



media release

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Universal paid maternity leave - the best Mother's Day present

Figures released today from the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency's (EOWA) 2009 Survey of reporting organisations shows that 53.4% now provide paid maternity leave to employees, an increase from 50.8% in 2008.

Acting Director of EOWA, Mairi Steele said, 'This increase is great news but it is important to realise that this means at least half a million women that work for organisations reporting to EOWA still do not have access to this vital paid break. Even in the organisations that *do* provide paid maternity leave, many women working part-time casually or on contract positions are ineligible. This makes the introduction of a government funded, universal scheme so important.'

Leading organisations ensure that their paid parental leave programs are supplemented by a range of other programs including maintaining a relationship with the women and considering them for promotion, transfer and training opportunities whilst on leave and offering flexibility on their return to ensure their transition back to work is an easy one.

For example:-

- At Alcoa of Australia, Elise, the Mine Environmental Scientist at Anglesea is heavily involved in the rehabilitation of the site's open-cut coal mine. In addition to paid maternity leave, Alcoa supported a job-share arrangement for Elise following her return to work following the birth of her daughter.
- CUA has implemented a 'Return to Work' Toolkit to help parents returning from parental leave.
- At BD, Senior Product Manager Valerie Kwok was promoted whilst on maternity leave and given the opportunity to work part-time on her return before transitioning into full-time work.
- At GlaxoSmithKline Australia two senior women returning from parental leave were given the opportunity to job share which enables them to maintain their career goals, work in a senior role in the organisation and still have the flexibility to focus on their family and
- At Microsoft, Tracey Fellows Managing Director was hired 6 months pregnant which not only helped her, but publicly and visibly showed the company's support for working mothers.

Ms Steele said 'Paid parental leave is not just important for women, but for the whole community. Women don't make the choice to have a baby on their own or in isolation - other people are involved. Husbands, partners, other children and extended family are also caught up in the decision and, more importantly, are significantly impacted by the effect women's caring responsibilities have on their earning capacity, on women's working hours and on women's chances for promotion and better wages.

The Government's paid parental leave scheme will help *all* these people – not just mothers. It will mean women are more able to afford the physical break they need, to safely recover from childbirth and to bond with their baby. It will take the strain off families and will give fathers the opportunity to share the leave with mothers and be more active care givers." she said.

Access EOWA's secure media site which includes case studies and talent at www.eowa.gov.au/Information_Centres/Media_Centre/Media_Releases/2010_PML/Media_Page.asp

Further information on the Rudd Government's Paid Parental Leave legislation can be found at http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/families/progserv/paid_parental/Pages/default.aspx.

The EOWA Survey was based on the responses of 2400 surveyed organisations that provided their annual equal opportunity compliance reports to the Agency in 2009. The survey was supported by Alcoa Australia.

EOWA is a Federal Government statutory authority which administers the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act (1999). Employers of 100 people or more are required to report to the Agency on the initiatives they take within their organisations to advance women in the workplace. EOWA works with employers to improve equal opportunity outcomes for women in the workplace to create an Australia where women in the workplace can achieve their greatest potential.

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