



Gavin Jackman

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Paid maternity, paternity and parental leave inquiry
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Sir/Madam,

The following forms BP Australia's submission to the Australian Government's inquiry into paid maternity, paternity and parental leave.

BP Australia Pty Ltd (BP) is committed to supporting its employees before, during and after parental leave through the provision of paid and unpaid parental leave. In order to deliver on this commitment BP has developed a Parental Leave Policy which is easily accessible to all staff on our intranet. Copies of the three elements of this policy – relating to maternity leave, paternity leave and adoption leave - are attached to this submission. BP's Parental Leave Policy was formalised 1 June 2007. Prior to this BP provided maternity leave only.

BP's aim is to provide working conditions which support the needs of its employees and encourages the retention of staff. Although there are many factors involved, it is noteworthy that the average length of employment of staff at BP is 10 years.

Results of a recent parental leave survey indicate that of 19 responding companies, BP leads the way in terms of its parental leave policy and provisions.

While the parental leave conditions provided by BP may be above the market average for many industries, BP provides these conditions in the belief that it is in the best interests of the company and our employees. BP would not support Government mandating any increase to the existing legislated terms and conditions as this simply reduces flexibility and adds costs for many businesses, such as small contractors working with BP, which may not be able to afford such generous conditions.

Parental leave is available to both full time and part time employees who have a minimum 12 months continuous service with the company. Parental leave is available for maternity, paternity and adoption leave. BP's goal is to provide

financial support whilst encouraging employees to return to work through the provision of supportive return to work conditions, as outlined below.

BP provides four months paid maternity leave with a maximum maternity leave entitlement being 12 months. Of this 12 month entitlement, an employee is able to commence maternity leave any time within 6 weeks immediately prior to the expected date of the child's birth. In addition, when choosing how the balance of their maternity leave is taken (up to the maximum period of 52 weeks), BP offers employees the option of either unpaid leave or utilising a combination of other leave entitlements such as annual leave or pro-rata long service leave.

BP's paternity leave is 1 week paid leave within the first month of the birth of the child. In addition, BP provides 'long paternity leave', which is an unbroken period of up to 52 weeks taken by a male employee who takes responsibility for being the child's primary caregiver.

The aim of BP's adoption leave is to protect the rights of employees who are undertaking this process and offer financial support to encourage their return to work. To be eligible, employees interested in taking adoption leave must have 12 months continuous service with the company. Options available include:

- a) pre-adoption leave: two days to attend interviews, examinations or obtain to approvals related to the adoption process.
- b) short term leave: a maximum of three weeks leave commencing the date the adopted child is placed with the family and;
- c) long term leave: maximum of 52 weeks leave inclusive of any annual or long service leave or leave without pay taken by the employee. Employees on long term adoption leave would normally be taken by the primary carer and are entitled to four months paid leave, paid upfront, directly prior to taking this leave.

Whilst on parental leave, BP actively encourages employees to keep in contact with their teams, providing a gradual transition upon return to work. BP's parental leave policy incorporates a section devoted to "keeping in touch", providing guidance to both employee and line managers on options available to facilitate this process (such as attend local work groups, company newsletters/videos, working reduced hours upon return to work, use of laptop whilst on parental leave).

Peace of mind is also provided for employees who choose to utilise the benefits of BP's parental leave policy by an entitlement to return to the position held immediately prior to the commencement of their paid parental leave or, by mutual agreement, a similar position with same skills, status and remuneration.

As noted above, while providing financial support to employees on parental leave, BP also endeavours to encourage employees to return to work through the provision of supportive return to work conditions. This includes the opportunity to work from home, although this is only possible where the role allows and is covered under a separate BP policy on "Working from Home").

If the role provides, BP may consider a transitional arrangement for the employee's return to work to be on a gradual basis (for example, commencing part time and, as agreed, moving up to the required hours of work). BP will also give positive consideration to requests from employees who wish to change their work status (i.e.: full time to part time) where the position permits.

Overall, BP believes that it provides the right mix of parental leave provisions, including financial support and flexible return to work arrangements, which is in the best interests of the company and our most valuable asset, our employees. BP believes that individual companies should be given the flexibility, beyond existing legislated minimum conditions, to provide the working conditions most suitable for their staff and their business.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact either Ms Jenny Samson, HR Officer, on 03 9268 3389 or me on 03 9268 3854.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Gavin Jackman