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THE IMPACT OF THE AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY'S PAID MATERNITY LEAVE PROVISION

FINAL REPORT

DENISE THOMPSON,
MICHAEL BITTMAN AND
PETER SAUNDERS

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**The Impact of the Australian Catholic University's
Paid Maternity Leave Provision**

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Denise Thompson, Michael Bittman and Peter Saunders

Report Prepared for the Australian Catholic University

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Publications, SPRC, University of New South Wales Sydney, NSW, 2052 Australia.
Telephone: +61 (2) 9385 7802 Fax: +61 (2) 9385 7838
Email: sprcpub@unsw.edu.au

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Executive Summary

- On 14 August 2001, the Australian Catholic University (ACU) announced that its new General Staff Enterprise Bargaining Agreement included a provision for one year's paid maternity leave – 12 weeks on full pay and a further 40 weeks on 60 per cent pay.
- This report assesses the impact of the ACU maternity leave provision on shaping the public debate on parental leave by examining how the issue has been covered in the media since its announcement, and how this has been incorporated into the broader debate on family-friendly workplace policies.
- The project does not address the impact of the provisions on the ACU itself, or on its employees.
- There was a very large increase in the number of mentions of the paid maternity leave issue following the ACU announcement. In the first three days after the announcement, the ACU initiative was front-page news eleven times. In the last four and a half months of 2001, the number of mentions was four times the number during the first seven and a half months.
- The provision met with approval in a number of quarters because of its recognition of the value of child rearing and the work women do in raising the next generation. It was also praised for its positive influence on the industrial relations environment, as a 'landmark enterprise bargaining agreement' and as 'a breakthrough in women's rights to parent and work at the same time'
- Women leaders were uniformly complimentary, and a number of ACU staff commented favourably on the provision in media reports.
- The two most common negative responses to the announcement were that any mandatory extension of paid maternity leave across the workforce would damage the employment prospects of women of child-bearing age, and that it would have a negative impact on the costs of business, especially small business.
- It was often not paid maternity leave as such that employers objected to, but any requirement that they should be *obliged* to fund it. Business leaders pointed out that government-funded social insurance programs were the usual way of financing paid maternity leave entitlements.
- Many employers were against the provision because they thought that it might set a precedent.
- However, senior management at the ACU consistently denied that there was any intention to set a precedent. The Vice-Chancellor and other senior staff emphasised that they did not intend to pressure other universities or businesses into introducing it.

- And while the unions supported the ACU provision, most union leaders were not overly optimistic that the ACU provision would set a precedent.
- The ensuing media debate focused on several aspects of paid maternity leave, including why it was needed and how much it would cost employers, taking account of its beneficial effect on staff loyalty and reduced turnover.
- The Prime Minister was highly complimentary about the ACU provision. He congratulated the ACU and said that paid maternity leave was ‘a very good idea’ where it could be afforded and where it resulted from the enterprise bargaining process.
- The debate generated by the ACU’s paid maternity leave provision was extensive and wide-ranging, covering every aspect of the issue, and every position that might be taken on it.
- The provision was welcomed by a wide spectrum of social groups, including unions, first-time mothers, women’s groups, ACU staff and the female workforce in general. Among the political parties, many of the reactions praised the ACU’s generosity and consideration for the stresses women undergo in trying to juggle work and family.
- Detailed interviews with seventeen key individuals reiterated the positive response to the provision and its impact on the changed ‘atmospherics’ in relation to discussion of work-family issues generally. Others felt that the connections between paid maternity leave and the broader work-family balance issue still had to be made.
- Interviewees from the ACU talked about the university’s family-friendly ethos and ACU’s sensitivity to issues like ‘allowing women to take leave and not put their families under enormous pressure’. Even those who were critical acknowledged that ACU had acted with determination.
- A number of interviewees mentioned the good publicity that the paid maternity leave provision had generated for ACU, although commentators thought that it had not had any lasting influence.
- Most of the opinion leaders interviewed were very positive about the ACU’s paid maternity leave provision, and the most enthusiastic were the union spokespeople. The criticisms that emerged took a different form from those that appeared in the media. There were few references to the cost to business, and none at all to the threat to women’s employment prospects.
- Attitudes towards the provision depended on the interviewees’ institutional affiliation. While the representatives of employer organisations did not express any antagonism, they tended towards neutrality rather than approval. In contrast, expert commentators, the union spokespeople and ACU staff all approved of the provision.
- The union spokespeople stressed the effect the ACU provision had had on what could now be included in enterprise bargaining negotiations. Employer

representatives tended to deny the wider significance of the provision, pointing out that it reflected the particularities of the ACU as a workplace.

- Informants tended to agree that it had had little or no influence on either federal government policy or on the political environment more generally.

Abbreviations

AAP	Australian Associated Press
ABI	Australian Business Industrial
ABL	Australian Business Limited
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ACCER	The Australian Catholic Commission for Employment Relations
ACCI	Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
ACIRRT	Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ACU	Australian Catholic University
ADAM	Agreements Data-base and Monitor
AEF	Australian Employers' Federation
AEU	Australian Education Union
AFR	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>
AIFS	Australian Institute of Family Studies
AIG	Australian Industry Group
AIRC	Australian Industrial Relations Commission
ANU	Australian National University
ASU	Australian Services Union
CCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPSU	Community and Public Service Union
CWLA	Catholic Women's League Australia
EBA	Enterprise Bargaining Agreement
EOPA	Equal Opportunity Practitioners' Association
EOWA	Equal Opportunity in the Workplace Agency
FaCS	Department of Family and Community Services
HREOC	The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission
IEU	Independent Education Union
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISSP	International Social Survey Program
IVF	In Vitro Fertilisation
IWD	International Women's Day
nd	no date
NTEU	National Tertiary Education Union
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
OSW	Office of the Status of Women
SMH	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
SPRC	Social Policy Research Centre
SRC	Student Representative Council
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UOW	University of Wollongong
VC	Vice-Chancellor
WABA	World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action
WEL	Women's Electoral Lobby

Table of Contents

1	Introduction and Background.....	1
	About the Australian Catholic University.....	1
2	Quantifying the Overall Impact of the ACU Decision on Public Discussion of Paid Maternity Leave.....	3
3	The Media and Public Reception of the ACU Decision	6
	3.1 The lead up.....	6
	3.3 The main themes.....	8
	3.4 Reception of the ACU provision.....	9
	3.5 Why paid maternity leave is needed	15
	3.6 The question of cost.....	16
	3.7 Who pays? – a central issue.....	17
	3.8 Impact of the Decision on Institutions	18
	Impact on the union movement – ‘the ACU standard’.....	18
	Impact on the federal government and the political parties.....	19
	3.9 Conclusion	20
4	Interviews with Key Opinion Leaders.....	22
	4.1 Methods	22
	4.2 Main themes: Evaluating the ACU provision.....	22
	4.3 Situating paid maternity leave within the family-friendly context	25
	4.4 Impact within the ACU.....	25
	4.5 Impact on policy	27
	4.6 The impact on public debate.....	29
	4.7 Impact on industrial relations.....	30
	4.8 Conclusion	31
5	Concluding Remarks.....	32
	References.....	33
	Appendix A: Background and Supporting Material.....	46
	A.1 The media response.....	46
	A.2 Additional mentions.....	49
	Appendix B: Opinion Leaders Who Were Interviewed	54

1 Introduction and Background

In December 2002, the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) was contracted to assist the Australian Catholic University (ACU) to assess: the impact of the ACU maternity leave provision on shaping the public debate on parental leave; and the influence (if any) of that provision on subsequent policy initiatives.¹ The project examines how the issue has been covered in the media since its announcement, and how this has been incorporated into the broader policy debate on parental leave and other aspects of family-friendly workplace policies. The project does not address the impact of the provisions on the ACU itself, or on its employees.

This report presents the results of that research into the impact on public opinion and policy. Following this brief Introduction, Section 2 presents an overview of the impact of the provision in terms of the number of times the issue was discussed in the Australian media. The bulk of the report is contained in Sections 3 and 4. Section 2 contains a detailed analysis of the content of the media reports mentioning and/or discussing the ACU initiative, from the time of its announcement on 15 August 2001 to the end of 2002. This survey of the media is as exhaustive as the limitations of databases and press-clipping services will allow and the discussion is organised around the main themes around which the media debate itself was structured.

Section 4 contains an analysis of seventeen in-depth interviews conducted with key opinion leaders on the topic of paid maternity leave. Those interviewed include representatives of relevant agencies, academics, spokespeople for peak business organisations, union representatives, journalists, and representatives of ACU management. The main conclusions of the report are briefly summarised in Section 5.

About the Australian Catholic University

ACU National is a public university formed by the amalgamation of four Catholic institutions of higher education in eastern Australia, funded by the Australian Government, and open to students and staff of all beliefs. It began operation as the Australian Catholic University on 1 January 1991 and currently has two campuses in Sydney at North Sydney (MacKillop) and Strathfield (Mount St Mary), and one each in Brisbane (McAuley at Banyo), Canberra (Signadou), Ballarat (Aquinas), and Melbourne (St Patrick's). It also has off-campus activity throughout Australia and overseas.

The ACU website states that 'Its ethos is derived from Christian values and its core concern is with ethics in all fields of endeavour', and that its 'inspiration, located within 2,000 years of Catholic intellectual tradition, summons it to attend to all that is of concern to human beings'.

In 2001, the ACU was awarded the Australian HR Award for Best Provider of Work/Life Balance. In 2002, the university also received commendations from the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) in its National Work and

¹ In addition to the research team who authored this report, the project was supported by a Project Advisory Committee consisting of Professor Peter Saunders and Dr Sara Graham (from SPRC) and Professors Peter Sheehan and John Coll (from ACU).

Family Awards. It was Joint Winner with the Australian Film Commission in the Single Innovative Initiative category, Highly Commended in the First Steps category, and a Finalist in the Large Business category. In their comments, the judges mentioned the university's 'respect for people' vision, its 'extensive and planned "listening" process', and its 'extended Maternity Leave scheme' (ACCI, 2002: 12-13; Abbott, 2002).

2 Quantifying the Overall Impact of the ACU Decision on Public Discussion of Paid Maternity Leave.

Whatever other effects the ACU provision might or might not have had, there was general agreement that it had an immediate impact on raising the profile and level of debate surrounding paid maternity leave. An article in the *Campus Review* nearly a year after the announcement said the ACU move had ‘started consciousness-raising in the wider community with the university playing the role of social critic’, and reported that ACU VC Sheehan viewed this as a ‘highly appropriate’ role for a university (Elson-Green, 2002). Sex Discrimination Commissioner from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC), Pru Goward thought that the ACU’s ‘landmark deal had upped the ante in the debate’ (Phillips, 2001b; ABC/Lateline, 2001b), as did Carmen Lawrence (Bachelard, 2001a), and Amanda Ellis, National Manager for Women in Business at Westpac (Ellis, 2001).

So too did the Social Policy Division of the OECD, who were reported to be impressed by the strength of the reaction to the ACU’s announcement (Steketee, 2001a). In a number of later interviews, and in a press release, VC Sheehan was reported to be pleased with the extent to which the ACU’s decision had raised community consciousness (O’Dwyer, 2002a; *Catholic Leader*, 2002b; *Catholic Weekly*, 2002; Cooney, 2002; Kairos, 2002; Sheehan, 2002b).

Two days after the announcement, the SMH editorial said that the ACU’s agreement had ‘reopened debate on maternity leave’, and that that was not such a bad thing ‘in a time of rapid workplace readjustments’ (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2001a). In November, the ABC Radio program, ‘Life Matters’, saw the ACU decision as at least partly responsible for the fact that the maternity leave debate had ‘flared up again’ during the last year (ABC/Life Matters, 2001b). Sally Moyle thought that the very fact that the ACU provision was so unprecedented, ‘so surprising and so out of the left field’, that it ‘forced the employer world to focus on the issue’ (Moyle, 2002).

Some writers pointed out the political importance of the ACU provision in raising the public profile of paid maternity leave. One writer in the AFR gave the ACU the credit for putting the issue ‘on the political radar’ (Long, 2001c). Another, writing in *The Australian*, said that the ACU agreement had ‘become so unexpectedly influential’ because the major political parties had refused to commit themselves on the issue, thus leaving a political vacuum (Bachelard, 2001b). A *Canberra Times* editorial expressed the hope that ‘the matter will also be put on the Government’s agenda’, as well as of those groups already willing to discuss it, such as women’s groups, the Australian Democrats and the unions (*Canberra Times*, 2001a).

Table 1 shows the number of discussions of paid maternity leave included in an extensive sample of newspapers in each month 2001, up to 15 August when the ACU provision was announced, and afterwards.² It is clear that there was much more media

² Due to the limitations of the database, there may be discussions that have not been included in Table 1. However, it is likely that the relative proportions before and after the date of the ACU announcement are accurate, both because there is no other obvious reason why the numbers should have increased so markedly after that date, and because many of the discussions, and all of them in the latter half of August, refer to it explicitly.

comment and debate about the issue after the ACU announcement than before. It is not possible to say with absolute certainty whether or not the trend shown in Table 1 was a direct consequence of the ACU initiative, since there was a great deal going on at the time, much of related to the paid maternity leave issue.³ Throughout the year, Pru Goward was frequently interviewed about the maternity leave issue while two related HREOC reports were being researched and written. Even so, there is a strong presumption that the trend shown in Table 1 is so strong that the ACU decision must have been a major – probably *the* major – underlying factor.

Table 1: Citations to the Paid Maternity Leave in the Australian Media in 2001

	SMH	Aus	AFR	Tel	Age	CT	CM	AA	HM	Total
Jan	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	4
Feb	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
Mar	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	4
Apr	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	4
May	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	8
June	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	7	11
July	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	7
Aug	4	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	9
Before	9	7	2	6	4	0	3	1	17	49
Aug	15	14	5	9	15	5	10	6	2	81
Sept	4	16	1	0	1	0	0	4	0	26
Oct	1	11	6	3	3	1	7	5	3	40
Nov	9	11	3	4	2	0	3	1	2	35
Dec	2	1	0	3	0	1	1	7	2	17
After	31	53	15	19	21	7	21	23	9	199
Year total	40	60	17	25	25	7	24	24	26	248

Source: Factiva.

