cent of the total wealth and that net private wealth in Australia stands at approximately \$1,269 billion. This is the equivalent of \$74,000 for every man women and child.¹

5.1.2 A gender break down of Australian wealth is not available but what is known is the income distribution between men and women. In 1989-90, of those women with a taxable income, more than half earned less than \$21,000 pa while two thirds of men had income greater than \$21,000. Average female earnings are around 83 per cent of average male earnings.

5.1.3 The submissions identify a variety of reasons for the comparative economic disadvantage for women. These include systemic discrimination; lower wages; *occupational and industrial segmentation of the labour force*; greater likelihood of casual or part-time employment and unemployment, particularly hidden, amongst young women. Other factors include an interrupted workforce pattern and subsequent reduced life-time earnings; lower level of non-pension retirement income; predominance among social security recipients and lack of payment for economic duties carried out in the home, including child care.

¹ 'Economic Roundup', (1990), Australian Treasury

5.2 Feminisation of Poverty - Single Parents

5.2.1 One of the most economically vulnerable groups are single parents, over 80 per cent of whom are women. The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that a quarter of women sole parents are in full-time employment, with a further 19 per cent in part-time employment. The rest are dependent on social security benefits. Merle Mitchell, President of the Australian Council of Social Security contends that more than half the single parent families are now living below the poverty line.²

Implications of Poverty

5.2.2 Living with poverty has broad implications. Many single parents are unable to participate more fully in society due to their preoccupation with meeting basic needs. As Christine Reardon, from the Council of Single Mothers and their Children imputes:

... women's input into decision making is nigh impossible because if women are focused on survival issues then obviously that is where all their energy is going.³

5.2.3 The situation is exacerbated for single mothers under nineteen years of age who, Kathy Silard, Acting Coordinator of SPARK Resource Centre contends, suffer an enormous loss of self esteem, anxiety and depression, as well as economic deprivation.⁴ Neville Jones, Senior Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Chief Minister NT, also highlighted the problems of teenage pregnancy and the difficulty these women have in obtaining work.⁵

5.2.4 It has been argued that the pensions income test operates as a disincentive for sole parents to take on more work, however the supporting parent's benefit is barely enough to survive on. A corollary is the number of women defrauding the social security system, indulging in what Rosemary Gillespie from the Campaign for Economic Justice calls 'crimes of desperation'.⁶

² Evidence, p.S1013

³ Evidence, p.942

⁴ Evidence, p.S49

⁵ Evidence, p.S4243

⁶ Evidence, p.S1900

5.2.5 The Department of Social Security in a supplementary submission to the Inquiry claimed that there was considerable community concern over possible fraud in the payment of sole parent pensions:

... to people who are not genuinely eligible because they are living with or being supported by, defacto partners.⁷

5.2.6 Fraud is a major concern, as is the difficulty many sole parents face in overcoming marriage breakdown and demanding economic conditions flowing from much reduced income levels.

5.2.7 Paul Wilson, then Acting Director of the Australian Institute of Criminology linked possible fraud to the experience of poverty. He argued that women commit more social security fraud and are more likely to be imprisoned for fine default and prostitution, crimes which have been linked to poverty. He comments:

... we contend that economic explanations for increasing female crime rates cannot be discounted. We also submit that economically motivated crime (whatever proportion of total property crime that it constitutes) will continue until there is real and effective acknowledgment and financial recognition of the contribution of women to society.⁸

Impact of Government Initiatives

5.2.8 In an early submission to the Committee, representatives of the Department of Community Services in Western Australia criticised the system which forces single mothers to live in poverty:

One of the factors that discourages women from seeking employment is the low level of income above which benefits and more importantly, associated concessions cease. A scheme where concessions could be maintained and monetary benefit decreased until a higher level of income was reached would encourage more women to seek employment.⁹

⁷ Evidence, p.S2901

⁸ Evidence, p.S2888

⁹ Evidence, p.S1065

5.2.9 Changes to entitlements to social security benefits have attempted to redress this problem and assist sole parents to financial independence. The January 1990 initiative which enabled sole parents gaining employment to retain their concession card for six months after the payment of pension ceases is seen as an important step in this regard. However while this change is welcomed, Merle Mitchell, President of the Australian Council of Social Services argues that such changes have not improved the position for women dependent on Social Security payments. She noted that the needs of single mothers cannot be met by income alone:

In addition to their reliance on adequate income support, sole parents also have a strong need for child care, training and other measures to assist them achieve independence through paid employment.¹⁰

