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## IEU members push for key updates and improvements to the National Employment Standards

The IEU has provided a detailed submission to the [Parliamentary Inquiry](#) into the operation and adequacy of the National Employment Standards (NES). Our [submission](#) reflects the experiences of IEU members and highlights several urgent areas for reform.

The NES has not been reviewed since 2012. Although it continues to provide an important minimum safety net, several provisions are unclear or no longer fit the needs of modern Australian workplaces. Thousands of IEU members, including many whose collective agreements reference or rely upon NES entitlements, are affected by these shortcomings.

### Modernisation and clarification of NES provisions

The NES must be strengthened and updated where inconsistent application has emerged over time or where entitlements have found to be inadequate. This includes [increasing annual leave](#), improving the operation of long service leave and personal leave, introducing cultural and kinship leave and providing greater flexibility for workers to access shorter working weeks. The IEU supports the broad suite of improvements [proposed by the ACTU](#) across these and other areas.

### The clear and compelling case for Paid Reproductive Health Leave

A central focus of our submission is the call for 10 days of paid Reproductive Health Leave (RHL) to be included as a statutory NES entitlement. The case is clear:

- Millions of workers experience reproductive health conditions that affect their ability to work including endometriosis, menopause, fertility treatment and reproductive procedures.
- RHL is a gender-equity measure. Such health conditions disproportionately affect women, contributing to lost income, lower workforce participation and long-term economic inequality.
- While some IEU agreements include RHL, coverage is inconsistent. Some faith-based schools refuse to bargain for it on religious grounds. A national standard is needed for all workers.

Our submission recommends that RHL should be a standalone NES entitlement of 10 days paid leave per year. Such leave would be available upfront each year (non-accumulating).

Reproductive Health Leave is not only fair – it's necessary. It addresses a long-standing gap in the NES, promotes gender equity and ensures that personal health does not force members into unpaid leave or workplace disadvantage.

The NES must evolve to reflect the realities facing education professionals in 2026 and beyond.