

Beauty therapist told pregnancy was 'her own problem' before losing job

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A pregnant beauty therapist was told her pregnancy "was her own problem" prior to her dismissal.

In the case before the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), the unnamed woman was awarded a total of €5,179 due to a number of breaches of employment legislation.

Employment law expert and solicitor, Richard Grogan has described the circumstances around the dismissal "as being particularly heartless".

Some €4,000 of the payment in the case related to the discrimination she suffered as a result of being dismissed while

pregnant and for harassment arising from a phone call she received on January 19th. The remainder of the award related to matters such as holiday pay.

Mr Grogan said the €4,000 award for discrimination "will no way, in a month of Sundays, act as a deterrent to employers in sacking pregnant employees".

"It is extremely low," he said.

Significant decline

In the case, the woman told her employer in October 2015 that she was pregnant. In January 2016, she received a phone call from the salon's manager stating that the business's accountant had said she should be dis-

missed due to a significant decline in business.

The therapist asked to stay on at work and suggested her hours be halved. The therapist said the female manager became aggressive and explained the company's circumstances. She received her dismissal letter on January 21st, 2016.

Two days before receiving the dismissal letter, the pregnant woman phoned the salon and alleged that the manager's daughter told her the "pregnancy was her own problem" in the context of being dismissed.

The WRC official said that in making the appropriate remedy, she was mindful that the employer went out of

business in July 2016.

Mr Grogan, who was not involved in the case, said the employer had shown "seant regard for the employee who was dismissed out of hand.

"This form of discrimination is abhorrent and needs to be stamped out and breaches of the relevant legislation cannot be countenanced."

'Terrified' of telling bosses

He said pregnancy related dismissals are becoming more and more common so much so that it is a question of "get pregnant, get fined" and that pregnant employees "are terrified of telling their bosses that they are pregnant".

IRISH TIMES 27th June 2017.