

Firstly I would like to say that I think the proposal is great – but needs some fine-tuning.

I would like to use my situation as an example and ask that this be taken into consideration.

I am a full time worker – full time taxpayer and have been since I was 16 years of age.

I am due to have my first baby in January 2009 at this point I anticipate that the only option available to me will be the \$5000 baby bonus + approx \$40 per fortnight family payment.

Should the current plan be implemented as currently proposed in the next budget on the 1 July 2008. I will be disadvantaged by approx 4 thousand dollars – even though I would have been technically entitled to the proposed Maternity Leave Payment.

Reasons Why I would have been entitled:

I have been working more than 10 hours a week for the last twelve months.
I would be making a claim within 6 months of the birth of my child – baby due Late January - implementation of Maternity payments 1 July is less than 6 months.

Why I will be disadvantaged:

I will be required to claim the \$5000 baby bonus prior to implementation of this policy.

This \$5000 (paid fortnightly) will be required to top up my half pay paid leave, in which I have negotiated through my employer. This is to enable us to pay our mortgage and expenses.

I hear you say well don't claim it – but this option is not possible as the half pay option will be even less than the minimum wage and thus not sustainable of our expenditure.

I feel forced into a catch 22.

Why would I not be entitled to a top up payment equivalent to what I should be entitled to as working mother? Why should I still be treated as a non-working mother and lose approx 4000 as a result? Why should I be forced back to work so soon?

There really should be something written into the first years policy so not to disadvantage mothers that have had babies 6 months prior to policy implementation. These mothers cannot be expected to hold tight with no assistance until the 1st July.

These are the women and babies that could be the first helped by this great government initiative. It just deludes me that if this is implemented the first lot of mothers that could be assisted and would be entitled to be assisted will be further financially constrained and disadvantaged as these mothers will be the first mothers that are returning to work too soon after the birth of their children.

Secondly if the claim for payment needs to be made after all other claims for payment I.E privately negotiated maternity leave, and within 6 months of the birth of their child.

What happens to those mothers that are given 6 months or more off work paid by their employers, do they have no right to claim the additional 18 weeks offered by the government. As they would now not be entitled to the payment as the claim was not made within the first 6 months of the Child's life.

Thank you for taking into consideration my points – in which I hope can be implemented in some form to assist not only my baby and myself but I am sure thousands of currently pregnant mothers in Australia.

Kind Regards,

Renaë Barnes

