

Thursday, 23 February 2023

Narrowing gender pay gap provides little relief to Australia's women

While figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) showing that Australia's gender pay gap is narrowing are welcome, women still receive, on average, \$255 per week less than men.

Despite narrowing the gender pay gap, this will provide little comfort to female workers, who, as the ABS revealed yesterday, are experiencing the biggest fall in real wages in history.

Today's ABS figures revealed that the gender pay gap had narrowed from 14.1 per cent in May 2022 down to 13.3 per cent in November 2022.

This outcome can be attributed in part to a strong decision in last year's annual wage review which has helped to boost the incomes of award-reliant workers, especially in the private sector, most of whom are women.

Figures from 'ABS characteristics of employment' (August 2022) indicate that women who are members of their union take home on average \$1400 per week (median), compared with just over \$1,000 for women who were not members of their union, indicating that union membership can play a strong role in lifting wages for women.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"While news that the gender pay gap has narrowed is welcome, the reality is that women still receive, on average, \$255 per week less than men.

"These figures highlight the importance of significant increases flowing from the Annual Wage Review as the majority of workers effected by a lift in minimum wages are women. Last years 5.2% increase made a real difference in the gender pay gap.

"The changes in workplace laws on bargaining, gender equality and pay equity will also play an important role.

"If women are to have justice in their workplaces, governments and industry must continue to make every effort to eliminate the unacceptable pay gap which unfairly disadvantages women and devalues and discourages their participation in the workplace.

"ABS data also clearly demonstrates that women who are members of their union earn, on average, \$390 more per week than women who are not union members. This demonstrates the critical role union membership can play in lifting women's wages.

"Sadly, today's figures on the gender pay gap will provide little comfort to women workers who, as was revealed yesterday, face the biggest fall in real wages in history. More action is needed to lift wages and to make jobs more secure.

“With spiralling inflation driven by corporate greed, rapid interest rate rises driven by an out-of-touch Reserve Bank and over a decade of stagnant wage growth, the unfortunate fact is that Australian women and their families have little to celebrate.”

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