



# Unions NSW Submission

## Senate Inquiry into Fair Work Amendment (Family and Domestic Violence Leave) Bill 2018

25 September 2018

Unions NSW  
Trades Hall  
Level 3, 4 Goulburn Street  
Sydney  
T: 02 9881 5999  
F: 02 9261 3505

## Unions NSW Submission

1. This submission focusses on the urgent need for a universal entitlement to ten days paid domestic violence leave. The submission is split into two sections. The first section draws on interviews with union members to provide insight into the time and costs involved in living with and leaving violence. The second section provides details on the minimal associated with the introduction of a universal entitlement to paid leave, providing evidence that the benefits of universal access to paid domestic violence leave far outweigh the costs of domestic violence to individuals, families, workplaces and the economy.
2. Unions NSW supports the submission of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, particularly in relations to the technical issues identified with the Bill.

## Introduction

3. Unions NSW is the peak body for trade unions and union members in NSW and has been fighting for the rights of working people in Australia since 1871. It has over 65 affiliated unions and Trades and Labour Councils, representing over 550,000 workers across the State. Affiliated unions cover the spectrum of the workforce in both the public and private sectors.
4. Unions NSW welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Fair Work Amendment (Family and Domestic Violence Leave) Bill 2018 (**the Bill**).
5. The Bill provides for the inclusion of five days unpaid domestic violence leave in the National Employment Standards. Unions NSW submits that five days unpaid leave, does not sufficiently take into account the costs and time associated with living with and leaving violence. At a minimum, all workers must have a universal right to ten days paid domestic violence leave.
6. Domestic violence is the leading cause of death, disability and illness among women aged 15-44 years of age<sup>1</sup>. This is higher than blood pressure or smoking.

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<sup>1</sup> Victoria Health, 2018, <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/our-work/preventing-violence-against-women>

7. Of the families and individuals who experience violence and abuse in the home, statistics tell us they are overwhelmingly women. For this reason, this submission will refer to women's experience of domestic violence, however, it is acknowledged that men also experience domestic violence.
8. A large number of women who experience violence are in the workforce. The Australia Bureau of Statistics estimates more than 800,000 women workers experience some form of violence in their home<sup>2</sup>.
9. Often the workplace is the only place where women experiencing domestic violence feel safe. Secure, paid work and the resulting financial independence is critical in enabling workers, especially those with children, to leave an abusive relationship.
10. Paid domestic violence leave provides women with the time and financial support they need to attend court hearings, provide evidence to the police, find somewhere safe to live, put safety plans into place in their children's school, update their financial arrangements and access support and medical services. Paid leave means workers are able to access the necessary services without losing a day's pay and without fear of losing their job.
11. A universal provision to ten days paid domestic violence leave is of paramount importance to the health, safety and well-being of workers living with domestic violence. Anything less than ten days leave is not commensurate to the time required to access support and services. Moreover, attempts to escape violence should not place a financial or employment detriment on workers living with violence.

## Part One

### Union members know the importance of paid leave

12. For ten years the Australian union movement has been campaigning in workplaces and the community for the introduction of paid domestic violence leave.
13. Across a range of different industries and occupations, unions and their members provide support and assistance to families living with domestic violence.

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<sup>2</sup> ABS, 2016, Personal Safety, cat 4906.0

14. This submission draws on interviews with union members who support women and families living with violence to demonstrate and quantify the time and cost associated with living with and leaving violence. The names of all members' have been changed to protect their identity.
15. The worker's stories outlined below are not exhaustive but provide a snap-shot of the impact of violence and the urgent need for a universal entitlement for ten days paid domestic violence leave.
16. Unions NSW refers the Committee to the submission of the Australian Services Union which provides a detailed account of the important work of members in the community sector who support women and families living with violence.

## Disclosure of violence

17. Women living with violence disclose their experience of violence to a range of different people and services that aren't always dedicated domestic violence services. This includes to paramedics, teachers and nurses. These professionals will refer women to specialist domestic violence services, but the first point of disclosure is important and often is made to someone a woman trusts.

