

Poverty, family violence, all a result of gender inequality, says AASW ahead of International Women's Day on 8 March

The single most important thing we could do to eradicate poverty and family violence would be embrace this year's International Women's Day theme "I am Generation Equality: Realising Women's Rights" and make sure all generations of women, including those to come, have equality with men. AASW National President Christine Craik said, "When women are empowered, have access to education and prospects and feel safe, we all prosper and thrive. "Social workers see daily the impacts of gender inequality on women, from increasingly homelessness in older women, family violence and sexual abuse, and increasing numbers of women being incarcerated for crimes of poverty. "As a society, we must show that we are committed to addressing toxic culture and attitudes, which we have seen recently on abundant display with irresponsible media commentary when women and children are subjected to family violence. "These comments are not without consequences; they continue to foster a culture which normalises violence against women and absolves perpetrators of responsibility. We will never have an equal society for women as long as these attitudes persist. "Governments may hold or attend vigils for murdered women and children, but the cuts to funding announced yesterday to legal aid funding for support for women dealing with family violence within the family court system, does not demonstrate commitment to dealing with this toxic culture. Government investment in family violence support programs and in men's behaviour change programs, is reactive and totally inadequate. In addition, the emotional labour that women do in paid and unpaid capacities must be acknowledged and valued if we are to support Generation Equality. "Earlier in the week, I announced that AASW would be advocating for the continuation of the Equal Remuneration Order Supplementation. One of the reasons it came into force back in 2012 was to go some way to addressing the gender pay gap and appropriately remunerating those who work in the community sector, most of whom are women with tertiary qualifications. "If the Commonwealth government does not commit to continuing this funding, this will send a terrible message to the community: that addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and valuing the skills of the predominantly female workforce to address the needs is not seen as important. "Australia needs to do better for women and we need to start now before inequality gets worse."

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