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# PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

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Human Resources  
YASC POL 11 – V6



2024

YARRABAH ABORIGINAL SHIRE COUNCIL  
56 Sawmill Rd Yarrabah, QLD 4871

# CONTENTS

1. LEGISLATION AND AUTHORITY .....	2
2. COUNCIL'S STATEMENT .....	2
3. PURPOSE .....	2
4. COMMENCEMENT OF POLICY.....	2
5. APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY.....	2
6. DEFINITIONS.....	2
7. ELIGIBILITY FOR PARENTAL LEAVE .....	3
8. PERIOD OF PARENTAL LEAVE - THE 12 MONTH LIMIT.....	4
9. EXTENDING UNPAID PARENTAL LEAVE WITHIN THE GUARANTEE PERIOD.....	4
10. EXTENDING UNPAID PARENTAL LEAVE FOR UP TO AN ADDITIONAL 12 MONTHS AFTER THE EXPIRATION OF THE GUARANTEED PERIOD .....	4
11. REDUCING UNPAID PARENTAL LEAVE .....	5
12. TIMING OF PARENTAL LEAVE.....	5
13. CONCURRENT LEAVE.....	6
14. NOTICE AND EVIDENCE.....	6
15. ENDING UNPAID PARENTAL LEAVE.....	6
16. UNPAID SPECIAL MATERNITY LEAVE.....	7
17. TRANSFER TO A SAFE JOB .....	7
18. PARENTAL LEAVE AND SERVICE .....	8
19. RETURN TO WORK FROM PARENTAL LEAVE .....	8
20. REPLACEMENT EMPLOYEES .....	8
21. CONTACT DURING LEAVE.....	8
22. OBLIGATIONS DURING LEAVE .....	8
23. FORMS.....	9
24. VARIATIONS .....	9
25. DOCUMENT CONTROL .....	9

## **1. LEGISLATION AND AUTHORITY**

The Local Government Act 2009 (Qld)  
Local Government Regulation 2012 (Qld)  
Industrial Relations Act 2016 (Qld)  
YASC Code of Conduct  
YASC Leave Policy

## **2. COUNCIL'S STATEMENT**

Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council ('YASC') conducts its business with integrity, honesty and fairness. All employees are expected to work within the rules and actions of YASC will comply with all relevant laws, regulations, codes and corporate standards.

Everyone representing YASC must reflect the highest standards of behaviour. Our relationships are critical to the ongoing success of our organisation. Our leaders have responsibility for fostering a culture where ethical conduct is recognised, valued and applied at all levels.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct, which outlines our standards of behaviour and workplace culture are in accordance with YASC's principles.

## **3. PURPOSE**

YASC provides parental leave in accordance with the relevant legislation.

'Parental leave' is a general term that encompasses long parental leave, short parental leave, short adoption leave and long adoption leave, the purpose of which is to enable an eligible employee to take time off work to provide care and support to a child.

## **4. COMMENCEMENT OF POLICY**

This Policy replaces all other parental leave policies (whether written or not), however, it does not create or confer any obligation, entitlement or benefit on any employee who is on parental leave at the time this Policy came into operation.

## **5. APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY**

This Policy applies to employees YASC. It does not form part of any employee's contract of employment.

## **6. DEFINITIONS**

**"Adoption leave"** means short adoption leave or long adoption leave.

**"Appropriate safe job"** is a job that has the same ordinary hours of work as the employee's present position, or a different number of hours, as agreed to by the employee.

**"Child"** includes an adopted child, stepchild, an ex-nuptial child and an adult child.

**"De facto partner"** means a person who, although not legally married to the employee, lives with the employee in a relationship as a couple on a genuine domestic basis (whether the employee and the person are of the same sex or difference sexes) and includes a former de facto partner of the employee.

**"Default event"** means a child being born before the expected date, a pregnancy otherwise terminating before the expected date, a child being placed for adoption before the expected placement date or another reason that is reasonable in the circumstances.

**“Employee couple”** means two employees who are spouses or de facto partners of each other.

**“Immediate Family”** means:

- a spouse, de facto partner, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild or sibling of the employee;  
or
- a child, parent, grandparent, grandchild or sibling of a spouse or defacto partner of the employee.

**“Long adoption leave”** means leave taken by an employee to enable the employee to be the primary care giver of an adopted child.

**“Long parental leave”** means maternity leave or leave taken by an employee’s whose spouse has given birth which leave is to enable the employee to be the child’s primary caregiver.

