

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021

## International Women's Day 2021 a reality check on progress.

### ***ACTU report shows women face increasing insecurity, pay gap and the fight for safe workplaces.***

The ACTU has today released a report detailing the issues that continue to face working women, and say that the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of International Women's Day is a wake-up call for Government.

The report details the fall in Australia's ranking on gender pay equity, the continued gender segregation of the workforce and the impact on Covid on women workers.

With a gender pay gap of 13.4 per cent, Australia now ranks 44<sup>th</sup> in the world for gender pay disparity.

In 2021 women still bear disproportionate responsibility for unpaid domestic work, which causes workforce disruption. Their ability to participate in the workforce to the same capacity as men is further hindered by the lack of affordable early childhood education and care, inadequate shared paid parental leave, and an inflexibility in work.

Due to the pandemic 21 per cent of the female workforce lost work or are experiencing pressure on their capacity to retain paid work.

The Federal Government's policies on superannuation and Covid recovery are further entrenching economic inequality.

The Government's Omnibus bill, if passed with further disadvantage women:

- The industries dominated by women, specifically in Accommodation, Food and Retail face changes to the Awards which will suppress wages, and further casualise employment.
- Australia's rate of casualised and precarious work was at 24.2% before the pandemic, and the risk is that the recovery will be dominated by casual work.
- Women in casual work already earn less than the male counterparts and much less than male permanent workers.
- 15.4% of female casual workers work a second job and 25.5% have children under 15. More than 50 of female casuals work weekends.

The Government has also failed on implementing the Respect@work report, released by the Sex Discrimination Commission in March 2020, with 55 practical recommendations for reform.

Research shows that two in three women have been subjected to one of more forms of sexual harassment at work, and that the regulatory and legal framework is still totally failing to keep women safe, or to assist women in making complaints.

#### **Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil,**

"In 2006 Australia ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in the world for gender pay disparity but our Governments lack of commitment to adequate paid parental leave, affordable early childhood education and care, and workplace flexibility has seen Australia fall to 44<sup>th</sup> position.

“With only 15 per cent of Australians believing they can manage both work and family responsibilities, our Government must implement adequate supports like affordable early childhood education and care.

“Australian industries and occupations are highly gender segregated, with the ones dominated by women being paid less and featuring fewer protections – this stems from historical gendered assumptions about the value of ‘women’s work’.

“Female dominated industries, like teaching, cleaning, and nursing, make up our pandemic frontline – despite this they are undervalued and underpaid.

“Our Government excluded much of the casual workforce from supports during the pandemic, taking money away from a disproportionately female part of the workforce.

“The Government’s Omnibus Bill’s attacks on the rights of casuals and part-timers will predominately affect women balancing caring responsibilities and work. The Government should be supporting the rights of women in work, not reducing them.

“Furthermore, the Government must act on the 55 recommendations from the Respect@Work report. These matters are incredibly urgent to ensure safe workplaces, and the Government’s inaction is an insult to women.”

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