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**Paid Work and Family Responsibilities Submission,  
Sex Discrimination Unit,  
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.**

**Harry Levy.**

**August 2005.**

12<sup>th</sup> August 2005.

Commissioner Pru Goward,  
Sex Discrimination Commissioner,  
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

Dear Commissioner,

I should like to thank the commission for responding to my request for a copy of the Discussion Paper 2005, and would like to congratulate all those involved in the submission of a well presented document, involving an extensive coverage of the subjects involved.

My comments relate to, and are framed in terms of Question 45 of the paper *'What evidence is lacking on the issues in this paper? What else does HREOC need to know in its considerations of these issues?'*

As my views and commentary have been largely shaped by my eighty-one years of life experience, I am submitting at the end of this paper a short life summary.

### **Australia's Life Style and continuity under threat.**

At the outset, I submit that any further changes in, or maintenance of existing patterns in relation to work and family responsibilities, must be made with full recognition that we are living in a society that is under threat both from inside and out, that our very life style and existence as a tribe is at stake. So any examinations of the subject of your paper, must be considered within parameters of security and continuity of the Australian nation, above all.

To the extent that existing family patterns are seen to be inconsistent with our ability to survive, they must be modified, or changes be postponed and given an appropriate priority, under the conditions in which we find the Australian nation. (In fact, it may be regarded as fortunate that your paper has been released at a time, coincident with that at which we as a nation are beginning to face the menace to our being , a problem which we have, until now, been inclined to ignore.)

The fact that the Western World has experienced a relatively peaceful existence since the end of WW2, is a fortunate short term experience, and inconsistent with the long term history of mankind.

We, in the west, resemble the long term picture of the tribe which has settled in the rich land of a river delta, developed its resources to produce a wonderful life style, whilst the tribes on the other side of the river look on us with envy and even hatred, and are prepared to attack us to gain and take what we have developed

Our society must be prepared to defend its treasured standards and hard earned gains, from those who would not only destroy our assets, but impose their life style (as has happened in Europe in past history) on us.

As an illustration of the position we, as part of the west face, I have taken the liberty of enclosing a copy of what I consider to be a balanced commentary – a SMH Article by Paul Sheehan “It’s a war on perverts-not terrorists.”

As a student of history, I have for the past forty or so years been conscious of the growing menace from religious fundamentalism emanating from the Middle East, and find this position is only now being more generally accepted..

As from time immemorial , from the days of Greece and Rome, when the enemy appears at the gates, it is necessary for the call to be made on our young and middle aged warriors for the defence of our tribe.

So whatever we have to do, we should provide a balance in the workplace and the family unit in particular, that will permit our potential defenders to be released from their allotted daily duties, to leave home and work, to defend our ramparts, without incurring complete dislocation and breakdown of our family and work structures

If this position of concern be accepted,( and I recognize some may not agree therewith,) we should direct our social activities and education among other priorities, to raising the capacity of our manhood to protect us.

### **The need to rejuvenate masculinity**

And this I believe requires us to rebuild those qualities of manliness and masculinity, which we seem to have deprecated, and lost over the past fifty years.

*I find it relevant to consider the qualities of ‘masculinity’ which had been part of my life experience. My childhood family consisted of a father, mother and two sons, and had a real man at its head*

*My father had served his country in the AIF in the First World War and as a machine gunner had fought in France and Belgium. What more a model of masculinity could boys wish to have? His service experience was reflected in the disciplined life style emured in our family.*

*Then, as a son we saw him look after his widowed mother, financially and with love and affection, taking her I recall to Church each week. The manhood of the machine gunner was complemented by the gentle concern for his parents. Finally his masculinity was capped by carrying out the responsibility of supporting, by his labours, his four member family.*

*Such were my impressions of masculinity! And, I believe these have ever been so in times past.*

*As indicated in my short profile at the end of this note, my life experience of masculinity paralleled that of my father. From the age of eighteen to twenty-two I flew as aircrew in the RAAF, seeing service overseas in the U.K. Mediterranean East Africa and Egypt , and I guess my sons saw me as I had seen my father. From the age of sixteen, when my mother became a widow, I tendered her financial and social affairs for a period of twenty –four years, and also took her to Church. And to complete my role as a male. I supported financially my family of four completely.*

*Masculinity thus involved      Defending one’s country when called upon  
Supporting in every way one’s family  
Standing proudly in one’s ability to financially support one’s family.  
And subscribing to the practice ‘Men don’t cry’.*

The question arises in relation to our consideration of gender family roles, should we, and can we regenerate these basic masculine traits of yore?.

