

Silje Andersen-Cooke
Director,
Australian Multiple Birth Association

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Jay Weatherill
Thrive by Five

Dear Jay,

Australian Multiple Birth Association - Make it Law Campaign

The Australian Multiple Birth Association is pleased to express support for Thrive by Five's Make it Law campaign and also makes some further recommendations to ensure that the unique challenges of multiple birth families are considered.

There is no doubt that flexible and adequate paid parental leave, universal and free access to maternal and child health care, three days of quality early childhood education and care per week for every child at a capped cost of \$10 a day, and additional days for those who need it at minimal cost, would prove transformative for multiple birth families in Australia.

We also support the establishment of a joint statutory body between the Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments, to oversee the implementation of the high-quality, universally accessible early childhood development system and the early childhood entitlement. We agree this body should work to clarify and negotiate the roles and responsibilities of the Commonwealth and State Governments, and ensure consistent universal access to preschool across all jurisdictions.

Multiple birth families face significant challenges in the early years including:

- the costs of twins and higher order multiples are up to 5 and 13 times, respectively, higher than those of a singleton up to the age of 1;
- 67% of parents of multiples in Australia reported that childcare was not affordable for them;

- 52% of parents of multiples said they had challenges securing placements at childcare centers for their multiples;
- Parents of multiples are 5 times more likely to experience postnatal depression and anxiety compared to parents of singletons;
- the rate at which mothers return to paid work is also slower for mothers of multiple birth children than singleton babies. Only 20% of mothers of multiples return to work by the time their multiples are 3 years old in comparison to 40% of mothers of singletons; and
- 1 in 2 fathers of multiples return to work within 2 weeks or less of the birth of their multiples.

Parents of multiples are undersupported in Australia, hear directly from parents of multiples in Australia and what they have to say:

“We’ve had to move from the CBD to live regionally to access a way of life that supports multiple children, with easier access to child care and less financial stressors. Even so, childcare costs were astronomical and it was very hard to return to work – it has absolutely stalled my career.” – Jessica, mum of 7 year old twins, Geelong VIC

“There are many challenges of having twins including access to childcare spots and it’s incredibly expensive. Once I finally got them two spots at daycare I struggled getting them physically in the door. I couldn’t just carry them like a parent of a singleton would, it creates extra stress.” – Megan, mum of 1 year old twins, Tasmania

“Two weeks after we came home from hospital my partner had to return to work. The extreme exhaustion and postnatal depletion is real! I also tried my best to ‘sleep when they sleep’ at the beginning – easier said than done of course, especially with twins because they need to be sleeping at the same time.” – Amy, mum of 7 month old twins, South Australia

It is clear that the multiple birth community needs more support and the Australian Multiple Birth Association has been advocating for additional parental leave for parents of multiples, access to increased childcare subsidies and in-home support services for the early years.

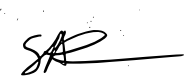
Recommendations from the Australian Multiple Birth Association

As stated above, we support the Thrive by Five Make it Law campaign and make some further recommendations in consideration of the unique challenges multiple birth families face including:

1. an additional 26 weeks of parental leave per additional child born in a multiple birth; and
2. the statutory body includes permanent representation from the multiple birth community, to ensure their unique challenges are taken into consideration.

The Australian Multiple Birth Association is committed to working with Thrive By Five and other stakeholders to ensure that multiple birth families are supported in Australia and all multiples are given the opportunity to thrive.

Yours sincerely,



Silje Andersen-Cooke
Director
Australian Multiple Birth Association

About the Australian Multiple Birth Association:

The Australian Multiple Birth Association is a fully volunteer run not-for-profit which supports over 4,700 families helping parents of multiples by linking them to a support network with other local multiple birth families, providing education and resources and advocating on behalf of parents of multiples with the aim to enable positive health outcomes and equality for multiple birth families. For more information head to:

<https://www.amba.org.au>