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NTEU Submission

to the

Productivity Commission Inquiry into Paid Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave 2008

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Productivity Commission Inquiry into Paid Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) represents more than 26,000 staff employed in the tertiary education sector in Australia. While academic and general staff in the university sector comprise the vast majority of NTEU's membership, the Union also represents staff of student organisations, English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) and staff working in university companies. In addition, the Union represents an increasing number of staff working in private education providers, TAFE and adult education.

Women comprise 54% of NTEU membership and are well represented in all the Union's representative elected bodies. Women members also participate in the Union's affairs through the Women's Action Committee, which is comprised of women representatives from each State and Territory and an Indigenous representative. It represents the specific interests of women working in Australian tertiary education institutions

The NTEU welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Paid Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave, and welcomes the discussion it has engendered in relation to a common standard of paid maternity leave for Australian working women.

NTEU has been at the forefront of advocating for improvements to the work/life balance for higher education staff for a number of years, and in doing so has won significant industrial outcomes in relation to parental leave. Advances made by the Union include improved paid parental and maternity leave provisions (now at a minimum of 26 weeks), better leave options for work/life situations (such as carers and adoption leave), nominal caps on academic workloads, and more flexibility in employment arrangements.

Introduction: Current Situation

The current standard for parental leave in Australia is the right of access to unpaid maternity leave, for a period of 52 weeks leave at the birth of a child. First granted to all award employees in 1991 by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC), it subsequently became enshrined in legislation in the Industrial Relations Reform Act (Commonwealth) 1993. The provision was then inserted into the Workplace Relations Act (Commonwealth) 1996 and in 2006, included in the Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Standard under the WorkChoices legislation.

In terms of paid maternity, or parental leave, there has been considerable debate. Most recently this debate culminated in an Inquiry by the *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission* [HREOC] in 2002, the purpose of which was to review options for paid maternity leave and make recommendations to Government.

Following the inquiry, HREOC recommended that the Commonwealth federally fund a maternity leave scheme, from general revenue, that

- a) provided for 14 weeks leave, at federal minimum wages (currently set at \$522.12 per week),
- b) it be accessed by all working women, inclusive of casual, part-time and self employed, who have worked 40 weeks of the past 52 weeks with any number of employers and/or in any number of positions.

Reaction to the proposal was mixed, with opposition to the proposal on a number of grounds. One objection was that, given Australia's 52 weeks unpaid parental leave provision and access to the so-called Baby Bonus (which provided for a lump sum payment on the birth of a child, irrespective of income), paid maternity leave was seen as not necessary.

Other objections were that paid maternity leave amounts to 'middle class welfare' (Senator Minchin), and that the related costs of a universal paid maternity scheme would be prohibitive (despite international evidence to the contrary).

Other opposition included objections to the enforcement of a mandated provision, with a preference for enterprise specific and negotiated outcomes. Finally, the philosophy of individual choice has been used to argue against the need for a specific policy, with the argument that paid maternity leave discriminates against women who stay at home.

NTEU believes that is therefore useful to examine the experience of the higher education sector, which has had universal paid parental leave in collective agreements since 2003. It is also useful to note the reasons why NTEU prioritised paid parental leave as an employment right, the benefits to staff and organisations, and the minimum standard achieved in universities. Finally, while this submission is not an economic paper, it notes approximate costs for paid parental leave in universities.

1. The Minimum Standard For Parental Leave in Australian Universities

In the higher education industry, the current minimum standard for maternity leave is 52 weeks leave, with 26 weeks of that leave at full pay.

The paid leave component is normally structured as 14 weeks leave on full pay, with the equivalent of an additional 12 weeks leave which can be taken on full pay, or as a proportion of pay, or in

some universities as a lump sum. The standard entitlement is available to all mothers employed on a continuing basis, and at some universities to casual and fixed term staff.

In 18 out of 39 universities, the entitlement is extended to adoption leave. Four institutions extend the paid leave component to those undertaking primary caring duties when their partner has given birth.

The minimum standard of 26 weeks is exactly that; with a number of universities in the Australian higher education sector currently offering up to 38 weeks paid leave.

This minimum was achieved largely as a direct result of the high priority NTEU placed on improving paid maternity leave during the last industrial bargaining round.

For a tabular representation of the standard of maternity and parental leave in Australian universities see Table A.

