

Welcome support for frontline workers

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Australian Unions have welcomed the Albanese Government's decision to provide an extra \$630 million in funding so the community sector can deliver wage increases to frontline health, disability and community workers.

The top-up funding for community service providers will directly fund wage rises for more than 460,000 frontline workers employed in the delivery of government programs.

Unions fought for the wage increases for women in lower paid work, as part of a Fair Work Commission review of five priority awards last year. From early 2026, significant pay increases have started being phased in for occupations with majority-women workforce, including in health, disability and community services who have been historically undervalued because of gender.

Before these changes, an early career psychologist could be earning as little as \$33 an hour. Workplace reforms won by unions have boosted women's wages, and because of the hard work of her union, a full-time psychologist will now take home an extra \$9,744 each year.

The funding boost means that health, disability and community workers can start being paid more in line with their skills and expertise; not based on outdated gender stereotypes on the value of work.

Importantly, these reforms and this funding are having real impact on closing the gender pay gap which is now at a record low.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President, Michele O'Neil:

"Providing a funding boost to community, charity and non-profit organisations so they can pass on these award wage rises to the health, disability and community service workers they employ is critical Federal Government support for frontline workers.

"The only thing worse than having to wait for wage justice, would be to miss out on this historic wage rise now because your employer struggles to pay without putting services at risk.

"The 460,000 workers who look after people who are sick, living with disabilities or struggling not only deserve these wage rises they need them and no community worker should miss out.

"The critical caring work done by workers in this sector has been chronically undervalued because the majority of workers are women, hitting these workers particularly hard in a cost-of-living crisis.

"Now that decades-old wrong is being righted and today's funding boost to service providers will mean frontline community workers get their wage rise, regardless of whether they are employed in the public sector, a charity or another non-profit.

"By discounting so-called women's work in the past, nobody benefited, not workers or their families or the people they are supporting."

ENDS

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