



SENATOR THE HON CHRIS EVANS

Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations
Leader of the Government in the Senate

MINISTER THE HON JENNY MACKLIN MP

Minister for Families, Housing, Community Service and
Indigenous Affairs

SENATOR THE HON JACINTA COLLINS

Parliamentary Secretary for School Education and Workplace Relations

MEDIA RELEASE

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Government commits to fair support for community sector

In its submission to the Social and Community Sector equal pay test case, the Gillard Government will commit to provide fair and appropriate supplementation to help support any phased in pay increase Fair Work Australia may award.

Minister for Workplace Relations, Senator Chris Evans, said the submission, to be lodged shortly, will also confirm the Government's willingness to continue participating in conciliation proceedings before Fair Work Australia.

"The Gillard Government is committed to achieving a fair outcome for women whose work has long been undervalued," Senator Evans said.

"The Commonwealth will meet its responsibilities and provide fair and appropriate supplementation, in consultation with key stakeholders, taking into account the fiscal implications of any increase as well as opportunities to pursue reforms for the sector, including cutting red tape."

Minister for Community Services, Jenny Macklin, said "Community sector employees provide critical services to some of the most vulnerable members of our community. We want to see a strong and viable community sector."

"The Federal Government does not directly fund or employ any employees in the sector. It is one of several funding sources along with state and territory governments and service providers," Ms Macklin said.

"We are endeavouring to identify the cost impact of the equal pay claim both for the sector and the Government."

"It is essential that the Federal and state governments are prepared to work together with community service providers to ensure the sustainability of the sector as any increased wages are phased in."

Parliamentary Secretary for Workplace Relations, Senator Jacinta Collins, said the historic Fair Work Australia decision was only possible because Labor removed the barriers to pay equity claims in the federal jurisdiction that required an applicant to prove discrimination as a prerequisite to an equal pay claim.

“Fair Work Australia will now determine the extent to which sector workers have been undervalued as a result of their gender,” Senator Collins said.

In its interim decision, Fair Work Australia acknowledged that gender did have “*an important influence*” on wages in the sector, however “*it would be wrong to conclude that the gap between pay in the sector with which we are concerned and pay in state and local government is attributable entirely to gender*”.

Senator Collins said the Government is especially keen to work with the parties on identifying the gender component of undervaluation and the basis on which it may be assessed.

Senator Evans’ Media Contact: Karen Brown 0413 080 956
Rhys Davies 0411 138 572

Senator Collins’ Media Contact: Felicity de Fombelle 0411 246 170

Minister Macklin’s Media Contact: Keely Bell 0417 297 157