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**Paid parental leave essential, says advocacy body for prevention of child abuse**

NAPCAN (National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect) has applauded the draft recommendations of the Productivity Commission review of paid parental leave but believes that they do not go far enough.

“The 18 weeks of paid parental leave proposed by the Productivity Commission is an absolute minimum” Maree Faulkner, the CEO of NAPCAN said today.

“This is not about the rights of parents.....it’s about ensuring the wellbeing and healthy development of Australia’s children.”

The evidence is now clear that the relationships and type of interactions a baby has play a critical role its brain development. Babies deprived of individual care and attention start life at a huge disadvantage .....they face potential long term impact on their cognitive, psychological and physical health.

“Australia prides itself on its productivity and high employment rates but our children should not have to bear the burden for this.” Ms Faulkner said.

Research has shown that babies need constant, consistent and caring interaction with significant adults. Touching and talking to babies is essential for their development. Similarly parents learn from consistent interaction with their babies, developing an understanding of the baby’s needs and laying the foundations for their on-going relationship. The first six months of a child’s life is a critical period for brain development and for psycho-emotional attachment.

Australia is facing a crisis of child neglect and abuse. Last year almost 35,000 Australian children were found to have been abused or neglected.

“Stepping in once the family is in crisis and the child has been harmed is too late. We need to be putting the preventative measures in place which support all families and give children the best possible chance of growing up safe and well.

Paid parental leave is a cornerstone in building a child friendly Australia” Ms Faulkner said.

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*www.napcan.org.au*

**About NAPCAN:**

NAPCAN (National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect) is Australia's leading advocate for the prevention of child abuse and neglect. NAPCAN's goal is to bring about the changes necessary in individual and community behaviour and in government policy to stop abuse and neglect before it starts.

NAPCAN also works directly with children and young people to strengthen protective behaviours, build resilience and life skills, assists 'at risk' parents through face-to-face programs and works in local communities building inclusive networks and strengthening local support for children and families. A charity, NAPCAN is governed by a national board with the support of professional sub-committees and state and territory councils.

For more information and to view the video visit [www.napcan.org.au](http://www.napcan.org.au)