

ACTU Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, Victoria

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1. Introduction and Executive Summary

The ACTU is the peak body representing 47 unions and almost 2 million working Australians.

The ACTU endorses and strongly commends the comprehensive submission of the Victorian Trades Hall Council to the Royal Commission into Family Violence. We welcome the opportunity to make a supplementary submission.

A significant number of the 350,000 women each year who experience domestic violence, are members of a union or are employed in a unionised workplace.¹

Unions have advocated for every person's right to a safe home, community and workplace for a long time.

Unions have also recognised that domestic violence is not a private issue, but a systemic issue arising from wider social, economic and cultural factors that must be addressed in the public sphere, including workplaces.

The terms of reference of the Royal Commission are broad and relate to the adequacy of a wide range of policy and services to prevent and support those experiencing domestic violence.

The ACTU submission focuses on an area in which our expertise can contribute to the Inquiry:

- The critical role of employment in maintaining financial independence and escaping domestic violence;
- The role of workplace laws to protect and support employees experiencing domestic violence;
- The role of workplaces in driving social, cultural and behavioural change; and
- The importance of decent wages and savings in mitigating women's vulnerability to violence.

Whilst our submission is focused on the role of workplaces and workplace laws in eliminating domestic violence, we have consistently advocated that effective operation of legislation relating to the protection of victims of domestic violence and children requires reforms which are integrated and complimentary.

To this end, our advocacy for amendments to employment legislation is based on the premise that the legislation will operate in an integrated manner with the broader legal domestic violence framework and service provision.

2. The prevalence and impact of domestic violence on employees

The issues paper published by the Royal Commission acknowledges that **despite** difficulties in estimating its extent and effects, it is clear that family violence is widespread and imposes substantial costs on the community.²

¹ Two thirds of women who suffer domestic violence are working in the paid labour force. Almost half domestic violence victims suffered violence at the hands of their current or former partner, and sadly, in the majority of cases, the violence is witnessed by children. ABS, Personal Safety, Australia, Cat. 4906.0 (2006) p.35

The high prevalence of domestic violence is a significant barrier to the participation of women from all socio-economic backgrounds in employment and the provision of a safe working environment for all employees.

The Family and Domestic Violence Clearinghouse (FDVCH) *National Domestic Violence and the Workplace Survey* in 2011 looked at the prevalence of domestic violence amongst employees and its effect on their employment and workplace.³

The survey found that domestic violence was prevalent amongst employees:

- 25% of employees had experienced domestic violence at some point in their life;
- 5% of employees experienced domestic violence within the last 12 months;
- 20% of employees know someone at work who experienced domestic violence within the last 12 months;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees (2% of total respondents) were significantly more likely to have experience with some form of domestic violence (86%) than non- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees (63%);
- 50% of male employees knew someone who had experienced domestic violence or had personally experienced it;
- 14% of those employees who had experienced domestic violence were still living in the relationship;
- 43% of those employees who had experienced domestic violence in the last 12 months still living in the relationship; and
- 40% of domestic violence survivors were still living in the family home.

The survey found that domestic violence significantly affected employees:

- Nearly half of the respondents reported that the domestic violence affected their capacity to get to work;
- The main reason was physical injury or restraint (67%); hiding or stealing car keys or transportation money (28%) refusal to show up or care for children (22%) or hiding or stealing personal documents or effects (21%);
- Disruptions to capacity to work also included sleep deprivation, being forced out of home, death threats and threats to harm children.
- 19% said the domestic violence continued at the workplace, including abusive phone calls and emails (12%) or the partner physically coming in to work (11%);
- The main result was a negative impact on work performance resulting in employees feeling distracted, tired or unwell (16%), needing to take time off (10%) or being late for work (7%);
- 12% worked in the same workplace as their abusive partner;

³ Family and Domestic Violence Clearinghouse (FDVCH) *National Domestic Violence and the Workplace Survey*, conducted between February -July 2011. 3,611 employees responded to questions about experience of DV in past

- Almost half had discussed the domestic violence with work colleagues- but very few with supervisors, HR or union representatives who could initiate changes;
- Those who didn't discuss domestic violence at work reported that they did so to maintain privacy, followed by reasons of shame and fear of dismissal;
- Just 1/3 of respondents who experienced domestic violence reported it to police;
- 25% of respondents who experienced domestic violence obtained a domestic violence protection order, but less than half (41%) included their workplace in the order; and
- All respondents thought that domestic violence impacts on the work lives of employees (100%) and a high percentage (78%) believed that workplace entitlements could reduce the impact of domestic violence in the workplace. ⁴

3. The importance of employment in preventing and maintaining economic independence and eliminating domestic violence

Evidence supports employment as a key pathway for women leaving a violent relationship.⁵ The financial security that employment affords, allows women to avoid becoming trapped and isolated in violent and abusive relationships, and makes it possible for them to maintain a decent standard of living.

