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Equal Pay Campaign starts today with launch of national test case for social and community workers

The newly-formed Equal Pay Alliance will today call on all political parties and employers to properly value women's work and close the 17% wage gap between men and women once and for all, as it launches a national equal pay campaign in Canberra.

"The pay gap is still so big that on average Australian women have to work 63 days more a year just to earn the same income. Over a lifetime, women end up earning on average about \$1 million less than men," said ACTU President Sharan Burrow.

The Equal Pay Alliance includes 150 organisations across business, unions and the community.

As part of the campaign, the Alliance is supporting a national test case to secure fairer pay rates for social and community sector workers who look after the homeless, the disabled, refugees, domestic violence victims, children at risk, the elderly and other vulnerable people in our society.

"This is difficult and demanding work, yet this female-dominated industry is one of the lowest paid in Australia because it has been historically viewed as 'women's work'," said Linda White, Assistant National Secretary of the Australian Services Union, which will officially lodge the case today with Fair Work Australia.

"The skills and professional judgement of these 200,000 workers deserve to be recognised and properly valued."

The case will be the first to test the new pay equity provisions of the Fair Work Act which acknowledge the right of men and women to be paid equally for work of comparative value. If successful, the case will help establish an equal pay standard for other industries.

The Equal Pay Alliance is also calling for other measures to be adopted to value women's work and help close the pay gap, including:

- More flexibility in rostered hours and access to decent part-time jobs,
- Accessible, affordable, good quality out-of-school care and childcare,
- Improved reporting and auditing of equal pay and equal opportunity,
- Pay equity cases to value and properly fund wages for work traditionally carried out by women,
- More opportunities to build skills and participate in the workforce, especially for mothers and older women,
- Superannuation gap to be addressed.

The media launch of the Equal Pay Alliance will take place at 7.30am to 9am TODAY (Thursday, 11 March) at The Boat House By The Lake Restaurant, Grevillea Park, Menindee Drive, Canberra.

Speakers include Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard, Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick, ACTU President Sharan Burrow and the Executive Director of the Australian Institute of Superannuation Trustees, Fiona Reynolds.

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