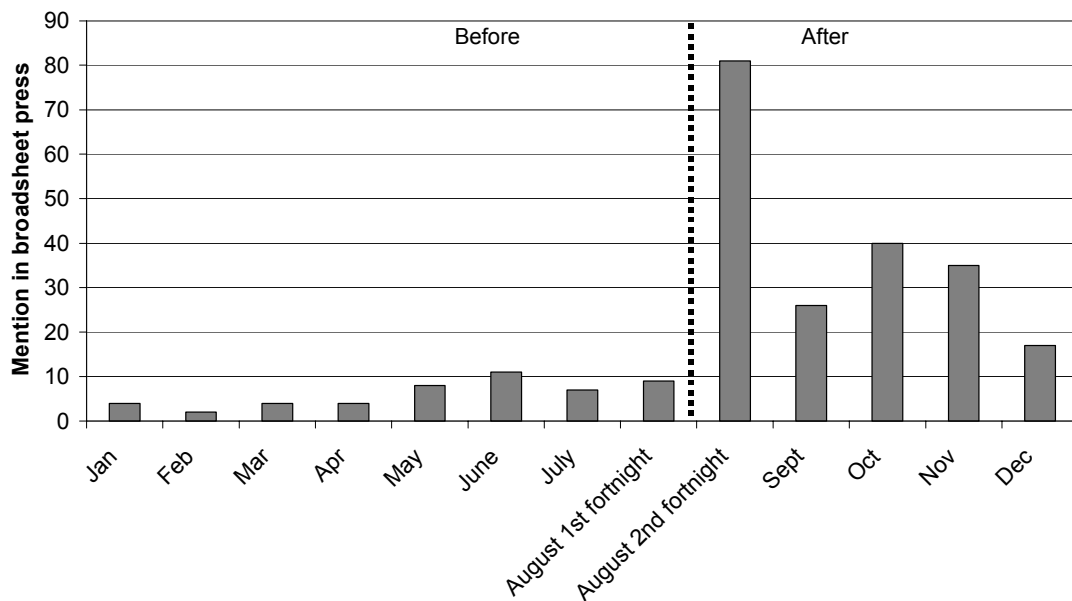
* The newspapers from left to right are: *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian*, the *Australian Financial Review*, the *Telegraph (Daily and Sunday)*, *The Age*, the *Canberra Times*, the *Courier Mail*, the *Adelaide Advertiser* and the *Hobart Mercury*. Numbers in this table do not match numbers in Table A1 because (a) these figures refer to any mention of paid maternity leave, not just those in the context of the ACU provision; and (b) different counting methods were used, e.g. SMH on 16 August in Table A1 counts the letters to the editor separately, whereas this table counts them as one article. The high number of articles in the *Hobart Mercury* in June reflects events within Tasmania – the introduction of paid maternity leave for teachers, and industrial action over pay and conditions at Launceston City Council.

Table 1 indicates that in the second half of August 2001 alone there were 81 mentions of paid maternity leave. This compares with 49 mentions in the period from the first of January to the middle of August. In the last four and a half months of 2001, the number of mentions was four times the number during the first seven and a half months.

The trend over the year is brought out even more starkly in Figure 1, which shows how dramatic the increase was after the ACU announcement in mid-August.

³ For example, in September, the clothing retail chain, Esprit, granted female employees 12 weeks' maternity leave. On 1 September, *The Australian* started a week-long series on 'our struggle to manage career and family'. In November local government employees were granted nine weeks' paid maternity leave by the NSW Industrial Relations Commission, a move which had been pre-empted by Yass Shire Council introducing nine weeks' paid maternity leave for staff in early October.

Figure 1: References to Paid Maternity Leave Before and After the ACU Enterprise Bargain Agreement



The sharp increase in the number of media citations to paid maternity leave might not translate into a corresponding rise in the impact of the ACU decision. Nor might any immediate impact be lasting, or change the minds of key individuals or the community at large. In order to assess whether these effects did in fact emerge, it is necessary to examine the content of the citations in detail, and to explore what impact the provision itself (and the media coverage it generated) had on those involved in the debate. These two issues provide the basis for the material contained in the following two sections of the report.

3 The Media and Public Reception of the ACU Decision

In undertaking a detailed analysis of the media debate that followed the ACU's announcement of its intention to provide its female general staff with a year's paid maternity leave, documents were sourced initially from the ACU's own extensive files of media clippings. Further documentation - accessed through the internet using the keywords 'Australian Catholic University' and 'maternity leave' - resulted in a large volume of material, mostly from the print news media. Discussions of maternity leave more generally have also been included, where that is relevant to points raised in relation to the ACU provision.⁴

3.1 The lead up

As it was told in the media, the story of the ACU's 2000 EBA, with its generous and groundbreaking maternity leave provision; 'came after 18 months of negotiations between the NTEU and the CPSU and the university' (Carmody, 2001). According to VC Sheehan, it 'was negotiated after extensive consultation and was responsive to expressed needs' (Tullberg, 2001; *Catholic Outlook*, 2001). It was instigated by the ACU itself and was not part of a union claim (Age, 2001a; Green, 2001a; *Catholic Outlook*, 2001; *WorkplaceInfo*, 2001a). It was proposed, as the AFR put it, 'by the mostly male university management' (O'Neill, 2001), a fact which the AFR found 'remarkable'.

A major aspect of what VC Sheehan called 'extensive consultation' was the 'Listening Program', referred to by Industrial Relations Victoria as 'an extensive, inter-campus consultation program' and 'one of the most successful employee relations initiatives undertaken by the ACU in recent years' (Industrial Relations Victoria, 2002). As Dr John Barclay, Director of Personnel Relations, put it, 'Two senior university officers, one an academic and the other an administrator, went out to employees with the brief that they could only listen, they couldn't butt in'. Employees were asked what they liked and what they didn't like about working at the university, and what they wanted included in the next EBA round. This enabled 'both unionists and non-unionists to have their views heard', he said (*Human Resources*, 2002).

The EBA was registered with the AIRC ('certified') on 14 August 2001 (Hannon, 2001c; MacDonald, 2001). It originally applied only to general staff (MacDonald, 2001), and was extended to academic staff in November 2001 (GM, 2001; Madden, 2001b; *Campus Review*, 2001). At that time there were '386 academics at ACU, in addition to the 422 non-academic staff who were awarded the entitlements in August'

⁴ Mentions of the ACU and its maternity leave provision that appeared in the public media, largely newspapers, are tabulated in Table A1 in Appendix A, and listed in the 'References' at the end of the report. Publications with more limited circulation, e.g. staff newsletters in individual workplaces, academic articles, etc., have not been included in the table, although they are listed in the 'References' and discussed in the text. Appendix A also contains a list of sources where the ACU provision was mentioned but not discussed any further. A manual search was also made of the women's magazines, the *Australian Women's Weekly*, *New Idea*, *Vogue Australia* and *Cosmopolitan* (since it is not possible to access these media electronically), from August to December 2001. There was only one mention of paid maternity leave, in *New Idea*, 29 September 2001 (on page 20), in the context of a story about Pru Goward.

(Madden, 2001b). By May 2002, there were seven staff who had taken the leave, according to one journalist who listed staff in Queensland, Victoria and NSW (O'Dwyer, 2002b).

Senior management were reported to be amazed at the intensity of the media reaction to the provision. 'ACU director surprised by media reaction to parental leave enterprise agreement', was the headline in *Campus Review* (Elson-Green, 2001); while a SMH journalist reported that the ACU had put the issue of maternity leave on the agenda 'quite against its will', and that it was 'desperately trying to play down its achievement yesterday' (Bachelard, 2001b).

It was widely reported in the media that the chief motivation behind the ACU's paid maternity leave provision was its family-friendliness. University services director, John Cameron, said it was adopted in line with ACU's "family-friendly" reputation' (*Border Mail*, 2001a; *Gold Coast Bulletin*, 2001a) and that it wasn't 'just that we're family friendly, the provisions are an acknowledgement that one aspect of a working career is looking after a family and we hope this will assist' (Elson-Green, 2001). The VC said, 'we can't treat our employees as if parenting doesn't matter. We believe it does and are committed to that value' (Carmody, 2001). He also said it was 'in line with a progressive tradition of social justice and equity which has characterised the university since its beginnings [and is] 'consistent with our ethos as a Catholic' institution' (Sheehan, 2001b).

Another motivation was 'to attract and retain high-quality staff' (Sheehan, 2001b). It was hoped that the provision would make the ACU a 'preferred employer in the sector' (Norington, 2001b). The VC said that this was not the primary reason for the provision. He hoped 'attracting quality women staff' would be 'a spin-off' from the decision (Hannon, 2001c; ABC/Businessbreakfast, 2002). But it was made, he said, 'because it was right: parents, women and men, should not be disadvantaged in the workplace because they have children' (Sheehan, 2001b).

3.2 The news breaks

On Tuesday, 14 August 2001, the ACU released a press statement announcing the signing of the university's General Staff Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA), and at 1:00 pm on the next day, a press conference was held at the campus in North Sydney. EBAs are not usually matters of riveting interest to the media, but this one was different. One of its provisions was a year's paid maternity leave – 12 weeks on full pay and a further 40 weeks on 60 per cent of salary – for those of its female general (non-academic) staff who had been in continuous employment for at least two years. Staff members had to give a guarantee that they would return to work for 26 weeks after the period of leave or repay any money over and above their 12 weeks' entitlement.⁵

According to ACU's executive director of university services, John Cameron, the maternity leave provision was 'a university initiative and not part of a union claim' (Norington, 2001a; Norington, 2001b; *Age*, 2001a; *Catholic Outlook*, 2001; EOPA,

⁵ The same provisions were extended to academic staff in November of that year.

2002; Sheehan and Kane, 2001). The unions were reported to be ‘surprised’ (McEwen, 2001), even ‘stunned’ (Brady, 2001), by the announcement. However, as time went on, it came to be seen as a union initiative. It was ‘a landmark case’ won by the NTEU and the CPSU (MacDonald, 2002b) and a CPSU win (Frew, 2002), and it was used as an example of the ‘generous leave provisions’ won by unions in the private sector (*Bulletin*, 2002). The CPSU consistently claims it as a union victory. Variations on the theme of ‘CPSU wins paid maternity leave’ can be found throughout the CPSU website.⁶

The media reacted with great enthusiasm. By 8 am on the 15 August, even before the ACU had held its media conference, the ABC had lined up interviews with Sharan Burrow, president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), and Garry Brack, Executive Director of the Australian Employers’ Federation (AEF). At least seven other media outlets included reports on the same day, despite the late hour of the press conference. By the next day, 34 media outlets carried the story, some of the newspapers more than once in the same issue.⁷ On the following day, 26 media outlets reported or discussed the maternity leave provision and its implications, once again more than once in some cases.

Over these first three days, the ACU initiative was front page news eleven times – twice in *The Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* (on the 15 and 16 August), and once each in *The Australian*, the *Cairns Post*, the *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton) and the *West Australian* (on 16 August), and the *Advocate* (Coffs Harbour), the *Colac Herald*, and the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* (Maryborough) (on 17 August). The story also appeared later on the front pages of the *Yass Tribune* (on 10 October 2001) and the *Catholic Leader* (on 12 May 2002). For the rest of the year 2001, scarcely a week went by without several mentions of the ACU paid maternity leave provision, often quite lengthy discussions; and the debate continued throughout the next year.

3.3 The main themes

The first and most obvious theme to arise was how the ACU provision was received by the various commentators, whether they saw it positively or negatively, and what reasons they gave for holding the views they did. The most common positive response referred to the ACU’s generosity, while the most common negative reactions cited the cost to business and the threat to women’s employment. There was some discussion of why paid maternity leave might be needed, with reason Australia’s falling birth rate cited as the most commonly reason.

⁶ In August 2001 (*General Staff Union News*), in September 2001 (Kennelly, 2001, *Bulletin – Stellar, IT Views*), in December 2001 (‘Enterprise agreement sets new parental leave standard’), in January 2002 (Galloway, 2002), in April/May 2002 (delegates@work), in Winter 2002 (*TheWorks*), and in October 2002 (Hammond, 2002).

⁷ *The Age*, for example, contained nine separate pieces, seven of them by-lined articles of some length (with an editorial and a letter to the editor); the SMH had six (three articles and three letters to the editor); *The Australian* had six (including a cartoon); the *Gold Coast Bulletin* had five (including another cartoon); the *Newcastle Herald* had four, while the *Melbourne Herald Sun* had three pieces.

Many of the reactions to the ACU provision were ambivalent. One headline summed it up neatly: ‘Alarm and delight at maternity leave’, it said. The author went on to pose the question, ‘A pace-setting initiative – or the straw that will break many employers’ backs?’ It must, she wrote, ‘send as many shivers of alarm down the backs of business managers as it does tingles of delight for prospective parents’ (Green, 2001a). An article in *The Australian* said that ‘reaction was divided yesterday’, the division in this case being between ‘women’s groups’ on the one hand, and AEF Director Garry Brack on the other, with his ‘doomsday warning’ about bankruptcy (Walker and Bachelard, 2001).

The ACU itself received wide coverage in the media. Its spokespeople and/or media releases were quoted extensively, explaining that the university’s decision was a consequence of the ACU’s family-friendly Catholic ethos, as well as a way of attracting and retaining high quality staff.

