

ASU MEMBERS CAMPAIGN

AUGUST 09 UPDATE



August, 2009

ASU - "The Social and Community Services Workers Union"

Member's newsletter
Campaign and SACS Update

Have you heard about the new Queensland SACS pay rates?

In an historic decision handed down by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, the ASU was successful in arguing that Queensland SACS workers should be paid at rates comparable with the Queensland public sector.

In the decision, the Commission considered a range of factors that had contributed to the undervaluation of work in the sector, including that it is considered to be an extension of women's work in the home and is seen as 'female'. The Commission determined that *'the overriding public interest consideration in this matter is to ensure that employees in this sector are remunerated commensurate with their work value'*.

The Commission went on to say that *'this will ensure that qualified, competent employees are attracted and retained in the sector to provide quality services (and) that service users receive appropriately funded quality services so as to properly assist them to increase their capacity'*.

Importantly, the Queensland government has agreed to fund these wage outcomes.

So exactly how much more would you now be paid for doing the same work in Queensland? We have put together a table that compares current Victorian rates of pay and the new Queensland rates. **Table located at the end of the flyer.**

So what does this mean for us in Victoria?

Unfortunately, we cannot run a case like this one in Victoria as we do not have a State industrial system. Still, the Queensland pay equity decision tells us some important things.

- That claim for an up to 50% wage increase by 2012 is realistic;
- That our argument about the need to address the poor wages of Victorian SACS workers - which are similar to those that applied in Queensland before the pay equity decision - are not only right but can stand up to the scrutiny of an independent industrial body;
- That the government does have the capacity to pay. The Queensland government has ear-marked funding to cover the increases awarded by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and;
- That we need to keep on fighting.

There were several things that contributed to the success of the ASU in Queensland.

- The fact that workers JOINED THE UNION and BELIEVED THAT CHANGE WAS POSSIBLE!
- Members of the union became active and encouraged their colleagues to do the same;
- The ASU worked with supportive employers;
- The ASU lobbied Government, making it clear that change was the ONLY acceptable road for the Government to take;

The facts about the need for change were clear and straightforward and could not be refuted and

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Australian Services Union,

116 Queensberry Street, Carlton South Vic 3053

Ph: (03) 9342 3400 Fax: (03) 9342 3498/99

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ASU members knew that not only did they deserve better, but their agency, their community and their State deserved better.

For Victorian SACS workers to succeed, we need to get active - NOW! That means recruiting people not only to the union but to become active in the campaign. Queensland SACS workers have shown that we CAN win this campaign but only if members get loud and get active. And this can only happen with the assistance of Delegates and active members such as you.

And whilst our methods for achieving success need to be different than those the ASU took in Queensland, there are still lessons to be taken from their success to bolster our campaign. This edition of the Member's Update will focus on what has been happening and more importantly, what the next steps are in the campaign.

ASU in Victoria meets with Minister Martin Pakula and Treasurer John Lenders following the Queensland Pay Equity Decision.

In our Ministerial meetings last week, the ASU discussed the Queensland decision and its implications for Victorian workers, including the decision's possible effect on the current federal Award modernisation proceedings.

'Award modernisation' is part of the new Fair Work Act and is happening in every industry. The process focuses on rolling Awards from around Australia into a single industry Award with the aim of standardising the conditions of workers undertaking similar work but under different Awards in different States.

The SACS Award is one of the last Awards to go through this process. So in the future, instead of having a SACS Award for each state there should be one national Award.

In our meetings with the Minister and the Treasurer, we told them that Queensland has now set the benchmark for funding for the wages of SACS workers and that Victoria should now step up to the mark. The meetings were productive, and the ASU looks forward to following up on our lobbying efforts in the near future.

Both ministers were left in no doubt that the ASU in Victoria would continue our campaign until comparable rates were delivered to our members in Victoria.

The Way Forward: A plan for positive change in the community sector

In the past, ASU members were prepared to negotiate their pay and conditions within existing funding arrangements. This meant that funding arrangements negotiated between the sector and government effectively created a 'cap' on what members could then achieve in terms of improvements to pay and conditions at their workplace.

However, the current low levels of pay and poor conditions across the sector show that this approach has not worked. In fact, it has led to the situation where agencies across the sector are not able to attract and recruit the workers that are needed to maintain services to our community.

So ASU members at a number of workplaces around Victoria are taking a new approach. They are putting together claims for wages and conditions that are based on the fair value of the work they do. This means comparing rates of pay with those of workers in Queensland doing the same work and with your colleagues in the public sector doing the same or similar work.

