

Paid maternity leave in Australia: breastfeeding, health and equity impacts

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Paid Parental Leave (PPL)

- Australia achieved its first, legislated paid leave scheme in 2011
- 2nd last OECD nation to do so
- Our late start a function of history, politics, ideology and, eventually, need



The scheme started January 2011

- 18 weeks at minimum wage (AUD \$740.60 per week before tax)
- Taxable
- Work tested
- Casual and self employed included
- Income tested \$150K
- Can be transferred to fathers



Policy goals

Improve:

- Women's labour force participation
- Gender equality and improve work/life balance
- Health of babies and mothers, and child development



Evaluation outcomes

- Equity
 - No impact on household division of labour
 - No effect on workplace gender equity
 - Improvement in work-life balance for mothers, by decreasing their sense of time pressure
 - Significant improvement in work-life balance by mothers on casual contracts



Martin et al. 2014

Evaluation outcomes

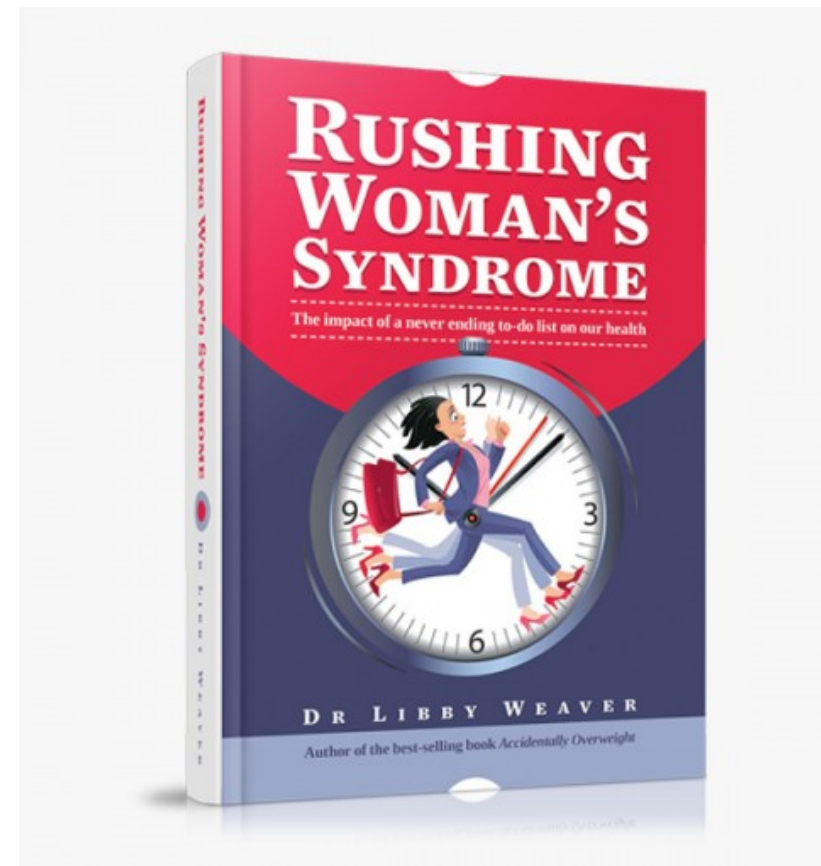
- Workforce participation
 - Early returning mother (returned 1-3 months post birth) now 4-6 months
 - Increased return to the pre-birth job:
 - Pre-PPL 73%,
 - Post-PPL 77%
 - Increased return to same job with the same conditions
 - Pre-PPL: 28%
 - Post-PPL: 33%**



Martin et al. 2014

Evaluation outcomes

- Mother's health
 - Physical health (mean):
 - Pre-PPL= 53.5
 - Post-PPL = 54.8**
 - Mental health (mean):
 - Pre-PPL= 50.8
 - Post-PPL = 52.2**



Evaluation outcomes

- Health gains among the most & least privileged mothers
- Managers and professionals could cobble together > 6 months paid leave
- Casuals had, for the first time, paid time off & often better paid