3.4 Reception of the ACU provision

The provision met with approval in a number of quarters because of its recognition of the value of child rearing and the work women do in raising the next generation. The word most commonly used to describe it was ‘generous’, repeated over and over again in discussion after discussion.⁸ It was also referred to as ‘a ground-breaking move’ (Allard and Glendinning, 2001; *Courier Mail*, 2001; Greber and Hele, 2001), as ‘trail-blazing’ (Molloy, 2001), as ‘a world first’ (Greber and Hele, 2001), as ‘an unprecedented agreement’, ‘a pacesetter for all workers’ (Norington, 2001a; Norington, 2001b; Milburn, 2001b), as ‘a step forward for women’ (*Green Left Weekly*, 2001), as ‘the right thing to do in a civilised society’ (O’Donnell, 2001), and as ‘a policy clearly aimed at the wellbeing of babies’ (Sherry, 2001a).

It was also praised for its positive influence on the industrial relations environment, as a ‘landmark enterprise bargaining agreement’ (Walker and Bachelard, 2001) and ‘a radical industrial agreement’ (Bachelard, 2001a), as a ‘remarkable offer’ setting ‘a new benchmark for working parents seeking “family-friendly” workplaces’ (*Age*, 2001a; Norington, 2001e), as ‘a pacesetter for all workers’ (*Bulletin*, 2001; *Catholic Outlook*, 2001), and as ‘a breakthrough in women’s rights to parent and work at the same time’ (Stewart, 2001). Even Garry Brack, a strong critic of the provision, referred to the ‘magnificent’ and ‘incredibly generous ACU package ... not only by Australian but [also] by world standards’ (ABC/AM, 2001b; Brack, 2001c; Hannon, 2001a; Hannon, 2001b).

Women leaders were uniformly complimentary. The Leader of the Australian Democrats, Senator Natasha Stott Despoja, referred to it as ‘the most generous in the

⁸ For example, in AAP, 2001a; ABC/AM, 2001a; ABC/Lateline, 2001a; ABC/2BL, 2002; *Age*, 2002; Bachelard, 2001a; Baird, 2001; *Bendigo Advertiser*, 2001a; *Bendigo Advertiser*, 2001b; *Border Mail*, 2001a; Brack, 2001c; Brady, 2001; *Bulletin*, 2002; Carmody, 2001; Carmody, 2002; *Chronicle*, 2001a; *Chronicle*, 2001c; Cooney, 2002; Despoja, 2001; Despoja, 2002; Dodson, 2002; Fyfe, 2001; Green, 2001a; Hannon, 2001a; Hannon, 2001b; Hannon, 2001c; *Herald Sun*, 2001; *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 2001; Keene, 2001; Lipari, 2001; Long, 2001a; Madden, 2001b; Mossop, 2001; *Newcastle Herald*, 2001a; *Newcastle Herald*, 2001b; Norington, 2001c; Norington, 2001d; O’Dwyer, 2002a; Sewell, 2001; *SMH*, 2001a; *Studentcentral*, 2001; Tabakoff, 2002; Toomey, 2001.

country' (Despoja, 2001). Dr Carmen Lawrence, Labor spokeswoman for the status of women, congratulated the university and the relevant unions, the Community and Public Service Union (CPSU) and the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), and expressed the hope that other employers would follow suit (Lawrence, 2001).

Pru Goward characterised it as 'a win-win situation' and 'a very welcome decision' which emphasised the fact that 'women, children and work have become inseparable'. She thought that seeing it as a 'benchmark' was 'putting it a bit highly', since that wasn't how workplaces worked any more, but that it did raise women's awareness of the issue (ABC/Lateline, 2001b; MacDonald, 2001; Mossop, 2001).

The media canvassed the views of a number of new mothers. Francesca Higgins, a librarian at the ACU Canberra campus, who was 16 weeks pregnant when the announcement was made, was announced in one article as 'the first woman in Australia to enjoy a year of paid maternity leave' (Atkey, 2001). Ms Higgins saw it as an acknowledgement of the service she and others like her had given to the university and as recognition of her skills. She said it made her feel as though the university valued her as an employee and instilled loyalty to the organisation, as well as reflecting the ACU's views about social justice and equity (Atkey, 2001; Carmody, 2001; Hannon, 2001a; Hannon, 2001b; Jackson, 2001; Milburn, 2001a; *Sunday Telegraph*, 2002; Walker and Bachelard, 2001).

Other ACU staff were also quoted in the media. Keitha Theodore, from the Ballarat campus, was pregnant at the time, said she had been going to take a year off anyway, 'but this is great' (Lees, 2001). Leah Timms said she had been drawn to working for the ACU because of its family-friendly policies (O'Dwyer, 2002b; Cooney, 2002). Anne Szadura said she would seriously consider taking a year off if she became pregnant again (Phillips, 2001a). So did Barbara Dougherty, a senior administrative officer in personnel relations at ACU's Brisbane campus at Michelton.⁹ She said the staff had welcomed the decision and that women could 'have their careers, retain their skills in the workforce' and would be more likely to return to work (Tullberg, 2001).

The media also carried stories based on the reaction of all mothers. The easing of financial pressure was the first thing mentioned by the young mothers interviewed by the SMH at the Newtown Early Childhood Centre. They also said that a year's paid maternity leave would make 'unforeseen medical traumas' easier to handle. It would also mean they would be able to spend more time with their children when they were developing so fast in that first year, and that they wouldn't have to leave jobs they loved in order to be with their babies (Allard and Glendinning, 2001).

Other young mothers were reported to be frankly envious. The ACU provision was described as 'like manna from heaven' for Cora Day, a high school teacher and new mother from Karrinyup, Western Australia, who did not qualify for paid maternity leave and who had taken a year off work without pay (Pratley, 2001). Sarah Simseker, six and a half months pregnant, and whose employer offered no paid maternity leave, was reported in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* to be envious of the new deal (Finster, 2001). A letter writer to the SMH applauded the ACU 'for its progressive stance on

⁹ The Brisbane campus has since moved to Banyo.

maternity leave entitlements', and concluded by saying, 'I only wished I worked for it' (Sainsbury, 2001).

Print media stories typically assumed that children were a benefit to all, that motherhood was undervalued, and that the university had invested in employee loyalty. The SMH's editorial of 17 August said the university's decision to pay women to take time off for mothering 'recognises the desirability of parenthood', as well as the importance of 'its harmonisation with the workplace', and that 'such a generous reform must surely encourage parenthood' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2001a). Ms Lynne Dalton, a member of the Coffs Harbour Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL), said the long-term benefits far outweighed the immediate costs, although she also said not all those benefits could be measured since 'they included things such as loyalty' (*Advocate*, 2001b). Anne Szadura, an executive officer at ACU's Melbourne campus, who was interviewed on 'Lateline', also mentioned loyalty (ABC/Lateline, 2001a).

Despite these highly approving reactions, there were also numerous negative responses. The two most common criticisms were: that any mandatory extension of paid maternity leave across the workforce more generally would damage the employment prospects of women of child-bearing age; and that it would have a negative impact on business, especially small business, because of the costs involved. As the authors of an article in *The Age* put it the day after the decision was announced, 'The general introduction of one year's paid maternity leave in Australia would lead to company failures and a reluctance among employers to hire women' (Gettler, Douez and Dunn, 2001. See also: *Australian Homepage*, 2001; Cowan, 2001).

There were many warnings given in the media against requiring employers to provide paid maternity leave because it could have adverse consequences for women's employment opportunities. A headline in the *Northern Territory News* put it succinctly: 'Mum's pay "jobs threat"' (*Northern Territory News*, 2001b). The most vituperative of the ACU's critics, SMH columnist P. P. McGuinness, asked: 'What private sector employers in their right mind would now want to employ young women?' (McGuinness, 2001).¹⁰ A letter writer to the SMH stated dramatically that it 'sounded the death knell for all those young, child-bearing aged women who may be currently seeking employment' (Fancourt, 2001b).

Senator Natasha Stott Despoja felt that paid maternity leave could inadvertently lead to discrimination against women of childbearing age as long as it relied on 'the present employer-pays system' (Despoja, 2001). An editorial in the Melbourne *Herald Sun* said that some employers might 'be tempted to risk subtle discrimination in favour of men when hiring staff' (*Herald Sun*, 2001). An editorial in *The Age* said that it 'could increase the risk of female workers being discriminated against' (*Age*, 2002), while an article in the *West Australian* reported that a job survey by the recruitment firm, TMP, had found that almost half of the employers surveyed had said

¹⁰ Vituperation is typical of McGuinness' style of commentary. As VC Sheehan put it, 'Mr McGuinness never likes to let the facts get in the way of a good mudsling' (Sheehan, 2001a).

paid maternity leave would mean that women would be passed over for promotions and jobs (*West Australian*, 2001a).¹¹

However, as Sally Moyle, Director of the Sex Discrimination Unit of HREOC, pointed out, ‘employers refusing to employ women to avoid paying for maternity leave – however subtly they may try to do it – would soon find themselves in trouble for breaching sex discrimination laws’ (Moyle, 2002: 19). But other writers thought that anti-discrimination laws couldn’t stop the tendency to discriminate against young women. One pointed out that it would be difficult to ‘legislate and police what will inevitably be intangible and surreptitious long-term hiring practices’ (Green, 2001a).

The reason why women of childbearing age would become unemployable if paid maternity leave became a universal entitlement was the cost to business, especially small business. The ACU decision, Senator Despoja said, ‘has spooked some employers concerned about costs’ (Despoja, 2001), and she agreed that it was ‘not a solution’ for most businesses because of the cost (Despoja, 2002a). Provisions like the ACU’s were ‘beyond the capacity of most employers to match’, said one writer (Rehbein, 2001: (Green, 2001a).

Employers and their representatives were almost unanimously opposed to the ACU provision. ACU was ‘criticised by employers nationwide’ (*Gold Coast Bulletin*, 2001d) in what the AFR referred to as ‘the generally negative response by employers to the idea of maternity leave’ (O’Neill, 2001). ‘And employers around Australia are downright terrified. Mention paid maternity leave and words such as bankruptcy spring immediately to their lips’ (Atkey, 2001).

The most frequently cited employer representative and critic of the ACU provision was Garry Brack, whose statement that the provision would ‘bankrupt a whole load of companies’ if it was extended throughout the Australian business world was widely cited.¹² Brack was not antagonistic to the ACU provision as such (which he referred to as ‘magnificent’), nor to paid maternity leave. What he objected to was extending ‘the ACU strategy’ to the whole female workforce and any requirement that employers should ‘shoulder the burden’. He had a great deal to say about the cost to business, but he had no objection to maternity leave ‘paid from taxes as a social security benefit, thus spreading the cost across the entire community’ (Brack, 2001a; Brack, 2001b).

¹¹ For more warnings about the effect on women’s employment, see: *Age*, 2001a; Bates, 2001; *Border Mail*, 2001b; Carew, 2001; *Chronicle*, 2001b; Corbett, 2001; *Courier Mail*, 2001; *Daily Advertiser*, 2001b; *Daily News*, 2001; Fehre, 2001; *Geelong Advertiser*, 2001; *Gladstone Observer*, 2001b; *Gympie Times*, 2001b; Herbert, 2001; Lees, 2001; Long, 2001b; McEwen, 2001; Martin, 2001; Mossop, 2001; *Northern Territory News*, 2001b; Nufer, 2001; Rollo, 2001; *SMH*, 2001a; *Warrnambool Standard*, 2001b.

¹² ABC/AM, 2001b; ABC/Lateline, 2001a; *Australian*, 2001; Bachelard, 2001a; *Bendigo Advertiser*, 2001a; *Border Mail*, 2001a; Brack, 2001b; *Canberra Times*, 2001a; *Gold Coast Bulletin*, 2001a; Hannon, 2001a; 2001b; Lees, 2001; Lipari, 2001; MacDonald, 2001; Mossop, 2001; Phillips and Edmonds, 2001; Rehbein, 2001; Southam, 2001; Walker and Bachelard, 2001

The main argument against any extension of the ACU provision, or even of paid maternity leave at all, was its cost – ‘matching the university’s deal would be too costly for many businesses’ (Phillips and Edmonds, 2001). An editorial in the *Gladstone Observer* quoted ‘employer groups’ warning that it would be ‘an incredible financial burden on most small and medium sized employers’, while ‘for larger businesses the costs would be astronomical’ (Hill, A., 2001). David Gregory, general manager of workplace relations policy at the Victorian Employers CCI, said that paid maternity leave ‘effectively means you’ll be bearing the cost of an additional head on the payroll’ (Gettler, Douez and Dunn, 2001).

Bob Herbert, chief executive of AIG, said that even unpaid maternity leave ‘involved significant costs for employers, including the costs of recruiting and training replacement staff during the period of leave’ and that ‘any extension of entitlements could be the straw that breaks the camel’s back’ (Herbert, 2001).

The concern with costs was especially evident in relation to small business. Noosa Chamber of Commerce president Val Smart said that paid maternity leave was ‘just another burden for small business’, (Carew, 2001). Sally O’Keeffe, a small business advisor voiced the view that ‘introducing compulsory paid maternity leave would be a mistake because the vast majority of Australian enterprises are small businesses’ (Southam, 2001). Brack agreed that most Australian businesses were small, and that paid maternity leave would add significantly to their labour costs and hence diminish their competitiveness (Brack, 2001a).

It was often not paid maternity leave as such that employers objected to, but any requirement that they should be *obliged* to fund it. ACCI chief executive Mark Paterson said the ACU provision could be a precedent for other businesses as long as it ‘is guided by the priorities that those businesses and employees establish for themselves as part of their bargaining process’ (MacDonald, 2001). Bob Herbert pointed out that government-funded social insurance programs were the usual way of providing for paid maternity leave entitlements (Herbert, 2001). And former sex discrimination commissioner, Susan Halliday, said that public funding ‘had significant industry support’ (Halliday, 2001).

