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Paid Work and Family Responsibilities Submission

Introduction

“Striking the Balance” is a genuine attempt by the authors to address the perspectives of both women and men on the important issue of work/family balance. Indeed it is refreshing to see a discussion paper that truly attempts to incorporate men's perspectives on gender issues. Full credit is due to HREOC for taking this initiative.

The attempt does however appear to have been, perhaps unintentionally, limited by the feminist-influenced culture in which it was written and by the gender and political views of the authorship team. As such, biases and errors, both explicit and subtle, towards women's and feminist perspectives can be found throughout the document.

Ideally this submission would focus primarily on positive solutions to the work/family issues raised by the discussion paper, however because of the biases and errors contained in the document this would be premature. It is necessary for these biases and errors to be corrected prior to the development of positive solutions lest the solutions themselves become at risk of embracing the existing biases. For this reason, this submission focuses primarily upon the biases and errors contained within the discussion paper in the hope that they will be corrected or removed within the final publication.

Paid and Unpaid Work – A Gendered Balance

When the issue of women, men, work and family is looked at without the bias of gender (i.e. from neither a women's perspective nor a man's perspective), a somewhat balanced picture emerges. There are advantages and disadvantages for both men and women within Australia's contemporary division of labour. The picture is heavily gendered (the positives and negatives for men and women are very *different*), but neither men nor women are worse off as a gender overall.

Paid and unpaid work can equally involve burdensome and tiring chores or pleasurable and energising activities. Neither kind of work is in essence more positive or negative than the other. There are, however two major differences between paid and unpaid work that receive little attention in the discussion paper.

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Firstly, paid work is often financed directly according to the time worked or one's productivity so there is often a direct correlation between the amount of work done and the amount of pay received. On the other hand, unpaid work is remunerated indirectly, either by the government via social security or by the worker's partner via their paid work (see pages 4-5), thus providing little correlation between the amount of work done and the amount of pay received (this can be both positive and negative for the "unpaid" worker). And as noted in the paper, regardless of how the money is earned (via paid or unpaid work), it is usually the unpaid worker who decides how 90 per cent of the income is spent.¹

Secondly, there are large occupational health and safety (OH&S) differences between paid and unpaid work. An analysis of the work with the greatest amount of illnesses, injuries and deaths reveals that the vast majority of this work is paid work (see page 6). While unpaid work can include some OH&S risk, it is commonly far less than that found in certain paid industries.

On average, men undertake more paid work than women, while women engage in more unpaid work than men. Existing gender roles are such that men's paid work is often viewed to be "compulsory" (it is their primary obligation/responsibility), while their unpaid work is considered more "optional" (if they don't do it, it will still get done by their partner). In contrast, women's unpaid work is often viewed to be a "compulsory" element while their paid work is considered more "optional" (if they don't do it, it will still get done by their partner). Women's greater burden of unpaid work constrains their ability to undertake paid work and men's greater burden of paid work constrains their ability to undertake unpaid work. It is evident that each of these conditions constrains the other: it is a pointless "chicken and egg" exercise to argue that one constrains more than the other. It is therefore imperative that *both* genders equally challenge their prescribed roles in order for a more equitable gender balance of paid and unpaid work to be reached. Is it not unfair and inequitable for men to take on more unpaid work without their partner taking on more paid work? And likewise, is it not unfair and inequitable for women to take on more paid work without their partner taking on more unpaid work?

Upon the arrival of children, both men and women experience an increase in total work. Once again, gender roles (and often practicalities such as breast feeding) dictate that men's paid workload increases more than their unpaid workload; while women's unpaid workload increases and their paid workload decreases. Time survey data shows that the total workload for fathers and mothers is relatively equal when erroneous double-counting of "secondary activity" hours are not applied (see pages 15-16).

Australian women and men seem to be relatively happy with the current state of affairs, as evidenced by the following article from The Australian newspaper:

¹ HREOC "Striking the Balance" Discussion Paper 2005, p98: "Australian women are responsible for spending 90 cents in every household dollar"

“‘There's no conflict about this: Australian women don't like it when their men work part-time,’ says Jan van Ours, an international researcher who will today present a paper drawn from Australia's HILDA (Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia) survey. ‘Australian women want their men in full-time jobs. They are least satisfied when they, themselves, have a job of more than 50 hours, and most satisfied when they are working part-time, or not at all.’ Happily, Australian men are in lockstep: they too prefer to work full-time - although, unlike women, they don't mind if their partners work full-time, part-time, or not at all.

“Professor van Ours's paper, ‘Does Part-Time Work Make the Family Happy’, written with Alison Booth of the Australian National University, investigated the relationship between part-time work and satisfaction with working hours, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction. It concluded that part-time work did not make the family happier: indeed, when it was the man who was working part-time, both men and women were less happy. ‘Australian couples are happiest when men are working full-time, and that's especially true for women,’ Professor van Ours said.

“... ‘For the men, I suspect it has more to do with expectations. Men are expected to work full-time, so they are happier if indeed they do’... Women were happiest with their working lives when working 21-34 hours a week; men when working between 35 and 40 hours a week.”²

The feminist and female biases in the discussion paper however, attempt to paint a picture of a society where many men and women are unhappy with the status quo and where women appear to be generally worse off than men. They do this in three ways:

- a) by arguing that women's greater share of unpaid work is the main causal agent for the gendered division of paid and unpaid labour in Australia;
- b) by ignoring the fact that “unpaid” work is often paid for in other ways; and
- c) by ignoring the negative impacts of the gendered nature of paid work.

Unpaid Work and the Gendered Division of Labour

The discussion paper asserts regularly, and without substantive evidence, that “the choices people make about how they spend their unpaid work time” effect “their choices and opportunities in paid work”³ more than the other way around. The paper does refer on many occasions to the ways in which the constraints of paid work can affect a person's ability to undertake unpaid work, however the emphasis on this is secondary. The paper's overwhelming message seems to be that unpaid work is the *primary* force that is shaping the gendered division of both paid and unpaid labour in Australia:

² The Australian, *Women want full-time work ... for men*, Caroline Overington, September 29, 2005.

³ HREOC “Striking the Balance” Discussion Paper 2005, p125

“Unpaid work is the linchpin of the work and family debate. The recurring problems of managing paid work and family will not be solved until issues of valuing, supporting and managing unpaid work are squarely faced and dealt with”⁴

“As this paper demonstrates, unpaid work responsibilities shape decisions about labour force participation, are a factor in the timing and number of children in families and are crucial to the running of the economy. It is imperative that they remain a focus of all of these areas of debate and that they are taken seriously as an area of public concern.”⁵

“Understanding how men and women manage their unpaid work in the home is central to understanding the ways in which Australian families manage the combination of paid work and family commitments”⁶

None of these assertions are backed up by evidence. There appears to be no reason why these assertions could not be made the other way around: that paid work is the primary force that shapes the gendered division of both paid and unpaid work in Australia. However, there is little evidence for this assertion either. The fact remains that paid work and unpaid work constrain *each other*, and there is little reason to argue that either is the primary shaping force.

“Unpaid” Work is Often Renumerated in Other Ways

It is clear that in one sense, housework and childcare are “unpaid” work, as they fall outside of society’s definition of paid work. However this work is in most cases, paid for by the “unpaid” parent’s partner (usually the father), as their income is used to support the entire family. In cases where this does not happen, the government steps in to fill the gap, paying the “unpaid” worker and their family via social security. It is worth mentioning again that the “unpaid” worker (usually the mother) also decides how 90 per cent of this *family* income is spent⁷, whether it comes from their partner or the government.

