

Submission Supporting the SDA Proposal to Increase Annual Leave to 25 Days

I strongly support the SDA's proposal to amend the National Employment Standards to increase minimum annual leave from 20 days to 25 days.

The current entitlement no longer reflects the realities of modern work. Australian employees are more productive, more connected, and under greater pressure than when the NES was introduced. Long hours, digital availability, customer-facing stress, and irregular rosters are now normalised across many industries, particularly retail, fast food, and distribution.

An increase to 25 days of annual leave is a necessary and reasonable response to these conditions.

Why This Change Is Needed

1. Preventing burnout and protecting mental health

Work-related stress and burnout are rising, placing strain on individuals, families, workplaces, and the health system. Annual leave is not a luxury—it is a preventative health measure. Additional leave gives workers genuine time to recover, reducing burnout, absenteeism, and long-term disengagement from the workforce.

2. Improving productivity and retention

Well-rested employees are more productive, safer, and more committed to their work. Employers already offering additional leave report improved morale and lower turnover. Increasing the NES minimum would lift standards across the board and reduce the high costs associated with staff churn, particularly in low-paid, high-turnover sectors.

3. Fairness for frontline and lower-paid workers

Many SDA members work weekends, evenings, and public holidays, often in physically demanding and emotionally taxing roles. These workers are least likely to have access to additional leave through bargaining, yet are among those who need recovery time the most. A higher minimum entitlement promotes fairness and dignity at work.

4. Bringing Australia in line with comparable nations

Australia lags behind many comparable countries where four to six weeks of paid leave is standard. Increasing annual leave to 25 days would modernise the NES while maintaining Australia's economic competitiveness.

Conclusion

This proposal represents a modest, sensible reform that balances the needs of workers, employers, and the broader economy. It reflects contemporary work demands, community expectations, and the importance of wellbeing as a foundation for productivity.

I urge Parliament to support the SDA's proposal to increase annual leave entitlements to 25 days as a practical step toward a healthier, fairer, and more sustainable workforce.