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# WOMEN'S ELECTORAL LOBBY

## CAIRNS

30 September 2005

To:

Paid Work and Family Responsibilities Submission  
Sex Discrimination Unit  
~~Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission~~  
GPO Box 5218  
Sydney NSW 2001  
Fax 02 9284 9789

There is a division in 'Striking the Balance' between child care and other tasks undertaken in the home, which is not always valid.

In the case of mothers, the housework as listed in Chapter 3 p 25 will usually be done, at least almost always in the case of young children, the same time as child care in the sense that the women will be continually aware of their children's occupation and place. (p33)

Something of this is noted on p 31: 'As the children age, the amount of time spent on washing, cooking and shopping increases while time spent on direct child care decreases' with its focus on young children.

'Men's time spent in unpaid work as their main activity following the birth of a child is mainly allocated to child care rather than housework' (p 31) also marks the division between child care and housework for men.

'When they become parents, partnered women spend a significantly greater amount of time with young children as a primary activity (19.6 hours per week) than do men (9.6 hours per week)' is another indicator of this difference.

In the case of sole mothers (the overwhelming majority of sole parents: 83.3 per cent p 17) the stress is far greater, with these women not having even that meagre contribution made by men, no greater than that made by coupled men, at 9 hours per week p 29.

This means that the pressure now being put on sole parents (i.e. generally mothers) to seek work when their youngest child reaches 6 years is unfair and unlikely to have positive results.

Women 'already feel more 'time pressured' in combining paid work and family responsibilities than men' p 36, and it is obvious that the new legislation will increase this pressure, 'an experience associated with poor health and reduced life satisfaction'.

'Women's withdrawal from the workforce depends on the age of their youngest child' p 16, 'almost 48.6 per cent' not in the workforce, their youngest child being under 5 years, while 'lone wothers are less likely than couple mothers to be employed when they have two or more children of primary school age', the question of multiple offspring not being of major consideration in the circumstances.

These differences as explained above are the result of the difference between men and women in their basic relationships with their children, which should be the main focus of all discussion and decisions.

Joan Trewern OAM  
Representative