Clearly this does make the “unpaid” parent *financially* dependent on their partner (they rely on their partner’s income to support them). However, it is also clear that the parent in “paid” work is equally *socially* dependent on their partner (they rely on their partner to provide housework and child care for them and their children). In other words, they are *dependent upon each other*, which in essence is what having a family is all about. It is disingenuous for the discussion paper to talk about only one side of this reciprocal equation while ignoring the other.

⁴ *ibid*, p126

⁵ *ibid*, p127

⁶ *ibid*, p25

⁷ *ibid*, p98: “Australian women are responsible for spending 90 cents in every household dollar”

The discussion paper also ignores other recognition by the law and society that the “unpaid” parent’s work is paid for by their partner’s paid work. Australian divorce and alimony laws require that the “unpaid” parent be *financially* supported by their partner’s paid work. If housework and childcare were truly “unpaid”, our divorce laws would require that the parent in paid work (usually the father) be entitled to all of the assets they have earned over the duration of the marriage. Not only is the “unpaid” parent (usually the mother) entitled to half the assets their partner has earned over the course of the marriage, they are also entitled to half of the assets their partner owned *prior* to marriage. This is a major acknowledgment of the social and *financial* value of “unpaid” work.

Australian alimony law provides further evidence of this. If work in the home were truly “unpaid”, then the “unpaid” parent (usually the mother) would not be entitled to alimony after divorce. Australian alimony law not only grants the “unpaid” parent access to part of their ex-spouse’s income for a period of time after divorce, it fails to acknowledge the reciprocal nature of paid and unpaid work within marriage as outlined above. That is, the law acknowledges that the parent in paid work (usually the father)’s ability to take on paid work was dependent upon their spouse taking on the “unpaid” workload at home (by the payment of alimony after divorce). However it doesn’t acknowledge that the “unpaid” parent (usually the mother)’s ability to take on “unpaid” work was also dependent upon their spouse taking on paid work (by reciprocal alimony in the form of “unpaid work” after divorce). The law acknowledges that the “unpaid” parent probably lacks workplace skills, education and training and thus requires assistance with entering/re-entering the workforce, but it does not acknowledge that the parent in paid work probably lacks childcare and housework skills, education and training and thus needs assistance with undertaking work around the home.

Impacts of the Gendered Nature of Paid Work

The discussion paper contains a detailed in-depth analysis of the gendered nature of unpaid work. Surprisingly, it neglects such a broad analysis of the gendered nature of paid work. The gendered nature of paid work is examined only from a financial perspective (e.g. that women choose to enter low-paid fields while men choose to enter high-paid fields). What is missing is an analysis of how the gendered nature of the paid workforce affects workers health and wellbeing (i.e. that women choose to enter safer, healthier professions while men choose to enter more dangerous, risky professions).

As boys grow up, they are usually socialised to take more risks than girls and to place a lesser value on their health and wellbeing. Perhaps a functional reason for this is to ensure that these boys as men take on the many dangerous and even deadly jobs, involving high-risk activities, that are necessary for the functioning of society and for the survival of the human species. Some examples, to name a few, include firefighting, logging, heavy trucking, construction, coal mining and the military. Ideally, we would socialise both our sons and daughters to share this work. In Australia however, the division of labour between safe work and dangerous work is primarily a gendered one.

Australia's most deadly, dangerous, unhealthy and risky work is carried out overwhelmingly by males:

Table 1 – Industries with highest incidences of work-related injuries/illnesses (NSW)

Industry	Incidence	Number	Proportion of males employed in industry
Mining	48.4	613	93.4%
Construction	34.8	4,871	88.2%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	33.3	1,465	76.0%
Transport and storage	31.8	3,035	75.6%
Manufacturing	27.0	6,324	70.5%

Source: Denominator data 2000/01, Australian Bureau of Statistics

If no one was socialised the way that boys currently are, then either no one would undertake these jobs in society or the cost of paying people “danger money” would be exorbitant. Warren Farrell illustrates:

“Imagine home costs if we had to pay what it would cost to have half the construction workers be women – walking on beams to construct roofs in high winds, digging pipelines through frozen dirt, repairing backed up sewers. If you are a woman, think of how much pay you would require before you committed to spending every working day of your life that way. Now add to that housing cost the cost of hiring 50% women as the lumberjacks to create those beams. Add to that the cost of 50% women truckers to transport the logs to make the beams.”⁸

This gendered division of labour and the socialisation required to achieve this accounts for much of the significant disparity between men's and women's health in general and between men's and women's health funding and research. The socialisation of males to take more risks and to place a lesser value on their health and wellbeing has led directly to markedly higher rates of accidents, injury, violence and assault, suicide, road traffic accidents, sexually transmitted infections, drug, tobacco and alcohol abuse, drowning, sports injuries, burns and scalds and firearm injuries among males (especially boys and young men) when compared to females. It also leads to them adopting poor help-seeking behaviour with regard to various health services. The low demand for men's health services in turn results in fewer health services being available for men (the gender that is currently most in need).

⁸ Farrell, Warren (2005) *Why Men Earn More*, Amacom, New York, pp213-4.

The end results of this socialisation are the high rates of mortality and morbidity and the low life expectancy among males compared to their female counterparts. While these high rates mainly affect men's lives, they also account for much of women's poverty and primary caring burden in old age (as widows often end up dependent upon social security and ill or disabled men are often cared for by their female partners).

Like all social values, the lesser value placed on men's health and wellbeing isn't restricted to these men's beliefs – it is widespread across society. Thus, although young men worldwide suffer the overwhelming health burden as victims of violence (84 per cent)⁹, there is an abundance of “stop violence against women” programs, but no “stop violence against men” programs. The federal government has funded a Longitudinal Study on Women's Health, but no such study on men's health. Most federal and state governments have women's health policies and fund gender-specific health services and bureaucracies for women, with no corresponding policies and services for men. Almost all of the participatory action research funding provided by the National Health and Medical Research Council is allocated to women, and the majority of all other gender based medical research is devoted to women's issues.

The media portrays violence against males and females in markedly different ways. Violence against men on TV and in the cinema is so common that it is hardly noticed and frequently the subject of humour. Violence against women on TV and in the cinema however, is far less frequent and, when it occurs is almost always portrayed with sympathy for the victim and is rarely the subject of humour. News reports describe victims of violence as “women and children”, never as “men and children”, highlighting our society's valuing of women's health and wellbeing over men's.

This emphasised “devaluing” of men's health and wellbeing is reinforced by the emphasised “valuing” of women's health and wellbeing by both men and women throughout society. Hence, the view that women should share society's burden of deadly/dangerous/risky work is not culturally accepted. In fact, the Australian Defense Force has a long-standing policy that bans women from hand-to-hand combat roles regardless of their individual strength and ability because, as Labor's defense spokesman Robert McLelland says “Australians may find it unacceptable for women to be killed while serving in hand-to-hand combat”¹⁰. Organisations can institute Equal Opportunity quotas requiring certain percentages of women be hired in safe and desirable occupations, but not in deadly/dangerous/risky or undesirable ones.

⁹ World Health Organisation, *GBD 2002: DALYs by age, sex and cause for the year 2002, World*.

¹⁰ Sydney Morning Herald, *Green light given for women soldiers on frontline*, August 22nd 2005

The entire coverage of this crucially important issue in the discussion paper is reduced to one single sentence which states “arguably this working pattern is damaging to men’s physical, mental and emotional health”.¹¹ It is hoped that the final draft of the paper will include as much in-depth analysis of how the gendered division of labour in the workplace affects men as it currently does of the health effects of paid work and family conflict on women.¹²

The second part of this submission will address a number of the specific questions raised in the discussion paper.