There has been a shift away from the perception of domestic violence as a 'private matter' to one in which community standards now consider it unacceptable to 'turn a blind eye' to domestic violence. And it is certainly no longer acceptable that victims of domestic violence should be penalized because they are unable to maintain employment as a consequence of the actions of an abusive partner. Employers cannot be complicit in allowing perpetrators of physical, emotional and economic violence to subject victims to a cycle of violence because they cannot maintain economic independence.

The ACTU participated in efforts coordinated by the then Labor Government in 2013 to successfully lobby the United Nations Council on the Status of Women (UNCSW) to recognise the role of employment and the workplace. The UNCSW Agreed Conclusions now expands the traditional, narrow view of employer's responsibility as simply to provide a safe workplace, to recognise the role of the workplace in supporting employees who are experiencing violence outside of the workplace, in order to protect and maintain their employment.

The high profile campaigns conducted by the White Ribbon Foundation and the Australian Human Rights Commission also recognise the role of employment in supporting employees experiencing domestic violence. The White Ribbon Workplace Project accredits workplaces who meet certain criteria based on a strong leadership and organisational commitment to a workplace culture of zero tolerance for violence against women as well as evidence of policies and practices which support employees experiencing domestic violence.

The Australian Human Rights Commission 'bystander' project acknowledges the importance of bystanders – employers, work colleagues, union delegates – in establishing a zero tolerance approach to violence against women in workplaces.

Unfortunately, in reality, it is still often the victim of domestic violence who pays the price for their abusive partner's crime. Indeed, this is often the goal of the abuser, as without a job, their victim has no economic independence and is less likely to be able to escape their control

⁴ Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, (FDVCH), UNSW, "Domestic Violence Workplace Rights and Entitlement Project" 2011.

and violence. For example, in one case, a childcare worker, whose abusive partner breached a domestic violence order and entered the centre at which she worked was dismissed by her employer on the grounds she placed the children at risk.⁶

4. Workplace entitlements that support employees experiencing domestic violence

The ACTU, Unions and Trades and Labour Councils recognise the critical importance of supporting women experiencing domestic violence to remain in employment if they are to escape the cycle of violence.

For a number of years, unions have been bargaining with employers for the inclusion of domestic violence leave provisions in workplace agreements. Unions are also committed to pursuing other entitlements that are particularly relevant to those experiencing domestic violence including an enforceable right to request flexible work arrangements and additional carer's leave.

The ACTU recognises the important role that bargaining has in setting a pace for cultural change and establishing good employment practices in workplaces where it occurs. Such bargaining outcomes play a significant role in paving the way for legislative change to minimum conditions for all workers including those who do not benefit from workplace bargaining.

Paid Domestic Violence leave

Over 1.6 million employees now have access to paid domestic violence leave negotiated by their unions and employers in workplace agreements.

Paid domestic violence leave is designed to assist victims of domestic violence to remain in paid employment, support them through the process of escaping violence and to promote safe and secure workplaces for them and their work colleagues. The leave is based on an employees need to, for example, attend court appearances and related appointments, seek legal advice, and make re-location arrangements.

Paid domestic violence leave recognises that it is largely women, who, as a result of the violence, are more likely to have broken employment histories, have insufficient paid leave accumulated and can least afford to take unpaid leave at a time where financial security is critical.

The ACTU has developed 7 key principles to evaluate and guide the implementation of paid domestic violence leave provisions across all workplaces. In our view, a best practice leave provision must meet the following criteria:

- i. The leave must be paid leave;
 - ii. There must be a workplace contact for employees who wish to disclose domestic violence;
 - iii. The role and responsibilities of the person whom an employee has disclosed domestic violence, including union delegates, must be clear;
 - iv. Processes and procedures to ensure confidentiality for employees disclosing domestic violence, including employee record must be clear;
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- v. The clause must address mandatory reporting and Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) requirements if relevant;
- vi. The clause must include anti-discrimination protections for employees disclosing domestic violence; and
- vii. Training and support must be provided for all employees; in particular those who are likely to have an employee disclose circumstances related to domestic violence to them.

