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Pay inequity, job insecurity and violence equals trifecta of discrimination for women

ACTU president Ged Kearney said as we approach International Women's Day, March 8, it is a good time to call on employers: "Take an honest look at the impact of your practices on women."

"Women are experiencing a trifecta of discrimination that can greatly impact on their working life and financial future," she said.

Ms Kearney pointed to systemic wage inequities, the cost of caring and violence as three areas where employers had the potential to be part of the solution rather than of part the problem.

"Why, in 2013, are female graduates in many cases still earning less than their male counterparts? Who is deciding, for example, that male dental graduates should earn an average of \$14,000 more than their female counterparts? Research shows us that across too many occupations women with a bachelor degree straight from university earned less than men. This is really troubling," she said.

"Adding to this starting gate handicap is the fact that women are more likely to experience job insecurity because they often have to balance work and family. Their reward for a lifetime of caring is earning on average 1 million less than the blokes."

Ms Kearney said the third 'forgotten and often silent' area of discrimination was experienced by victims of violence.

"We know that thousands of women fall victim to violence each year. Thanks to unions 1 million Australians now have the right to seek leave if they are a victim of domestic violence. However many workplaces still offer no options. What we hear is that women lose their job because they are unable to access short-term leave to assist them to put their lives back together."

"We need to fix the culture and embedded discrimination within companies. We call on employers, rather than holding morning teas this International Women's Day consider exactly how you will tackle the inequality too many working women face," Ms Kearney said.

These comments came as Ms Kearney spoke to the AWU conference about the importance of taking responsibility to address gender issues on all levels including government, employer and union.

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