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# Media Release

## Reproductive leave? It's For Every Body campaign launches today

Workers could take paid leave for IVF treatment, chronic conditions such as endometriosis or menstrual issues, prostate or breast cancer screening, vasectomy recovery or other reproductive health issues under a union campaign launching today.

The It's For Every Body campaign wants new laws to provide up to 10 days paid leave for workers to address reproductive health issues that impact on their capacity to work.

Queensland Council of Unions General Secretary Jacqueline King said this leave will help provide support and flexibility for workers when their reproductive health negatively affects them and their capacity for work. It also recognises the need for preventative health care.

"Reproductive health can affect every body, at every stage of their working life," she said.

"Reproductive leave is an industrial matter, a work health and safety matter, and a community wide issue."

She said the campaign had the support of more than 25 Queensland unions, representing 400,000 workers.

Maurice Blackburn Lawyer Jessica Heron said "union surveys show that the stigma associated with the reproductive body prevents workers from seeking flexibility to manage their symptoms at work."

"We see Reproductive Leave as a step towards pushing the cultural shift needed, and modernising industrial relations laws to reflect the needs of the current workforce."

"This issue may appear new to some, but it's the stigma associated with reproductive health concerns like menopause and menstruation, which has prevented workers from speaking up in the past. The issue is just finally having a light shone on it."

Reproductive Leave covers additional leave that may be required for workers with chronic medical issues related to menstruation and menopause and managing issues such as time off for IVF treatment. It also includes a component of preventative health leave for workers dealing with vasectomies, hysterectomies, end of pregnancies and breast, cervical and prostate screening.

Ms King said data backed up the widespread impact of reproductive health issues on the community.

Research shows that more than 90 per cent of women have gone to work with debilitating period pain, with 77 per cent of that group saying it impacted on their ability to work.

One in six Australian families experience fertility issues, and one in 18 babies in Australia is now born through IVF.

Prostate cancer is the most diagnosed cancer in Australia with one in seven men affected. Early detection through preventative screening is key to improving survival rates.

Ms King said the campaign will highlight stories from workers affected by their reproductive health, talk with employers, undertake community actions, and lobby government on incorporating these changes in workplace laws.

"Reproductive leave is an investment in people and the workforce," said Ms King.

***(see key elements of policy page 2)***

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[www.ItsForEveryBody.au](http://www.ItsForEveryBody.au)

## **Key Elements of Reproductive Health Leave Policy**

- 10 days paid non-cumulative reproductive health leave per annum.
- The entitlement applies to all employees other than casual employees.
- Part time employees can access reproductive health leave on a pro rata basis.
- Leave can be taken as a block, in multiple or single day absences or part thereof.
- The entitlement applies where an employee has a reproductive health reason and –
  - i) the employee is unfit for work because of the reproductive health reason affecting them; or
  - ii) the employee needs to do something to deal with the reproductive health reason, including a preventative healthcare measure and it is impractical to do that thing outside the employee's work hours.
- Reproductive health reasons include –
  - a condition or illness, whether temporary or permanent, related to reproductive health, including pregnancy, fertility, endometriosis, the menopause, dysmenorrhea; and
  - any other experience of pain or discomfort relating to menstruation.
- A preventative reproductive healthcare measure includes:
  - monitoring for healthcare issues related to prostate or for cervical or breast screening;
  - surgery or other treatment relating to reproductive organs.
- Payment for paid reproductive health leave is at an employee's base rate of pay for the employee's ordinary hours of work in the period of leave (commensurate with existing arrangements for paid carer's sick leave and compassionate leave).
- Notice and evidence requirements are consistent with existing arrangements for other forms of sick and carer's leave, but also could include a pre-existing certificate by a medical or other healthcare professional where an employee has a chronic or recurring reproductive issue.