

21 February 2017

Senate Inquiry
Omnibus Bill

Dear Members of Committee,

I write in regard to the Inquiry to the Omnibus Bill to provide the Inquiry Committee evidence regarding the Parental and Maternity Leave systems in the United Kingdom.

As the United Kingdom is a country which Australia seeks to emulate, it seems that the fairer, more generous, more child-focused approach to this issue bears comparison in establishing the rules for the Australian system.

The question for the Inquiry is, if this system is good enough for the UK, why isn't it good enough for Australia?

Key Features that are improvements on Australia's approach:

- 90% of salary covered for six week months – paid by the Government system (I highlight this is not at minimum wage)
- Minimum wage or 90% of wage (whichever is the lower) for the next 33 weeks - paid by the Government
- Employer contributions are **in addition** to the Government and do not negate the Government contribution – they are considered a top up. They are **welcomed** by the UK Government.

There are multiple reasons to support this approach

- The day to day - Having a child does not reduce daily expenses: rent/mortgage, bills, food, petrol, insurance, petrol etc. Reduction to minimum wage for most families places extreme stress on the household and mothers. Childcare for other children is often foregone placing additional stress onto a household with a newborn.
- Systemic inequality - The Government has an opportunity to start to rectify the significant wage, superannuation gaps that women face, to address the feminisation of poverty. Women who rear children bear the brunt of these forms of inequity. In 2017, a civilised nation such as Australia can do better.

My family was a beneficiary of this system while in the UK, and was able to have a financially stress free entry into parenthood. This meant

- Maternity pay of 90% of salary for 6 months – Government and Employer contributions
- Maternity pay of 50% of salary for 3 months – again co funded
- Maternity leave of additional 3 months

I implore you to review the attachments regarding the UK system for parents and mothers and use them as the launching point for Australian policy.

Finally, I implore you not to use students, the unemployed, the elderly and disabled as political chess pieces in passing this legislation. We should stop coal industry subsidies before we attack our society's most vulnerable.

Thank you.