



AUSTRALIAN
INSTITUTE
of BUSINESS

Empowering Choices:

Rethinking Reproductive Leave Policies
and Practices and Women's Career

SYMPOSIUM | 1 DECEMBER 2023

About the event

In this symposium, we will shine a light on the topic of “Reproductive Leave Policies and Practices and Women’s Career”, delving into the effects of reproductive health transitions on women’s careers.

We will explore challenges and opportunities in building inclusive workplaces that prioritise reproductive health choices and promote gender equity. Specifically, we’ll focus on challenges women face in balancing their reproductive health needs with their professional careers, delayed entry into the workforce, balancing work with caregiving, workplace discrimination and bias, occupational segregation, lack of support systems, and long-term career implications. The symposium will also examine entitlements focusing on menstrual and menopause leave legislation.

FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This event has been organised with the support of funding from the Association of Industrial Relations Academics of Australia and New Zealand (AIRAANZ).



Keynote address



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ELIZABETH HILL
UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Elizabeth is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Economy at the University of Sydney. She is Deputy Director of the Gender Equality in Working Life Research Initiative, co-convenor of the Australian Work and Family Policy Roundtable and co-convenor of the Body@Work Project.

As a leading researcher on the future of women, work and care in Australia and in the Asian region, she has collaborated on research into gender equality, work and care with leading national and international institutions, including the International Labour Organisation and UN Women.

Elizabeth's research focuses on how economic institutions shape women's paid work, unpaid care and the care workforce, especially as they evolve in response to the rapidly evolving dynamics of the global political economy. Elizabeth has served as a non-executive director on a number of non-profit Boards and is an experienced media commentator and advisor to government, unions, and businesses.



MARY CROOKS AO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, VICTORIAN WOMEN'S TRUST

After an extensive public policy career, Mary became the Executive Director of the Victorian Women's Trust at the end of 1996. She has designed and led ground-breaking community engagement initiatives, such as the Purple Sage Project and Our Watermark Australia. These were two early examples of the Trust's Kitchen Table Conversation model which has since become a nationally lauded approach to democratic engagement as exemplified in the successful application of the model in 2012/2013 which saw the election of Independent Cathy McGowan to the seat of Indi.

Mary has led other major Trust initiatives including the exhibition, Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Lives; the development of Here She Is! as a register of women; the Breakthrough for Gender Equality Conference in Melbourne in November 2016, the largest feminist gathering on record; the research and publication of About Bloody Time: The menstrual revolution we have to have; the creation of the Rosie website for girls; and the development of Club Respect as a harm-prevention initiative for community sports clubs across the country.

In 2012, Mary authored A Switch in Time - Restoring Respect to Australian Politics which was distributed widely across Australia. She also authored the Trust's publication of a one-page advertisement in four national newspapers called Credit Where Credit is Due, which paid tribute to the leadership and capacity of Julia Gillard as the nation's first female prime minister.

In June 2012, Mary was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia, for her distinguished services to public policy and advocacy for the advancement of women. In 2016, Mary won the Public Policy category as part of the AFR/Westpac's 100 Women of Influence for her years of work in shaping public policy in Australia.

Panellists



SYDNEY COLUSSI
CO-CONVENOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY
BODY@WORK PROJECT

Sydney is a PhD candidate at the University of Sydney, co-convenor of the University of Sydney Body@Work Project and member of the Women, Work and Policy Research Group. Her research explores the role of trade unions in advocating for legal and workplace protections for a range of reproductive health issues, including menstruation, pregnancy loss, fertility treatment and menopause. Sydney is a regular commentator on this topic and has co-authored academic and media articles on the relationship between reproductive health, paid work and gender equality.



JESSICA HERON
EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL LAWYER AT
MAURICE BLACKBURN

Jessica holds a Juris Doctor from Monash University and is currently a practising solicitor at Maurice Blackburn Lawyers, specialising in Employment and Industrial Law. Jessica is part of a team in Brisbane that is listed as a top-tier law firm for plaintiffs, an achievement that her team are proud of as passionate advocates for workers' rights.

In September 2022, Jessica established a working group with some of her union clients to uncover ways in which reproductive health issues could be better dealt with by workplaces. The working group has grown significantly and now includes some of the largest unions in the country, covering every industry. The working group's advocacy efforts have been reported on by every major publication in Australia, which was one of their goals in helping to facilitate a national conversation on this topic.

