

HREOC

23/6/05

SUBMISSION # 16

Dear Friends,

I am writing to let you know I support the work of the HREOC in publishing the document on Paid Work & Family Responsibilities, 1, 5, 13, 14, 20, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 35

- I have caring responsibilities, with 3 children & 1 husband to care for. I have no extended family to help out, as our relatives live too far away.
- I work part-time, fitting in with school hours & school holidays as best I can. I do most of the housework. I have been working, both full-time & part-time, since 1976, yet I have barely \$14,000 in superannuation so far. I take approximately 2 weeks off per year.
- Every time I have had to take maternity leave, my old job has no longer been available to return to, despite what the law says. Yet I am highly employable & find jobs very easy to obtain.
- I am criticised by all sectors of the community for not being up to expectations — examples follow:
 - ① The government wants me to gain enough superannuation to support myself in old age, but I can't amass enough.
 - ② The school wants me to help out in canteen & attend plays, nat parades, carnivals & take my children to various excursions, but as I usually have to go to my paid job instead, it shows the school that I don't care about my children.
 - ③ I have tried to have as many children as I could, but since I have to look after them by myself mostly, I have started taking strong birth control pills after having the first 3 children.
 - ④ My husband, his family & my last 2 bosses declare that women should not work outside the home. I am constantly struggling against their attitudes to go out to work at all.
 - ⑤ My husband works in 3 different part-time jobs, on a 7 day roster including shiftwork. One of his jobs also includes regular overseas travel paid for by his employer, and his life is very different to mine. Everyone we know values his work more highly than they do mine. Interesting!

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6. Child care has always been difficult to obtain, especially for several children of different ages at once.
 • Childcare, even of poor quality, is expensive.
 • The hours of child care available do not match up with the hours I would be required to work in many jobs eg the 24 hour rotating shiftwork jobs, night & weekend work.

7. I am unable to devote much time to leisure. I am constantly feeling harried, overworked & overtired. I get up at 6am & go to bed after 1200pm, 7 days a week. I do housework when I am at home & usually hang out the washing after 1030pm. I just feel so overworked that when I am standing in the checkout line at the supermarket it is only embarrassment that stops me from sinking to the concrete floor & falling asleep.

8. I have recently begun devoting some quality time each day to prayer because I feel so desperate I have had to throw myself on the mercy of God just to get through the day.
 • The habit of prayer may be useful someday when I am an old, cast-aside woman living in poverty in my final years without enough money for electricity, water, food or accommodation.

9. In the world of paid work, I have to work part-time to accommodate my unpaid family caring responsibilities, which means everyone in the workplace looks down on me because I am not at work 7 days a week.
 I work in an area of workforce shortage, and 80 hours per week of work could be mine tomorrow, if I were to ditch the family altogether.
 Yet what would be the cost to the community of 3 abandoned children and a lone father who would then have to drastically reduce his working hours in order to care for them?

- * It is time that unpaid caring and home duties were elevated in status to be ~~at~~ the pinnacle of community life.
- I have often heard it said "you women have won the sexual revolution & now you have equality, so shut up & stop whinging"
- Also, "you women do housework & care for children because you want to, and it isn't actually work"

ON AGED CARE -

- Let me tell you, there is no more "give" in my life, and when my frail aged mother turns up on my doorstep, I will be leaving her outside the doors of the nearest hospital in a wheelchair.
 - This may seem cruel to some, but I have already told her, so she can make forward plans for other arrangements.
 - I would like to state that the more women work in any given sector of the workforce, the less status that job acquires, the less money it is worth, and the less skill is thought to be required in order to do that job.
- This is a very important, and largely unconscious, social belief that guides community attitudes and the formation of workplace & community assistance legislation.

I hope that the HREOC is able to obtain true equality of unpaid work and carer status for both men & women, amend the decline in the status of women and improve the old-age income for women. In my current situation, I will never be able to afford to retire.

I remain,

Yours in Gender Equality

Julia