



## **Resolution Number Eighteen**

*Submitted by National Secretary, Paul Howes.*

### **Paid Parental Leave**

#### **Background**

Australia is one of few developing nations that does not offer any form of statutory paid parental leave. As an example, the following nations have paid parental leave schemes with the following benefits –

New Zealand	14 weeks' continuous leave at normal rates of pay
Sweden	18 months' paid leave to both parents, with the costs shared between the employer and the State
Canada	35 weeks' paid leave paid supported through the Employment Insurance system
United Kingdom	All female employees are entitled to 52 weeks' leave, out of which 39 weeks are paid, and the first 6 weeks are paid at 90% of the employee's full pay

Since 1979, Australian women have been entitled to legislated unpaid maternity leave of up to 54 weeks. This leave entitlement was extended to fathers for paternity leave in the early 1990's. In early 2008, the federal government tasked the Productivity Commission to prepare a draft report into a Paid Parental Leave Scheme, which was released in October 2008. Importantly, Productivity Commission highlighted the fact that about 285, 000 children were born in Australia in 2007-2008, and that of these, 175, 000 were born to mothers who were in the workforce prior to giving birth, and 80% of these women planned to return to the workforce.

There has been much research done in the area of early childhood health. The Productivity Commission noted that there was "compelling evidence of child and maternal health benefits from a period of postnatal absence from the workforce of the primary care giver of around six months – although 9 to 12 months even better" The Productivity Commission also noted that there were societal benefits to a paid parental leave scheme as well, where society would otherwise pay for the health costs of poorer outcomes for children and parents.

The Productivity Commission recommended 18 weeks statutory paid parental leave, to be commenced immediately after any other continuous leave available at the birth of the child and before 6 months after the birth. The Productivity Commission also recommended that in addition to this entitlement, 2 weeks paternity leave (which cannot be accrued) should also be afforded to fathers. Finally, the Productivity Commission recommended that parental leave should be paid at the adult minimum wage rate of \$543.74 for each week of the statutory period.



# NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2009



## **Resolution**

This National Conference acknowledges the increasing pressures that work and child rearing can place on both parents. This National Conference also acknowledges that in the formative first 6 months of a newborn's life the health benefits of having at least one parent caring in a full-time capacity is proven to be invaluable.

As such, this National Conference commends the federal government's commitment to lifting Australia's paid parental leave up to international standards and encourages the government to make the implementation of this policy a priority for the coming 2009 – 2010 financial year.

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**Moved:**

**Seconded:**

**Outcome:**