

**From:** Diann Rodgers-Healey  
**To:** [Community Affairs Committee \(SEN\)](#)  
**Subject:** Stop PPL Cuts  
**Date:** Tuesday, 22 November 2016 8:57:59 AM

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I am writing to express concerns about the proposed changes to the paid parental leave scheme and ask you to stop the proposed changes to Australia's current PPL scheme.

Our current scheme is already a bare bones scheme compared to other similar nations which was designed to operate as a public/private partnership, encouraging business to become enthused about their role in ensuring women can both parent effectively and return to the workplace. According to the OECD's PPL Report Australia's current PPL scheme falls below the average for OECD countries. It is one of the least generous in the world. The OECD's PPL Report ranks Australia's current PPL scheme as the third lowest in the OECD, with only Portugal and the USA having lesser entitlements.

The existing scheme aimed to improve women's health; improve babies' health; and develop a culture of promoting PPL as a gender equality measure in workplaces and the broader community.

The proposed amendments will reduce women's choices about when to return to work. The implications of forcing women back to work before they are ready go well beyond the period of leave; the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children found that women who took between 13 and 26 weeks parental leave were more likely to report that they were suffering from mental distress for up to two years than women who took more than 26 weeks; and the long term benefits to children of breastfeeding exclusively to 6 months are well known: improved brain and cognitive development, measurable impact on school performance and later life and a decreased risk of obesity have all been clearly identified as benefits of prolonged breastfeeding.

Furthermore, the proposed amendments break down the developing culture of employers and Government having shared responsibility for PPL. To suggest that women are 'double dipping' completely misrepresents the nature and design of the scheme. Enterprise agreements top-up the minimum entitlements provided by Government to provide access to additional paid leave. Removing access to the Government scheme imposes an unexpected and unwarranted financial burden on families and denies employees access to freely negotiated conditions of employment. Such entitlements contribute to allowing more time for breast feeding, bonding, and child development.

We already have a significant gendered wealth gap in this country. Financially disadvantaging women who take time off work to be with their babies will only contribute to that gap. New mums will need to decide to either forego the lost income and attempt to survive without it, or be forced back to work before they're ready, losing valuable bonding time and incurring additional childcare costs.

Overall, paid parental leave is not just about economics and productivity but also about ensuring children get a good start in life. We are counting on you to stand up for Mums and bubs and help protect our paid parental leave.

Please also see this as a petition which has more than 600 signatories including 20 women's organisations: <http://www.leadershipforwomen.com.au/transform/activism/paid-parental-leave-ppl/stop-changes-to-paid-parental-leave-petition>

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

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