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## Government's commitment to equal pay an historic day for women workers: unions

Decades of undervaluation of the work of women will be overcome following the Labor Government's historic commitment to fund pay rises for 150,000 social and community sector workers, say unions.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said today's announcement by Prime Minister Julia Gillard was a landmark day for the thousands of social and community sector (SACS) workers, who do important but traditionally undervalued work for the community's benefit.

"Today's commitment from the government to fund its share of pay rises averaging 20% and up to 33% in some cases for social and community sector workers is an historic milestone on the road towards true equal pay," Ms Kearney said.

"It is a win for those workers and their unions who have been determined to gain wage justice in the SACS industry.

"We are talking about workers who are mostly women and who look after the homeless, the disabled, refugees, domestic violence victims, children at risk and other vulnerable people in our society. "This is difficult and demanding work, yet this female-dominated industry is one of the lowest paid in Australia because it has been historically viewed as 'women's work'.

"This has been a major reason why the gender pay gap remains at 18%, despite the right to equal pay for equal work being enshrined in law several decades ago.

"The skills and professional judgement of these 200,000 workers deserve to be recognised and properly valued.

"This shows the equal remuneration provisions work in really delivering on the promise of equal pay. Equal pay is a workplace right and a human right, so unions welcome the Government's commitment to redress the inequity that has occurred for too long for these women.

"And now that the Federal Government has committed to funding equal pay it is time for those state and territory governments who have not already done so to follow.

"The \$2 billion commitment from the Government is carefully structured over a six year period, after negotiations with the Australian Services Union and other unions.

"It is not okay to pay one group of workers less than another doing work of comparable value simply because one group of workers is women.

"It is time all governments acknowledged that and commit to funding their share."

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