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MEDIA RELEASE

Survey shows WA community services and workers at risk from funding uncertainty

Western Australian community service leaders are concerned the Federal Government has yet to commit to the continuation of funding to ensure staff are fairly paid in this important sector. The sector provides homelessness, food relief, mental health and many other community services.

A survey of community service sector leaders has found without the renewal of this funding, community service organisations will be forced to reduce staff or services.

The funding (Equal Remuneration Order Supplementation) was put in place almost a decade ago to provide fair pay in the highly feminised sector.

The survey was conducted by the Social Policy Research Centre at UNSW Sydney in collaboration with the Councils of Social Service of Australia, supported by Community Sector Banking.

Federally funded community services reported if the ERO supplementary payments were removed, without adequately building-in appropriate wage levels into base funding, it will result in cuts to services in our communities that people in our communities rely on.

The survey shows 65.5% of community sector services surveyed in WA currently receive the Equal Remuneration Order Supplementation funding.

Louise Giolitto, Chief Executive Officer of the Western Australian Council of Social Service, said:

“Workers employed in the WA community service sector provide support to people when they need it most, when they’re facing homelessness, escaping domestic violence or dealing with mental health issues.

“Community service workers deserve fair pay for their important work.

“We’re deeply concerned the Federal Government has yet to commit to the continuation of funding put in place to ensure staff are paid fairly in this sector, which is made up of 80% women.

“Cutting funding for community sector workers means less people to help those who reach out in times of great need.”

Anglicare WA CEO Mark Glasson, whose organisation will be impacted if the supplementation ends, said:

“The supplementary funding was critical in enabling us to manage the increasing costs of supporting families navigating relationship breakdown and child custody arrangements. If it’s scrapped and funding returns to pre-2012 levels, the result will be significantly longer wait times and less availability of these integral services for families already experiencing the strain of separation and family violence.

“This cost-cutting measure will place vulnerable parents and children at increased risk, at a time when the system is under pressure to better protect them.”

CEO of the Australian Council of Social Service, Cassandra Goldie, said:

“In Australia, one of the wealthiest countries in the world, people should be able to rely on community services in times of need.

“Without adequate funding, community services can’t keep up with demand and people are not getting the help they desperately need, such as emergency food relief, affordable housing or mental health services.

“In the lead up to International Women’s Day, we’re calling on both the Federal and State Governments to commit to provide to Equal Remuneration Order Supplementation funding, to provide fair pay in the feminised community service sector,” Dr Goldie said.

The Equal Remuneration Order funding concerns cut across to services funded by State Government contracts. The sector is asking for catch-up funding of 19.88% to address the legislated ERO wage increases. The McGowan Government has allocated \$60million over four years in supplementary payments, which is estimated to be 1%, well short of the levels needed to maintain sustainably funded services. WACOSS and community services who receive state-funded contracts have been campaigning via *Your Help* (YourHelpWA.com.au) for this important increase.

#fairfunding4fairpay

Ends.

Chris Twomey, Policy and Research Leader, WACOSS and Mark Glasson, CEO, Anglicare WA are both available for interview.

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