The president of the Hervey Bay CCI, Stephen Dixon, implied that the ACU had used public funds to pay for its maternity leave provision. He ‘wondered if the university would have had the same attitude if it had been a private enterprise employer having to use its own money’ (Martin, 2001); while a writer in *The Australian* questioned the progressive nature of the provision, saying that the ACU was ‘largely using taxpayers’ money’ (Shanahan, 2001). SMH columnist, P. P. McGuinness, asked rhetorically: ‘Where is the money coming from? The ACU is not funded by the government for this change of employment and pay policy’ (McGuinness, 2001).¹³

Other criticisms were that it was ‘too generous’, that it was discriminatory and unfair, that it benefited only already privileged women, that it was a diversion from the real issues, and that pregnancy was a personal decision and therefore not the responsibility

¹³ The attribution of sinister motives is not surprising coming from McGuinness whose comments were, in VC Sheehan’s words, ‘defamatory, discriminatory, demeaning and incorrect’ (Sheehan, 2001a).

of employers. Three writers mentioned fathers. ‘And in the spirit of true anti-discrimination’, said one, ‘if a mother is entitled to a year’s paid maternity leave, shouldn’t the father also be entitled to the same?’ (Green, 2001a. See also: Leggatt, 2001; Stewart, 2001).¹⁴

Paid maternity leave was also criticised for being of no benefit to unemployed mothers, those who didn’t want children or who had already had their families, who could only watch ‘the taxpayer-subsidised mothers move out of sight up the ladder’ (Corbett, 2001).

For a number of writers the unfairness of paid maternity leave stemmed from the fact that, as they saw it, it tended to benefit relatively privileged women. A letter writer to *The Australian* asked: ‘Isn’t it the case that the biggest winners from this latest decision will be those women with the highest salaries?’ (Dolphin, 2001)

Some people believed that having a baby was a private decision and that, therefore, the costs ought to be borne by the person having the baby, and not by the employer or the public at large. Lyn Dahl, a spokesperson for the Fraser Coast Zonta Club, an organisation of business executives, said that ‘Pregnancy was the woman’s choice’. Any woman having a child, she said, ‘should be prepared to resign her employment’ and ‘join the job queues like anyone else’.

Many employers were against the provision because they thought that it might set a precedent. Over and over again, employers and their representatives were quoted arguing against any extension of the ACU provision to other workplaces: ‘the university agreement should not be seen as a template for similar deals’; ‘it’s not something that you can apply across the board’; and ‘most traditional industries are a long way from paying 12 weeks’ maternity leave, let alone a year’; and that the ACU provision ‘did not set a precedent’.¹⁵

Senior management at the ACU consistently denied that there was any intention to set a precedent. Both the VC and the executive director of services, John Cameron, were quoted saying they did not intend to pressure other universities or businesses into introducing it (Bates, 2001; Birch, 2001; *Border Mail*, 2001b; *Canberra Times*, 2001a; *Gladstone Observer*, 2001b; Sheehan, 2001b). The VC admitted there would be pressure on others to follow suit because of ‘the media interest in it and the importance of it being a first’, but that was not one of the reasons for embarking on it (Madden, 2001a; Mossop, 2001; Carmody, 2001). He was aware that it wouldn’t ‘be possible for many employers, especially small businesses, to introduce such

¹⁴ Stewart, 2001, which was wholly negative, was reproduced in *Today*, an electronic journal of the International Child and Youth Care Network

<http://www.cyc-net.org/today/today010817.html>

¹⁵ Quotations taken from the following sources: Gettler, Douez and Dunn, 2001; Allard and Glendinning, 2001; Milburn, 2001b; MacDonald, 2001; Hannon, 2001a; Hannon, 2001b; Field, 2001; Molloy, 2001; ABC/AM, 2001b; *Bendigo Advertiser*, 2001a; *Border Mail*, 2001a; Haley, 2001; Hannon, 2001c; Brady, 2001; *Morning Bulletin*, 2001; Lees, 2001; *Canberra Times*, 2001a; Lees, 2001; Sewell, 2001; Hill, A., 2001; *Australian Homepage*, 2001; *Gnowangerup Star*, 2001.

provisions' (*Catholic Leader*, 2002b), and was quoted saying that any provisions introduced had to be 'affordable', and that the ACU's 'generous leave arrangements would be unlikely to be repeated' because of 'the philosophy behind the decision' (O'Dwyer, 2002a).

Most of the unions were not overly optimistic that the ACU provision would start a trend either. 'But trade union doesn't expect many employers to follow', was the sub-heading of one article, which went on to quote Sharan Burrow saying that 'Unions do not expect all employers to be able to meet the same standards' (Molloy, 2001). The *Canberra Times* called the ACTU's reaction 'the most pleasing' of all the responses to the ACU's announcement because it 'refused to allow itself to get carried away by the university's benevolence', preferring instead to focus on a campaign for 14 weeks' paid leave in line with the ILO standard (*Canberra Times*, 2001a).

3.5 Why paid maternity leave is needed

The most common reason given for introducing a universal scheme of paid maternity leave was that it would help to improve Australia's birth rate. Thus, Susan Halliday argued that: 'With fertility continuing to drop, paid maternity leave for many women, their families and the community is a necessity if we want women, irrespective of their economic or cultural background, to continue to have children' (Halliday, 2001).

Sally Moyle said the Sex Discrimination Unit of HREOC didn't disagree about the importance of fertility levels, if only because of the interest shown by 'politicians, the media and the public'. At the same time, she argued, that was not the main reason for the Unit's concern with paid maternity leave. It was 'an industrial entitlement', not a question of women's reproductive ability, 'a "womb gazing" debate', she said. It was about overt discrimination against pregnant and lactating women, and about changing the workplace 'to create an environment that welcomes women as we are' (Moyle, 2002).

Another argument in favour of paid maternity leave was that it was a good thing not only for mothers, but also for fathers. It was good for both mothers and fathers because it offered a 'helping hand, and the breathing space, they all need at the start of a dramatic new phase in their lives' (Williams, 2001). It was good for babies because it allowed the mothers to be with them full-time during the first year of the baby's life. Given that this is 'a significant period for growth and development' (Wills, 2001). And because it was good for mothers, fathers and babies, it was also good for families.

It was also good for society. Thus, 'If we continue to devalue their efforts, we will surely erode the foundations of what we used to know as family values (Bartlett, 2001). VC Sheehan agreed, saying that 'raising the next generation of children is one of the most important tasks facing our society, with benefits for all in the community regardless of whether they have children or not' (*Catholic Leader*, 2002b; *Catholic Weekly*, 2002). It was also good for society because, as Sunshine Coast University gender issues lecturer, Hurriyet Babacan, pointed out, if parents don't spend enough time with their children, 'it is society that ends up paying – whether it be difficulties in schooling, dysfunctional relationships and anti-social behaviour' (Green, 2001b).

Despite the fact that employers and their representatives, by and large, condemned any general introduction of paid maternity leave, there were a number of commentators who argued that it was good for business. Another writer said that family-friendly companies ‘nearly always prosper, not least because they attract the pick of the talent available’ (Williams, 2001). ‘Employers agree to paid maternity leave for good reasons’, said another. ‘It improves staff retention rates, creates goodwill, cuts training costs and makes them a more attractive employer’ (McEwen, 2001).

Finally, it was argued, Australia needed to introduce paid maternity leave because it was an anomaly among developed countries in having no national mandated scheme of paid maternity leave (NTEU, nd). ‘More than 120 countries’, said one commentator, ‘have legislated that women have to receive paid maternity leave and health benefits, either via their employers or the social security system. Australia is way out in the freezing cold’ (Williams, 2001).

3.6 The question of cost

The question of how much paid maternity leave might cost, even a provision as generous as the ACU’s, was not quite as cut and dried as many of the commentators made out. VC Sheehan was reported saying that ‘the leave would be expensive’ but that it was worth it because it was ‘for the benefit of staff’ (Hannon, 2001a; Hannon, 2001b). But the general tenor of the reported opinion was that it would not be expensive at all. John Cameron said the university had estimated it would cost around \$200,000 a year, or about 0.4 per cent of their current payroll, even if the number of women who took maternity leave in any one year (i.e. six) were to double. That cost was expected to increase only slightly when the agreement flowed on to academic staff.¹⁶

Eleven months later, and eight months after the provision was extended to academic staff, Cameron said the ACU hadn’t found any great change in the numbers of women taking maternity leave (ABC/PM, 2002). By the end of July 2003, 12 women in total had taken the leave. With a female staff of just under 550 women, that means that the proportion of female staff taking the leave to that date was just over two per cent, or around one per cent a year (Personal communication, John Barclay, Director, Personnel Relations Directorate, ACU – 30.7.2003).

There is some support from other sources for the view that paid maternity leave would not be costly. It was pointed out that only about 1 per cent of workers had a baby in any one year, and that the chances of those workers being employed by a small business were very low (Horin, 2001; *Daily Advertiser*, 2001c). A letter writer to the SMH said that paid maternity leave was ‘hardly a recipe for the financial ruin of business’, given that only 2 per cent of the female workforce were on maternity leave at any one time. She referred to the reaction to the ACU’s announcement as ‘vitriolic’, and called for ‘a balanced, realistic look at the facts on paid maternity leave’ (Connolly, 2001).

¹⁶ The estimate was based on a cost of around \$25,000 per worker, although that did not include the cost of a replacement (ABC/Lateline, 2001a; Horin, 2001; Fyfe, 2001; Lipari, 2001; McManus, 2002; O’Neill, 2001; *Studentcentral*, 2001; *WorkplaceInfo*, 2001b).

Other commentators pointed to the benefits that paid maternity leave could bring to business. Queensland Nurses Union Mackay Base Hospital branch president, Sheryn Petersen, said it could ‘help attract and retain staff’, and thus cut the costs of recruitment and training (Kelly, 2001). Carmen Lawrence said it showed what could happen when ‘an organisation thinks through the consequences for them of losing talented and skilled staff’ (*Kalgoorlie Miner*, 2001). Others argued that the provision would probably save the ACU money ‘in the long-run’ when it was ‘offset against the cost of recruiting and training new staff’ (Elson-Green, 2001).

Ann Sherry, Westpac human resources executive and a former head of the Office of the Status of Women, said that her organisation had already found that paid maternity leave saved money. It had cost Westpac about a year’s salary to replace each of the women who did not return to work after maternity leave, ‘taking into account the cost of recruitment, training and the lower productivity of new workers’. After the bank had introduced six weeks’ maternity leave on full pay in 1995, the return rate went up by 30 per cent (Steketee, 2001b; Gettler, Douez and Dunn, 2001; *WorkplaceInfo*, 2001b).

3.7 Who pays? – A central issue

The question of who pays for maternity leave was widely discussed. According to demographer Professor Peter McDonald, it ‘was the central issue’ (Horin, 2001); while Carmen Lawrence said that whether maternity leave was funded by employers or taxpayers, and what exemptions were provided for small firms, were key issues (Allard and Glendinning, 2001). There was general agreement that employers should not have to carry the whole cost. Citing the two most common arguments against paid maternity leave, a writer in the AFR said, ‘Foisting the cost on individual employers would hurt many smaller businesses and make some reluctant to hire women’ (Long, 2001b).

Pru Goward said it was ‘unrealistic to expect employers to foot the entire bill’ (*Shepparton News*, 2002); while Natasha Stott Despoja said that businesses with fewer than nine employees ‘simply cannot afford to pay’ (Despoja, 2001). Professor McDonald agreed that business, especially small business, ‘should not be expected to shoulder the burden’. Prime Minister, John Howard, was quoted as saying that he: ‘would not endorse legislation obliging employers to provide paid maternity leave’ (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2001a); and it was pointed out that the ILO convention itself warned against making employers directly liable for the costs of parental leave (Field, 2001; *Age*, 2002).

Instead, following the presumption that child provided some benefit to all, it was suggested that paying for maternity leave was a community responsibility. ACCI chief executive, Mark Paterson, also said that if it was seen as ‘a social obligation’, then ‘it should be borne socially’ (Hannon, 2001c). A letter writer to the SMH said ‘the cost should be spread over the community’ because ‘increasing the birth-rate is a community matter’. Another writer said that being serious about reconciling work and family responsibilities required ‘a community solution’, and that meant ‘a legislative solution that applies the same rules, the same deal to everyone’ (McEwen, 2001).

3.8 Impact of the Decision on Institutions

Reported impact on other universities¹⁷

The most positive response from another university to the ACU provision came from University of Canberra VC, Professor Don Aitkin, who said he believed universities didn't need to be 'fearful of the ACU offer' because it wouldn't be expensive nor 'lead to a rash of pregnancies'. He saw it as a progressive step. 'Anything that makes it easier for women to make the choice to have babies is a good thing', he said (MacDonald, 2001).

Others were not quite so positive, but neither did they reject the ACU provision outright. Officials at Central Queensland University didn't 'rule out future discussions', although the issue wouldn't come up for some time, they said, since they had just signed off on the current EBA (Brady, 2001). Both the Deputy VC of the University of Western Australia, Alan Robson, and Curtin University general manager of student and staff services, Jane den Hollander, said that the current arrangements at their universities – 12 weeks' paid leave – could be expanded or renegotiated, although that would depend on 'what our staff wanted', according to Robson (Wilson-Clark, 2001). Murdoch University director of human resources, Chris Jeffrey, said that it would 'raise the stakes for attracting staff' (Wilson-Clark, 2001); while Bond University was waiting to see if it became a norm, according to its Registrar, Alan Finch, in which case they would 'look carefully into it' (*Gold Coast Bulletin*, 2001b).

The Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee CEO, John Mullarvey, was widely quoted saying that, although the provision gave the ACU 'a competitive edge in recruiting staff', that didn't 'mean that it will be a strategy that will be or can be adopted by others' (Bachelard, 2001a; *Advertiser*, 2001a; Hannon, 2001a; Hannon, 2001b; Madden, 2001a). The employee relations manager at Charles Sturt University, Mr Craig Clarke, agreed. He said that, although the ACU decision 'would rebound on the tertiary sector', it applied only to the ACU and didn't set a precedent (Bunn, 2001).