Unions have pursued family and domestic violence related entitlements through negotiations with employers across almost all sectors of the economy. A range of paid leave entitlements have been negotiated. At the higher end, agreements entitle employees to unlimited or 20 days paid leave for absences related to family violence per year which may be taken as consecutive or single or fractions of days as required and there is no qualifying period.

Flexible Workplace Arrangements

Unions commonly negotiate flexibilities for employees experiencing domestic violence that supplement those provided by legislation.

The *Fair Work Act 2009* ('FW Act') enables employees experiencing family violence to request flexible working arrangements. Employee requests are based on the need to adapt to changed caring arrangements, move house, or alter work routines to better protect the employee from an abusive partner.

Unfortunately, the right to request flexible work arrangements under the Fair Work Act:

- does not require employers to reasonably accommodate an employees' request; and
- denies employees the right to appeal an unreasonable refusal of a request.⁷

Unions have successfully improved on these arrangements by negotiating an obligation on the employers to accommodate employee requests⁸ and a right for employees to appeal an employer's unreasonable refusal.

Personal/Carers Leave

Unions have also pursued provisions that complement the provisions of the FW Act in relation to personal/carers leave that directly benefit employees who are victims of domestic violence and/or care for victims of domestic violence.

The FW Act currently provides paid personal / carer's leave of 10 days per year for:

- a) personal illness or injury affecting the employee; or
- b) to provide care or support to a member of the employee's immediate family or household who requires care because of illness or injury or an unexpected emergency affecting the member.

Unions have successfully negotiated personal/carers leave entitlements in workplace agreements that:

⁷ S.186(6) FWA

- extend the scope of paid personal/carer's leave so that it is available to employees who care or expect to care for a dependant who reasonably relies on the employee for care;
- extend the scope of personal / carer's leave to include a broader range of carer responsibilities not limited to illness, injury or emergencies;
- increase the amount of (dedicated) paid carer's leave; and
- expressly accommodate the needs of employees experiencing domestic violence to care for, support or make necessary arrangements for dependents.⁹

5. The need for further workplace law reform in assisting employees experiencing domestic violence to maintain financial independence

The current system of enterprise bargaining is predicated on the capacity to tailor arrangements to the individual needs of a workplace, provided that the arrangements agreed on are superior to those established by the minimum safety net. The considerable differences in bargaining power of groups of employees' limits the capacity to deliver entitlements equally to workers through workplace bargaining alone. Women generally, and especially those employed in low paid sectors or on a part-time or casual basis, have the lowest bargaining power.¹⁰

Employees experiencing family violence are especially likely to have a history of disrupted work patterns, be on lower incomes or be employed in casual and part-time employment and are therefore less likely to be able to negotiate domestic violence related provisions through the bargaining process.¹¹

For this reason, the ACTU advocates for the inclusion of paid domestic violence leave, an enforceable right to request flexible work arrangements and additional carers leave entitlements to be included in the safety net which applies to all workers.

The ACTU and affiliated unions have made an application for paid domestic violence leave to be included in all Modern Awards as part of the 2014 Modern Award Review process. The ACTU's claim is detailed further below.

6. The ACTU's claim for Paid Domestic Violence Leave

The ACTU and unions are currently pursuing 10 days paid domestic violence leave as a minimum entitlement for all employees covered by the FW Act, including employees in Victoria, through the 4 yearly Review of Modern Awards.

Modern awards operate in conjunction with the National Employment Standards contained in the FW Act to provide a safety net of legally enforceable, minimum terms and conditions of employment for all employees covered by Act, including private sector employees in Victoria.

⁹ For example, the Australian Services Union (ASU) and Surf Coast Shire Workplace Agreement Family Violence Clause provides that an employee may take carer's leave to accompany someone who is experiencing domestic violence to court, to hospital, or to mind their children.