The first step is for members to put together and then endorsing a Log of Claims for negotiations. A Log of Claims is a list of new conditions and pay rates that a party - in this case the ASU and its members - want introduced at a

workplace. For these new conditions and pay rates to then become legal, an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement must be implemented.

The ASU will serve a log of claims on a number of SACS agencies in the first week of August. Others will follow in September and so on. At each workplace, once the log of claims has been endorsed, the ASU can start bargaining for better wages and conditions for members. This means that we can then put pressure on the Victorian government to follow the Queensland governments lead, do the honourable thing and fund your employer so they can pay you and your colleagues appropriately.

To succeed in this, the ASU is focusing our energy on those SACS organisations where there are lots of union members who are active and are keen to be part of the process. And clearly we want as many organisations as possible to have a log of claims endorsed and be ready for action.

To find out if your Organisation is already part of this process or if you want to be included, call the ASU Member Contact Centre on 1300 85 55 70 or email info@asuvic.com.

For more information on what you can do to make your organisation campaign ready, you can obtain a copy of our new Campaign tool kit called, 'The Way Forward'. Delegates will be sent the link to download this in the near future. The tool kit contains useful information about what needs to happen at your workplace in order for the campaign to be successful



Picture is from a recent SACS Rally in Collingwood

Update on the four priority campaign areas

Portability of long service leave:

We are now just under a year away from the scheduled introduction by the Victorian government of portable long service leave across the 'not for profit' sector.

It is our understanding that the Government is still on track to introduce a portable long service leave scheme despite strong opposition from some employers, who are loudly protesting that it is not needed and is too expensive. We believe that this grumbling should be drowned out by a loud chorus of common sense. To this end, the ASU has sent information to every Member of the Victorian Parliament that reiterates our position on portability of long service leave.

The SACS sector has huge problems with recruiting and retaining workers. This puts both sector sustainability and best practice service provision in jeopardy. And every time someone leaves, it costs SACS organisations money - money that could be better used for other things apart from recruitment. And portability of long service leave is an entitlement that our colleagues in the public sector have enjoyed for years.

To keep a portable long service leave scheme on track, make sure your employer knows that you think this is an entitlement that you not only deserve but that the sector needs to remain viable.

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Paid parental leave

It is old news by now that the federal government is going to introduce 18 weeks of paid parental leave for all employees that are primary carers that have been employed 10 months out the 13 months leading up to the birth of a child. This will begin as of July 2011.

This is a great step forward but it is not the whole journey! Under this scheme parental leave will be paid at the minimum weekly wage, which is currently just over \$543.00 per week for a full time worker. This is less than the majority of workers on the SACS Award or SACS Enterprise Bargaining Agreements receive.

So the ASU is campaigning for SACS workers to receive a minimum of 18 weeks paid parental leave AT FULL PAY. At organisations with existing Enterprise Agreements which include paid parental leave, we will be asking for 18 weeks at full pay on top of the existing entitlement.

Up to 50% wage increases by 2012

When we first announced our claim for pay increases for Victorian workers, some people said the ASU was being unreasonable and that our thinking was 'pie in the sky'. However, the Queensland pay equity decision makes it abundantly clear that a claim for an up to 50% pay increase for SACS workers in Victoria by 2012 is not unreasonable.

And achieving this will - as it has in Queensland - redress years of inequality, when community workers were paid far less than their counterparts in the public sector.

So it is important that you take the time to promote the ASU claim and show members and potential members that with a will to succeed, it is possible to get a good wages outcome.

Improvements in Occupational Health and Safety.

Unfortunately, far too many SACS organisations do not think about occupational health and safety until there has been a near miss or worse, someone is injured.

On 20th July 2009, the Australian newspaper reported that some DHS Child Protection offices were being investigated by Worksafe because their child protective workers were being asked to visit potentially violent homes alone. This highlights how important the OH&S aspect of our campaign is – how many ASU members do outreach visits on their own on a regular basis? The answer – far too many.

The ASU wants the SACS sector to have uniformity in how they deal with OH&S issues. And at the ASU, we believe that an essential part of reducing risk is to have elected workplace OH&S representatives with the skills, knowledge and confidence to do the job. Sadly in the SACS sector, we find this is often not the case and workers suffer injuries as a result.

So if you do not have an elected OH&S representative, make it your job to elect some one - maybe even you - to the position. As an OH&S rep you are entitled to receive training. You can contact us if you want more information - the ASU is an accredited provider of OH&S training.

