




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BILL

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (10.48 pm): As Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, I am so proud to lend my support to the Industrial Relations Bill which, if passed, will make Queensland the first jurisdiction to legislate for domestic and family violence leave.

Domestic and family violence is absolutely a workplace issue. Two-thirds of women who experience domestic and family violence are in the workforce, and when workers are affected by domestic and family violence the organisation suffers from increased absenteeism, a reduction in performance and safety for everyone and victims, and their colleagues can be put at risk. For some women the workplace is the only place they feel safe and the only space where they have to talk to someone about the violence and the intimidation they experience at home. Their workmates may be the only people in their lives who can help them plan and execute their exit, and of course it is almost impossible to leave a violent relationship without an income.

The Queensland government was told in the *Not now, not ever* report to act as a model employer, and we have. We have implemented 10 days leave as part of supportive workplace packages across government; training for staff in the form of recognise, respond and refer online training which empowers staff to support their colleagues experiencing violence; \$6.8 million for the training of front-line professionals to support the delivery of quality services to upskill workers, particularly in rural and remote locations; and of course we have joined the national campaign calling for 10 days paid leave in the National Employment Standards. We think that more organisations should join major companies like Telstra, NAB, Virgin Australia and Ikea to provide this much needed leave to their employees.

Sadly, this position does not have the federal government's support. Senator Michaelia Cash, who holds the industrial relations, employment and women portfolios, says that domestic and family violence leave could provide a 'perverse disincentive' from hiring women. We have heard that before: it is the same argument once used against maternity leave, which is now considered a universal right. What would we expect from a government that has instructed agencies and departments to reject paid domestic and family violence leave provisions in Public Service bargaining, which was a move criticised by everyone from the YWCA to the Human Rights Commission.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions is currently running a case in the Fair Work Commission for 10 days paid domestic violence leave in addition to any other paid leave entitlements to attend doctors appointments, court hearings, finding somewhere safe to live or a new school for children et cetera without putting their job at risk. Along with my colleagues Minister Grace and Minister Bailey, I attended an event to mark the first day of this case before the commission as part of the 'We Won't Wait' campaign. I was very pleased when Brisbane hosted the national COAG summit on reducing violence against women. Our Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk joined the Victorian and South Australian premiers in lending support for the inclusion of domestic violence leave in the National Employment Standards.

Queensland is once again leading the way in this important policy area, and it is adding to the tremendous reforms already achieved in combating domestic and family violence which will be a lasting legacy of the Palaszczuk government. I commend the bill to the House and eagerly await the outcome of the Fair Work Commission.