2. Source of NTEU Claim

NTEU's parental leave claim was based largely upon the minimum standard set by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The principle of paid maternity leave is an internationally recognised labour right; endorsed by the ILO at its third convention in 1921. This right was revised in 1952, coming into effect in 1955 as the Convention Concerning Maternity Protection (Revised), which provided for 12 week's maternity leave; then further revised in 2000 as C183 Maternity Protection Convention 2000.

Article 4 of the revised 2000 Convention states that "a woman to whom this Convention applies shall be entitled to a period of maternity leave of not less than 14 weeks". Article 6 further provides that women on maternity leave should be provided with "cash benefits".

- 1. Cash benefits shall be at a level which ensures that the woman can maintain herself and her child in proper condition of health and with a suitable standard of living.*
- 2. Where, under national law or practice, cash benefits paid with respect to leave referred to in Article 4 are based on previous earnings, the amount of such benefits shall not be less than two-thirds of the woman's previous earning or of such of those earnings as are taken into account for the purpose of computing benefits.*

Whilst Australia voted for the 2000 revision, Australia has never ratified the Convention.

NTEU and the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) also successfully negotiated a landmark maternity leave provision with the Australian Catholic University (ACU) in 2003 as part of the General Staff Enterprise Bargaining Agreement. This provision allowed for one year's paid maternity leave, with 12 weeks on full pay and a further 40 weeks on 60 per cent pay. This change placed ACU as a leading institution in terms of maternity leave provisions, and NTEU actively promoted the improved leave provision in negotiations with other institutions.

3. NTEU's Experience – Paid Parental Leave in Universities

NTEU adopted the principle of ILO minimum paid parental leave of 14 weeks for a number of important reasons.

a) Social Justice

Research has consistently shown that encouraging and assisting parents to raise their children has significant social benefits, including healthy development and ensuring the ongoing cohesion of communities. Improved paid parental leave is a way to recognise and support the benefit of parenting and improve the choices for women around childbearing¹

There are further arguments in favour of a paid maternity leave scheme, including the recognition of the social shifts that have occurred in relation to the increasing participation of women in higher education, the paid workforce and to women's increasing contribution to family incomes.

It should also be noted that, by removing what is essentially an economic disincentive for working women to have children, there may be a positive result in the fertility rate in Australia, which is currently 1.72 % and lower than the natural replacement rate².

b) Pay Equity and Career Progression

Research has shown that paid maternity leave assists considerably in improving the imbalance in gender equity, allowing women to maintain their links with the labour market as well as to continue with their contributions to superannuation and lifetime earnings.

Australia's higher education institutions are still a long way off achieving gender pay equity. A 1998 study of gender pay equity in higher education showed that in 1997, for academic staff, men

¹ HREOC, *Valuing Parenthood, Options for Paid Maternity Leave*, 2002, p61.

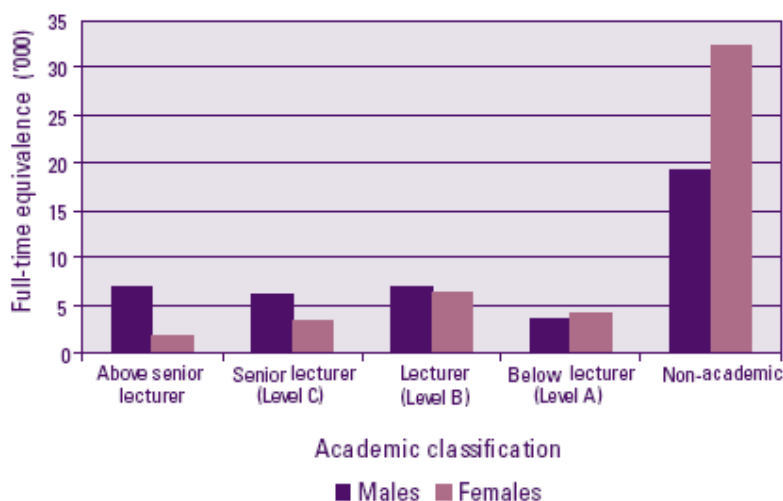
² Baird and Litwin, *Unpaid and Paid Maternity and Paternity Leave in Australia: Access, Use, and Options for Broader Coverage* 2007, p .4

earned an average of \$439.31 per fortnight more than women, and for general staff men earned an average of \$264.72 more than women³.

There are a number of reasons for this gap, perhaps most significant of which is under-representation of women in senior positions, itself partly a result of women's interrupted employment patterns.

