

I work for a 'not for profit' agency that is part of the community sector. I am a *(insert type of work that you do)* providing support to *(insert the client group that your program supports)*. Community workers are often the last resort for people in times of crisis and are frequently the only safety net for people holding together families, homes and livelihoods. Unfortunately, however, my agency is one of the hundreds of community agencies struggling to deliver services to our community in the face of a severe workforce crisis.

A survey by my union, the ASU, shows that nearly half of the workers are not committed to staying in the industry beyond the next five years. Numerous reports by the State Government confirm that the community sector is now unable to recruit and retain the workers it needs to support our community into the future and the main reason for this is the low wages and conditions of its workers. Although funded by the State Government, community workers are paid much less than government employees who do similar work. In fact, the average full time qualified community worker with several years experience earns around \$15,000.00 less than the average Australian wage.

We also lag behind everyone else when it comes to our working conditions – very few of us can access either long service leave or paid parental leave and we have a higher than average incidence of 'burn out' and stress. This situation must be addressed as a matter of urgency or we risk an imminent collapse in services for our poorest, most disadvantaged and vulnerable citizens. My colleagues and I working in 'not for profit' community agencies all over Victoria are therefore calling on the State Government to fund the wages and conditions of community workers properly so that our agencies can get on with the job of providing essential services to our community. This would demonstrate the State Governments' commitment to the community sector in particular and to fair wage outcomes in general.

Regards