



MEDIA RELEASE

This year **Equal Pay Day** will take place on 1 September

In the 25 years since the *Affirmative Action Act* was passed, women's working lives and prospects have improved, but discrimination and disadvantage remain a problem. The gender pay gap, currently 17.2 per cent, is about the same as it was 25 years ago. This means that, to match what men earn in a year, women would have to work an extra 63 days. Sadly, women are two and a half times more likely to live in poverty in old age than men.

ABS data shows that, based on average full-time weekly earnings, Australian women earn 17.2 per cent less than men. Women's pay has remained between 82 – 85 per cent of men's pay since 1990. It is completely unacceptable that in 2011 this situation still prevails.

The principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value was established about 40 years ago. Every survey shows that Australians want action on achieving pay equity. However, progress on closing the gender pay gap has been slow because working men and women are still concentrated in different occupations, industries and job levels, because women still do more of the family and caring work, and because many jobs that women tend to do are still undervalued.

Australia's pay equity legislation has not corrected historic gender-related undervaluation. Until recently, equal pay cases have achieved little. We now have the *Fair Work Act* which has enabled social and community services employees to bring a pay equity case. While this particular case is yet to be finalised, in an interim finding, Fair Work Australia found that these workers were receiving less pay than their public sector counterparts, due in part to gender.

This is a landmark ruling but there is still much to be achieved if pay equity is to become a reality through legislative intervention. In addition to disappointing legislative interventions, there have been market failures

Employers need to do more to address pay equity. In 2010, less than 40 per cent of organisations reporting to the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) conducted an annual pay equity analysis.

ALGWA has partnered organisations and is leading the way to assist and promote the 50-50 Councils for Gender Equity Program.

This important program is the first national accreditation and awards program which encourages Local Government across NSW to address gender equity issues within



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their organisation and among their elected representatives. It is timely that on this day.

Councils across NSW should review their practices and sign up to the 50-50 Councils for Gender Equity Program.

The program has been designed to be accessed by all Councils, regardless of their size, location and progress on gender equity. Councils can apply for accreditation at three levels - starting with Bronze and working up to the prestigious, peer reviewed Gold Award.

On this year's **Equal Pay Day** I encourage all Councils to take a step forward, put in place systems to ensure that both men and women are paid equally for the value of their work, sign up to the 50-50 Councils for Gender Equity Program and achieve status for the work you have done to promote Equity in your workplace.

Show that Local Government in NSW is an Employer of Choice.

Julie A Griffiths

President ALGWA NSW

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