

Friday 8 April 2022

ACTU calls for 10 days paid family and domestic violence leave for 2.23 million workers

The ACTU will make its closing arguments today to the Fair Work Commission's hearings considering the need for 10 days paid family and domestic violence leave for 2.23 million award-dependent workers.

The hearings are part of a larger effort to ensure that all workers have access to 10 days paid family and domestic violence leave in the National Employment Standards; something the Morrison Government has consistently blocked.

The ACTU has called evidence for the hearings from a range of frontline workers, including a nurse, a paramedic, a doctor, a community lawyer, and community sector workers. These workers have provided evidence to the Fair Work Commission explaining why paid leave is essential to enable people to access critical medical, legal, financial, emergency housing, safety planning, relocation, and counselling services.

Research provided to the FWC shows that women who have experienced FDV are more likely to end up in lower-paid and casual work, and are at risk of unemployment, financial stress, homelessness, and poverty. Escaping violence can cost on average \$18,000. Economic security is the primary factor determining whether a person subjected to FDV can escape from a dangerous relationship.

Paid FDV leave is now even more urgent, with FDV services reporting a 62 per cent increase in the number of clients accessing their services since the pandemic began.

Experts estimate that the cost of providing 10 days paid FDV leave to award covered workers is not likely to be high, compared to the benefits. At 0.04 cents per hour worked, 10 days paid FDV leave represents a very low cost for employers, which is likely to be largely offset by the productivity gains of retaining staff, enhanced firm reputation and other benefits.

The Morrison Government has not even bothered to make a submission to the hearing.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"1 in 4 women in Australia have experienced some form of family and domestic violence since the age of 15, marking a national emergency that cannot continue to be ignored by Mr Morrison.

"Mr Morrison has refused to make a submission to the FWC hearing on paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave, once again going missing on women's safety when action is needed most.

“Economic security is the primary factor that determines if someone subjected to family and domestic violence remains in, escapes from, or returns to a dangerous relationship – and at an average cost of \$18,000 to flee, unions will not accept anything less than a minimum of 10 days paid leave.

“Addressing family and domestic violence is key for closing the gender pay gap as women who experience violence are more likely to fall behind in their career into low-paid and casual work, or out of the workforce entirely.

“10 days paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave for 2.23 million award dependant workers is critical but would only be the beginning; it’s time for Mr Morrison to stand up for women’s safety and ensure all workers have access to this leave in the National Employment Standards.”

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