

As a full time working mother of two children, I would like to make the following comments about the draft scheme:

- It should be possible to take some maternity leave from 6 weeks before the due date. This will assist some women who are not able, for health reasons, to continue to work up until the due date (eg very physically demanding work, or very demanding pregnancy with health issues or twins) and who may not be eligible for other payments (eg due to casual work).

- The report indicates, and international guidelines suggest, that 6 months' leave is desirable for the mother in particular to promote breastfeeding. For this reason the duration of leave should be 26 weeks. It cannot be assumed that all or most women have sufficient annual or long service leave to extend their leave to 26 weeks or longer, especially with so many women in casual work.

- In support of this scheme, improved access to lactation consultants would be likely to assist in extending breastfeeding duration.

- I support the two weeks' paid leave for fathers. In particular, many women have caesarean delivery and need help at home for some time after the delivery.

- I think the amount of the payment is appropriate.

- I think it is appropriate that the government bear most of the cost and the employer a small part of the cost.

- I do not think it should be a loan. That would be inequitable when compared with non working parents.

Regards,

Sally North

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