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Abbott and Liberals miss the point: Paid Parental Leave must be a workplace entitlement

The ACTU and unions will reject the proposed attempt by the federal coalition and business lobbyists to turn Australia's new paid parental leave into a welfare payment rather than a workplace entitlement.

"Once again Tony Abbott, backed by business lobbyists, has shown a deep lack of understanding about the needs of working women and how paid parental leave can best help women stay connected to the workforce when they take time out to care for their babies," said ACTU President Ged Kearney.

The Private Member's Bill proposed by the Coalition would force Centrelink to administer paid parental leave, rather than allowing women to be directly paid by their employer as a workplace entitlement, as is the case with long service or sick leave, for example.

"This would weaken women's connection to the workplace rather than strengthen it," Ms Kearney said.

"One of the key purposes of a proper paid parental leave scheme is to ensure women stay attached to the workforce rather than drop out altogether, taking their skills and knowledge with them.

"This has long been a problem in Australia which has one of the lowest workforce participation rates in the OECD for women between the ages of 22 to 44.

"Research and direct experience show that when an employer administers the payment to a female employee it keeps the workplace relationship intact.

"This connection to the employer engenders loyalty and good faith between both parties. It creates a much greater likelihood that the woman will return to the workplace when the leave is finished," said Ms Kearney.

"Tony Abbott said he would introduce paid parental leave over his dead body. This Bill is just another attempt to prevent Paid Parental Leave from becoming an accepted workplace right for all women and speaks volumes about his ignorance on this issue."

Media contact:
Giulia Baggio 0409 141 038