

## **Submission for Inquiry into Paid Maternity, Paternity and Parental leave.**

I currently have a baby who is 11 months old, our first. I am shift worker in a professional career; my partner also does shift work. The AWA I was employed under at the time I became pregnant only permitted me to work until 28 weeks gestation. From 28 weeks I was required to take unpaid maternity leave or use accrued annual and long service leave. The maximum time on maternity leave permitted was twelve months which included any annual or long service leave. There was no paid maternity leave available.

Financially, because of the unavailability of paid maternity leave and my income being the primary one, I had to return to work when my baby was seven months old. This was difficult not only emotionally but also practically because I wanted to keep breastfeeding until the baby was twelve months. I have managed to keep breastfeeding by leaving expressed milk and expressing at work. You can imagine it is very difficult to express milk at work. There are no facilities available. Non standard shift patterns added to the difficulties. Some shifts start at 4:30am and finish at 2pm. I get up 30mins earlier to express milk in the morning and after six hours at work I need to find time and somewhere to express.

Even though there is no formal agreement in place my roster has been adjusted to allow me to have the opportunity to express milk during my shifts. It is ironic that my husband does have the availability of paid paternity leave immediately after the birth of the child if he is the primary carer, if only he could breastfeed.

The other difficulty with returning to work so early was the lack of care after hours available for shift workers. To solve the problem of childcare my husband has gone to part time, we use part day care and have managed to find some in home care in our area. My nearest family members interstate.

Whilst on maternity leave I am not permitted to find other employment and there is currently no availability of part time or casual employment with my organisation. It is fulltime or nothing. The organisation I work for has just introduced six weeks paid maternity leave however this is a very small amount of time considering I must stop work unpaid from 3 months before my due date. Our decision to have another child will have to take into account the cost of childcare for us as shift workers and also the financial penalty of me not receiving any income whilst on maternity leave.

I think there should be some form of paid paternity leave, I believe it should be government funded and means tested below \$200 000 combined income. It is frustrating that I have spent 10 years building my career to my current position in the same organisation and paying large amounts of tax. Yet there is no scheme to assist me financially whilst I am on maternity leave.