Comments on Specific Questions Raised in the Paper

5. Does the imbalance in sharing of paid and unpaid work by men and women affect children, and if so, how?

There is overwhelming evidence that children – both boys and girls – need to spend considerable amounts of quality time with both their mother and their father in order to grow up as healthy, well-balanced human beings. Some of this evidence is presented in the discussion paper. In fact the paper states that “most young people prefer more time with their parents over more money gained through parental work.”¹³

As such, children can develop a range of social ills - violent crime, drug and alcohol abuse, truancy, teen pregnancy and suicide – when one parent spends an unbalanced amount of time away from them at work and when they are cared for primarily by the other parent. This situation is further exacerbated in the occurrence of a relationship breakdown between the parents. As the mother has commonly filled the role of primary caregiver prior to the break-up, it is most common that the children end up living permanently with her after separation, limiting the opportunity to spend time with their father, on average, to one weekend per fortnight and school holidays. Stephen Baskerville notes that:

“Virtually every major social pathology has been linked to fatherlessness: violent crime, drug and alcohol abuse, truancy, teen pregnancy, suicide - all correlate more strongly to fatherlessness than to any other single factor. The majority of prisoners, juvenile detention inmates, high school dropouts, pregnant teenagers, adolescent murderers, and rapists all come from fatherless homes. The connection is so strong that controlling for fatherlessness erases the relationships between race and crime and between low income and crime”¹⁴

¹¹ HREOC “Striking the Balance” Discussion Paper 2005, p70

¹² *ibid*, pp58-9

¹³ *ibid*, p61

¹⁴ Baskerville, Stephen (2002) *The Politics of Fatherhood* in “Political Science and Politics” Vol.35 No.4 (December 2002)

If a better balance in the sharing of paid and unpaid work by men and women is achieved, the improvements for children in both intact and separated families will potentially be immense.

19. Are fertility rates sensitive to social and economic conditions and if so, what specific conditions and how sensitive are they to changed conditions?

There is a very high chance that a male fertility pill will be on the market within the next decade, perhaps even within the next five years. Once men have the same reproductive rights as women, they will most likely start making the same sorts of decisions with regards to having children as women currently do: delaying childbirth until later in life, having fewer children, having fewer unintended children. Some men might decide not to have children at all because the chances of losing both their home and children under the current legal system are so high if the relationship ends. In any case, the male pill will probably reduce fertility rates in Australia.

21. What effect would a balance between paid work and family responsibilities for Australia's workers have on Australia's productivity and international competitiveness?

As argued above, a true balance between paid work and family responsibilities for Australia's workers would mean a reduction of the gendered nature of both unpaid and paid work. However, the additional costs involved in attracting more women into deadly/dangerous/risky industries have the potential to be so high as to negatively affect Australia's productivity and international competitiveness (see page 6).

23. Can anti-discrimination systems assist men and women better balance their paid work and family responsibilities? Why or why not?

Unfortunately anti-discrimination systems are limited by the beliefs of the culture in which they exist. Because our culture has been so influenced by feminist ideas, there is a widespread belief that "it's a man's world" and as such men aren't viewed as able to be discriminated against. This belief underlies such sexist ideas as "an Equality Act, a federal act ensuring that women's equality is legally protected, or a process like the United Kingdom's Women and Work Commission, which will identify the sources of women's disadvantage at work and make recommendations for redress".¹⁵

Unless anti-discrimination systems are made gender-neutral so that people are able to be looked at as individuals with unique circumstances that may or may not be affected by their gender, they will continue to assist women, but not men, to better balance their paid work and family responsibilities. This approach renders the exercise futile, as argued previously, because men's and women's paid work and family responsibilities are inherently interdependent. It also, of course, remains a sexist and inequitable approach.

¹⁵ HREOC "Striking the Balance" Discussion Paper 2005, p87

24. Why do men with family responsibilities not make more use of the family responsibilities provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act?

The discussion paper clearly explains that men are unable to make use of such provisions because of the inherent sexism of the Act.¹⁶ The Act needs to be amended in order for men to make full use of the family responsibilities provisions. The fact that this sexism hasn't yet been addressed is clear evidence of the female bias within HREOC and government. The concept of family responsibility also needs to be broadened to include caring for one's family by working to earn money to support them, rather than the narrow traditional definition of "hands-on" care which is biased towards women.

37. What are the best ways of engaging men in the work of caring (for children, elders or other family members) and other unpaid work?

The most important way of engaging men in the work of caring and other unpaid work would be to remove the burden of the "breadwinner" role from them by encouraging women and/or government to share it with them. While men are still required to be "breadwinners" – i.e. while they shoulder primary obligation/responsibility for providing financially for their family (if they don't do it, it won't get done by their partner or by government) – their engagement with unpaid work will necessarily be secondary to their paid work.

40. What responses to paid work and family conflict would assist to promote equality between men and women?

The best way to promote equality between women and men is for HREOC, the federal and state governments and associated bureaucracies, academics and all stakeholders to begin taking an unbiased rather than a feminist approach to all issues of gender. This would necessarily mean redressing the gender bias that currently exists within Australian society. Practical outcomes of such a change may include:

- Abandonment of "advocacy research" which promotes gender hostility, in favour of unbiased research that promotes understanding and appreciation;
- Making Equal Opportunity laws *equal*, rather than biased towards certain groups within society;

¹⁶ *ibid*, p86: "certain restrictions apply to men in their use of some provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act. They are unable to access the sex discrimination provisions to address discrimination on the basis of their family responsibilities"

- Actively seeking equal representation by men and women in all stages of research, policy-making and discussion (both as creators of the research and draft policies, in public discussion of them, and in the analysis leading to final policies). This would mean, for example, taking action to *ensure* that HREOC pursues an *equal* perspective from men and women on work and family. Such action would be gender-sensitive, taking into account the different work patterns of men and women;
- The establishment of men’s studies programs at every institution that currently runs a women’s studies program;
- Funding of men’s organisations to the same level as women’s organisations (currently women’s voices are heard louder in processes like HREOC’s “Striking the Balance” because women’s organisations are funded at much higher levels than men’s organisations and thus can pay staff to take the time to write submissions);
- Addressing the failings towards men in current legislation as soon as they are known (such as the limits imposed on men in using the family responsibility provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act); and
- Responding to important family issues like domestic violence in a gender-neutral manner, acknowledging both male and female perspectives.

45. What evidence is lacking on the issues covered in this paper? What else does HREOC need to know in its consideration of these issues?

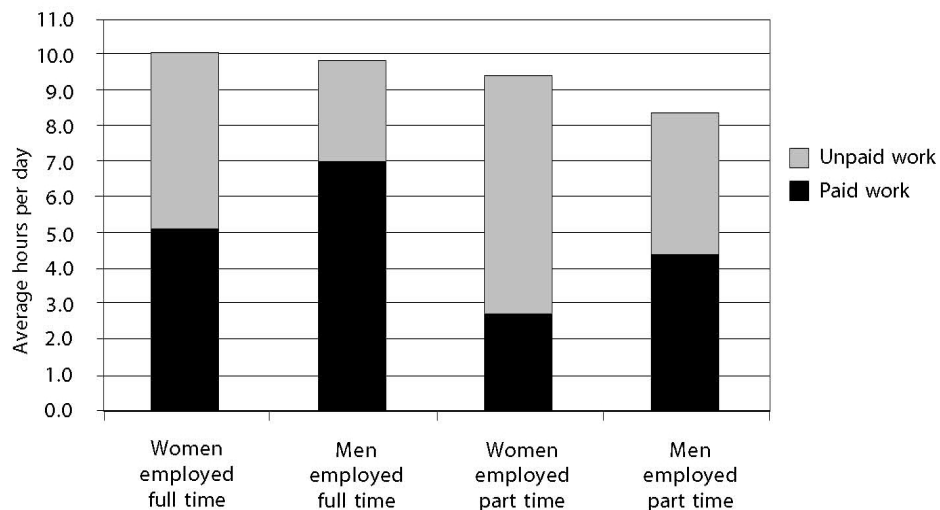
The gaps, errors and exaggerations contained in the discussion paper are substantial. It is hoped these can be rectified prior to publication of the final paper.

