



Work, Family and Equal Pay

Working families need parental leave, access to childcare, and real flexibility in working hours

- Work and family balance is a long-standing concern for working people and their unions – ever since we fought for the eight hour day and four weeks paid annual leave.
- Australian unions have campaigned for paid parental leave for more than 30 years because it is an essential workplace right for women and families.
- From 1 January 2011, a new national system of paid parental leave will give new parents up to \$10,000 financial support.
- With an ageing population, more of us need to take time out to care for older family members. Not enough workers are able to do this and employers need to better recognise caring responsibilities.
- Women doing the same job as men are supposed to be paid the same by law. However, many women still find themselves underpaid or they miss out on the best jobs, resulting in an 18% gender pay gap.
- Unions believe everyone's work should be valued properly. Closing the pay gap and providing more opportunities for working women are major priorities for unions.

Paid Parental Leave

After 30 years of campaigning, women will have better financial security when they have a baby. From 1 January 2011, all new mothers will get a minimum of 18 weeks paid leave – whether a full-time, part-time or casual worker.

Eligible women will get taxable payments via their employer at the Federal Minimum Wage (\$570 a week). All primary carers will be eligible providing they have:

- Worked continuously for at least 10 of the 13 months prior to the expected birth or adoption of a child (women who take time off due to a pregnancy related illness can be exempt from this requirement).
- Undertaken at least 330 hours paid work in the 10 month period (an average of around one day of paid work a week).
- Income less than \$150,000 in the previous financial year.

The government scheme will operate alongside employer schemes already in place and unions will campaign to ensure employers do not reduce their existing parental leave payments and obligations or cut paid maternity leave from agreements.

There is more work to do to build on the 18-week scheme. Unions will campaign for improvements in the following priority areas:

- A requirement that employers “top-up” the government scheme so women earning above the minimum wage receive full income replacement.
- Paid parental leave for fathers, and/or secondary care givers.
- Employer payment of superannuation on maternity leave.
- More flexibility on the qualifying period and to allow women to take some of 18 weeks paid leave before the birth of the baby.
- Providing women the option of taking 18 weeks paid leave at half pay over 36 weeks.

All working Australian women will have access to 18 weeks paid parental leave

Women retire with less than half the super savings of men

**More time
with family
and friends**

Improving work and family provisions

Under the new National Employment Standards enshrined by the *Fair Work Act*, all workers have a right to request flexible working arrangements to help them care for their children. These arrangements may include changes in the hours of work, patterns of work, and to the location of work. Employers may only refuse a request on reasonable business grounds.

Unions will continue to campaign for improved right for workers to achieve better work/life balance, including:

- More flexible working arrangements
- Strengthen and increased paid personal/carers' leave – so all workers with caring responsibilities have access when they need it. This should include provision for palliative care leave as a minimum standard.
- Accessible, affordable, good quality out-of-school care and childcare.
- Reporting and auditing of equal pay by government agencies.
- Valuation and proper funding of wages for work traditionally carried out by women.
- More opportunities to build skills and participate in the workforce, especially for mothers and older women.

Valuing women's work

Across the Australian workforce, women in full-time paid work still earn 18% less than men. Over their lifetimes, this adds up to \$1 million less.

**On average
women earn
\$1 million less
over their
lifetime than
men do**

Unequal pay or "pay inequity" occurs despite it being illegal to pay a woman less for doing the same job as man. This is because there are industries with a majority of female workers that attract lower pay than male-dominated industries. The pay gap occurs within industries as well, particularly where pay arrangements are negotiated individually where indirect discrimination may occur, or when women are passed over for promotion.

- Women are still disproportionately linked to casual or low income jobs
- Women are now more likely to have a tertiary qualification than men, but after graduating women earn \$2000 less than male graduates and \$7500 less five years after graduation
- Fewer than 2% of ASX 200 companies have a female CEO and only 1 in 12 board directors are women
- Under the former Coalition Government's WorkChoices laws, the pay gap widened for the first time in 25 years, as thousands of women lost penalty rates and other important job conditions and minimum wages were cut in real terms.

Closing the pay equity gap and providing more opportunities for working women are major priorities of unions. In 2010, unions have embarked on a landmark pay equity test case in Fair Work Australia to lift the pay of workers in the female-dominated social and community services sector.

**"Paid
maternity
leave? Over
this Govt's
dead body,
frankly."
- Tony Abbott,
2002**

The Liberals have failed to help working families

The former Liberal government's WorkChoices IR laws had a negative effect on women and families:

- Working families lost rights to more family-flexible working conditions that unions had won in the Work and Family Test Case. These rights have now been restored by Labor.
- Pay inequality grew for the first time in 25 years, with cuts to real minimum wages, the removal of the award system that allowed for test cases to lift basic conditions, and the use of individual contracts.

During his years as Employment Minister under John Howard, Mr Abbott never made any attempt to introduce a paid parental leave scheme. He is on record as opposing it.

WorkChoices
Whatever the name,
never again.

We Need Your Help

- Find out more
- Talk to your family and friends
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Visit www.neveragain.org.au
Call the Union Helpline 1300 486 466