Impact on the union movement – 'the ACU standard'.

The response of the unions was uniformly positive, although the ACTU did not expect a year's paid maternity leave to become general throughout the workforce. ACTU president, Sharan Burrow, called the provision 'magnificent' and congratulated the ACU for showing how much they valued their employees and for recognising 'the responsibility of parents in rearing children' (Norington, 2001a; Norington, 2001b). She hailed it as 'an amazing breakthrough for Australian women' and for workplace relations more generally (ABC/AM, 2001a; *Bendigo Advertiser*, 2001a; *Border Mail*, 2001a), especially in light of the fact that 70 per cent of Australian women had no paid maternity leave at all (Lipari, 2001).

Most union representatives seemed to think the ACU provision set a precedent for other enterprises (Phillips, 2001b; *Bulletin*, 2001; Labor Council of New South Wales,

¹⁷ It should be noted that this section relates only to the impact over the period covered by the report and does not therefore include any effects that occurred later.

2001). The Independent Education Union (IEU) adopted a resolution at its 2001 Women's Conference calling on the IEU Council 'to endorse, in principle, a claim for twelve months paid maternity leave, in line with the decision of the Australian Catholic University' (IEU, 2001).

The Tasmanian secretary of the CPSU, Sue Strugnell, said that the ACU provision was 'a benchmark [that] could not be ignored' (*Examiner*, 2001). Queensland Council of Unions secretary, Grace Grace, was reported to say that it was a 'precedent' and that workers would be seeking to have it included in future claims. Nine months later, however, she was conceding that it was probably unrealistic to expect other employers to take up the ACU provision, given that unions were finding it difficult to get any paid maternity leave at all (O'Dwyer, 2002a).

NTEU president, Carolyn Allport, was reported to say that most universities should consider 'extending leave provisions in a way similar to what the ACU has done', and that the union would be 'moving towards that in the next round of enterprise bargaining' (Lipari, 2001). In an article in *Frontline*, the union's national women's journal, she made explicit acknowledgement of the influence of the ACU provision, referring to 'the ACU standard'. The NTEU submission to the HREOC inquiry into paid maternity leave reiterated this position, referring to 'the standard achieved at the Australian Catholic University' (NTEU, 2002. See also: Tattam, 2002).

Impact on the federal government and the political parties

The Minister for Family and Community Services at the time, Senator Amanda Vanstone, claimed that her government was 'the most family-friendly government in Australia's history' (*Daily Telegraph*, 2001). In contrast, the Howard government had been widely portrayed in the media as having 'done almost nothing to encourage family-friendly workplaces' (*Australian*, 2001).

And yet, Prime Minister John Howard, was highly complimentary about the ACU provision. He congratulated the ACU (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2001a) and said, 'It's quite a breakthrough' (Allard and Glendinning, 2001). He said paid maternity leave was 'a very good idea' where it could be afforded, and that he didn't think there would be anyone who argued against its desirability (Grattan, 2001).

The seeming contradiction between the Prime Minister's approval of the ACU provision and his government's perceived disapproval is open to further comment. It can be argued that he approved of the ACU provision because it was reached by way of the enterprise bargaining process. This is consistent with his view that: 'forcing firms to pay maternity leave regardless of whether they could afford it would drive up unemployment' (Emphasis added; Grattan, 2001; Lumby, 2001; *Australian Business News*, 2001; Kairos, 2002; Cazzulino and Murray, 2002).

This view is consistent with the response to a Question Without Notice in the Senate by Senator Amanda Vanstone, who agreed that the ACU provision was entirely compatible with the Howard government's position on paid maternity leave. She mentioned the ACU in the context of a statement about the appropriateness of the Workplace Relations Act for 'negotiating paid maternity leave arrangements in the work force', saying she was 'sure that the work force there are very happy about' what the ACU had done in relation to maternity leave (Hansard, 2001).

The government's position on paid maternity leave was clearly outlined by Tony Abbott, the Workplace Relations Minister, who argued that it 'was best left to enterprise bargaining' (Bachelard, 2001a). He was not embarrassed, it was reported, by any comparison between Australia and the rest of the world because 'the "full range of benefits for mothers and children" adequately covered their needs' (Bachelard, 2001a).

The Labor politician most frequently quoted in the media in relation to the ACU provision was Labor's spokeswoman for the status of women, Dr Carmen Lawrence. In an interview in *The Australian*, she said it was 'scandalous that we are alone in the world on this issue' (Bachelard, 2001a). She did not believe, however, that the provision set a precedent. She 'stopped short of recommending employers offer 12 months' paid leave', it was reported, 'saying most people would see three months as more appropriate' (*Kalgoorlie Miner*, 2001; Mossop, 2001; Phillips and Edmonds, 2001).

Labor's Industrial Relations Spokesman, Arch Bevis, made no commitment about legislation, referring instead to the 'baby bonus' introduced under the Keating Labor government. He did say there was a 'business case' for paid maternity leave, and recommended other employers to adopt it. Tanya Plibersek, Labor member for Sydney, extolled the benefits for business of paid maternity leave, in terms of the savings gained from decreased turnover and recruitment costs, and told the IEU Women's Conference that the Labor party was 'committed to universal paid maternity leave'. This would be government-funded, either wholly or in part, she said, because 'small businesses cannot afford to pay this on their own' (Plibersek, 2001).

Overall, the ALP 'heralded the ACU deal' (MacDonald, 2001) and 'welcomed it as an advance for working women'. In April 2002, ALP Leader, Simon Crean, announced that 'a Labor government would introduce paid maternity leave for all women', while his Deputy, Jenny Macklin, said that the proposal was to introduce six weeks' maternity leave 'paid for by taxpayers and big business' would be 'only a starting point' (*Catholic Leader*, 2002b; Dodson, 2002).

The Australian Democrats were reported to be in favour of paid maternity leave (Dodson, 2002; Hannon, 2001a; Hannon, 2001b; Hill, J., 2001). This is hardly surprising, since Leader at the time, Senator Natasha Stott Despoja, introduced the *Workplace Relations Amendment (Paid Maternity Leave) Bill* in the Australian Parliament early in 2002 (O'Neill and Shepherd, 2002). She saw the ACU provision as generous and she was concerned about the effects on women's employment opportunities if employers were made to pay for maternity leave. She was also concerned about the fact that the present system benefited only relatively privileged women. Her preferred option for funding was by government - perhaps through the family tax benefit, although she also mentioned an insurance scheme similar to superannuation (Despoja, 2001: 2002a).

3.9 Conclusion

There can be no doubt that the ACU's paid maternity leave provision struck a chord with the Australian media. Its announcement led to a flurry of media activity, with nearly 150 articles (including radio programs and letters to the editor) published in the first four days following the announcement. The debate it generated was extensive

and wide-ranging, covering every conceivable aspect of the issue, and every conceivable position that might be taken on it.

The provision was welcomed in many quarters and by a wide spectrum of social groups, including unions, first-time mothers, women's groups, ACU staff themselves and the female workforce in general. Among the political parties, many of the reactions were full of praise for the ACU's generosity and consideration for the stresses women undergo in trying to juggle work and family.

But the provisions also attracted a large amount of criticism, for a variety of reasons. The question of why there should have been such widespread opposition to the ACU provision, despite the many highly approving responses, is an interesting one. It is best answered by looking at the principal objections that were raised, that is, the adverse effects on women's employment and the cost to business. In fact, these two explanations are related, since the adverse effect on women's employment opportunities is a consequence of the cost impact. It follows that the primary reason why the ACU provision was so unpopular, at least as reported by the media, was its alleged effect on the cost of doing business. This was also seen as a threat to women's interests in gaining employment, but it was the threat to business interests that drove the debate.

Associate Professor Wendy Weeks had another explanation. She said the opposition to the ACU's paid maternity leave provision 'reflected the extent to which child bearing and the rights of infants and mothers are poorly supported' in society (Weeks, 2001). Thus, whereas the media emphasised the interests of businesses, Weeks' explanation emphasised those of mothers and infants.

Together, the two explanations highlight the fact that what is involved is the issue of work/family balance. Workplaces are generally not family-friendly organisations, and families, especially with young children, are not efficient and productive in a narrow economic sense. The issue of paid maternity leave, along with other work/family initiatives are attempts to bridge this gap.

4 Interviews with Key Opinion Leaders

4.1 Methods

The document analysis described in Section 3 was supplemented by a series of semi-structured interviews with key individuals (hereafter the interviewees). A ‘snowball’ technique was used to identify interviewees, whereby the interviewer sought out referrals from identified subjects to other potential contacts.¹⁸ Interviewees were asked to say what they knew about the ACU provision, how they had come to hear about it, whether it had had any influence on their organisations’ policies, and whether or not it had influenced their own thinking on paid maternity leave. The interviews were recorded and analysed using content analysis to measure the salience of different aspects of the impact of the ACU provision.

The seventeen people who were interviewed, together with their organisations and their positions within the organisation are listed in Appendix B.¹⁹ They include ACU staff and management, unionists, representatives of peak employer organisations, public servants and one journalist. Nine other people were also contacted, including three unionists, one journalist, one public servant and four employer representatives, but they failed to respond to requests for an interview.

4.2 Main themes: Evaluating the ACU provision

Most interviewees were very positive about the ACU’s paid maternity leave provision. Adele Horin said she thought it was ‘fantastic’ and that she could remember thinking at the time ‘Good on them’, and that ‘it was a terrific thing’.²⁰ Not all respondents voiced their approval so directly, but it was one of the unspoken assumptions running through the interviews. Those who were not altogether favourably disposed tended to be neutral rather than overtly critical. Concerns raised included that it did not go far enough, or that it had given rise to unforeseen problems that would need to be addressed in subsequent initiatives.

The informants who were most enthusiastic about the provision came from the unions. Jo Tilly from the PSA/CPSU said that it was by far the best paid maternity leave provision in the country ‘in terms of the quantum of leave offered’. Carolyn Allport of the NTEU called it ‘a very significant public statement’, Cath Bowtell of the ACTU said ‘it was great in terms of attracting attention to the issue’, and because it showed ‘what a good employer is capable of’.

She said that she had attended a Work/Life Association seminar where someone from ACU management had talked about the university’s reasons for introducing the provision. She reported that he had said ‘it’s about long-term investment in skills and

¹⁸ This hierarchy of influential informants also serves as a measure of the impact of the ACU maternity leave provision, in so far as these opinion leaders were influenced by news of the ACU decision.

¹⁹ The interviewees agreed to allow the researchers to identify them in this report.

²⁰ Adele Horin is a journalist with the SMH. She was assigned to cover the press conference at the McKillop campus at North Sydney on 15 August, and wrote one of the articles that appeared in that newspaper (Horin, 2001).

people, all the things that we know should be what's driving good employers'. She said it was 'just fabulous to have an employer stand up and say why they did it'.

Amanda Watkinson, an academic staff member at ACU and herself on maternity leave, was even more enthusiastic. 'I can tell you it's been brilliant to have the option', she said, 'absolutely brilliant'. She said she had intended to come back to work anyway when the baby was born, but the 12 months pay allowed the time to look for childcare and meant her baby was a little older when she had to go back to work.

Very few informants had any criticism of the provision. Michael Sheehan, from Business SA, mentioned the cost to employers of paid maternity leave, and his organisation's view that employers shouldn't have to bear that cost. But he also felt that paid maternity leave was an issue governments would have to address 'one way or the other'.

Adele Horin mentioned the cost in the context of the federal government's attitude towards paid maternity leave. 'The main concern of the government', she said, 'is that private enterprise, small business, would find paid maternity leave too costly'. She agreed that that was 'probably true for a lot of small businesses', but felt that universities were 'in a slightly different position'.

Peter Anderson, Director of Workplace Policy ACCI, mentioned what he referred to as 'the atmospherics' that have flowed on from the ACU's Agreement, as well as from those of other 'high profile' employers. He said that the ACU initiative was not of particular concern for his organisation because it was 'employer-specific' and 'the employer community is generally experienced enough with the bargaining system to recognise that what is agreed in one business is not necessarily appropriate in another'.

They have also had to deal with the advocacy for 'a universal system of paid maternity leave'. But he didn't hold ACU responsible for that. It was he said, 'a consequence of the profile and the publicity' the move attracted. He believed that ACU management had been reasonable in the way they had handled the issue. 'They haven't gone out there and proclaimed that what they've done is desirable for other businesses to do', he said. 'They've dealt with it at a corporate level ... and I think they should be recognised for having done so'.

John Barclay, Director of the Personnel Relations Directorate at ACU, said that some people saw the ACU provision as 'yet another example of a conspiracy to encourage birth'. He said that others had also expressed concern, largely because of the implications for the Catholic school sector, which employed large numbers of women of childbearing age. There was also a conservative Christian group whose members had rung to complain about the provision.

Tim O'Hearn, Dean of Students at ACU, also mentioned that sections of the Catholic community who were unhappy about the provision, although their reactions were based on misapprehensions about the nature of its funding and about the ACU management's motives. He was doing quite a bit of fund-raising at the time, he said, and he got more than one reply saying, 'We're not going to give you any money. You're obviously wealthy enough not to need it'. He said that 'very few within the

Catholic network seemed to understand that it had a set of values attached to it, and that we considered them important’.

Anne Bardoel said that, although it was ‘absolutely fantastic’, she said that one part of her ‘absolutely applauds an organisation that decides to support paid maternity leave and put its money where its mouth is’. Because the ACU is a Catholic university and has a ‘religious affiliation’ and ‘thinks about things from a broader social community perspective anyway’, the paid maternity leave provision was entirely appropriate, she felt.

On the other hand, she pointed out that ‘the people who were actually arguing for the change in policy weren’t arguing that you should necessarily follow the ACU model’. Pru Goward, for example, ‘was never advocating a model where individual organisations should fund it’. But it still elicited responses like ‘This is a cost that small business couldn’t possibly afford’. She thought it was probably the timing more than anything else, but it still confused ‘those who weren’t particularly informed, or didn’t want to be informed’.

