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IWD: Living minimum wage the bedrock of fairness for women at work

Increasing the minimum wage is central to unions' agenda for improving standards of living for Australian women workers, Australian Council of Trade Unions President Ged Kearney said ahead of International Women's Day.

Nearly 60% of the 1.5 million Australian workers reliant on the minimum wage are women.

"We know that despite great progress fought for by working women over the decades, women today still face barriers in the workplace," said Ms Kearney.

"These include a lack of flexibility to accommodate caring commitments, pregnancy discrimination, higher rates of casualisation and fewer opportunities for training and promotion.

"Unions are fighting to address all these issues.

"But the bedrock of fairness for women workers is a living minimum wage on which women can support themselves and their families with dignity.

"Breaking the glass ceiling is important and there is still much progress to be made in ensuring equal representation in leadership positions.

"But at the same time we need to recognise the significant challenges that many women workers are faced with everyday – challenges that are the reason why many women in Australia are struggling to make ends meet.

"Australians are lucky that we have secured a minimum wage that means a full-time worker doesn't have to work three or four jobs to cover food and rent, but each year the gap between low-paid workers and the rest of the workforce widens.

"For women in particular, bridging that gap is critical.

"Ensuring our minimum wage keeps pace and prevents low-paid workers from falling further and further behind is key to ensuring fairness for Australian women."

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