Mean SF-12 scores (after matching)	Pre-PPL (per cent) (matched)	Post-PPL (per cent)
Contract type: Permanent/ongoing		
Mother's physical health (mean)	53.5	54.7**
Mother's mental health (mean)	50.9	52.4**
N	1893	2504
Contract type: fixed term		
Mother's physical health (mean)	51.9	55.1**
Mother's mental health (mean)	52.7	51.1
N	134	208
Contract type: casual		
Mother's physical health (mean)	54.1	54.7
Mother's mental health (mean)	48.4	52.0**
N	287	342
Contract type: Self-employed		
Mother's physical health (mean)	53.6	55.1
Mother's mental health (mean)	51.1	51.3
N	183	195

Evaluation outcomes

- Infants health
 - No difference in immunisation rates
 - Child had an illness lasting for one week or more in last 12 months
 - Pre-PPL= 45.2%
 - Post-PPL = 41.4%*



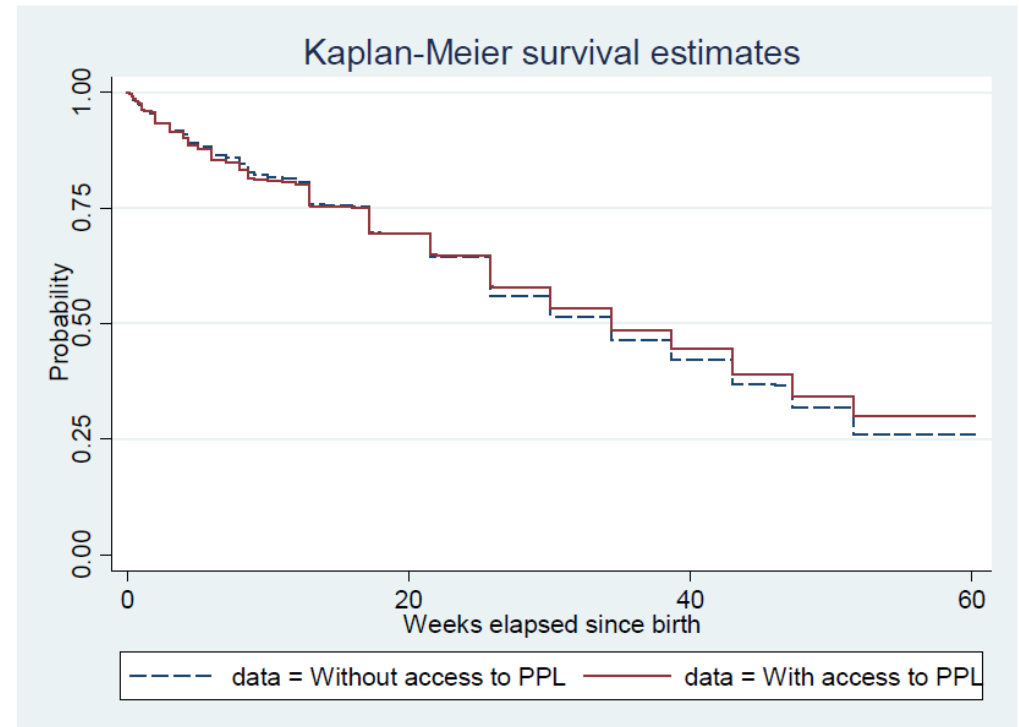
Evaluation outcomes

- Breastfeeding initiation
 - Small increase
(93.6% Pre-PPL vs
95% Post PPL)
 - No significant differences depending on type of employment contract.



Evaluation outcomes

- Breastfeeding duration
 - breastfeeding after 26 weeks
 - 26 weeks: 56.0% Pre-PPL vs 57.9% Post-PPL
 - 52 weeks: 26.0% Pre-PPL vs 30.1% Post-PPL



Dad and partner pay: January 2013

- Dedicated payment
- 2 weeks minimum wage
- Use it or lose it
- Same income, work test as mothers
- Anytime within 12 months