5.2.10 Attempts to meet these needs are being addressed through the Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program, a re-employment program targeted specifically at single mothers funded by the Department of Employment Education and Training. Susan Barclay from the Council of Single Mothers and their Children acknowledged that JET:

... has improved sole parents' access to training. To a large extent, JET has helped to overcome attitudes in both the community and the government which formerly closed off sole parents training options.¹¹

5.2.11 However, female sole parents attempting to enter paid employment encounter other disincentives such as the cost of working, clothes; transport; specific job requirements, difficulties encountered in common with long-term unemployed and young people attempting to enter the workforce. To offset this the Government has provided a one off payment of \$100.00 for all sole parent pensioners taking up employment since January 1991.

5.2.12 A major change which has improved the income levels for many sole parent families has been the introduction of the Child Support Agency. Evaluation of the Agency has shown both the amount of maintenance paid to families and the regularity of payment have increased since the Agency's inception.

¹⁰ Evidence, p.S1013

¹¹ Evidence, p.S224

5.2.13 The National Women's Consultative Council emphasised that sole parents in the paid workforce also have full-time domestic responsibilities with little support in their home and parenting roles.¹² Low status and consequent low self esteem, coupled with the need to find affordable, quality child care compound the difficulties for single parents.

Retirement Incomes for Sole Parents

5.2.14 The current emphasis on superannuation as the best way to ensure adequate retirement income puts single mothers at an extreme disadvantage. Given their difficult financial circumstances, it is not plausible that single mothers could afford to pay any of their allowance into a more flexible superannuation scheme, until they entered the paid workforce. To this end, the old age pension remains a safeguard for these women.

5.3 Child Care for Homemakers

5.3.1 With half the female population in the paid workforce, the traditional support networks for women in the home are no longer available. While fewer women are available to work in school canteens and other voluntary work, there are also fewer women to provide the informal support networks to mothers at home. Grandmothers, who were available to assist in parenting are also more likely to be in the paid workforce, leaving many women with professional child care as the only option should they need someone to look after their children. Priority listing in Centres and family day care programs, clearly discriminate in favour of women who are undertaking study or paid work. As a result, professional child care is unaffordable for many of these women. Even if child care became a tax deductible expense, women caring for their children at home would not benefit.

5.3.2 Ms Smit from the Women's Action Alliance felt that women caring for children in their own homes are resentful of the fact that they are completely excluded from child care subsidies.¹³ The Alliance recommended that subsidies should be provided to all parents on the basis of income and not on the model of

¹² Evidence, p.S2063

¹³ Evidence, p.923

care, effectively allowing mothers at home to receive the same subsidy as the parent of a child in a professional child care centre. A similar argument was put by Maureen Minchin from the Australian Lactation Consultants Association.¹⁴

5.3.3 Of particular need are mothers with disabilities who according to Maureen Hartung, Education Officer of the Arthritis Foundation of Australia - ACT Inc, find themselves unable to access child care places when priority is given to women in the paid workforce or undergoing training programs.¹⁵ These parents and children have special long-term requirements for care as Sandra Renew, from the Gender Equity in Curriculum Reform Project suggests:

... these families cannot look forward to a developmental process whereby the children are less dependent as they reach adolescence and adulthood.¹⁶

5.3.4 Under current regulations, children and mothers with special needs are eligible for priority listing but evidence suggests places are not always available.

5.4 Tax, Income Splitting and Homemaker's Allowances

5.4.1 One way of 'elevating the status of the domestic service provider'¹⁷ is to provide an income for those people, mostly women, who are currently involved full-time in unpaid domestic work. Attributing economic value to caring and housework is a complex task, one which the law has attempted to grapple in respect of the Family Law Act and compensation for personal injuries. According to Professor Regina Graycar, Associate Professor of Law at the University of New South Wales, neither of these areas accurately represents the unpaid contribution of women. She implies that only paid labour is considered work, while unpaid caring work is recognised as welfare.¹⁸

¹⁴ Evidence, p.S535

¹⁵ Evidence, p.S46

¹⁶ Evidence, p.S3771

¹⁷ Evidence, p.S3

¹⁸ Evidence, p.1381

5.4.2 One method which could achieve greater recognition for unpaid work is income-splitting which would generally result in a lowering of the tax payable for single income families and for those couples where one partner earns a great deal more than the other.

