

Dear Senators,

I am writing to ask you to consider making the Parental Leave Scheme available for all mothers, whether they are in the paid or unpaid workforce. Supporting families in the raising of children is a worthwhile goal and it is right for the Government to have a discussion about this. While it seems the Government's primary concern is to encourage women into the paid workforce (to help counter our deteriorating dependency ratio) I hope broader considerations will be examined. I remember reading that women with young children were more likely to desire less paid work, rather than more paid work, until the children reached approximately school age (apologies for not referencing this but I am sure you will examine the data to verify or falsify this). I am concerned mothers may feel pressured to go back to work earlier than they would otherwise wish to gain access to the financial benefits of the scheme. A way to provide this assistance to families and avoid this unintended consequence is to make the scheme available to all Australian mothers. This would also give the greatest level of equity between Australian mothers (the means testing would eliminate any concerns of "middle class welfare" that some may express.) Thank you for your work as our representatives and best wishes for the enquiry.