

Why some organisations take on family-friendly policies: The case of paid maternity leave

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ABSTRACT

The Australian policy approach has relied on a narrow version of the 'business case' to encourage workplace provision of paid maternity leave and other work - family benefits within a substantially deregulated labour market. The paper draws on case study research investigating organisational rationales for taking on equal employment opportunity and diversity initiatives. The findings suggest that the business case is only one of the reasons paid maternity leave is introduced or increased. Equally important were beliefs about the 'right thing to do', both in terms of meeting community expectations and social justice or gender equity goals, a desire to enhance the stature and reputation of the organisation, and increase organisational commitment and cohesion. Given Australia is likely to remain without any statutory provision of paid maternity leave, the paper argues for a recasting of the policy approach, beyond the 'business case', to encourage more widespread workplace provision.

Introduction

There has been considerable policy debate around paid maternity leave (PML) over the last two years in Australia. Much of this debate has focused around the 2002 proposal by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) for a federally funded scheme (HREOC 2002b), which followed a HREOC discussion paper (HREOC 2002a) and exhaustive consultation with employers, unions and the community. The proposal provided for payment at the rate of the federal minimum wage or the woman's previous weekly earnings, whichever is the lesser, for all working women (including casual, part-time and self-employed) who have worked 40 weeks of the past 52 weeks with any number of employers, and/or in any number of positions (HREOC 2000b). Despite broad community support for a government-funded PML scheme (HREOC 2002b, 5-7), the proposal was taken up by neither the federal Coalition government nor the Labor Opposition. Instead a \$3000 'maternity payment', paid as a universal lump sum for each new born child, was introduced in July 2004. Rising to \$5000 by 2005, this payment incorporates the former means tested 'maternity allowance' and the much contested 'baby bonus'. The new maternity payment is a welfare payment, no doubt of great assistance to families in meeting the costs of a new baby. It is not, however, paid maternity leave intended to encourage women's on-going attachment to the paid workforce, nor is it intended to compensate working women for income forgone as a result of childbirth (Baird 2004, 265).

So what is the extent of PML provision in Australia? Many permanent public sector workers have access to paid leave of some kind. In the private sector some provision for PML has been introduced into a limited number of workplaces, in either single employer collective agreements (union and non union) as a result of enterprise bargaining, through registered individual agreements or through voluntary management initiatives. Estimates of the spread of paid maternity leave vary (HREOC 2002a, 2002b; Baird 2003, Baird, Brennan and Cutcher 2002, Baird and Litwin 2004; Baird 2004), however it is clear that the majority of women in paid work do not have access to paid maternity leave. Recent ABS data suggests that only 36 percent of female employees (65 percent in the public sector and 28 percent in the private sector) have any entitlement to PML (ABS 2003). Further, even where paid leave is provided, the available data show a strong pattern of differential access according to occupation, with higher skilled professional employees more likely to have such access than those in less skilled, lower paid or casual work (Baird and Litwin 2004, 5-6; HREOC 2002a, 105). There is also significant variation across workplaces in the quantum of any paid maternity leave provided, the basis on which it can be accessed, and the conditions that adhere to it (HREOC 2002b, 34-36; Baird 2003).

So given the poor spread of PML why was there such political resistance to the relatively modest HREOC scheme that was directed to women in paid work? The history and politics of the effort to secure a national PML scheme have been comprehensively documented elsewhere (Baird, Brennan & Cutcher 2002; Baird 2003; Baird 2004). However it is worth pointing out that at least some of the political opposition to such a scheme is underpinned by the contradictory views many Australians continue to have about working mothers. While most now strongly endorse the notion of mothers working, there is also a contradictory discourse which constructs any government support for working women as marginalising and discriminating against 'stay-at-home' mothers (see Probert 2002, 15-16). The political resistance to the HREOC proposal draws on this ambivalence about working mothers, an ambivalence which is also reflected in contradictory family policies and distinctions made between women in couple families and in sole parent families who do not have the same right to be supported as stay-at-home mothers (Probert 2002, 15).

