



White Ribbon Day 25 November 2015

*One woman each week dies as a result of domestic violence.
More than 400 000 women and men experience domestic violence each year.
65% of people who experience domestic violence are in the workforce
(Broderick, 2011)*

Domestic violence is a widespread problem across Australia. It occurs in all parts of society, regardless of geographic location, socio-economic status, age, cultural and ethnic background or religious belief.

Every week in Australia, one woman is killed by her current or former partner, often after a history of domestic violence. The Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey (2006) shows that:

- 40% of women have experienced violence at some time in their adult life;
- 29% women have experienced physical assault;
- 17% of women have experienced sexual assault;
- 16% have experienced violence by a current or previous partner in their lifetime; and
- since the age of 15, one third of women (33%) have experienced inappropriate comments about their body or sex life, one quarter (25%) have experienced unwanted sexual touching and one in five (19%) have been stalked.¹

Domestic violence is an issue which must be tackled by all members of the community.

Wednesday 25 November 2015 is White Ribbon Day; a day to campaign for the prevention of violence against women and girls and a chance to provide positive examples for the next generation.

Domestic Violence is a Workplace Issue

Domestic violence impacts on workplaces through increased absenteeism due to injury, sickness, stress, court attendances and other factors. It limits a worker's ability to perform effectively, resulting in performance management, terminations and resignations.

Yet the workplace is often the only place where workers can feel safe, gain support or find out about community services that can help. Through a stable and secure job, workers who are experiencing domestic violence can support themselves and their families financially and plan an exit strategy from the violence at home

It is time for employers to provide practical support for those employees experiencing domestic violence.

What is Domestic Violence Leave?

Paid domestic violence leave and protections at work help victims of domestic violence to maintain safe and secure employment.

Paid domestic violence leave recognises that workers experiencing violence often have exhausted their personal leave entitlements and can least afford to take unpaid leave or may have no right to ask for it.

¹ Australian Bureau Statistics (2006) Personal Safety Survey (reissue), Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra
<<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/cat/4906.0>

Domestic Violence and Family Violence Leave Provisions

Unions and employers have negotiated over 500 workplace agreements which provide for domestic violence leave across a wide range of industries.

It is a fact that some IEU members have access to specified industrial provisions within their collective agreement which details the care and practical support, including paid leave, available to employees experiencing domestic violence. Some collective agreements even include support to those employees who support a person who is experiencing domestic violence. (Contact your Union office for advice regarding your collective agreement.)

These collective agreement provisions have been successfully achieved through strong membership activism when negotiating working conditions.

The sad reality is that there remains a substantial number of staff in non-government schools who do not have access to paid domestic / family violence leave and employer support. More needs to be done.

Australian Unions Against Domestic Violence

The ACTU has filed a claim with the Fair Work Commission to get paid domestic/family violence leave included in all Modern Awards. If successful, this claim will:

- directly benefit more than 6 million workers;
- provide for 10 days paid domestic violence leave permanent workers to attend court appearances; medical and legal appointments and make safety and re-location arrangements;
- provide for 10 days unpaid leave casual workers for the same purposes;
- allow employees to request a change in working arrangements, such as start and finishing times and other safety measures such as changing work email and phone numbers.

A Much Needed Safety Net

While the majority of IEU members' working conditions are covered through Enterprise Agreements, not enough have access to paid domestic violence leave.

The Modern Awards set the "basic safety nets" for employment conditions for all workers. Any enhancements to the Modern Award "safety net" must ultimately be reflected into Enterprise Agreements. (Enterprise Agreements must be able to meet the *Better Off Overall Test* against the relevant Modern Award.)

Therefore, the successful inclusion of paid domestic violence leave into Modern Awards will provide the much needed safety net for all workers.

Challenging Negative Attitudes and Behaviours Through Education and Action

If our society is to move forward and prevent violence against women from occurring, we must challenge negative attitudes and behaviour around domestic/family violence and campaign for paid leave arrangements.

IEU members can campaign against domestic /family violence on 25 November White Ribbon Day by

- Distributing the education clip on *Changing the Story* <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=b62CU28ArPo>
- Campaigning for the inclusion of paid domestic/family violence leave provisions within workplace collective agreements;
- Calling on employers to endorse the ACTU claim for leave provisions into the Modern Award;
- Wearing a white ribbon on the day.

By wearing a white ribbon on 25 November 2015, IEU members make a public demonstration that we do not tolerate violence against women, and we are committed to supporting those who experience such violence.