### Case study One

#### Louise, Nurse practitioner and NSW Nurses and Midwives Association member

18. Louise is a nurse practitioner in a women's health clinic. The clinic is a free service for all women and provides a wholistic range of women's health services including sexual and reproductive health concerns, contraception and menopause. In her work, Louise has seen the hesitation of women to disclose violence.

“When women access our service it's not usually because they are experiencing domestic violence. They will come to the clinic for another reason. We routinely ask women if they are affected by domestic violence and if they will be safe when they leave. This is a standard question. Women living with violence don't usually answer yes the first time they are asked. It is often after the second or third visit, or they will call up after the fact.”

19. Louise has also seen women who live with violence seek refuge in her clinic because it was a safe place.

“Several years ago when I was working in a rural area I saw a client who showed signs of experiencing domestic violence, however she didn’t disclose the violence. Several years later I saw her in different clinic in another town. She told me that she had been in a violent and controlling relationship. She said she would lie to her husband about needing pap-smears or follow up tests because when she attended the clinic and saw me it was the only time she was able to be alone from her violent partner.”

20. Some workers find it difficult to reassure women who have disclosed violence, because they know the financial stress women face.

### Case study two

#### Jess, Paramedic and Health Services Union member

“As a paramedic we often get called after violence has happened. And we sit on the lounge with women and their children and we hold their hand and say it’s going to be ok and there are options available. Unfortunately a lot of the time it feels a little bit hollow because we can’t guarantee it’s going to be ok. If we could tell them they had ten days paid leave, we could help them find a safer place for their children and keep them financially secure and independent.”

21. As first responders paramedics play an important role in referring women to services and support.

“We treat physical injuries on site and if needed refer women to further assistance. This includes to hospitals if further treatment is required, to sexual assault services if a sexual assault has occurred and to FACS if children are involved. If appropriate, we also make informal referrals based on local knowledge. This includes referrals to women’s shelters, domestic violence services or other community-based support. These referrals are particularly important when women don’t enter the hospital system. We are able to provide reassurance to women that they are not alone and they have options.”

22. In the school system, teachers often become aware of violence through disclosures from students or changes in student behaviour. They will use different avenues to provide support and advice to parents.

### Case study three

#### Katherine, Learning and support teacher and NSW Teachers Federation member

23. Katherine is a learning and support teacher in a regional primary school. She is a trained teacher who works with children with learning, cognitive and behavioural difficulties and their parents and teachers. In her role Katherine has close interactions with parents and tries to provide support where she can.

“If I am aware a parent is experiencing violence, myself and other teachers will refer them to support agencies and support services in the community. Sometimes we provide more subtle referrals. For example, in the school newsletter we will often include information on support services or courses for families living with violence.”

24. Sometimes women aren't ready to admit their relationship is violent. In these circumstances service providers will work with women to assist them identify issues with their relationship and the impact it has on them and their children.

### Case study four

#### Gemma, School counsellor and Independent Education Union member

25. Gemma is a school counsellor in a K-12 catholic school and provides support to both students and parents.

“We may have students who disclose family violence to us. When we meet with the parent who is experiencing the violence, they don't always acknowledge that they are living with violence. With these parents we spend time providing psychoeducation on what domestic violence is and the impact it has on children. These are generally one hour meetings, and there may be several meetings over weeks and months. This is important, because until they recognise the behaviour as domestic violence, they won't seek help from specialist domestic violence services which we have also referred them to.”

26. Disclosure of violence is difficult, it is also an important first step for women to seek support and prepare to leave violence. It is crucial that woman living with violence have the time to build relationships and trust with different service providers to facilitate the disclosure of

violence, as well as the time to continue to access support from the services they are referred to.

27. Access to paid domestic violence in workplaces sends an important message that workplaces support women who are living with violence.

