

Response to the Productivity Commission's draft report: Paid Parental Leave: Support for Parents with Newborn Children

(Note these question were prepared by the NFAW)

1. Are you an individual male or female, or responding on behalf of an organisation?

Organisation

2. *If individual*, what is your age? Under 20, 20-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55 or over

3. *If individual*, do you have dependant children?

4. *If individual*, are you expecting or planning to have children in the future?

5. *If individual*, are you an employee, an employer, self-employed without employees, or not currently in paid work?

All respondents:

6. Are you in favour of paid maternity leave for mothers? YES

7. Are you in favour of paid leave for fathers? Should it be a separate entitlement or shared between parents?

PAID LEAVE FOR FATHERS SHOULD ALSO BE GRANTED. WHICH EVER PARENT IS GOING TO BE DOING THE PRIMARY PARENTING SHOULD RECEIVE THE PAYMENT. IF PARENTS WISH TO SHARE THIS ROLE, THEN THERE SHOULD BE THE ABILITY TO HAVE THE PAYMENT SHARED.

8. Who should be included?

a. Casual employees, permanent, self employed, contractors, mothers outside the paid workforce, other?

THE PARENTAL LEAVE PAYMENT SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED TO ENCOURAGE WORKFORCE ATTACHMENT AND RECOGNITION OF THE LABOUR INVOLVED IN RAISING A NEWBORN CHILD, THEREFORE ALL EMPLOYEES WHO ARE ELIGIBLE SHOULD BE PAID THE PAYMENT (MINIMUM OF 10 HOURS PER WEEK FOR A 12 MONTHS PERIOD). PARENTS AT HOME WOULD QUALIFY FOR THE BABY BONUS AND THE PARENTING PAYMENT

b. What recent employment record, if any, should be the criterion for eligibility? **MINIMUM OF 10 HOURS PER WEEK FOR 12 MONTHS CONTINUOUS EMPLOYMENT WITHIN AN INDUSTRY)**

c. Should adopting families be treated the same way? **YES**

9. What about those with stillborn children or those whose baby dies? **A PAYMENT SHOULD BE GRANTED TO ASSIST WITH THE ASSOCIATED COSTS OF FUNERAL AND GRIEF COUNSELLING AND LOSS OF PAY DUE TO ABSENCE AT EMPLOYMENT**

10. What duration of paid leave do you think is appropriate? **UP TO SIX MONTHS**

11. The start date – should it allow for time off before the birth? Should it be able to start later than the six months cut-off proposed by the Commission? **YES**

12. Should people be able to use sick leave, recreation leave or partly accrued long service leave to extend the period of paid leave? In your experience will low income women especially have enough accrued leave to bring their period of paid leave up from the 18 weeks to the six months accepted as the desirable minimum?

IF WOMEN HAVE THE ENTITLEMENTS DUE THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO NEGOTIATE TO INCORPORATE THIS INTO THEIR PARENTAL LEAVE. IF NOT, THE ORGANISATION MAY BE PREPARED TO AGREE TO AN ADDITIONAL SIX WEEKS, AS A GOOD EMPLOYER PRACTICE AND STRATEGY TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN EXPERIENCED STAFF

13. What level of payment is appropriate, eg minimum wage, replacement, replacement capped at a certain level, other? **MINIMUM WAGE AS A BASELINE AND THE ABILITY TO NEGOTIATE EMPLOYER TOP UP**

14. Do you think it should be means tested? **YES IF YOU ARE EARNING ABOVE ONE MILLION DOLLARS PA**

15. How do you think the leave should be funded?

a. **Government only,**

b. Employer should pay

c. **Government with an employer top-up**

d. Government and a levy on all employers, or Government and a levy on both employers and employees

e. HECS style loan, repaid by parent later, or special savings accounts

f. Other and if so, what?

16. How should 'self-employed' be defined? **AS PER TAX OFFICE**

17. Should the leave be able to be taken part-time? In more than one period? **ONE PERIOD IF POSSIBLE AS LESS DISRUPTION TO THE ORGANISATION AND IT WOULD FULFILL THE AIM OF PARENT/NEWBORN ATTACHMENT IN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS, UNLESS THERE ARE SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE**

18. What would be the effect on employers of parents extending their leave? **MINIMAL IF THIS IS PLANNED LEAVE FOR THE EMPLOYEE, AS THE EMPLOYER CAN EMPLOY A RELIEF STAFF PERSON, ALTHOUGH, IF THERE IS A SKILLS SHORTAGE, THIS COULD BE A CHALLENGE. IN SAYING THAT THE CHANCES OF MORE THAN ONE STAFF MEMBERS REQUIRING THE SAME TIME OFF FOR PARENTAL LEAVE WOULD BE UNLIKELY.**

19. What other Government policy changes should be made, along with or complementing the proposed scheme?

NEED TO LOOK AT PROVIDING ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY BASED CHILD CARE CENTRES, POSITIVE PARENTING AND BREASTFEEDING PROGRAMS

20. Should other forms of leave (sick, recreation, long service) accrue while the employee is on paid parental leave? **YES**

21. Should employers be required to continue to pay super entitlements? **YES**

22. Should a Government funded scheme be paid through employers or direct by Government, eg Centrelink?

DIRECT BY GOVERNMENT

23. Should small-medium employers receive a payment to compensate them for the costs of short-term replacement hiring? If so, how much? **YES, THE MINIMUM WAGE**

24. What are the implications of the Commission's proposal for breastfeeding? **WILL NEED TO BACK THIS SCHEME UP WITH THE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR BREASTFEEDING PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES IN AGENCIES AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY**

25. What are the implications for the health and wellbeing of the mother and child? **THE IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILD AND MOTHER HEALTH AND WELL-BEING WILL BE POSITIVE AS THERE WOULD BE LESS DEMANDS ON THE PARENT TO RETURN TO WORK SO QUICKLY AND THE NEWBORN CHILD CAN HAVE THE MUCH NEEDED TIME TO BOND WITH THEIR MOTHER/FATHER**

26. Would you support the option of an income contingent loan in addition to the Commission's recommended scheme? (A loan where the parents did not have to start repaying until their income reached a certain level) **YES**

Other comments:

THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR WOMEN IN PARTICULAR, AND IT IS DEFINITELY A VITAL OPPORTUNITY THAT WE MUST SEIZE, ESPECIALLY IF IT IS GOING TO BENEFIT AND ASSIST PARENTS ON LOW INCOMES WHO ARE MOST AT NEED AND ARE ALSO MOST AT RISK OF LOSING THEIR JOBS IF A SCHEME THAT DOES NOT SUPPORT WORKFORCE ATTACHMENT IS IN PLACE.