a) The discussion paper claims that “women work on average longer paid and unpaid hours than men”¹⁷. This claim while factually correct, is misleading because women work on average only 7 minutes (!) per day more than men.¹⁸ This average also obscures the work patterns of people in relationships and is skewed by a very small percentage of men who work very few hours. It appears that, in order to bolster the discussion paper’s view that women work more than men, statistics showing the work hours of parents have been presented in a potentially misleading manner. A good example of this is the graph on page 30:

¹⁷ *ibid*, p125

¹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *How Australians Use Their Time 1997*, p7

Graph 4: Couples with children work activity (primary activities) – 1997 time use survey



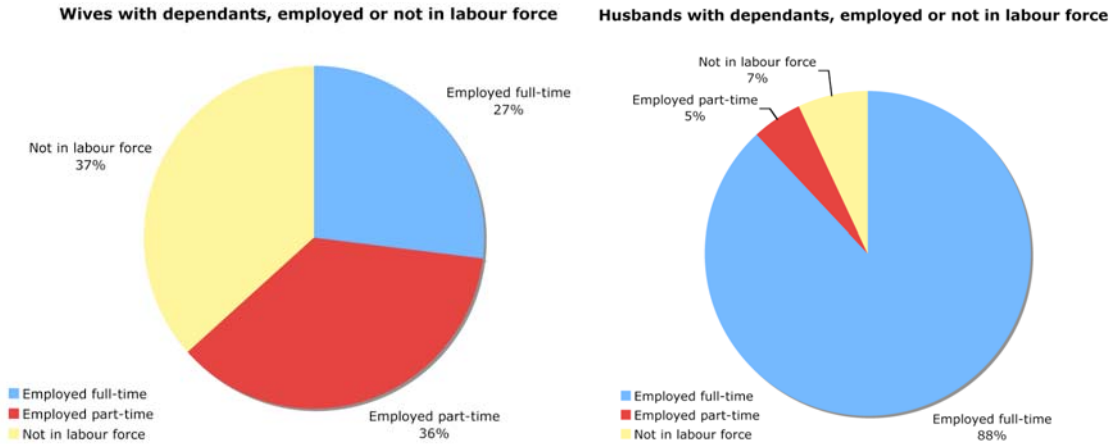
Source: ABS *How Australian Use Their Time* 1997Cat No 4153.0, p 33.

Note: Much unpaid work is undertaken in conjunction with another activity. Analysis of unpaid work as primary activity may under report the time spent on it.

When reading this graph, one naturally compares fathers employed full time with mothers employed full time; and mothers employed part time with fathers employed part time and concludes that men work fewer hours per day than women. However, when one looks at the breakdown of people by gender and employment category (full-time, part-time or who are not in the labour force), one sees that the most common work combinations for spouses are, as the graphs below illustrate, in this order:

1. Father full-time / mother not in labour force
2. Father full-time / mother part-time
3. Father full-time / mother full-time
4. Father not in labour force
5. Father part-time

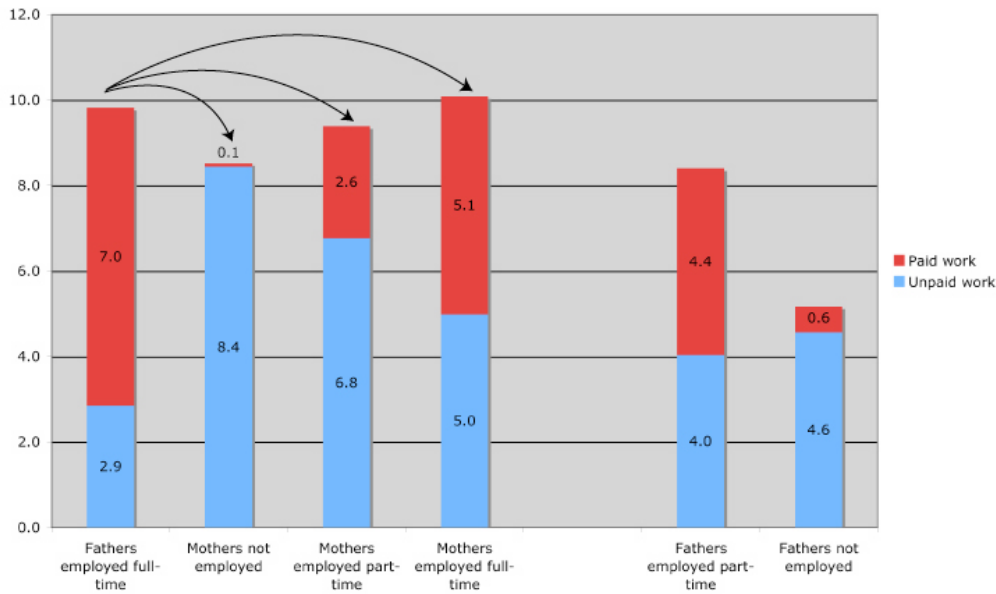
Graph 1 – Employment patterns of husbands and wives with dependants (part-time, full-time and not in labour force)



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force Status & Other Characteristics Of Families June 2000*, p26. N.B. Unemployed people have been omitted from this data as they are proportionally few in number and unemployment is often an unpreferred temporary state.

Thus, if we are to look at the work patterns of spouses, the comparisons that would be most useful are between fathers employed full-time and the three different employment categories of mothers.

Graph 2 – Total hours worked by gender and employment status



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *How Australians Use Their Time 1997*, p33

The above graph reflects a far more accurate and realistic comparison of total hours worked by mothers and fathers in relationships. For the vast majority (two-thirds) of couples, fathers work between 0.4 and 1.3 hours per day more than their partners. For a minority (20 per cent) of couples, mothers work 0.3 hours per day more than their partners. For the tiny remainder of couples (7 per cent and 5 per cent respectively), mothers work 4.9 and 1.0 hours per day more than their partners. This is quite a different picture than the one painted by Graph 4 in the discussion paper.

Another way of interpreting this data is as follows. As a general trend, mothers are most likely to leave the workforce while their children are very young; work part-time when the children get a bit older; then move into full-time employment when the children are older still.¹⁹ With this in mind, the following picture begins to emerge - when children are very young, fathers do more total work than mothers; when the children get a bit older, fathers' and mothers' total workload equals out; and when the children are older still mothers do more total work than fathers.

N.B. Please refer to pages 15-16 for an explanation of why primary hours are the only accurate measurement of the total amount of time worked by individuals.

b) The discussion paper looks at some of the reasons for the “gender pay gap”:

“One of the main indicators of economic inequality is the ratio of women’s to men’s ordinary full time earnings, known as the gender pay gap. Some of this gap is the result of women taking work which accommodates their family caring responsibilities instead of work which fully rewards their skills and experience. Additionally, industries and occupations in Australia remain highly gender segregated and women’s work is still often undervalued. Teaching, for example, is considered to be so undervalued men are now reluctant to do it, as male to female teacher ratios reflect. Women are still significantly under represented in the most highly paid industries and occupations. Continuing discrimination also contributes to the earnings gap.”²⁰

This analysis, while correctly identifying *some* reasons, misinterprets and ignores other reasons for the gender pay gap. There is not sufficient space to explore these reasons here. As such I have attached the most comprehensive recent study of the pay gap - Warren Farrell’s “Why Men Earn More” - as Appendix A to this submission. While much of the data presented is from the USA, the principles are equally applicable to Australia. The evidence and arguments provided by Farrell clearly show that “the pay gap can no longer be attributed to large-scale discrimination against women. Men who earn more often do so not because of their gender but because ‘the invisible curriculum of male socialisation’ influences the choices they make.”²¹

¹⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force Status & Other Characteristics Of Families June 2000*, pp19-20

²⁰ HREOC “Striking the Balance” Discussion Paper 2005, p69

²¹ Farrell, Warren (2005) *Why Men Earn More*, Amacom, New York, front flap.