In this context the government has taken a largely passive approach to the provision of family friendly benefits such as PML. Committed to a decentralised and deregulated industrial relations system, responsibility for initiatives such as PML is seen as falling to individual workplaces that can afford to provide them, either through management decision-making or perhaps through some form of single-employer bargaining with employees (Reith 1999; Abbott 2003). The government has consistently opposed trade union initiatives aimed at generalising family-friendly benefits, on the grounds this may impose unreasonable burden on employers, particularly small business (Howard 2003, 6). Instead government activity relies on promoting the voluntary initiatives of larger employers, appealing to a narrow version of the 'business case', focused on the (potential) attraction of policies like PML, in realising 'bottom line' cost-benefits through attracting and retaining staff, reduction of absenteeism and turnover and improved morale and productivity (DFACS 2002, 50). A frequently cited example is that of the Westpac Banking Corporation, which has reported that its retention rate has increased from 54 percent in 1995 to 93 percent in 2000 as a result of introducing six weeks paid maternity leave, which reportedly saved the company \$6 million. (EOWA 2004; HREOC 2000a, 57).

Yet despite this focus on the business case as a key incentive to encourage individual enterprises to introduce PML, we know relatively little about why and how organisations introduce PML (Baird, Brennan and Cutcher 2002, 15) and in particular the extent to which the business case provides the rationale for introducing PML in practice. This paper aims to shed light on these questions by drawing on experiences in seven Australian organisations, which have introduced or increased the quantum of PML or paid parental leave (PPL) over the last decade.

The case study research

This research reported here was undertaken as part of a larger study of equal employment opportunity (EEO) and diversity initiatives in Australia. Case study research in nine 'best practice' organisations, identified as such by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency and the National Diversity Think Tank, was carried out in 2002 and 2003 investigating a range of initiatives nominated by the organisations. In each organisation in-depth interviews were undertaken with key personnel including the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), human resource (HR) and other managers, employee members of the group the particular EEO/diversity action was designed to benefit, as well as union officials where relevant. Internal documentation in relation to the implementation and evaluation of the specific initiatives researched was provided by the case study organisations. Given the community debate at the time, decisions around PML were examined in each of the seven organisations that had introduced it in the last decade. (For the sake of simplicity, PML is used to cover both PML and PPL, except where the specific provision by individual case studies is discussed.) Details of specific PML provided in each organisation are set out in Table 1. The organisations include:

- Busico**, an Australian professional services partnership
- Carco**, a large multinational vehicle manufacturer
- Funco**, an Australian cultural and recreational services company
- Healthco**, a state-based private teaching hospital
- Manuco**, an Australian-based operation of a multinational automotive parts manufacturer
- Socialco**, a state-based family welfare charitable organisation
- Unico**, a multi-campus tertiary institution

TABLE 1
Quantum, conditions and basis of PML/PPL provision in case study organisations

Case Studies	PML/PPL years in place	Quantum of leave	Eligibility	Basis	Status
Busico PPL	6 years	4 months for managers 2 months for other staff 5 days for non-primary carers	Continuous service of 1 year for perm staff	2 months up front for all staff Additional 2 months for managers on return to work	In company policy
Carco PML	6 years Increase 1 year ago	14 weeks (was 6 weeks)	Continuous service for perm staff of: • 2 yrs for 14 weeks • 1-2 years for 6 weeks	6 wks pay at up front Further 8 weeks either at full pay or 16 weeks at half pay	No formal policy for partners 6 weeks in union enterprise bargaining agreement 14 weeks in company work/life policy
Funco PML	2 years	6 weeks	Continuous service of 2 years for perm staff	3 wks pay (at base rate) on commencement of leave 3 wks paid 2 months after RTW	In company policy
Healthco PPL	4 years Increase 1 year ago	6 weeks	Continuous service of 2 years for perm staff	3 wks pay (at base rate) on commencement of leave 3 wks paid 2 months after RTW	In union enterprise bargaining agreement
Manuco PML	2 years Increase 1 year ago	14 week (was 6 weeks)	Perm award staff with continuous service of: • 1-3 years –10 weeks • 3years+ – 14 weeks Also extended also to perm non award staff. Service of agency staff counted towards service when become perm	3 wks pay (at base rate) on commencement of leave 3 wks paid 2 months after RTW	In union enterprise bargaining agreement Others covered by company policy
Socialco PML	8 years	9 weeks	Continuous service of: • 18 months for perm staff. • 12 months 2nd & sub confinements	Paid upfront	In non-union certified agreement
Unico PML	8 years	9 weeks	Perm staff with continuous service of: • <1 years –1 week for every month of service • 1-2 years service –12 wks • 2 years+ service –1 year	3 months on full pay (paid as lump sum or as fortnightly pay) 9 months on 60% of pay as fortnightly pay Incremental progression deferred after RTW After leave of 6 months+ If take 1 year's PML must RTW for 26 weeks or repay leave taken in excess of 12 wks	In union enterprise bargaining agreement

PML= paid maternity leave; PPM = paid parental leave; RTW= return to work

In identifying the main drivers of change we have concentrated on the views of those involved in or very close to the decision-making process which led to the action being taken around PML. The limitations of relying on company-selected interviewees are balanced by the benefits of multiple in-depth interviews with individuals in a range of organisational roles, and with varied perspectives, in each of the case study organisations.

