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It's time Aussie Dads are given the opportunity to “share the care”

Australian business and community leaders kick start the first national discussion into shared parental leave

- The first national public discussion on shared parental leave kicks off this week via a unique Business Leaders 'Think Tank'
- A range of events will seek to inspire Aussie Dads to participate in parental leave and play a primary caring role in their child's early life
- A new guide for Australian employers sets out best practice for developing shared parental leave policies

Sydney, Thursday 23 August 2018. A collaboration of local and international organisations, Government, advocacy groups and industry experts will launch Australia's first national conversation on introducing shared parental leave. The goal is to advance equal opportunities for fathers and mothers to share caring responsibilities. This Thursday the Business Leaders 'Think Tank' launches at the Sydney Opera House alongside the debut of 'Aussie Dads', a series of photographs of fathers on leave taken by internationally acclaimed 'Swedish Dads' photographer Johan Bävman. The exhibition is proudly produced by Parents At Work, an Australian-based working parent consultancy and advocacy group, and the Embassy of Sweden and the Swedish Institute.

Central to the discussion at Thursday's 'Think Tank' is the release of a leading practice Employer Guide to Developing an Equitable Parental Leave Policy created by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA). The guide aims to support Australian businesses in adopting policies and strategies that normalise men taking shared parental leave and encourages participation.

In addition, Parents At Work will launch a white paper to support companies to promote shared care and will include best practice parental leave policies and learnings from leading organisations around the world.

Unfortunately, Australia's parental leave policies lag significantly behind OECD nationsⁱ.

WGEA's latest Gender Equality Scorecard for 2016–2017, which includes data from non-public sector employers with 100+ employees only, reveals that:

- Only 4.7% of all employees who took primary carer's leave were men while 94.8% of employees who took secondary carer's leave were men.ⁱⁱ

- Approximately 27.4% of all employees who took primary or secondary carer's leave were men.

The Government Dad and Partner Pay (secondary carer) scheme is also under-utilised with approximately just one in three dads taking it up.

This compares with Swedish fathers who take roughly 25 percent of the total number of days available to the couple. Sweden offers 480 days paid leave to share with 90 days preserved for each parent.ⁱⁱⁱ

Emma Walsh, CEO, Parents At Work said "The critical goal is to increase the number of men taking primary parental leave. This means encouraging our dads to play a primary caring role in their child's early life and access flexible work without fear of discrimination or adverse career consequences."

Libby Lyons, Director of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) said: "Children need their dads to be present in their lives. Yet fathers are too often sidelined as the 'secondary carer', which in reality means the parental leave available to them is limited to a few weeks."

"Many fathers want to share the care of their children so it is now a priority for Australian employers to implement and embrace shared parental leave policies in their workplaces. The time has come to normalise parental leave being taken by both women and men. Let us all work to make it easier for Australian men to be the best dads they can," she added.

And it seems the business community is ready to act with both Deloitte and Westpac reporting gains in engaging men in taking leave and working flexibly.

Cindy Hook, CEO Deloitte Asia-Pacific said: "Deloitte are incredibly proud to be involved in bringing this important issue to Australian businesses and to help spark a broader public discussion. "When I think back on my own career, how I got here – a very big part of that is because my husband shared 50/50 in raising our children from the beginning. This allowed us to both have careers and also to raise two great kids," said Cindy.

Brian Hartzler, Chief Executive Officer of Westpac Group said, "Westpac Group is delighted to get behind the Aussie Dads campaign – it's an important conversation that will help more men feel comfortable taking parental leave. I'm proud that 72 per cent of our male employees choose to work flexibly in some way. By giving our employees the ability to choose how and when they work, we're helping more dads to share the load, and more families to decide what caring arrangements work for them."

The series of events that form part of the initiative, include:

- The debut of the '**Aussie Dads' photographic exhibition** featuring the iconic 'Swedish Dads' images at the Sydney Opera House which shines a light on the importance and benefits of dads sharing parental leave from 23–31 August 2018.
- A community '**Dads Talk' – Aussie Dads Uncensored** – in partnership with Men's Health Magazine, to inspire Aussie dads to 'share the care' and increase their participation in primary parental leave on 28 August 2018, 6pm, Atrio, Level 7, Westfields, 85 Castlereagh St, Sydney.

- A **Business Leaders 'Think Tank'** in Melbourne at the Victorian State Library, 31 August 2018. This will be supported by the Aussie Dads photographic exhibition at the Victorian State Library, 31 August–7 September 2018.

The initiative is sponsored by principal partners Westpac and Deloitte and supporting partners Embassy of Sweden, Scentre Group, Lendlease, PwC, HSBC, KPMG, Macquarie Bank, Gilbert + Tobin, Karitane and the Swedish Australian Chamber of Commerce who have collaborated with Parents At Work to advance equal opportunities for fathers and mothers to share caring responsibilities.

For further information on event details, see aussiedads.parentsatwork.com.au
#ParentalLeaveEquality #AussieDads #sharethejoy

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ⁱ http://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/Leavenetwork/Annual_reviews/2017_Leave_Review_2017_final.pdf
ⁱⁱ Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) latest Gender Equality Scorecard for 2016-2017
ⁱⁱⁱ www.sweden.se

Aussie Dads

Photographic exhibition. Principal Partners Westpac and Deloitte.

Supporting Partner

