

'SIT DOWN GIRLIE'

Girlie takes off



GetUp! and go

The Productivity Commission's report on paid maternity leave has proposed 18 weeks of paid maternity leave at the minimum wage of \$544 a week. Depending on how or who does the sums, this could cost a great deal of money — an estimated \$450 million annually for government and \$74 million for business. About 140 000 mothers would be the beneficiaries if the proposal was adopted, however the 'current economic downturn' is likely to be used as the excuse for not doing so.

The Australia Institute has done its own economic modelling showing that costs to the government would actually be reduced by half as new jobs would be created. There would be 8900 new jobs created to replace women on leave which would boost tax revenues by \$225 million annually. The author David Richards has claimed paid maternity leave would be a better economic stimulus than cash bonuses, infrastructure spending and tax cuts. The mums on leave would be likely to spend locally rather than going on overseas trips. Advocacy group GetUp! has accused the Federal Government of using the economic situation as an excuse and over 45 000 Australians have signed GetUp!'s petition calling for the immediate introduction of paid parental leave. (*The Australian*, 17 April 2009)

Gen Y on the go

The subtitle to Adele Horin's piece in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (1 April 2009) says that Gen Y women are the first to experience true wage equality. Women in their early 20s and 30s have achieved far more than their male counterparts for years. More finished high school than did the boys, more enrolled in universities, completed their degrees and moved into the professions. However General Manager of AMP Financial Services notes, 'Gen Y is the first generation where the wages of women are almost on a par with men.' Note the 'almost'. A report by AMP and the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling also notes, 'Despite the progress women have made in education and in the workforce over the past twenty years, a 25-year-old man is likely to earn \$2.5 million in his lifetime while a 25-year-old woman will earn \$1.4 million.' The report, *She works hard for the money*, also reveals that for the first time women in the professions outnumber men. Co-author of the report, Rebecca Cassells, says these young women have benefitted greatly from the feminist movement.

Get off!

'What?' exclaimed Myrtle Smith upon reading that mistresses can claim maintenance under new laws, 'first the bitch gets to bonk my good for nothing husband and then we have to pay her for it!' Under the *Family Law Amendment (De Facto Financial*

Matters and Other Measures) Act, colloquially referred to as the 'mistress laws' passed by the Senate last November and which came into effect on 1 March 2009, mistresses can now claim income maintenance and property including superannuation funds. The rationale is to remove same sex discrimination from the Family Court but there will also be implications for men or women who have a second relationship outside a marriage. (*Herald-Sun*, 1 March 2009)

Get it

The Victoria Women's Trust choir in October 2009 sang an anthem, *Love and Justice*, commissioned by the Trust and written by Kavisha Mazella to celebrate the centenary of white women's right to vote in Victoria. The choir of 450 women performed at Federation Square to a packed and emotional house. *Love and Justice* has subsequently been played on radio and was featured on ABC TV's Stateline. On 31 March 2009 a smaller but equally enthusiastic group of choir members gathered on the steps of Parliament to sing the anthem and to celebrate the anniversary of the coming into force of the Act that gave Victorian white women suffrage. The choir then proceeded into the House itself and sang in Queen's Hall under the approving marble eye of Queen Victoria Herself. Copies of the anthem and instructions for choir members are available from the Victorian Women's Trust at women@vwt.org.au.

Get over it

The Family Court has for the first time prevented a father from taking his daughter to Africa to have her circumcised. The father is an Australian citizen of African descent and was ordered by the Court to surrender his passport and that of his 9-year-old daughter. Justice Cronin banned the father from 'removing or attempting to remove the child ... from the commonwealth of Australia'. Genital mutilation or female circumcision has been unlawful in most Australia states since the late 1990s. (*The Australian*, 14 April 2009)

Get it back!

Symone Anstis is a Victorian student who has successfully claimed education-related expenses as a tax deduction. This is a first and could set a precedent that will worry the Australian Tax Office, which may appeal. The Federal Court ruled that Symone could claim \$920 on textbooks, transport and university fees. She argued that in order to qualify for the Youth Allowance she had to incur unavoidable expenses.

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