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Local Government

ASU bargains for world's best family violence provision in council enterprise agreement

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By ASU-Victorian Authorities & Services Branch

Australian Services Union members last week voted to endorse a new enterprise agreement at Surf Coast Shire which contains a provision for paid Family Violence leave which is being heralded as the best of its kind around the world.

Employees at the Shire will have access to up to 20 days paid leave per year if they are victims of family violence, in a bid to ensure security of employment for a person experiencing such issues.

ASU Assistant Victorian Branch Secretary Lisa Darmanin said that the new Surf Coast Shire clause would help victims of family violence hold down a stable job and maintain a career path.

"Family violence can interrupt women's lives, including their work. Escaping such a situation requires leave to secure safety for themselves and their children as well as dealing with legal, accommodation and financial matters, to name a few. Keeping your income through these times is paramount to a victim's well being and future in the workforce."

Two thirds of family violence victims are employed, with the annual direct cost of domestic violence to employers from absenteeism, staff turnover and lost productivity totalling at least \$500 million.*

"Tackling family violence needs a multi-faceted approach, including the workplace. The ASU recognises this and is committed to working with employers to fight family violence and its impacts in the workplace," said Darmanin.

ASU delegate and Surf Coast Shire employee Sharon Rowlands - responsible for putting the Clause forward for consideration - says the new clause will go a long way to improving the lives of many.

"To me, this clause is for the thousands of workers that have only one secure thing in their life - a job. If we can give people an opportunity to escape family violence without endangering the one secure thing they have, then we are giving workers and their children an opportunity to stop the misery and live in safety."

An event celebrating this achievement, involving Surf Coast Shire, the ASU, the ACTU, Domestic Violence Victoria and local family violence services will be held in late October.

Intimate partner violence alone is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged between 15 and 44.**

* Source: *Impacts and Costs of Domestic Violence on the Australian Business*, Henderson & Associates 2000

*** Source: Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development*

For further information

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