

Welcome to the 2nd edition of the Body in the Workplace Series!

Over six months have passed since our first newsletter and a lot has happened in this space, with employers, academics and policymakers turning their attention to the body at work.

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The Body @ Work – At a Glance

In **September 2020**, Victoria's Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) made a world-first claim for **Reproductive Health and Wellbeing Leave** as part of its collective bargaining agenda. The original claim was available to men, women and gender diverse people and provided five days paid leave for a range of reproductive health concerns and interventions including menstruation, menopause, poly-cystic ovarian syndrome, endometriosis, IVF, hysterectomies and vasectomies, terminations and social and medical gender affirmation therapies.

In **October 2020**, Malta introduced 100 hours of **paid leave for IVF treatment**, available to any prospective parent, regardless of relationship status or gender identity. This is an issue that is receiving increased attention in Australia, with the Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation (ANMF) and HACSU backing the idea.

In **November 2020**, Future Super introduced **paid leave for menstruation and menopause**. Chief Operating Officer, Leigh Dunlop, argues it is 'unfair women should have to dip into their personal or holiday leave to manage the regular symptoms of periods and menopause' (see, Tu 2021). Australian sustainable period underwear brand, Modibodi, also introduced paid leave for menstruation, menopause and miscarriage in **May 2021**.

In **March 2021**, New Zealand passed legislation providing three additional days **paid leave for miscarriage and still birth**. Labour Party MP Ginny Andersen argued this benefit will 'give women and their partners time to come to terms with their loss without having to tap into sick leave. Because their grief is not a sickness, it is a loss' (see, ABC News 2021).

In **March 2021**, Senator Ivana Bacik presented the **Organisation of Working Time (Reproductive Health Related Leave) Bill 2021** in the upper house of Ireland's legislature, the Seanad Éireann. The Bill calls for a reproductive health leave scheme, including paid leave for early miscarriage and fertility treatments. In **April 2019**, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) had called for **paid leave for miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy and fertility treatment**.

In **April 2021**, the former CEO of Asiana Airlines was **fined by a court in South Korea for refusing 138 employee requests for menstrual leave**. Article 73 of South Korea's Labor Standards Act [Act No. 5309/1997] provides one day of unpaid leave per month. Employers are not allowed to deny menstrual leave and there are criminal penalties for non-compliance, including up to two years imprisonment or a fine of up to 10 million won.

In **May 2021**, the NSW Department of Education announced a **trial program to distribute free menstrual products in public schools**, following the lead of Victoria and South Australia. The initiative aims to address period poverty and menstrual absenteeism in the education system, issues that are receiving increased attention since Isobel Marshall was named Young Australian of the Year for her not-for-profit work on period poverty.

In **May 2021**, Standard Chartered commissioned the Fawcett Society, a women's rights charity, to **survey over 300,000 workers in the UK's financial sector** to investigate the impact of menopause and unsupportive working environments on gender equality (see, Makortoff 2021). The relationship between menopause and paid work is receiving increased attention in the UK – in **October 2020**, the **British Medical Association** surveyed over 2,000 doctors and found a significant number reduced their hours or retired early due to a lack of support during menopause and sexist and ageist attitudes. On World Menopause Day in **October 2019**, Channel 4 announced its **menopause policy**, which provides the option for additional workplace support such as desk fans, access to a quiet/cool room, occupational health assessments, flexible working arrangements or paid leave.

From our Network!

In **January 2021**, Alana Munro – PhD candidate at the University of Sydney and Policy Officer at the Australian Department of Health – surveyed 240 menstruators on their experiences with their period **on Instagram**. Alana found 33% of respondents felt anxious managing their period outside their home and 70% said their period impacted their school, university or work attendance. Alana also found 82% of respondents would like access to menstrual leave at school, university or work.

In **March 2021**, Sydney Colussi was interviewed by Lisa Leong for the ABC's This Working Life podcast about menopause at work. Listen to the episode here: **Stop the silent career killer, managing menopause at work**.

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In **April 2021**, Professor Beth Goldblatt and Dr. Linda Steele of the University of Technology Sydney, Faculty of Law, presented their recent paper, Disposable Menstrual Products as Law's Objects (forthcoming in the Columbia Journal of Gender and Law) at Columbia University's symposium, 'Are you there Law? It's Me, Menstruation'. The symposium celebrated the 50th anniversary of Judy Blume's beloved novel, *Are you there God? It's Me, Margaret*, and is the 'first-ever symposium to explore the intersection of menstruation and the law'. Find out more about the symposium [here](#).

Menstrual and Menopause Research Project Workshop – May 28th

On world Menstrual Hygiene (MH) Day, Friday May 28th, we are hosting a Menstrual and Menopause Research Project Workshop at the University of Sydney. The Workshop is an opportunity for leading scholars in the fields of political economy, industrial relations, gender studies, law and public health to meet and discuss research findings related to menstruation, menopause and reproductive health and wellbeing.

At the workshop, scholars will present up-to-date research and receive feedback from others working in this exciting and rapidly evolving field. We will also be hearing from key industry leaders who are advocating for more inclusive policies and practices around reproductive health and wellbeing in the workplace. Following the workshop, we will be circulating the **3rd edition of our Body in the Workplace newsletter**, which will provide a detailed summary of presentations and roundtable discussions.

Below are key workshop resources, including journal articles and publications that provide additional information on the research and contributions of workshop participants.

