

# Mum fights sacking in industrial court

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Sad ... Janette Wynbergen leaves the hearing yesterday. Photo: Nick Moir

A woman sacked because she refused to work every Saturday for her children's sake would not be welcomed back by her colleagues, a industrial court was told yesterday.

This was despite Janette Wynbergen's employer, baby products retailer Babyco, priding itself on being a family-friendly workplace.

Mrs Wynbergen, married with four children under the age of 11, was sacked on February 20 after she refused to accept a new roster which prevented her from taking her daughters to netball on weekends.

The Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association took her case to the NSW Industrial Relations Commission, saying it wanted to send a warning to employers to be more family-friendly.

Mrs Wynbergen, 32, whose husband Michael is still employed by Babyco as a warehouse manager, told the court yesterday that she offered to work Thursday nights and some Sundays in order to have alternate Saturdays off - the same benefit extended to the chain's 33 store managers.

But the firm would not budge, with the only alternative being a pay cut after converting to part-time employment.

"I said I couldn't really do that because my children play sport," Mrs Wynbergen told the court.

"Basically, I said I will do anything you ask of me, just to get one of the Saturdays off [each fortnight]. I am very disappointed because I loved what I was doing, I thought it was a very good company to work for and I am hoping to go back."

But her stand for family values cost Mrs Wynbergen her job and, ironically, she could not afford to keep her girls at netball.

Babyco's NSW manager, Vicky Kulupach, said media coverage of the issue had caused upheaval for staff and she did not think Mrs Wynbergen's colleagues would be happy to have her back.

"They wouldn't be happy, to be honest. They all share work responsibilities and look after each other in their own store as a family," she said.

Babyco's managing director, John Langley, insisted his business was family-orientated but he had no choice but to retrench Mrs Wynbergen, a task he described as difficult and sad.

Mr Langley said he was trying to save the Bankstown store where Mrs Wynbergen worked by boosting poor sales and therefore, she needed to work on Saturdays.

The hearing continues today.

**AAP**