

Senate Select Committee on Work and Care

Public Hearing – 8 December 2022

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Evaluation on the paid parental leave

Question reference number: IQ22-000048

Question asked by: Barbara Pocock

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 20

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 09 January 2023

Question:

CHAIR: So it's a big problem. I just wanted to ask about paid parental leave. We have a plan now for increasing paid parental leave by two weeks each year, to hit 26 weeks in 2026. We have had evidence put to us that the international standard is considerably higher, so this committee may well consider mapping out some pathway to increase paid parental leave into the longer run to reach towards the international standard of a year. Do you have any comments on the way paid parental leave is unfolding, how it's working? Do you have any evaluation or evidence you can give to us about that program?

CHAIR: If you have any evaluations of the Paid Parental Leave scheme in the last couple of years, we would be very keen to see them, if you are able to take that on notice of research outcomes. It would be useful for us.

Ms Evans: Certainly, we will take that on notice.

Answer:

An evaluation of the Paid Parental Leave (PPL) scheme (conducted from 2010-2014 by the Institute for Social Science Research) is available online at <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/programmes-services/paid-parental-leave-scheme/paid-parental-leave-evaluation>.

In addition, recent research on the PPL scheme includes:

- Marian Baird, Myra Hamilton and Andreea Constantin (2021): 'Gender equality and paid parental leave in Australia: A decade of giant leaps or baby steps?', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, (available online at <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/other/15907/Prof%20Rae%20Cooper%20-%20Att%202020-%20Baird,%20Hamilton%20and%20Constantin%20JIR%202021.pdf>).
- KPMG (2021): *Enhancing Work-Life Balance: A better system of Paid Parental Leave*, April 2021, (available online at <https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/au/pdf/2021/better-system-for-paid-parental-leave-report.pdf>).
- Grattan Institute (2021): *Dad Days: How more generous gender-equal parental leave could improve the lives of Australian families*, (available online at <https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Dad-Days-Grattan-Institute-Report.pdf>).

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Tracking of number of people on schemes

Question reference number: IQ22-000049

Question asked by: Linda White

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 21

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 09 January 2023

Question:

Senator WHITE: The number of people who have other schemes from their workplace, do you track any of that?

Ms Evans: Yes, we do have data.

Senator WHITE: I think it would be very useful to understand who has that. You won't have the economic disadvantage that you suffer by taking it at the rate that it currently is but if you have anything that indicates who is taking it up—age or anything that can enlighten us about it—in both paid parental leave and dad-and-partner pay, I think that would be very interesting.

CHAIR: That would be very welcome.

Answer:

According to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's report, *Australia's Gender Equality Scorecard - Key results from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's 2020-21 employer census* published in February 2022, 60 per cent of employers with over 100 employees offer paid parental leave to their employees, regardless of gender and 83 per cent of employers with over 5,000 employees offer paid parental leave, regardless of gender.

According to the ABS Characteristics of Employment, Australia (released December 2021), as at August 2021, 43 per cent of all workers had access to employer funded paid parental leave.

The table at **Attachment A** outlines the demographics of Parental Leave Pay and Dad and Partner Pay recipients.

Attachment A:

Paid Parental Leave Recipients (2021-22 entitlement year)

		Dad and Partner Pay (DaPP)		Parental Leave Pay (PLP)	
DEMOGRAPHICS					
Relationship status	Partnered	95,598	97.7%	169,158	94.6%
	Single (includes Unknown)	2,265	2.3%	9,620	5.4%
Indigenous		2,278	2.3%	4,074	2.3%
Culturally and linguistically diverse		22,972	23.5%	36,334	20.3%
Average age (all recipients for DaPP and all females for PLP)		33 years		32 years	
Pre-birth claim		41,886	42.8%	113,569	63.5%
By relationship	Biological father/mother	96,593	98.7%	177,621	99.4%
	Partner of birth mother	955	1.0%	940	0.5%
	Adoptive or legal parent	315/255	0.3%	217/183	0.1%
PARTICIPATION					
Recipient income (ATI)	Average income	\$75,258		\$64,615	
	Median Income	\$72,648		\$60,000	
	\$20,000 and under	2,223	2.3%	10,302	5.8%
	\$20,001 to \$40,000	8,598	8.8%	32,468	18.2%
	\$40,001 to \$60,000	21,989	22.5%	46,757	26.2%
	\$60,001 to \$80,000	25,836	26.4%	36,415	20.4%
	\$80,001 to \$100,000	19,220	19.6%	26,132	14.6%
	\$100,001 to \$120,000	11,527	11.8%	15,833	8.9%
	\$120,001 to \$140,000	6,609	6.8%	8,138	4.6%
	\$140,001 to \$150,000	1,727	1.8%	2,558	1.4%

Source: Services Australia Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW) Paid Parental Leave scheme - Claims Universe, Data Load Version 2.2, Universe Version 11.1.0

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Government data

Question reference number: IQ22-000050

Question asked by: Deborah O'Neill

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 21, 22

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 09 January 2023

Question:

