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Labor-linked think tank backs 12 days reproductive leave

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In the wake of IR Minister Tony Burke ruling out inserting reproductive health leave into the Fair Work Act, a new report from the Labor-aligned McKell Institute report is calling on Canberra to legislate 12 days of paid leave in the National Employment Standards, to address the long "overlooked" effects of reproductive health issues, including missed work and employment opportunities.

The [Suffering in Silence](#) report observes that to access personal or carers leave a worker must be ill or injured, which is not applicable for workers experiencing menstruation; "an ordinary part of the biological process".

McKell Institute directors and authors of the report, Gemma Beale and Sarah Mawhinney, said that women have led the charge for reproductive leave, but it is important to acknowledge that trans men and gender diverse workers also experience menstruation, menopause, endometriosis, and pregnancy loss, and the leave extends to health issues like vasectomies relevant to men, trans women and gender diverse workers.

They said that the fight for reproductive leave began with calls for menstrual and menopause leave, to recognise that "menstruation is a normal and unavoidable part of life for half of the working population; a core component of reproductive health; and a necessary component of human reproduction", but expanding the entitlement to reproductive leave acknowledged that other reproductive health issues also affect workers' lives.

"A failure to provide paid leave and a safe environment to raise these health issues leads to absenteeism and, in some severe cases, workers exiting the workforce," issues that are compounded in male-dominated industries, the researchers said.

The report indicated that inserting paid reproductive leave into the NES would contribute to the Government's aims to increase women's economic participation "by levelling the playing field for workers experiencing reproductive issues", reducing absences and increasing productivity.

Earlier this month, workplace relations minister Tony Burke ruled out legislating to insert 10 days' paid reproductive health leave into the NES, but the union campaign continues (see Related Articles [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).

[Suffering in Silence, Making the case for reproductive leave in Australia, by SA/NT executive director Dr Gemma Beale and Queensland executive director Sarah Mawhinney, McKell Institute, June 19, 2024](#)

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