

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

I am a 38 year old mother of a 2 year old daughter. I was previously an employee of a NSW State Government owned Corporation. I specifically chose to work for this employer due to the NSW State Government conditions and awards in respect to paid maternity leave and rights of return to work as my husband and I hoped we would be starting a family while I was working there.

I was fortunate to fall pregnant with our daughter in 2006, a year after I had been promoted to a senior management position within the company. I was also fortunate to access 14 weeks paid maternity leave (which I took as 28 weeks half pay) which began 2 weeks before our baby was born.

There has been some talk from people against paid maternity leave about people needing to be financially aware before having a baby. In this day and age when people are having children at a later stage in life I'm sure there are many people like my husband and I who certainly planned for the financial costs of having and raising a baby, and were prepared to live on one income for a period of time. However, knowing that I had access to paid maternity leave certainly made the choice for me to stay home for a 12 month period a lot easier. I find it incredible women are forced back to work before they are truly ready in an effort to pay mortgages and family bills. If a paid maternity leave support scheme was introduced this would at least give women and their families more options as to when they return to work. The baby bonus is certainly a help to new parents, and for us was used to pay the additional bills that came from having a Caesarean delivery.

My husband took 2 weeks off following the birth of our daughter however it would have been ideal if he had received some paid leave in order to be able to spend more time with his new family member. Fathers are often left out of the paid leave scheme, but as everyone knows men have a lot to get used to when their family expands as well. It has been well documented that men need to bond with their children, and that they are at risk of developing depression following a birth as well as the woman.

Further to paid maternity leave there is a further issue that needs to be discussed and tabled. I believe a woman's right to return to work on a part time basis is just as important an issue as their right to maternity leave. What possible economies of scale are brought about by women having to leave a business because of an old fashioned attitude that if you work, you work full time. In the days

of expensive and difficult-to-find childcare, and in times when women are having their babies later, many women want to combine the joy of being a mother with the desire to contribute to the family finances and have a stimulating job. However, while ever organisations are hesitant to keep positions open, or employ senior managers on a part time level, women will continue to leave the workforce, losing valuable skills and experience.

I returned to work on a job-share basis two days a week, after 12 months away from work. After three months this was negated and I was told I had to return to work on a full time basis. While my employer offered me extra time beyond the deadline they set so I could find full time childcare, this was not an option for my family. We did not want our 12 month old daughter in full time care, nor were we going to find a centre available to take her at short notice. I was forced to resign my position in a government organisation that considers itself "family friendly" and an "employer of choice" because they did not want managers to work on a job-share or part time basis.

I feel very frustrated and annoyed that I had built my career, and was a very loyal and competent employee, yet had to choose between my family and working for this organisation. Obviously I chose my family.

Women should not be faced with the choice of family or work. Having children is a wonderful experience but many women are finding they have to put this experience off until they can afford to do so, as they know their options for paid maternity leave and retaining their jobs are limited. The loss of skilled women in the workforce due to pregnancy and a desire to spend time with their families needs to be stopped.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this enquiry. If I can answer any further questions regarding this submission, please contact me.

Regards

Alison Collis