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## ***Hon Anne Levy***

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I make this submission to support the Commission's recommendation of a system of Paid Maternity Leave for all Australian women workers.

My name is Anne Levy, my date of birth 29/9/1934. I am a retired politician, having been a member of the South Australian Parliament for 22 years, which included 3 years as President of the Legislative Council and five years as a Minister. My ministerial portfolios included Arts, Consumer Affairs, Local Government, and the Status of Women.

I strongly support the introduction of Paid Maternity Leave for Australian workers, and feel appalled that Australia is one of only two developed nations to not have such a scheme.

All studies have shown that such a scheme enhances productivity, strengthens worker attachment to the workforce, and assists in removing discrimination against women workers. It will be good for the economy and also increase equity in our society.

In addition it will have the social advantage of enabling a longer period of bonding between mother and child, which so many experts deem necessary for healthy child development.

The scheme proposed in the draft report of the Productivity Commission is not an ideal one from an equity point of view. In many countries the payment to the mother is a sizable proportion of her salary, and is not capped at the minimum wage. Ideally a woman worker on Paid Maternity Leave would receive her normal wage, as do all workers for all other forms of paid leave – sick leave, holiday leave, long service leave, etc. But I appreciate that the funding system in European countries differs from that proposed here, and that the compromise of a capped payment may be all that is practically possible in Australian conditions. The payment, however, should be available for ALL women in the work force, whether they are fulltime, part time, or casual, and should certainly not be means-tested, any more than other forms of paid leave are means-tested.

As this proposal is basically an industrial issue, women not in the workforce would not be eligible. They would, nevertheless, remain eligible for the “baby bonus”, unlike those in the workforce.

I certainly support the introduction of parental leave for the partner of a new mother, for a limited period, and the other caveats as to time in the workforce, and continuation of superannuation contributions by the employer.

I also wholeheartedly support the recommendation of reviews after two and four years of operation of the scheme. There may well be unintended consequences which need to be corrected, and a thorough evaluation of the effects would provide valuable statistical data on an important social policy.