



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Paid Parental Leave**

**QUESTION**

**Wednesday, 17 March 2010**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## QUESTION

**Date** Wednesday, 17 March 2010  
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**Questioner** Bird, Sharon, MP  
**Speaker**

**Source** House  
**Proof** Yes  
**Responder** Macklin, Jenny, MP  
**Question No.**

### Paid Parental Leave

**Ms BIRD** (Cunningham) (2.48 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Minister, how is the government supporting families to make their own work and family choices? How confident can they be that support will improve in the future?

**Ms MACKLIN** (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs)—I thank the member for Cunningham for her question because she certainly knows that giving mums and dads more support when they have a new baby in their home is going to be very good for their children and will give them a much better start in life. That is why this government is delivering Australia's first national paid parental leave scheme. It is our scheme that is going to be both fair for families and fair for business. It also lets families make their own work and family choices. One of the characteristics of our scheme is that parents are going to be able to transfer or share their leave so that mums and dads have more options about how they organise their work and family responsibilities.

It is the case that families in Australia have been waiting decades for paid parental leave—12 years. We know that those opposite refused to introduce paid parental leave, and everybody here knows that it was this Leader of the Opposition who said that paid parental leave would happen 'over his dead body'. Well, we know that the Leader of the Opposition has now come up with a sham of a scheme, a sham that will not let mums and dads actually make decisions themselves about how they organise their work and family choices, because he really does not support the work and family choices that so many Australian families make. We saw in the *Australian* newspaper where he was justifying his latest views by saying that paid parental leave will mean that more women are in what he described as 'the most traditional role of all'. We know that this Leader of the Opposition is just so stuck in the past and just wants to preach to Australian families about their work and family choices.

I know people on this side of the parliament will not be surprised to learn that he is not alone. Today we have an absolute gem from—you guessed it—Senator Barnaby Joyce. Barnaby Joyce was on ABC TV this

morning trying to ignore Peter Costello's scathing attack on the Leader of the Opposition. This is a real original from Senator Joyce. This is what he said:

Unless we can figure out another way to create babies, then we have to realise that ladies have babies and we've got to make sure that we create the environment that gives them financial protection to go through the process of having that child.

Thank you very much for the biology lesson, Barnaby, but I have to say it is not all about ladies. There are certainly men involved in the process too. This might be news to the Leader of the Opposition but, in most homes today, mums and dads actually decide what is best for their baby and what is best for their family. Of course, in the bizarre, old-fashioned world that this lot live in, they are demonstrating yet again just how out of touch they are with modern Australian family life. Peter Costello got it so right today when he said:

Abbott undoubtedly thought he had to say something on International Women's Day—he keeps being told he needs to appeal more to female voters. So he adopts the Crocodile Dundee approach.