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New \$10,000 Paid Parental Leave scheme should be on top of other entitlements: unions

The new national paid maternity leave scheme due to start this week on 1 January 2011 is a big win for Australian women and their families, say unions.

After 30 years of union campaigning women will now have support to keep their jobs and greater financial security when they have a baby says ACTU President Ged Kearney.

New parents will receive 18 weeks pay at the Federal Minimum Wage (currently \$569.90 a week) – or just over \$10,000.

But it is important that employers do not use the Government scheme as an excuse to cut existing parental leave entitlements from their employees said Ms Kearney.

“The Government scheme should operate alongside or on top of employer schemes that are already in place,” said Ms Kearney.

“Unions are concerned by reports of cases where some unscrupulous employers are trying to cut back on their existing parental leave entitlements.

“This is simply not on and unions will be working hard to ensure employers do not get away with this.

“We don’t want to see the rights and entitlements of new parents undermined.

“The new parental leave should be on top of any current payments or leave that employers provide their workers.

“Instead of seeing some unethical employers use the government scheme to cut their existing payments we’d like to see decent employers “top-up” the government scheme so women earning above the minimum wage receive full income replacement.

“The Labor Government’s parental leave scheme is a major social reform which unions have campaigned for since the 1970s.

“It will benefit the entire community by allowing mothers time to bond with their babies without financial stress forcing them back to work too early.

“And by keeping women attached to the workforce it will improve participation and help the economy,” said Ms Kearney.

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