



A•S•U

Our Ref: DS:jk  
Your Ref:

Please quote in reply

Friday, 31 May 2013

Paid Parental Leave review – FaHCSIA  
AW3  
PO Box 7576  
CANBERRA BUSINESS CENTRE ACT 2610

By E-MAIL: [ppl@fahcsia.gov.au](mailto:ppl@fahcsia.gov.au)

Dear Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries,

**Re: Australian Government review of the Paid Parental Leave (PPL) Scheme 2013**

The ASU refers to the Australian Government review of the Paid Parental Leave Scheme, as required under the Paid Parental Leave Act 2010, and welcomes the opportunity for comment. Please find our *Review of Australia's Paid Parental Leave scheme Business/Organisation Submission Form*, attached.

The Australian Services Union (ASU) is one of Australia's largest unions, representing approximately 120,000 members. Our members work in public services and private sector industries and occupations. Our public service coverage extends to local government employees and employees of State Owned Corporations in energy and water industries (and some higher education coverage in Queensland and South Australia); also, passenger rail transport. Our private sector coverage extends to all clerical and administrative employees generally, as well as passenger air transport, road and air freight transport employees; also, employees of social and community services organisations and contact call-centres.

The ASU is aware of the Australian Council for Trade Unions (ACTU) submission; dated 31 May 2013 and agrees with the views contained in it.

In particular, the ASU would like to draw attention to the Recommendations. A survey of ASU members shows us that the Recommendations made in detail by the ACTU, have strong importance to the ASU membership. We submit the following summary results of our survey to support the ACTU submission:

1. The ASU membership is most likely to follow the full period of PPL with additional leave.
2. Many of our members would not; prior to the introduction of the federal scheme, have had the option of paid leave for the purpose of caring for a newborn or newly adopted child. Therefore; the PPL scheme has become essential to providing greater income security to primary carers of newborns or newly adopted children.
3. Unpaid leave periods taken after PPL vary from as little as 1 month or as much as 3 to 6 months; sometimes up to 9 months or more. Those statistics clearly show that ASU members need a more realistic period of paid leave made available to them, compared to the 18 weeks provided by the current PPL scheme.
4. Of the members surveyed, more than 80% want a meaningful Right to Request a part-time arrangement upon return to work. More than 65% believe continuation of superannuation contributions whilst on leave is fair, in the same way payments are continued for other forms of leave.
5. ASU survey results; also, provided the ASU with a collection of responses that describe serious and unacceptable issues with the application process

**Australian  
Services  
Union**

**National Office  
Melbourne & Sydney**

*All correspondence to:*

Ground Floor  
116 Queensberry St  
Carlton South VIC 3053

T: (03) 9342 1400  
F: (03) 9342 1499  
E: [info@asu.asn.au](mailto:info@asu.asn.au)  
W: [www.asu.asn.au](http://www.asu.asn.au)

**National Secretary  
David Smith**

**Assistant National Secretaries  
Greg McLean  
Linda White**

for PPL or the Family Assistance Office of Centrelink. We submit to you the following written comments from members and highlight the negative experiences including delays with payment, as matters of urgency and for the immediate attention of Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries participating in the 2013 review. Please refer to Appendix A. for a table of comments given in response to our survey.

The key issues have been provided to support the broader and more in depth arguments of the ACTU submission. We welcome any opportunity to facilitate further consultation. I trust that you will contact us.

Yours faithfully,

[via email]  
Joanne Knight  
National Research/Industrial Officer

Mobile: 0419 59 33 96  
E-mail: [jknight@syd.asu.asn.au](mailto:jknight@syd.asu.asn.au)



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**Review of Australia’s Paid Parental Leave scheme  
Business/Organisation Submission Form**

Part A: Confidentiality statement

I have read and agree to the conditions outlined in the Privacy Information (A1)\*

We encourage you to allow your submission to be shared with other members of the public to promote discussion. If you would prefer your submission be treated as confidential please tick the following box:

Please treat my submission as confidential (A2)

Part B: Your name or business/organisation name

B(b)1. Business/organisation name\*: Australian Municipal, Administrative, Clerical and Services Union, trading as the Australian Services Union (ASU)

B(b)2. Details of the contact person for this submission\*

B(b)3. Title: Ms.