Senator O'NEILL: Professor McGorry and Professor Hickie gave evidence to this committee in Brisbane. Professor McGorry indicated that we have had the first national mental survey in 15 years. We should be having them more frequently, and there is a bit of a theme here about data collection and data interrogation. They are alarming figures: 50 per cent rising diagnosable mental illness in young people rising from 26 per cent in 2007 to 39 per cent in 2021 and as high as 48 per cent in young women. Professor Hickie states: 'If young people, and young women in particular, are to continue to have many of the critical multiple caring roles that they have plus also develop the skills and training for participation in the workforce from which we will all benefit economically then that needs to be formally addressed in the metrics we have in the support systems we have and how it actually plays out throughout the various employment and training systems that we have.' Are we in a situation where we are measuring what the system asks in terms of measurement for its own edification? Do we have data poverty about the metrics that really matter for a person-centred set of information from which policy might be developed?

Mr Flavel: It's a good question. I don't think so. I think that people are often surprised at the extent of the different points of data that are actually collected. I can talk about the social security system and the plethora. To go back to that question about paid parental leave, we have very good data about age, gender and whether somebody's on an income support payment—everything. I think there has been a pretty strong shift over the last few years in terms of the amount of data that's collected but, most importantly, then being taken into account in policy design, which I think is your point.

Senator O'NEILL: It is.

CHAIR: Are we using it?

Senator O'NEILL: Are we really interrogating the data in a way that continues to prioritise the citizens of a country rather than the systems in their complex interactions? Because, really, public servants are servants of people, not servants of systems. But the systems have such power and dominance in the way things operate. I'll ask you to take that on notice, in terms of the data richness or poverty and the interrogation of that data. Are we funding? Are we providing enough interrogation? Is there enough research going on? And, at the end, how responsive are the systems to any adjustment that might make it more child-centred in the

case of a child or carer-centred in a carer space?

Ms Mitchell: It's been incredibly difficult over many, many years to have rich data on people with disabilities, and so over the last couple of years all of the states and territories and the Commonwealth have been working on developing a national disability data asset. That will take us a long way to being able to understand the complexity of the systems for those particular people as they try to navigate through the carer system, the NDIA and the health system. I can't sit here today and say that we have that data asset; we're still working very closely. As Mr Flavel says, there are enormous data assets out there. The difficulty, of course, is to bring them together and interrogate them in a way that looks at that person-centric view.

Senator O'NEILL: Rostering justice is an issue that we've been talking about. In terms of rostering data, the other day we heard from Aldi, and today we'll hear from another significant employer in Australia, Bunnings. We couldn't get any sense from Aldi about any data on requests for rostering shift changes. Without knowing about that, it's hard to understand the shape of what's going on with the workforce. It's not just the data that you hold; it's the data intersecting with other datasets, provided or not provided, that are creating these blind spots where people are just falling through systems, not accessing support and care when they need it. That's a huge loss of productivity and capacity for the nation. I just ask you to think about the private sector, the broader economy and the intersectionality of critical data, to give the fullness of the picture. Is it robust, or are there some holes there?

Mr Flavel: We'll take it notice, but what I will say is that there's a lot more sharing of data across government now, through mechanisms. The DAT Act passed last year, which allows researchers to get, under certain conditions, access to de-identified data. I think the only caution I'd note is that, when it comes to the sharing of government data with the private sector, privacy and those issues are pretty much at the forefront.

Senator O'NEILL: We're all for that, but the private sector need to be telling you what they're doing; otherwise, we could spend a lot of taxpayer dollars fixing up problems that are generated in the private sector.

Mr Flavel: It's more the matching, I think, back with government data where we need to be a bit careful. But, certainly, we look at private sector data. To the extent that banks and others are willing to share, transactional data can show useful pictures about people on lower incomes, what they're spending habits are and how they change, for instance, when we have something like a coronavirus supplement. So a lot of that happens.

Senator O'NEILL: Is it picking up women who are underemployed, who have shifts and who leave their children at home with no care and can't get rostering justice because their manager doesn't have to record any data? If I can be that blunt—thanks.

Answer:

The department draws on many data sources in undertaking its analysis and continues to explore and develop additional new data sources from across government, private sector and not for profit institutions to better inform policy and program development. For example, the department makes extensive use of the Australian Bureau of Statistics Multi Agency Data Integration Project, which integrates social security data with a wide range of other sources, including Single Touch Payroll data covering information collected from almost all of Australian private businesses.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Research about the impacts of the changes in level of support

Question reference number: IQ22-000051

Question asked by: Barbara Pocock

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 18

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 09 January 2023

Question:

CHAIR: Can I ask a couple of questions about policy. We've had a number of submissions put to us from diverse groups about sole parents. I wonder whether you are doing or have done any research about the impact of the changes in the levels of support for sole parents. We took evidence this week from the National Council of Single Mothers and their Children, for example, who had a strong argument in favour of support through to your child being 16 and 18—a return, really, to what was there before. Have you got evidence about the impact of changes in support, the decline in support, and the impact on families and children?

