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MEDIA RELEASE

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New long service leave laws a win for gender equality

Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC) applauds Victorian parliamentarians for passing the Long Service Leave Bill 2017, introduced by the Victorian Government. Long service leave entitlements are now fairer for women, parents and families.

The new legislation means that people taking more than 12 months of parental leave will no longer lose continuity of service. And now any period of paid parental leave, and up to 12 months of unpaid parental leave, will actually count as service.

“This change is an important step towards closing the economic gap between men and women. It is women who are most likely to take longer periods of parental leave, and these new laws means that women will no longer lose their entitlements,” said Kristine Olaris, GEN VIC Convenor.

“Women already face disadvantage when it comes to equal pay, and most women retire with around half the superannuation of men. We’re thrilled to see the discriminatory *Long Service Leave Act 1992* replaced by a fairer system for long service leave, which will have a positive impact on women’s lives, health and wellbeing,” said Ms Olaris.

GEN VIC is also pleased to see that taking up to two years parental leave (whether paid or unpaid) will not break continuity of service for casual employees. This is particularly important for women, who are more likely to be in casual employment than men.

There’s still a long way to go to correct the social and political structures that continue to limit women’s economic equality. Not only is there a gender pay gap in every industry and occupational category in Victoria, but employees in women-dominated industries such as health care and social assistance are paid significantly less than employees in industries dominated by men. In Australia, women spend substantially more time on unpaid care work than men, which results in a loss of wages for women across their lifetime.

Gender equality will come when we change the systems and structures that discriminate against women. This change to long service leave legislation marks important progress towards equal economic outcomes for women.

- ENDS -

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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About Gender Equity Victoria

Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC) is the Victorian peak body for gender equity, women's health and the prevention of violence against women.

Gender Equity Victoria works with organisations across Victoria to advance a shared vision of gender equality, health, and freedom from violence for every woman and girl, in every community across Victoria.

www.genvic.org.au

Statistics

- In Australia, women's superannuation balances at retirement are 47 percent lower than men's
<https://clarety-wis.s3.amazonaws.com/userimages/Resources/Not%20So%20Super%20for%20Women%20-%20Superannuation%20and%20Women's%20Retirement%20Outcomes.pdf>
- In 2015-2016, Australian woman are reaching retirement with an average of \$113,660 less superannuation than the average male. As a result, women are more likely to experience poverty in their retirement years and be far more reliant on the Age Pension
www.humanrights.gov.au/education/face-facts/face-facts-gender-equality-2018
- Australia's current gender pay for full-time work is 15.3 percent. Women earn on average \$253.70 a week less than men <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/gender-pay-gap-statistics.pdf>
- Employees in female-dominated industries such as health care and social assistance are paid significantly less than employees in male-dominated industries
<https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/BCEC%20WGEA%20Gender%20Pay%20Equity%20Insights%202017%20Report.pdf>
- Women are more likely to be in casual employment than men: 25.5 percent of all female employees in Australia are casual compared to 19.7 percent of male employees
https://www.actu.org.au/media/349417/lives_on_hold.pdf
- Victorian women are over-represented as part-time workers in low-paid industries and in insecure work, and continue to be underrepresented in leadership roles in the private and public sectors
www.humanrights.gov.au/education/face-facts/face-facts-gender-equality-2018
- Women spend 64.4 percent of their average weekly working time on unpaid care work compared to 36.1 percent for men <http://mams.rmit.edu.au/91rjuiz8jw2t.pdf>
- Raising children accounts for a 17 percent loss in lifetime wages for women
<https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Parental-leave-and-gender-equality.pdf>