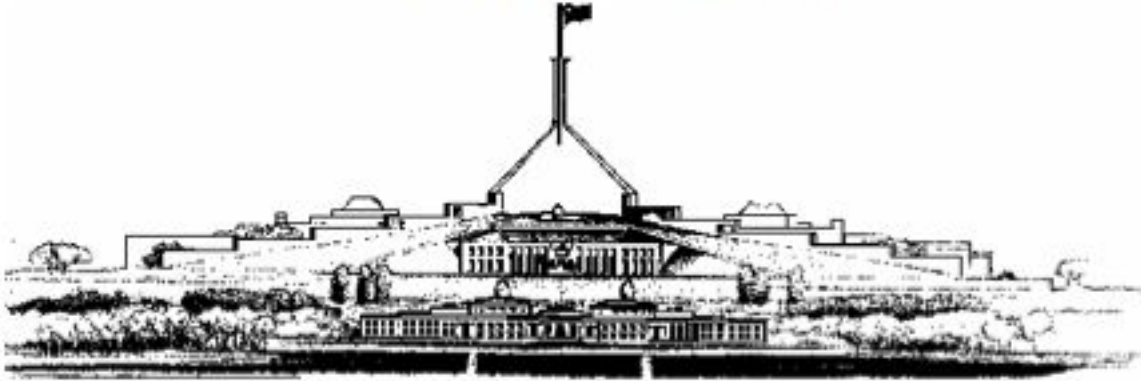




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**BILLS**

**Fair Work Amendment (Paid Family  
and Domestic Violence Leave) Bill 2022**

**Consideration of Senate Message**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 27 October 2022**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

<b>Date</b> Thursday, 27 October 2022	<b>Source</b> House
<b>Page</b> 3	<b>Proof</b> Yes
<b>Questioner</b>	<b>Responder</b>
<b>Speaker</b> Burke, Tony MP	<b>Question No.</b>

**Mr BURKE** (Watson—Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Minister for the Arts and Leader of the House) (09:04): Every worker has the right to be safe at work and safe at home. This is a workplace entitlement that will save lives, that can make all the difference to workers who are experiencing family and domestic violence and need to get out. In the Senate inquiry, the committee received and considered many extremely expert and compelling submissions, but one particular case study stood out for me in the submission from the Australian Services Union, on behalf of Cynthia. It read as follows:

Going to work was the only time that I felt safe, and it gave me a chance to find help to leave my husband. He started sending me threatening texts and emails and would call my office constantly demanding to speak with me and frightening the receptionist if I didn't answer his calls.

... ..

I was constantly tired, sick and often injured. He insisted on coming to our work Christmas party and one of my colleagues made a formal complaint that he had sexually harassed her at the party. I was incredibly embarrassed. When I tried to leave him, my husband turned up at work and demanded to see me. He waited for me in the car park at night time and attacked me, pulling out most of my hair. My friends at work were terrified. My employer said 'enough'. I couldn't cope anymore and had no choice but to leave my job.

It is the stories like Cynthia's that are the reason for the Fair Work Amendment (Paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave) Bill 2022 being the very first bill I introduced as minister for workplace relations. It's clear that this issue is widely and deeply felt in the parliament, and the community expects us to take urgent action. We heard many powerful and moving contributions during debate on this bill, including from Senator Nita Green, from Queensland, who spoke about her personal experiences with family and domestic violence as a young child. Minister Anne Aly also spoke about her personal experiences, telling the parliament there was a time in her life when she couldn't have even imagined that she would be here in this place passing such a bill. I want to thank and commend senators from the Jacqui Lambie Network for their amendments, which will provide greater comfort to members that their sensitive personal information will be handled appropriately and confidently by their employer and that they will not experience adverse consequences as a result of disclosing their circumstances. I want to thank all my colleagues from all sides for some extraordinarily powerful contributions to this bill in the discussion.

In my second reading speech for the bill I said that as a nation we can and must do better. We need a whole-of-community response, and workplaces have a key role to play as a source of critical support for people experiencing family and domestic violence. We do need to continue to consult on what needs to be done to make sure that the entitlement is implemented safely and successfully in workplaces. We've agreed that we will review the amendments in 12 months time, which will provide an opportunity to consider if the entitlement is operating effectively.

As an immediate measure, we have a small business assistance package, which will provide \$3.4 million over four years. The package will deliver a range of holistic supports to help small businesses. This is to ensure small business can access the right advice at the right time to provide the best support to their employees experiencing family and domestic violence.

I want to, once again, thank and pay tribute to the advocates, frontline community sector organisations, workers and their unions who have campaigned so passionately for this reform and to all those who've experienced and are experiencing family and domestic violence. You have asked us to take action, and we are. This bill will not by itself solve the problem of family and domestic violence, but it does mean no employee in Australia will ever again be forced to make a choice between earning a wage and protecting the safety of themselves and their families. I want to acknowledge our incredible frontline workforce who strive every day to support and assist

individuals and families impacted by violence. I want to acknowledge those on the floor here and in the other place, my colleagues, who have campaigned for this moment for so many years. I acknowledge you and thank you for your commitment and support for those impacted by family and domestic violence. I want to acknowledge those in our community who've lost their lives due to family and domestic violence. I recognise those we've lost, those who've survived and those who, at this very moment, still feel trapped. This bill is for you, and now we take the final parliamentary step to make it law.

Question agreed to.