



AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION

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MEDIA RELEASE

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BUSINESSES URGED TO CONSIDER PAID MATERNITY LEAVE BILL

Business groups and the major political parties are today being urged to consider supporting the Paid Maternity Leave Bill that has been introduced into Federal Parliament by Senator Natasha Stott Despoja.

AHA Director National Affairs Bill Healey said the passage of the bill could assist tourism and hospitality businesses address growing labour shortages by enhancing their capacity to attract and retain good staff.

"Businesses have traditionally rejected point blank the concept of paid maternity leave because of legitimate fears that it will substantially increase operating costs," Mr Healey said.

"This bill addresses these concerns by introducing a publically funded scheme."

Mr Healey was surprised at the small relative cost of the scheme proposed by Senator Stott Despoja and to learn that Australia was one of the few countries in the world that did not provide some form of paid maternity leave across its workforce.

He acknowledged that flexible labour arrangements increased the capacity for workers to negotiate leave arrangements at the workplace level, however, the provisions provided by the bill would improve access to workers in this sector, many of whom are employed in small businesses that are incapable of covering the costs of paid leave.

"The demographic challenges confronting Australia require a detailed re-think of how we structure and support our workforce," Mr Healey said.

"This bill will be helpful for workers, businesses and the broader community."

Mr Healey commended Senator Stott Despoja for her persistence in pursuing this issue.

**For further information:
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The Australian Hotels Association (AHA) is the pre-eminent tourism and hospitality industry organisation in Australia. It has around 5000 members operating general and accommodation hotels. It has a National Office and Branches in each State and Territory. It also has a discrete Branch to represent the interests of its Accommodation members that covers four and five-star properties operated by the major chains.