#### **Case study four**

##### **Sarah, Domestic violence support worker**

“The nature of domestic violence is that it is a very difficult thing for women to disclose and they’re in workplace where there’s no understanding that it’s a safe place to disclose because there isn’t domestic violence leave”.

### **The time and cost of medical support and treatment**

28. Women and children who are living with violence will often require medical assistance for both physical and psychological injuries. Many of these appointments will need to take place during the working day and incur out of pocket expenses.
29. There are both short and long-term injuries sustained by women as a result of domestic violence and women will often face additional out of pocket expenses in receiving treatment.

##### **Jess, Paramedic and Health Services Union member**

“Minor physical injuries take over an hour to treat on scene. More serious injuries take significantly longer and may require hospitalisation. Women who have experienced violence have generally also sustained psychological and emotional injuries which will take much longer to heal.”

“Women we treat may also be exposed to additional medical costs. Limited resources allocated to health may mean there are long waiting lists to see specialists for free. If women and their children can’t wait, they have to pay out of pocket to see psychologists, GPs and physiotherapists.”

30. Support for psychological injuries almost always results in women paying out of pocket expenses.

### Louise, Nurse practitioner and NSW Nurses and Midwives Association member

“Previously our Community Health service had psychologists and social workers co-located. If a woman I was seeing disclosed violence I could go down the hall-way and bring a mental health professional to them immediately. After a restructure and loss of funding there are no longer psychologists or social workers in the clinic. Now I need to give women a list of counselling services. The vast majority are paid services. They can go to their GP to get a mental health plan and referral to see a psychologist. But they are still going to be charged a gap of about \$60 a visit.”

### Impact of violence on children

31. Over half of women who experience family and domestic violence have children in their care<sup>3</sup>. There is a significant impact on children who witness or who are subjected to violence. When violence is identified, teachers make referrals to ensure students receive appropriate support. However, time and cost restrictions mean that students aren’t always able to access professional support outside the school setting.

### Katherine, Learning and support teacher and NSW Teachers Federation member

“We are often made aware of family and domestic violence through observing changes in the behaviour of students, or from children disclosing. When this occurs we report to the child wellbeing unit or FACs depending on the seriousness of the violence. Students exposed to violence will also need to be referred to additional services and support outside of the school. We have a school psychologist, but children need additional, professional support which cannot be offered by the school. We try and refer to services in the community that won’t have an additional cost for parents. But parents have to organise and take children to the services and appointments”.

### Gemma, School counsellor and Independent Education Union member

“If a student discloses violence and they are experiencing trauma we will refer them to additional services. We may also make a referral to external psychologists, either for the individual child or to a family referral service, where a psychologist can work with the entire family. Generally, these will incur out of pocket expenses. Sometimes they can have a mental health plan developed by their GP which includes some

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<sup>3</sup> Australian Services Union - NSW Branch, 2017, ‘What it takes to leave’.

subsidised access to a psychologist. Sometimes, because of the costs to families they are reluctant to follow up with referrals. Most of the services also occur during normal hours of work and don't offer after hours appointments. There are also a limited number of services which means there are long waiting periods. This restricts access for a lot of families. Having a counsellor in the school that students and parents can talk to for free during school hours is really important to support families. But there are limitations to the support we can provide and we need to refer families to additional support outside of the school."

32. Women living with violence often experience financial abuse, which can make accessing treatment difficult.

**Louise, Nurse practitioner and NSW Nurses and Midwives Association member**

"Women will come to the service and I will tell them they need to purchase medication. Sometimes women attending the clinic who require a prescription, they will say they can't cover the costs because their husband has not provided them with enough 'housekeeping money' for that month."

33. Maintaining economic independence through employment is crucial for women to finance the costs of medical treatment for themselves and their children. It is also important that any time taken off work to access medical treatment or other services is paid. For many women who have experienced violence, they have exhausted all their sick leave entitlements. An entitlement to ten days paid domestic violence leave gives women the time to access the support and treatment they need.

