

I am a 50 year old Tasmanian Public Servant and mother of two teenage sons. I am one of the lucky few women who enjoyed the benefits of paid maternity leave. This enabled me to prepare and recover from the birth of my children, make appropriate arrangements for care of my sons when I returned to work, and plan for the lifestyle changes that go hand-in-hand with being a 'Working Mum'. One of those lifestyle changes was returning to work in a part-time capacity for a period of time.

Twenty years on, it's hard to imagine that such rights are not available to every Australian working woman.

In addition to maternity leave, I also took some unpaid leave. I didn't realise at the time that I would need to continue making superannuation payments while I was on unpaid leave; I thought that 5.5% of nothing was nothing, and that I would resume payments when I was once again earning an income. Instead, when I returned to part-time work, I was slogged with a request for back paid superannuation, which I could not afford. I already paid the added cost of childcare in order to work part-time! Because I was working part-time and superannuation was not then compulsory for part-time workers, I had no option but to terminate my superannuation and receive a lump sum pay out. I then had to restart superannuation when I resumed full-time employment. In effect, I was victimised and the system was prejudiced against me because I chose to have a family.

I truly hope the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Parental Leave will recommend that the Government take action to ensure mothers are not victimised in the future and that a fair and equitable maternity scheme is implemented to support all working mothers.

Yours sincerely

Carol Houghton