

Thursday, 19 October 2023

Increase in parental leave welcomed to address gender inequality

New laws introduced to parliament today will allow for families to be able to access 26 weeks of paid parental leave by 2026. This is the largest increase to paid parental leave since the beginning of the scheme in 2011. This follows previous changes made by the Albanese Government to make the scheme more accessible, flexible and gender equitable that started from 1 July 2023.

Parents already have access to 20 weeks of paid leave, but under the changes, that amount will increase by two weeks each year from July 2024, until the 26-week rate is reached in 2026.

Once the scheme is fully implemented from July 2026, the 26 weeks will be able to be shared by both parents. It also increases to 4 weeks the number of weeks reserved for each parent.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O’Neil:

“We welcome the Albanese Government’s leadership and prioritisation of this issue.

“Australia had the second-worst paid parental leave scheme in the developed world, which is a direct driver of women’s lower workforce participation and unequal caring responsibility and causing women’s earnings to fall by 55 per cent on average in the first five years of parenthood.

“This Bill is a significant improvement after a decade of neglect by the previous government by providing more paid leave and creating a more equal balance of caring responsibilities amongst parents.

“It’s not only a good policy for women, but it’s a good economic policy that will boost the economy by supporting working families to share their skills and experience with the workforce

“There is still more to be done to improve and expand Australia’s PPL scheme. Including the extending of the scheme to 52 weeks, increasing the rate of pay from its low level of the National Minimum Wage, and paying superannuation on parental leave. These are all changes necessary to increase women’s workforce participation, facilitate more equal sharing of caring responsibilities between men and women, and close the gender pay gap.”

ENDS

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