

Tuesday, 8 March 2011

## International Women's Day 2011: 100 years of achievements but gender pay gap still too wide

On a day of celebration of a century of advances for women in the workplace, unions are redoubling efforts to achieve true gender equality by closing the 18 per cent pay gap.

Over the last 100 years, union campaigns for women's rights have succeeded in introducing paid and unpaid parental leave, carer's leave and family-friendly flexible working arrangements.

But ACTU President Ged Kearney said a continuous effort and commitment was needed to achieve gender equity.

"We're proud of what we have achieved, including – earlier this year - the introduction of Paid Parental Leave for all working mothers. This was the result of over 30 years of union campaigning," Ms Kearney said. "This is a workplace right that allows women to maintain a vital connection to their employer whilst taking time off to nurse their newborn.

"It's essential that we value women's skills and experience and do what we can to ensure they can exercise a choice to return to work when they're ready.

"The latest statistics show that 48 per cent of the workforce is female yet women earn almost 18 per cent less than their male counterparts.

"Essentially this gap exists because jobs that are traditionally considered 'women's work' such as cleaning, aged care and hospitality is undervalued."

Unions launched an equal pay test case for social and community service workers in Fair Work Australia in early 2010 to redress the pay discrepancy.

If successful the case will lift the pay of about 150,000 workers in the female-dominated sector, who have traditionally been unpaid and undervalued in comparison to sectors that are male dominated.

"There is firm commitment from the Federal Government to support the outcomes of this landmark case but we need to ensure that businesses and state governments are on board and serious about closing the gender pay gap," Ms Kearney said.

"We will be continuing our campaign to remove gender barriers that prevent women from achieving equal rights, including more flexible work arrangements for workers with family responsibilities, affordable out-of-school and childcare, more initiatives to increase female workplace participation and improvements to the paid parental leave scheme," said Ms Kearney

### MEDIA EVENT

**To celebrate International Women's Day 2011, unions will be coming together at a cocktail event on Tuesday, 8 March at Victorian Trades Hall at 6 pm, where ACTU President Ged Kearney will be joined by the Minister for Family, Housing and Community Services Jenny Macklin.**

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