



## Experts slam Queensland government plan to replace 'maternity leave' with new term

The proposed move has been called an 'attack on women's rights'.

Cindy Lever / **Parenting** / Updated 7 hours ago

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Women would be denied long-standing legal rights under a plan to replace the term "["maternity leave"](#)" with "birth-related leave", opponents say.

The proposal to introduce 'gender neutral language' is one of a number of [changes being considered to Queensland's workplace laws](#), following an independent five-year review.

A bill to amend Queensland's Industrial Relations Act 2016, introduced by the Labor government in June, aims to protect workers from sexual harassment.

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But opponents have labelled one of the proposals – to scrap the term “maternity leave” because the language implies ‘gendered division’ of parental care – as regressive and alarming.

They say a change to the terminology would strip away the recognition that maternity leave exists to enable women “to recover from pregnancy and birth and to care for their newborn baby, including breastfeeding”.



Mother and baby. Stock image Credit: Getty Images/Image Source

Karleen Gribble is Adjunct Associate Professor at the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Western Sydney University.

Gribble, who last week gave evidence at a public hearing into the proposed changes to the Act, said the planned amendments were an attempt to deny women their legal rights.

“It is very concerning they are not recognising maternity leave is a right that women hold, and it exists to enable them to recover from pregnancy and birth and care for their newborn baby, including breastfeeding,” Gribble said.

“Removing that recognition in legislation, with the explicit aim of encouraging or

promoting the idea that it shouldn't be normal for mothers to be the primary caregivers of their newborns, is alarming."

As well as proposing to drop the "maternity leave" definition, the bill also seeks to remove gendered language such as "she" to "employee".

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