



National Women's Safety Alliance

MEDIA RELEASE

Domestic violence leave legislation welcomed by National Women's Safety Alliance

DATE: 27 July 2022

The National Women's Safety Alliance (NWSA) has welcomed the introduction of legislation to provide 10 days of paid domestic violence leave to workers as an entitlement in the National Employment Standards.

The Bill was introduced by Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, The Hon. Tony Burke MP, and will improve the entitlement set by the previous government which provided 5 days unpaid leave to workers experiencing domestic or family violence. It also expands the entitlement to part-time and casual workers.

Importantly, unlike other forms of leave that are accrued over time, the full 10 days of leave will be available to workers as soon as the scheme starts.

Leah Dwyer, a member of the NWSA Policy Advocacy Advisory Committee, and Head of Policy at YWCA Canberra, says that paid domestic and family violence leave will be a gamechanger when it comes to supporting victim-survivors to leave violent circumstances.

"This is a huge win, and it is immensely symbolic that this is one of the first bills the new government is introducing because domestic violence does not discriminate, and it is in everyone's interest to prevent it," Ms Dwyer said.

"Leaving a violent home or relationship is an incredibly dangerous time for a survivor. The provision of 10 days paid leave will help during what is a costly and frightening experience. It will give survivors precious time to plan and access vital services without losing their income. The government must however ensure that employers are supported to deliver the scheme safely and effectively to their staff who need to access this leave.

"Furthermore, while paid domestic and family leave is a step forward, we must also keep in mind that women who are not connected to a workplace also experience violence and need financial support to leave. For this reason, the ongoing challenges to accessing the Escaping Violence Payment, including cumbersome application processes and delays in the payment being available, must be addressed.

"According to ACTU, it costs around \$18,000 in lost wages and costs, and 141 hours for a victim to extricate themselves from an abusive relationship.

"The fact that the full 10 days of leave will be immediately available for a worker to access once the scheme commences reflects the urgency with which survivors need to find a safe exit, and we commend the Government for taking meaningful action."

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