

I wish to submit that:

government funded paid maternal leave is essential on economic grounds as a way of partially restoring to women the substantial economic losses they bear as a result of bearing and bringing up children.

These economic losses include

- work income forgone;
- superannuation missed out on, perhaps never to be made up;
- lost chances for even a moderately well-paid career in many cases;
- loss of the full use of a woman's education and career skills

The above are both personal, familial and social costs which accrue when women do not have paid maternal leave. Our current arrangements mostly leave women themselves to bear the brunt of these costs, while the rest of us benefit from the fact that their childbearing and rearing enables the continuation of our society. It is this unpaid work by women which produces the new generation who will grow up to support and eventually replace the ageing.

When rearing young children, most women without paid maternity leave must be constantly under additional stress trying to juggle the two unreconcilable sides of their lives: bringing up a young family, and earning money. (One might wonder why the extremely onerous and responsible work of rearing children has not been seen as worthy of being paid.)

In objective terms, mothers' education, training and career skills might be seen as wasted to some degree, should it be too difficult to return to their positions after some time away to bear and rear children, or should low level work be the only feasible employment.

Because of their economic losses in this way, women whose marriages do not survive, or who are widowed later on, may be particularly vulnerable economically, with scant savings, few career possibilities, and minimal superannuation. They may eventually have to turn to the state for support, scrimping to survive and constantly anxious lest some accident bring up an unexpected expense which cannot be met.

Finally, it is critical that maternal leave be government funded, since the alternative is would be a resumption/increase of discrimination against women in terms of reluctance to hire or promote them.