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Victoria's public servants offered \$5600 cost of living payment, better women's health

Blair Jackson April 9 2024

Public servants in one state have been offered hefty cost of living payments and extended reproductive health leave under an agreement between unions and the government.

Victorian public and community sector workers are now entitled to period and reproductive leave under a collective agreement minted on Tuesday. The state Treasurer signed the agreement after two weeks of enterprise bargaining with the Community and Public Sector Union through an independent bargaining facilitator.

The four-year deal will extend leave entitlements to recognise reproductive rights, menstruation and menopause.

Superannuation payments on parental leave have doubled to 104 weeks, with parental leave payments to the primary carer reflecting actual pay.

Full-time workers will get a one-off \$5600 cost of living lump sum payment to be paid as soon as possible after the agreement is voted on by the Victoria Public Service Union and approved by the Fair Work Commission.

Shift workers will get a \$1000 lump sum as well.

Speaking on Tuesday before the agreement was signed off by the Treasurer, Premier Jacinta Allen said she agreed with and supported the new deal.

The reproductive rights components were a recognition that at particular points in women's lives, they needed support to participate in the workplace.

The new extra five days of leave entitlements can be used for menstruation, menopause and IVF and other reproductive health conditions.

Pain was holding women back in the workplace, the Premier said.

Asked whether the public service agreement would be mirrored in the private sector, Ms Allen said that was a matter for the private sector.

But she compared the support needed for women's reproductive rights to the support Defence Force veterans needed in the workforce.

On Tuesday, the Premier announced a 1500 veteran-employment target had been met a year of head of schedule, and the target lifted by a further 300.

Research commissioned by the state government — released in January — found two in five Victorian women live with chronic pain linked to periods, pregnancy, birth and post-natal care, or conditions like endometriosis.

About half of the 1700 participants reported heavy periods, cramping and premenstrual syndrome affected their health and wellbeing, the research found.