## **Access to the legal system**

34. Legal protection from domestic violence takes time and costs money. Women will interact with the legal system for domestic violence orders restricting contact, custody arrangements and property issues. It can be a long and costly process.

**Sally, Domestic violence support worker and Australian Services Union member**

"I work with women who are seeking legal protection from domestic violence. These are women who need to take the time to talk to police about what has happened and to make statements. They may be required to attend court for AVO matters. They have injuries and need to get medical attention or have those injuries

documented as evidence. Women know that their employment offers them security in the long term and they won't do anything that would jeopardise them losing employment. I've spoken with women who if faced with the choice of attending court or going to work, will go to work. Ten days paid domestic violence leave would provide women and their children with an opportunity to be supported while they leave an abusive relationship".

### **Case study five**

#### **Rose, Solicitor and Australian Services Union member**

35. Rose was a solicitor who provided support and representation to women through the legal process.

"Victims of domestic violence who are going through the court system, seeking the protection of an AVO often have to attend court on multiple occasions and take time off work to do that. The legal system is not a fast one. For victims of domestic violence this can specifically be used against them as a means of undermining their employment. Most of our clients have children and if they have a job it's so important for them to be able to keep that job rather than have to rely on Centrelink or welfare benefits."

### **Case study six**

#### **Sarah, Domestic violence support worker and Australian Services Union member**

36. Sarah supports women through a domestic violence court advocacy program. She supports women when they attend court on domestic violence related matters and assists them with referrals to refuges, counselling and financial support.

"Women are often very frightened when they attend court and must face the person who has been attacking them and their children. Often they have not told anyone else in their family or friends, so have no one to go to court with them. They also need support with finding other services, such as a safe place to live and counselling"

"I attend court with women who tell me that they cannot return for a second hearing or cannot take time off to provide a witness statement etc because they fear they will lose their job. I have been told countless times that they cannot afford to have time off because they need the money to feed their children because the perpetrator refuses to give them money or because if they have no income they

cannot afford to pay the rent and so stay away from the perpetrator. I have seen many women return to a violent perpetrator because they cannot afford to live and have no income – because they lose their job or have no paid leave available”

## Safety planning for children

37. Women with children need to take time to put formal plans into place to ensure their children are safe. These are often developed in conjunction with the child’s school and require the child’s mother to attend meetings at the school during the normal working day.

38. Safety plans may be developed while women and children are still living with violence.

### Gemma, School counsellor and Independent Education Union member

“We work with students who are living with violence to develop a safety plan. For primary school students the child’s parent will attend the session. The safety planning includes working with the student and parent to identify a safe place to go to if they need to leave the family home. This includes identifying relatives they could stay with. Also, information on numbers and support services they can access. We also work to equip children with strategies to remove themselves from violent situations. These meetings take place in school hours. Arrangements could be made for outside these hours, but it would still be between 8.30am and 5pm on a school day. The meeting will take about an hour.”

39. After a violent incident, a parent may contact the school to make alternative arrangements for school pick-up

### Katherine, Learning and support teacher and NSW Teachers Federation member

“Parents may disclose violence when they call the school to change the pick-up arrangements for their child and request a partner no longer be permitted to pick the child up. Technically the school cannot implement these restrictions without a court order in place. Sometimes there is just not enough time between the incident of violence and the implementation of a court order for this to be effective.”

40. The requirement of court orders to be in place to alter pick-up arrangement emphasises the importance of ensuring women have the time to attend court hearings and provide evidence to the police to put protection orders in place.

“Once a court order has been made restricting access to a child, the parent will need to visit the school to provide documentation and put a crisis management plan in place. This requires the parent to go to the school and meet with the principal for about 1-2 hours. The school will take copies of the court documentation. A crisis management plan will be developed. This includes alterations to who can pick the child up from school, the child’s emergency contact details, who is permitted to attend school events such as sporting carnivals, parent-teacher interviews, who will or won’t be sent information about the child. Additionally, there needs to be a plan for if the violent parent arrives at the school and who should be contacted. Depending on the seriousness of the violence, we may call the other parent, the police or the school may need to be put into lock down.”

