

DR ERICA LEWIN

LEAD SENATE CANDIDATE, AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS WA DIVISION

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## PERSISTENT PUSH FOR PAID MATERNITY LEAVE

The Australian Democrats have been a leading advocate for paid maternity leave. Senator Stott Despoja has persisted and again moved a motion in the Senate for the introduction of a national paid maternity leave scheme on June 14. The motion was not supported by the Coalition parties, Labor or Family First.

'The national system of paid maternity leave put forward by Senator Stott Despoja would be a great move forward in addressing the myriad of issues facing women in the workplace', said Dr Erica Lewin, Australian Democrats WA spokesperson and lead Senate Candidate in Western Australia.

'A national system of paid maternity leave enables women to maintain their participation in the labour force in the long term in a way that provides much-needed income for families, and allows for continued superannuation contributions while on maternity leave. It will ensure that women's skills, knowledge and experience will benefit the workplace and the economy', continued Dr Lewin.

Australia remains one of only two OECD countries without a national paid maternity leave scheme. The scheme put forward by the Australian Democrats gives all working women access to 14 weeks Government-funded leave at the minimum wage on the birth of a child.

'If business wants to retain valuable, reliable staff then paid maternity leave is going to be essential. This will become increasingly important during the years ahead as Australia is faced with an ageing population and the need to keep women in the workforce becomes a necessity.'

'The Australian Democrats have, since 2001, been front runners in demonstrating their concern for women's access to paid maternity leave and for their families,' concluded Dr Lewin.

**CONTACT: ERICA LEWIN Mbl. 0423130054**



Authorised by Pat Olver 113 Naturaliste Blvd ILUKA WA 6028