



Phone (03) 9689 9588
Fax (03) 9689 3861
Email info@whwest.org.au
Website www.whwest.org.au

317-319 Barkly Street
Footscray 3011

MEDIA RELEASE

22 July 2011

Undervalued and Underpaid: Women's Health West Urge State Government to Fund Equal Pay for Women

One of the most significant improvements to women's lives in decades depends on the outcome of next week's submission to Fair Work Australia by the Baillieu government.

'Women's work' in the social and community services sector has always been undervalued and underpaid, leading to inequality, poor health outcomes, and vulnerability to violence in the home.

On average Victorian women earn 17.4 percent less than men. As a result, they are more likely to live in poverty in their old age.

Next week, the Baillieu government has the chance to change that.

Fair Work Australia has found that community sector workers, 87 percent of them women, do not receive equal pay and that gender is a significant cause of that pay gap.

They are waiting on a commitment for funding from the Baillieu government before deciding how large a rise can be awarded.

Last night Women's Health West held an equal pay event at the Sun Theatre in Yarraville, including a speech by Zelda D'Aprano, the 83 year old campaigner who chained herself to the Arbitration Commission in 1969 to protest women's unequal pay.

'Here we are, more than 40 years later, and women are still fighting for equal pay!' said Women's Health West CEO, Dr Robyn Gregory.

'We do not want to face losing staff or cutting programs because the state government has not committed to fair and equitable funding that reflects job worth.

'Neither do we want Fair Work Australia to award negligible rises out of fear that the Victorian government's lack of commitment to funding equal pay could lead to these outcomes.

'If the state government is serious about preventing violence and chronic disease, here is one of the best investments they could make. Funding equal pay will improve the status and health outcomes of all women, reducing their vulnerability to violence and the death, disability, depression and chronic disease that results', she said.

MEDIA: For more information contact Nicola Harte, Communications Co-ordinator on 9689 9588 or email nicolah@whwest.org.au

Women's Health West works with individual women, communities and services across the western region of Melbourne. Services include information and referral; health promotion and education; service provider education and development; family violence crisis intervention and support; social support; policy analysis and advocacy; management and governance.