

Iceland shows way to parental equality with fathers leave ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

New research presented in Sydney today looks at how Nordic countries have a long history of placing emphasis on policies providing both mothers and fathers with the opportunity to work and care.

Visiting Icelandic academic Ásdís Aðalbjörg Arnalds is in Sydney today to present her new research on Icelandic paid parental leave – and in particular the importance of fathers/paternity leave.

The crux of her research most crucially shows a correlation between the length of leave taken by fathers and their involvement in care after the leave is over. Iceland has enacted a leave scheme providing both parents with three months of non-transferable leave in 2000 (a so-called mother's and father's quota).

As Iceland has the longest experience of equal quota rights for both parents, it serves as an excellent test-case for whether the law has met its aim of ensuring children care from both parents.

The research focuses on:

- How the Icelandic law on paid parental leave encouraged fathers to take paid leave which then had an impact on their participation in care of their children.
- The emphasis on fathers' quotas, how Iceland encourage fathers to take leave, and why it is important to encourage fathers to take leave.
- How Iceland went very far when the fathers' quota was introduced in Iceland in 2000, for many years Iceland had the longest fathers' quota in the world.
- The literature strongly supports how encouraging substantial fathers' leave use is very beneficial for both parents and children, and therefore should now be considered for Australia.

"Australia could readily do what Iceland has so dramatically done, as just revealed in the inspirational evidence from visiting academic Ásdís Aðalbjörg Arnalds. To double to nearly 80% the proportion of parents who report an equal division of care between mothers and fathers for their three year old children is extraordinary," said Professor Andrew Scott, from the Australia Institute Nordic Policy Centre.

"Australia could do this now by exploring similar policies to expand its current minimal paid 18 weeks maternity leave provision, and by expanding its minimal two weeks' 'Dad and Partner Pay', towards the 3 months leave which is required of fathers in the early stages of their child's life in Iceland.

"The Nordic countries' provision of extensive paid parental leave is part of the public investment which is made in the early years of all children's lives and leads to huge social benefits and lesser inequality, as well as long-term dollar savings later."

Region: Europe ^[2]

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