

Media Release – For immediate release

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Celebrating changemakers and calling for pay equity this Social Workers' Day

Social Service Providers Aotearoa (SSPA), the national membership-based organisation representing over 200 NGO social service organisations, is today celebrating the contributions made by Aotearoa's community-based social workers every day.

Dr Claire Achmad, SSPA Chief Executive, says that Social Workers' Day is a chance to highlight the positive change that social workers are making every day, especially alongside children, rangatahi, families and whānau facing the toughest situations.

"SSPA celebrates and recognises the incredible contributions that social workers make to our communities and hapori around the motu, often working in complex, demanding situations. I especially take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge the mahi of the social workers amongst our SSPA member whānau, who work in NGO and Iwi social services throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. Social workers are changemakers in our communities and they deserve to be recognised and valued for the work they do, every day", Dr Achmad says.

Dr Achmad says that as well as Social Workers' Day 2021 being a moment to celebrate the mahi of Aotearoa's social workers, SSPA is this year calling for pay equity for people working in social work roles throughout NGO and Iwi social services. She says that "right now, our community-based social workers are showing yet again the difference they make for children, rangatahi, families and whānau through their mahi as essential workers during the Delta COVID-19 outbreak. However, the reality for our NGO and Iwi social services social workers is that they are, on average, paid on average \$25,000 a year less than their government social worker counterparts."

Dr Achmad says that this is an unsustainable situation, and that people in social work roles employed by NGOs and Iwi social services have a right to pay equity and pay parity with government social workers. "Fair funding for our NGO and Iwi social services and pay equity for people in social work roles in these organisations is desperately needed. These things are directly related to our ability as a nation to make progress when it comes to the wellbeing of children and whānau. Addressing the pay gap is reliant on the Government funding NGO and Iwi social services to be able to deliver pay equity to their workers in social work roles," she says.

SSPA is currently coordinating the employer response to a pay equity claim lodged by the PSA in 2019, and is working to represent the interests of the community social services sector, so that a sector-wide pay equity settlement can be reached with the Government. "We know the Government recognises the need to address the pay equity situation for NGO and Iwi social services, and we urge moving quickly towards a settlement in the current pay equity claim that will provide a sector-wide solution," Dr Achmad adds.

"Through this pay equity claim, the community social services sector has an unprecedented opportunity to achieve pay equity for all people working in social work roles in our sector in Aotearoa. Today on Social Workers' Day, we are calling on all those employers of community-based social workers, and social work kaimahi themselves, to join our collective call for pay equity," Dr Achmad says.

SSPA has a dedicated Pay Equity page on its website at www.sspa.org.nz/pay-equity, and is encouraging employers and social workers across the NGO and Iwi community social services sector to visit and sign up to receive updates on pay equity and opportunities to be involved.

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ABOUT SSPA

Social Service Providers Aotearoa is a membership-based organisation, representing some 200 non-profit organisations from around Aotearoa.

Our members are funded by government to deliver social services in our communities every day, with a predominant focus on children, rangatahi, families and whānau. Our affiliate members are organisations that deliver social services for these people, and organisations and individuals who work in areas aligned to the interests of children, young people, whānau or communities.

SSPA's vision is that Aotearoa's NGO social services are sustainable, making a positive impact every day in our communities, supporting children, young people and whānau to thrive now and into the future. SSPA works to strengthen Aotearoa's social sector through advocacy and engagement, learning and development, relationships and sector leadership.

