



MEDIA RELEASE

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PEAK BODY UNDERWHELMED BY EQUAL REMUNERATION SUBMISSION

Homelessness Australia is disappointed with the Australian Government's submission to Fair Work Australia regarding the equal remuneration case for social and community services workers.

"It's disappointing that the Gillard Government has not stated in its submission that it will increase funding to providers of social and community services in order to allow them to meet the costs that will flow from the equal remuneration test case, should it be successful," Homelessness Australia's Chief Executive Officer Nicole Lawder said.

Despite supporting the principle of pay equity and acknowledging that workers in the social and community services sector are generally paid significantly less than the median income in Australia the Australian Government has urged Fair Work Australia to consider the impact on the budget bottom line when making its judgement. If the outcome of the test case is successful and the Government does not increase funding to enable providers to meet the cost of pay increases, Homelessness Australia believes that service delivery will be compromised.

"If the Government refuses to increase funding for homelessness services, providers may be forced to cut programs that benefit some of Australia's most disadvantaged and vulnerable people. We are concerned that service delivery will suffer as a result. We don't believe that people experiencing homelessness and workers that support them should pay this price," Nicole Lawder said.

The ACOSS community sector survey has consistently documented that the social and community sector experiences significant problems attracting, recruiting and retaining appropriately qualified workers due primarily to low wages.

"We know from the ACOSS Community Sector survey that the homelessness services experience much higher rates of staff turnover than other Australian workplaces. We know that the reason most commonly given by workers for leaving the sector is because they can earn more money elsewhere. That is why this test case is important. That is why we are underwhelmed by the Australian Government's submission," Nicole Lawder said.

Homelessness Australia is committed to working cooperatively with the Australian Government, ACOSS and the Australian Services Union to achieve a positive outcome for the homelessness sector.

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