



PAID MATERNITY LEAVE - A LONG TIME COMING

1912 – Commonwealth Maternity Allowances Act passed, granting a 'baby bonus' of £5 to Australian mothers.

1972 – Australian Public Service introduces 12 weeks paid maternity leave.

1979 – ACTU wins right to unpaid parental leave in the private sector.

1984 – ACTU wins case for unpaid maternity leave to adoptive parents.

1986 – AEU wins 6 weeks paid maternity leave for Qld teachers.

1990 – ACTU wins case for extended unpaid leave to fathers.

1993 - 2000 – Bargaining for paid maternity leave continues across many sectors and is achieved in the finance sector and in retail.

2001 – ACTU wins case for unpaid maternity leave for casuals. Western Australian, Tasmanian and South Australian teachers get paid maternity leave thanks to their union. Women working in NSW local government get right to paid maternity leave after a deal reached between the ASU and the Local Government Shires Association.

2005 – The ACTU won the case for employees' right to request an extension of parental leave up to 24 months, the right to eight weeks of concurrent parental leave and additional allocation of leave for caring purposes.

2007 – National Foundation for Australian Women releases poll results showing 76% of Australians in favour of paid maternity leave for working women.

2007

April – ALP conference adopts policy stating that “Labor will aim, over time, to introduce a paid maternity leave scheme for all mothers with no cost burden to small business.”

November – Rudd Government elected, with a pledge to act on paid maternity leave.

2008

January – Government announces Productivity Commission inquiry into paid maternity leave.

June – Woolworths announces parental leave for its workforce.

October – Productivity Commission issues draft report recommending 18 weeks paid leave including leave for non-primary care givers but no employer salary top-up. Unions say the model is a good first step. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd says its time to ‘bite the bullet’ on the issue.

2009

Feb – March

Commentators speculate that the Government cannot afford a paid maternity leave scheme in the Budget due to the global financial crisis. Unions keep up the pressure with a week of activities and a gathering of women in Canberra and warn that Australian women will not abandon the cause.

April

Australia Institute releases report on the macro economic benefits of maternity leave showing that a scheme would create 9000 jobs.

May

BHP Billiton announces 18 weeks paid maternity leave

Federal Government announces a universal government funded Paid Parental leave scheme in the May Federal Budget to start in 2011.