5.4.3 Susan Bastick suggests that:

... if we are serious about recognising the value of women's unpaid work in the home, instead of casting the unpaid woman as the dependent of her independent husband we should be regarding them as a mutually interdependent partnership and taxing them accordingly.¹⁹

5.4.4 Babette Francis founder of the Endeavour Forum believes that higher status will be accorded to women in the home if they were to be provided with a carer's or homemakers allowance for looking after children or the elderly, equivalent to one week's child care costs, approximately \$200.00. She also recommends optional income splitting. She maintains that:

Income splitting would not only give taxation equity to single income families but would also enhance the status of wives by recognising them as equal partners in marriage.²⁰

5.4.5 Valerie Williams, Senior Development Worker from the City of Unley cautions that paying women to stay at home with young children would be counterproductive in improving the status of those who do unpaid work. She suggests that a wage for housewives would be:

... construed as an acceptance that the only work of real value in our society is that with a direct economic benefit. This serves to not only devalue women's (and men's) contribution to parenting but also the involvement of both men and women in voluntary effort.²¹

5.4.6 The major criticism of income splitting is that it would more likely be of assistance only for people in the higher tax brackets and would be of little benefit in assisting low income families who are unarguably in greater need. Furthermore, while income-splitting can be argued as a tax benefit for both parties, it would not

¹⁹ Recognition Seminar, p.139

²⁰ Evidence, p.S508

²¹ Evidence, p.S3723

guarantee that the non-earning partner has access to the tax dividend any more than current legislation can ensure that the spouse has access to the pay packet of the partner in the paid workforce.

5.5 Older Women and Retirement Income

5.5.1 Women live longer than men. Life expectancy of women at 60 is 23 years. Older women are more likely to be living alone incurring a range of basic living costs comparable to couples but on a single income. Higher numbers of older women, living alone, has contributed to an increasing number of older women appearing in the poverty statistics. Merle Mitchell from ACOSS, purports that accommodation costs for older women, particularly single older women have perpetuated poverty for this underclass.²²

5.5.2 Provision of adequate, secure retirement income is an issue for all women in the paid and unpaid workforce. In the past, women have either not had a long history of paid employment or been employed in areas which did not enjoy superannuation. Frances Hyde explains the inequity of the situation when she was forced to resign on marriage to her husband who was a public servant prior to the 1966 amendment allowing married women to work in the public service.²³ As Linda Adamson, of the Australian Pensioners' and Superannuants' Federation explained, women have spent less time in the paid workforce and therefore had less opportunity to contribute to their retirement income.²⁴

5.5.3 Cliff Picton the Executive Director of the Australian Council on the Aging illustrated the kind of systemic discrimination which applies to older women. He noted that negative stereotyping combines with the absence of legislation aimed at preventing age discrimination. This militates against opportunities for older women particularly in gaining paid employment.²⁵

5.5.4 June Stone, the Chair of the Council of Ex-servicewomen's Association provided further examples of indirect discrimination, in this case, in the Defence Forces where women veterans are not treated equally with their male counterparts.

²² Evidence, p.S1013

²³ Evidence, p.S2221

²⁴ Evidence, p.S1040

²⁵ Evidence, p.S992

Mrs Stone pointed out the fact that eligibility for low-interest, war veteran home loans being linked to overseas service (or entitlement to sign up for overseas service) excludes most female veterans, who, on the whole were only eligible to serve in units in Australia, with the exemption of nurses and support personnel. This unequal treatment is felt particularly by those women veterans who saw enlisted men, who also spent the war years in Australia, receive defence service loans while the women veterans remained ineligible.²⁶ In a subsequent submission, noting that the dependents of female veterans are not eligible to the same benefits as male veteran's dependents, Mrs Stone believes that the Veteran's Entitlement Act:

... does not accept the women as providers within families.²⁷

5.5.5 The February 1991 amendment to the *Veteran's Entitlement Act* has addressed inequities in benefits for dependents. The issue of inequitable access to war service loans however still persists.

Superannuation

5.5.6 Superannuation is an issue of considerable interest and importance to women. Submissions to the inquiry addressed the issue from the point of view of women's access to superannuation, its contribution to income support in retirement or invalidity, discrimination regarding superannuation coverage and entitlements, and the disadvantages experienced by women in terms of vesting, portability and preservation of benefit and entitlements.

5.5.7 In 1986, 25 per cent of women workers were members of a superannuation scheme compared to 49 per cent of male workers. In 1986, only 4 per cent of part-time workers were members of a superannuation scheme.

