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PPL AND BABY BOOMERS

Australia's adoption of an eighteen week Paid Parental Leave (PPL) scheme targets the future generation as a means for offsetting the retiring 'Baby Boomer' populace, believes the National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ). Yet, such a similar move for New Zealand has been pushed off the agenda.

"The gap between New Zealand and Australia in economic and social terms has widened even further," says Elizabeth Bang, NCWNZ National President. "Should we be surprised that Australia continues to be more attractive as a place to resettle, when support for families is so readily on offer?"

According to the latest NZ Government CEDAW report 2010, Paid Parental Leave is not seen as a priority for the current Government. The tight economic times were identified as the reason behind this.

Labour has put forward a Bill supporting the increase of the PPL scheme to six months. NCWNZ supports this, whilst also seeking its extension to twelve months which is in line with recommendations from the Families Commission and the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women (NACEW).

"So how does current policy support the load expected as the 'Baby Boomers' retire from employment?" asks Elizabeth Bang. "In New Zealand and Australia, where over-population is not a problem, and where there will be insufficient working-age people to contribute towards the economy so that retirees can receive retirement income, Australia is actively supporting the growth of families financially. In New Zealand, our 'Generation Y' and 'New Millennium' workers are expected to pay sufficient taxes to meet the costs of the retired, while also saving for their own retirement, saving to purchase their first house, repaying their student loan, earning sufficient to raise families, and even continue enjoying the 'Big OE'."

The extension of PPL needs to be returned to the political agenda immediately. Without this extension, the raising of the future generation will rapidly become too hard a choice for many couples in New Zealand.

According to the EEO Trust, the labour pool is shrinking. In five years from 2001 – 2006, 275,000 people joined the labour force, but the EEO predicts that around 56,000 will join the labour force from 2026 – 2031.

NCWNZ believes that between 2007 – 2025, an unsustainable shrinkage will occur, which potentially will make the country more dependent upon importing labour.

“2011 has to usher in Government policy which is supportive of families; the raising of children in sufficient numbers to support our many ‘Baby-boomers’ , while still allowing such children when adults to pursue the Kiwi dream – of owning their own house and sustaining their family, “concludes Elizabeth Bang.

ENDS

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