¹⁰ ABS 6306.0, May 2012

¹¹ M Costello, D Chung & E Carson, 'Exploring Pathways out of Poverty: Making Connections Between Domestic Violence and Employment Practices' (2005) Australian Journal of Social Issues 253, 256;

S Franzway, C Zufferey & D Chung, 'Domestic Violence and Women's Employment' (Paper presented at Our Work ,

Our claim will ensure that all employees have access to a stand-alone paid leave entitlement that may be used for the purposes of attending legal proceedings, counselling, appointments with a medical or legal practitioner, relocation or making other safety arrangements; and other activities associated with the experience of family and domestic violence.

Employees experiencing domestic violence are likely to have exhausted their paid leave entitlements such as annual leave and personal/carers leave and commonly have to choose between loss of their job and much needed income or placing their safety and the safety of their children at risk.

The inclusion of domestic violence leave in Modern Awards ensures that the entitlement is available to all employees affected by domestic violence as a matter of law and removes the need for employees facing extremely difficult circumstances to negotiate with their employer in order to take time off work.

The ACTU claim includes a number of provisions that ensure the leave is accessible to employees in practice, operates fairly, and is workable for businesses. In summary the proposed modern award clause provides that:

- For the purpose of accessing the proposed leave entitlement, family and domestic violence is defined as any violent, threatening or other abusive behaviour by a person against a member of the person's family or household (current or former).
- The employer must provide employees with referral information about specialist support services.
- The employee must give his or her employer notice as soon as reasonably practicable of their request to take leave. Note that this will not necessarily require employees to provide notice in advance of using the leave.
- The employee must provide evidence that would satisfy a reasonable person that the leave is for the purpose of attending medical appointments, legal proceedings, legal assistance, court appearances, counselling, relocation, the making of safety arrangements or other activities associated with the experience of family and domestic violence. Such evidence may include a document issued by the police service, a court, a doctor (including a medical certificate), district nurse, maternal and child health care nurse, a family violence support service or lawyer, or a statutory declaration.
- The employer must take all reasonable measures to ensure that any personal information provided by the employee concerning an employee's experience of family and domestic violence is kept confidential.

The claim also includes up to 2 days unpaid family and domestic violence leave on each occasion for employees that have exhausted their paid leave entitlements.

The ACTU's claim is not intended to provide a best practice model for domestic violence leave. Rather it provides a minimum standard that ensures all employees experiencing domestic violence have access to minimum paid leave entitlements.

Unions will continue to pursue family and domestic violence related entitlements through negotiations with employers that complement these arrangements including additional paid leave, provisions that expressly enable leave to be taken as consecutive days or a fraction of a day as required and obligations on employers to provide their staff with further training in relation to domestic violence.

At the ACTU Congress on the 26-28th of May, the Congress passed a resolution that:

- Calls on employers to accept their role in taking a stand against violence against women by withdrawing their objections to the ACTU claim for inclusion of paid domestic violence leave in the award safety net;

- Commits to campaign for the inclusion of paid domestic violence leave in the National Employment Standards;
- Calls on all political parties to support the inclusion of paid domestic violence leave as a minimum safety net entitlement; and
- Calls on the Federal government to acknowledge the suite of measures required to reduce violence against women by providing adequate funding for domestic violence support services.

The ACTU's claim has also recently been endorsed by Rosie Batty, domestic violence campaigner and Australian of the Year.¹²

In this context and for all of the reasons outlined above, we urge the Commission to specifically recommend that:

- a) the Victorian Government publicly support the ACTU's claim for paid domestic violence leave as a minimum award entitlement for all employees; and
- b) implement workplace agreements that ensure public sector employees receive paid leave entitlements that are at least as beneficial as those contained in the ACTU claim.

6. The role of discrimination laws in protecting and support employees experiencing domestic violence

As noted above, victims of domestic violence are often fearful of disclosing their circumstances to their employer because of the risk of being discriminated against.

The *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)* ('EO Act') is the primary anti-discrimination legislation in the Victorian jurisdiction. The EO Act protects people with certain attributes from discrimination on the basis of those attributes. The EO Act makes no reference to employees that experience discrimination because they are victims of domestic violence. Consequently access to remedies for discrimination on the grounds of domestic violence are restricted to those people who are able to 'fit' the discrimination under the indirect heads of status as a parent or carer, sex, physical or mental disability. This is an obvious limitation that would be remedied by the addition of discrimination on the grounds of circumstances relating to domestic violence.