Because men are often valued by women and other men by how much they earn (whereas women are often valued for their physical appearance), men have a much greater incentive to earn more. “To get higher pay, men are more likely to enter higher paying fields, perform riskier tasks, take positions with less stability and less fulfillment, and work longer hours – a choice that doesn’t just translate as ‘more hours, more money’ but also opens the door to much more lucrative job and career opportunities. Although it’s men who are more likely to make such choices, the fact is, both men *and* women who do so usually earn more than those who choose otherwise... For men, women and their families, some choices will lead to higher income, some to a more balanced life. And quite a few will help achieve both.”²² Some may ask, “but why should women have to play by men’s rules to earn more?” It is important to note that no man alive today designed these rules nor has the power to change them: individual men are *also* stuck with these rules whether they like them or not (and more often they do not). It is up to progressive men and women together to change these rules for the benefit of society. In the meantime, any *person* who wants to earn more knows what they have to do to achieve this result.

Hopefully you will take the time to read Farrell’s book. If you do, you will most likely see that the notion of “men’s generally superior earning power”²³ is really quite ridiculous. It seems disingenuous for the paper to argue that “the continuing gap between men’s and women’s pay is another reason many men become locked into the breadwinner role”.²⁴ It is much more likely that gender socialisation is the reason.

c) The discussion paper uses erroneous calculation methods to arrive at the conclusion that mothers average 2.5 more hours of total work per day than fathers.²⁵ This figure is arrived at by adding up both primary activities (the main activity that a person was doing) and secondary activities (other activities that a person was doing at the same time - simultaneously with - their primary activities). E.g. a parent might be washing the dishes as their primary activity, while simultaneously doing childcare as their secondary activity. This counting of secondary activities as extra *hours* worked is erroneous. As Stuart Birks argues:

“In time use surveys, time spent on an activity is used as a measure of input, which is then equated to output of that activity. Can you be as productive in each of two or more activities conducted together as you would if you spent the same amount of time on one alone? If you can, then time spent does not reflect the opportunity cost of the activity because it does not preclude other activities. If you cannot, then time spent on one activity does not reflect output in that activity unless allowance is made for any other activities undertaken at the same time.”²⁶

²² *ibid*

²³ HREOC “Striking the Balance” Discussion Paper 2005, p66

²⁴ *ibid*, p57

²⁵ *ibid*, pp31-34

²⁶ Birks, Stuart, and Buurman, Gary 2000, *Research For Policy: Informing Or Misleading? Issues Paper No.7*, Massey University, Centre for Public Policy Evaluation

If a parent spent an entire 24 hour day simultaneously doing housework and looking after their children, by HREOC's methodology they would be counted as having done 48 hours of work in that day, where clearly they actually only worked for 24 hours. Even if a person is "doing 2 things at once" for an hour, they are actually only doing one *active* thing at a time - their mind is just switching between the two activities. They are only working for one hour, not two.

Why does HREOC limit this concept to just primary and secondary activities? It is quite possible that a parent could simultaneously be doing the ironing, looking after their children, thinking up a solution for a work client, and babysitting someone else's children. Would they then be doing 4 hours of work per hour? Once simultaneous activities are counted as extra hours worked, people could work a potentially unlimited amount of hours per day!

This erroneous maths is also entirely biased towards the parent who does more child care. If a parent looks after their children from 9am to 5pm, *every other activity* they do during that time is inevitably "double-counted". This means that mothers, who are currently more likely to spend more time on child care than fathers, end up appearing to work more hours per day than fathers.

There are two kinds of childcare that are absolutely essential for parents to provide. The first is "hands on" care - looking after the children. This is a fundamental responsibility of parenthood. The second is "financial" care - earning the money to feed, house and clothe the children (and often the other parent). This is also a fundamental responsibility of parenthood. But because only "hands on" child care is considered "real" child care in our society, only those parents who provide more of this type of care (mostly mothers) count it as a secondary activity when they fill out their time use survey diaries. The parents (mostly fathers) who provide more "financial" care, can also legitimately count it as a secondary activity in their diaries (they have, after all, usually increased their paid work hours in order to provide for their family) but they don't do so (not considering it to be "child care"). This cultural attitude, also evident in the discussion paper, that only child-minding is "child care", while financial providing isn't "child care", values women's unpaid work over men's paid work.

For these reasons, the discussion paper's note that "much unpaid work is undertaken in conjunction with another activity. Analysis of unpaid work as primary activity may under-report the time spent on it"²⁷ is clearly false and misleading. It might be correct to state that "analysis of unpaid work as primary activity may under-report the *effort* spent on it", but simultaneous activities clearly do *not* take more *time* than singular activities. Effort however, along with many other measures of work (productivity, health impact, necessity for survival of the family or of society, efficiency, difficulty, education and experience required, income produced, whether supervised or unsupervised) is not the measurement unit used by the discussion paper: time is.

²⁷ HREOC "Striking the Balance" Discussion Paper 2005, p29

Perhaps it would be useful to look at some of these other measures of work when analyzing the gendered division of paid and unpaid labour. For example, if I take one hour to cook a meal and my partner takes half an hour to cook the same meal, have we done the same amount of work? Is this a fair and equitable division of labour? If my partner and I both do 40 hours of paid work per week but I earn \$500 a week more than they do, is it fair and equitable that I undertake less unpaid work at home? If I work 40 hours a week at a safe and physically undemanding job such as secretarial work and my partner works 40 hours a week at a dangerous and highly physically demanding job such as construction work, it is fair and equitable that they undertake less unpaid work at home?

d) The concept of women's "double shift", "second shift" or "double load" is used repeatedly throughout the discussion paper:

"Despite decades of social change, many women are still working a double shift in paid work and at home"²⁸

"The inequitable 'double load' of women in performing paid and unpaid work..."²⁹

As it is clear that women on average work only 7 minutes per day more than men, and that the vast majority of fathers work between 24 and 78 minutes per day more than their wives, it cannot be argued that women work twice as many hours per day as men, as the concept of a second shift seems to infer. If work is measured by effort rather than by time spent, one might be tempted to argue that because women undertake more secondary (or simultaneous) activities than men, they put in more effort. However, if one is to truly measure effort, there are a wide range of other factors that must be measured in addition to undertaking of secondary activities: the type of labour, whether it is physical or mental, whether the person is outside exposed to the elements or inside a warm comfortable home, etc.

It *is* clear that men are more likely to work one long shift doing paid work followed by a smaller shift doing unpaid work at home, while women are more likely to work one medium shift doing paid work followed by another medium shift doing unpaid work at home. However, both do two shifts and work for approximately the same amount of time in total. It might be more accurate and less misleading therefore to talk instead about women having a "divided focus" demanded of them more than is demanded of men.

