

EMBARGOED to 6am, Thursday, 1 September 2011

States must commit to equal pay as another year passes with women lagging too far behind men

State Governments must commit to equal pay for women as the latest figures show women continue to be paid 17.2% less than men and take an extra 63 days to earn the same average income as men each year, unions say.

ACTU Secretary Jeff Lawrence said today's Equal Pay Day, held each year on the day women catch up to men's annual earnings as of 30 June, was a stark reminder that another year on, nothing had changed.

"This year it has taken 63 days for women to catch up to men – that's the same as last year, an indictment on workplaces and Governments who in 2011 still refuse to pay women the same as men," said Mr Lawrence, who will speak at a joint ACTU and Victorian Trades Hall Council morning tea for Equal Pay Day at Parliament House this morning.

"However, this year we have a unique opportunity to turn that around, thanks to the case now before Fair Work Australia to deliver equal pay to the tens of thousands of women who perform important community sector work. Yet sadly, in Victoria, Tasmania and NSW, the state governments have failed to commit to deliver equal pay to these women, despite the preliminary findings of the bench of FWA that gender does indeed play a role in the pay gap between community and public sector workers.

"These states are refusing to commit to funding equal pay for these women, who do some of our community's most important yet under-valued work. In Victoria, the Ted Baillieu-led Government has all but completely dismissed FWA's findings.

"Equal pay is a workplace right and a human right, yet Ted Baillieu has shown contempt for the thousands of women across Victoria who perform important, yet clearly undervalued, community services work. Unless Mr Baillieu and his NSW counterpart, Barry O'Farrell, commit to equal pay, they are essentially saying it is OK to pay women less than men."

Mr Lawrence said women earned the right to equal pay back in 1972, but little progress had been made in the 40 years since.

"We encourage the Government to continue to pursue its important reforms to equal opportunity legislation and we call on employer groups to be proactive in their support for these reforms. We have a real chance now to create pay equity for women and we can't afford to turn our backs on it," he said.

Women now make up half the workforce and are more skilled and educated than any other time in Australia's history. Yet men are still paid more through overtime, penalty rates and bonuses.

ACTU / Victorian Trades Hall Council Equal Pay Day Morning Tea

10am

Thursday, 1 September 2011

Room K
Victorian Parliament House
Spring Street, Melbourne

For more information please contact: Rebecca Tucker 0407 030 808



