

Thursday 2 August, 2018

Australia must catch up to New Zealand on paid FDV leave

People working under awards are now eligible for five days unpaid domestic violence leave. But the fight for paid leave, which is vital for people experiencing family and domestic violence, continues.

Last week New Zealand became the second country in the world to legislate paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave, guaranteeing 10 days paid leave for all workers who are experiencing violence and need to escape.

By contrast the Turnbull Government has for years campaigned against paid FDV leave, an effort initiated by then Minister for Women and Employment, Michaelia Cash.

Current Minister for Women Kelly O'Dwyer has refused to look beyond an unpaid leave system, which forces workers escaping family and domestic violence to choose between their job and the safety of themselves and their children.

The Turnbull Government has done everything in its power to stop universal access to this critical new paid leave entitlement even as state governments, private employers and economists embrace it.

People who experience family and domestic violence are often forced out of work entirely and routinely struggle to get back into full-time work after escaping to make themselves or their children safe.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"From today 2.3 million award-covered workers have access to 5 days unpaid family violence leave. This is a small start, but nowhere near good enough."

"We need 10 days of paid family violence leave included in the National Employment Standards and Australian unions are committed to continuing to campaign until 10 days paid leave is a right for all workers."

"The Turnbull Government is telling people experiencing family and domestic violence that guaranteeing paid leave is impossible. New Zealand has shown that to be a lie."

"We have to change the rules for people experiencing family and domestic violence. No one should be forced to choose between their income and their safety."

"If you're escaping family and domestic violence you need financial stability and independence while you go to the police, seek support from doctors and lawyers, move house and find new schools for your kids."

"New Zealand has made it clear that the Turnbull Government is living in the past. We used to lead the world in workplace entitlements, but under the Turnbull Government working people are going backwards."

"Ten days paid domestic violence leave will save lives."

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