

EQUAL WORK EQUAL PAY



Community workers make a difference

WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

ALL ASU MEMBERS

July 2010



No more lip service
to equal pay

For too long the community services sector which employs 85% women and the highest number of multiple tertiary degree holders has been under-valued and under-resourced. The work of the sector and its social and economic importance to our community has not been adequately recognised.

The Australian Services Union (ASU) has been working with community sector peak bodies like SACOSS, workers, stakeholders, clients and employers across the nation to build a strong community sector able to continue to provide high quality services to vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians. We have had some campaign success however our best opportunity to move forward on key workforce issues which impact on attraction and retention and the future sustainability of the sector is now before us.

In 2008 and 2009 the Queensland ASU, the Queensland Council of Social Service, employers and other stakeholders ran a pay equity case on the Queensland Social and Community Services Award. In a landmark decision, in May 2009, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission awarded wage increases of between 18 to 37% to Queensland community services workers. A pay equity decision found that the work of the community services sector is undervalued in relation to public sector work and the work of other sectors and due to the fact that the sector is dominated by women workers. Long term campaigning by the Queensland community sector ensured the Queensland government substantially funded the decision.

Given the Queensland decision and the ASU's desire to run a federal pay equity case to ensure workforce issues like low pay and attraction and retention are addressed, during 2009 the ASU negotiated with the Deputy Prime Minister about the referral of all community sector workers in Australia to the new Federal industrial relations system. The ASU negotiated an historic agreement with the Federal Government which paves the way for pay equity for the community sector around Australia. The historic agreement -

- recognises the national implications of the Queensland decision;
- commits the ASU to supporting the referral of community services to the federal system;
- provides protection of the Queensland decision for Queensland workers;
- provides for the Commonwealth to support the use of the Queensland Equal Remuneration principles in the Federal Pay Equity Case;
- provides for the Commonwealth and the ASU to agree on an agreed set of facts for the case;
- acknowledges the need for the Commonwealth to fund the decision and commits them to fund it; and
- in light of the federal pay equity case, suspends aspects of Award Modernisation.

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The agreement means that the first national equal remuneration (pay equity) case under the new *Fair Work Act* was launched in March this year and is being run by the ASU with the support of the Australian Government. The landmark agreement provides an unprecedented opportunity for us to argue for significant pay increases based on pay equity principles to flow to community sector workers throughout the country. The community sector is a key part of the Australian economy and is at the forefront of delivering social inclusion to our country; we look forward to working together towards pay equity as an Australian community services sector!

All of this has been achieved in a changing industrial relations environment. Award modernisation has resulted in 47 community sector Awards across Australia being modernised into the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010 (SCHCDS Award).

We have lobbied hard to ensure the new SCHCDS Award retains conditions. Due to our impending national pay equity case we have successfully lobbied to retain existing wages until the case's conclusion. Key dates for modern Award implementation are as follows:

- 1 January 2010 - Conditions in the new Award (other than any wage related matters - ie, salaries, penalties and loadings) take effect
- 1 January 2011 - Conditions take effect for organisations that are non constitutional corporations
- 1 July 2011 - Wages and wage related matters in the new Award will take effect.

The ASU has developed a comprehensive comparison of the existing Awards and the new modern Award; please contact the ASU office for a copy.

There is no doubt that during 2010 we have before us the best opportunity we have had to significantly address low wages, attraction and retention in the community sector. We cannot achieve pay equity alone! More than ever it is imperative that the sector acts together to achieve its goals. Together, we can make a difference and together we can make history! Following on from our highly successful national day of action held on 10 June which brought people committed to the sector together and significantly publicised the issues facing the sector, there are a number of other things you can do:

- [Join your Union the ASU today VISIT www.asu.asn.au/join/](http://www.asu.asn.au/join/)
- **Facilitate an ASU meeting about the campaign at your workplace**
- **Participate in delegations to parliamentarians about funding the outcomes of the pay equity case**
- **Sign the postcard which calls on Governments to commit to funding the pay equity case outcomes**

**For more information call your
ASU office on 8363 1322.**

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