

Inquiry: the Fairer Paid Parental Leave Amendment Bill 2015

Frankly it's a disgrace that families in Australia are forced to campaign for one of the most basic employee rights.

I am appalled that the government of a progressive country such as ours, has decided to withdraw access for mothers to paid parental leave that has been decided by employers to be a fair scheme for new mothers.

The first year of a child's life is the most crucial in developing a bond between parents and child, it is an important start to healthy social, emotional and cognitive development, building the foundation for a sense of security, safety and good coping skills.

It is a pity that as mothers in this country we only have access to 18 weeks paid parental leave at minimum wage to begin with. The very few of us who have employers that understand the importance in facilitating this special time between child and parent, have access to a few extra weeks of paid leave which is now under threat by the governments proposed changes to the paid parental leave access.

Most parents are taking a pay cut during paid parental leave if we earn above the states minimum wage on offer. With the rising cost of living this is an monumental task to begin with. I know I made some hard decisions around finances while on maternity leave, extending the life of our mortgage and personal loans just to survive on minimum wage during this special time, but we made it work, as there is nothing more important to us than the welfare of our child.

It is my firm belief that all parents should have access to paid leave for one care giver for at least 6 months. Of course in a perfect world, paid parental leave for a whole year would be ideal, but we need to be realistic here.

Realistic is not what the government is proposing. It would not be realistic to expect a new mother to return to work after only 14 weeks. This is what the government is proposing!! Most mothers will commence paid parental leave approx 4 weeks before due date and this is as long as everything is going smoothly. Any other issues such as pelvis instability, gestational diabetes, high blood pressure, prenatal depression are all very valid reasons why a mother may need to commence paid parental leave early. So that leaves only 14 weeks after the birth of our little gem to connect, establish routines and gain confidence as parents. This is also not taking into account the very large possibility that our little gems decides they are not yet ready for this world and would like to grace us with their presence later than expected. Only 5% of baby's are born on their due date! So now we are looking at only 12 weeks of paid parental leave before we send our little cherub off to childcare so we can return to work. Are you serious! Of course we have access to 12 months UNPAID maternity leave, but let's be realistic here, who can afford to take 12 months of UNPAID parental leave??

12 weeks!! And those mothers like me who had to have a cesarean, those first 6 weeks we are not even allowed to drive!! There is a lot of discussion around the importance of

breastfeeding too, but can we really say that at 12 weeks old we had become professional breast feeders?? I know I can't. With the proposed cut to paid parental leave access, would we really stick with breast feeding when that would mean expressing while at work just to ensure our little gem gets the nutrition they need. At 12 weeks they rely solely on milk as the source of nutrition. Having to express breast milk every 3 – 4 hours while working, then to care for baby after work and most likely on minimal sleep as our 12 week baby has not yet learnt to sleep through the night, let's be realistic here!

The proposed decrease in access to paid parental leave by the government is just unrealistic!! Why limit access to one of our most basic employee rights?? If the government wants us to develop as a nation, this is not the step to take. Where will we all be without that healthy social, emotional and cognitive development that we all gain in the first year of life?

Yours sincerely,

Disgruntled parent!!