



PAID PARENTAL LEAVE (PPL)

The Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs have called for submissions on the Fairer Paid Parental Leave Bill 2015.

The PSA have contributed a submission to this Committee, outlining the importance of retaining the current policy, which enables NSW public servants to access both the employer funded award entitlement of 14 weeks paid leave and in most cases the Commonwealth PPL scheme to top up their leave to an amount commensurate with international standards.

KEY POINTS IN THE PSA SUBMISSION INCLUDE:

- The historical factors surrounding parental leave, including the fact that the current employer funded scheme is a right that was hard fought and won by unions after many decades of campaigning. Had maternity leave not been 'on the bargaining table', it is very likely we could have bargained for other employee entitlements instead. Maternity leave is a workplace right and should not be misconstrued as a form of welfare or a 'handout'.
- Over time, many countries have implemented schemes far in excess of the 14 weeks afforded to NSW public servants. This includes not only countries that one would

expect to have exemplary schemes for working mums, such as the Scandinavian and some European countries, but ironically, countries such as: Venezuela (26 weeks on full pay); Iran (6 months on full pay); Estonia (62 weeks on full pay); Montenegro (52 weeks on full pay) and Poland (26 weeks on full pay) also offer more maternity/PPL than many Australian women can access.¹

- The Commonwealth scheme is working as it was designed to, by providing both a safety net for women (such as casual employees) who would otherwise not have access to paid leave, as well as the ability to extend or 'top up' existing employer funded schemes to provide women with a minimum of six months paid leave, in line with the World Health Organisations (WHO) recommendations. The use of both schemes is a 'top up', not a 'double dip'.
- Adequate periods of parental leave are necessary for the health and wellbeing of both mothers and babies and has been demonstrated to increase the likelihood of working mothers remaining in the paid labour force in the longer term, thus assisting with retaining skills and experience and reducing recruitment and training costs. Conversely when working mothers are forced back to

work earlier than they would prefer, this has been found to increase the likelihood of future health difficulties for both women and children. It appears mum really does know best.

- Rates of breastfeeding are found to be higher where women can access initial periods of adequate parental leave and are also able to access flexible work arrangements (as well as suitable workplace facilities).
- The PSA has called on the Senate to reject this Bill and retain (or ideally improve) the current scheme to keep us on par with other countries and in line with WHO recommendations.

You can read the full submission [**HERE**](#)

(<http://psa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/PPL-Submission-v1.1-28-July-2015-final.pdf>)

HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION (HREOC) RELEASE NEW RESOURCE FOR WORKING PARENTS

In 2014, the HREOC held an inquiry into pregnancy and return to work discrimination. The PSA undertook a member survey and contributed a submission to this inquiry on behalf of members (thank you again to those who

completed the survey).

Our survey results indicated that over 70 percent of respondents had experienced some form of discrimination in relation to either pregnancy or when returning to work after pregnancy. Across Australia as a whole, the results were not much better, with around half of the women respondents revealing they had encountered some form of discrimination in relation to their pregnancy.

In response to the ongoing discrimination identified during the 2014 *Supporting Working Parents: Pregnancy and Return to Work National Review Report* by the Australian Human Rights Commission, a new web site has been developed to assist people to understand their legal rights.

It is pleasing to see that, in line with recommendations made by the PSA in our submission to the inquiry, the HREOC advocate a strengthening of 'right to request' provisions.

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Senator Michaelia Cash said that "Being pregnant and having caring responsibilities should not impact parents' careers or economic security."

You can view the resource [**HERE**](#)

(<http://www.supportingworkingparents.gov.au/>)

¹ Maternity and paternity at work: Law and practise across the world. International Labour Organisation. 978-92-2-128630-1

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Authorised by Steve Turner, Acting Assistant General Secretary
Public Service Association of NSW, 160 Clarence Street Sydney



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