

I was eligible for paid maternity leave when my children were born but it was very hard first time around with the twins. I had to leave work at 30 weeks pregnant as a multiple birth is much riskier than normal and whilst I had 12 weeks maternity leave, this meant the money ran out when they were about 2 months old. Living on one wage (my husbands) was very tough, I fell behind with payments for a store credit card and had debt collectors hounding at my door. We often only had just enough money to scrape food together and pay the rent, gas and electricity. Stupidly, even though I had two children at once, I didn't qualify for the Multiple Birth Allowance. Relatives helped us out a lot but it was very TOUGH. I went back to work part time when they were 8 months old, I'd have liked a little more time with them but it was financially impossible. When my youngest son was born 3 and a half years later I had long service leave and used this + 12 weeks maternity leave so it was a bit easier as I could take the long service leave at half pay for 6 months.

I think it is disturbing that women are discriminated against at this very vulnerable time in their lives. Pregnancy and childbirth are life changing events, women make up over half our society and when they are having children they are actually contributing a NEW GENERATION OF WORKERS AND CITIZENS. Women should be protected and rewarded for such a MAJOR CONTRIBUTION to society. It is a monumental decision to take on such a responsibility and financial burden, to raise the next generation, not to mention that pregnancy and childbirth are the most dangerous times in a woman's life.

If we don't care enough to give our children a good start at the very beginning how will our society be in the future? If we don't take care of mothers properly, how can they give their children the best start in life. It is a shame that women's contributions to society are again taken for granted and undervalued. I'm glad this is an issue and is being addressed. I'd like it to be resolved adequately so that my grandchildren will have a better start than I was able to give my sons.