

Speech by Ged Kearney, Federal Secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation for the launch of domestic violence clauses – UNSW 15 April 2010

What the PSA/CPSU has done here today is a landmark action for Australian unions. Seeking to have the rights [set out in this proposal] included in industrial instruments, and therefore enforceable, is a very important step for unions in Australia. This clause doesn't only provide basic protections for those experiencing domestic violence but will make it a workplace right and an entitlement. I think what we've learnt today is that it's vitally important for all of us to take these issues to our members and ensure they have rights and proper workplace procedures in place. Australian unions must continue to be at the forefront of developing these rights because they are so relevant to our over two million members. For my part, as Federal Secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation, with about 175 000 members, 90% who of whom are women – I'm going to take this back to my Federal Executive and I'm going to urge them to implement these clauses. The thing about being a nurse is that we see all too often the consequences of domestic violence, terrible consequences, usually in emergency departments and in refuges. It's terrible for my members as nurses to see how domestic violence impacts on women, and let's face it; a lot of my own members face it themselves. This is a prime example of how unions are working for a better life for everyone: unions working for a better society and unions being leaders and agents for important social change. This really is fantastic and I can't congratulate you enough. I, too, urge UNSW to take this issue seriously, as you've shown you are today. Be at the forefront of change with us, with the union, with your women workers, because together the unions and UNSW can lead the way. They can make a real difference to the lives of your employees and to the university in such an important way.