5.5.8 In 1991, while there has been a significant increase in the number of women covered by superannuation, they remain much less likely than men to belong to superannuation schemes. Currently, 44 per cent of all women in employment are covered by superannuation schemes compared with 58 per cent of men. Approximately 22 per cent of part-time employees receive superannuation coverage.

²⁶ Evidence, p.S77

²⁷ Evidence, p.S2359

Further gains are expected from recent relaxation of the definition of part-time employment for the purpose of eligibility for contributions to superannuation funds.

5.5.9 The structure of superannuation in the past has failed to acknowledge women's work history. Josephine Tiddy the South Australian Equal Opportunity Commissioner is unequivocal in her criticism of current superannuation schemes which allow indirect discrimination against women.²⁸ Women have historically had low superannuation coverage due to low employment in workforce areas with greatest coverage such as salaried and professional occupations and the public sector, greater likelihood of part-time and casual employment, and an interrupted workforce pattern.²⁹ Discriminatory employment practices such as requiring women to resign upon their marriage also removed their superannuation coverage, while other practices excluded women from joining superannuation schemes.

5.5.10 Lack of any superannuation cover, problems of short and broken employment for women, lack of portability and poor vesting requirements have all acted to ensure that older women are either dependent on their husband's superannuation or the old age pension.

5.5.11 The current practice entitling wives to only a percentage of their deceased husband's superannuation annuity can also be problematic. Roma Wilson among others raised the issue of the woman in the home who forgoes paid work to support husband and children in the belief that the husband's superannuation will support them both in old age. In the event that the husband dies first, the wife finds that she is in receipt of only two-thirds the amount which would have gone to the husband.³⁰

5.5.12 Marriage breakdown is leaving many older women with no access to their husband's superannuation. Should a marriage dissolve, only previous superannuation savings are taken into account leaving the wife with no guaranteed retirement income, other than the old age pension. This is devastating, particularly for women over forty who have no way of establishing an income to provide them with a retirement income comparable to their ex-husband. To make matters worse, the Family Law Act empowers the Court with the capacity to override private

²⁸ Evidence, p.S3233

²⁹ Evidence, p.S1205

³⁰ Evidence, p.S1801

agreements in respect of superannuation and indeed, the deliberations of the Superannuation Act as in the case described by Judith Kellett, private citizen.³¹

5.5.13 The Committee is aware of the consideration by the Joint Select Committee on Certain Aspects of the Operation and Interpretation of the Family Law Act, regarding the treatment of superannuation entitlements under that Act, and awaits that Committee's recommendations.

5.5.14 Retirement incomes for women in the unpaid workforce is of particular concern. Susan Bastick from the Australian Family Association argues:

If superannuation continues to be unavailable to them while it becomes increasingly common for those in the paid work force, women at home will become the new social welfare dependants; their years of unpaid service totally forgotten.³²

5.5.15 By way of solution, Pauline Smit National President of the Women's Action Alliance recommends that non-earning spouses should be encouraged to take out superannuation as preparation for retirement with a means-tested superannuation system for low income earners and welfare recipients.³³

5.5.16 Mrs Smit, acknowledging women's low rate of participation in superannuation schemes urged that more women take it up for two reasons:

Firstly women cannot assume that they will be supported by their husbands in retirement, with one in three marriages ending in divorce. The Family Court's attitude to superannuation is ambiguous and there is certainly no requirement to take retirement benefits into account in any property settlement. Secondly, women tend to outlive men, and the majority of women end their lives living alone. If they rely solely on the aged pension, they will be living below the poverty line.³⁴

³¹ Evidence, p.S3238

³² Evidence, p.S138

³³ Evidence, p.S1718

³⁴ Evidence, p.S1721

5.5.17 Women are significantly disadvantaged by the design of superannuation schemes which are formulated on the basis of a work-force pattern of full-time, unbroken employment. Women's work experience differs greatly from this. Women are less likely to be in the paid workforce and therefore not eligible for superannuation. When in paid employment, their workforce pattern is more likely to be characterised by interrupted employment, part-time or casual employment or an interrupted career in full-time employment, resulting in lower life-time earning.

5.5.18 This broken work history is reflected in current statistics regarding womens' contributions to superannuation funds. Generally, women's coverage decreases after the mid-twenties and recovers after 45 years but at a lower rate. In contrast, the rate of superannuation coverage increases with age for the male labour force.

