

Thursday, 1 August 2019

## Union members earn more in era of low wage growth

People working under enterprise bargaining agreements are winning wage increases ahead of the cost of living, but wages remain too low across the board, data released by the Attorney General's Department today reveals.

The Trends in Enterprise Bargaining report for the March 2019 quarter shows that wage increases in newly approved federal agreements fell by 0.1 percentage points to 2.7 percent per year.

This was comprised of a 0.1 percentage point fall to 2.9 percent in the private sector and 0.3 percent to 2.4 percent in the public sector.

Agreements that had union involvement – 85 percent of agreements – delivered pay rises of 2.7 percent on average, while those without union representation had only 2.4 percent pay rises. The wage price index is currently 2.3 percent.

The public sector fall impacting people like scientists, engineers, nurses, administrators and teachers was a result of caps imposed by some governments that stop fair wage increases for public sector workers.

Particularly concerning is the high number of people whose wage increases were “non-quantifiable” in agreements – more than 45 percent. This is an indication that the current rules restricting bargaining and industrial action are hurting the ability of workers to win fair pay increases.

### Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

“This data shows once again that joining your union is the fastest way to increase your pay. People working where unions have been involved in collective agreements are winning bigger pay rises than those without union representation.

“Unfortunately the data also shows that the rules are stacked against working people and that this is holding back wages and making it more difficult for people to win fair pay rises.

“It also shows that people working in the public sector are being unfairly disadvantaged by artificial caps that are placed on wage levels by governments who don't want to pay their own workers fairly.

“This is part of the Morrison Government's deliberate plan to keep wages low in the public and private sector.

“This plan is holding our entire economy back and local businesses are suffering because their customers don't have money to spend.

“We need to make sure that when workers and their unions are negotiating pay increases they do so on a level playing field that gets our wages moving again.”

**ENDS**

**Media contact: Lachlan Williams 0447 682 027, ACTU Media: 03 9664 7315**