Rationales for PML: More than the business case?

How effective has the business case been in organisational decision making around PML? Our research suggests that a narrow business case rationale was not the sole or even the main reason for introducing or increasing PML. In each of the case study companies several key factors were identified behind the introduction and/or increase in the quantum of PML. Factors such as *'the right thing to do', improving the stature and reputation of the organisation and improving organisational commitment and cohesion* were just as important and in some organisations much more important than a business case. These findings are consistent with both UK and Australian survey data that suggests that the motivation to take on family friendly, diversity and EEO initiative include the social justice case, legal pressures, political pressure and personal leadership commitment (Rutherford and Ollereanshaw 2002, 7; EEONA 2003).

While most of those interviewed in the case study organisations argued that there were sound business reasons for introducing or increasing PML, few pointed to any financially quantifiable cost benefits as a driver for action. The most frequent use of the business case driver was where retention and attraction of employees generally and/or in key (mainly female) occupations was seen as an issue. In most cases this formed part of a broader business case rationale, less concerned with immediate cost savings that with the medium to long term interests of the organisation. For *Unico*, with an aging academic and administrative workforce, a decision to increase PML from 12 weeks to 52 weeks was seen as a means to attract and retain younger staff. For *Healthco*, faced with the critical shortage of qualified nursing staff, paid parental leave (PPL), along with other flexible work arrangements, was seen as a way of becoming employer of choice in a tight labour market.

In a number of instances the interpretation of the business case extended to a rationale for 'looking after people' to ensure the longer term survival of the organisation. At *Manuco* for example, a decision to introduce six weeks PML was driven by the need to retain staff who understand their work and can meet increasingly higher productivity targets in a competitive market.

There's a competition out there and globally. So we had to find a way of being able to embrace continuous improvement, in other words year on year cost reductions in a way that wouldn't alienate our people. So the value in [looking after] our people is that we want to have people that understood and were not fearful of the fact that we could embrace continuous improvement...

CEO *Manuco*

The business case was more frequently used to secure internal agreement for a PML proposal, as a *persuader* as or a post-facto legitimiser to justify, both externally and internally, the decision taken. Whatever the reasons for a decision to introduce or increase PML those pushing for it within the organisation would in many instances use a business case to win support or to account for its introduction. The assertion of the business case rationale for PML was also frequently used in applications for best practice awards, in best practice case studies and in applications by organisations seeking to be waived from the annual reporting requirements of the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999* (Cth).

Given the emphasis on cost/benefit analysis in the traditional business case, one might expect that detailed estimates of the costs and savings associated with the PML initiative would be prepared in the organisational negotiating process. However, in many cases this analysis was undertaken in a fairly ritualistic way. For example, assertions were made about the financial savings from improved retention of key female staff that would follow the introduction of PML even where, as at *Manuco* and *Funco*, retention after childbirth was already high. Further, clear benchmarks that would facilitate monitoring the costs and benefits of a specific initiative were rarely established before or with its introduction.

The emphasis in many of the case study organisations was on a rough estimate of the ‘cost-effectiveness’ of a specific action, rather than the preparation of a sophisticated cost/benefit analysis. At *Manuco* for example, while specific initiatives such as PML were seen as having a tangible cost, this was seen as irrelevant in terms of the real, but unquantified, value gained from ‘looking after’ employees. Concern with cost-effectiveness was reduced in several instances to the senior management team being satisfied that PML would not incur unacceptably high *additional* costs. For example at *Unico*, the age profile of the organisation, and at *Carco* the small proportion of women working in the company, meant that relatively few women would access PML and that the cost to the organisations would be relatively small. At *Healthco* the CEO and the HR Director reported that the internal discussion about the PPL proposal was more about ‘what would be the costs if we didn’t do it [PPL]’, than weighing up the costs of providing such leave.