²⁸ *ibid*, p51

²⁹ *ibid*, p120

e) The discussion paper states that “women are almost solely responsible for this domestic load”³⁰, when they are doing around two-thirds of the unpaid work³¹. Two-thirds is hardly “solely responsible”. At the same time men are doing two-thirds of the paid work, but the paper doesn’t bother to mention this, let alone phrase it as “[men being] almost solely responsible for this financial load”.

f) The discussion paper erroneously states that “a greater percentage of men over 75 years than women are carers”.³² To be correct, this should instead read “a greater percentage of men over 75 years than women are *primary* carers” or “a greater percentage of men over 65 years than women are carers”.

g) The paper erroneously states that “CEDAW’s primary objective is equality between men and women in public life”.³³ CEDAW is a horribly discriminatory law designed to protect only women but not men from gender discrimination (this is evidenced in its title and wording). Men need as much protection from gender discrimination as women do. For instance, article 11 of the Forced Labour Convention of 1930 actually exempts males between ages 18 and 45 from the international ban on forced labour. Imagine the outrage if it exempted women. Forcing males into labour, military or otherwise, is common throughout the world. Yet CEDAW has no problem with it. Likewise, the genocide in Rwanda involved mass “gendercide” killings of Tutsi men. Again, no problem under CEDAW. Similarly the “gendercides” of men in Kosovo and most recently in Sudan. As David Buchanan of Amnesty International (Vancouver) states, “having one particular identity has resulted in more suffering in human history than any other: that of being male. This often surprises the uninitiated... Separating out the men from the women and then killing, torturing and/or detaining the men has become so pervasive that when it happens it is often not the men, but the women or children, who receive journalists’ attention.”³⁴

h) The paper claims that the Australian Government’s Maternity Payment is “a payment of \$3,079 to families (usually a lump sum) following the birth or adoption of a baby”.³⁵ The payment is not made to families, it is “payable to one eligible claimant, with the default payee being the mother” and “cannot be apportioned between two members of the same couple” (Australian Government Family Assistance Office, *Maternity Payment - Guidelines for Apportioning and Instalments*, http://www.familyassist.gov.au/internet/fao/fao1.nsf/content/publications-factsheets-maternity_payment_guidelines.htm). Of course, the claimant will probably use their

³⁰ *ibid*, p31

³¹ Table 8 on page 31 of the discussion paper shows that non-parent females do 62% of total unpaid work in the relationship and mothers do 66%.

³² HREOC “Striking the Balance” Discussion Paper 2005, p40

³³ *ibid*, p68

³⁴ Buchanan, David 2002 *Gendercide and human rights*, in *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol.4 No.1, March 2002

³⁵ HREOC “Striking the Balance” Discussion Paper 2005, p103

payment to support the family, but this cannot be assumed (just as it is likely, but cannot be assumed, that a spouse in paid work would use their income to support their family).

i) The discussion paper makes no note of whether paid maternity and paternity provisions are generally *equal* for men and women. If provisions are unequal, it would be useful to outline in what way and for what reasons a discrepancy exists.

j) The discussion paper incorrectly states “Australians believe that caring work and housework tasks should be shared equally between men and women. This matches contemporary social expectations of equality and fairness for women and men in *all aspects of public and private life*”³⁶ [my emphasis]. However this is not a true reflection of contemporary reality. It is quite clear that neither men nor women, on the whole, expect equality and fairness for women and men when it comes to undertaking society’s deadly and dangerous work (see pages 5-7). Chivalry is alive and well in Australia in 2005 and chivalry plays a large part in society’s “blind spot” when it comes to violence against men. As previously mentioned, young men worldwide suffer the overwhelming health burden (84 per cent) as victims of violence, yet contemporary social expectations are that violence against women is either more prevalent or more morally abhorrent than violence against men. This is neither equality nor fairness.

k) The discussion paper notes “there are initiatives to create greater opportunities for men to be involved in parenting, as well as efforts to get men more engaged in housework.”³⁷ These initiatives and efforts are to be applauded. Unfortunately they seem particularly unbalanced without corresponding efforts to get more women engaged in society’s essential dangerous and deadly professions.

l) The discussion paper acknowledges that “women have experienced greater opportunities in entering traditionally male domains of public life and taking on non-traditional work.”³⁸ While this is true, they have done so selectively, generally avoiding professions that are deadly or dangerous. As such, women have received opportunities equal to men without taking on an equal level of the corresponding responsibilities.

m) The discussion paper comments that “currently women are two and a half times as likely to live in poverty in old age as men”³⁹ while ignoring the fact that there are 300,000 less men than women over 65⁴⁰ because men’s poor health status has led to their early deaths. It also ignores the effect that these men’s deaths might have on women’s poverty in old age (as previously discussed).

³⁶ *ibid*, p51

³⁷ *ibid*, p51

³⁸ *ibid*, p52

³⁹ *ibid*, p69

⁴⁰ In the year 2000 the population in the age group 65 years and over was 1,040,950 males and 1,340,937 females. Source: Yahoo!igans! Reference: World Factbook: Australia Population (<http://yahooligans.yahoo.com/reference/factbook/as/popula.html>)

- n)** The discussion paper omits data on the gender analysis of new jobs created in Australia that shows that women are experiencing greater levels of success in the job market than men. For example, “women had snared 60 per cent of the new jobs created since 1992”⁴¹ A newspaper reported in November 2004 that “nearly 44,000 new jobs were created last month, with women taking about 85 per cent of them”.⁴² If this trend continues, the ramifications for Australian families will be potentially enormous.
- o)** The discussion paper notes that “women make up just over half of all carers, and the majority, 71 per cent, of primary carers”,⁴³ and then goes on to talk almost exclusively about primary carers. It is important to note that primary carers make up just 19 per cent of carers in Australia.⁴⁴
- p)** The discussion paper provides data showing the labour force status by caring hours per week, 1998, of females aged 25-54 years,⁴⁵ without providing data on male carers in this age group. The missing data is available in Table A3 on page 82 of Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Carers in Australia: Assisting frail older people and people with a disability* AIHW Canberra October 2004, and should be included in the final paper.
- q)** The discussion paper notes that “one major study of women’s health showed that caring work put a strain on employment, finances and careers, and that in many cases women carers could not seek paid employment or were forced to leave satisfying careers because of their caring responsibilities.”⁴⁶ It is quite likely that male carers also suffer from these problems, but it should be noted that the study specifically excluded males from their subject data because women’s health, but not men’s health is a political priority in our culture. This is despite the fact that males have shorter life expectancies, higher death rates across almost all causes of death, suffer the vast majority of illness, injuries and deaths in the workplace and are more often the victims of violence, injuries and suicide than their female counterparts. In other words, men’s health is far worse across the board than women’s health, yet no corresponding men’s health study has examined the effects of caring work on men’s health (or possibly HREOC couldn’t find one to quote).

⁴¹ Sydney Morning Herald, *Men out of work – why families are falling apart*, Adele Horin, July 23, 2005

⁴² Sydney Morning Herald, *Women with attitude beat boys for the jobs*, Michael Bradley, November 13, 2004

⁴³ HREOC “Striking the Balance” Discussion Paper 2005, p39

⁴⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004 *Carers in Australia*, p80

⁴⁵ HREOC “Striking the Balance” Discussion Paper 2005, p42

⁴⁶ *ibid*, p44

r) The discussion paper states that “care [by grandparents] is seen by *families* to assist mothers to work in paid employment”⁴⁷ [my emphasis]. This is a misreading of both the article cited and of the ABS source data. The article cited actually states that “mothers’ employment [is] the main reason why grandmothers (and some grandfathers) accept the responsibility for child care on a regular basis”. This article misinterprets the ABS data, which contains no reference to “assisting mothers to work in paid employment”. The ABS data (p20) refers simply to “Main reason used informal care: work-related”. This refers to both mothers’ and fathers’ work.

s) While the discussion paper clearly acknowledges that males are more likely to “care” for their children by earning money to support them via paid work, it leaves this issue unexamined when it comes to the chapter on caring for people with disabilities and elder care. It seems reasonable to assume that males are also more likely to “care” for their disabled relatives and elders by earning money to support them via paid work. This extra paid work burden for men remains unaddressed by the paper.

t) The discussion paper acknowledges that “women still face barriers to equality in the public realm”.⁴⁸ No mention is made of the barriers than men face in the public realm. Warren Farrell discusses many of these barriers in Chapter 11 of “Why Men Earn More” (Appendix A). Some of these include the lack of affirmative action programs for men in nursing, primary and early childhood education; the fear of male sexuality leading to problems for men entering careers in massage therapy, obstetrics and gynecology, nursing, dental hygiene, child care and early childhood education; and the hostile anti-male attitude prevalent within the liberal arts community in our universities.

u) The discussion paper ignores evidence that many women and girls choose male partners on the basis of their “breadwinning” abilities. Chilla Bulbeck’s recent study found that “a man’s earning capacity still matters to some girls”⁴⁹ Van Ours’ recent paper drawn from the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia survey showed that “when it comes to the men in their lives, Australian women are conservative: they want their husbands to work full-time”⁵⁰ This behaviour by females is then reinforced by the many media role models of men as “breadwinners” in various guises (heroes, performers, providers, saviours, risk-takers, etc) rather than as home-makers and carers for children. No wonder men bend over backwards to be the best “breadwinner” (rather than home-maker) if it is the best way to receive a woman’s love and affection!

