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Hey new dads: take your parental leave!

As Father's Day approaches this Sunday, we can celebrate more fathers gaining access to improved parental leave. The challenge now is ensuring they feel supported to use it, without concerns about workplace stigma, career consequences or outdated ideas about who should be providing care at home.

IEU campaigns and bargaining wins have delivered the best [paid parental leave](#) and [flexible work](#) options ever available in schools and ECEC workplaces. More employers are moving away from the outdated idea that only one parent is the 'carer', and the other is just there to help.

But [workplace culture](#) often takes longer to change than collective agreement entitlements.

Despite some recent progress, men are still only accounting for around [17% of paid primary carer leave](#), while accessing an overwhelming 96% of short-term 'secondary carer leave'.

Many fathers still worry about how taking extended leave will be viewed by colleagues or employers. Will it affect their career opportunities? Will people think they are less committed to their work? Those concerns are real, even in workplaces that support parental leave on paper.

As teachers, school leaders and support staff, IEU members see the importance of strong family relationships in a child's development. We know that [children benefit](#) when all parents or carers have the opportunity to be actively involved in their early years.

Access to paid parental leave should be widely available and inclusive. It's a vital and hard-fought workplace right that helps families share caring responsibilities and supports women's workforce participation. It provides fathers with more opportunities to build lasting bonds with their children from the very beginning.

This Father's Day, let's continue challenging [outdated assumptions about caregiving](#). Taking parental leave should never be viewed as a lack of career commitment.

A fair workplace is one where all parents feel supported to take the leave they are entitled to, without guilt or stigma or outdated gender stereotypes.

That's something worth fighting for and celebrating this Father's Day.