



Brotherhood of St. Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty

Fair Work Commission Review

Gender undervaluation – priority awards

Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010 (AM2024/21)

Brotherhood of St. Laurence

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For further information or to discuss this submission, please contact:

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The Brotherhood of St. Laurence and the FWC Review

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL) is a social justice organisation working towards an Australia free of poverty. Our purpose is to advance a fair Australia through our leadership on policy reform, our partnerships with communities and the quality of our services. Our approach is informed directly by people experiencing disadvantage and uses evidence drawn from our research, together with insights from our programs and services, to develop practical solutions that work.

The FWC is reviewing award classifications and minimum wage rates to remedy potential gender-based undervaluation, starting with five priority awards including the SCHADS Award. BSL delivers services in areas relevant to the SCHADS Award – which is the focus of this submission.

BSL comment

Support to address undervaluation and simplification

BSL welcomes the FWC review of the SCHADS Award and supports correction of gender-based inequities and simplification of classifications. BSL acknowledges the work of the FWC and its

consideration of feedback to-date from across the community sector. BSL notes concern that the SCHADS review may result in pay cuts for some staff¹. BSL does not support changes that result in reductions to existing pay and conditions.

Impact and funding

The proposed changes are likely to result in net increases to Award rates of pay (and subsequent entitlements) and changes in classifications, which will increase costs for community sector organisations including BSL. In order to enable Award changes to be implemented by community sector organisations, and ensure cost increases do not have a negative impact on the delivery of services to participants, it will be important to ensure funding increases to reflect cost impacts and to avoid potential cuts to critical service cuts.

As government is a major purchaser of services in scope for the review, BSL urges the Federal Government and State and Territory Governments to commit to fully funding resulting cost impacts flowing from the FWC review. This should include proactive indexation and variation of existing agreements, as well as those currently under negotiation, to ensure cost neutrality for providers.

BSL notes that in 2012 the FWC made an Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) for the social and community services industry that resulted in increased pay rates over the period 2012 to 2020. However, the level of government funding supplementation did not meet the ongoing needs of the community sector, which has resulted in pressure on services and sustainability.

Implementation

As part of the review of classifications in the SCHADS Award, lived and prior experience is being considered (and likely to be implemented) when classifying roles. The intent is to move away from primarily/significantly focusing on qualifications required to perform the role. BSL supports this approach to help address any potential gender pay gap concerns and to ensure that all workers are fairly remunerated regardless of their formal educational pathway.

To avoid ambiguity and uncertainty when reclassifying roles, BSL urges the Commission to provide a standardised classification schedule to ensure clarity and facilitate correct interpretations. Without such guidance, roles may be incorrectly or inconsistently classified leading to excess administrative burden from conducting individualised and subjective assessments that will absorb critical time and resources of the organisation and sector during the transition period and ongoing.

BSL also supports an appropriate transition period being provided to allow for the implementation of changes from the FWC review.

¹ [Stop the Cuts to the SCHADS Award - No Cuts to Equal Pay! | Australian Services Union](#)