**“Maternity leave”** means ordinary maternity leave which is available to be taken by a female employee in respect of the birth or expected birth of her child.

**“Parental leave”** means long parental leave, short parental leave or adoption leave.

**“Short adoption leave”** means leave taken by an employee at the time of placement of an adopted child with the employee for up to 3 weeks.

**“short parental leave”** is leave taken by an employee in connection with either the birth of a child of the employee’s spouse either at the time of the birth of the child or, on the other termination of the pregnancy for up to 3 weeks.

**“Spouse”** includes a former spouse, a de facto partner or a former de facto partner.

## **7. ELIGIBILITY FOR PARENTAL LEAVE**

An employee, other than a casual employee, will be eligible to take unpaid parental leave if the employee has (or will have) completed at least 12 months’ continuous service with YASC immediately before:

- the date of birth of the child, or expected date of birth (for leave other than adoption leave);  
or
- the day of placement of the child, or expected day of placement (for adoption leave).

With respect to periods of parental leave which exceed three (3) weeks, the employee must be the primary care giver for the child in order to be eligible for parental leave.

For employees accessing adoption leave, the child must, at the day of placement or expected day of placement:

- be under 16;
- not have lived continuously with the employee for at least 6 months; and
- not be a child of the employee’s spouse or de facto partner.

### **Casual Employees**

A casual employee will be eligible to take unpaid parental leave if the employee has been (or will be) employed by YASC:

- on a regular and systematic basis for a sequence of periods of employment during a period of at least 12 months prior to the taking of parental leave; and

- would have a reasonable expectation of employment by YASC on a regular and systematic basis but for the birth, the expected birth, the placement or the expected placement.

Eligibility for all employees, is also subject to employees meeting the relevant documentation requirements outlined below.

#### **8. PERIOD OF PARENTAL LEAVE - THE 12 MONTH LIMIT**

Except as noted below, the amount of parental leave that an eligible employee is entitled to take is 12 months (*the Guarantee Period*), less any leave taken as outlined below:

- any period of leave that the employee has taken concurrently with the other member of the employee couple;
- any period of parental leave taken by the employee's spouse;
- any period of maternity leave the employee has been required to take under the "Timing of Parental Leave" section of this Policy;
- any period of paid leave the employee has taken while taking unpaid parental leave. (called the "**Deducted Leave**")

An employee may not take paid personal / carer's leave or be paid community service leave while taking unpaid parental leave.

##### Continuous Period

With the exception of special maternity leave and concurrent leave, any parental leave must be taken in one continuous period.

#### **9. EXTENDING UNPAID PARENTAL LEAVE WITHIN THE GUARANTEE PERIOD**

An employee who initially applied for a period of less than the Guarantee Period may extend once, without requiring the consent of YASC, the period of unpaid parental leave by giving YASC written notice of the extension at least 14 days, before the start of the parental leave, or if the parental leave has started, before the parental leave ends (*the First Extension*).

The notice must specify the new end date for the First Extension. The total period of leave, including the First Extension and all Deducted Leave, must not total more than 12 months.

During the Guarantee Period, if an employee wishes to extend their period of parental leave after the First Extension, they may do so only with YASC's consent.

#### **10. EXTENDING UNPAID PARENTAL LEAVE FOR UP TO AN ADDITIONAL 12 MONTHS AFTER THE EXPIRATION OF THE GUARANTEED PERIOD**

An employee may request that their period of unpaid parental leave be extended for up to an additional 12 months following the expiry of the Guarantee Period or in the case of short parental leave and short adoption leave, can request an extension of that type of leave for up to 8 weeks (*the Extended Leave Period*).

In order to request an extension past the Guarantee Period, the employee must submit the request in writing to YASC at least 4 weeks before the end of the Guarantee Period. That request must include any particulars nominated by YASC.

Employees should be aware that YASC does not have to grant the request for the Extended Leave Period. YASC is entitled to refuse the request on reasonable business grounds. If YASC refuses the request, it will write to the employee detailing the reasons for the refusal.

A member of an employee couple who wishes to request the Extended Leave Period must also specify in their request:

- the length of the proposed extension;
- the amount of unpaid parental leave that the other member of the employee couple has taken up to the time of making the request;
- the amount of time that the other member proposes to take after submission of the request;
- that they will be the primary care giver of the child during the Extended Leave Period;
- that the amount of Extended Leave Period for the couple will not exceed 12 months.

