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**Workers and employers celebrate historic decision to extend pay equity
to all community-based social workers**

Workers and employers are welcoming the Government's decision to extend pay equity to all social workers across Aotearoa New Zealand's community-based social services.

The Government's decision announced today will mean 4,600 workers will receive equitable pay for the work they are doing every day.

The Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi (PSA) and Social Service Providers Aotearoa (SSPA) said the extension would right a long-standing wrong. The work of social workers has been historically undervalued because it was predominantly undertaken by women. The Government righted this wrong for social workers working for Oranga Tamariki in 2018 and now it is the turn of community sector social workers.

"This is a historic day for all social workers," said PSA National Secretary Melissa Woolley. "Once implemented, the extension will mean all social workers in the wider sector will be fairly paid for the valuable work they do in our communities and hāpori for our tamariki, rangatahi and whānau. We at last are heading in the right direction; all social workers are worth 100% no matter where they work."

SSPA's Chief Executive, Dr Claire Achmad, said the pay equity extension would be felt throughout the social services community. "This is a major win for our community-based social services. This will make a tangible difference for tauwhiro, and strengthen their work with children, rangatahi and whānau. The decision sends a strong message that the essential mahi of social work is valued and recognised."

The extension announcement follows a settlement raised by the PSA extending pay equity for some 500 workers employed by five iwi and NGO social service employers [announced in October](#). Those workers are now enjoying pay that is equal to their Oranga Tamariki counterparts. An average full-time worker will receive an increase of between \$20,000-30,000 on top of their annual salary.

The PSA and SSPA said that the timing of the extension was important. "We hope that all our social work kaimahi will enjoy significant pay corrections once the extension is completed, particularly at this time when so many households are under pressure," said Woolley.

Stephanie Brown is a PSA delegate and social worker in Dunedin. “This is life changing for me and my colleagues. It’s a real struggle to survive on our current salaries, especially for those who are raising families on a single income. It’ll give us room to breathe. I’ll be able to afford things that have been out of reach, like double glazing to keep warm in winter.

“It will be a game changer for our profession because our work will be properly valued and acknowledged. Social work is hard, but decent salaries mean we can do better at retaining staff and attracting good people.”

The PSA and SSPA said the extension, once made, would strengthen the sector.

“We’ve seen high rates of turnover and real challenges in retaining experienced workers so we are hopeful a settlement will mean a more stable workforce over time, and that will ease some of the pressures for these workers, and their employers,” said Woolley.

SSPA said it was now crucial for all employers of community-based social workers to provide the data and information that will be requested by Te Kawa Mataaho (the Public Service Commission), the government agency leading the next steps in the extension process.

“The process from here will be a significant undertaking given the number of employers and kaimahi involved,” said Achmad. “We will continue working closely with Te Kawa Mataaho to support this, and we call on all community-based social service providers and workers to participate actively when they are asked for information. It’s also crucial that all government social sector agencies engage so we can get an effective and timely result for all.”

The PSA and SSPA remain committed to advocating for an end to pay inequity for everyone across the community-based social sector. Both organisations will soon begin work on a second pay equity claim relating to a wider group of people in social services.

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