



12 May 2010

Committee Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By Email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

Re. Exposure Draft of the Paid Parental Leave Scheme Bill 2010

The ANF commends the Government on the introduction of the Paid Parental Leave Bill 2010. As a union representing over 175,000 nurses, 91% who are women, the provision of a universal scheme of paid parental leave is long overdue and will be widely applauded by nurses and their families throughout the country. The ANF supports the policy objectives of the Bill to encourage and support women's participation in the workforce and facilitate child and maternal health and the well being of families in general.

As we have stated in earlier submissions to the Productivity Commission Inquiry, and response to the draft Productivity Commission Report on paid Parental Leave, a universal paid leave scheme is a significant step in recognising the overlapping roles of working people, particularly women, and should form part of a suite of measures necessary to improve and support opportunities for both women and men to achieve a better balance between work and family life and more equitable arrangements at work and in the home. The ANF believes the draft legislation is a significant and necessary positive step in meeting this objective.

We endorse the ACTU's response to the Exposure Draft and urge the Committee to adopt the suggested changes to improve eligibility, including broadening of the work test and the proposed improvements to the general operation of the scheme. While we note that the Paid Parental Leave scheme is not intended to replace existing employer provided paid leave arrangements, this point needs to be clearly stated in the legislation to ensure existing entitlements remain unaffected by the legislative provisions.

The industrial and professional organisation for nurses and midwives in Australia

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As indicated in the ACTU's submission the ANF also supports the current model as a positive first step for a universal paid parental leave scheme but would like to see further improvements in a number of areas including:

- Payment of the statutory superannuation guarantee levy over the period of leave;
- Provision of paid paternity leave or secondary carer's leave;
- Accrual of service related entitlements during paid parental leave;
- 26 weeks paid parental leave and
- Employer "top up" of the parental leave payment to full income replacement.

The results of an ANF survey of around 1500 nurses' views on parental leave in 2008 highlighted the direct relationship between access to adequate paid leave arrangements and decisions relating to the amount time off from work and the continuation of breast feeding. The vast majority of respondents proposed at least 26 weeks paid leave to provide better health outcomes the mother, child and family in general. The survey showed that adequate paternity leave is also a significant factor in assisting families adjust to the financial and personal challenges of a new baby. The provision of adequate paid paternity or secondary carer's leave is an essential component of a universal paid parental leave scheme.

We urge the Committee to adopt the changes proposed by the ACTU and support passage of the Bill to ensure access to entitlements from 1 January 2011.

Yours sincerely



GED KEARNEY
Federal Secretary