

Workers With Family Responsibilities Strategy

ACTU Congress September 1991

1. Introduction

1.1 Congress notes that the influx of women into the paid workforce, and the "ageing" of the population, have made it increasingly necessary for the union movement to address the needs of workers with family responsibilities.

1.2 The care of children and elderly parents and the running of the home are no longer the concern only of women, but are the responsibilities of both male and female workers.

1.3 Congress recognises however that these responsibilities often cause conflict and stress for workers who try to juggle work and family commitments, and that much more needs to be done before there is equal opportunity between men and women workers with family responsibilities, and between these and other workers.

1.4 Congress endorses ILO Convention 156 "Workers with Family Responsibilities" and the accompanying ILO Recommendation 165 "Workers With Family Responsibilities" (which have been ratified by Australia) and supports the speedy implementation of those policies.

2. Achievements

2.1 Congress notes the following achievements for workers with family responsibilities over the past two years, in line with the implementation of ACTU policies:

- Ratification by Australia of ILO Convention 156 "Workers with Family Responsibilities".
- Establishment of the "Work and Family" unit in the federal Department of Industrial Relations to oversee the
- implementation of ILO 156.
- Successful conduct of the ACTU's Parental Leave Test Case resulting in 12 months unpaid leave for fathers or
- mothers, and optional part-time work up to a child's second birthday. Commencement of flow-on of the test case into federal and state awards.
- Production and distribution of a leaflet and explanatory booklet on Parental Leave, including information about maternity and adoption leave.
- Production of ACTU guidelines on part-time work, casual work and job-sharing for use in negotiations.
- Lodging of claim for Special Family Leave Test Case and commencement of national research project on how employees cope with family emergencies.
- Commencement of Federal Government study on Paid Maternity Leave and how it is funded in other countries.
- Introduction of a package of "work and family" policies in several areas of employment including "career
- break" schemes, assistance for families of workers who are relocated, etc.
- Spread of award superannuation to most awards covering women workers, amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act to stop discrimination in superannuation schemes, production of ACTU leaflet on women and superannuation.
- Special publicity campaigns in Cleo and New Idea targetted at women workers on work and family and other
- issues.

- Improvements in child care, including a large increase in the number of subsidised child care places, establishment
- of several employer-subsidised centres and programs, spread of fee relief assistance to users of private centres. (see Children's Services Strategy)

3. Priorities

3.1 Congress determines the following priorities:

- Insertion of Parental Leave into all federal awards.
- Completion of all state test cases on Parental Leave and flow-on into state awards.
- Development of support for Special Family Leave test case and conduct of test case.
- Review of current legislative and award provisions relating to pregnant women and the development of strategies
- to improve such provisions as necessary.
- Completion of the Paid Maternity Leave study, followed by development of support for and extension of paid
- maternity leave.
- Further negotiations by affiliates to improve the rights of part-time workers to all award benefits on a pro-rata basis, and equal access to training and promotion.
- Inclusion of work and family issues on union agendas in enterprise negotiations. These issues to include
- employer subsidised child care, time off for workers to meet family emergencies, parental leave, career breaks, flexible working hours and assistance to families of workers who are relocated. Further, this will include examining ways in which standard award provisions, such as entitlement to sick leave and payment for overtime and employment practices such as access to phones by employees, can be adapted to take into account the needs of workers with family responsibilities.
- Development of strategies to encourage a more equal sharing of domestic and family responsibilities between men
- and women.
- Continued publicity and information to workers with family responsibilities on their entitlements in relation to
- Parental Leave, superannuation, child care etc.
- Participation in the Federal Government's review of the Affirmative Action Act.
- Monitoring of Affirmative Action plans submitted by employers under the Act.
- Improvements in the provision of, and affordability of child care (see Children's Services Strategy).

4. Implementation

4.1 That the ACTU Women's Committee and the Executive develop active industrial, political and media campaigns in support of key priorities outlined in the strategy.

4.2 This must include the provision of resources and personnel to both ensure the ACTU campaigns are given sufficient support but also those of affiliates and or groups of affiliates.