

AASW urges Commonwealth government to commit to continue funding the Equal Remuneration Order Supplementation

The Commonwealth government must commit to maintaining the Equal Remuneration Order Supplementation funding for the community sector, which was put in place in 2012. AASW National President Christine Craik said, “If the Commonwealth government is serious about addressing the concerning issues facing the community, such as affordable housing, family violence and mental health, now is not the time to cut the funding of the community services who respond to them. Nor should the Commonwealth government be cutting the amount of money available for these services to pay the wages of the highly qualified and skilled workers in these services, most of whom are women.” This Equal Remuneration Order Supplementation funding for the community sector was put in place to acknowledge not only the high level of skills, qualifications and experience necessary to work in the social and community services sector, but also to acknowledge that those who need these services deserve competent workers who are qualified and committed to this work. “Working with society’s most vulnerable in areas such as homelessness, mental health and family violence, requires the ability to do highly complex and skilled work, with specialist knowledge and training. If the government chooses to discontinue this funding, it will do a disservice to the people who need the services of skilled workers in the sector, including qualified social workers,” said Ms Craik. “This increase in funding almost a decade ago also recognised that the majority of workers in the sector are female, and most had tertiary qualifications, yet they were (and are) paid less than male-dominated sectors, many of which do not require tertiary qualifications. “Increasing the relevant Awards and corresponding funding was a step in the right direction in addressing gender pay disparity. Australia has one of the most highly segregated workforces in the world. “The increase was welcome then and is still needed now. At a time when there is such a high level of concern about the quality of services for many vulnerable people, that we are holding two royal commissions, the government should show that it is committed to properly resourcing the social and community services sector. “As the professional association representing highly qualified social workers, many of whom work in the community sector, we are concerned about the loss of recognition and value for this important workforce. They, alongside their community sector colleagues, need to be remunerated appropriately. Nothing less will do.” The AASW will be advocating directly to the government to continue funding the Equal Remuneration Order Supplementation.

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