



Joint Media Release

Senator Judith Adams
Liberal Senator for Western Australia

Senator Sue Boyce
Liberal Senator for Queensland

Senator Mary Jo Fisher
Liberal Senator for South Australia

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Coalition Senators: Rudd's Paid Parental Leave more welfare law than workforce law

A Coalition Senate Inquiry Report tabled today reveals the Government's Paid Parental Leave scheme is more welfare law than workforce law, Coalition Senators Judith Adams, Sue Boyce and Mary Jo Fisher said.

"The Paid Parental Leave Bill breaks two Government promises; that it will deliver paid parental leave, and top up any existing benefits," Senator Adams said.

"And the Government is prematurely promoting its broken promises with tax-payer funded brochures which contain information that is wrong and misleading. The Government is breaking promises and has botched this Bill," Senator Fisher said.

"The Government promised that its Paid Parental Leave scheme will be an additional entitlement on top of the existing employer-provided schemes, yet the Inquiry heard the Bill doesn't compel this outcome," Senator Boyce said.

"The Government has failed to clarify how its Paid Parental Leave scheme interacts with existing benefits provided by an employer," Senators Adams, Boyce and Fisher said.

"There's nothing in the Bill to prevent employers from passing on the Government's handout and abandoning part or all of their existing arrangements. Why wouldn't employers consider it their right to do so, when the Government scheme is tax-payer funded, and businesses are, after all, tax-payers," they said.

"The Government promised its Paid Parental Leave scheme meant what it said: 'Paid Parental Leave', not government handouts. The Bill breaks that promise," Senators Adams, Boyce and Fisher added.

"The Government has broken its promise that its Paid Parental Leave scheme is about mum and bubs."

"Professor Andrew Stewart's evidence shows that the Bill is more about money, than about mums and bubs, more about handouts than entitlement to take leave from your job for time with baby*," they said.

"He gave evidence to the Committee that the Bill would be better called the 'Parental Payment Bill' rather than Paid Parental Leave Bill."

"This Bill is a right to payment only, it does not create a right to leave and Professor Stewart warned some new parents will have little option but to quit their jobs if they want to get the payment and spend time with baby."

"This Bill has misnomers and glaring gaps and shortcomings of which the Government was forewarned repeatedly and consistently in the lead up to the Bill. The Bill will need a significant overhaul if it is to achieve the Government's stated aims and keep the Government's promises," they said.

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***Professor Andrew Stewart's submission to the inquiry notes:**

"The title of the Bill is a misnomer, since the proposed scheme does not confer any entitlement to paid leave... There will be workers who can receive payments, but cannot take leave from their existing jobs..."

This means that an employee (could face), "the prospect of having to quit her job without any guarantee of a return to work... it is hardly unreasonable for employees (or indeed employers) to believe that a right to "paid parental leave" means what it says!"