

Inquiry into Paid Maternity, Paternity
And Parental Leave
Productivity Commission
Fax: 02 6240 3377

5 June 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

As a working mother in our own small business I would like to express my views on paid maternity, paternity and parental leave.

I was employed by Westpac Banking Corp for 17 years prior to resigning to work with my husband in his refrigeration maintenance & manufacturing business. Since working with my husband we have had two daughters now aged 6 & 8 years.

At the time of my daughters' births we were in a situation where I had to continue working as we only had one other employee other than ourselves. My role in the business at the time could not and would not have been performed by another person. My daughters were at the office with me until they were too 'old' to be there. They then went into care which was shared between Family Day Care and my mother.

I have felt for a very long time that this situation has had a lasting effect on the disposition and emotional stability of my eldest daughter. In hindsight she would have been better off with more time and attention from her mother. I too feel deprived of that precious time I should have spent with my daughters when they were babies. I can never have that time again. People often ask if I'll have more children. My answer is always "No, but I'd love to have these two over again."

I have read that important aspects of a child's disposition and personality are formed in their first three years. Surely children are much better off at this time with their mother at home full time to care for them and the rest of the family without dealing with the stress of coping with a career as well. I now only work three days a week which are between school hours. I can't help but notice how much easier it is for all of us on the days that I don't work. I am more organized when I bring the girls home from school and have a lot more time for them and feel more relaxed. They are noticeably happier on these days because I am not rushing them and are more settled and patient myself and feel better able to cater to their needs.

As an employer, I have never been able to understand why an employer should pay an employee while they are not at work due to having children. Is it not the employee's responsibility to provide for their own future? We all have to have superannuation to save for our retirement so why not set ourselves up for one parent leaving the workforce to raise a family. We all know at a young age that we may want children one day so there is plenty of time to get our financial situation in order before that time comes. I do not feel that an employer should have to provide financial assistance for this. It is harsh enough on an employer that they have to hold the

employee's position open for their return from parental leave. In small business it is impossible to pay two people to do one job which, in effect, is the result of paid parental leave. Even during my years of employment with Westpac I was not a believer in paid parental leave.

Due to the nature of our business we employ males to perform the work. We prefer to employ more mature aged males as they have proven to be more stable and conscientious. Paid parental leave is just another deterrent to employing younger males at the prospect of them becoming a stay-at-home dad at our expense.

On a society level I feel that our species, like others of the animal kingdom, were meant to function with the male being the hunter and provider while the female takes care of the home and family. Perhaps if we reverted to what nature intended the divorce rate would not be so high as people would be acting out the roles that their bodies and minds were engineered for. Call me old-fashioned if you like but I feel that this theory is quite simple and glaringly obvious. We all used to spend more time with family and friends on a much more regular basis when mothers were at home all week to take care of household chores etc and free to spend time with family on weekends. We also spent more time with family and friends when shops weren't open all weekend to cater to all of the people who can't shop through the week because they are at work.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments.

Yours faithfully

Jo Egginton

NSW