

Wednesday 8 March 2022

Unions celebrate 10 wins for women on International Women's Day

Union members have won significant changes to improve the lives of women at work since last International Women's Day. While we know there's more to do to close the gender pay gap and achieve full gender equality at work, Australian unions are proud to have seen the result of decades of campaigning by union members in just one year. Ten of the big changes are:

1. 10 days' paid family and domestic violence leave enshrined in the National Employment Standards for all workers, because no worker should have to choose between their income and their safety.
2. Expansion of paid parental leave from 20 weeks to 26 weeks by 2026, a step towards closing the gender pay gap and supporting women's workforce participation.
3. Stronger equal pay laws and gender equality as an object of our workplace laws to better value women's work.
4. Access to multi-employer bargaining, allowing women in female-dominated industries such as aged care and early childhood education and care to negotiate together to win fair terms and conditions.
5. A 15% interim pay rise for aged-care workers.
6. Stronger rights to request flexible work and challenge its refusal.
7. Outlawed pay secrecy clauses, another step towards closing the gender pay gap.
8. A new positive duty for employers to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.
9. New protections from discrimination in our workplace laws.
10. A minimum wage increase of 5.2% in 2022, lifting the pay of low-paid and award-reliant workers, the majority of whom are women.

Workers have been fighting for many of these changes for decades: it's amazing the difference it makes to get rid of a government that is hostile to women.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"Union members are proud of the huge gains made for women in the workplace over the past year. These changes will have a practical and positive impact on the lives of working women and their families.

"This list of gains reflects how unions have always been crucial to creating better, safer and fairer workplaces for women.

"Changes such as these don't happen on their own – union members have stood together and campaigned to win them. With the gender pay gap still at 13.3%, there is more to be done – and we are not giving up.

"We know that when women have the power to negotiate collectively, they win better pay, conditions and protections. Over the past year, union women have won crucial stronger bargaining rights.

"Unionised workplaces are better workplaces for women. Women union members earn on average 23% more than women who are not union members."

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