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MATERNITY LEAVE BOOST FOR ACT PUBLIC SERVANTS

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will increase paid maternity leave for its public servants to 18 weeks – the highest of any Australian Government – and double paternity or bonding leave.

Labor's \$7 million investment over four years will deliver the most generous public-sector scheme in the nation.

Chief Minister Jon Stanhope said only ACT Labor understands the importance of helping workers balance the demands and pressures of their lives and that only Labor can be trusted to make this investment in a better city and a stronger community.

"ACT Labor's commitment to increase paid maternity leave is about attracting and retaining women, and about recognising the realities of modern family life," Mr Stanhope said. "A progressive Labor Government such as ours is committed to making life easier for working men and women.

"A worker who is happy, satisfied and free to make use of flexible work arrangements and who is made to feel valued by their work conditions is a worker who will stay around.

"That's why I announce today, on Labour Day, that a re-elected ACT Labor Government will invest \$6 million over 4 years to increase paid maternity leave for ACT public servants from 14 weeks to 18 weeks. And that's why we will invest \$1.06 million over 4 years to double paid paternity or 'bonding' leave to two weeks."

Mr Stanhope said ACT Labor supports the recommendation of the Productivity Commission for a federally funded paid maternity leave scheme providing a base entitlement of 18 weeks of paid maternity leave and two weeks of paid paternity leave. But he pledged that whatever the final fate of the federal scheme, ACT Labor's maternity leave entitlements for its own employees would be maintained.

"As the father of four, and now seeing my own children balancing family life and careers, I know very well the need for flexibility, the need for genuine choice for young parents," Mr Stanhope said.

"In my own career I deliberately delayed my entry into politics until my children were older. I do not know how I would have managed 80-hour working weeks, late sittings and the need to spend a large number of nights each week working, if I still had young children at home.

"Unfortunately, not every Canberran has the luxury of choice, when career and family responsibilities rub up against each other. That's why flexibility is so crucial. That's why choice is important."

Mr Stanhope said ACT Labor has urged the private sector to follow Labor's lead, to ensure the Territory remains the most competitive destination for quality workers.

Statement Ends

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