5.5.19 As a result of restrictive standards covering vesting of employer contributions, and inadequate portability and preservation arrangements, women have received fewer benefits than men from employer sponsored superannuation. Women who belong to superannuation schemes have been shown to be less likely than men to collect a benefit by remaining in a scheme until retirement.³⁵ In the past, resignation payments often include neither the employer's contributions nor commercial interest on their own contribution. Consequently, women who join superannuation schemes but do not ultimately claim a retirement benefit effectively subsidise those (mostly male) members who do. Even when women do claim a retirement benefit they receive, on average, a smaller benefit than men.

5.5.20 The Retirement Income Policy announced in the 1989/90 Budget included changes to superannuation arrangements which will eventually be of some benefit to women. Part-time employees working a minimum of 10 hours are now to be eligible to join superannuation schemes and people will be able to continue making superannuation contributions for up to two years after leaving the paid workforce. As from 1 July 1995, employer superannuation contributions will vest in the employee at a rate of at least 10 per cent each year with full vesting by the end of the tenth year, to be preserved until retirement on or after 55 years of age.

³⁵ Evidence, p.S3327

5.5.21 In the 1991-92 Budget, the Government announced the introduction of the Superannuation Guarantee Levy (SGL) which will require an employer to invest a prescribed percentage of an employee's salary in a superannuation fund. This will ensure some superannuation cover for a majority of the workforce. Vesting and preservation procedures have also been addressed as part of the SGL. The SGL arrangements will require that these employer contributions be vested immediately and be fully preserved.

5.5.22 *The introduction of compulsory superannuation raises several issues of particular significance to women. Depending on where the entry threshold is set, in terms of minimum hours worked or minimum earnings, a significant number of casual and part-time employees (who are predominantly women) will be making compulsory superannuation contributions from relatively low incomes, to the detriment of other competing priorities for the individual, such as housing or child-care costs. For low income earners with limited capacity to save, compulsory provision for retirement income will take precedence over immediate financial needs and may cause financial hardship.*

5.5.23 A further matter of concern to part-time and casual employees is the disproportionate impact of fees and commissions on low superannuation contributions and the subsequent effect on the capital growth of those contributors. The Committee notes that the Senate Select Committee on Superannuation is examining this issue, amongst others, in relation to superannuation arrangements.

5.5.24 Increasingly, reliance on occupational superannuation to provide retirement income has serious implications for those women who are unable during their paid and unpaid working life to make sufficient, or any, superannuation contributions to ensure a reasonable income upon retirement. Women are currently the majority of old age pensioners and it is likely that this will increase as proportionally more men enter superannuation-funded retirement. It is important that there be no erosion of the real value of the age pension, the poverty effects of which would be borne by women.³⁶

³⁶ Evidence, p.S1045

Carers Pension - Domiciliary Nursing Care Benefit

5.5.25 An area of concern to older women is the carer's pension which is currently restricted to those people requiring intensive physical nursing. In reality many older women are engaged in caring for older people who need social and emotional support which is not recognised in the carer's pension. Given that carers are disadvantaged in employment and the changing demographics in Australia, this should be noted. The Committee was concerned at the appallingly low level of the pension and the fact that it has not been indexed since 1980. The Committee notes the initiative of the Inter-departmental Committee on Carers being undertaken through the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

5.6 Summary and Recommendations

5.6.1 Despite the fact that women contribute billions of dollars into the market economy through their paid work and an unquantifiable sum by virtue of their voluntary labour, most women are not financially independent. Ultimately, women's access to financial security is not commensurate with their contribution to the economy.

5.6.2 Women live longer than men and despite differences in the patterns of their economic contribution, have just as much need for income security. While the old age pension is an essential safeguard, it is clear that many older women are not adequately provided for.

5.6.3 Whilst women have been entering the paid workforce in increasing numbers over the past few decades, it is only in very recent times that superannuation schemes have begun to adapt in recognition of women's particular work patterns. For most older women, economic well-being has depended on a share of the family income, most often earned by the husband. For those who did not have a paid job, superannuation has generally been denied them.

5.6.4 Income levels for single parents, most of whom are women, are also of concern, as is a guaranteed share of the family income for women who choose to be home-makers and care-givers. Options for workforce re-entry bolstered by appropriate training and incentives, are seen as crucial for these women.

5.6.5 The Committee does not support income splitting as an initiative which will enhance recognition of the unpaid woman in the home. While it has been recognised that status is clearly linked to income, it is hard to extrapolate that providing home-makers with an allowance or options for income splitting would confer extra status. These contingencies would clearly be tied to government funding and as such linked to welfare payments which have extremely low status already.

