

On a daily basis social workers see the distressing and harmful impact of job insecurity

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) submission to the Senate Select Committee on Job Security is calling for governments at all levels to commit to a five year funding certainty for the precarious community services sector, as the nation recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic and recent devastating natural disasters.

AASW National President, Vittorio Cintio said that on a daily basis social workers see the distressing and harmful impact that job insecurity has on the people they work with, their families and the broader community, yet the nature of community sector funding means is that many social workers themselves do not have security in their own work.

“The community services sector, and social workers in particular, have done so much of the heavy lifting in supporting Australians through recent crises, supporting women and children in situations of family violence, meeting the mental health needs of the community, and preventing some of our most vulnerable people from falling into homelessness.”

“While social workers are reporting ever increasing demand for their services and are struggling to keep up with the pressure and stress, without the certainty of their own employment they are in a very precarious and unstable position themselves.”

Mr Cintio said social workers are a predominantly female workforce, that is lower paid than other industries and the cumulative lifetime effects of this job insecurity can be devastating.

“The tendency now is for newly created jobs to be contract and/or casual is having a detrimental impact on worker’s wellbeing and government needs to take a holistic approach to ensuring people have stable, secure and appropriately remunerated employment.”

“Many social workers are employed on contracts tied to short term government funding, some for as short as one year. This hampers their ability to plan for their future and to effectively deliver services and improvements that workers in other industries take for granted.”

“It also makes the retention of experienced and highly skilled staff in the community sector difficult, particularly in already under resourced regional and rural areas of Australia. And this job insecurity can impact the wellbeing of those we as a community rely on to support those in need.”

“All workers deserve security, stability and to be paid appropriately for their work. The community sector deserves this too and as a matter of urgency. We urge governments to implement five-year funding contracts as a priority in upcoming Budgets to deliver certainty to a struggling sector,” he said.

To interview Vittorio Cintio, please contact Noel McMahon on 0413 532 954.

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