



**Police Federation
of Australia**
The National Voice of Policing

SUBMISSION to the

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

via – community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

**PAID PARENTAL LEAVE AMENDMENT
(MORE SUPPORT FOR WORKING FAMILIES) BILL 2023**

The Police Federation of Australia (PFA) is the national body representing the professional and industrial interests of Australia’s more than 65,000 police officers, across all state, territory, and the federal police jurisdictions.

Membership as at: 31 December 2022	
Police Association of South Australia	4,703
Western Australia Police Union of Workers	6,880
Queensland Police Union of Employees	12,177
The Police Association of Victoria	17,424
Police Association of NSW	17,020
Police Association of Tasmania	1,415
Northern Territory Police Association	1,628
Australian Federal Police Association	4,040
Police Federation of Australia	65,287

The PFA thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide comments relating to the ***Paid Parental Leave Amendment (More Support for Working Families) Bill 2023***. We have written numerous submissions and appeared before a range of Parliamentary and other Inquiries into issues of parental leave and childcare and flexible working arrangements for Australia’s police.

The PFA is pleased to support the Bill as it compliments many of the issues we have raised over the years.

In November 2017, the PFA released its Report on Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA's) for police in Australia and New Zealand. The 90 question survey that underpinned that Report was completed by 11,418 police officers - 16.5% of the combined police forces at the time of the survey. Public Safety Officers and Community Police were included in the survey results. Response rates of higher than 10 percent were recorded by all genders and non-commissioned ranks in all jurisdictions.

Just prior to this survey the PFA had participated in the 2016 Nanny Pilot Program. This came about as many of our members had indicated their concerns about an ability to return to full duties as a result of the difficulties of obtaining childcare as a seven-day shift worker. Flexible working arrangements were seen by many officers as an opportunity to manage their childcare arrangements once their paid parental leave entitlements had been exhausted.

The 2017 survey result showed the number of police working under FWA's in Australia was approximately 5,500, around 8 percent of the police workforce, with 80 percent of those on FWA's being women, and the vast majority of requests being made for parenting reasons and other carer responsibilities. Unsurprisingly, the majority of those were constables, aged between 30-49 years (87 percent), a similar demographic who would avail themselves of PPL.

Childcare responsibilities were the major reason for the requests for FWAs. Severe difficulties in being able to access affordable and appropriate childcare limits the workplace participation of parents, currently, predominantly women.

Survey data demonstrated many issues for parents managing childcare whilst in the police workforce, including:

- The inflexibility in paid childcare and a mismatch in the times of availability of care compared with police rosters;
- The cost of childcare which can cover extended hours, or of home based options such as nannies, is prohibitive and the impact of extended time in care for children is a concern for many parents;
- The needs of school age children change, but do not decrease;
- Officers in regional areas generally have limited options for care and limited family support; and
- Single and divorced parents can experience particularly high levels of stress as they try to negotiate their caring roles within their workplaces.

In support of the above survey data findings, the very recently released report, 'Choiceless', the plight of parents accessing regional, rural and remote early learning and care, by The ParentHood, states –

“Police, teachers, doctors and nurses are essential services in rural towns. If they cannot have ELC for their children while at work, they will leave”.

Interestingly, in the context of the current debate about police recruitment and retention, of those on FWAs for parenting during the FWA survey period, 42 percent indicated that they would consider returning to regular full-time work if appropriate and affordable 24/7 childcare was available.

From the perspective of PPL, as well as childcare, qualitative data from the survey also demonstrated an evolving pattern amongst police couples of planning their childcare and future careers together, so that for many couples both men and women anticipate using PPL and FWAs to share the responsibilities of caring for their children.

And again, from a recruitment and retention perspective, the survey also showed that parenting responsibilities were the most significant family and health related factor causing officers to consider leaving policing over the ensuing decade, supporting the findings of the 'Choiceless' Report. There is a strong linkage between officers considering leaving police work because of parenting or other caring responsibilities and the lack of flexible work, a reason why the PFA strongly supports the content of this Bill.

I would be happy to appear before the Committee to expand on any aspects of this submission.

Sincerely yours

Scott Weber APM
Chief Executive Officer
17 November 2023