

## Financial Support for Parents

The Federal Government provides a range of support for parents, including Family Tax Benefit, Childcare Subsidy, and Parenting Payment. For more info, speak to Centrelink on 131 021 or go to [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)

## For more info on...

**Wages and Conditions:** WorkChoices Infoline 1300 363 264 [www.workchoices.gov.au](http://www.workchoices.gov.au)

**Financial assistance:** Centrelink 131 021, [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)  
Family Assistance Office 136 150, [www.familyassist.gov.au](http://www.familyassist.gov.au)

**Occupational Health and Safety:** NT Worksafe 1800 019115

**Childcare options in your area:** Child Care Access Hotline 1800 670 305

**Discrimination:** NT Anti-Discrimination Commission 1800 813 846, or  
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission: 1300 656 419

**Family friendly workplaces:** [www.workplace.gov.au/workfamily](http://www.workplace.gov.au/workfamily) or  
[www.families.gov.au](http://www.families.gov.au)

# Women, family and work

**Working mothers face many issues. This leaflet is aimed at providing some basic information on these issues, so that you know what your rights are in the workplace, as well as some ideas to create a family friendly workplace.**

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## Pregnancy & work

**Safety:** You should be able to continue working in your job while pregnant. Simple ways your employer can accommodate your pregnancy include:

- providing seating and rest breaks;
- reducing time spent in hot conditions;
- reducing tasks that require bending, reaching or lifting.

If risks can't be controlled, you may negotiate with your employer to work part-time for a period. Under the law, you also have the right to be transferred temporarily to another job. This temporary job must be as close as possible in status and pay to your present job. If there is no such 'safe' job available, then you may be entitled to paid leave, until you access your parental leave. In this situation your employer may request a medical certificate confirming your fitness for work.

**Discrimination:** It is illegal to discriminate against pregnant women in the workplace. It is also illegal to discriminate against women on the ground of 'potential pregnancy' (i.e. women of child bearing age, who may be likely or perceived to be likely, to become pregnant). So, if you are pregnant, or potentially pregnant, this cannot be used as a reason against your wishes to:

- refuse to employ you;
- transfer you (without a valid medical or safety reason);
- demote or give you less skilled work;
- change you from full-time to part-time, or permanent to casual;
- reduce or increase your hours of work, or change your days of work;
- deny you access to training, promotion or other opportunities; or
- dismiss or retrench you.

It is unlawful for employers or potential employers to question you about current or future pregnancies.

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**For advice, information and assistance on all work-related matters:**

**NT Working Women's Centre**  
**98 Woods St Darwin**  
**Freecall: 1800817055**  
**[www.wwc.org.au](http://www.wwc.org.au)**



*This pamphlet is provided to present basic information about work issues. While all care is taken, we do not guarantee the information is complete or accurate.*

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Inappropriate behavior towards pregnant employees, such as constant references to the pregnancy, touching the woman's stomach, or continually questioning her about her intention to return to work may also be discriminatory. Employers could be held liable for their employees' inappropriate conduct.

## Breastfeeding & work

It is unlawful to treat a woman differently from other employees because she needs to breastfeed or express milk. Employers can show their commitment to breastfeeding by providing flexible break-times to express breast milk or to breastfeed, and a space for breastfeeding that is hygienic, private, and includes hand washing facilities and adequate refrigeration and freezer space.

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**Good practice: Lend Lease Corporation provides "Breastfeeding rooms", and also employs a nurse to provide advice to mothers returning to work.**

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## Child care

Availability of high quality, affordable childcare is an important issue for working mothers.

**Employers can help with childcare options** by reserving places in local childcare centres, by subsidising a childcare place for their employee, or even by providing their own workplace based child care (a "creche"). They can also allow employees to use phones to maintain contact with their children at childcare or home, and provide access to home-based work arrangements or a Family Room in the workplace for sick children.

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**Good practice: SAAB Systems Pty Ltd provide employees with a child care subsidy for up to three months after maternity leave. Star City Casino has established its own 24 hour staff child care centre, and staff at Minter Ellison Melbourne get a 10% discount at a local child care centre.**

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## Parental leave

Parental leave (or maternity/ paternity/ adoption leave) is a period of leave available for parents to take time off work to care for a newborn or newly adopted baby.

To get it, you must usually have completed at least **12 months continuous service** with your employer. Under WorkChoices, you and your partner can get a **total of 52 weeks unpaid leave** on a shared basis, which includes time taken off work before the birth.

Unless you are a public servant, the law does not provide for any paid leave, however some awards or agreements provide for it. You should check your award or agreement to see whether you may be eligible.

After parental leave, you are entitled to:

- return to your former position; or
- if that is no longer available, a similar job;
- if you transferred to a different job because of your pregnancy, you are entitled to return to your earlier job;
- if you began working part-time because of your pregnancy- to the job you held before you went part-time.

Your award or agreement may entitle you to return to work on a part-time or job-share basis. You may also negotiate for these arrangements with your employer.

If you find that your job has changed or no longer exists upon returning to work, you may be able to make a claim of unlawful termination under WorkChoices.

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**Good practice: At MBF, staff are eligible for 8 weeks maternity leave at full pay and a further 16 weeks at half pay. At SBS, staff are eligible for 12 weeks paid leave, and staff of the NT Government are eligible for 14 weeks paid maternity leave.**

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## Discrimination

Under anti-discrimination law, it is unlawful to discriminate against an employee because of their sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy or because they are breastfeeding. It is also unlawful under WorkChoices for an employee to be dismissed from employment because of sex, marital status, family responsibilities or pregnancy.

## What makes a family friendly workplace?

A family friendly workplace is one where the needs of your family do not have to take second place to your work commitments. Some of the things that could make your workplace family friendly include:

- flexible hours, part-time work, job-sharing or working from home;
- paid maternity leave;
- 'keep in touch' plans for staff on parental leave and part-time staff;
- supporting parents who need to stay home when a child is sick; or
- access to work phones for family reasons.

**Family friendly policies are good for business!** Finding and keeping good staff is the key to any business's success. You may wish to tell your employer about the benefits of introducing family friendly measures:

- improved staff morale, commitment and productivity;
- Increased staff retention;
- decreased absenteeism;
- reduced recruitment & training costs;
- increased rate of return from maternity leave;
- reduced stress levels, and
- enhanced corporate image.