#### **11. REDUCING UNPAID PARENTAL LEAVE**

If YASC agrees, an employee whose period of unpaid parental leave has started may reduce the period of unpaid parental leave he or she takes.

#### **12. TIMING OF PARENTAL LEAVE**

##### Maternity leave

Maternity leave for a female employee who is pregnant may start up to 6 weeks before the expected date of birth of the child. Otherwise, the employee's leave must not start later than the day of the birth of the child, or immediately after the parental leave of their spouse.

YASC may require a pregnant employee to commence birth-related leave as soon as practicable up to 6 weeks before the expected date of birth once certain steps are followed. These steps are:

YASC has asked the employee to provide a medical certificate or other evidence that would satisfy a reasonable person stating:

- that the employee is fit for work, and
- that it is advisable for the employee to continue working, considering illnesses or risks arising out of the pregnancy or hazards connected with the position.

Then:

- the employee has not provided the medical evidence within 7 days after the request; or
- the employee has provided the medical evidence, but the evidence states that it is inadvisable for her to continue in her present position during the stated risk period, and there is no safe job available to transfer the employee to.

##### Adoption leave

Any employee who applies for and is granted unpaid adoption-related leave must, as a condition of the leave, start the leave on the day of the placement of the child. However, if the other member of the employee couple has responsibility for the care of the child from the day of the placement, the employee may take the unpaid adoption related leave from the date their partner's leave finishes.

An employee may also access up to 2 days' unpaid pre-adoption leave if required to attend an interview or an examination in order to obtain approval for the adoption and the employee cannot take some other form of leave.

### **13. CONCURRENT LEAVE**

If an employee wishes to take a period of leave at the same time as their spouse, that concurrent period must not be for more than 8 weeks from the date of birth (for leave other than adoption leave) or the day of placement (for adoption leave) (i.e. short parental leave and short adoption leave).

Employees must give 10 weeks' notice of their intention to take concurrent parental leave and the concurrent leave is deducted from the total entitlement to unpaid parental leave.

YASC may extend the period of short parental leave at its discretion.

### **14. NOTICE AND EVIDENCE**

An employee who wishes to take parental leave must submit a Request for Parental Leave Form to YASC to provide notice of the intention to take parental leave and the intended start date and end dates of the leave at least 10 weeks before starting the leave.

For leave other than adoption leave, an employee is also required to confirm the intended start and end dates of the leave at least 4 weeks before the intended start date, along with any changes to the dates.

For adoption leave, an employee is also required to confirm the intended start and end dates of the leave at least 14 days before the intended start date, along with any changes to the dates.

YASC will consider the request and whether the employee is eligible for leave and will, advise the employee whether the request is granted or declined.

At the time an employee submits a request for parental leave, they must give YASC:

- a doctor's certificate confirming the employee is pregnant and the expected date of birth - for leave other than adoption leave;
- provide a statement from an adoption agency of the expected placement date- for adoption leave;
- provide evidence that the child is an eligible child for the purposes of adoption leave;
- provide a statutory declaration stating the period of any parental leave sought by the employee's spouse;
- if the leave is long parental leave or long adoption leave then the statutory declaration must also state the employee is seeking to be the child's primary caregiver.

An employee will not fail to comply with the above requirements if the failure was caused by a default event and the employee gives YASC notice of the period of leave within 2 weeks after the birth / placement and a doctor's certificate stating the date on which the child was born.

If any of the information provided by an employee who applies for parental leave changes, the employee must notify YASC of the change within 2 weeks.

### **15. ENDING UNPAID PARENTAL LEAVE**

An employee who takes parental leave should be aware that YASC may give the employee 4 weeks' notice directing the employee to return to work if the employee ceases to be the primary care giver of the child.

A period of parental leave can also be ended in other circumstances, for example, where the pregnancy does not come to term.

## 16. UNPAID SPECIAL MATERNITY LEAVE

Special Maternity Leave is leave taken by a female employee because, before she starts maternity leave, she is suffering from a pregnancy related illness or her pregnancy ended (other than by the birth of a living child) before the expected date of birth of the child.

Special Maternity Leave can arise during pregnancy (in circumstances of pregnancy-related illness) or at the end of pregnancy if the pregnancy ends other than by the birth of a living child.

An employee who wishes to apply for unpaid special maternity leave and/or paid sick leave should submit a request for Leave form together with a medical certificate outlining the period of the absence.

Special maternity leave taken does not affect an employee's entitlement to unpaid parental leave or the Guaranteed Period.

