

## **Mind the gap: improvements in narrowing the gender pay gap**

New work rights and higher wages in sectors like aged care are closing the gender pay gap, at a rate three times faster than under prior Coalition governments, according to an ACTU report out today.

The report is being released today to mark the start of the period when Australian women effectively turn up at their jobs and work for 'free' for the rest of the year because of the gender pay gap. On the latest figures, women are working for free for 42 days.

Equal pay has still not been achieved in Australia but there has been strong recent progress with the gender pay gap now at its lowest point ever at 11.5 per cent.

Australian women are seeing an improvement in the narrowing of the gap in line with the introduction of new work rights and wage reforms under the Albanese Government.

Since 2022, the gender pay gap has been closing at a rate of 1.3 per cent per year, compared to 0.4 per cent, under successive Coalition governments.

The ACTU report 'Minding the Gap' outlines 20 Albanese Government reforms that have contributed to the rapid closing of the gap between working men and women's wages.

Analysis in the report states that if the previous slow rate of progress under the Coalition had continued, the average full-time working woman in Australia would be a further \$1,900 a year worse off than they are now.

One of the key drivers of the gap narrowing is union members winning Federal Government commitments to fund generous wage increases of up to 28.5 per cent for workers in under-valued feminised sectors, like aged care.

Other factors were the Government decision to back higher wages for award workers – 60 percent of whom are women – as well as strong growth in full time employment for women, made possible by stronger supports to better balance work and care, such as the right to flexible work and improved paid parental leave.

The union movement campaign and the Federal Government's commitment to fund a 15 per cent pay increase for early childhood education and care workers from December is expected to further shrink the gender pay imbalance.

The Coalition opposed the Albanese Government's workplace reform agenda to level the playing field for working women. This included them voting against new work rights in Parliament and their current threats to abolish multi-employer bargaining, despite these reforms supporting working women in aged-care, disability services, early childhood education and care and community services.

### **Quotes attributable to ACTU President, Michele O'Neil:**

"Unions campaign for all Australians to be valued and paid for their work, regardless of their gender. Yet, sectors with a majority of women workers pay some of the lowest wages despite these workers providing some of the most valuable services to our community, such as caring for our loved ones.

"Whether it's looking after our kids in early childhood education or caring for our parents and grandparents in aged care, the union campaigns and the Albanese Government's support for pay rises are life-changing for these workers, and they have gone a long way in closing Australia's gender pay gap.

“Government policies have a direct effect on the underpayment of women workers and the gender pay gap. The gender pay gap is closing three times faster under this current government than the previous government, meaning if Peter Dutton’s party was still in power, the average woman working full time would be \$1,900 worse off.

“The big business lobby teamed up with Peter Dutton to stop Australians winning more rights at work and having more money in their pocket. If the Coalition win the next election, there’s no question that ordinary people’s wages will be on the line, particularly working women.

“More needs to be done to completely close the gender pay gap and nobody can ignore the fact that women work an extra 42 days a year to earn the same as men.”

**ENDS**

**Media Contact:** Cameron Warasta 0447 159 467