

# Equal Pay Case – it's all about the numbers

By Catherine Davis, AEU Federal Women's Officer

Fair Work Australia handed down a decision on Monday 16th May which recognised that social and community services (SACs) workers were undervalued and underpaid for reasons of gender. This represents a significant win for equal pay due to the successful shift in the understanding of what drives the persistent pay gap.

Fair Work Australia however also requested further information to help quantify the addition to pay rates they will use to remedy this gender pay gap.

The formal hearings in the case concluded on 12th April, after 76 union witness statements, 25 different work site visits and enough days of hearings and evidence to fill over 1,300 pages of transcript.

The ASU and other unions (including the AEU Vic Branch who represent instructors working in disability and community services) supporting this historic equal pay case have called for a further national day of action on **8th June 2011**, as the campaign has reached a critical stage.

The sector is largely reliant on Government funding to run its essential services and to pay the wages of the workers. Winning the case by proving these workers are undervalued alone will not correct the injustice.

Given the FWA decision will now heavily rest upon the details of how a dollar or percentage amount might be reached it is even more critical that the community fights for the Federal Government to commit to fully funding the outcome of the case and for those State Governments to reverse broken pre-election pledges (Victoria) or reverse their objection (NSW and WA) to funding the outcome of the case.

Our members working with adults with learning difficulties and disabilities are among the lowest paid in the union, doing one of the most difficult jobs. They are undervalued, not properly respected and because their work has traditionally been seen as "women's work" their wages have been restricted as a result.

The case seeks to apply pay increases of between 18% and 38% which the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission awarded to the State's SACS workers in a previous pay equity decision.

Workers in the sector are in services such as: youth refuges, women's refuges, family support services, disability services, community legal centres, Aboriginal organisations, community or neighbourhood centres, family day care centres, migrant or ethnic services and aid agencies.

There will be rallies in every state and territory major city on June 8. Go to [http://www.asu.asn.au/data\\_man/sacs/payup/20110608equalpay-dayofaction-poster.pdf](http://www.asu.asn.au/data_man/sacs/payup/20110608equalpay-dayofaction-poster.pdf) to find out the locations. If you are working, please wear red to show your support for your fellow members.

To prepare for your rally, check out the dance to She Works Hard for Her Money <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1wQxIAnKeg&feature=fvsr> so you too can dance for equal pay!

For further information about pay equity go to <http://www.aefederal.org.au/Women/CampPE.html>