



There's nothing modern about downsizing women's awards

Nationwide, a large and diverse group of associations concerned with women's recognition and rights in the workplace have united to oppose the downsizing of women's awards.

The Australian Services Union, the Australian Nursing Federation and a number of other groups listed below, have today published an open letter to the Federal Government to ensure women's gains in the workforce were not lost.

Linda White, Assistant National Secretary of the ASU said, "downsizing women's awards, by removing occupational awards and placing them within the industrial awards framework, will remove the hard earned recognition that women have gained over the past 100 years.

"It will affect all women who work, particularly women in clerical and administrative, nursing and childcare work.

"We call on the Federal Government to protect the advances women have made in the workforce over the last 30 years and to ensure we do not go backwards."

Ged Kearney, Federal Secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation, said the so-called award modernisation process would make attempts for women to gain pay parity even more difficult.

"It is misleading to suggest that the removal of occupational awards is 'modern', in fact, the large array of organisations that have signed onto the campaign assert that this will take women back generations in their struggle to earn equal amounts to men, and to enjoy the same conditions," said Ms Kearney.

“Getting rid of occupational awards will devalue their careers and leave them isolated, covered only by industry awards that will be mostly concerned with completely unrelated work.

Linda White (ASU) said, “Women will be going back to the dark days before the 1970s when their role at work was not sufficiently valued.”

Ged Kearney (ANF) said, “Women often do not identify with the industry they work in, they almost always identify with their occupation. These changes will not only affect their pay, conditions and standing in the workforce, but it will also affect their perception of themselves in the workplace.”

Both women called on the Federal Government and the Australian Industrial Relations Commission to ensure women’s gains in the workforce were not lost. “We call on the Federal Government & the AIRC to protect the advances women have made in the workforce over the last 30 years and to ensure we do not go backwards.”

The supporters of the statement include:

- ASU (Australian Services Union)
- ANF (Australian Nursing Federation)
- CWA (Country Women’s Association)
- NUS Women’s Department (National Union of Students)
- WEL (Women’s Electoral Lobby)
- WAVE (Women in Adult and Vocational Education)
- Emily’s List (A group devoted to seeing more progressive women elected in Parliament)
- Queensland Working Women's Service
- Working Women's Centre of South Australia

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