



19 January 2023

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Community Affairs Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Re: Inquiry into the provisions of the *Paid Parental Leave Amendment (Improvements for Families and Gender Equality) Bill 2022*

Dear Committee Secretary

UNICEF Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Standing Committee on Community Affairs Legislation Committee's inquiry into the provisions of the *Paid Parental Leave Amendment (Improvements for Families and Gender Equality) Bill 2022*.

The social and economic benefits of adequate Paid Parental Leave (PPL) have now been well-established. PPL increases female workforce participation and health benefits for mothers, lowers infant mortality, and for fathers it increases parental satisfaction through time spent bonding with the child, and creates a more equitable division of household labour.

The sharing of childcare responsibilities is one of the biggest levers governments can pull to improve women's economic security and safety. A proposed model of improved PPL includes adding up to six additional weeks of PPL to the current 20-week allowance. This would be achieved through a 6/12/6 structure to encourage sharing – 12 weeks to share between parents, with a six weeks 'use it or lose it' provision. To incentivise uptake, an additional two weeks of bonus leave could be taken by either parent if both take at least six weeks. Single parents would be given the full 26 weeks.

UNICEF Australia welcomes the Albanese Labor Government's commitment to gradually increase PPL to 26 weeks with 'use it or lost it' provisions over the coming three years, and acknowledges that the *Paid Parental Leave Amendment (Improvements for Families and Gender Equality) Bill 2022* is the first step along this important journey.

By equalising access between parents and carers to a more adequate PPL scheme, we can ensure children receive the care they need, increase the participation of men in family life, and reduce the workforce participation gap. We therefore reaffirm our support for the Government's commitment to increase PPL to the desired model of 26 weeks and look forward to the future reforms required to make this vision a reality.

Warm regards,

Katie Maskiell
Head of Child Rights Policy and Advocacy
UNICEF Australia