For example, the proportion of academic staff at Levels D and E who are women has grown only slowly, with latest data (DEST 2005) showing that women at these levels to be significantly less (12%) than their male counterparts (78%). While at Level C (Senior Lecturer) the ratio is slightly better, women still remain significantly under-represented (at 36%) when compared with their male colleagues (64%). These rates remain well below what might be expected given women's share of the academic workforce, suggesting that there is still a measure of disadvantage experienced by women in progressing academic careers. Similarly, women are also clustered at the lower levels of the HEW general staff classification structure.

Fig 1 Male and Female FTE by Academic Classification 2005



Source: DEST Selected Higher Education Statistics Staff 2005 p 4.

This is not because women are not committed to their careers: the Probert et al study found that women were just as career-oriented and ambitious as men. However, the study also found that women were far more likely to be working part-time than men, and to have breaks in employment, with negative influences on their chances for promotion. It is well established that interruptions in

³ Probert, Ewer and Whiting, *Gender Pay Equity in Australian Higher Education*, 1998, pp 36 and 65.

employment such as those for childbirth and child raising reduce women's attachment to the labour force and can be barriers to women's career progression⁴. Clearly, these barriers have been working effectively to restrict women's access to senior university positions.

This is a pattern that extends beyond higher education: Australia's Background Report to the OECD Review of Family Friendly Policies states that:

*'[t]he time women take out of the workforce to have and look after children... contributes to the pay and earnings gap between women and men.... Child rearing also affects the hourly wage rate in a number of ways. For instance, it impacts on women's labour market experiences, often restricting career progression for those with family responsibilities. Periods of absence from the labour market are also associated with a lessening in value of labour market skills, and there is evidence to suggest that this decreases women's wages relative to men's wages.'*⁵.

Improved paid maternity leave can help to improve women's labour force attachment by encouraging return to work after leave and thereby reducing these barriers to women's career progression. Internationally, in countries where good paid parental leave is provided, employment activity rates post-birth are higher than in countries where paid parental leave is lower or minimal⁶. In the UK, the more generous the period and paid component of maternity leave, the more likely the woman is to return to work after leave⁷:

Furthermore, improved paid maternity leave can directly reduce the impact that career breaks for maternity have on the gender pay equity gap in higher education, by ensuring that these breaks are paid.

Finally, the impact of unpaid breaks in employment for women has negative consequences for women's superannuation due both to the lower overall superannuable salary for staff taking unpaid maternity leave; and also to the lower likelihood of immediate re-entry into the paid workforce for women on unpaid maternity leave. Improved paid maternity leave can therefore assist in achieving gender equity in retirement incomes for higher education employees.

However, it should be noted that the data shows that under representation of women in the higher education sector is not as extreme as in many other industries, a factor that can be attributed to

⁴ HREOC, *op cit*, p 49.

⁵ *Australia's Background Report to the OECD Review of Family Friendly Policies: The Reconciliation of Work and Family Life*, August 2002, p 14.

⁶ Fagan and Rubery's study cited in ACIRRT, *Paid Work and Parenting: Charting a New Course for Australian Families*, 2001, p 49.

⁷ ACIRRT, *Work-family balance: international research on employee preferences*, Working Paper 79, 2002, p 31.

some extent to the ongoing existence and relative improvement of a paid standard of maternity leave in the industry.

c. Retention of Skilled Staff

Retention of skilled staff is important to employers as it reduces the cost impact of turnover. Employers invest significant resources in recruitment and training of staff, meaning that long-term retention of those staff is important and ultimately economically efficient. The costs involved in replacing a staff member whose employment is terminated include separation costs, replacement costs, training costs and loss of productivity as the new staff member adjusts⁸.

NTEU has argued that is therefore in employers' interests to improve paid parental leave entitlements, as this encourages those taking parental leave to return to work at the conclusion of leave⁹.

Furthermore, it may be easier for employers to backfill parental leave positions if they are for longer periods, (such as up to a year), rather on for a shorter term.

The evidence suggests that staff are more likely to take parental leave where that leave is paid¹⁰. Therefore the provision of a long term payment for parental leave should assist employers by streamlining the appointments process and making backfilling of parental leave positions easier and simpler.

d. Health Benefits

Providing paid maternity leave would be in accord with international conventions, not only of the ILO but also of the United Nations and the World Health Organisation (WHO), both of which acknowledge the positive effects of paid maternity leave on the health and well being of both the mother and newborn child. As such, the WHO considers 16 weeks to be the minimum length of time for a woman to recover from childbirth and accommodate breastfeeding, and, in terms of child health, the WHO has found that children who are breastfed for at least four months “*have significantly less gastrointestinal and respiratory illness, including ear infections and asthma, than those who are not breastfed.*”¹¹ Thus a longer period of paid maternity leave would reduce the need for a woman to return to work before her child was able to reap the full health benefit of breastfeeding.