Business case arguments were, nonetheless, frequently used to structure the form of the PML provided. At *Busico* the differential amount of PPL paid to managers (4 months) and to employees (2 months), reflected the organisation’s view of the different potential costs and benefits flowing from any increased retention of the two groups of staff. In other case study organisations, eligibility criteria that restricted PML to those with two or more years of service and/or the payment of a proportion of the PML on return to work, were viewed as ensuring that any investment in PML was realised. However, it is noteworthy that any close monitoring of the returns on this investment was rare, which is another indication that the business case can be largely rhetorical.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the silences around gender equity as a goal of PML both in the political sphere and within organisations, we identified a broad social justice case that was used to argue for the introduction of PML. This was frequently described by interviewees as ‘*the right thing to do*’. The right thing to do covered two different but often linked rationales. The first of these related to reflecting perceived community standards/expectations and meeting expectations of a modern company operating in the 21st century. Overseas head offices or subsidiaries as well as key individuals were important influences in linking the provision of PML with a vision of the organisation within the broader community and society. At *Manuco*, which has its head office in Sweden, and a CEO and an HR Director who both express views publicly on corporate social responsibility, responding to perceived community values was an important impetus that went beyond any employee or union pressure:

We listen to our people but we’ve also listened to the community values and what society is saying to us about the sort of workplace that our broader community wants to see.

CEO *Manuco*

The second strand of ‘the right thing to do’ was more clearly a social justice/gender equity case for PML. For *Socialco*, which introduced nine weeks PML, social justice and women’s equality is central to the organisation’s mission to provide services to families, and particularly mothers, in crisis. The organisation draws a direct link between its clients and its employees.

Women’s issues are really terribly central to our thinking in the programs... valuing women as carers then draws you in then to look at women who are in paid work, [and] supporting women as carers.

Senior Manager *Socialco*

Busico’s commitment to improving the gender culture in their male-dominated organisation was also an important motivation for action around PPL:

There’s a little bit about levelling the plain here so that if you want someone to come in and be able to have a family as well, you’ve got to try and have as level a plain as you can, and I think that’s how [PPL] contributes strongly to it.

CEO *Busico*

Improving the stature and reputation of the organisation was another value involved in decisions to introduce or increase PML. At *Carco*, one of the drivers to increase PML from 6 to 14 weeks was the desire to position the company and the management as both industry and community leaders and good corporate citizens. Taking action to increase PML well beyond the industry standard was also seen as a way of enhancing the company's reputation as a player in the development of broad national/international trade policy:

Senior management] are trying to create Carco as a business and a business leader. So we don't want to be seen just as a car manufacturer. Part of that strategy... is to get [the CEO's] face and to get his opinion on the business pages so that [Carco] is seen as a business leader...

HR Manager *Carco*

In some cases positive publicity around the introduction of PML was seen as a way of mitigating negative publicity. At *Busico* the introduction of PML of between two and four months provided some positive publicity in the face of audit scandals in the international professional business industry. For *Funco* too, one of the secondary drivers to the introduction of six weeks PML was its potential to neutralise negative publicity about problem gambling associated with the company.

Several case study organisations reported that they decided to introduce or increase PML in order to *enhance organisational commitment and cohesion*. For *Unico*, the desire to restore employee morale and commitment, after what was described as 'a bruising encounter' between management and employees in a prior enterprise bargaining round, was a major impetus behind a management proposal to increase the quantum of paid maternity leave well above industry standards in the next bargaining round. At *Manuco* the desire to ensure continued employee trust and commitment was an important driver in the decision to introduce a package of family friendly entitlements, including PML. Providing PML was seen not only as a way to enhance morale, but also as a visible sign of 'looking after' the company's employees.

Who pushed for paid maternity leave?

In Australia the influence of employee pressure has been an important driver in the introduction of PML, particularly where it has been introduced through enterprise bargaining negotiations. (Baird 2003, 10; McGrath-Champ 2003, 50-51). So what role did unions play in our case study companies? There was significant union membership at four of the case study organisations. Quite unexpectedly we found that even where PML was included in the relevant enterprise agreement the relevant unions had played a negligible role in the introduction or extension of PML in these enterprises. It could be argued that our finding is hardly surprising given that management rarely acknowledges unions or employees as a driving force behind policy innovation (Zetlin and Whitehouse 1998, 10). However interviews with the relevant unions at *Manuco* and *Unico* openly acknowledged the introduction and extension of PML was a management initiative, and at *Carco* placing the increased PML in company policy sidelined any union involvement in its negotiation.

