



## Agenda setting for paid parental leave: a case study

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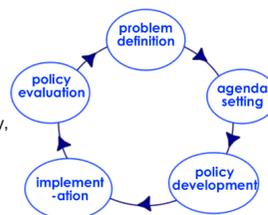


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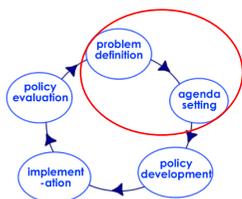
Policy research on the social determinants of health equity

Team: Australian National University, Flinders University, University of Ottawa, University of Sydney

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How can we make health equity a political and policy concern?



**Question:** What factors have enabled or constrained the inclusion of health equity in policy and government agendas in Australia?



## Paid parental leave in Australia

Australia was one of the last countries in the OECD to adopt PPL. Three goals in legislation:

↑ Women's labour force participation and economic productivity

↑ Gender equality

↑ Health and wellbeing of babies and mothers



## Approach

Social constructivist approach

- how policy issues are framed shapes what receives attention
- Actors
- Formal and informal policy processes
- Broader political context
- Power: structural, institutional, discursive



Rally for paid parental leave 2016

## Two phases

### 1970s - 2000

- Paid parental leave fails to get onto agenda
- Fought in industrial relations arena
- Employer opposition to pay

### 2000 onwards

- Marks a shift in strategy and tactic by advocates
- Key shift to a government funded scheme
- Advocacy leads to successful adoption of PPL in 2009

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## First phase: key barriers

- Gendered model of employment – the “wage-earner welfare state”
- Adversarial industrial relations system & employer opposition
- Conservative ideology
- Anti-welfare views
- Weak advocacy
- Lack of health evidence

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## Second phase: key enablers

- Shift in tactic to government-funded scheme
- Building broad coalitions
- Strategic framing
- Incremental approach
- Generating health evidence
- Shifting venue
- Election of ALP

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## Health & equity frames

- All 3 frames (economics, health, gender) required
- Health often not key frame
- Tensions between health and gender
- Equity underlying but not seen as winning frame
- Productivity/economic frame powerful

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## Lessons for advocacy

- Dominance of economic market ideas  
>>> build broad coalitions, strategic framing, generate evidence, target venues.

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## Acknowledgments

Research team: Professor Lyndall Strazdins (CI), Sharon Friel (Co-Director), Fran Baum (Co-Director), Dr Phillip Baker.

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<b>Actor power</b>	Policy community cohesion Leadership Guiding institutions
<b>Ideas</b>	Civil society mobilisation Common frames Frames influence government
<b>Political context</b>	Environments in which actors operate
<b>Issue characteristics</b>	Features of the problem

Shifman and Smith (2007): framework on determinants of political priority.