⁸ HREOC, *op cit*, p 56.

⁹ ACIRRT, *op cit*, p 31

¹⁰ Ibid, p 30.

¹¹ HREOC *op cit*,. p45.

4. The Effects of Revised Parental Leave Clauses in Universities

By 2006, all universities that have a NTEU negotiated collective agreement met the minimum requirement of 26 weeks paid maternity leave (or equivalent). While this standard, in itself, is far above what many other industries offer, as noted above, many universities offer substantially better terms and conditions (see Attachment A).

As such, 23 of Australia's universities were listed as 'Employers of Choice' by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) in 2008 (out of a list of 99 companies and organisations). The acceptance of this standard, and subsequent improvements made to it, gives weight to arguments that paid parental leave brings substantial benefits not only to those accessing it, but to the organisation as a whole.

The reason for this is relatively simple. In universities, the adoption of paid parental leave by university employers not only better supports employees' work-life balance, but reflects the fact that employers see it as in their interests in maintaining a skilled and efficient workforce. For example, in 2005 Monash University revised its paid maternity leave policy (as part of the Union negotiated collective agreement) to be 14 weeks at full pay and a further 38 weeks at 60% pay, on a pro rata basis. After 26 weeks' parental leave, staff on maternity leave may choose to return to work on a part-time basis and use the outstanding entitlement to be paid at a full salary. Additionally, where the Monash child-care facilities are used, staff also have the option of requesting that any outstanding entitlement from the 38 weeks at 60% pay be directed towards the payment of child-care fees. As a result, Monash University has recorded that the return rate from maternity leave has improved significantly, measuring over 92% in 2006.

(Source: EOWA 2007 Leading Edge Initiatives publication)

The ACU, which led the sector in terms of maternity leave provisions, conducted an analysis of the costs and benefits of their improved scheme one year after its implementation. The report found that the scheme had been well received by ACU staff, particularly female staff, who saw the provision as a "first step towards making academic life family friendly". This positive feedback carried over to the wider community, who saw it as evidence that the ACU was responding to broader concerns relating to work-life balance and social responsibility. The report also noted that ACU management had found that, as part of the process of consultation prior to the implementation of the maternity leave provision *"one of the key themes that came out was the whole notion of work/life balance, family friendly, a desire to have supportive conditions, not necessarily dollars"*¹²

¹² Thompson, Bittman and Saunders, *The Impact of the Australian Catholic University's Paid Maternity Leave Provision: Final Report* 2004 p25 - 26

It also reported that very few respondents interviewed for the report were concerned over the perceived cost to business, and that, in contrast to what business representatives usually believed, ACU management had determined that it wouldn't be a particularly costly measure. In fact, the report quoted University estimations of the cost to be less than 0.4% of the then current payroll, (even allowing for the number of women who took maternity leave in any year to double). The cost of flowing on the entitlements to academic staff were expected to increase overall costs only slightly.

However, almost 12 months after the implementation of the leave, the report found that there had not been any great change in the number of women taking maternity leave, and that the proportion of female staff taking leave was just over one per cent per year, well within budget expectations.

The report also found that there was no evidence to support the argument that the increased maternity leave provision had impacted negatively on women's employment prospect. Instead there was a perception that it had assisted in attracting and retraining staff, thus cutting the costs of recruitment and giving the ACU a competitive edge in recruiting staff.

In addition to maternity leave provisions in collective agreements, some institutions have recognised the wider problems associated with career breaks due to child-caring duties and adopted programs to assist women in returning to their careers. For example, the University of NSW has established the *Career Advancement Fund for Women* returning from Maternity Leave. This program assists full-time and part-time female academics in re-establishing their careers upon returning to the workforce. The fund has been designed to be accessed for research assistance, the purchase of equipment or consumables for research purposes, professional development or the recruitment of casual teachers to reduce teaching loads while the academic focuses on developing their research. In 2008, the EOWA commended UNSW's program as a leading example. NTEU notes that other leading institutions have established programs similar to that at UNSW.

In general, the 14 weeks' standard of paid maternity leave in the higher education sector serves to offset women's workplace disadvantage in terms of career progression and income. Clearly however, more needs to be done, and NTEU maintains that it is vital that, if Australia is to be considered an industrially progressive country, there is a national scheme for paid parental leave.