⁴⁷ *ibid*, p45

⁴⁸ *ibid*, p52

⁴⁹ Sydney Morning Herald, *Teenagers are just cavemen and women at heart*, Ellen Connolly, December 15, 2004

⁵⁰ The Australian, *Women want full-time work ... for men*, Caroline Overington, September 29, 2005

v) The discussion paper observes that “women have not only entered the paid workforce in large numbers, there has also been significant growth in the numbers of women and girls completing secondary and in particular tertiary and professional education. This has further contributed to the competitiveness of the Australian workforce and is expected to remain a significant contributor to productivity gains.”⁵¹ The paper neglects to mention how the crisis in boys’ education is likely to contribute in a *negative* manner to the competitiveness of the Australian workforce and productivity gains. Boys in Australia are also less likely to finish school or attend higher education and are more likely to be excluded from school than girls.⁵² Below is an outline of some statistics surrounding boys’ education:

Literacy Scores.⁵³ In 2000, 3.4% fewer Year 3 boys and 4.4% fewer Year 5 boys achieved the national reading benchmarks than girls. 15.3% of Australian boys lack the literacy skills to benefit sufficiently from their education opportunities, compared with just 8.7% of girls. 69% of 15-year-old girls scored at or above the OECD mean in reading literacy tests, compared with 55.4% of males. While girls’ performance in literacy results has remained relatively stable over the past 25 years, overall, boys’ results have fallen to a significant degree.

Year 12 Scores.⁵⁴ Girls are achieving higher average marks in the majority of subjects at Year 12, and the “gap” between boys’ and girls’ total marks has widened. In NSW, the difference between boys’ and girls’ average Tertiary Entrance Score rose from 0.6 marks in 1981 to 19.4 marks in 1996. In most States, boys and girls are fairly evenly represented among the top one or two percent of students in Year 12 overall results, but the majority of mid-level to upper performers are girls, while boys dominate the bottom performers.

School Engagement and Enjoyment.⁵⁵ Boys are less engaged with their school and enjoy school less than girls. While male students are more likely to participate in extracurricular sports activities, female students are likely to participate to a greater extent in extracurricular activities than male students and in doing so increase their level of attachment to the school. Boys report less positive experiences of schooling than girls in terms of “enjoyment of school, perceived curriculum usefulness and teacher responsiveness”.

⁵¹ HREOC “Striking the Balance” Discussion Paper 2005, p71

⁵² Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training: Boys’ education website (<http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/boyseducation/default.htm>)

⁵³ Australian Government *Educating Boys: Issues and Information*, p2 (<http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/boyseducation/Educatingboys.pdf>)

⁵⁴ *ibid*, p3

⁵⁵ *ibid*

School Retention.⁵⁶ For the past 25 years more girls than boys have completed schooling. In 2002, the apparent Year 12 school retention rate was just 69.8% for males, compared with 80.7% for females.

Higher Education.⁵⁷ More girls than boys go on to study at higher education institutions. Males made up just 43.1% of domestic higher education students in Australia in 2002, compared with 45.9% in 1992.

Behavioural and Social Outcomes.⁵⁸ Males make up an overwhelming proportion of students experiencing disciplinary problems and school exclusion. Teenage boys are more likely than teenage girls to be unemployed, be involved in a car crash, have problems with the law, experience alcohol and substance abuse or commit suicide. By fifteen years of age boys are three times more likely than girls to die from all causes combined - but especially from accidents, violence and suicide.

w) The discussion paper states that “the Sex Discrimination Act makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, or to sexually harass another person, in many defined areas of public life, such as education and employment.”⁵⁹ The paper neglects to mention that there are exemptions on the grounds of “measures intended to achieve equality”, which apply equally to both genders but in practice are offered mainly to women. For example, special incentives such as scholarships are offered to attract women into male-dominated professions but not to attract men into female-dominated professions. It is argued by universities for example, that men’s under-representation in early childhood and primary education is not an equity issue when there is overwhelming evidence that men face considerable barriers to entering these professions.⁶⁰

x) The discussion paper notes that “certain restrictions apply to men in their use of some provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act”.⁶¹ Rather than noting the inherent sexism and discrimination against *men* contained within this law, the paper merely notes how it “actually serve[s] to entrench traditional domestic arrangements as the responsibility of women and discourage a more equal sharing of caring and domestic work” (i.e. how it affects *women*). However it does not highlight the way in which this law serves to entrench traditional “breadwinning” roles as the responsibility of men *and* discourages a more equal sharing of *paid* work.

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p4

⁵⁷ *ibid*

⁵⁸ *ibid*

⁵⁹ HREOC “Striking the Balance” Discussion Paper 2005, p81

⁶⁰ See, for example, Ed Lewis, Jude Butcher and Peter Donnan “Men in Primary Teaching? An endangered species?”, Paper presented at the *Australian Association for Research in Education Conference* Melbourne 1999

⁶¹ HREOC “Striking the Balance” Discussion Paper 2005, p86

y) The discussion paper describes how “businesses are increasingly recognising that it makes good business sense to adopt EEO programs. The provision of flexible work arrangements that permit employees to integrate their personal lives with their work lives has numerous benefits for both employee and employer.”⁶² It is disingenuous to talk about genderless “employees” here when the paper makes it clear on page 108 that EEO programs apply only to women, not to men.

z) The discussion paper lists a number of arguments in favour of EEO programs.⁶³ If EEO were to be applied in a non-sexist manner (i.e. to men as well as women), another argument in its favour would be the benefits flowing from increased employment of men in female-dominated areas such as early childhood and primary education. Such benefits would undeniably include better academic and social outcomes for boys and girls.

aa) The discussion paper neglects to mention anything about how the Federal Child Support Agency’s operations affect both payers and payees with regard to work and family balance. The submission from the Lone Fathers Association will no doubt expand upon this point in detail.

bb) Question 33 in the discussion paper asks “does the cumulative effect of this government assistance facilitate choice for women and assist them to balance paid work and family roles? If not, how could this be achieved?”.⁶⁴ Earlier in the paper evidence was presented that “fathers were significantly more likely than mothers to say that they did not have a choice in how they balance paid work with family commitments”⁶⁵ Why is HEROC then asking about choice and balance for *women only*?

cc) In a chapter titled “Attitudes to *paid* work and family”⁶⁶ [emphasis mine], it is astonishing that the discussion paper does an in-depth examination of Australian attitudes to *unpaid* caring work (which affects mostly women) while ignoring Australian attitudes to paid work (which affects mostly men).

