



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Paid Parental Leave

SPEECH

Thursday, 28 May 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Dreyfus, Mark, MP

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Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (09:42): Last week I held two child care forums in my electorate: one in Patterson Lakes and one in Edithvale. At these forums I met with dozens of parents who were concerned about the government's changes to paid parental leave and other family payments, as well as uncertainty about the future funding of 15 hours of kindergarten each week. Again and again, parents of young children told me that the government's decision to cut paid parental leave for mothers who received a payment from their workplace would make their lives that little bit harder. One young mother in particular was furious about the rhetoric coming from the government, that she along with tens of thousands of other mothers were 'double-dipping' their paid parental leave. Another young mum, who worked as a teacher, said that cutting government-funded paid parental leave would mean that she and her husband would reconsider whether or not to have another child.

For parents who receive employer-sponsored paid parental leave, this benefit is part of their salary package. By removing paid parental leave payments for parents who receive an employer-sponsored payment, the government is cutting the take-home pay and household budget of many of my constituents. With the median annual income of a parent receiving paid parental leave at just over \$47,000, the government's slashing of paid parental leave entitlements will prevent almost half of all new mothers from accessing the full paid parental leave scheme.

It is offensive the way the government represents the role of the paid parental leave scheme, which was always intended to complement employer-based entitlements. The language used by the Treasurer and the Minister for Social Services, describing new mothers as fraudsters and rorters is disingenuous and dishonest. Young parents are not rorting the system by claiming the government funded paid parental leave scheme. They are using the system as it was designed.

The government's misrepresentation of the purpose of the Paid Parental Leave scheme shows just how out of touch they are with the needs and priorities of our community.

The other issue frequently raised at these forums is the ongoing funding of 15 hours per week of kindergarten. At present this government has only budgeted for funding 15 hours per week up to 2017. The uncertainty caused by the temporary state of kinder funding makes future planning for parents and early learning educators unnecessarily difficult. I call on the government to commit to permanently funding 15 hours of kinder per week and drop its attack on Australian families by reversing its cuts to family payments and paid parental leave. This needs to be seen as early childhood education. It is not just about workforce participation, as this government persists in saying. It is about early childhood education, and the government should understand it for what it is.