

Parliamentary reply by DPM Teo Chee Hean on government-paid adoption leave

**THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT OF SINGAPORE
WRITTEN ANSWER
MONDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2017**

Mr Louis Ng:

To ask the Prime Minister whether the Government-Paid Adoption Leave (GPAL) can (i) be converted into shared leave which parents can allocate between themselves as they choose, instead of being open to mothers only and (ii) be extended to parents (both mothers and fathers) who adopt children above the age of 12 months old.

Mr Teo Chee Hean (for the Prime Minister):

With the latest enhancements announced on 13 April 2016 which will take effect on 1 July 2017, adoptive fathers will enjoy the same leave provisions as biological fathers. What Mr Ng has proposed goes beyond what is provided for biological fathers. Let me elaborate.

The Government is strongly committed to supporting Singaporeans in their aspirations to get married and raise families. Leave has been one of the key measures to help working parents, including adoptive parents, better manage their work and family commitments.

Leave provisions have been progressively enhanced over the years, and several new enhancements will take effect this year, including allowing a portion of Government-Paid Adoption Leave to be converted to shared leave. Specifically, the enhancements are: a. The second week of paternity leave has been made mandatory from 1 January 2017, which both biological and adoptive fathers are eligible for; b. Government-Paid Adoption Leave will be extended from 4 to 12 weeks from 1 July 2017; and c. Both adoptive and biological fathers will be able to share up to 4 weeks from their spouse's Adoption or Maternity Leave respectively. With these enhancements, adoptive fathers will enjoy the same leave provisions as biological fathers, and working parents (biological and adoptive) will have more flexibility to decide on the allocation of leave that best suits their caregiving needs.

Adoption Leave – like Maternity and Paternity Leave – is intended to support parents of infants in their first year after delivery, when infants are more vulnerable and need more care. Hence, usage of the leave is limited to the child's first year of age. Beyond the child's infancy, all working parents, including adoptive parents, can take 6 days of paid childcare leave each per year until the child turns 7 years old, and 2 days each per year when their children are between the ages of 7 and 12 years. In addition, parents are eligible for 6 days of unpaid infantcare leave per parent each year, during the child's first 2 years.

Employers have provided feedback that even if the overall duration of leave provisions remains unchanged, extending their coverage (e.g. beyond the first year of the child's life), or allowing even more flexibility in sharing the leave between parents, could have an impact on manpower and administrative costs, especially in a time of business uncertainties. We need to balance between providing support for employees with caregiving needs, and employers' concerns on business costs and manpower constraints, as well as the employability of caregivers. Given the significant enhancements made recently, we will not be adjusting the Adoption Leave provisions further, at this point of time.

It will be more important and sustainable for employers to provide a family-friendly work environment, such as by having flexible work arrangements in place, and for our wider community

to create a more family-friendly environment in Singapore. Employers can tap on various resources to implement flexible work arrangements, including the WorkPro Work-Life Grant from the Ministry of Manpower and the Tripartite Advisory on Flexible Work Arrangements published by the tripartite partners.