5. Cost of Paid Parental Leave Arrangements in Australian Universities

Based on the assumption that a maximum of 1% of staff are on maternity leave in any given year and that the average period of full paid leave is 26 weeks, the NTEU estimates¹³ that the maximum annual cost of paid maternity leave for any university is equal to 0.5% of its total employee expenses in any given year. Table 1 shows for 2006 the NTEU estimates of the cost of paid parental leave for a number of selected universities of differing size. As the data shows the cost of paid parental leave varies from \$178,000 per year for the University of the Sunshine Coast who only had 365 full time equivalent full time and fractional employees in 2006 to about \$2.9m for Monash University with over 5600 FTE employees. Importantly the Table shows that the cost of paid parental leave represents 0.3% or less of total income for all of these universities.

Fig 3 NTEU Estimates of Cost Paid Maternity Leave 2006 Selected Universities

Higher Education Provider	Full Time and Fraction Staff (Full Time Equivalent)	Total Employee Expenses (\$'000)	Cost of 26 Weeks Paid Parental Leave (\$'000)	Total Income (\$'000)	% Total Income
University of Sunshine Coast	365	\$35,542	\$178	\$67,077	0.3%
Macquarie University	1759	\$212,992	\$1,065	\$397,235	0.3%
Australian National University	3519	\$375,146	\$1,876	\$868,018	0.2%
Monash University	5623	\$580,994	\$2,905	\$1,052,321	0.3%

Source: Selected Higher Education Statistics and NTEU estimates.

¹³ In 2007 there was a total of 95,062 staff employed at Australian universities of whom 27,100 were females aged less than 45, which represented 29% of all staff. Given that there is no publicly available data on the cohort of university staff who actually take paid parental leave, it must be assumed that: 1) they are representative of the broader population and that the current existing Australian standard birth rate of 1.8 children per woman also applies, and 2) are of similar composition in terms of the split between academic and general staff and level of appointment as the rest of the institution's staff. It should be noted, however, that these assumptions may to some extent be an over-estimation of the costs of paid parental leave because being younger, staff taking this type of leave are likely, on average, to have lower rates of pay than for the university population overall.

Notwithstanding this proviso, it is on this basis that we have assumed that on average, every female staff member aged less than 45 will access 1.8 years of paid parental leave, which the standard for most Australian universities is currently 26 weeks. In other words, on average each female staff member aged less than 45 would be entitled to a total of 46.8 weeks or 0.9 of a year of paid parental leave. If on average each female employee took 0.9 years of paid parental leave over a 25 year period (20-45 age span) this means that on average 3.3% (0.9/25) of the female workforce aged less than 45 would be on paid maternity leave in any given year. Given that these employees account for 27% of the total workforce this means we estimate that 0.97% (rounded up to 1%) of the total workforce would be on paid maternity leave at any given time.

NTEU's own experience, and the effects of improved paid parental leave provisions across the sector support NTEU's recommendation that the conditions adopted by the higher education sector should be applied economy-wide. While these costs are specific to the sector, they can be applied to other similar sized bodies. Furthermore, proposals that incorporate small and independent businesses (such as in the HREOC recommendations) show that a universal and government funded scheme is affordable. Independent analysis has shown the net cost of a paid maternity scheme, based on the HREOC recommendations, to be an estimated \$213 million per year¹⁴.

In 2007, Senator Natasha Stott-Despoja of the Australian Democrats introduced a bill to Parliament that would guarantee 14 weeks paid maternity leave for all working women, at either the minimum wage, or (if earning under this) their average weekly earnings. The costings for the proposal indicated it would cost approximately \$591.6 million in the first year, not including offsets from the Family Tax benefits schemes. This assumed that the payment was taxable, and the women who received the payment were also eligible for the existing Baby Bonus and Maternity Immunisation Allowance. It should be noted that the estimated 2007 – 2008 costs to Government of these schemes would be at 1.3 billion and \$59.3 million respectively.

6. International Comparison

Another reason for the success in paid parental leave provisions in universities is that fact that tertiary education is a global industry. NTEU has maintained consistently that it is in universities' interests to provide improved parental leave in order to maintain their competitiveness – not only domestically, but also in comparison with international higher education institutions. Australian universities will not be able to take best advantage of the global market in higher education and attract the best applicants to positions if they provide conditions inferior to those offered overseas.

