



RTBU

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Friday 10 July 2020

SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO FAMILY, DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) thanks the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs for the opportunity to make this submission to the Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence.

The RTBU is the principal union in the public transport and rail freight industries, with over 30,000 members around Australia.

Our union has recognised that family, domestic and sexual violence are overwhelmingly (although not exclusively) the result of actions and behaviours by men. As such, family, domestic and sexual violence is a problem largely caused by male attitudes. It therefore follows that the key to fixing this problem lies with men themselves. It must also be recognised that family, domestic and sexual violence is a workplace issue. It not only affects the ability of workers to perform their job, it can also happen within the workplace itself.

The RTBU's membership is approximately 75 per cent male (although the proportion of women working in our industries is steadily increasing). We feel that it is incumbent on trade unions such as ours to display leadership in relation to family violence, and to make a positive contribution to gender equality. In that regard, the 2017 RTBU National Council resolved to equip union Officials and Delegates with practical skills to recognise situations where family violence may be present, and to help drive the cultural change needed to tackle this deep-seated social problem. Since then we have engaged Griffith University's [MATE Bystander program](#) to provide training to our senior officials, and have sought to educate our members about the relationship between gender inequality and family violence.

Rail, Tram & Bus Union Australia **The Power of Union**

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Tackling domestic abuse and family violence remains a priority for our Union. This submission reflects the anecdotal feedback and discussions that the RTBU National Office has had with union officials, organisers and rank and file members over the past three years, and focuses on two issues:

- Driving cultural change, and
- The role of workplaces.

TOR: Immediate and long-term measures to prevent violence against women and their children, and improve gender equality.

The RTBU asserts long-term measures to prevent family, domestic and sexual violence must involve:

1: Broad education and awareness raising programs

Our experience with the MATE Bystander Program has shown that courses such as these can help drive positive change at the workplace level. We recognise, however, that community-level change requires education at scale. In short, there should be a concerted national effort to make sure all workers have access to these programs. As a model employer, the Federal Government should take the lead and require all government agencies to provide bystander intervention training and workplace gender equality training for their staff. Moreover, a national advertising campaign should be conducted to encourage private businesses to provide such training courses for their own employees.

The RTBU recommends the Federal Government ensures that all agencies and government-owned business enterprises include training in bystander intervention and gender equality as a standard component of workplace education and training for all employees.

It is the RTBU's understanding that training courses dealing with issues such as bystander intervention and gender relations in the workplace are tax deductible. The RTBU contends that the Federal Government should work collaboratively with employers and trade unions to promote these courses to private sector employees.

The RTBU recommends the Federal Government form a task with trade unions, employers and the community sector to promote greater private sector uptake of training courses that address family violence and gender equality.

2. Intervention programs targeted at people who use forms of violence in their personal relationships.

The RTBU supports the work of No to Violence, the national peak body for organisations and individuals who work with men to end family violence. No To Violence also manages the national Men's Referral Service, which provides counselling, information and referral services around the country and is the central point of contact for men taking responsibility for their violent behaviour.

Many of the organisations involved in No To Violence deliver Men's Behaviour Change programs. These intervention programs are aimed specifically at men who use violence, and are therefore at the 'pointy end' of domestic violence prevention. While these program work on a micro level, they deliver real and tangible outputs.

Too often, however, Men's Behaviour Change programs are overlooked in governmental responses to domestic and family violence. This may be because governments have been reluctant to be seen to be

helping domestic violence perpetrators. Genuine change cannot happen, however, if governments fail to engage with men, and specifically with men who use violence.

The RTBU recommends that the Federal Government assist the States by providing significant national funding for the delivery of accredited Men's Behaviour Change programs around Australia.

TOR: Any other related matters.

The RTBU recognises that the issue of control is at the heart of domestic violence. A partner that seeks control, and is prepared to use violence and intimidation to achieve it, often also has control over the couple's finances, housing arrangements and possessions. Breaking away in such a situation can be a logistical, emotional and legal nightmare. When you throw in the needs of children, and the complications in this scenario increase tenfold.

The element of control is why so many women find it hard to escape from violent and abusive relationship. In these circumstances, victims need time: time to find a place to live, time to see a doctor, time to set up new bank accounts and establish financial independence, time to enrol children in new schools, time to get counselling and professional support, and so on. For victims who are also trying to hold down a job, that could be time they just don't have.

This is why paid domestic and family violence leave can be a life saver. It is also why the RTBU has long campaigned for workers to be able to access paid domestic and family violence leave, and we have successfully negotiated for such provisions to be included in a number of Enterprise Agreements in our industries.

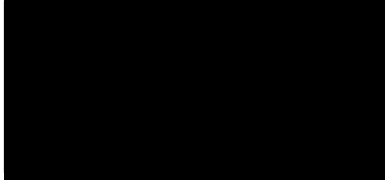
The RTBU provides employees experiencing family and domestic violence with up to 20 days paid family and domestic violence leave per year. This leave is in addition to the existing leave entitlement and may be taken as whole days or as part days. Furthermore, an employee who provides support to an immediate family member who is experiencing domestic violence is entitled to access 5 days per year of paid domestic violence leave.

We note that the National Employment Standards were amended in 2019 to include a provision of five days unpaid Domestic and Family Violence Leave.

The RTBU recommends that the National Employment Standards be further amended to provide for 10 days paid domestic violence leave for workers to attend court proceedings, counselling, medical or legal appointments, re-location or safety arrangements and other related activities, plus a further two days unpaid domestic violence leave per occasion if a worker's paid leave is exhausted.

If you have any questions about this submission, please contact RTBU National Executive Officer
[REDACTED] by email at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

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Mark Diamond
NATIONAL SECRETARY