## 17. TRANSFER TO A SAFE JOB

YASC may direct a pregnant employee to provide medical information concerning her pregnancy to determine whether it is safe for the employee to perform her position and/or work during her pregnancy.

If an employee provides a medical certificate stating that she is unfit to work, she may be entitled to unpaid special maternity leave, as outlined above. Alternatively, YASC will consider appropriate arrangements having regard to the particular circumstances.

If an employee provides a medical certificate stating that she is fit to work, but that it is inadvisable for her to continue in her present position because of illness, or risks arising out of her pregnancy, or hazards connected with that position, YASC:

- may transfer the employee to a safe job if there is an appropriate safe job available. The employee's terms and conditions of employment will otherwise remain unchanged; or
- may require the employee to take paid leave. The paid leave will cease at the end of the risk period in the medical certificate, when the employee gives birth, or when the pregnancy otherwise ends. This leave will be paid at the base rate of pay for the employee's ordinary hours in the risk period.

In the event that an employee who:

- is not eligible to take a period of unpaid parental leave; and
- is unable to perform their job; and
- there is no 'safe job' to be transferred into;

then they will be entitled to take a period of unpaid 'no safe job' leave.

In the event that an employee who:

- is eligible to take a period of unpaid parental leave; and
- is unable to perform their job; and
- there is no 'safe job' to be transferred into;

then they will be entitled to a period of paid 'no safe job' leave.

In order to be entitled to transfer to a safe job and/or 'no safe job' leave (paid or unpaid) in these circumstances, the employee must comply with the documentation requirements outlined in this clause.

#### **18. PARENTAL LEAVE AND SERVICE**

Any period of parental leave does not break an employee's continuity of service. However, a period of parental leave does not count as service for the calculation of entitlements and benefits. This includes calculation of redundancy entitlements; bonus payments and incentives, and accrual of leave.

#### **19. RETURN TO WORK FROM PARENTAL LEAVE**

Upon return to work from parental leave, the employee is entitled to:

- return to the position that they held immediately before going on parental leave; or
- if the employee was promoted or voluntarily transferred to a new position during the period of parental leave, be employed in the new position; or
- if, before commencing parental leave, the employee began working part time because of her pregnancy (or because of his spouse or de facto partner's pregnancy) or was transferred to a safe job because of her pregnancy, to the position the employee held immediately before working part time or being transferred to a safe job; or
- if that position no longer exists, an available position for which the employee is qualified and suited nearest in status and pay to the pre-parental leave position.

An employee that has returned from parental leave may request in writing a flexible working arrangement.

YASC will consider the request and respond in writing within 21 days to advise the employee of the outcome of the request.

Flexible working arrangements may take any form but typically relate to the hours of work and arrangements for the performance of work including examples such as the timing of meal breaks, span of hours, a temporary or permanent shift to part-time employment or working from home arrangements.

#### **20. REPLACEMENT EMPLOYEES**

YASC may engage a temporary replacement for an employee who is on parental leave. The replacement employee will be advised that the engagement to do that work is temporary and advised of the employee's right to return to their former position.

#### **21. CONTACT DURING LEAVE**

YASC may be required to consult with employees whilst they are on parental leave about significant work matters that directly impact on them. It is therefore important that an employee informs YASC of their contact details no less than 2 weeks before the commencement of leave and as and when those details change during the period of parental leave.

#### **22. OBLIGATIONS DURING LEAVE**

The employee must not engage in any conduct during the period of parental leave which is inconsistent with the employee's contract of employment or their general employee obligations to YASC. This includes but is not limited to engaging in other employment and using or disclosing confidential information.

Employees can also obtain further guidance regarding their entitlements to parental leave and obligations to YASC during any period of parental leave from Human Resources.

### 23. FORMS

The forms referred to in this Policy can be obtained from Human Resources.

### 24. VARIATIONS

Council reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy from time to time.

### 25. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Adoption Date:	12 January 2016	Resolution No.	Version No. 1
Amended Date:	30 January 2020	Resolution No. 03:30/01/2020	Version No. 2
Amended Date:	17 February 2021	Resolution No. 05:17/02/2021	Version No. 3
Amended Date:	18 May 2022	Resolution No. 09:18/05/2022	Version No. 4
Amended Date:	29 June 2023	Resolution No. 11:29/06/2023	Version No. 5
Reviewed Date:	26 July 2024	Resolution No. 12:26/07/2024	Version No. 6
Next Review Date:	2025		
Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)		



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