



Police Federation of Australia

The National Voice of Policing

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Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Committees
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Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for Families Child Care Package) Bill 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into the *provisions* of the *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for Families Child Care Package) Bill 2015*. We do so representing the interests of in excess of 60,000 police officers across Australia in all State and Territory jurisdictions and the Commonwealth. The Police Federation of Australia (PFA) is a federally registered organisation under the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009.

The PFA has been instrumental in campaigning to support working parents; to improve flexible working arrangements for our members and increase women's participation rates in the force. Our determination to influence change in this area is evidenced by the below list of Inquiries the PFA has provided submissions to in the past:

- Economic Security for Women in Retirement 2015
- Fairer Paid Parental Leave Amendment Bill 2015
- Productivity Commission's Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Draft Report 2014
- Productivity Commission's Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Inquiry 2014
- Supporting Working Parents: Pregnancy and Return to Work National Review 2014
- Paid Parental Leave Review 2013

In these submissions we have emphasised the unique working patterns of police, the round the-clock demands and unpredictable nature of the job as well as outlining key barriers to greater female participation in the Police Force. While we understand the *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for Families Child Care Package) Bill 2015 Inquiry* is designed to investigate key *provisions* of the *Jobs for Families Child Care Package* announced in the 2015-16 Budget, it is important to emphasise the intertwined nature of the issues covered in the above list of submissions including; superannuation, taxation, pregnancy and return to work, workplace discrimination, paid parental leave, part time and broken employment, along with child care.

We congratulate the Government for making further investment into the child care sector and we are proud to support the anticipated Nanny Trial Pilot in 2016. However, we note key points made by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) that the spending figure announced in December 2015 of \$3.2 billion for the *Jobs for Families Child Care Package* was lower than the previously announced \$3.5 billion in May 2015 and Australia's spending on early childhood education and care reportedly still lags behind that of comparable countries. The PFA also shares the ACTU's concern that funding for the *Jobs for Families Child Care Package* will negatively impact on other key policy areas such as Paid Parental Leave.

Paid Parental Leave

The PFA has been a long term strong supporter of the Paid Parental Leave Act 2010. Our members have been able to access the 18 weeks parental leave pay under that Act, on top of the respective entitlements under the various state, territory and federal police enterprise bargaining agreements or award entitlements. Negotiations our members' branches have had with the various state, territory and federal governments and police forces in respect to enterprise bargaining around PPL have always been predicated on our members also having access to the PPL Act 18 weeks.

The current PPL scheme coupled with other leave arrangements have allowed "most infants to be exclusively cared for by a parent for the first six months of life" and there is also evidence of increased workforce participation of women in the police frontline and greater retention of women of childbearing age following the birth of their children. To reiterate any reduction to paid parental leave will adversely affect many police officers, their infants and in turn the community those officers serve. The PFA would like to see an extension of paid parental leave and recognises that polices need to also allow men to share parenting roles.

Affordability

We take this opportunity to reinforce that any suite of measures to reform the flexibility and accessibility of child care will need to be affordable for all families. Police currently pay a premium for any flexible child care they can access. The PFA supports a simplified child care system through the streamlining of payments however according to a recent report by the McKell Institute "families paying fees above the benchmark may have to absorb a larger portion of their childcare costs than present"¹. It remains unclear what families will end up paying who currently pay a premium for child care. To again state our major concern put forward in previous submissions, Police officers with parental responsibilities should not be further penalised for working the shifts, weekends, public holidays necessary to keep the community safe.

Conclusion

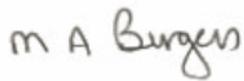
Policing does not take a break on weekends or public holidays, it is essential that flexible child care is made accessible and affordable. The PFA recommends that spending for the *Jobs for Family Child Care Package* should equate to the original May 2015 announced figure or above and should not negatively impact on current Paid Parental leave entitlements through a reduction in current financial support.

¹ Brennan, D. and E. Adamson, '*Baby Steps or Giant Strides?*' (Report, The McKell Institute, June 2015) p22

We encourage the committee to consider points raised in the PFA's submissions listed at the top of this submission in relation to encouraging greater female workforce participation and consider the suite of measures that would together with an improved flexible, accessible and affordable model of child care support working parents further.

The PFA would be happy to provide further information if that was required.

Sincerely yours

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "m A Burgess". The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style.

Mark Burgess
Chief Executive Officer