And if you have a story about an Occupational Health and Safety incident at your workplace we are looking for case studies, so please contact Organiser Tash Wark on 0400 917 845 or twark@asuvic.com so your story can become part of the fight for improved Occupational Health and Safety conditions

ASU members at Community Connections in Warrnambool hold the line

Community Connections Victoria Limited (CCVL) is a 'not for profit' agency based in Warrnambool. In 2008, both the ASU and the Victorian Workplace Rights Advocate expressed concerns that workers at Community Connections

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were in some cases being paid below minimum rates and that workers were having their hours reduced with no consultation regarding workload.

Despite over 12 months of repeated requests, the agency refused to meet with the union and workers at CCVL were no closer to getting a new, valid collective Agreement.

So in May 2009, ASU members at Community Connections took a big step – they took protected industrial action. In doing so, they came under fire from their management, who suggested that members lacked commitment to their work and the community. Despite this, members stayed strong and in June management agreed to negotiate a new enterprise agreement with staff. The ASU is representing members in this process.

This is a great outcome – and a great example of how sticking together, staying strong and standing up for what is right can pay dividends!

New campaign material download now

The Respect campaign has a new campaign brochure and membership form. Download it now and start handing out to people at your workplace and throughout your networks.

Remember - the reason most people say they have not joined a union is NOT that they don't want to join but that NO ONE ASKED! So go ahead have the conversation with your colleagues today.

<http://www.asuvic.asn.au/260.html>

SACS workers on the Award forgotten by the Fair Pay Commission.

No one was expecting an overwhelmingly generous increase to the rates of pay set out in the SACS Award as a result of the Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Commission. However, we did not expect Award dependent workers to be granted no increase at all!

Workers on Awards were forgotten by the Commission. Whilst the inflation rate in Australia has slowed, it still costs the average Australian more to live now than it did this time last year. The union movement often wonders whether the people involved in making these decisions do their own shopping, buy petrol or pay rent.

So when the ASU met with Minister for Industrial Relations, Martin Pakula on 22nd July, 2009, we asked that he write to SACS agencies - as his predecessor Rob Hulls did in 2006 - and tell them that they should pass on the 3.14% per annum funding indexation increases they got from DHS to their workers in the form of pay increases. We are now waiting on a formal response from the Minister to our request.

In the mean time, you should talk to your employer and ask them if they are passing on the funding increase they got on 1 July 2009 in the form of a wage increase for workers. If your employer says, no, call the ASU Member Contact Centre on 1300 85 55 70 or email info@asuvic.com for advice on what you can do about this.

WATCH OUT FOR OUR SPECIAL MEMBERS CAMPAIGN UPDATE NEXT WEEK WITH THE LIST OF ORGANISATIONS THAT THE ASU HAS COMMENCED PROCEEDINGS TO NEGOTIATE AN ENTERPRISE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

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SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES (SACS) AWARD VICTORIAN AND QUEENSLAND AWARD CLASSIFICATION COMPARISONS

Queensland SACS workers have been awarded wage increases of between 18% and 37% in an historic decision of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.

These increases mean that SACS workers in Queensland now earn wages comparable with their fellow workers in the public sector and Queensland SACS workers are now the highest paid SACS workers in Australia.

Set out is a comparison of the relevant SACS rates of pay for Queensland and Victoria.

Victorian social worker	\$ P.A as at Oct 2008	Queensland equivalent classification	\$ PA as at Jul 2011	% difference
SW 1-1	37,188	Level 3-2	45,390	22%
SW 1-2	38,572	Level 3-3	46,410	20%
SW 1-3	39,145	Level 3-4	47,940	22%
SW 1-4	40,291	Level 4-1	51,000	27%
SW 1-5	41,536	Level 4-2	52,020	25%
SW 1-6	42,958	Level 4-3	54,060	26%
SW 1-7	43,946	Level 4-4	55,590	26%
SW 2-1	45,349	Level 5-1	58,650	29%
SW 2-2	46,732	Level 5-2	60,180	29%
SW 2-3	48,056	Level 5-3	61,710	28%
SW 2-3 CONT'D	48,056	Level 6-1	64,406	34%
SW 2-3 CONT'D	NA	Level 6-2	65,420	NA
SW 2-3 CONT'D	NA	Level 6-3	66,434	NA
SW 3-1	49,084	Level 7-1	69,477	42%
SW 3-2	50,408	Level 7-2	70,998	41%
SW 3-3	51,732	Level 7-3	72,520	40%
SW 4-1	52,759	Level 8-1	73,377	39%
SW 4-2	54,261	Level 8-2	74,827	38%
NA	NA	Level 8-3	76,272	NA
Victorian Community Development Worker	\$ PA as at Oct 2008	Queensland equivalent classification	\$ PA as at Jul 2011	% difference
CDW 1-1	36,082	Level 3-1	43,350	20%
CDW 1-2	37,307	Level 3-2	45,390	22%
CDW 1-3	38,255	Level 3-3	46,410	21%
CDW 1-4	39,204	Level 3-4	47,940	22%
CDW 2A-1	37,188	Level 4-1	51,000	37%
CDW 2A-2	38,255	Level 4-2	52,020	36%
CDW 2A-3	39,204	Level 4-3	54,060	38%
CDW 2A-4	40,429	Level 4-4	55,590	38%
CDW 2A-8, 2B-1	45,349	Level 5-1	58,650	29%
CDW 2A-9, 2B-2	46,653	Level 5-2	60,180	29%
CDW 2A-10, 2B-3	47,938	Level 5-3	61,710	29%
CDW 2B-4	49,222	Level 6-1	64,406	31%
CDW 2B-5	50,428	Level 6-2	65,420	30%
CDW 2B-6	51,732	Level 6-3	66,434	28%
CDW 3-1	49,222	Level 7-1	69,477	41%
CDW 3-2	50,428	Level 7-2	70,998	41%
CDW 3-3	51,732	Level 7-3	72,520	40%
CDW 3-3 CONT'D	51,732	Level 8-1	73,377	42%
	NA	Level 8-2	74,827	NA
	NA	Level 8-3	76,272	NA

