



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

MC22-002578

Ms Peta Arthurson
Beaches Baby


info@beachesbaby.com.au

Dear Ms Arthurson

Thank you for your email of 31 March 2022, to the Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, regarding increasing Parental Leave Pay from 18 weeks to 26 weeks. Your email was referred to the Minister for Families and Social Services and Minister for Women's Safety, Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, as this matter falls within her portfolio responsibilities. With the announcement of the forthcoming election by the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, the Australian Government has assumed a 'caretaker role' and the Minister has asked me to reply on her behalf.

Thank you for your correspondence, and your petition on behalf of more than 8,000 Australians. Feedback like yours assists Governments in understanding and making key policy changes. The Paid Parental Leave scheme is intended to complement employer-provided parental leave entitlements in order to extend the average length of leave taken by employed parents after childbirth, and to provide a minimum entitlement for self-employed families and families without access to employer-provided leave.

The Paid Parental Leave scheme currently provides Parental Leave Pay for up to 18 weeks to eligible working primary carers, in addition to any existing employer-provided paid or unpaid leave. Parental Leave Pay can be taken before, after or at the same time as any paid or unpaid maternity or parental leave, or other employer-provided leave entitlements such as annual leave or long-service leave. In addition, the Paid Parental Leave scheme has been designed to complement the unpaid leave entitlements under the National Employment Standards in the *Fair Work Act 2009*. Parents who have worked continuously for their employer for 12 months or more may have an entitlement to 12 months of unpaid parental leave under the National Employment Standards with the option of extending that time by 12 months if the employer agrees.

The Paid Parental Leave scheme is closely based on the scheme proposed by the Productivity Commission, an independent research and advisory body. In its 2009 inquiry report, the Commission noted that resuming work is not the main reason given by Australian women for discontinuing breastfeeding. As such, paid parental leave by itself is likely to be only partly effective in increasing breastfeeding duration.

The Commission also recommended a Government-funded parental leave payment of 18 weeks. It noted that this, together with parents co-funding options (self and employer funded leave), would allow almost all infants to be exclusively cared for by their parents for the first six months of life. Benefits of funding a scheme for more than 18 weeks would not be worth the additional costs of forgone spending on other areas such as health and child care.

I appreciate the concerns you have raised and I have noted your suggestions. The Government continues to monitor paid parental leave arrangements to ensure they are efficient, effective and appropriately targeted to give children the best start in life. Your feedback will be considered in future reviews of paid parental leave arrangements.

Thank you again for writing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'Agnieszka Nelson'.

Agnieszka Nelson
Acting Group Manager
Participation and Family Payments
13 April 2022