

Cuts to parental leave doomed in the Senate as polling shows working mothers key undecided in upcoming election

MEDIA RELEASE

17 March 2016

The government's latest proposed cuts to paid parental leave are dead in the water, with a block vote secured in the Senate. Senators Lazarus, Lambie and Xenophon have now all publicly committed to vote against cuts to parental leave.

This comes as a recent ReachTEL poll conducted by The Parenthood and Maurice Blackburn Lawyers found that 18-percent of working mums are still undecided on who they'll vote for in the upcoming Federal election.

The Executive Director of the national peak body representing parents, *The Parenthood*, Jo Briskey, said the government needs to take cuts to paid parental leave off the table or expect voter backlash from working mums on election day.

"Paid Parental will be a key election decider for many mums. Many voted for Tony Abbott on his promise to provide six months of full paid maternity leave. This election will be no different." Ms Briskey said.

"These cuts would strip precious time from new parents trying to make ends meet while they care for their new baby." Says Renee Carr, Executive Director of Fair Agenda. "It's great to see many of the crossbench Senators standing up for working families on this issue."

Research commissioned by Fair Agenda has shown that the cuts would hit working families hard - with nurses, teachers, ambos and retail service workers set to have precious time at home torn away under the government's proposed cuts. Families in the scenarios modelled in the report would have more than 4 weeks of family living costs taken away under the government's proposed cut system.

Jo Briskey said that many pregnant mums are anxious and angry that there is still no decision on Paid Parental Leave.

"What does the government expect mums to tell their employers just three months out? They don't know if they can take a year off or four months - parents need certainty" Ms Briskey said.

Fair Agenda member and expecting mother Kasia Holt, who is due after the cuts are scheduled to take effect says: "I am sitting here in limbo, not knowing whether I will need to return to work early. It would be impossible for us to live off one wage, which means I would be forced to compromise my child's health and my health by returning to work early."

“The introduction of paid parental leave was a big step forward in tackling the financial inequality faced by working mothers. Economic disparities in women’s and men’s working lives often start at motherhood. These cuts would disproportionately disadvantage women -- and drag us back in time.” Added Renee Carr, Fair Agenda.

More than 35,000 community members have spoken out against any cuts to parental leave.

Contact:

Jo Briskey, The Parenthood, Executive Director 0423 262 449
Renee Carr, Fair Agenda Executive Director, 0435 597 976
Fair Agenda member & expectant mum Kasia Holt, 0412 183 275

Note: Photos of press conference can be made available.

Links

Fair Agenda report available at www.fairagenda.org/media

ReachTEL results

Question 1:

If a federal election were to be held today which of the following would receive your first preference vote?

	Total
<i>The Liberal Party</i>	30.6%
<i>The Nationals</i>	3.7%
<i>Labor</i>	28.8%
<i>The Greens</i>	11.0%
<i>Palmer United Party</i>	1.3%
<i>Other / Independent</i>	6.1%
<i>Undecided</i>	18.5%

Question 1a:

Being undecided to which do you have even a slight leaning?

	Total
<i>The Liberal Party</i>	37.4%
<i>The Nationals</i>	3.9%
<i>Labor</i>	30.6%
<i>The Greens</i>	5.9%
<i>Palmer United Party</i>	4.1%
<i>Other / Independent</i>	18.2%

Note: Only respondents who answered 'Undecided' to Question 1 were asked Question 1a