



Inquiry into Paid Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Commissioner

The Queen Victoria Women's Centre Trust believes it is time the Federal Government introduced a national paid parental leave scheme consistent with the model outlined in the Productivity Commission Draft Recommendations on Paid Parental Leave.

This will provide essential economic support to women who overwhelmingly bear the cost of child bearing and bring Australia into step with other OECD countries. It would also make a major contribution to the Federal Government's objective of improving work life balance.

Normalising access to 18 weeks of paid parental leave will provide crucial financial support for postnatal care of women and children, leading to significantly improved maternal and child health and wellbeing.

A national paid parental leave scheme is also an essential element in recognising the right of women to financial independence. In particular, it will reduce the economic burden currently borne by women in their child bearing years, a burden that leads to financial inequality over their working life and into retirement.

The Trust believes the most equitable and sustainable option for the period of paid parental leave would be a tax-payer funded minimum leave payment (paid through reimbursement of employers) together with compulsory payment by employers of contributed superannuation. Maintaining the connection between women and their employer throughout the paid leave period is also the model most likely to facilitate women returning to the workforce after child bearing. Evidence suggests that organisations providing paid maternity leave are also more likely to retain the skills and expertise of women in their workforce. These women are also more likely to return to the work earlier after child bearing.

Sustaining the positive benefits for women and families of a national paid paternity leave scheme will require that paid parental leave be aligned with other support to women and families, including high quality, affordable and dependable child care for both pre-school and school aged children.

The Trust is pleased that it has been able to help facilitate discussion on this important issue through providing space at the Centre for the Melbourne round of consultations with women and women's organisations on the Commission's Draft Report in November 2008. By working collaboratively with organisations like the National Foundation of Australian Women and Security4Women who

convened these conversations, the Trust believe we will make a bigger overall impact on both the debate and on ensuring a positive Government response to the Report.

The Trust now looks forward to the implementation of Australia's national paid maternity, paternity and parental leave scheme.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catherine Brown', with a stylized, flowing script.

Catherine Brown
Chair
27/11/2008

cc. Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister
Julia Gillard, Deputy Prime Minister
Lindsay Tanner, Minister for Finance
Tanya Plibersek, Minister for Women's Affairs