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Agenda setting for paid parental leave in Australia

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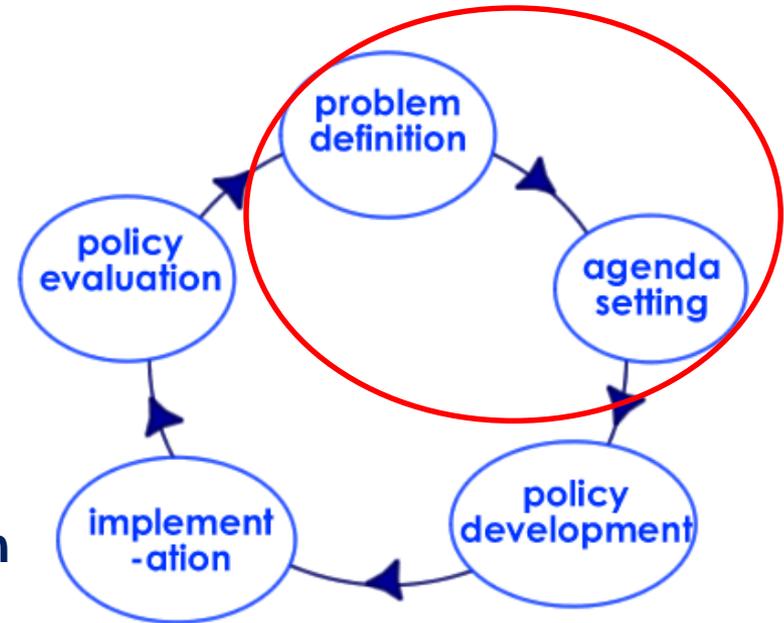
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CRE
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How can we make health equity
a political and policy concern of
government?

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the Social Determinants of Health Equity
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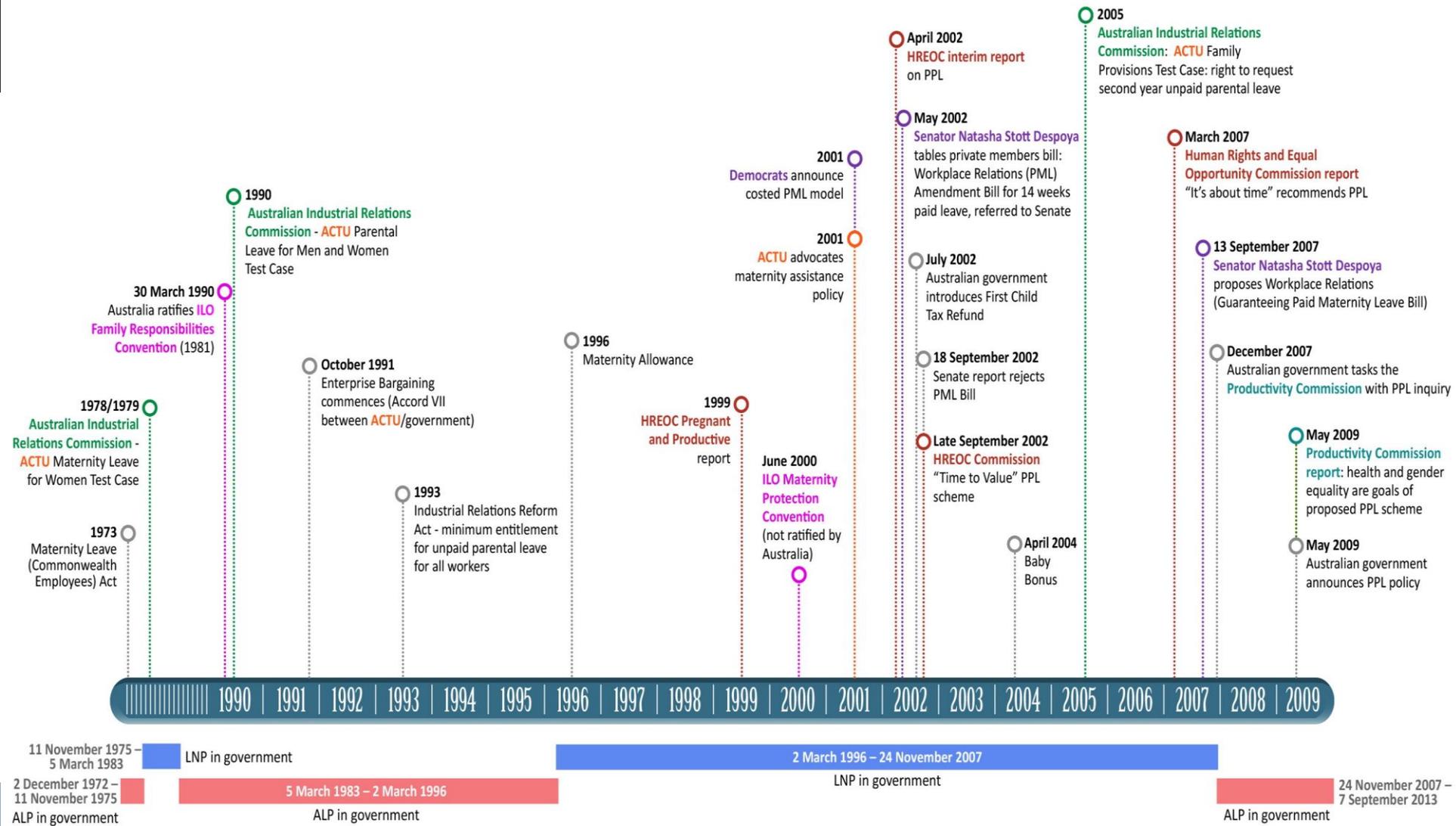
Paid parental leave in Australia

Australia was one of the last countries in the OECD to introduce PPL.

Three goals in legislation:

- ↑ Women's labour force participation and economic productivity
- ↑ Gender equality
- ↑ Health and wellbeing of babies and mothers





Two phases

1970s - 2000

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

2000 onwards

- Marks a shift in strategy and tactic by advocates
- Key shift to a government funded scheme with voluntary top ups from industry
- Advocacy leads to successful policy, implemented 2011

First phase: key barriers

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

Second phase: key enablers

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

Framing ideas

- All 3 frames (economics, health, gender) required to get PPL over the line
- Health uncontested but often not key frame
- Tensions between health and gender framing
- Equity was an underlying rationale but not seen as winning the debate
- Productivity and economic framing was powerful

PPL model was always seen as a first step....

- 18 weeks pay at the minimum wage for primary caregivers with a voluntary 'top up' from industry
- Productivity Commission recommended compulsory employer superannuation payments during PPL (introduce after 3 years)
- Ten years later - inequities in access – duration of leave, who's taking leave and what income they receive

Lessons from PPL ‘mark 1’?

- Broad informal coalition of supporters
- Different framing arguments
- Evidence collected
- Debates in different institutional venues

Acknowledgments

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