



25 November 2010

Ms Julia Gillard
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

EQUAL PAY CASE

We are writing to express our profound dismay at the Australian Government's Submission in the Equal Remuneration case for social and community service workers.

The community services sector workforce, which is predominantly female, has been undervalued and exploited for too long. We understood that you were aware of, and supported, our aspiration that these women might at last achieve the equal pay to which they are entitled. Indeed we were informed that the Australian Government had entered into an understanding with the Australian Services Union that included an acknowledgement that this would require increased expenditure on salaries. It was for this reason, we believed, that a five year phase in period was negotiated.

We do not accept the contention that the aim of bringing the budget back into surplus should be achieved at the expense of equal pay for low-paid women workers. Nor do we accept that an increase in pay for workers in the community services sector should be funded by cuts in the services available to vulnerable members of our community. We expect that this should be dealt with by way of a whole of government approach. All Australians benefit from the work done by community service workers and should be expected to contribute to the cost of providing those services. The cost should include the cost of equal pay for women.

The suggestion that the matter could be addressed by way of productivity improvements is unrealistic. All the services provided in the community sector are already overstretched, underfunded and run with minimal overheads and maximum leverage; such as the contribution of volunteers and donated funds, services or premises.

We urge you to reconsider your approach to the equal pay case.

Yours sincerely
Women's Legal Services NSW

Helen Campbell
Executive Officer