



## **Federal Government Paid Parental Leave Scheme**

**The IEUA has welcomed the Federal Government's announcement that it will introduce an 18-week paid parental leave scheme in January 2011**

While IEUA members have had many successes in negotiating paid maternity leave, these successes have been achieved through high union membership activity when negotiating working conditions.

However, access to paid maternity leave varies in terms of length of leave entitlement or eligibility criteria. More problematic is the reality that there remains a substantial number of staff in non-government schools who do not have access to any paid maternity leave.

**The Federal Government Paid Parental Leave scheme will now provide some financial security to those working parents who are unable to access employer funded maternity leave.**

It is also a particularly positive initiative for members who are working in casual, temporary positions or who have worked short term contracts with multiple employers.

The federal government paid parental scheme will be payable at the federal minimum wage of \$543.78 for 18 weeks.

### **Who is eligible?**

To be eligible for the scheme, the primary care giver must have:

- must have worked continuously with one or more employers for at least 10 of the 13 months before the expected date of birth or adoption;
- must have worked at least 330 hours in those 10 months (equivalent to around one full day of work each week).

The scheme will be means tested to exclude families where the primary caregiver earns \$150 000 or more. Recipients of the Government's paid parental scheme will not be eligible to also receive either the Baby Bonus nor Family Tax Benefit Part B.

### **Interaction with Employer Funded Paid Maternity Leave**

Members who are eligible for Paid Parental Scheme will be able to continue to access employer-funded leave around the time of the birth or adoption of a child. This includes employer funded paid maternity leave and annual leave.

**Importantly, employers who provide paid maternity leave through an industrial instrument cannot withdraw that entitlement for the life of that instrument.**

**Campaign continues.**

There is still much work to be done in order to provide working families with adequate support in the workplaces.

Loss of continuity of employment is a major handicap for women's career advancement and is costly in terms of reduced superannuation and other employment related benefits. Paid parental leave must be considered as genuine paid leave similar to all other leave entitlements and consequently be counted for the purposes of accruing annual, sick and long service leave entitlements, superannuation and incremental salary progression.

As well, flexible arrangements for return to work, such as part-time work and job share or other options which enable women and their partners to balance work and parenting commitments are paramount to stable working conditions of women and must be provided for by employers and protected by legislation.

**IEUA will continue to campaign for enhanced working conditions which support our members and their families.**