5.6.6 In the light of the evidence, the Committee makes the following specific recommendations and conclusions.

5.6.7 Evidence to the Inquiry indicates that poverty traps prevent sole parents, most of whom are women, from re-entering the workforce. Furthermore, the Committee believes that poverty has destructive implications for these parents, their children and society generally. Income support policies, child care provisions, training options and flexible working patterns can all contribute to alleviate poverty traps for sole parents.

RECOMMENDATION 19

The Committee recommends that the financial position of sole parents be closely monitored by the Department of Social Security, with the view to introducing any further measures needed to alleviate poverty traps by facilitating options for sole parents to move into the paid workforce. This may require:

- (a) additional expenditure on training and employment programs; and
- (b) retention of fringe benefits while in the first year of paid employment.

5.6.8 While the Committee supports a contributor based national superannuation policy it recognises that a retirement income policy that is based on individuals making provision through superannuation has the potential to disadvantage women who have not been able to make their own substantial contributions.

RECOMMENDATION 20

The Committee recommends that:

- (a) the old age pension be maintained at an adequate level to provide for those who have not been able to financially contribute to their own retirement income through superannuation and other means.
- (b) Furthermore, it is recommended that there be an immediate appraisal of the carers pension.

5.6.9 With the introduction of the Superannuation Guarantee Levy, it is opportune to further improve the rate of vesting and preservation announced in the 1989 Retirement Income Policy, so that the commitment to a national retirement scheme will benefit women workers to the same extent as men. There is clearly a need to provide more equitable benefits, thus increasing financial security for women.

RECOMMENDATION 21

The Committee recommends that the superannuation policy reforms currently being prepared by the Treasurer encompass the following specific matters:

- (a) the establishment of vesting, preservation and portability provisions that take into account women's broken work patterns in all schemes;
- (b) ensuring that superannuation schemes permit parents to retain membership rights during maternity and parental leave with contributions frozen whilst on leave;
- (c) promotion of the use of flexible and nil employee contribution rates so that women moving between full-time, part-time and unpaid work can maintain membership of a superannuation fund with contributions tailored to their current economic circumstances;
- (d) that the qualifying period for coverage by employer sponsored superannuation be reduced to that required by the Superannuation Guarantee Levy;

- (e) that all employer contributions vest immediately and be fully preserved;
- (f) that measures for improved portability between funds be instigated by the Insurance and Superannuation Commission; and
- (g) the development of an education package by the Insurance and Superannuation industry to be included in school careers courses directed at young people, particularly young women, explaining what superannuation is about and why it is necessary.

5.6.10 Evidence to the Committee suggests that security in retirement is dependent not only on having access to a reasonable income level but also fundamentally having secure, affordable accommodation.

5.6.11 Currently the national retirement income policy is based on the system of superannuation. While superannuation provides a retirement income it does nothing to assist families to secure a home. The Committee believes that the superannuation system should be flexible enough to achieve the twin goals of income security and secure affordable accommodation in retirement.

5.6.12 Accordingly the Committee is attracted to propositions that allow contributors to superannuation to have access to a proportion of superannuation savings to assist with home ownership.

RECOMMENDATION 22

The Committee recommends that the Treasurer, through the Insurance and Superannuation Commission investigate the possibility of allowing members of superannuation schemes to have access to a designated proportion of their superannuation savings towards the purchase of accommodation.

5.6.13 The Committee acknowledges that the Dependent Spouse Rebate, as it currently exists, undermines the contribution of the home maker, perpetuating a stereotype of dependency. While the Committee does not wish to remove a benefit to which families are currently entitled, it believes that the benefit should be paid to the parent who is the homemaker, more accurately reflecting recognition of this unpaid work.

RECOMMENDATION 23

The Committee recommends that the Department of Social Security and the relevant Commonwealth agencies undertake an analysis of individuals currently claiming a Dependent Spouse Rebate with the view to replacing the rebate with a direct payment to the homemaker.

5.6.14 The Committee notes that recent changes to the Veterans' Entitlement Acts have gone some way towards eliminating discriminatory practices against female veterans. The Committee notes however that discrimination still exists and this should be addressed as a matter of priority.

RECOMMENDATION 24

The Committee recommends that the Veteran's Entitlement Act be reviewed and that any discrepancies between entitlements for men and women veterans, caused by indirect discrimination be redressed by amending the Act, most notably in regard to the entitlements to war service loans to women veterans who were ineligible to serve overseas.