

Friday 6 March 2020

MEDIA RELEASE

Commit to Fair Funding for Fair Pay this International Women's Day

Ahead of International Women's Day, the Western Australian Council of Social Service and the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services WA are calling for the Federal Government to commit to renewing funding for the highly feminised community service sector.

Louise Giolitto, Chief Executive Officer at WACOSS said the funding, called Equal Remuneration Order Supplementation, was put in place almost a decade ago to ensure workers in this sector, made up of 80% women, were fairly paid, after long being undervalued with low wages for their caring work. The Federal Government funding of about \$500 million per year nationally is set to expire next year.

"If the Federal Government does not commit to renewing this funding, they will be at risk of widening the gender pay gap.

"Workers in the Western Australian community service sector help people in great need, when they are escaping domestic violence, facing homelessness or dealing with mental health issues.

"They deserve fair pay for their important work.

"But the Federal Government is yet to commit to the continuation of funding put in place to ensure staff can be fairly paid in this important and highly feminised sector.

"West Australian community service leaders say that if this funding is not renewed there will have to be job losses and cuts to services.

"This would not only impact women working in the sector, but also the women they help, including with emergency accommodation, food relief, domestic violence services and affordable childcare.

"Women are much more likely to experience domestic violence. They're also far more likely to be single parents and we know that one third of single parent families in our wealthy country live in poverty. Older women are the fastest growing group facing homelessness and most older people trying to get by on the paltry rate of Newstart are women."

Angela Hartwig, Chief Executive Officer for the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services WA said:

"In the lead up to International Women's Day, we're calling for the Federal to commit to fair funding for fair pay in the community service sector, made up of 80% women, so the sector can continue to help women in times of need."

WACOSS and the community services sector in WA continue to advocate the State Government for sustainable funding for state-based contracts. The sector is asking for catch-up funding of 19.88% to address legislated ERO increases. Although \$60 million has been allocated over four years in supplementary payments by the McGowan Government, this is estimated at just a 1%, and well short of the levels needed to sustain services. The state campaign is *Your Help WA* (YourHelpwa.com.au).

Ends.

Media contacts

Louise Giolitto, Chief Executive Officer, WACOSS, 0411 534 911

Angela Hartwig, Chief Executive Officer, WCFDVS, 08 9420 7264