

#### Summary of recommendations:

1. That all women with at least one year's service with their current employer have access to 14 weeks of paid maternity leave at full pay or 28 weeks at half pay (as a first step).
2. That gradually this is extended to 26 weeks at full pay or a year at half pay, in line with the Community and Public Sector Union's request. Unlike the CPSU, I do not believe this should be limited to employees in the Australian Public Service but perhaps they see this as a first step.
3. That all women returning from maternity leave have the right to return to work on a part time basis.
4. That the period of total maternity leave (paid and unpaid) after which women have the right to return to their job be extended from one year to two years.

#### Submission:

I am an employee of the Australian Public Service (APS), currently on maternity leave following the birth of my first child at the end of last year. I have received 28 weeks of maternity leave at half pay, and this has greatly assisted my husband, baby and me. As a highest priority, I feel that all working women should have this same access to 14 weeks at full pay or 28 weeks at half pay.

I would appreciate the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) suggestion of 26 weeks of paid maternity leave for APS employees, which I assume could be taken as a year at half pay. I do not think this should be limited to APS employees, although this may be a first step. There may need to be a phasing in period to achieve this.

I also feel fortunate to have the right to return to my job on a part time basis when I return to work after my year on maternity leave. I realise that not everyone has that option, and in my case I doubt I would return to work at all when my year is up if I did not have the option. It is my belief that introducing this flexibility more widely could only be beneficial to the labour force participation rate.

I would greatly prefer to spend the first two years of my son's life with him, as child psychologist Steve Biddulph's research suggests is optimal for children. Quality part time jobs, even in the public service, are scarce to non-existent. Because I do enjoy my job, and because I doubt that I could find another equally as enjoyable on a part time basis at a later date, I feel obligated to return to work at the end of my year of maternity leave as there is no guarantee my job will remain open to me if I take longer than one year of maternity leave.

References:

Union to lobby Rudd for longer maternity leave, Community and Public Sector Union  
press release, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2008

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