Absurdly, and despite all evidence and research demonstrating the economic and social benefits of paid parental leave, Australia remains one of the few countries (the others include the US, Lesotho, Liberia, Swaziland, and Papua New Guinea) that does not have some form of paid maternity leave for workers. Denmark and Norway have the highest level of maternity benefits - Norway provides ninety-six weeks of paid maternity leave while Denmark provides fifty two. Fathers are granted paid paternity leave or paid parental leave in sixty-five countries; and thirty one of these countries offer at least fourteen weeks of paid leave. British workers average twenty-five weeks and German employees thirty. In terms of countries that have low production and labor costs, Australia lags far behind - Vietnam provides for 4 – 6 months at 100% of wages, China provides for 90 days at 100% and Indonesia allows for 3 months at 100%. Both the Philippines

¹⁴ Baird and Litwin *op cit*, p .2

and Republic of Korea allow for 60 days at 100% of wages, while Thailand allows 100% for 45 days, then 50% for another 45 days.¹⁵

In Britain, the legislation goes further, with laws passed allowing parents of children under six to request a more flexible work schedule, with the onus on companies to approve such requests as long as they do not damage the business. There is also international evidence that employees value flexibility and better work/life balance arrangements more than wages alone - a 2003 survey of graduates in the UK revealed that graduates value flexibility more than wages¹⁶.

7. NTEU Proposal

Whilst in the higher education industry paid maternity leave is the industry standard, NTEU believes that this should be a universal right applicable to all working women – not just to those who have the industrial and political strength to achieve it through workplace bargaining.

NTEU supports the right of all women to access maternity support and asserts that the current arrangements within the social security system (eg the so called “Baby Bonus”) are inadequate. On this basis NTEU supports the ACTU’s submission to the Productivity Commission calling for a minimum Government-funded maternity leave payment for new mothers.

However, the Union believes that working women face unique disadvantages, including employment discrimination, lack of access to career progression and low wages compared with their male counterparts. This disadvantage is often exacerbated greatly if a woman chooses to have a child. Paid maternity leave for working women is one way to combat this kind of overall disadvantage for women. The fact that provision for paid maternity leave for working women is reflected in International Labor Organisation and United Nations Conventions, and that almost all western nations provide for paid maternity leave for working women reflects international acceptance of this view.

Thus NTEU supports the model proposed by the ACTU, with the proviso that the minimum standard for parental leave should be 26 weeks paid leave, ie:

- (1) 26 weeks paid parental leave, structured as 26 weeks paid maternity leave for all mothers of new born babies, funded by the Government at the federal minimum wage (\$522.12 per week), with 12 weeks of this leave alternatively available to:
 - another parent if she or he is to be the primary carer; or

¹⁵ http://www.apesma.asn.au/women/maternity_leave_around_the_world.asp

¹⁶ Halpin, Nick. "Work Life Balance – an Overview." Work Life Balance Centre. The Counseling Service, The University of Dundee. 3 Apr. 2007 [www.worklifebalancecentre.org].

- a parent adopting a child under the age of 5.
- (2) Guaranteed income at ordinary time earnings for the period of leave referred to in (1) above for parents in paid employment through the National Employment Standards (ie an employer-funded top-up).

Based on cost estimates provided by ACTU in their submission and following the same methodology NTEU would estimate the cost to Government of such a scheme to be \$1.95bn (\$12,648 per parent).¹⁷

Recommendations

NTEU urges the Productivity Commission to make the following recommendations in relation to maternity, paternity and parental leave:

- (1) That the Australian Government ratifies the Maternity Protection Convention C183 of the ILO.
- (2) That the Australian Government set a standard of 26 weeks as the minimum entitlement for paid maternity and parental leave, structured as 26 weeks paid maternity leave for all mothers of new born babies, funded by the Government at the federal minimum wage (\$522.12 per week), with 12 weeks of this leave alternatively available to:
 - another parent if she or he is to be the primary carer; or
 - a parent adopting a child under the age of 5.
- (3) That for those parents in paid employment, the Australian Government further guarantee income at ordinary time earnings for the period of leave referred to in (2) above through the National Employment Standards (an employer-funded top-up).

This standard is based on existing entitlements in the higher education industry as well as the level set by the ILO and the WHO and includes 14 weeks paid maternity leave for working mothers (the ILO standard) and an additional 12 weeks to assist in the physical recovery of birth and allow for breastfeeding to be established during those first vital months (WHO standard).

- (4) That the Australian Government ensure that employers who currently provide paid parental leave to their employees continue to fund such leave **in addition** to the entitlements set out in (2) and (3) above.

¹⁷ Based on ACTU's estimate of a 14-week scheme costing \$1.92bn..