

Submission:

I support six months, paid paternity leave at full wage replacement. Such a scheme will promote optimal health outcomes for babies and go a long way to closing the gender pay gap.

Paid Parental Leave will benefit babies. The World Health Organisation explains that breastfeeding for the first six-months of a babies life maximises health benefits. Six months paid leave would maximise opportunities for mothers to breastfeed (all other things being equal). It is also known that babies bond with their primary care giver in the first six months.

In days gone by, women left the paid workforce upon becoming married. The rationale for this was that they would soon be looking after children. In 2008 women are an integral part of the modern workforce. Society has benefited enormously, in terms of economic productivity and creativity. Even if society didn't benefit, women still have a right to enter the work force. Everyone should be able to stand on their own two feet, women should not have to be dependant on a male 'bread-winner'. Such enforced dependency denies people the opportunity to fully live. It is also a major factor in abusive relationships.

Whilst female workforce participation is here to stay, it has not been fully realised and children still need to be looked after. On average, women still earn significantly less than men. Women are also over-represented in part-time and casual work. One major reason for this is that women still take on most of the child raising responsibilities. These responsibilities are vital. But performing them disadvantages a woman in the economy. This needs to be corrected and six months paid maternity leave would go a long way towards this goal. Furthermore, when economic circumstances dictate, women may choose to give their babies less attention or less time being breastfeed than they would ideally like. This may be necessary, to pay the rent or the mortgage and thus keep a roof over their head (and baby's head). Six months paid maternity leave, at full wage replacement, would go along way toward solving both these problems.

A major objection to Paid Parental leave is that starting a family is a personal choice and a personal undertaking. Why should taxpayer's money be spent in the personal sphere? Having children is of course an intensely personal thing for a couple. And individual children are of course the responsibility of their parents. But children are also members of our society. I want to live in a society that shares some of its wealth to make sure everyone has the best possible opportunities to succeed, and contribute, in society. As the old saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child. Our society, through the government, already support children in many ways. The most obvious is the education system. Councils build playgrounds and childcare centres. Governments fund after school sports and other activities. Ensuring that babies and primary care givers (usually their mothers) have time for bonding and breastfeeding is another vital investment in our children's future that the government has an opportunity to make.

I believe Australia should adopt a Paid Paternity Leave scheme, providing six months paid leave at full wage replacement. The technical details of how this could be achieved have been explained by Unions NSW, and other groups, in their submissions

and other documents. Such a scheme will benefit babies, by maximising the opportunity for them to be breastfeed in the first six months of their lives. It will benefit mothers, by shrinking the gender pay gap. And it will benefit society as a whole, by ensuring that parents are supported as they undertake the most important role in our society.

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