Victorian Youth Work	\$ PA as at Oct 2008	Queensland equivalent classification	\$ PA as at Jul 2011	% difference
Unqual 1-2	31,596	Level 2-1	38,760	23%
Unqual 1-3	32,169	Level 2-2	40,290	25%
Unqual 1-4	32,979	Level 2-3	41,820	27%
Unqual 1-5	33,533	Level 2-4	43,350	29%
YW 1-2	37,169	Level 3-1	43,350	17%
YW 1-3	37,840	Level 3-2	45,390	20%
YW 1-4	38,789	Level 3-3	46,410	20%
YW 1-5	39,461	Level 3-4	47,940	21%
YW 2-1	39,461	Level 4-1	51,000	29%
YW 2-2	40,785	Level 4-2	52,020	28%
YW 2-3	41,891	Level 4-3	54,060	29%
NA	NA	Level 4-4	55,590	NA
YW 2-4	43,195	Level 5-1	58,650	36%
YW 2-4	NA	Level 5-2	60,180	NA
YW 2-4	NA	Level 5-3	61,710	NA
YW 3-1	43,195	Level 6-1	64,406	49%
YW 3-2	44,460	Level 6-2	65,420	47%
YW 3-3	45,488	Level 6-3	66,434	46%
YW 4-1	46,476	Level 7-1	69,477	49%
YW 4-2	47,701	Level 7-2	70,998	49%
YW 4-3	48,827	Level 7-3	72,520	49%
YW 4-3 CONT'D	48,827	Level 8-1	73,377	50%
NA	NA	Level 8-2	74,827	NA
NA	NA	Level 8-3	76,272	NA
Victorian Welfare Worker	\$ PA as at Oct 2008	Queensland equivalent classification	\$ PA as at Jul 2011	% difference
Unqual 1-4	31,418	Level 2-1	38,760	23%
Unqual 1-5	32,150	Level 2-2	40,290	25%
Unqual 1-6	32,979	Level 2-3	41,820	27%
Unqual 1-7	33,533	Level 2-4	43,350	29%
WW 1-4	36,971	Level 3-1	43,350	17%
WW 1-5	37,821	Level 3-2	45,390	20%
WW 1-6	38,789	Level 3-3	46,410	20%
WW 1-7	39,441	Level 3-4	47,940	22%
WW 2-1	37,821	Level 4-1	51,000	35%
WW 2-2	38,789	Level 4-2	52,020	34%
WW 2-3	39,421	Level 4-3	54,060	37%
	NA	Level 4-4	55,590	NA
WW 2-4	40,607	Level 5-1	58,650	44%
WW 2-4	NA	Level 5-2	60,180	NA
WW 2-4	NA	Level 5-3	61,710	NA
WW 3-1	40,607	Level 6-1	64,406	59%
WW 3-2	41,832	Level 6-2	65,420	56%
WW 3-3	42,820	Level 6-3	66,434	55%
WW 4-1	43,670	Level 7-1	69,477	59%
WW 4-2	44,776	Level 7-2	70,998	59%
WW 4-3	45,705	Level 7-3	72,520	59%
WW 4-3 Cont'd	45,705	Level 8-1	73,377	61%

Note: Comparisons are approximate and individual classifications may vary slightly from this, depending on an individual worker's position description.

Old Level 6,7 and 8 may also be entitled to a 7.5 loading on top of amounts shown, in lieu of some payments and allowances. This additional 7.5% has not been included in above comparisons.