

ACTU ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Question 1

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: Thank you both for your submissions and the work of both your organisations on these and so many other issues. I want to go to the question of the trajectory towards 52 weeks. I think you're both saying that you welcome 26 weeks, but I think you, Alessandra, from the ACTU, said that you'd like to see 52 weeks by 2030. Do your organisations have a perspective on how that would be achieved over time?

The ACTU does not currently have a fixed position on how the increase to 52 weeks by 2030 should be achieved. There are two main options, being a phased in increase taking the amount of leave available to 52 weeks by 2030, or a one off increase to 52 weeks by 2030. If the increase was to be phased in, that could be done by splitting the additional 26 weeks over the 4 years from 2026-2030, which would mean an additional 6.5 weeks would be made available each year from 2026 to 2030.

Question 2

Senator WATERS: Barbara asked a lot of the question I'm interested in. We are all passionate about this area, so thanks for your time and expertise here and in your submission. I'm interested in your proposal to increase PPL to 52 weeks by 2030. I know you said you haven't yet set out the pathway to get there, but I'm interested in whether you have raised this issue with the government and put that on their agenda and, if so, what their response has been.

This issue has been raised with the Office of the Minister for Women and Minister for Finance.

Question 3

Senator WATERS: I'll ask the same question about the addition of super to PPL. My understanding is it's a broadly accepted proposal by many of the academics and people interested in this field, and yet it was missing from the government's scheme. Is the addition of super something that you are actively pushing for with government. Again, if so, what's their response been?

The ACTU confirms that we have been campaigning on this issue for many years, and have raised this proposal at all levels of government.

Question 4

Senator WATERS: They're great. I really love those last few proposals in particular. For me as a breastfeeding advocate—as I'm sure many of us are—could you elaborate on the amount of breastfeeding leave you're envisaging? Can you talk about the provision of facilities that you've suggested and about what else needs to be done so that employers

are aware that you can't just pump at home? For physical reasons, you need to pump on a regular basis—to keep your milk slow and for your own comfort. Could you give me a little bit more detail on that? I'm particularly interested in that.

In addition to the response provided to the Committee on 20 February 2023, the ACTU provides the following further response.

The ACTU's proposal would involve paid breastfeeding/lactation breaks becoming an industrial entitlement. Breastfeeding/lactation breaks would enable a worker to breastfeed, pump and/or express milk at work when needed. They would operate in a similar way to other paid breaks, being a paid break of a sufficient length to allow a worker to breastfeed their baby or to pump or express milk. For example, the Queensland Government Work and Breastfeeding Policy and the Queensland Health C5 Flexible Working Arrangements Policy both provide that all Queensland Health employees are entitled to one hour of paid lactation break for every eight hours worked. Whether the lactation break is taken at once or split into separate breaks during the day can be negotiated between the employee and employer.¹

Appropriate breastfeeding/lactation facilities also need to be provided to workers so they can breastfeed or express milk at work. Facilities need to be private, safe and clean. Access to a bathroom is not suitable as toilet areas are unsanitary.

Breastfeeding facilities need to include the following:

- A suitable room that cannot be seen into by co-workers or the general public to ensure the worker's privacy, that can be locked from the inside and/or has privacy signage
- A flat surface such as a small table or countertop for a breast pump to rest
- Tissues and anti-bacterial wipes to clean the flat surface
- A comfortable chair(s)
- Electrical outlets for breast pumps
- Access to a sink for handwashing and to rinse out pump parts with soap and paper towels
- Access to a microwave for steam cleaning pump pieces
- Access to a fridge for storing breastmilk (eg in the staff kitchen)

Question 7

Senator BROCKMAN: I think there's broad acceptance of the change from 18 to 20 weeks and the increased flexibility among employers and employer groups. I think the one area where I've probably still heard concerns about this broad area of policy, particularly in light of proposals such as the one you've mentioned to increase it to 52 weeks, is the flow-on consequence, particularly to smaller business who simply don't have the capacity to cover staff in the same way that larger businesses do. Have you put your minds to that in a policy sense and have any suggestions or sympathy for that question?

Ms Peldova-McClelland: Could you just clarify for me what the concern is exactly?

¹ More information available at [Work and breastfeeding | Queensland Health](#)

Senator BROCKMAN: Smaller employers who have to cover, when they only have a small team, staff being absent for periods of time.

In addition to the response provided to the Committee on 20 February 2023, the ACTU provides the following further response.

It is beneficial for employers, including smaller employers, to provide parental leave because it has a significant impact on attracting and retaining workers. The implications of this Bill and of employers providing parental leave include:

- they are able to retain good workers in a tight labour market where employers are competing for staff
- providing anything more than the legal minimum required will mean they are better able to attract good and talented workers by demonstrating they are a family friendly workplace
- having more employees take up parental leave (including men) leads to more inclusive workplace cultures that support people taking time out to care for children and that enable workers to work flexibly
- having more inclusive workplace environments that enable parents to balance work and care will lead to having satisfied, healthy, engaged, loyal, creative and productive employees.