Workshop Resources

Presenters – Professor Beth Goldblatt and Dr. Linda Steele (University of Technology Sydney, Faculty of Law)

- Linda Steele and Beth Goldblatt, '[The Human Rights of Women and Girls with Disabilities: Sterilization and Other Coercive Responses to Menstruation](#)' in C Bobel et al (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Menstruation Studies*

(Palgrave Macmillan, 2020)

- Linda Steele and Beth Goldblatt, '[Engaging with Law's Menstrual Moment](#)' (2020) *Australian Feminist Law Journal*
- Beth Goldblatt and Linda Steele, '[Bloody Unfair: Inequality related to Menstruation – Considering the Role of Discrimination Law](#)' (2019) 41(3) *Sydney Law Review*
- Beth Goldblatt and Linda Steele, 'Disposable Menstrual Products as Law's Objects' (2021) *Columbia Journal of Gender & Law* (forthcoming)

Presenters – Casimira Melican (Victorian Women's Trust, menstruation and menopause policy) and Jane Bennett (Chalice Foundation, menstrual educator)

- Victorian Women's Trust (VWT) – menstrual policy
 - [About VWT's policy](#)
 - Casimira Melican & Grace Mountford, [Why we've introduced a menstrual policy and you should too](#)
 - Sydney Colussi, [Menstrual Leave – making space for the body at work](#)
 - Casimira Melican, [A short history of workplace menstrual policies](#)
 - Casimira Melican, [How to start conversations about menstruation and menopause in your workplace](#)
 - Casimira Melican, [Bleeding from home](#)
 - Chalice Foundation, [The Leak](#)
- Menstrual health & wellbeing and positive menstrual culture
 - Lara Briden, *Period Repair Manual* (Pan Macmillan, 2018)
 - Lara Briden, *Hormone Repair Manual* (Pan Macmillan, 2021)
 - Lisa Hendrickson-Jack, *The Fifth Vital Sign* (Fertility Friday Publishing Inc., 2019)
 - Gabrielle Jackson, *Pain and Prejudice* (Allen & Unwin, 2020)
 - Karen Pickering & Jane Bennett, *About Bloody Time* (Victorian Women's Trust, 2019)

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- Period Summit
 - On 30th June 2021, The Commissioner for Children and Young People SA Helen Connolly will team up with Taboo, Period Revolution, and Chalice Foundation for an engaged day of exploration and discussion on menstruation in Adelaide
 - If you are interested, register for the Summit, [here](#)
- Celebration Day for Girls
 - 'With the intention to overturn secrecy and embarrassment **Celebration Day** for Girls nurtures connection, normalisation and openness through practical and positive information, stories and fun activities'

Presenter – Thea O'Connor (Wellbeing and Productivity Advisor, provides menopause training for managers)

- [Menopause – A workplace issue in need of leadership](#)

Additional Resources

Media

- Anna Kelsey-Sugg and Maria Tickle, '[Menopause can make everyday work a struggle. So why aren't we talking about it?](#)' ABC News
- This Working Life with Lisa Leong, '[Stop the silent career killer, managing menopause at work](#)' ABC
- Jessie Tu, '[Superannuation introduces paid menstrual and menopause leave](#)' Women's Agenda
- Mornings with Nadia Mitsopoulos, '[The case for menstrual leave in Australia](#)' ABC News
- BBC News, '[Menstrual leave: South Korea airline ex-CEO fined for refusing time off](#)'
- Wendy Tuohy, '[Australia's first claim for "reproductive leave" gets ACTU backing](#)' The Age
- Rani Hayman, '[Girls are staying away from school when they have their period, research shows](#)' ABC News

- ABC News, '[New Zealand passes miscarriages bereavement leave law, giving would-be parents time to grieve](#)'
- Jordan Baker and Laura Chung, '[NSW to trial free tampons and sanitary pads in public schools](#)' The Sydney Morning Herald
- Kalyeena Makortoff, '[Menopause study to uncover impact on senior women in the city](#)' The Guardian
- Channel 4, '[Menopause Policy](#)'
- Modibodi, '[Modibodi launches menstrual, menopause & miscarriage paid leave](#)'

Academia

- Thomas Hvala, '[In vital need of reform: providing certainty for working women undergoing IVF treatment](#)' (2018) 41(3) UNSW Law Journal
- Sally King, '[Menstrual leave: good intention, poor solution](#)' in J Hassard and L.D. Torres (eds) *Aligning Perspectives in Gender Mainstreaming: Gender, Health, Safety and Well-Being* (Springer, 2021)
- Inga T Winkler and Virginia Roaf, '[Taking the bloody linen out of the closet: menstrual hygiene as a priority for achieving gender equality](#)' (2014) 21(1) *Cardozo Journal of Law & Gender*
- Emily Krusz et al, '[Menstrual health and hygiene among Indigenous Australian girls and women: barriers and opportunities](#)' (2019) 19(146) *BMC Women's Health*
- Rachel B. Levitt and Jessica L. Barnack-Tavlaris, '[Addressing Menstruation in the Workplace: The Menstrual Leave Debate](#)' in C Bobel et al (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Menstruation Studies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020)
- Marian Baird, Elizabeth Hill and Sydney Colussi, '[Mapping menstrual leave legislation and policy historically and globally: A labour entitlement to reinforce, remedy or revolutionise gender equality at work?](#)' (2021) 42(1) *Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal* (forthcoming)

Reports

- British Medical Association, '[Challenging the culture on menopause for working doctors](#)' (October 2020)

The Body@Work Project and newsletter is convened by Sydney Colussi, A/Prof Elizabeth Hill and Prof Marian Baird, The University of Sydney.