

Speech by Tanya Plibersek, Commonwealth Minister for Housing and Minister for the Status of Women for the launch of domestic violence clauses – UNSW 15 April 2010

The cost of violence against women is enormous. Recent research shows that violence against women costs the nation \$13.6 billion each year and that figure is expected to increase by two billion dollars over the next decade if we do not put a stop to violence or at least reduce its incidence. The impact of domestic violence on women's employment has clear adverse consequences for their economic security and independence. Domestic violence reaches further into the workplace also because of injuries, absenteeism and lower performance and productivity, as victims struggle to put on a brave face at work. Victims of domestic violence are often employed in lower skilled and lower paid jobs, have disrupted work histories and less job stability. There are no simple answers. As a woman quoted in a paper prepared for the Clearinghouse said: 'When you are employed, especially if you have children, routine is everything. If I went to a refuge, I would lose my routine and have to give up my job, and I didn't want to give up my job'. While there is a long way to go, things are changing. At the enterprise level, negotiations such as the PSA/CPSU is proposing here at UNSW would allow employers and employees to determine the most supportive and flexible provisions to protect employees experiencing domestic violence, while supporting them to stay at work. This is a really exciting proposal – and if approved, will be the first of its kind in Australia. Women should not have to suffer the consequences of losing their connection with the workplace – either because they have been a victim of violence or because they have chosen to take action to stop it. By remaining connected to the workplace, a woman has a much better chance of retaining her independence after a perpetrator has been removed from the family home. Good luck to all of those involved in the campaign.