Mr Flavel: I might take that question on notice because there is some research. I'm aware that ANU has done a study done recently looking at that cohort. I'm being little bit careful, of course, because what probably matters most is longer term outcomes, and those changes are still working their way through the system in some cases. But, yes, there is a little bit of research there.

CHAIR: Thank you. If you could take that on notice, we'd like to receive that.

Answer:

The Department undertakes regular analysis of payment data, including for Parenting Payment recipients.

The Department also monitors independent research undertaken on Parenting Payment, including the impact of eligibility changes over time. Examples of this research includes analysis undertaken by Ms Kristen Sobeck and Professor Bob Bruenig (Australian National University) that considered the impact of eligibility changes on earnings for single mothers.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Profile of people - Carer Gateway

Question reference number: IQ22-000052

Question asked by: Deborah O'Neill

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:**

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 09 January 2023

Question:

Senator O'NEILL: You might need to take this on notice: can you give us the shape of the profile of people who are engaging, with that 180 per cent increase in use of the Carer Gateway?

Answer:

In the first 6 weeks after the Carer Gateway communication campaign launch (16 October- 26 November 2022), the number of people accessing the Carer Gateway webpage increased by about 245%. New users of the Carer Gateway webpage increased by 255% compared to the 6 weeks before the campaign (4 September to 15 October 2022). This represents 354,098 compared to 102,658 users, and 343,754 compared to 96,712 new users for the respective periods.

In the 4 weeks following the launch of the campaign, there was a 17% increase in calls to the 1800 number, compared to early October 2022 (pre-campaign).

Demographic data on carers accessing Carer Gateway following the launch of the communications campaign is not yet available. Data on carers registered with Carer Gateway is reported every six months and increases in Carer Gateway client registrations will be monitored in 2023 as data becomes available.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Community providers

Question reference number: IQ22-000053

Question asked by: Deborah O'Neill

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:**

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 09 January 2023

Question:

Senator O'NEILL: Can you give me an example of a community provider? Is it like the Red Cross, or Carers SA? We heard evidence from them in Adelaide the other day, a major provider in South Australia. How many of the people they are employing are actually First Nations people from the community? That seems to be one of the gaps I keep hearing about all the time when I'm there.

Mr Bulman: I understand what you're saying. On notice I will spell this out a bit more, but if you take the Northern Territory example, where there are quite unique circumstances, we'll have service providers from the local ACCHO, the Aboriginal community health organisation, connected to our head contract. But if I show you that sort of ecosystem, I think it will help the committee to understand how we've taken that into account, because you can't just have a one-stop 1800 number for the carer community; this is far more detailed service provision that's more localised.

Answer:

The 10 lead organisations funded to deliver Carer Gateway service provider (CGSP) activities are all community organisations. These 10 organisations work with a further 17 community organisations as consortia partners to deliver Carer Gateway supports and services.

An example of this is in Western Australia, where Carers WA is the lead CGSP, and together with its consortia partner HelpingMinds, are supporting carers in the Kimberly region.

The Department of Social Services does not collect data on CGSP employee demographics, however CGSPs report they employ or engage First Nations people, groups and organisations to engage with First Nations carers. This includes, but is not limited to:

- First Nations Carer Support Workers;
- First Nations Engagement teams;
- First Nations Community Engagement traineeships;
- local Elders groups;
- partnerships with Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council; and

- partnering with local and culturally appropriate service providers and health professionals to ensure planning for service delivery is also linked to local need.

The Carer Gateway service delivery model is an early intervention and preventative model designed to improve a carer's wellbeing, skills and capacity to participate in the workforce and their communities.

The delivery of services to carers through Carer Gateway differs nationally depending on the carer cohort being supported, the circumstances of an individual's caring role and the geographical area in which a carer resides. To enable this, CGSP Grant Agreements provide the flexibility to deliver localised and tailored support for carers that is provided through their own networks, as well as established relationships with community and health based service providers and organisations.

Carers in rural and remote areas can access Carer Gateway services either by calling the national 1800 number, online via the Carer Gateway website or through outreach services provided by CGSPs. These outreach services also raise awareness and increase community understanding of support available through Carer Gateway.

CGSPs support First Nations carers nationally, including in rural and remote regions through innovative approaches tailored to specific carer needs. Examples of cultural supports provided through Carer Gateway include:

- culturally appropriate respite support, where carers engaging in traditional or cultural practices have been supported through the purchase of fishing equipment and tents where appropriate;
- where a carer is experiencing homelessness, the provision of accommodation through Aboriginal Short Stay and Caravan accommodation on country;
- access to Aboriginal Short Stay accommodation when there are limited alternate options for carer retreats or to take a break from the caring role; and
- the provision of fuel cards supporting carers to travel to country to attend to Sorry Business and other cultural responsibilities.