

# Period friendly workplaces

A how to guide for union officials



**Start by asking the manager or Human Resources representative:**  
Do you know any workers who experience painful periods?

**If they answer yes**

Ask what policies they have in place to support them

**If they answer no**

Then this may indicate that a taboo exists in their workplace relating to menstruation (as many as 80% of women will experience pain related to menstruation in their lifetime, according to the Medical Journal of Australia).

Did you know that 75% of workers surveyed would prefer to say they have some other illness than a painful period? Can you tell me why this might be? Do you think there is stigma for workers experiencing painful periods in their workplace?

## Consequences of the stigma

- You may have levels of absenteeism that you're not currently aware of
- You have higher chances of employees quiet quitting
- It's likely your organisation has exhausted employees who aren't prioritising their health, which can contribute to burn-out and subsequent injuries and/or staff turnover, and
- In the absence of any reproductive health policies, your organisation is unfortunately perpetuating stigma associated with menstruation.

## How can you remove the stigma?

Introduce workplace policies and make them public, in order of impressiveness:

- Provide workers with 10 days additional paid leave for reproductive health reasons (including painful periods)
- Provide workers with access to flexible work arrangements for reproductive health reasons (including painful periods)
- Tell employees they can utilise their existing personal leave for painful periods
- Provide free sanitary products in staff bathrooms
- Tell employees that you're a menstruation friendly employer.

## Why can employers stand to benefit from these policies?

- Your organisation will be more inclusive, making it an employer of choice
- Employee productivity levels will increase and absenteeism will decline
- Your organisation will set an industry example to other employers, and
- Your workplace will thrive, with healthier, happier workers.

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