Australian Government



Dad and Partner Pay
Supporting the role of dads or partners



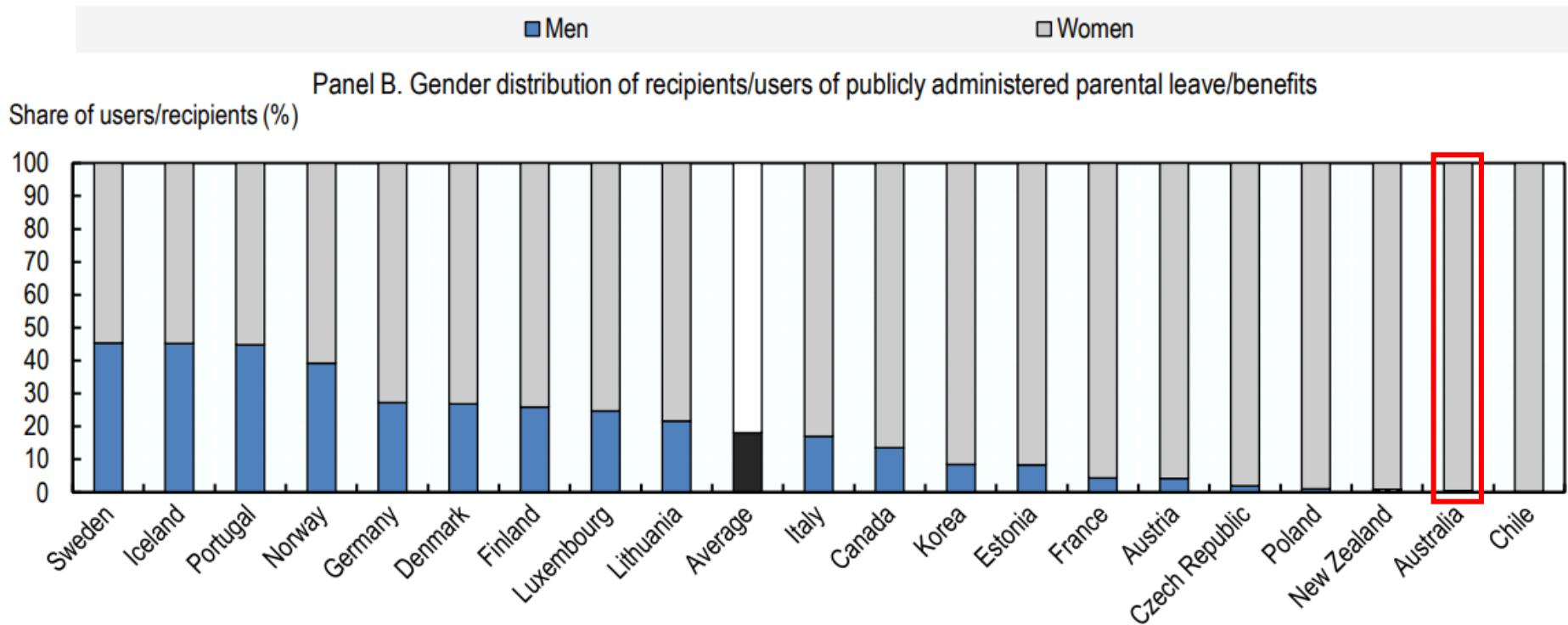
...now comes
with 2 weeks pay
for dads or partners

Evaluation

- 36% eligible fathers took DAPP
- Increase of 1 day away from work in first 2 months
- Slight increase in household work