*I was concerned but not surprised at an experience I had recently. I was attending a dinner hosted by a number of us octogenarians, who in our twenties had served in aircrew in the European theatre of WW2, either in Bomber Command flying over France and Germany or, as in my case, in Coastal Command hunting enemy Uboats over the North Sea and Atlantic. At our table was the son (aged forty) and grandson (aged about twenty) of one of my comrades. The son said to me, 'You know neither I at twenty, nor my lad now, could do what you flying chaps did at twenty'. Such a view was consistent with one I heard whilst paying a visit to the aircraft hall at the Australian War Memorial. After being quizzed as to the type of life we lead flying in the U.K. during the war my conversant, a lady school teacher observed, 'I have a nineteen year old son, but there is no way I can see him doing what you chaps did'*

The question thus arises, what action do we take to negate this view, which indeed appears to be somewhat common?

### **Reintroduce National Service.**

I submit strongly that we should reintroduce National Service for young and middle aged men, and a limited number of females, so they become conscious, through their training, that they can do as well as, if not better than we did.

If such training be accepted and introduced, the roles of members in the family, who may be called to be so involved, must be such that they can be released, without resulting in a collapse of bedrock family activities.

And with such training, inculcate a mind set of responsibility to contribute to the family unit, and maintain its basic economic and social structure.

### **The Family-the basic building block of our Society.**

If the family is to remain the building block of our society, it is necessary for us to consider what steps should be taken, now, to fortify it. From my life experience, I see today's family structure as a complete disaster, with most of the disaster falling unfairly, on the shoulders of the female.

I am inclined to look at several basic causes of our present unfortunate situation, and would suggest steps be taken to neutralize or modify these.

Several Contributory Factors to present family disaster situation:-

- 1.The introduction and use of the contraceptive pill
- 2.The feminist movement
- 3.The no-fault divorce legislation and regimen
4. The misdirection of female education, even to the extent of over education
- 5.The deregulation of the banking system, and controls on lending,

### **Some action to remedy the present problems.**

As for item 1., this is without doubt a benefit to all mankind, and work on its development should be encouraged, with associated research to develop methods of gestation outside the womb, thus releasing women of a nine months pregnancy period.

Item 2-many women have commented on its success or failure.

Item 3 has been a complete disaster for the core of family existence, so action must be taken to modify this whole area .

Item 4 I feel girls were educated to be over keen on outside careers, as opposed to family responsibilities and activities, with the present consequent frustration and discontent. Start changing the mind set and syllabi.

Item 5 In many cases family activity has suffered because the mother has had to go out to work to assist in the payment of mortgage undertakings, which may well be greater than that which might be considered a prudent level. And this has occurred because the banks' activities were deregulated, and these organizations encouraged over borrowings. Action----re-regulate all suppliers of finance, and teach financial prudence.

Reference is frequently made in the discussion paper to 'equality' and 'fairness' and I get the impression that there is an undertone of discontent on the part of the females. And with the position into which they have been lead, I have a good deal of sympathy for them. But changes in relative family and work balances can only be satisfactorily achieved on a pragmatic basis and not on a normative 'ought to be' footing . Possibly this is how we would like things to be, but life is just not like that! My lifetime experience, and that of my wife, have lead us to seek and follow a life of 'complimentary' roles, rather than a life of 'equal roles'.

One remedy for imbalance in family housework, which does not appear to have been emphasised, is that of outsourcing cleaning , washing and ironing services, thus in effect adding to the number of hands available. It has been observed by several social analysts that Australians are inclined to avoid employing outsiders to help in the home. So why not an education campaign to overcome this tendency? Not only would the above contribution be made, but it would encourage employment of otherwise unskilled workers.

And if we discontinued the general support for poker machines in clubs, the money there spent could be diverted to this worthwhile end.

