

Exposure Draft of the Paid Parental Leave Scheme Bill 2010

I would like to submit my support for the introduction of the paid parental leave (PPL) bill.

I am a young mother with 2 children under 3 and am currently on maternity leave. I am fortunate enough to work for an organisation that has a paid parental leave scheme. Many of the mothers who I have met since having my first child have not been so fortunate and many of these mothers have returned to work before they would have liked because they rely on 2 incomes.

Some of the women I know who had no access to paid parental leave have returned to work early and as a result have also given up breastfeeding their infant as it was too difficult to both work and be able to continue to breastfeed. All of the research indicates that a period of 6 months is the ideal period for a mother to have off work in order for both mother and child to bond, and to also extend the opportunities for long term breastfeeding which has health benefits.

I am accessing some paid parental leave along with other entitlements (long service leave, annual leave) in order to maximise the time that I have at home with my children. Like so many other young families who live in Sydney we cannot manage on a single income and so I will return to work as soon as my leave runs out. The scheme that is set out in this bill should allow primary caregivers to spend more time with their new babies and this has a demonstrated benefit to society.

I absolutely believe that we have an obligation to leave our society in better condition for our kids, than what it was when we inherited it. It is for this reason that I ask you not to take too seriously submissions that say “we managed without it, so we shouldn’t introduce it”.

As I’m sure you’re aware every other industrialised nation (bar the USA) has a PPL system and it’s about time that Australia joined the rest of the developed world. My husband is Canadian and I know that it was tempting to have our children in Canada given they have a PPL system.

The only other thing I’d like you to consider with the draft bill, is introducing a No Disadvantage test. I know of some people who are entitled to 8 weeks PPL at the moment whose employer has said that when the government system is introduced they will top up to full wages for **8 weeks only** saving their employer literally thousands of dollars. I don’t think that that is what the system was designed to do and I reckon that employers should be encouraged (through a no disadvantage test) not to be able to save money but rather to have the same spend and use the money to top up for a longer period of time.

Again, congratulations to the Rudd Government on this historic achievement and let’s hope that the proposed system is further improved in years to come.