As noted above, very few respondents mentioned the cost to business. Most of those who did tended either to refer to it as an issue they did not necessarily agree with (Amanda Watkinson, Anne Bardoel, Adele Horin), or to point out that the cost was not as great as was usually feared. Adele Horin said she had been fascinated when she heard that ACU management ‘had worked the economics out’ and come to the conclusion that it wouldn’t be ‘a particularly costly measure’, in contrast to what business representatives usually believed.

The representatives of employer peak organisations tended to regard paid maternity leave as inevitable in one form or another. Dick Grozier, Manager Workplace Policy at Australian Business Limited (ABL) and Director of Industrial Relations at Australian Business Industrial (ABI) said that ABI had made a submission to the HREOC inquiry, and had also done research among their members and written to the Prime Minister about it.²¹ He thought that the ABI Council’s thinking was that it was appropriate for employers who saw a reason to provide either paid maternity leave or additional paid maternity leave to have the freedom to do so with their own employees’. He felt the ACU provision hadn’t had a great deal of influence on Council thinking on the matter because ‘they were already in that area of thinking anyway’.

Peter Anderson also acknowledged that the ACU initiative had ‘meant that the employer community generally have had to look more closely within themselves in terms of understanding and responding to the issues’. But he also felt that that would have happened anyway, ‘with or without the ACU Agreement’.

²¹ ABI is the registered industrial relations affiliate of ABL and is responsible for ABL’s Workplace Policy and Industrial Relations matters. It is recognised as a Peak Council of Employers in NSW in accordance with section 216 of the *Industrial Relations Act 1996*. Members of ABL can also be members of ABI.

4.3 Situating paid maternity leave within the family-friendly context

Interviewees from both the ACU and the unions were quite clear that paid maternity leave was only one aspect of the broader issue of balancing work and family. Amanda Watkinson (who was on maternity leave from the ACU) felt that the ACU initiative was more successful than the HREOC report in placing the issue of paid maternity leave within the context of family more generally. She found the HREOC report disappointing because it was so narrowly focused on women, whereas the ACU provision emerged from of ‘the principle of being committed to family’ and the discussion didn’t focus solely on women.

Ruth Webber, one of three staff representatives on the University Senate saw the maternity leave provision as a first step towards making academic life family-friendly. Frank Young, Manager of Employee Relations and Workforce Management, pointed out that while the media focused only on one dimension of the whole EBA package, management ‘had focused on the broader package of parental leave provisions’. They had expanded the maternity leave dimension, but they had also introduced other provisions (e.g. extended paternity leave) that were designed to give staff ‘a lot more flexibility to address their life circumstances’, while ‘trying to be more supportive of staff in tangible ways that didn’t just mean dollars in pockets’.

Cath Bowtell of the ACTU agreed that it was ‘a bit of a shame’ that the 52 weeks paid maternity leave got so much attention, ‘and not some of the other things the ACU did at the same time, because they did a range of things around work and family of which paid maternity leave was one’. In contrast, Carolyn Allport felt the connections between paid maternity leave and the broader work/family balance still had to be made. ‘There’s a missing link’, she said, in that maternity leave was ‘still structured very specifically to address issues of reproductive labour’.

4.4 Impact within the ACU

Family-friendly Catholic ethos

Interviewees from the ACU talked about the university’s family-friendly Catholic ethos and its influence on the decision about paid maternity leave. Ruth Webber said the University Senate ‘is very interested in maintaining traditional Catholic values and ethics, in terms of social justice, etc.’ As a consequence, they were ‘very sensitive’ about issues like ‘allowing women to take leave and not put their families under enormous pressure’.

Tim O’Hearn said the provision was intended ‘to try to reflect better the mission of the university’. It was a way of saying, ‘Well, staff are important, and if we don’t have the money, perhaps we can find other ways of making their working life better and getting a better balance for them in their total life’.

But it wasn’t only ACU staff who commented on the particular ethos at ACU. Anne Bardoel mentioned ‘the overall mission of an organisation like the Australian Catholic University’, stressing the fact that it was Catholic and hence had community ties and a broader perspective than most other employers. Cath Bowtell saw the Catholic family-oriented ethos as ‘conservative’, but at least the ACU had acted with determination. Many employers, she said, ‘would tell you that they thought the family

was the cornerstone of the society and the rest of it', but they were less likely to act on that belief.

The ACU's commitment to family-friendly values was queried by Judith Bessant, Director of the Social Policy and Advocacy Research Centre at ACU. She said that the intentions behind the maternity leave provision were undermined by other university policies, including the lack of childcare on any of the university's campuses. She said that, although the paid maternity leave provision was good because it gave some women choices, it needed to be seen in the context of these other policies.

Perceived Management and Staff Motivations Behind the Origins of the Maternity Leave Provisions

It was generally agreed among ACU interviewees that the 'Listening Program' referred to earlier gave rise to the idea of including a year's paid maternity leave in the next EBA. John Barclay, Director of the Personnel Relations Directorate said that he and the VC formulated the questions to ask staff: 'What is good about working at ACU?' 'What is not good about working at ACU?' and, 'What should we do in the next EB round? And what is important for that?'

In exploring the material later, it became apparent that 'one of the key themes that came out was the whole notion of work/life balance, family-friendly, a desire to have supportive conditions, not necessarily dollars'. A number of people had made it clear that 'they didn't consider the university had the finances for large pay rises', but that they would appreciate 'ways that could make their working and family life more tolerable'. People from a number of campuses had indicated that 'they weren't as interested in money as they were in looking for better conditions of work'.²²

John Barclay saw the VC's input and support as crucial. He said it was the VC, with 'his psychology and social science research background', who was instrumental in devising the three questions put to staff during the 'Listening Program'. He also found the VC 'to be very committed to what perhaps once would have been called women's issues that are perhaps now more called parental issues'.

Ruth Webber also saw the VC's role as central. She said she thought 'it was the VC as much as anything wanting to do something to indicate that ACU is family-friendly'. She said 'The university has been very interested in family studies issues and supporting families is a major push. I've been here 21 years and right through, that's been one of their high interest levels'.

The Public Profile and Reputation of ACU

A number of interviewees mentioned the good publicity the paid maternity leave provision had generated for ACU. Cath Bowtell said that, some years ago, 'the ACU probably wasn't on people's consciousness' but that now the provision had 'raised its

²² ACIRRT's database of Australian Enterprise Agreements was also searched in certain key areas for examples of clauses that fell into the principal areas that people had played with and that helped to point the way for some of the family issues.

profile'. She said the ACU 'probably doesn't only want to be known as the university with good maternity leave', that 'it probably wants to be known for the quality of its courses and its approach to teaching and learning and all those things'. But 'these corporate reputation things are important', she said, 'and good work and family policies are great for corporate reputations'.

Peter Anderson and Adele Horin also mentioned the good publicity. Anderson commented that 'it was an initiative which provided a substantial amount of public profile for the university as a employer'; while Horin said 'it was very good public relations at the time'. However, neither thought that it had had any lasting influence. Adele Horin thought it had had an effect on the public debate 'for a few days', while Peter Anderson (ACCI) thought that 'the effect on the ACU's public profile 'appears to have been its most lasting significance in the industrial relations debate'.

Ruth Webber also mentioned the publicity, specifically in the context of the advantages for staff. ACU staff, she said, 'feel they are disadvantaged in comparison to other universities in terms of other things, like our high teaching load and the lack of financial support they're able to give for research and conference leave, etc.' So the maternity leave provision 'indicates goodwill'. There might not be 'money to do everything', she said, 'but we really do want to care for our staff in the best way that we can and do something that we think is fundamentally just'.

As John Barclay saw it, ACU management thought it would probably be reported in the media, but all of them 'were a bit stunned at the dramatic impact that it had'. On the morning it was announced, he said, 'we were on the front page of both the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*', and he thought that was 'really quite remarkable'.

4.5 Impact on policy

The Government

In the case of federal government policy, informants tended on the whole to feel that the ACU provision had had no direct influence. Adele Horin pointed out that the provision was already in accordance with government policy. 'I'm sure the government would be in favour of businesses and universities and so on extending paid maternity leave', she said. It would 'get them off the government's back and show that paid maternity leave can be won through enterprise bargaining, which is what the government would like, enterprise by enterprise'.

Bruce Williams (spokesman Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry) thought the ACU provision had had little or no influence on government policy, but that 'the whole debate', and especially 'the Pru Goward report' were much more significant.

Nonetheless, there was general agreement that there had been some influence, if only at the level of those 'atmospherics'. Anne Bardoel thought that the provision had 'put it on the agenda' for the government, while Cath Bowtell pointed out that it was a legitimisation to have 'a large organisation come out and say, "Not only is this possible but we think it's good for us"'. Carolyn Allport thought that the fact that employers were not totally against the idea of paid maternity leave 'has been significant in shifting the government's approach to this issue, even though they have yet to come up with a policy'.

Susan Biggs (Deputy Director, EOWA) said there had been ‘a lot of debate within government about what should and shouldn’t be happening’, but that the government’s failure to act one way or the other had had an influence on employers’ decisions not to introduce paid maternity leave. ‘The government’s been speaking about it for a while now’, she said, ‘and people have been waiting to see what the government comes up with’.

Dick Grozier was puzzled at the government’s ‘apparent resistance to the idea of restructuring maternity benefits’. He said that ‘one of the underlying issues here is the extent to which you are trying to encourage an attachment to the labour force’. Government thinking had moved fairly quickly on this ‘in a variety of other areas’. ‘Whatever you might think of “work for the dole” and work whilst on disability pensions and the like’, he said, ‘underneath that thinking is the view that it is preferable that people are attached to the labour force’. And yet, such thinking hadn’t been applied in the case of ‘parenting, particularly maternity’. But if society is better off if the long-term unemployed and those with disabilities are ‘doing some work and getting work experience and not losing what work skills they have’, then ‘it’s difficult to see why that doesn’t also apply to women’.

The Australian Labor Party

Most interviewees felt that the influence of the ACU provision on the ALP had been minimal or non-existent. Amanda Watkinson didn’t think there’d been any at all. Neither did Cath Bowtell. She thought there were ‘a whole lot of things contributing to the politicisation of paid maternity leave’, including ‘the fact some of the bigger unions decided to make it a very important part of their bargaining claims’, Stott Despoja’s Private Member’s Bill and the Senate inquiry, ‘Pru’s inquiry’, all of these ‘put pressure on Labor’ and were ‘more influential than any individual Agreement, no matter how good it is’.

Carolyn Allport thought the ACU provision had had some influence. ‘The fact that an employer like the ACU came out with what it did come out with’, she said, ‘and the fact that Pru Goward became involved and became a convert just by listening to women, particularly about issues around pregnancy discrimination’, helped to shift ‘the ALP as well as the government’.

Other political parties and contexts

In terms of political influence more generally, informants tended to think the ACU provision had had an influence, although they stressed the fact that it would not have been the only one. Anne Bardoel pointed out that, nowadays, all political parties ‘mention the issue of family-friendly, work/family policy in their political platforms’, whereas even five years ago they ‘wouldn’t have included anything on it’. Cath Bowtell said it was the general ‘politicisation of paid maternity leave’ that influenced the political parties to come out in support of it, and ‘the ACU Agreement probably played a fairly small part in that’.

Anne Bardoel and Bruce Williams both mentioned state government initiatives in their respective states (Victoria and Western Australia) which may have been influenced, at least in part, by the ACU provision. Anne Bardoel said the Victorian Government had dropped the payroll tax on paid maternity leave. Whether or not that

was a result of the ACU initiative she didn't know, but she thought 'it would have been part of the mix'. Bruce Williams said the WA state government had announced that it 'was going to give public sector employees a limited form of paid maternity leave'. He felt that the ACU provision had had 'those sorts of impacts' by 'pushing the whole issue to the fore', and that it had 'become a key issue, certainly at a state level here, between the ALP and the union movement'.

Dick Grozier said it was 'difficult to escape the conclusion that the Democrats, the Greens and the ALP all think that community feeling is in favour of paid maternity leave, and they all have policies supporting that'. He thought the electorate's antagonism to paid maternity leave came from three sources.

There were the 'people in private sector companies which are not large and capital-intensive' who were worried about the cost to the company, a concern that he felt was 'not unreasonable'. Then there were those 'who feel we shouldn't be spending more money on social security'. The third source of antagonism came from 'traditional breadwinners' who viewed paid maternity leave either as irrelevant because 'these are things that they never get to see the benefit of', or as counterproductive because it 'potentially costs them benefits they might otherwise have'.

4.6 The impact on public debate

There was no unanimity among interviewees about the impact of the provision on the public debate. Amanda Watkinson said she didn't think there was a person she mentioned it to who hadn't heard about it 'as a consequence of the publicity around it when it was first agreed to'. For example, when she tells parents at her son's school that she's on maternity leave from the Australian Catholic University, 'it immediately starts up a conversation. People have heard about it, and want to know more about it and what it means'.

The union spokespeople also thought it had had a marked influence on public debate. Cath Bowtell thought that was because 'in some ways it was so far ahead of where the rest of the community was that it was seen as a bit odd'. Jo Tilly thought it had resulted in some 'major profile raising about paid maternity leave and the fact that it was affordable'.

Peter Anderson agreed that the provision had had a decided effect on the public debate, but he did not agree that that was necessarily a good thing. As discussed above, ACCI were concerned at the way in which the ACU Agreement 'became part of a broader atmospheric' than simply 'something which existed in a number of workplaces where there were specific corporate reasons why paid maternity leave was introduced'.

