Dear [NAME],

*[If writing on your own behalf, give a little introduction about yourself. Are you a Mum? An Aunty?
A Grandma? Explain why you care about PPL. If writing for an organisation, introduce your organisation here.*

*I'm / We’re* writing to express *my/our* concerns about the proposed changes to the Paid Parental Leave (PPL) scheme.

Our current scheme is already a bare bones scheme (compared to other similar nations), which was designed to operate as a public/private partnership, encouraging business to become enthused about their role in ensuring women can both parent effectively and return to the paid workplace.

Spreading the responsibility between business and government was a great way of recognising that we all benefit when new Mums can spend the recommended six months breastfeeding and bonding with their baby. The health and developmental benefits of breast feeding for six months are well documented. *[Possibly insert your own story here – e.g.: In my own case, I don't know what I would have done if I had been 'encouraged' to return to work after only 18 weeks. My son would not take a bottle or sleep through the night until he was six months old, which is common – at six months, 50.2% of babies are still feeding once in the night.]*

The implications of forcing women back to work before they are ready go well beyond the period of leave. The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children found that women who took between 13 and 26 weeks parental leave were more likely to report suffering from mental distress for up to two years than women who took more than 26 weeks. The long term benefits to children of breastfeeding exclusively to six months are well known: improved brain and cognitive development, measurable impact on school performance and later life, and a decreased risk of obesity have all been clearly identified as benefits of prolonged breastfeeding.

We already have a significant gendered wealth gap in this country.

Financially disadvantaging women who take time off work to be with their babies will only contribute to that gap. New mums will have to choose between losing income, and attempting to survive without it, or being forced back to work before they’re ready, losing valuable bonding time and incurring additional childcare costs.

*I'm / We’re* counting on you to stand up for Australian families, and help protect our paid parental leave.

We fought too hard to get the minimum entitlement - we can't let it go now.