On the other hand, the desire of management to contain union influence through introducing or increasing PML was a theme in number of organisations where there was significant union membership. At *Manuco*, taking the initiative around PML and other proposals was seen to allow the company to better meet the needs of its employees by consulting directly with them, without getting caught up in industry wide union negotiations:

Whilst we don't exclude [the union], we make it very clear that our interest here is in progressing the well-being of our employees and not in meeting the political needs or the industry needs [of the union] as such. So we've tried to have a focus on making sure not so much that we're ahead of the game, although I think we probably are, but making sure that the sorts of benefits that we're able to pass on to our employees are those that are important to them.

CEO *Manuco*

At *Carco*, *Healthco* and *Unico* the desire to contain union influence contributed to decisions by management to put forward offers of PML that were well in excess of relevant industry standards.

While the unions at both *Carco* and *Unico* had negotiated the initial PML provision of six and twelve weeks respectively, they were not involved in the decision to increase the quantum of that leave. At *Unico*, the decision to increase PML caught the union by surprise:

I sort of jaw dropped when we saw it because there's no question about the fact that it was a very generous initiative. We couldn't quibble with that, and you know, we weren't going to turn around and say, 'No, no, no, we're not going to accept it.'

Union organiser *Unico*

Nonetheless, once in place, the relevant unions have used the benchmarks established in the case study organisations in enterprise bargaining negotiations within their respective industries. This is particularly evident in the case of the National Tertiary Education Union, which has used the increased quantum of PML introduced at *Unico* to win increases in PML across the university sector.

So if the unions in several of our case study organisations were not pushing for PML, was there any role for direct employee pressure? While many of those managers interviewed spoke of responding to employee need, there was little evidence that there was a strong push for PML by employees. Where employee pressure was reported it was more in response to individual cases or in respect to specific groups of employees. At *Busico* it was only when the company's first female partner negotiated paid leave after the birth of her child that PML began to be discussed within the organisation. At *Funco* a concern to retain female managers who went on leave led to some senior management support for the introduction of PML and some other flexible work arrangements:

What had happened in the organisation [was] there's a lot of women who were pivotal in various areas [who] were going on mat leave, and all of a sudden the managers initially started to jump up and down and say, almost like 'This is your problem...Don't you see what a problem this is?' It hadn't arisen before because the women hadn't been in those positions, but now all of a sudden they were going on mat leave, and then there was this subtle change from it is somehow 'my fault' to 'Well, how are we going to deal with it because we want them to come back', and then all of a sudden it got a little bit of a life of its own...

Senior Manager *Funco*

Overwhelmingly it was the personal leadership and commitment of a number of executive and senior managers which appeared to provide an impetus to action around PML, with previous work and personal experiences in particular being an important influence. At *Manuco*, most interviewees agreed that the idea of introducing PML came initially from the HR Director. In her previous job she had been responsible for the introduction of PML in a local government authority and prior to that worked as a teacher, where she had been able to access PML for the birth of her own children.

I pushed it. That would be the one thing that I'd say that that wouldn't have happened if I hadn't been here. Because even at that stage, that's three years ago, the [Union] you know, they might have had it down the bottom of their wish list; they didn't even mention it; the women who were delegates weren't pushing it...At [local authority] I got paid maternity leave into their EBA and they have that there. Coming from a teaching background you know, three months paid maternity leave has been in several years, and I had both of my children on paid maternity leave. So I just believe that it's one of the industrial rights of working women as your basic [right], and I had a lot of trouble getting it into the [local authority] EBA more trouble than I had getting it in here.

The actual decision to introduce PML had significant support from the CEO, who sees action around EEO and diversity action more broadly as consistent with both his business experience and his personal values. At *Healthco* too the decision to introduce PML, according to both the CEO and other managers interviewed, was initiated by the HR Director, who had had significant HR experience in the UK:

When I came to Australia ... I was really staggered that Australia was so far behind the world in terms of paid maternity leave. I mean I keep joking with [the CEO] that I have two kids and I should make our paid parental leave retrospective; that I missed out!

