



**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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## **Paid Parental Leave must support Australian mums to breastfeed**

The Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) has released its much-anticipated Position Statement on Paid Parental Leave.

ABA's vision is for breastfeeding to be recognised as important by all Australians and culturally normal. ABA advocates for the protection of breastfeeding by governments, and actively promotes and supports breastfeeding.

"ABA's Position Statement on Paid Parental Leave (PPL) is underpinned by the knowledge that Australian mums want to breastfeed their babies and recognises that they need to recover from their birth and establish breastfeeding in the early weeks after birth," said Ms Marshall-Cerins, ABA's Executive Officer. "Most Australian mums start to breastfeed. It's important to them. Breastfeeding is vital for the health of babies and has significant protective health benefits for mothers. If we want more mums to breastfeed for 6 months or more, in line with national health recommendations, they must be supported with appropriate paid parental leave."

ABA understands that the sharing of care and domestic work between women and men is crucial to gender equality and that inequalities in the division of labour are an obstacle to achieving women's equality.

While ABA supports moves towards gender equality, the 2023 amendment of Australia's PPL legislation has failed to recognise that breastfeeding, like childbirth, is reproductive work that cannot be directly redistributed to fathers, partners or others.

As breastfeeding is part of the continuum of reproductive or sexed care work, no actions should be taken to reduce this care work.

ABA's position statement calls on the Australian government to support the sexed care work of breastfeeding by advocating for:

- Six months protected paid maternity leave for Australian mothers to allow them time to recover from birth, establish breastfeeding and exclusively breastfeed for 6 months, in alignment with World Health Organization (WHO) and Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) infant and young child feeding recommendations.
- When the baby is 6 months old, parents can access a further 6 months of paid parental leave that can be shared between a mother and her partner, to allow continued breastfeeding for at least 12 months (in alignment with WHO and NHMRC for continued breastfeeding) and/or return to work.
- A separate provision for paid parental leave for fathers and partners of 4 weeks that can be accessed from birth to support the mother's rest and recovery from birth or breastfeeding as recommended or return to work.

ABA believes the payment of PPL should be increased from the current level of the national minimum wage to a payment at the level of two-thirds of prior earnings, the threshold set by International Labour Organization's (ILO) *Maternity Protection Convention No. 183*.<sup>1</sup>

The significant contributing effect of motherhood to the superannuation gender gap should be acknowledged and addressed by legislating for employer superannuation contributions throughout maternity leave (paid and unpaid) and PPL.

ABA believes the interaction between women's reproductive biology and infant care role needs to be recognised. Initiatives towards gender equality, including Australia's PPL scheme, must not undermine breastfeeding and should be assessed against their impact on women's ability to breastfeed.<sup>2</sup>

Read ABA's full Paid Parental Leave Position Statement here:

[Position statement on Paid Parental Leave | Australian Breastfeeding Association](#)

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### **Breastfeeding facts**

- Mums want to breastfeed their babies. In Australia, more than 95% of mothers start breastfeeding their babies,<sup>3</sup> but 30% of babies are given formula before leaving hospital,<sup>4</sup> breastfeeding is undermined, and by 6 months of age only 15.4% of babies are still exclusively breastfed.<sup>3</sup>
- Breastfeeding is vital for the health of babies and has significant protective health benefits for mothers.
- Breastfeeding reduces the risk of infections<sup>5</sup> and SIDS<sup>6</sup> in babies, and overweight and obesity as babies grow.<sup>7</sup>
- Breastfeeding reduces the costs of hospitalisation of babies and young children due to gastrointestinal illness, respiratory illness, otitis media, eczema, and necrotising enterocolitis.<sup>8</sup>
- Breastfeeding reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease in women.<sup>9-19</sup>
- The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding for babies to 6 months of age, and then for breastfeeding to continue alongside suitable complementary foods for up to 2 years and beyond.<sup>20</sup> Exclusive breastfeeding means that the baby receives only breastmilk. No additional food or drink are given, not even water.
- Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for around 6 months and then for breastfeeding to continue alongside complementary food until 12 months of age and beyond, for as long as the mother and child desire.<sup>21</sup>

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