



## What we're campaigning for

# Paid Maternity Leave long overdue

**Unions are joining forces with community organisations and many employers to campaign for a paid maternity leave scheme for all Australian women.**



*Unions are campaigning for a broad range of options, with the ACTU seeking a minimum standard of 14 weeks paid maternity leave for all women whether they work or not.*

### **How much?**

*14 weeks at full pay plus 9% superannuation.*

### **Who pays?**

*The federal government would provide a basic 14 week payment at minimum wage levels for all women, with employers contributing a top-up payment to ensure working women receive full income replacement.*

### **Can I get more than 14 weeks?**

*Yes. Fourteen weeks should be regarded as the absolute minimum standard. If you already have access to paid maternity leave, this would be added onto the 14 weeks proposed by the ACTU. In addition, employers and employees can agree to extend the period of paid leave over and above the 14 weeks.*

# Why we need paid maternity leave

## **Better care for kids and mums**

Women need time to recover from childbirth, adjust to motherhood and establish breastfeeding - one of the most important contributions to the health and development of babies.

Our children's health, well-being and futures are at stake.

## **Good for the economy**

To remain internationally competitive Australia needs to retain as many people in the workforce as possible.

Studies show the longer women remain out of the workforce after having a baby without any financial support or link to their workplace, the more likely they are to simply drop out of work altogether.

At the moment Australia is lagging badly behind most other developed countries in helping women between ages 25-44 stay in the workforce.

**For the Australian economy, this means a massive loss of productivity, knowledge and skills. For women personally, this means a loss of career and income.**

International studies show that women with access to at least 14 weeks paid maternity leave are more likely to return to work in the same job.

Recent figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show women make up two thirds of Australians who are not working but want to work. Most are mothers.



## **Employers reap the benefits**

Currently, Australian women rely solely on their employer to provide paid maternity leave. **As a result, two thirds have no access to paid maternity leave and most of these women are employed in low-paid, casual or part-time jobs in shops, cafes, hotels and other service industries.**

Companies such as Westpac and General Motors Holden have found paid maternity leave is an essential part of holding on to staff and avoiding the high costs of recruitment and replacement.

Since introducing paid maternity leave schemes these organisations have return to work rates nudging 90%.

## **What other countries are doing**

Bulgaria:	2 years paid leave
Sweden:	64 weeks paid leave
Germany:	64 weeks paid leave
Norway:	54 weeks paid leave
Canada:	50 weeks paid leave
UK:	39 weeks paid leave
New Zealand:	14 weeks paid leave
<b>Australia:</b>	<b>0</b>

At least 157 countries offer Paid Maternity Leave including Mongolia, Botswana, Burkina Faso and Burma.



Makayla McIntosh returned to work just 12 weeks after having her first child. With a mortgage to pay - and no paid maternity leave - she had no choice.

**“ I was tired and very emotional, so going back to work was the last thing I wanted to do. ”**

After 4 weeks at work, her breast milk dried up.

“My baby was crying for food, yet I couldn’t feed him – I have never felt such a failure... I had pushed myself too far.”

After several very stressful months, Makayla fell ill and had to resign from her job.

As a contractor, construction manager Julianne Dalglish was told she had no right to paid maternity leave. At four and half months pregnant, the company sacked her.

**“ I was the only woman in a company of 30 men and I was made to feel like I was committing a crime because I was pregnant. ”**

Six weeks after the birth, Julianne was attending job interviews, looking for a new job.

“I just didn’t have a choice, our mortgage was just too big.”

## **Dads need it too**

For men, paid maternity leave would mean they do not become the sole breadwinner at exactly the same time they face the challenges and stress of new fatherhood.



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## When do we want it?

The Rudd Government has asked the Productivity Commission to recommend whether Australia should introduce a paid maternity leave scheme. The Commission will report back in February 2009.

The Productivity Commission will take into account submissions from organisations such as unions as well as the views of private individuals. You can make a personal submission to [parentalsupport@pc.gov.au](mailto:parentalsupport@pc.gov.au)

It's important to have your say over the coming months to make sure Australia finally gets the scheme it needs.

## What you can do...

- **Send your story** about maternity leave to us at [www.rightsatwork.com.au](http://www.rightsatwork.com.au)
- **Make an online submission** about your personal experiences to the Productivity Commission by June 2, 2008
- **Tell your local MP or Senator** what a difference a national paid maternity leave scheme would make to you, your family or community
- **Get involved** in union campaigns and public events promoting a paid maternity leave scheme of at least 14 weeks
- **Contact the Union Hotline** on **1300 362 223** if you are experiencing problems at work
- **Be active through your union** – strong unions are the best way to protect your rights at work and improve your wages and conditions. If you are not already a union member call the Unions Australia hotline on **1300 4 UNION (1300 486 466)**.

**To lend your voice to  
the campaign, visit the  
Rights at Work website.**

*Join over 200,000 fellow  
Australians taking concrete action  
to help achieve long overdue rights  
to paid maternity leave  
[www.rightsatwork.com.au/joinin](http://www.rightsatwork.com.au/joinin)*

Your Rights at Work  
the campaign continues...

**ACTU**

**unions  
australia**  
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**mums' rightsatwork**  
paid maternity leave