

VIEU Family Friendly Workplace Policy

Preamble

The Victorian Independent Education Union is committed to ensuring that workplaces in non-government education place the highest value on considering the family needs of employees in the negotiation of wages and conditions, their employment practices, and their work and organisational structures.

This policy has been developed by VIEU to provide guidance to the Committee of Management, officers, other VIEU staff, VIEU representatives and members of VIEU in their work on behalf of members. This policy also provides guidelines for schools and other non-government education employers in the negotiation of wages and conditions, the organisation of work for staff and guidance to those representing VIEU to government and employing authorities.

This policy recognises that over 70% of VIEU members are women, which reflects the employment patterns in non-government education. While acknowledging that family responsibilities are shared between men and women, this policy acknowledges that women face particular issues in relation to family responsibilities, particularly in relation to pregnancy and maternity leave.

The policy also recognises that the adoption of family friendly policies also assists employers in the operations of their organisation. Such policies encourage long term commitment and loyalty from employees and ensure that trained and skilled staff are not forced to resign from employment in order to meet family responsibilities.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other VIEU and IEUA policies.

Needs of Employees With Family Responsibilities

This policy recognises that all employees have varying family responsibilities. It recognises a broad definition of family including family as defined by various legislative and industrial instruments, people in same sex relationships and other close personal relationships. It also acknowledges that family needs and expectations of people from different cultures and religions may vary. In particular, VIEU recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander employees have particular family obligations in relation to the observance of ceremonial and customary events.

While family needs are continuous, this policy recognises that there are key times in people's lives which are of particular significance and where people may have specific needs. These include:

- The formation of families, particularly the birth, care and upbringing of children
- The need to provide care and support for family members in times of illness, death or crisis
- The need to provide care and support for elderly family members
- The need to fully participate in significant family events

Key Principles

The following key principles underpin this policy:

- Provision of entitlements should be made equally available to men and women
- All Australian workplaces should provide the minimum standards outlined in various International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions to employees
- Employers have a social responsibility to organise work in a manner which assists employees to meet family responsibilities
- Employees have a right to have their family needs accommodated in the workplace, and employers should make employees familiar with these rights
- Employees should not suffer career disadvantage because they exercise their rights in relation to their family responsibilities
- Entitlements should be made equally available to all categories of employees
- Employers should not discriminate in the provision of entitlements on the grounds of race, colour, sex, sexual preference, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, family responsibilities, pregnancy, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin.
- Employers must guarantee the maximum level of support for employees returning to work from parental leave.

Parental Leave

All employees have a right to take leave from their employment in order to have and raise a family. Employers should work with employees to minimise the economic impact on employees who have children and to ensure that employees not suffer a career disadvantage because they have taken leave to have children.

VIEU will work towards achieving the following conditions for members employed in Victorian non-government education.

- A minimum of 14 weeks paid parental leave for the primary care giver for each child, as per the International Labour Organisation (ILO) standard
- A minimum of unpaid parental leave of three years per child
- Both paid and unpaid leave, as above, should be made available on an equal basis to parents adopting a child or taking responsibility for a child on a permanent care order
- A minimum of ten days paid leave for an employee who is the non primary care giver to be taken within six weeks of the birth of the child

- The right to access accrued Long Service Leave before and after paid parental leave

Return to Work

Employees who have taken a period of parental leave should be provided with assistance on their return to work from leave. In particular, employees have the right to return to work in arrangements that are flexible and accommodate the family needs of the employee. Furthermore employees should not suffer any career disadvantage upon their return to work and as such have a right to return to a position consistent with the position they held prior to commencing parental leave.

Employees should have a right to return to work part-time or in job share arrangements if this best accommodates their family needs. Scheduling of work should be done in a manner which allows employees to determine optimum arrangements for child care.

VIEU will work towards achieving the following conditions for members employed in Victorian non-government education:

- The right for employees to return to work on a part-time basis from parental leave until the child reaches school age, with the right to return to a full-time position at that time.
- The right to have a reasonable spread of hours for part-time employees on the following basis, unless otherwise agreed by the employee:
 - 0.2 FTE – attendance on one day of a week
 - 0.4 FTE – attendance over two days of a week
 - 0.6 FTE -- attendance over three days of a week
 - 0.8 FTE – attendance over four days of a week
- The employee's right to set and maintain a suitable time fraction in a part-time position on return from parental leave. Such a time fraction should not be altered without the consent of the employee.
- The rights to appropriate professional development, mentoring and support when returning to work from parental leave.
- The right to hold a position of responsibility in a part-time or job share position.
- The right to paid childcare if a part-time employee is required to attend employment on a non-attendance day.
- The provision of a suitable and private place for breast feeding or expressing of milk, if required.

Family Responsibilities and Carers Leave

There are other significant family events or times when employees require leave, flexible working arrangements or other accommodations so that family needs can be met. This includes leave to attend such significant family events, leave for bereavement, leave to care for a family member who is ill or in crisis, and also flexible work arrangements to accommodate the needs of employees who have responsibility to care for elderly parents or family members or family members with chronic or terminal health conditions.

VIEU will work towards achieving the following conditions for members employed in Victorian non-government education:

- The right to paid carers leave, including the right to use, with greater flexibility, any or all accrued sick leave for the family circumstances as outlined above.
- The right to use accrued Long Service Leave before and after paid carers leave.
- The right for employees to work on part-time or job share basis when they are required to care for a family member on a long term basis, with the right to return to a full-time position.
- The right to have a reasonable spread of hours for part-time employees on the following basis, unless otherwise agreed by the employee:
 - 0.2 FTE – attendance on one day of a week
 - 0.4 FTE – attendance over two days of a week
 - 0.6 FTE - attendance over three days of a week
 - 0.8 FTE – attendance over four days of a week
- The right to set and maintain a suitable time fraction in a part-time position. Such a time fraction should not be altered without the consent of the employee.
- The right to take leave without pay for the above purposes if paid leave has been exhausted.

Furthermore VIEU will work with members and employers toward achieving the provision of workbased child care and/or assistance with the provision of child care.

Monitoring

VIEU should monitor the implementation of this policy in workplaces in non-government education and report annually on progress towards achieving the conditions and aims contained herein.

Committee of Management should regularly review the policy to ensure that it keeps abreast with changes in legislation and other regulations.

Adopted by Annual Conference November 2002