41. Even when crisis management plans are in place, a parent may be required to attend the school to pick up a child at short notice.

“The principal at my school is quite savvy. If a violent parent arrives at the school at pick-up time when they shouldn’t, the principal will invite the parent into the office for a meeting. Meanwhile he will signal for someone to call the child’s mother. The child might usually catch the bus home or walk home from work. But in these circumstances, the child’s mother will drop everything and get to the school to pick the child up that day.”

42. Ensuring their children are safe will be the paramount concern for a woman who is living with or leaving violence. Putting safety plans in place takes time and will require women to take time-off work to attend.

## **Financial arrangements**

43. When women leave violence, they will need to update their financial arrangements to ensure they have control of their money. This takes time and may raise issues around lines of credit and debt.

## Case study seven

### Elizabeth, Bank worker and Finance Sector Union member

“Women who are experiencing domestic violence will come and see us to close down a bank account. We often talk to women about how this may potentially aggravate their partners and often devise another plan, like setting up a new account. This process may involve setting up new passwords, getting new cards. Basic updates like this usually take about half an hour. And we also have a conversation and provide what support we can. The process becomes more complicated if there is a personal loan or a mortgage. Sometimes we will speak to women, who after leaving their partner no longer have a line of credit to cover the outstanding debts. For some women it is quite frustrating because the loan may be in their name, but the car or asset the loan was used for is in their ex-partners name. Because the debt is in the women’s name though it’s her responsibility. For women who can no longer cover their debts, we refer them to a hardship team who can assist them put together a payment plan. This process can take around an hour or so.”

44. Women will generally prefer to come to the bank and receive assistance from someone face-to-face. This will often require them to take off work to go to the bank during the working week.

“My bank is open from 9.30am-4pm during the week and 5pm on Fridays. Some banks are open on a Saturday, but it is usually a minimum 45 minute wait to see someone. I think a lot of women who are updating their financial arrangements as a result of violence prefer to come into the bank and deal with someone face-to-face as opposed to accessing help over the phone. Some people don’t understand their financial arrangements and the implications of their loans. They want to come in and see someone face to face to get some certainty about their situation.”

45. For some women leaving violence they are taking control of their finances for the first time in their life. This can be a daunting experience, particularly when they don’t have a high level of financial literacy, or their partner has set up accounts they were not aware of.

“I recently assisted a woman who was fleeing domestic violence. She was living in a women’s refuge and was receiving support. She came to the bank to change her details and that was when she found out she was the sole company director of her

husband’s business transaction account. The responsibilities of the business were all in her name, but she had no idea until she came into the bank to speak with us. It was really sad, she had a young child and English wasn’t her first language. We were able to talk her through the situation and assist her set up appropriate banking arrangements for herself.”

## Living in a regional area

46. The union members interviewed for this submission pointed to the increased difficulty women who live in regional areas face when accessing services. There are a limited number of services often with long waiting periods.
47. Additionally, women in regional areas have more limited job opportunities. Keeping their job was important, because it would be difficult to find another.

### Katherine, Learning and support teacher and NSW Teachers Federation member

“I work and live in a regional area and access to support services is often difficult. There are limited services and parents may need to drive several hours for an appointment. Or else they have to take an appointment when it becomes available and there is very little flexibility.”

### Louise, Nurse practitioner and NSW Nurses and Midwives Association member

“My clinic is opened 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday. We currently have a 3-month waiting list

## Additional costs and time commitments

48. This submission has provided a small snapshot of the time and money considerations women living with violence are forced to make. Additional considerations include:
- Finding emergency accommodation
  - Finding a safe and permanent place to live, which often means navigating an expensive private rental market
  - Hiring removalists
  - Purchasing new household appliances and essential goods
  - Setting up new utilities

- Changing locks at the house
- Attending lawyers offices to receive advice
- Setting up new mobile phone numbers
- Changing details or applying for assistance with Centrelink

49. A comprehensive overview of the time and costs associated with leaving violence has been developed by the ASU NSW Branch titled ‘What it takes to leave’, attached as Appendix 1 to the submission.

