



WORK & FAMILY TEST CASE FACT SHEET

The ACTU will apply to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission for a Work and Family Test Case in 2003.

- ❖ **The Case seeks flexible choices for employees at different stages of family life by establishing new standards in industrial awards to:**
 - Extend the current provision for unpaid maternity leave (parental leave) from 12 months to 24 months.
 - Give a right for full-time employees returning from parental leave to do part-time work.
 - Allow employees to “buy” up to six weeks a year extra annual leave through averaged salary adjustments (eg for school holidays).
 - Give a right to reasonable unpaid emergency leave for family responsibilities (eg caring for sick or frail aged family members).
 - Allow employees to request changes to start and finish times (eg to accommodate school and childcare appointments).

- ❖ **The Case responds to major social changes that have intensified pressure on employees struggling to balance work and family life:**
 - The proportion of couples with children where both parents are working has increased from 44% in 1981 to 62% in 2000 (ABS).
 - The proportion of single mothers in paid work has increased from one-third in 1985 to one-half in 2000 (ABS).
 - The proportion of mothers in couple families who return to work by their child’s second birthday has increased from 42% in 1986 to more than 50% in 2000; 38% of mothers return before the child’s 1st birthday.
 - 70% of women in prime childbearing age are in the workforce (ABS).
 - 60% of full time mothers would prefer part time work. (AIFS)
 - 80% of employees in prime childbearing age support extending unpaid parental leave to two years (ACTU Workplace Survey 2002).
 - The proportion of employees working more than 45 hours per week has increased by 76% since 1981 (ABS) - Australia has the second longest working hours in the OECD after Korea.
 - Women on average earn around \$160 per week less than men. (ABS)

**Media Contact: Jeremy Vermeesch 0408 513 849
www.actu.asn.au**