Jessica currently provides advice to unions on how they can establish better workplace policies that address reproductive concerns, such as menstruation and menopause.



PROFESSOR REBECCA MITCHELL
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

Prof Rebecca Mitchell qualified in organisational psychology and HRM has led partnerships in evaluation and research across a wide range of health and employment-related industries. Her research interests lie in the area of organisational psychology and healthcare management, including wellbeing and health at work, leadership and professional roles in healthcare organizations.

Prof Mitchell leads the Health and Wellbeing Research Unit (HoWRU) at Macquarie University, which brings together scholars from a wide range of health, psychology and business disciplines in research on health and wellbeing at work.

In addition to her academic experience, Dr Mitchell has worked as State representative on several Council of Australian Government (COAG) working parties and has developed health, community and social services policy at a state and national level. Her work as State representative on several Council of Australian Government (COAG) working parties evidences her capacity to bridge academic research, policy and practice. She is a professional Member of the Australian Psychological Society (MAPS) and an Academic Member of the College of Organisational Psychologist (AMCOP).



DR ALISON BARNES
NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF NTEU'S WOMEN'S ACTION
COMMITTEE, NTEU

Dr Alison Barnes is the National President of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU). She was elected to the position in October 2018. Before taking up her role as National President, Alison served as Assistant Secretary in the NTEU NSW Division and Branch President at Macquarie University. While at Macquarie University, Alison was a Senior Lecturer in the School of Management. Her research interests include union strategy, the development of workplace resistance and industrial relations.

Alison has had a strong commitment to unions since her university days as an Australian Services Union member while working in a call centre. She first joined the NTEU as a casual tutor at UNSW and has been actively involved in the Union throughout her academic career.

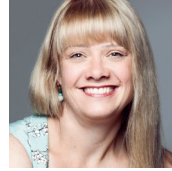


ABBIEY KENDALL
WORKING WOMEN'S CENTRE SA AND PRESIDENT
AT INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SOCIETY OF SOUTH
AUSTRALIA

Abbey has dedicated her career to representing and advocating for worker's rights and has successfully represented organisations against unlawful police raids, defended employees against dodgy traineeships enforced by national food franchises, and represented hundreds of workers in discrimination, sexual harassment, dismissal and worker's compensation matters.

Abbey holds a Bachelor of Law and a Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice. Abbey also holds governance qualifications from the Governance Institute of Australia. Abbey is a member of the Respect@Work Council and of the South Australian Gender Pay Gap Taskforce. Abbey is the Vice President of the Australian Labour and Employment Relations Association (ALERA) national committee and the President of the ALERA SA committee. She is also a member of the SA Union's Women's Standing Committee, the Welfare Rights Coalition, and on the South Australian Concessions Review Reference Group.

In 2019, Abbey was elected to the Policy council of the South Australian Council of Social Service. Abbey is a feminist unionist and advocates for collectivist gender, sexual and political justice. Presently, Abbey is working in the movement calling for the full implementation of the 55 recommendations of the Respect@Work report.



VICKI DOHERTY GAICD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AUSTRALASIAN MENOPAUSE
SOCIETY

Vicki has more than 25 years of experience in the public, not-for-profit and government sectors. She is a C-suite Executive and Non-Executive Director. Vicki has extensive skills and experience in strategic planning, policy and program management. She has qualifications and experience in governance, quality and risk, as well as developing and delivering education for healthcare professionals.

Vicki has a health research background, with many peer-reviewed publications and promotes evidence-based practice. She has implemented health programs across the primary, acute and community health sectors and pioneered health education in midlife women's health. Her work interests are underpinned by her belief that physical and mental health, as well as social well-being are fundamental human rights.

TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE SYMPOSIUM INCLUDE:

The challenges women face in balancing reproductive health and professional careers, including delayed entry into the workforce, difficulties in career advancement, and workplace discrimination.

Regulatory approaches to women's career advancement during reproductive health transitions, such as menopause and menstrual leave.

Organisational challenges and opportunities in building inclusive workplaces prioritising reproductive health choices and promoting gender equity.

The advocacy of trade unions in enshrining industrial protections during the reproductive health transitions.

Practical recommendations for how employers can support employees during their reproductive health transitions.

Event organisers

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