

## Federal governments urged to promise parents of premature and sick babies fair paid parental leave

- In 2023, a petition with over 10,000 signatures proposed changes to support families with a premature or sick baby requiring medical care for more than two weeks but, to date, no action has been taken
- Given that up to half of parents with a baby in the NICU will suffer from mental illness, changing the current Paid Parental Leave (PPL) entitlements is crucial to prevent parents from exhausting their leave before even leaving the hospital
- Ahead of the federal election, Miracle Babies Foundation is urging the Albanese Government and The Opposition to commit to providing additional leave entitlements for parents of sick and premature babies as part of their election promises

Up to half (40%-50%) of parents who have a baby in the NICU will suffer from mental illness<sup>1</sup>, yet these families are set to be left behind this federal election. In 2023, not-for-profit Miracle Babies Foundation proposed changes to the Australian Government Paid Parental Leave (PPL) Legislation to better support families with a premature or sick baby requiring neonatal care lasting more than two weeks, yet no action has been taken.

The petition received more than 10,000 signatures<sup>2</sup>, and the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) acknowledged the vital need for change after employees reported using all PPL entitlements whilst their baby remained in hospital<sup>3</sup>. The APSC also recognised the complex health needs of premature and sick babies and noted the need for mothers to access leave that supports breastfeeding and providing skin-to-skin contact.

Despite this, Assistant Minister for Social Services, The Hon. Justine Elliot MP responded to the petition saying parents caring for a premature or sick baby will benefit from the planned expansion of the Paid Parental Leave scheme from 20 weeks to 26 weeks by 2026. However, legislation falls short of the unique needs of these parents – some of whom spend between four to six months in hospital, placing higher financial pressure on parents to return to work sooner, potentially forcing vulnerable, at-risk babies into childcare much earlier than expected.

Following the petition, the APSC enterprise agreement was updated to include additional leave for parents of premature babies, but this only applies to government employees<sup>4</sup>. The proposed extension of Paid Parental Leave for NICU parents would ensure all parents have the same PPL entitlements as those who have a healthy, full-term baby, preventing parents from exhausting their leave before even leaving the hospital.

Ahead of the federal election, Miracle Babies Foundation is urging the Albanese Government and The Opposition to commit to providing additional leave entitlements for parents of sick and premature babies as part of their election promises. The proposed change would mean providing fair leave for pregnant employees who give birth to a premature or sick baby requiring two or more weeks of neonatal care. To learn more and support the cause by downloading a letter to send to your Federal MP, head to [miraclebabies.org.au](https://miraclebabies.org.au).

**With me in the studio, I have Kylie Pussell, CEO & Founder of Miracle Babies Foundation.**

Question 1: Can you tell us more about the lack of support for parents of premature and sick babies?

Question 2: What legislation changes have been proposed?

Question 3: How has the Australian Government responded so far?

Question 4: What is being called for ahead of the federal election?

Question 5: How can Australians show their support?

# MEDIA RELEASE



## About Miracle Babies Foundation

Miracle Babies Foundation is Australia's leading organisation supporting premature and sick newborns, their families and the hospitals that care for them.

Since 2005, Miracle Babies Foundation has been passionate in developing and providing vital programs and resources to support and enhance a family's experience from a threatened pregnancy, hospital journey with a premature or sick newborn, the transition to home and beyond.

Australia is home to 23 state of the art intensive care units designed to meet the unique and critical needs of our earliest and sickest babies. Working with health professionals on the joint agenda of better outcomes for families, Miracle Babies provides informative education and insight on a family's experience and funding for equipment, resources and research.

## About the Citations

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<sup>1</sup> [Grunberg VA, Geller PA, Hoffman C, Njoroge W, Ahmed A, Patterson CA. Parental mental health screening in the NICU: a psychosocial team initiative.](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aph.gov.au/e-petitions/petition/EN5627>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.apsc.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/workplace-relations/maternity-leave-act-review-report/chapter-4-leave-entitlements-0>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.apsc.gov.au/about-us/working-commission/apsc-enterprise-agreement-2024-27>