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Qld unions call for 18 weeks of paid parental leave – for both partners



Matt Dennien

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Queensland unions will embark on a pre-election push for 18 weeks of universal paid parental leave for the state’s 300,000-plus public sector workers in an effort to better bridge the gender pay gap.

The campaign, to be launched on Equal Pay Day, argues the current entitlements of 14 weeks for the primary caregiver and only one for their partner are still leaving women behind.

Instead, the proposal, to be announced on Monday, suggests those deemed “secondary caregivers” should also receive a full 18 weeks of paid leave – able to be taken at the same time as their partner.



Access for partners could be brought in gradually, according to the campaign, which is also calling for expanded parental leave for long-term casuals and some grandparents. LOUISE KENNERLEY

Queensland Council of Unions general secretary Jacqueline King said while progress had been made on equal pay laws – entitling all workers to some paid parental leave – more changes were needed.

“We know there are many factors contributing to the reported 12 per cent gap in pay between men and women employees across the country, and one of these is the amount of time many women take out of the workforce on parental leave, often as the primary caregiver,” King said in a statement.

“For too long, societal expectations have been backed up by outdated entitlements, meaning women are assumed into the role of primary caregiver, currently making up 95 per cent of workers accessing paid or unpaid parental leave.

“If we’re serious about breaking down gender discrimination, we need updated entitlements that ensure women aren’t continually putting their careers on hold and taking a back seat, which we know puts women’s career and financial outlook behind in the short and long term.”

The campaign’s website notes the reforms would reflect recent changes to the Australian public service and Commonwealth paid parental leave, which recognise [equal entitlements for both parents](#).

“[This] will not only help reduce this gender pay gap, but also ensure dads and partners have equal rights and responsibilities to be involved in caring for and supporting their children,” it says.

“Employers also benefit from equal paid parental leave arrangements, producing higher rates of return to work by both parents and partners, maximising the attraction and retention of a diverse workforce, and increasing workforce productivity and morale.”

Teacher Liam Holcombe said equal access to parental leave would have made a huge difference to him and his wife, also a teacher, as they juggled raising three young children with work – which they both now do part-time.

“When our last child was born, I was only eligible to take five days’ paternity leave, which goes by so quickly, so I chose to chip away at my long service leave so I could be around more for my wife and children,” Holcombe said in the campaign media statement.

“Every family is different, but the reality of juggling young kids and work can be hard, and often it’s a conversation between partners of who is going to stay home today and care for sick kids. This extra amount of shared paid parental leave would be a fantastic way of allowing families to manage.”



Matt Dennien is a state political reporter with Brisbane Times, where he has also covered city council and general news. He previously worked as a reporter for newspapers in Tasmania and Brisbane community radio station 4ZZZ. Connect via [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or [email](#).