Further, The FW Act provide protection for employees from adverse action (including dismissal) by their employer:

- a) because the employee exercises a workplace right (such as an entitlement to domestic violence leave or the right to request flexible work arrangements); or
- b) on discriminatory grounds, including family or carers responsibilities, sex, physical or mental disability.

However section 351 (2) of the FW Act provides a significant exception to the protections in section 351 (1) because, inter alia, the protection '*does not apply to action that is not unlawful under any anti-discrimination law in force in the place where the action is taken.*' As there is currently no protection against discrimination on the grounds of circumstances relating to domestic violence in State or Federal anti-discrimination legislation, the FW Act provisions, limited as they are, are negated by the operation of the exception in s.351(2).

¹² <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-26/rosie-batty-calls-for-annual-leave-for-domestic-violence->

Meaningful protection of victims of domestic violence from discrimination must start from the premise of amending anti-discrimination and employment legislation to include circumstances relating to domestic violence as a ground for discrimination.

The EO Act should be amended to include the personal characteristic 'status as a victim of domestic violence' among the list of attributes protected from discrimination.

6. The role of work health and safety laws to protect and support employees experiencing domestic violence

In a study of partner stalking (defined as unwanted, repeated attention that is threatening and invokes fear), 95% of women with violent partners who stalked them experienced harassment at their workplace.¹³ The Victorian Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework identifies stalking as one of the risk factors that can lead to the victim being killed.

According to O'Leary-Kelly et al, domestic violence perpetrators target victims at work to increase their control and compromise the victim's economic independence.¹⁴ Intimate partner violence is motivated by a desire to control the intimate partner, so perpetrators who extend their abuse to the work setting are increasing the number of domains in which they control their partners. Further, by harassing, stalking and threatening the target at work, perpetrators may succeed in getting the victim fired and thereby increase the victim's dependence.¹⁵

It is the right of every worker to a safe and healthy work environment. Employers have a legal duty to take all reasonable measures to provide a safe workplace and protect the welfare of their employees at work, including employees facing a domestic violence related threat.

However, anecdotal evidence from unions identifies a gap in both employers understanding of their obligations in relation to employees experiencing domestic violence, the safety of all employees in the workplace and the implementation and enforcement generally of existing regulation as it relates to domestic violence.

This gap needs to be addressed by:

- a) The implementation of programs to educate and support employers on their Workplace Health and Safety obligations;
- b) The explicit reference to domestic violence in all Workplace Health and Safety legislation, Codes and Guidelines to clarify employer's obligations; and
- c) Information to employees to clarify their rights and entitlements under Workplace Health and Safety legislation, Codes and Guidelines

We note that the Australian Law Reform Commission into Family Violence and Commonwealth Laws (Improving Legal Frameworks) 2011 made the following recommendations in relation to family violence and work health and safety:

Recommendation 18–1 Safe Work Australia should, in developing or reviewing its Research and Data Strategy or other relevant strategies:

1. identify family violence and work health and safety as a research priority;

¹³ Logan et al, 2007

¹⁴ O'Leary-Kelly et al, 2008 p.6

2. examine the effect of the harmonised legislative and regulatory OHS scheme on duties and obligations owed in relation to family violence as a possible work health and safety issue; and
3. consider ways to extend and improve data coverage, collection and analysis in relation to family violence and its impact as a work health and safety issue.

Recommendation 18–2 As part of the national education and awareness campaign in Recommendation 15–1, Safe Work Australia should work with the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, unions, employer organisations, State and Territory OHS regulators and other relevant bodies to:

1. raise awareness about family violence and its impact as a possible work health and safety issue; and
2. develop and provide education and training in relation to family violence as a possible work health and safety issue.

Recommendation 18–3 Safe Work Australia should consider including information on family violence as a possible work health and safety issue in relevant Model Codes of Practice, for example:

1. ‘How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks’;
2. ‘Managing the Work Environment and Facilities’;
3. ‘How to Consult on Work Health and Safety’;
4. ‘Preventing and Responding to Workplace Bullying’; and
5. any other code that Safe Work Australia may develop in relation to other relevant topics, such as workplace violence and psychosocial hazards.