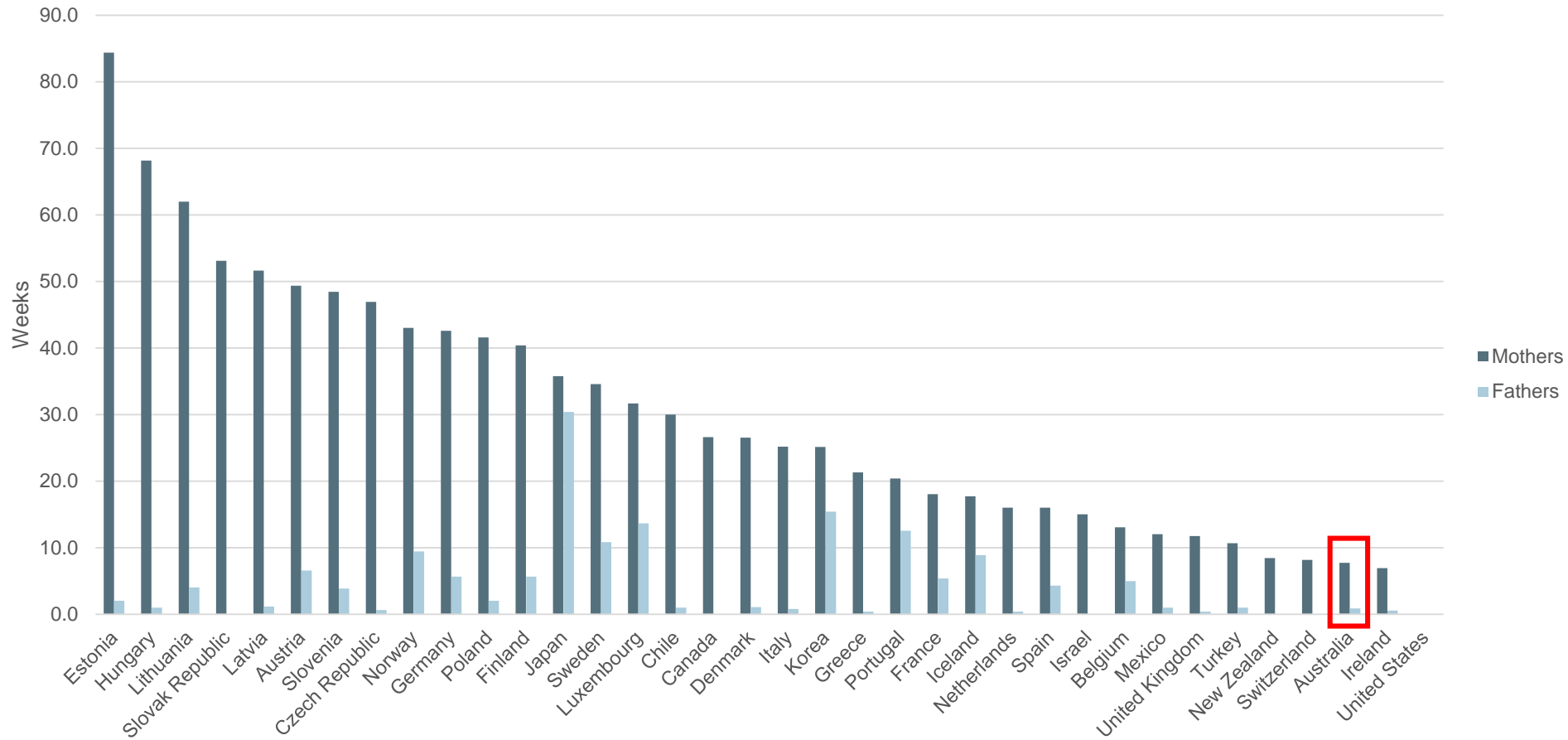
Users of paid parental leave by gender



Paternity leave and breastfeeding

- Likelihood of being weaned; no paternity leave vs paternity leave
 - 2 months: 10% vs. 7%
RR=1.33, CI=1.24–1.42, **p<0.001**
 - 4 months: 21% vs. 16%
RR=1.27, CI=1.21–1.33, **p<0.001**
 - 6 months: 33% vs. 28%,
RR=1.16, CI=1.12–1.20, **p<0.001**

Total Paid Leave Available: Full time equivalent (weeks)



Lessons?

- Equity in health > 6 months paid leave
- Equity at work and at home > paid paternity leave and a cultural wrap around for fathers
- Breastfeeding change....what else is needed to support?

Thank you

- Julie Smith
- Amelia Yazidjoglou
- Belinda Hewitt
- Belinda Townsend



Paid leave and Breastfeeding

- Children of mothers eligible for paid leave more likely to be breastfed from 6-12 months

	not eligible	eligible	p-value
Breastfed more than 2 weeks	85.890	88.880	0.001
Breastfed more than 4 weeks	81.450	85.580	0.000
Breastfed more than 13 weeks	62.410	70.800	0.000
Breastfed more than 26 weeks	45.200	53.600	0.000
Breastfed more than 39 weeks	33.590	38.880	0.000
Breastfed more than 52 weeks	18.780	23.260	0.000
N	844	1014	

Source: Longitudinal study of Australian children (LSAC), own calculations

Paid leave and breastfeeding

- Children of mothers eligible for paid leave more likely to be breastfed from 6-12

Figure 1: Breastfeeding duration by eligibility for paid parental leave - kernel density

