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For immediate use

Social Workers applaud the Gillard Government's support for the ASU community sector pay and conditions

AASW members welcome and acknowledge the historic commitment by the Federal Government to equal pay for women in their reaching an agreement with the Australian Services Union (ASU) on appropriate pay increases for low-paid social and community workers represented by the Union.

The AASW is the only national organisation for social workers in Australia, with over 6,000 members. Around 1 in 5 AASW members works in the not for profit sector, providing a wide range of services to Australians. Social Workers work in drug and alcohol services, community health centres, housing services, mental health services, family violence services and child and family welfare services. Social workers often provide the backbone to community sector organisations. The social work degree equips people with the skills, values and knowledge to work in the community sector.

Professor Karen Healy, AASW National President, said, "The AASW has wholeheartedly supported the ASU in this campaign. Australians who receive community services must be able to rely on the competence, capacity, integrity and professionalism of the staff, regardless of the nature of the service accessed. Raising pay and improving conditions is a vital first step to recruit and retain a highly skilled workforce to deliver these vital community services."

The AASW calls on all Governments to play their part in:

- Ensuring a sustainable community sector by improving pay and conditions, which will assist in quality staff recruitment and retention;
- Lifting the skills and qualifications of the community sector workforce by introducing a national accreditation scheme for the community sector;
- Developing a national community sector workforce strategy to recruit and retain skilled people to deliver community services;
- Reviewing the funding and contracts for community services, to ensure sustainable services with minimal compliance costs;
- Specific measures to attract skilled staff to remote and rural Australia."

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