

23 March 2008

Parental Leave Inquiry
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City, ACT 2601

Re Paid Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave

Dear Sir/Madam

I would like to show my support for the inclusion of paid maternity, paternity and parental leave as part of the compulsory employment benefits such as superannuation, paid sick leave and paid annual leave.

The Australian population needs to grow in order to sustain its economic growth. This growth should be underpinned by an increase in birth and immigration. The biggest hindrance in encouraging Australian families to grow by birth is the financial impact.

The alarming rise in the cost of housing, education, food, medical expenses and petrol (all basic needs) is like a big, scary sign in the highway of life to working couples saying "Beware the cost of having children". The provision of paid maternity, paternity and parental leave should help bring down this 'barrier'.

In Australia, the average age of the Australian population is continuously rising. There is a danger that at some point, the size of the working population will no longer be enough to sustain the tax revenue that the Australian government needs to fund all its expenses in providing benefits and infrastructure to the nation.

It is a fact that people from other countries immigrate to Australia and contribute to the country's productivity and the government's generation of tax revenue. But is it enough? Do we have the required population of youth who could be trained and educated to become professionals and skilled workers? We are currently running at full capacity. This is further pressure to the rising inflation which the Reserve Bank of Australia has been trying to tame for the last 5 years.

The introduction of paid maternity, paternity and parental leave has already been a subject of comprehensive inquiry, as well as a Senate inquiry into Senator Stott Despoja's first Private Senator's Bill for paid maternity leave.

The Australian Democrats introduced historic federal legislation to establish a paid maternity leave scheme that would provide all working women with 14 weeks

Government-funded leave at the minimum wage on the birth or adoption of a child. Yet, despite the efforts of the Democrats, Australia remains one of only two OECD countries that do not have paid maternity leave. The other is the United States of America.

The government should act now. It is not too late, but fairly soon, it will be.

Yours sincerely

Richie Martinez