

Senate Inquiry Submission
Paid Parental Leave
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100 Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Ma'am/Sir

The Rudd Government has indicated its commitment to the removal of discrimination by instituting an Australian Human Rights Commission Inquiry to identify and eradicate it. However, in the matter of Paid Parental Leave (PPL) it is hoist on its own petard. The 2011 Budget Estimates are replete with discrimination against non-working mothers.

The difference in payments between working and non-working mothers amounts to about \$2000 per child. Given that about 48 % of the beneficiaries will be working, and the remaining 52 % non-working mothers, why is it necessary to complicate the issue administratively when it would be far simpler to award all mothers an amount of \$6340 via the baby-bonus scheme? In other words there is a need to amend reference to the "work" test (sections 32-36) and "income" test (sections 37-41) in the draft Bill. It has been suggested that the PPL has been introduced to ensure that the bonding process between mother and child is established. Why then is it deemed necessary to penalise mothers who are not in the work-force? Surely they are just as entitled to bond with their offspring?

Another deficiency in the scheme proposed in the draft Bill is that there is nothing to discourage 'double-dipping'; a mother who receives the PPL can then place her child in day-care and still claim the 50% child-care rebate.

The final obscenity in the draft Bill is that mothers who abort their babies after 20 weeks will be entitled to benefits under the proposal in conformity with children who are stillborn at the same gestational period.

As surveys indicate that about 75% of mothers favour equal payments to all, whether working or not, there is a serious need for appropriate sections of this Bill to be redrafted in order to ensure equity.

Yours faithfully

Margaret and Dunstan Hartley