There were others who thought it had influenced the debate at the time the Agreement was announced, but that that influence had not been a lasting one. Anne Bardoel said that 'it certainly encouraged the debate', and that 'it was a very high profile thing that was picked up a lot, which did actually get people talking about it'. But now, she said, it had 'lost its momentum', and she thought the reason was 'political things on a broader, international political scene, such as the war in Iraq'.

Heather Ridout also felt the initial impact, though very significant at the time, was followed by a tailing off. She thought that 'when the announcement was made it got

quite a lot of press and it really put paid maternity leave very squarely again on the public agenda'. She also felt, however, that 'we've moved on since then' and that 'it hasn't been followed up particularly with anything'.

A number of informants made connections between the ACU provision and the work HREOC had been doing that same year, usually by referring by name to the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward. John Barclay said he suspected the ACU had 'walked into the middle of something that was almost at the boil', at the time when Pru Goward's initiative was starting to build up. 'I think we probably hit there', he said, 'and helped that ferment a little'. Jo Tilly made the same point, saying that Pru Goward had also been thinking about paid maternity leave at the time the ACU Agreement was announced, 'and thinking about where she was going to go with her report'.

Some of those who made the connection between HREOC and the ACU Agreement regarded Pru Goward's work as more influential. Bruce Williams thought that Pru Goward 'was very active in seeking media support for her to explain and promote her view', and so 'that became the more dominant issue'. In a similar vein, Anne Bardoel thought that Goward 'played a very significant part in the overall debate', and that 'she did a magnificent job of getting the publicity'.

Placing Australia within the international context

Some informants pointed out that one of the ways in which the ACU provision influenced the debate around paid maternity leave was to highlight how far out of step with the rest of the world Australia was. Amanda Watkinson said that 'people have become aware that in other Western nations there is maternity leave provision', and that they were not necessarily aware of that prior to the debate around the ACU initiative.

Cath Bowtell said that those concerned with paid maternity leave in Australia have always had the view that 'we couldn't possibly ask for world's best practice, we could only ask for something that just scrapes through ILO 183'. She felt that 'Pru Goward's report to some extent reflects this'. In contrast, she thought it was 'enormously influential in making people recognise that extended parental leave beyond the 12 months was not unusual in the rest of the OECD, and that continuing payment for the first 12 months of a baby's life was not outside the realm of possibility.

4.7 Impact on industrial relations

Although the provision was not a union initiative they welcomed it enthusiastically, as noted earlier. Jo Tilly (Women's Officer, PSA) 'found out as it happened' and that the union were normally 'so concentrated on getting the very minimum amount across, it was a bit beyond all our wildest dreams that this would actually come true'.

Her views are typical of the union movement's overwhelmingly favourable reaction to the ACU's paid maternity leave provision. She gave a number of reasons for this. The first involves the sheer size of the leave. 'It was such a major gain', she says, 'in terms of the quantum of leave offered'. Then there was the publicity value of the fact that it was agreed to by such a prestigious employer as the ACU. It was 'not only us saying it', she says, 'here's the person in charge of the best lot in the country saying,

“Well, no, it’s not going to break the bank””. She also approved of the provision because it revitalised the debate around paid maternity leave and placed it within an international context where it could be seen as not ‘such an outrageous ask’ after all.

Carolyn Allport said the NTEU was making the ACU standard ‘a core claim’. She said, ‘every branch has to claim it and every branch has to get an outcome. Cath Bowtell (ACTU) said the provision had influenced union campaigners to ‘re-think the minimum position that we’d been putting, and make sure we didn’t just look at the minimum position, but looked at an ideal position as well’. Michael Sheehan thought that an application by the Australian Workers’ Union in South Australia, to allow for the inclusion of paid maternity leave in a State award had been influenced by the media coverage, especially ‘Pru Goward’s comments’.

In contrast, Dick Grozier (Australian Business Limited) felt that the ACU provision had had very little effect on union thinking. Unions ‘hadn’t done terribly much thinking about maternity at all’. ‘Even today’, he said, ‘there are unions which are distinctly uncomfortable with the idea of part-time work’. In contrast Bruce Williams, Director of Employee Relations WA CCI, did not agree that paid maternity leave was not of interest to the union movement as a whole. In fact, he felt it had been on the union agenda ‘for a very long time’.

4.8 Conclusion

As already mentioned, most of the opinion leaders interviewed were very positive about the ACU’s paid maternity leave provision, and the most enthusiastic were the union spokespeople. Nonetheless, there was some criticism, although it took a different form from that which appeared in the media. There were few references to the cost to business, and none at all to the threat to women’s employment prospects.

Not surprisingly, attitudes towards the provision clearly depended on the interviewees’ institutional affiliation. While the representatives of employer organisations did not express any antagonism, they tended towards neutrality rather than approval. In contrast, the union spokespeople and ACU staff, together with the journalist and the public servant (both of whom have been working on women’s issues for many years), approved of the provision.

In terms of the provision’s influence on public policy, it is clear that it has had a major impact on the unions. All the union spokespeople stressed the effect the ACU provision had had on what could now be included in EBA negotiations. Employer representatives, on the other hand, tended to deny the wider significance of the provision, pointing out that it came about through the normal bargaining process and was a result of the particularities of the ACU as a workplace. Informants tended to agree, however, that it had had little or no influence either on federal government policy or on the political environment more generally.

5 Concluding Remarks

The material presented in this report confirm that the ACU paid maternity leave provision announced in August 2001 gave rise not only to a large number of media articles on its nature, rationale and consequences, but also generated a lively debate into the underlying issues – particularly those relating to its impact on employer-employee relations in the organisation and the best way to pay for it more generally.

Most of the themes identified in Section 3 as dominating the media coverage were taken up in more detail by those interviewed in Section 4, and similar differences of emphasis and opinion emerged in both Sections. Overall, the material reviewed here shows that the overwhelming tide of opinion about the ACU provision was positive, although the reasons cited as being important differed. Most supportive of the provisions were ACU employees, the unions and experts on work and family issues – including a number of prominent contributors to the public debate on these issues. Employers tended to be more cautious about its merits, expressing particular concern that the ACU decision does not become a precedent for others to follow automatically.

The federal government (at least the Prime Minister) appeared supportive, emphasising the importance of acknowledging that it was produced at the enterprise level as part of the bargaining process. There was less support from the government (and from the other major political parties) for a mandatory universal scheme, funded from tax revenue. The issue of cost did not emerge as a strong theme in the media coverage, or among those who were interviewed, but this would seem to be something that is worthy of further attention – in the context of a broader analysis of the scheme's costs *and* benefits.

Whether or not the ACU initiative has had any lasting effect on public debate about maternity leave and its role in achieving work-family balance is less clear. Many people thought that its impact on debate was predominantly short-term – possibly reflecting the media's initial response and the focus of much of its coverage. However, this assessment can be questioned by the evidence in this report, which illustrates how the maternity leave issue is central to several current policy challenges, including work-family issues, the tax burden, business costs and competitiveness and the determinants of fertility. The importance of these issues suggests that paid maternity leave will remain where it was located after the ACU announcement in August 2001 - at the forefront of public debate on a number of important intersecting issues.

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Appendix A: Background and Supporting Material

A.1 The media response

Table A1: The media response to the ACU's paid maternity leave initiative

Date	Media	Page nos	No. of articles*
15.8.2001	AAP	–	6
	ABC/AM	–	2
	ABC/Lateline	–	2
	<i>Age</i>	1	1
	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>	4	1
	Carmen Lawrence – press statement	–	–
	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	3	1
	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	1	1
	16.8.2001	AAP	–
ABC Radio 'Life Matters'		–	–
<i>Advertiser</i> (Adelaide)		7	1
<i>Age</i>		1, 2, 12, 13, 15	9
<i>Australian</i>		1, 2, 10, 11	6
<i>Australian Financial Review</i>		6	1
<i>Ballarat Courier</i>		3	1
<i>Bendigo Advertiser</i>		4	1
<i>Border Mail</i> (Albury-Wodonga)		2	1
<i>Cairns Post</i>		1	2
<i>Canberra Times</i>		3	2
<i>Chronicle</i> (Toowoomba)		4	1
<i>Courier Mail</i>		3, 16, 17	3
<i>Daily Advertiser</i> (Wagga Wagga)		5	1
<i>Daily Liberal</i> (Dubbo)		34	1
<i>Daily Mercury</i> (Mackay)		8	1
<i>Daily News</i> (Warwick)		4	1
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>		9	2
<i>Geelong Advertiser</i>		5	1
<i>Gladstone Observer</i>		10	1
<i>Gold Coast Bulletin</i>		3, 16	5
<i>Gympie Times</i>		6	1
<i>Herald Sun</i> (Melbourne)		15, 18	3
<i>Illawarra Mercury</i>		6	1
<i>Kalgoorlie Miner</i>		12	1
<i>Maitland Mercury</i>		21	1
<i>Mercury</i> (Hobart)		9, 19	2
<i>Morning Bulletin</i> (Rockhampton)		1, 6	2
<i>Newcastle Herald</i>		3, 8	4
<i>News-Mail</i> (Bundaberg)		10, 16	2
<i>Northern Territory News</i>		2, 19	2
<i>Sunshine Coast Daily</i> (Maroochydore)		13	1
<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>		1, 7, 12, 13	6
<i>Warrnambool Standard</i>		2	1
<i>West Australian</i>	1, 14	2	
17.8.2001	<i>Advertiser</i> (Adelaide)	16	1
	<i>Advocate</i> (Coffs Harbour)	1, 6	2
	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>	16	1
	<i>Ballarat Courier</i>	5	1
	<i>Bendigo Advertiser</i>	10	1
	<i>Border Mail</i> (Albury-Wodonga)	6	2
	<i>Canberra Times</i>	12	1
	<i>Chronicle</i> (Toowoomba)	3, 8	2

ACU Maternity Leave Provisions

Pages	Media	Page No.	No. of articles*
	<i>Colac Herald</i>	1	1
	<i>Courier Mail</i>	5, 14	3
	<i>Daily Advertiser</i> (Wagga Wagga)	4	1
	<i>Daily News</i> (Tweed Heads)	8	1
	<i>Examiner</i> (Tasmania)	8	1
	<i>Fraser Coast Chronicle</i> (Maryborough)	1, 6	3
	<i>Geelong Advertiser</i>	5	1
	<i>Gladstone Observer</i>	4, 12	2
	<i>Gold Coast Bulletin</i>	9, 11	2
	<i>Gympie Times</i>	6	1
	<i>Herald Sun</i> (Melbourne)	21, 23	2
	<i>Morning Bulletin</i> (Rockhampton)	2	1
	<i>Newcastle Herald</i>	8, 9	3
	<i>Northern Territory News</i>	9	1
	<i>Sunshine Coast Daily</i> (Maroochydore)	7, 14	3
	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	12, 13	11
	<i>Warrnambool Standard</i>	4	1
	<i>Wimmera Mail Times</i>	6	1
18.8.2001	<i>Age</i>	8, 9	3
	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>	20	1
	<i>Canberra Times</i>	2	1
	<i>Courier Mail</i>	22, 29	3
	<i>Daily Advertiser</i> (Wagga Wagga)	4	1
	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	23, 42	2
	<i>Gold Coast Bulletin</i>	56	1
	<i>Newcastle Herald</i>	26	1
	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	10, 32, 35	4
	<i>West Australian</i>	60	1
19.8.2001	<i>Sunday Mail</i> (Adelaide)	45	1
	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i> (Sydney)	87, 90	2
	<i>Sunday Times</i> (Perth)	15	1
	<i>Sun-Herald</i> (Sydney)	24, 28	2
20.8.2001	<i>Age</i>	14	1
	<i>Australian</i>	12	2
	<i>Canberra Times</i>	9	1
	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	13	2
21.8.2001	<i>Australian</i>	15	1
	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	13	1
	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	12	1
	<i>Wanneroo Times</i> (Perth)	29	1
22.8.2001	<i>Advertiser</i> (Adelaide)	18	1
	<i>Altona-Laverton Mail</i>	8	1
	<i>Australian</i>	33	1
	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>	55	1
	<i>Business News</i> (WA)	8	1
	<i>Campus Review</i>	3	1
	<i>Green Left Weekly</i>	–	1
	<i>North West News</i> (Chermside)	5	1
	<i>Herald Sun</i> (Melbourne)	24	1
24.8.2001	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	14	1
25.8.2001	<i>Hamilton Spectator</i>	9	1
	<i>Weekend Australian</i>	15	1
26.8.2001	<i>Catholic Weekly</i>	–	1
27.8.2001	<i>Herald Sun</i> (Melbourne)	16, 18	2
	<i>Sunshine Coast Daily</i> (Maroochydore)	16	1
28.8.2001	<i>Bulletin with Newsweek</i>	10	1
29.8.2001	<i>Illawarra Mercury</i>	21, 27	2