## Why we need ten days paid domestic leave now

50. Union members know universal access to ten days paid domestic violence leave is urgent. For many members, they have supported women living with violence in their jobs, experienced violence themselves or supported colleagues who have disclosed violence to them.

### Olivia, School teacher and NSW Teachers Federation member

“One of my colleagues is in a violent relationship and she has exhausted all her sick leave. She often comes to work upset and distracted because of the violence. It has an impact on her teaching and has been noticed by students and parents. As colleagues we are concerned for her and try and offer support. She is financially stressed and works as a tutor after school. She is a permanent employee but does not have any paid leave left”.

### Jess, Paramedic and Health Services Union member

“Everyone has the right to be safe and look after their families. Paid leave provides women with some more control over the situation they are in. We need to be able to guarantee women that they are going to keep their financial independence. Without that we’re already on the backfoot in trying to convince them to leave the situation and get help. The option of paid leave is one of the things that can provide women with some independence when trying to get out of a difficult situation.”

### Gemma, School counsellor and Independent Education Union member

“In our work as counsellors, we work to help people going through difficult times. If a worker is experiencing violence they are not in the right space to be able to help

others. Workers need to be able to step away from work and be given the time and space to deal with violence and take next steps. This is about the duty of care of employers, to provide a safe space for workers to allow them the time they need.”

**Koreen, CEO of a specialist women’s domestic violence counselling services and Australian Services Union member**

“Paid leave is essential – the main reason that working women stay in a violent situation is because they can’t afford to leave. It is common for me to hear women say that they will put up with the violence that is directed at them (as long as it is not also directed at her children) because it provides a roof over the head of her children and food in their mouths. Many women only make the move to leave when their last child becomes independent and leaves home, or if a child is attacked.”

**Victoria, Domestic violence support worker and survivor of violence, Australian Services Union member**

“Speaking from my own experience, if I had access to paid leave I would have left my husband much earlier. Speaking as a professional, I see that many women do not attend court for ADVO’s and do not attend other police and court appointments because they fear losing their job. This often means that they are forced to stay in a violent situation with no police protection – until it is too late. Most women have used up all of their leave: annual leave, sick leave because they have to stay home to look after their children – if they are sick, or to protect them from a violent partner. They also use all of their leave when they are prevented from leaving their home by a controlling partner. In my experience most women attend work – even when they are injured (they cover themselves with makeup and long sleeves, trousers; rather than risk losing their job. They try to ‘save’ their leave for their children.

## Part Two

### The cost of domestic violence

51. A 2015 PwC report estimated domestic violence costs \$12.6 billion a year or \$27,000 per woman who experiences violence. This is close to one percent of Australia’s GDP. In their modelling the annual costs were categorised, with lost productivity estimated to cost \$926 million a year<sup>4</sup>.
52. In workplaces, productivity costs are evidenced by workers experiencing violence having:
- Increased absenteeism;
  - Decreased performance and productivity;
  - Safety issues for co-workers if the perpetrator of violence goes to the workplace;
- and
- Higher staff turn-over and resultant costs of recruitment and training.
53. In addition to the cost of health, administration and social welfare, governments also bear the cost of lost taxation revenue when violence affects women’s ability to work. Lost taxation income is estimated at \$449 million per year.
54. The cost of domestic violence to the economy, government and employers is high, but is it the victims of violence who bear the highest proportion of the costs (31%). The cost of violence to the children of victims is estimated at \$300 million per year.