In light of these recommendations, the ACTU submits that :

- a) the Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Act (2004) and Regulations (2007) should be amended to clarify that the OHS obligations imposed on employers under that Act require a response to acts or threats of family violence; and
- b) The Victoria Government and WorkSafe Victoria should work co-operatively with Safe Work Australia, unions, employer organisations, and other relevant bodies to:
 - raise awareness about family violence and its impact as a possible work health and safety issue;
 - develop and provide education and training in relation to family violence as a possible work health and safety issue; and
- c) WorkSafe Victoria should ensure that information provided to employers and employees incorporates family violence as a work health and safety issue.

7. The role of workplaces in driving social, cultural and behavioural change

Government, employers and unions must develop policies and guidelines to compliment any legislative or workplace entitlements. Effort must be focused on changing underlying cultural and community attitudes to violence against women and children as well as the responses of community agencies to victims of violence. Employers, unions and employees are part of this broader community culture and their support and understanding of the issues will be critical to the successful implementation of any legislative reform in workplaces.

Training and support of employers, union staff and delegates and employees in relation to legislative reforms as well as their rights and responsibilities and the provision of resource and referral information will be critical to the effectiveness of any legislative reform in workplaces.

Workplaces can be critical in sending a message of zero tolerance of violence against women by providing a workplace culture which is supportive of employees experiencing domestic violence from leadership and across all levels of organisation. Workplaces should provide information, resources, policies and practices which demonstrate their commitment to zero tolerance of violence against women.

The implementation of a minimum entitlement to paid domestic violence leave would have a significant impact on community attitudes as it sends a clear signal to employers and employees that victims of domestic violence are entitled to receive support at the workplace and should not be blamed for the impact that domestic violence has on their performance at work.

8. The importance of decent wages and savings in mitigating women's vulnerability to experiencing violence.

There is evidence that women with a history of domestic violence have a more disrupted work record, have to change jobs more often and consequently are on lower personal incomes, and are employed at higher levels in casual and part time work than women with no experience of violence.¹⁶

The financial effect of domestic violence on women has consequences for their long-term well-being. Ludo McFerran's study into the link between domestic violence and homelessness amongst older women found that low savings make women vulnerable to major life crises, such as divorce or ill-health, from which they are never able to financially recover due to a lack of savings or an adequate earnings base. Ironically, poverty often places these women in circumstances, such as homelessness, which increase the risk of violence and abuse.¹⁷

As a result of the gender pay gap and the high proportion of women that take time off work in order to care for their children, women are already significantly disadvantaged in the accumulation of adequate earnings and retirement savings.

The ACTU believes that Government action is required to remedy the gender income and savings gap generally and assist women to build financial security and resilience to life crises, including domestic violence.

In addition to the specific reforms outlined above, the ACTU and unions advocate for the following measures:

- a) The principle of 'equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value' must be paramount in all relevant legislation and practices relating to the setting of wages and conditions;
- b) Legislative provisions and policy must acknowledge and specifically assist and protect women in weak workplace bargaining positions;
- c) Workplace entitlements which encourage greater female participation and enable women to stay in the labour market such as paid parental leave should be accessible to all employees;
- d) The legislative provisions that require businesses to provide annual reports on gender representation to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) must be retained. Business should also be required to disclose these reports in annual general meetings and accounting standards;

¹⁶ Family Violence Prevention Fund 1998

¹⁷ Ludo McFerran, "It Could be You: Female, Single, Older and Homeless", August 2010

- e) Superannuation for women should be improved by:
- maintaining the Low Income Contribution Scheme until a progressive system of superannuation taxation concessions is implemented;
 - extending the Superannuation Guarantee entitlement to all employees regardless of minimum earnings;
 - payment of superannuation during all periods of paid and unpaid parental and maternity leave;
 - payment of superannuation contributions by Government on behalf of long term carers in receipt of carer payments or allowances; and
 - payment of an extra 2% superannuation for woman workers.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

The workplace, and the financial independence that employment provides, is a critical factor in reducing the negative consequences of domestic violence and enabling those affected to move on with their lives.

Employment related reforms are an indispensable aspect of a suite of social policy and service delivery measures required to better protect and support those in our community who experience domestic violence.

Safe and secure employment is a preventative measure, which is cost effective, can be delivered relatively easily and sends a strong message that violence against women is not tolerated.

It is particularly important that all employees have access to paid domestic violence leave for the purposes of attending legal proceedings, counselling, appointments with a medical or legal practitioner, relocation or making other safety arrangements.

We commend the recommendations put forward in this submission to the Commission and would be pleased to assist with further information or discussion of our submission if the Commission so pleases.