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UnitingCare Australia calls for equal pay, funding certainty

As we mark Equal Pay Day, UnitingCare Australia warns that the gender pay gap will widen and essential community services will be cut, unless the Government commits to ongoing funding for fair and equitable wages.

A decision by the Fair Work Commission in 2012 saw the introduction of an Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) in the community sector. As a result, workers across the sector received wage increases, with the Commonwealth Government providing additional funding to pay these higher wages. However, the current arrangements expire in July 2021.

“For far too long, the work of the community services sector has been undervalued, because ‘caring work’ has been considered women’s work and because the majority of our workforce are women” said National Director, Ms Claerwen Little.

“The Equal Remuneration Order was a landmark decision to address this gendered pay disparity. Women have already been hardest hit by the economic effects of the pandemic, bearing the brunt of job losses and reduced work hours.

“We know that this financial year, women have to work a staggering 59 extra days to earn the same pay as men. The national gender gap is 14% which is simply unacceptable, especially for essential workers providing essential social services” said Ms Little.

“Without ongoing funding from Government, the gender pay gap will only widen and the gains in gender equity achieved as a result of the Equal Remuneration Order will be diminished by job cuts in the community sector’s predominantly female workforce.

“So today we call on the Government to commit to fair funding and to permanently increase the base rates of grants where the ERO applies.

“Funding cuts will result in cuts to the programs that people across Australia rely upon. And in this time of crisis, we simply cannot allow that to happen.”

UnitingCare Australia is the national body for the Uniting Church’s community services network in Australia. The UnitingCare network is one of the largest networks of social services providers in Australia, supporting 1.4 million people every year across urban, rural and remote communities and powered by over 50,000 staff and 30,000 volunteers.

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