The organisational context

What drives or motivates organisations to take action around PML at a particular time or in a particular way is influenced by a number of factors, both internal and external to that organisation. Internal factors include organisational values and culture, work and workforce organisation, organisational change and industrial/employee relations. In *Manuco* and *Healthco*, for example, there is a commitment to, and practice of, people-centred management, and this appeared to provide a positive and dynamic environment in which these organisations approach both EEO and work and family issues more generally. This creates the 'space' for a focus on 'the right thing to do' or for undertaking ongoing action to improve organisational commitment.

External factors include industry/global pressures and demands, which place particular business pressures on organisations, legislative requirements, government policy and perceptions of social and community responsibility. Business pressures and demands create the context in which PML policy is developed and they can work to facilitate or frustrate any action. The recent community and political debates around paid maternity leave and work and family provisions more generally created an environment in which a number of organisations decided to take specific action to introduce or to extend PML. The debate influenced both the timing and also the structure of PML in several of the case study organisations. For example at *Funco*, the debate around PML provided a profile for the issue that had not been present when earlier attempts were made to introduce it.

I guess my honest opinion about paid maternity [leave] is more that it became and has become quite a hot issue. I'm not sure the organisation would have done it for any other reason.

Operations Manager *Funco*

During the course of the community debate round PML, much was made of the fact that Australia lagged behind almost every OECD country in not having a national scheme. Providing PML became, for several larger companies, the hallmark of a modern 21st century company. This was the context in which *Unico* increased its PML provision to one year, *Carco* and *Manuco* increased the quantum of PML they provided to 14 weeks, the ILO minimum recommended by HREOC (HREOC 2000b), and *Healthco* increased the quantum of PPL leave provided to eight weeks.

Concluding comments

The seven 'best practice' case studies of PML provision are exceptional enterprises in the Australian context. They have won public EEO and work/family awards and the PML provided in all of the case study organisations would fall in the 'good' category of Marian Baird's 'good, bad and ugly' typology (Baird 2003, 101). While most of the PML provision exceeds relevant industry standards, the differential quantum of and criteria for access to PML, set out in Table 1, underscore the limits of individual enterprise initiatives in substituting for a national PML scheme. Given such a national scheme is now unlikely, our research suggests that the narrow business case needs to be recast to reflect the wider range of beliefs and interests than can be mobilised in support of enterprise based PML provision. We suggest that there are three main elements to this recasting.

First, the promotion of voluntary employer PML provision, either through enterprise bargaining or company policy, needs to be based on understanding of why and how organisations take up PML initiatives. While a business case rationale can be harnessed to push for the introduction of PML and other family friendly benefits, the way it was used in our case study organisations suggests that it is more about organisational effectiveness than a narrow cost/benefit analysis. The promotion of enterprise based PML also needs to harness other rationales such as a concern with 'the right thing to do' and with organisational commitment and cohesion. While other case study research has also identified a range of arguments that were used to introduce EEO or work/family benefits such as PML (Zetlin and Whitehouse 1998; Dex and Scheibl 2001; but cf Wynd and Brown 2001), little practical use has been made of these insights, with a continued reliance on a narrowly conceived and largely rhetorical business case argument.

Second, emphasising such drivers as the ‘the right thing to do’ can work to reinstate social justice and gender equity as goals of PML, goals which have slipped out of sight with the recent emphasis on the business case and the bottom line. Despite the lack of any overt public policy support for an ‘equity orientation’ around PML (Baird 2004, 270-271), our study found that within the case study companies, even in the face of weak and contradictory attitudes to equality generally, there is support for PML on gender equity grounds. Perhaps one way of harnessing and promoting this rationale for PML would be to couch gender equity goals in terms of ‘equal citizenship’, based on the principles of social justice and fairness (Zetlin and Whitehouse 2003), not only within society but within organisations. This is important because where gender equity is not an explicit consideration in organisational initiatives such as PML it is difficult to manage for gender equitable conditions and outcomes.

Third, the conception of the business case needs to be broadened. One way of conceptualising a broader business case to see it as a pyramid where the narrow cost/benefit business case is only the ‘tip of the iceberg’. The next layers are about both specific and general organisational effectiveness and cohesion; such as attraction and retention, and organisational well-being. These layers are in turn underpinned by layers drawing on the wider external organisational context, including the industry and global economy and the community and social environment in which the organisation is located. A broad business case draws on all these layers and incorporates the medium to long-term interests of the organisation and its employees within the context of the medium to long-term interests of the economy and the community. Focusing on all of these layers opens up the potential for a number of different social, economic, industry and organisational contexts to be mobilised in support of equity measures such as PML.

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