### **In Retrospect.**

In contrast to many of the positions outlined in your paper, my wife and I have been happily married for fifty- four years, and appreciated and enjoyed the benefits of a patriarchal oriented family. When I ask her what she thought of a life style as a fulltime house wife and mother, she replies that nothing could be or have been better . She accepts the fact that to have a balanced and well-run family there must be a family head or leader. And in her case, she felt it was good to have a masculine male.

And when it has come to final decision making as was practiced some weeks ago, when we had a major family decision to be made, she exclaimed , ' I'll make the decision that its up to you to make the decision- after all You're the Boss'

### **In addition to the general thrust of my views outlined above, I should like to make reference to several specific matters raised in your paper.**

Page 53 Para 3 last sentence sharing of housework and parenting as opposed to gender division. I cannot subscribe to this view. Nor could the members of a lion pride! During my working life as a company finance director it was necessary for me to make frequent interstate and overseas visits. It was just not possible to share the family chores, and my wife carried these out with a smile and utmost efficiency.

Page57 Para 6 Ideal but again not practical , complementary roles are to be preferred to 'equal' ones.

Page 70 Para 4 As an old man of the tribe , I can but respond to this contention as ‘not necessarily true’.

Page 113 Para 2 last sentence. With this I firmly agree ‘the promotion of the importance of innate gender differences and traditional family values.’

Page 114 Para 3 Reference to rewriting the rules on fathering and the use of the term ‘father friendly’ As a father I find the term an oxymoron to start with. A father is a disciplinarian and exemplar which is normally inconsistent with the concept of friend. I found as a son or as a father, the father was one to be respected and even feared, sometimes loved. Now that I am eighty- one, and my sons about fifty, I can be a respected, loved, and no longer feared, and be regarded as a friend.

#### **A Note of Consolation.**

In considering the steps to be taken in the field under review, and the position we find ourselves now in, it may prove comforting to recall that since our ancestors came down from the trees and found they could think and even make decisions , our record has not been all that good. History tells us that about eighty percentages of the decisions of mankind have had bad or unfortunate outcomes, and only some twenty percent have, or can expect to result in, good outcomes.

Might I thank you for the opportunity of participating in this activity, from which I trust you have a satisfactory outcome, and that in whatever steps may follow, wisdom may prevail.

*Yours sincerely,  
Harry Levy.*

Harry Levy.

### **Short outline background of the submitter.**

My forebears come to Australia from the U.K. in 1842, and I was born (of Australian born parents ) in 1924 in Sydney.,

My father served in the first AIF in Europe and after suffering bad gassing at the Battles of Messines and Villers Bretonneux passed away in 1940.

After Primary School, I attended Sydney High School from 1936 to 1940, and completed my Leaving Certificate in 1940. As my father had died, I joined the work force as an office boy ( the lowest of the low) working a forty-four hour week ( five days plus Saturday morning) on a salary of \$2.75 per week, all of which of course was handed over to my widowed mother.

To attempt to 'increase my prospects' I enrolled in the School of Accountancy at Sydney Technical College, and with lads in a similar situation trammed after work, two nights a week, to lectures, and spent most of each weekend doing assignments.

In 1942 at the age of eighteen I volunteered for RAAF Aircrew service, and after training in Australia served as a navigator with RAF Coastal Command on Sunderland Flying Boats, from north Scotland, the Middle East, East Africa, and finally Egypt.

With two members of our family having served our country in war, I feel we have a somewhat proprietary interest in Australia.

On return to Australia I attended Sydney University as a part time student under the CRTS scheme from 1946 to 1949 and graduated as a Bachelor of Economics, having majored in Accountancy. Registration with the relevant finance and accounting bodies required a further three years home study, and I continue as an FCPA and Life Member of CPA Australia.

After marrying in 1951 the girl who it is my delight to have still as my wife, it was my pleasure to father two boys now in the 48 to 50 year age bracket

After forty-three years in the work force, mainly as the finance director of a listed public company, I retired in 1983, and have spent the last twenty-two years enjoying the delights of the 'golden years'.

All in all, as a child of the depression years, and the experiences of subsequent events, I have found life tough, but most rewarding, and I am conscious that the views I have expressed in my paper reflect these life experiences. Overall I have the impression from your Discussion Paper 2005, that many of our follows citizens, want it all, without the need to earn the right to the 'golden years.'