### The cost of introducing 10 days paid domestic violence leave

55. In 2016 the Centre for Future Work modelled the likely utilisation rate of a universal entitlement to paid domestic violence leave. The researchers consulted with workplaces who had implemented paid leave and considered the current rate and impacts of domestic violence<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> PwC, 2015, “A high price to pay”

<sup>5</sup> Jim Stanford, 2016, ‘Economic Aspects of Paid Domestic Violence Leave’ The Australia Institute

56. The analysis concluded the likely take up rate of the leave would be 1.5% of female employees and 0.3% of male employees. The total cost was estimated to be between \$80-\$120 million per year for the whole economy, which equates to roughly 5 cents per worker per day. Incremental wage payments associated with universal access to paid domestic violence leave are equivalent to less than 0.02 per cent of current pay roll costs.
57. The argument that an entitlement to paid domestic violence leave would create a perverse disincentive to hire women is not borne out in the research or evaluations by companies who have implemented domestic violence leave. Research also tells us that domestic violence is already costing businesses and the economy a significant amount of money in lost productivity.

## **Organisations have already identified the benefits of leave**

58. There are at least 840 enterprise agreements approved by the Fair Work Commission which contain clauses relating to support for employees living with family and domestic violence<sup>6</sup>. These workplaces are providing a safe and supportive environment through the introduction of appropriate domestic violence clauses in enterprise agreements, associated policies and procedures. Workplaces with paid domestic violence leave become employers of choice and have higher retention rates, higher staff morale, lower rates absenteeism and higher productivity.
59. Some examples of workplaces where employees have access to paid leave through an enterprise agreement include Qantas, Westpac, Virgin Australia, Sydney Water and Sydney Trains.
60. Reports on workplaces who have access to paid domestic violence leave show that take-up rates are low and have had a minimal cost for employers. This is likely a reflection on the many barriers women will face when disclosing violence in their workplace. Workers will likely exhaust all other forms of leave prior to accessing paid domestic violence leave. This however, does not diminish the critical need for a universal entitlement to 10 days paid leave, especially for women who have exhausted all their leave, and face losing their

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<sup>6</sup> Productivity Commission, 2015, 'Workplace Relations Framework, Inquiry Report'.

employment.

61. Telstra employs 32,000 people and has an entitlement for paid domestic violence. As of February 2017, only 0.001% of their employees had accessed leave over a 2 year period (22 employees, with an average of 2.3 days per person)<sup>7</sup>.
62. The Surf Coast Council at Torquay in Victoria has an entitlement for 20 days paid leave in their enterprise agreement, which covers 354 employees. Their take up rate has been 0.004% and the Mayor reports the cost to the organisation was only \$2,324<sup>8</sup>.
63. The National Australia Bank has a policy for uncapped paid domestic violence leave for its 35,000 employees. Between 2013 and 2017 they have reported that it has been accessed about 70 employees – about 0.2%.<sup>9</sup>
64. The take up rates of domestic violence leave will likely be small, but they will be life-changing for women who need to access leave.

## Conclusion

65. The Federal Government urgently needs to introduce a universal entitlement to ten days paid domestic violence leave in the National Employment Standards. Living with and leaving violence takes time and costs money. Unpaid leave is not sufficient and does not take into account the financial impost violence has on women and their families.
66. Paid domestic violence leave will cost as little as 5 cents per worker per day. Compared to the \$12.6 billion per year cost of domestic violence, this is a minimal impost on employers and the Government.
67. Unions NSW urges the committee to recommend the immediate introduction of ten days paid domestic violence leave in the National Employment Standard because it will save lives.

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<sup>7</sup> Jim Stanford, 2016, 'Economic Aspects of Paid Domestic Violence Leave' The Australia Institute

<sup>8</sup> Jim Stanford, 2016, 'Economic Aspects of Paid Domestic Violence Leave' The Australia Institute

<sup>9</sup> Smith, Fiona. 2017 "Domestic violence leave a small cost to employers but priceless to victims", 9 February 2017