ACU Maternity Leave Provisions

Pages	Media	Page No.	No. of articles*
Sept. 2001	<i>Catholic Outlook</i>	3	1
1.9.2001	<i>Weekend Australian</i>	19	1
4.9.2001	<i>Bulletin with Newsweek</i>	45	1
	<i>Illawarra Mercury</i>	11	1
5.9.2001	<i>Australian</i>	13	1
6.9.2001	<i>Australian</i>	2	1
	<i>Gnowangerup Star</i>	3	1
8.9.2001	<i>Weekend Australian</i>	5	1
10.9.2001	<i>Advertiser</i> (Adelaide)	16	1
12.9.2001	<i>Minnesota Women's Press</i>	–	1
23.9.2001	<i>Sun-Herald</i> (Sydney)	29	1
27.9.2001	<i>Illawarra Mercury</i>	19	1
1.10.2001	<i>Australian Net Guide</i>	24	1
	<i>Practical Parenting</i>	13	1
7.10.2001	<i>Catholic Leader</i>	7	1
	<i>Melbourne Weekly</i>	14	1
10.10.2001	<i>Yass Tribune</i>	1	1
1.11.2001	<i>Australian Business News</i>	33	1
	<i>Illawarra Mercury</i>	10	1
	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	3	1
2.11.2001	<i>West Australian</i>	10	1
7.11.2001	<i>Campus Review</i>	3	1
	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	9	1
9.11.2001	ABC Radio 'Life Matters'	–	–
	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>	3	1
	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	3	1
21.11.2001	<i>Australian</i>	27	1
28.11.2001	<i>Australian</i>	39	1
Dec. 2001	<i>TMP Worldwide Newsletter</i>	4	1
6.12.2001	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	4	1
12.12.2001	<i>Campus Review</i>	9	2
23.12.2001	<i>Catholic Weekly</i>	–	1
26.12.2001	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	9	1
27.12.2001	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	3	1
	<i>West Australian</i>	7	1
28.12.2001	<i>Advertiser</i> (Adelaide)	4	1
	<i>Canberra Times</i>	4	1
	<i>Northern Star</i> (Lismore)	6	1
1.1.2002	<i>QHA Review</i>	12	1
Feb. 2002	<i>Winning Ways</i>	11	1
6.2.2002	<i>Australian</i>	3	1
11.2.2002	<i>Australian</i>	12	1
7.3.2002	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	13	1
8.3.2002	<i>Age</i>	2	1
28.3.2002	<i>Shepparton News</i>	4	1
10.4.2002	<i>Bulletin</i>	–	1
19.4.2002	<i>Age</i>	4	1
20.4.2002	<i>Age</i>	6	1
21.4.2002	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i> (Sydney)	80	1
28.4.2002	<i>Sun-Herald</i> (Sydney)	10	1
1.5.2002	<i>GEN</i> (Government News)	17	1
4.5.2002	<i>Canberra Times</i>	7	1
	<i>Courier Mail</i>	13	2
12.5.2002	<i>Catholic Leader</i>	1	1
18.4.2002	ABC/7:30 Report	–	–
19.5.2002	<i>Catholic Leader</i>	3	1
2.6.2002	<i>Catholic Weekly</i>	–	1

Pages	Media	Page No.	No. of articles*
5.6.2002	<i>Canberra Times</i>	11	1
15.7.2002	ABC/PM	–	–
19.7.2002	ABC/Business Breakfast	–	–
	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>	82	1
	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	25	1
23.7.2002	<i>Canberra Times</i>	11	1
24.7.2002	<i>Campus Review</i>	3	1
28.7.2002	<i>Catholic Weekly</i>	–	1
31.7.2002	<i>Australian</i>	42	1
2.8.2002	<i>Age</i>	13	1
18.8.2002	<i>Kairos</i>	12	1
1.9.2002	<i>Australian Mother and Baby</i>	61	1
9.9.2002	Industrial Relations Victoria	–	–
14.9.2002	<i>Western Advocate</i> (Bathurst)	13	1
	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	–	1
30.9.2002	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	4	1
7.10.2002	<i>Australian</i>	2	1
9.10.2002	ABC/2BL	–	–
	<i>Age</i>	8	1
6.12.2002	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>	63	1

* Articles include by-lined articles, editorials, ‘In Brief’ news notes, letters to the editor and cartoons in the print media, and programs or segments of programs on radio and TV.

A.2 Additional mentions

The following is a list of dates and sources when the ACU initiative was simply mentioned without further discussion:

- 18.8. ’01: When the ACU decision was first announced, in a regular feature called ‘Milestones of the week’, in the *West Australian*, p.60.
- 19.8. ’01: When the ACU decision was first announced, in a regular feature called ‘The week’ (*Sunday Telegraph*, 2001).
- 23.8. ’01: In a story about a teacher in a Catholic school who was taking action in the Equal Opportunity Commission to get back the job she had had before she went on maternity leave (Hodder, 2001).
- 25.8. ’01: In a general story about maternity leave (*Hamilton Spectator*, 2001).
- 25.8. ’01: In a discussion of Australia’s reservation to the paid maternity leave provision of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (Evatt, 2002: 10).
- 25-6.8. ’01: In an overview of ‘Australians at work 1901-2001: Snapshot – Getting there’ by Jonathan King, *The Australian* 25-6 August, p.15 (The author appears not to be aware that the ACU has a number of campuses, since he refers to ‘The Australian Catholic University in Canberra’).
- 1.9. ’01: In a discussion of the ageing population and the low birth rate – ‘the birth strike’ (Steketee, 2001a).
- 8.9. ’01: In a general discussion of paid maternity leave (Toomey, 2001).
- 23.9. ’01: When the clothing retail chain, Esprit, granted female employees 12 weeks’ maternity leave (O’Rourke, 2001).

- 27.9.'01: In a letter replying to criticism of his support for the ACU decision (Newman, 2001b).
- 1.10.'01: By *Practical Parenting*, on a page of notes and hints.
- 7.10.'01: In the first paragraph of a discussion and interview with Pru Goward about women's continuing lack of success in achieving top management positions (Jerums, 2001).
- 10.10.'01: When Yass Shire Council introduced nine weeks' paid maternity leave for staff (*Yass Tribune*, 2001).
- 16.10.'01: In a general discussion of paid maternity leave (National Property People, 2001).
- 1.11.'01: When local government employees were granted nine weeks' paid maternity leave by the NSW Industrial Relations Commission (Norington, 2001c; Norington, 2001d)
- 1.11.'01: In a general discussion of paid maternity leave (*Australian Business News*, 2001).
- 2.11.'01: On the release of the results of the TMP survey and the day after local government employees were granted nine weeks' paid maternity leave by the NSW Industrial Relations Commission (*West Australian*, 2001a).
- 7.11.'01: When Sydney City Council offered female staff 14 weeks' paid maternity leave (Skelsey, 2001).
- 9.11.'01: When the New Zealand government announced 'a taxpayer funded system granting 12 weeks PAID maternity leave to new mothers' (ABC/Life Matters, 2001b).
- 9.11.'01: The day before the 2001 federal election, and in response to the ACTU announcement of its campaign for paid maternity leave and local government employees being granted nine weeks' paid maternity leave by the NSW Industrial Relations Commission (Long, 2001c).
- 9.11.'01: In a story about the ACTU campaign for paid maternity leave for all working women in Australia (Downie, 2001).
- 21.11.'01: In the context of a tirade against family-friendly policies, with extensive quotes from *The Baby Boon: How Family-Friendly America Cheats the Childless* by Elinor Burkett. (The author gets the ACU policy wrong, referring to 'the Australian Catholic University's year on full pay') (Boase, 2001).
- *December*: In an article discussing paid maternity leave in general (Newman, 2001).
- 6.12.'01: When the clothing retail chain, Esprit, granted female employees 12 weeks' maternity leave (Norington, 2001e).
- 12.12.'01: In a month-by-month overview of the year's headline news, in August when the agreement with general staff was announced, and in November when it was extended to academic staff (*Campus Review*, 2001).
- 23.12.'01: When ACU was 'named Best Provider of Work/Life Balance in the inaugural Australian Human Resources Awards' (*Catholic Weekly*, 2001).

- 26.12.'01: In a story about the ACTU's campaign for 14 weeks' paid maternity leave (Peterson, 2001).
- 27.12.'01: When female staff working for the SRC at Wollongong University were granted a year's paid maternity leave (Norington, 2001f; *West Australian*, 2001b).
- 28.12.'01: When female staff working for the SRC at Wollongong University were granted a year's paid maternity leave (*Advertiser*, 2001b; *Canberra Times*, 2001b; *Northern Star*, 2001).
- 1.1.'02: In a general discussion of maternity leave (Richards, 2002).
- 6.2.'02: When the ACU introduced a policy requiring parents to get permission to bring children onto campus (Illing, 2002).
- 11.2.'02: In a letter from the Vice-Chancellor responding to the above (Sheehan, 2002a).
- 7.3.'02: 'As we approach International Women's Day' (Despoja, 2002a).
- 8.3.'02: IWD (Dubecki, 2002).
- 28.3.'02: In a discussion of the adverse effects on business of having to pay 'up to 12 weeks maternity leave' as suggested by Pru Goward 'earlier this week' (*Shepparton News*, 2002).
- 10.4.'02: In a discussion of cross-national provision of paid maternity leave (*Bulletin*, 2002).
- 18.4.'02: When *Valuing Parenthood* was released (ABC/7:30 Report, 2002).
- 19.4.'02: When the AIFS report, *Family-Friendly Work Practices, Differences within and between Workplaces*, was released (Ryan, 2002).
- 20.4.'02: When *Valuing Parenthood* was released (*Age*, 2002).
- 21.4.'02: In a story about Francesca Higgins and another new mother, Chelsi Williams, whose workplace had much less favourable conditions (*Sunday Telegraph*, 2002).
- 4.5.'02: In a discussion of *Valuing Parenthood* (MacDonald, 2002a).
- 12.5.'02: When 'a paper on maternity leave' was released 'last week' by Goward (presumably *Valuing Parenthood*) (*Catholic Leader*, 2002a).
- 19.5.'02: With reference to 'the release of a paper by ... Goward recommending paid maternity leave', and statements on paid maternity leave by Crean and Macklin (*Catholic Leader*, 2002b).
- 2.6.'02: When the Catholic Education Office sent a letter to schools in the Sydney archdiocese expressing concern about the cost of implementing more generous paid maternity leave than the current nine weeks, after the release of *Valuing Parenthood* (Carmody, 2002).
- 5.6.'02: In a discussion of the forthcoming 'third round of enterprise bargaining in higher education which begins later this year' (Mahoney, 2002).
- 14.6.'02: In a discussion of *Valuing Parenthood* (Baird, 2002).

- 15.7. '02: 'Nearly 12 months on' from the first announcement of the ACU's paid maternity leave provisions (ABC/PM, 2002).
- 16.7. '02: In a list of key dates in Australian industrial law history, as 'the first employer to provide 1 year's paid maternity leave' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002a).
- 19.7. '02: 'one year on' (ABC/Businessbreakfast, 2002).
- 19.7. '02: In a discussion of what is to be done about the ageing population and the low birth rate (*Australian Financial Review*, 2002).
- 19.7. '02: In a discussion of *Valuing Parenthood* (Cazzulino and Murray, 2002).
- 23.7. '02: After 'Howard delivered his most comprehensive support to date ... last week', and as 'Howard continues her high-profile forums across the country' (MacDonald, 2002b).
- 28.7. '02: When 'the Government is reviewing the family payments system', and 'Howard agreed to consider government-funded maternity leave as one option to help families' (*Catholic Weekly*, 2002).
- 31.7. '02: In a letter from V.C. Sheehan in response to an 'article in last week's HES on the poor representation of women at the most senior levels of university management' (Sheehan, 2002c).
- *August-September, '02*: In an article in *Arena Magazine* discussing government policy on paid maternity leave (Kirkham, 2002).
- 2.8. '02: With reference to Howard's address to the Aston electorate dinner, Melbourne, where he referred to the debate about the balance between work and family as 'a barbecue stopper' (Dodson, 2002).
- 18.8. '02: In the context of what the author sees as an intensification 'in recent weeks' of the maternity leave debate, as a result of 'high-profile feminists, academics, researchers, working women and stay-at-home mothers slugging it out in the pages of daily newspapers' (Examples given are an article by Anne Manne and 'ABC-TV newsreader Virginia Haussegger' – no article cited) (*Kairos*, 2002).
- 29.8. '02: In an article about paid maternity leave (Beecher, 2002).
- 1.9. '02: In the context of tips for working mothers of infants (*Australian Mother and Baby*, 2002).
- 14.9. '02: In an article in the *Western Advocate* (Bathurst) similar to those that appeared at the time the ACU's agreement was first announced. No reason is given for discussing the issue at this particular time, although the length of time elapsed is acknowledged (Cooney, 2002).
- 14.9. '02: In a discussion of 'an options paper' by Pru Goward, (Tabakoff, 2002)
- 30.9. '02: In a story about women who have taken their employers to court when they have been denied family-friendly entitlements (Nixon, 2002).
- 7.10. '02: The day after the NTEU meeting in Melbourne (Keenan and Yaman, 2002).
- 9.10. '02: In a story about the Holden car manufacturer giving female employees 14 weeks paid maternity leave (Nader, 2002).

- *30.10. '02*: In a Fact Sheet produced by the National Pay Equity Coalition (WEL, 2002).
- *6.12. '02*: After the release of Pru Goward's 'interim options paper on maternity leave', 'the union movement stepp[ing] up its campaign to improve parental leave conditions for public sector workers', and 'a [recent] Northern Territory [Government] move to offer 14 weeks paid maternity leave to public sector employees' (Frew, 2002).
- *and*: In a discussion on the NTEU website of the history of maternity leave in Australia (NTEU, nd).

Appendix B: Opinion Leaders Who Were Interviewed

Name of Interviewee	Position	Organisation
Carolyn Allport	President	NTEU
Peter Anderson	Director of Workplace Policy	ACCI
John Barclay	Director, Personnel Relations Directorate	ACU
Anne Bardoel	Senior Lecturer	Dept of Management, Faculty of Business and Economics, Monash University
	President	Victorian Work/Life Association
Judith Bessant	Director, Social Policy and Advocacy Research Centre	ACU
Susan Biggs	Deputy Director	EOWA
Cath Bowtell	Industrial Officer and Women's Committee Executive Officer	ACTU
Dick Grozier	Manager Workplace Policy	ABL
	Director Industrial Relations	ABI
Adele Horin	Journalist	SMH
Tim O'Hearn	Dean of Students	ACU
Heather Ridout	Deputy Chief Executive	AIG
Michael Sheehan	Employee Relations Advisor	Business SA
Jo Tilly	Women's Officer	PSA
Amanda Watkinson	Academic staff member currently on maternity leave	ACU
Ruth Webber	Associate Director, Social Policy and Advocacy Research Centre	ACU
Bruce Williams	Director of Employee Relations	WA CCI
Frank Young	Manager, Employee Relations and Workforce Management	ACU