dd) The discussion paper suggests some possibilities for workplace cultural change.⁶⁷ Another possibility to explore might be promoting the financial rewards that flow from women taking on the forms of “male work” that they appear to be currently avoiding, for example shift work, work requiring lots of travel, hazardous work, work requiring long hours, work with less job security, etc (see Appendix A). The paper also suggests some ideas for educational programs to bring about attitudinal change.⁶⁸ Another possibility might be to institute educational programs that encourage girls not to choose “breadwinners” when looking for partners – that a struggling author may well make a

⁶² *ibid*, p98

⁶³ *ibid*

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p109

⁶⁵ *ibid*, p63

⁶⁶ *ibid*, p111

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p130

⁶⁸ *ibid*, p131

better hands-on stay-at-home dad than a high-flying executive. Yet another might be to start educational programs that teach girls as well as boys to take risks at a young age so that they can grow into more flexible, higher paid employees in adulthood.

ee) The discussion paper makes a number of unsubstantiated assertions and generalisations that need to be backed by evidence prior to publication of the final paper:

- “Formal child care is often considered to be for the benefit of working women, organised by them and paid out of their income”⁶⁹
- “Unpaid work is often dismissed as less important than paid work”⁷⁰
- “Traditional notions of family and community have assumed that caring work was undertaken largely by women within the family without financial reward, and that extended families and neighbourhoods would be further supported by the unpaid work of men and women in those communities. This work was not valued in the way that paid work was valued, either economically and socially.”⁷¹

ff) The discussion paper uses a great deal of language that is sexist and offensive towards men. It is suggested that this language be removed or reworded prior to publication of the final paper:

- “Men recognising their caring side”⁷² It is offensive to suggest that men have ever been less caring than women. They merely provide their care in different ways.
- “It is likely that in the future, men as well as women will experience difficulties in managing caring responsibilities with paid work”⁷³ It is offensive and incorrect to suggest that men don’t already experience these difficulties, or that they haven’t done so for as long as women have. (Whether women, on average, experience more difficulties than men is another question altogether).
- “However, women are more likely to do ‘caring’ work as volunteers in community or welfare organisations and men are more likely to be involved in sporting or business organisations or emergency services.”⁷⁴ It is offensive to suggest that work for business organisations or emergency services is less ‘caring’ than work in community or welfare organisations.

⁶⁹ *ibid*, p118

⁷⁰ *ibid*, p126

⁷¹ *ibid*, p111

⁷² *ibid*, p6

⁷³ *ibid*, p42

⁷⁴ *ibid*, p46

- “Men often do not have a relationship with their children that is as direct and resilient as women’s, as evidenced by the common experience of estrangement after divorce, and struggle to become active fathers at a time of great stress.”⁷⁵ It is offensive to suggest that the experience of estrangement after divorce and the struggle to become active fathers is because men’s relationship with their children is less direct or resilient than women’s. It is much more likely that a number of other factors play a big part in men’s struggle to become active fathers: family court decisions that remove the non-resident parent (usually the father) from their home and children; the abuse of family court orders by parents (usually mothers) who refuse to let their children see their other parent (usually the father); the false allegations of violence and abuse that are used as a strategy to remove fathers from their children; and the child support system that gives resident parents (usually mothers) a financial incentive to remove the other parent (usually the father) from their children’s lives by basing child support calculations upon parental time spent with children.
- “Underlying the decisions that men and women are able to make about their lives are more subtle influences that are not generally the subject of law, but are important in shaping behaviour. These include social expectations such as a man deciding to remain in paid work full time after having a child because it has never occurred to him, nor been suggested by anyone he is close to, that caring for a child full time might be something he could happily and usefully do.”⁷⁶ Other social expectations exist, such as a woman deciding to do the bulk of child care because it has never occurred to her, nor been suggested by anyone she is close to, that her partner has both the ability and desire to be as good a parent as she. By only mentioning those social expectations that affect men, the paper ends up presenting a biased perspective.
- “[S]ome reshaping of social institutions to suit women as well as men...”⁷⁷ This statement infers that social institutions have been designed to suit men, which is clearly untrue: social institutions have been designed to suit society (which often suits *neither* men nor women overall). The evidence presented in the paper that “workplace culture and practices such as unsocial hours, frequent short-term travel and the perception that there is no support for taking time out are also major barriers to better balance for men”⁷⁸ should provide enough evidence of this.
- “Most men tended to give priority to work over family”⁷⁹ This statement infers that work and family are mutually exclusive, when the opposite is true: most men give priority to work *in order to* support their families.

⁷⁵ *ibid*, p65

⁷⁶ *ibid*, p68

⁷⁷ *ibid*, p87

⁷⁸ *ibid*, p119

⁷⁹ *ibid*, p95

- “Family policies and entitlements focused on young families influence women’s decisions to have children, particularly the choice to have more than one child”⁸⁰
This statement infers that women are solely responsible for the decision to have children: that children are “women’s business”. HREOC should not need reminding that children have *two* parents, and that the choice to have children rests equally with both of them.
- “As unpaid work responsibilities become increasingly the lot of men as well as women, the standard working lives of men will also increasingly resemble those of women.”⁸¹ This statement makes two incorrect assumptions: that men don’t currently undertake unpaid work responsibilities and that women’s work arrangements provide the benchmark for men to use. If the discussion paper is really concerned about *equality*, not sameness, it should *also* be encouraging women’s lives to increasingly resemble those of men (so that the arrangement of stay-at-home father and “breadwinner” mother becomes increasingly an option).

gg) The discussion paper is also full of language that is subtly biased towards women. It is suggested that this language be removed or reworded prior to publication of the final paper. Some examples include:

- Men’s greater share of paid work is referred to as their “responsibility” (neutral), while women’s greater share of unpaid work is referred to as their “burden” or “carrying the load” or “intense responsibility” (negative)
- When men outnumber women, they “dominate” (negative), while when women outnumber men they “undertake more” (neutral)

hh) The discussion paper often uses gendered language when it is inappropriate and inaccurate. It is suggested that this language be reworded prior to publication of the final paper. Some examples include:

- Page 17, paragraph 2, line 2: “single mothers” should read “single parents”
- Page 22, paragraph 4, line 1: “mothers” should read “people”
- Page 32, paragraph 1, line 1: “mothers” should read “parents”
- Page 36, paragraph 1, line 4: “sole mothers” should read “sole parents”
- Page 64, paragraph 4, line 6: “women” should read “people”
- Page 106, paragraph 5, line 1: “women” should read “people”
- Page 106, paragraph 5, line 4: “mothers” should read “single parents”
- Page 107, paragraph 2, line 5: “employed women” should read “secondary earners”
- Page 107, paragraph 3, line 6: “woman” should read “secondary earner”
- Page 108, paragraph 1, line 1: “mothers” should read “secondary earners”
- Page 121, paragraph 3, line 7: “men” should read “men and women”

⁸⁰ *ibid*, p108

⁸¹ *ibid*, p132

Conclusion

Although this submission is primarily of a critical nature, it is important to reiterate that the Men's Information and Support Centre believes the discussion paper is a promising starting point for dealing with the issue of work/family balance. It is hoped that HREOC will not be put off by the number of critical points raised in this submission and will consider it in good faith. If the issue of gender bias can be addressed for the final version of the paper, there is no reason why the public discussion of the issues raised cannot achieve a better balance between work and family, and thus improve the lives of Australian men, women and children.

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Editor: Sharna Pearce

30 September 2005

APPENDIX A

“Why Men Earn More” by Warren Farrell. This book has been attached as part of this submission because it contains a rare *gender-balanced* perspective on the issue of work/family balance. The comprehensive research in this book, though biased towards American data, is essential information for HREOC to consider when drafting the final version of their discussion paper.

Appendix A was posted to the address below via Express Post on 29th September 2005. I would be grateful if you could ensure that it is attached to this submission.

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