First name: Joanne

Surname: Knight

B(b)4. Email address\*: jknight@syd.asu.asn.au

B(b)5. Phone number: (02) 9283-9282

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Part C: Information about your business/organisation

C(b)1. Which of the following best describes your business or organisation?

- A private sector “for profit” organisation
- A private sector “not-for-profit” organisation
- A government business or enterprise or commercial statutory authority
- Another government organisation such as a public service department, local council, school or university
- Other type of business/organisation: Trade Union
- Not sure

C(b)2. Does your business/organisation operate from more than one location?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

C(b)3. Where is the primary location of your business/organisation?

- NSW
- VIC
- QLD
- WA
- SA
- Tasmania
- NT
- ACT
- National
- International
- Not sure

C(b)4. Please provide a brief description of your business/organisation? (eg. sector, type of products or services, etc.)

The Australian Services Union (ASU) is one of Australia's largest Unions, representing approximately 120,000 employees. The ASU was created in 1993. It brought together three large unions – the Federated Clerks Union, the Municipal Officers Association and the Municipal Employees Union, as well as a number of smaller organisations representing social welfare, information technology workers and transport workers.

Today, the ASU's members work in a wide variety of industries and occupations and especially in the following industries and occupations:

- Local government (both blue and white collar employment)
- Social and community services, including employment services
- Transport, including passenger air and rail transport, road, rail and air freight transport
- Clerical and administrative employees in commerce and industry generally
- Call centres
- Electricity generation, transmission and distribution
- Water industry
- Higher education (Queensland and South Australia)

The ASU has members in every State and Territory of Australia, as well as in most regional centres as well.

C(b)5. Approximately how many people does your business/organisation usually employ (that are paid a wage or salary)?

- Less than 5
- 5 to 19 employees
- 20 to 99 employees
- 100 to 199 employees
- 200 employees or more
- Not sure

C(b)6. Is your business/organisation registered to provide Government-funded Parental Leave Pay to its employees?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

C(b)7. Does your business/organisation offer its employees any paid leave to care for children, funded by your business/organisation, in addition to the Government's Paid Parental Leave scheme?

- Paid maternity leave (for mothers to care for their children after birth)
- Paid paternity leave (for fathers to care for their children after birth)
- Paid primary carer's leave
- No employer-funded paid leave to care for children after birth
- Not sure.



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## Appendix A.

Table of comments in response to ASU Paid Parental Leave question: *Did you experience any difficulty making applications?* The survey was conducted for the brief period of 20 to 27<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

The forms are very complicated and you're required to estimate income without even knowing how much paid parental leave you will receive.
Centrelink application was a pain. It took hours and was hard to understand. HR process with work was also confusing as they offered 6 weeks paid leave also but wasn't clear if it was in conjunction with or instead of government leave
They were unsure how to go about it . Centrelink was HORRIBLE!!!! I hated going to deception bay to line up and each time i phoned they were engaged or the wait was about an hour and they had NO IDEA of any information and treated me terribly. Not interested in helping me in an unknown complex situation. I was worried I would be unable to pay the morgage and they could not tell me exactly how much I would be getting.
The questions were really confusing to answer, repeated questions, and some unknown answers. I didn't complete it properly, sent it in, they sent it back, I sent it back with a letter explaining I didn't know how to answer... it was ridiculous.
Complicated forms and information on the web site
It was hard to navigate and weigh up the benefits over just the baby bonus. With Baby bonus now set to change the paid parental leave will be vastly more beneficial to primary carers that work part time and casual- which makes up a vast majority of the un or low skilled workforce.
The fact that you do not know the birth date and they would not let it be converted. That is had booked as annual leave as was unure of birth date, had baby and on return submitted for conversion to paternity leave and was told that I was already on annual leave so could not get paternity leave.
When I filled the application form in I had to take data into Centrelink. Then I was told I had done it wrong so I was rejected and had to start again. Then it took even longer to be paid.
The application forms were difficult to understand and confusing. Both my wife and I went to Centrelink at Goodna for clarifications. We have experienced that staff could answer our questions in relation to the questions asked in the form. My wife and I both graduated from University in Queensland. Staff at centrelink asked other staff whom couldnt help us neither. We ended up with completing the form the best we could.
Took ages to process and we were without benefit for weeks after I gave birth.
It is a very complex process dealing with centerlink.