

brisbane Families

A guide for parents



Helping hand

ALMOST two years on from the start of Australia's first national Paid Parental Leave (PPL) scheme, parents are still enjoying its increased financial stability during a period traditionally known for its insecurity.

The PPL scheme began on January 1, 2011 and allows eligible working parents of a child born or adopted from this date to receive taxable, government-funded Parental Leave Pay for a maximum period of 18 weeks.

Shelton (pictured) and Cameron Dunlop of Tarragindi felt great joy as well as increased financial pressure increase on discovering they were to become parents for the second time.

After the birth of their now three-year-old son Jayden, the couple had to live off their savings and neither of them wanted to be in such a position.

Mrs Dunlop said she was delighted to

The Paid Parental Leave scheme has been welcomed by both parents and employers. **CHARLOTTE DURUT** investigates.

have access to the PPL scheme, which helped the couple immensely when their second son, Flynn (pictured), was born 15 months ago.

"The PPL scheme helped ease the stress of losing one income," she said.

Mrs Dunlop said the PPL payments also assisted families in other ways, with women not necessarily having to choose between a career and having children.

"The payments are designed to help keep mums at home with their babies for a while," she said.

CareerMums director Kate Sykes said the PPL scheme had been welcomed by both parents and employers.

"Australia has been funding a PPL scheme for public servants since 1973 so it

is appropriate that private sector workers can now tap into such a scheme," she said.

"For small businesses that cannot afford to pay any extra paid parental leave, the PPL scheme provides a base financial benefit to employees.

"Many employers also top up the payments by offering six to 18 weeks of extra paid parental leave at full pay."

Ms Sykes said the PPL scheme also gave parents the crucial financial stability they needed to stay at home with their young children without feeling pressured to return to work early.

Mrs Dunlop said having the PPL payments spread over a long period rather than receiving them in one lump sum was

helpful too.

"It's possible to fill out much of the application online, which is great," she said.

"Alternatively, there are people very willing to help at the Family Assistance Office although trying to understand the office's many requirements can sometimes be frustrating."

Paid Parental Leave scheme:

- Australian government-funded initiative
- Began on January 1, 2011
- Allows working parents to receive taxable payments for 18 weeks
- Gives families financial stability
- Enables parents to stay at home with children longer