

# Queensland CARES

On Wednesday 6th May the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission handed down an historic decision that awarded Queensland SACS workers wage increases of between 18% and 37%.

The decision means that Queensland SACS Workers are now paid at rates of pay comparable with the rates in the public sector.

In this decision the Commission considered a range of factors which had contributed to the undervaluation of work in the sector including that care work is considered to be an extension of women's work in the home and characterised as "female".

The Commission determined that "a pattern emerges that gender is at the core of present work value of the community services sector" and that the "work has been undervalued on a gender basis".

The second reason that the commission gave as grounds for awarding the significant wage increases was the issue of equal pay with comparable public sector jobs. As all members know – we are paid significantly less than workers in the public sector doing the same or similar work. The quest for wage parity with the public sector has been a long term battle for ASU members – especially in the ACT.

The Commission noted that:

*"the overriding public interest consideration in this matter is to ensure that employees in this sector are remunerated commensurate with their work value and in a way that is affordable to the funding bodies. This will ensure that qualified, competent employees are attracted and retained in the sector to provide quality services, that services users receive appropriately funded quality services so as to properly assist them to increase their capacity ... and finally that the services can be provided at a cost reasonable to the taxpayer."*

**This decision has huge implications at a National Level.** It means that SACS workers in Queensland are being paid on average 25% to 30% more than their colleagues in other states for doing the same work.

### **Queensland Wage Increases to be fully funded**

On Tuesday 16th June Queensland Premier Anna Bligh announced funding of \$414 million over four years, to fund the decision of the Queensland Industrial relations commission, recognizing the value of the work that that SACS workers do.

The ACT SACS Industry needs to work together to demand that ACT SACS workers are not treated as second class citizens. The ASU is running the CARE Campaign to fight for significant increases in our funding so that we can have the value of our work recognized. For more information on the CARE campaign visit:

[www.asumembers.org.au](http://www.asumembers.org.au)

## YOUR NEW ORGANISER IN THE ACT



Natalie Lang is the new Union Organiser for the ACT. Natalie has been an organiser with the ASU for the last three years. During that time Natalie has been an organiser with our Social and Community Services division

working across both metropolitan and regional areas of NSW.

Natalie will be working on the ACT Multi Enterprise Agreement and other workplace campaigns over the coming months. To arrange for Natalie to hold a meeting in your workplace you can contact the ASU office on 1300 784 278, or email [natalie@asu.org.au](mailto:natalie@asu.org.au)

### The Future of the ACT SACS Award

In 2008 the Australian Federal Government initiated a process of Award Modernisation. This is the process whereby the Australian Industrial Relations Commission will roll multiple SACS industry and state based awards into a single and less extensive award. It is unknown as to which conditions will be included in the modern Award, but we can be sure that it will no longer contain all of the conditions that you are currently entitled to.

**This means that your ACT Award will no longer exist after 1 January 2010.** A number of ACT employers have already begun taking steps to ensure that your employment conditions will be protected into the future by joining the ACT SACS Multi Enterprise Agreement.

Historically the ACT SACS Award has maintained continuity of employment conditions across the SACS Industry in the ACT. This has assisted in keeping our industry together to campaign for wages and conditions, and for the subsequent government funding to meet these costs.

It is vital that the SACS Industry in the ACT maintains a continuity of employment standards, and that we campaign as an industry to adequately fund improvements in our industry, just as SACS workers have successfully done in Queensland. All employers in the ACT are encouraged to join the ACT SACS Multi Enterprise Agreement (MEA) before the end of 2009.

For more information on the SACS ACT MEA please

contact the ASU on 1300 784 278 or visit [www.asumembers.org.au](http://www.asumembers.org.au) or contact ACTCOSS on 6202 7200 or visit [www.actcoss.org.au](http://www.actcoss.org.au)

### ACT Multi Enterprise Agreement

The ASU is now focusing on supporting SACS employers to consider moving onto a Multi Enterprise Agreement (MEA). An MEA is similar to the Multi Business Agreement (MBA) that a number of ACT employers are currently party to. A MEA is a collective agreement between a group of employers and employees that provide an employment standard that acts as a minimum set of employment conditions.

Now more than ever it is vital for all ACT SACS Organisations to be party to the MEA as the Award Modernisation process will remove our ACT SACS Award from 1 January 2010. The Modern Award that will replace the SACS ACT Award is expected to deliver much lower conditions of employment than the current ACT SACS Award.

Much like the previous ACT Multi Business Agreement (MBA) the new MEA is intended to serve three purposes:

1. Preserve the pay and conditions that are currently applicable under the SACS ACT Award
2. Pass on wage increases to employees, in line with ACT Government funding indexation
3. Maintain equity in wages and conditions across the SACS Industry in the ACT. Only as a united industry can we campaign to improve funding and conditions in our industry, just like our colleagues in Queensland have been able to achieve.

### What Do I need to do to secure my wages and conditions?

The ACT Government has indexed funding to the ACT SACS industry by 3.15%. This is done deliberately to allow for increases to wages. To ensure that your employer passes this funding on to employees, and to guarantee that your wages and conditions are protected into 2010, you need to encourage your employer to join the ACT MEA. ASU members are encouraged to take the following steps:

1. Call a meeting of all workers to discuss joining the MEA
2. Pass a resolution calling on your employer to enter into discussions with the ASU to join the MEA
3. Encourage your co workers to join the ASU so that the ASU can negotiate on behalf of all workers in your workplace. United we bargain, divided we beg.

4. Contact Natalie Lang to attend and assist in running your workplace meeting. Call 1300 784 278, or email [natalie@asu.org.au](mailto:natalie@asu.org.au)

Once employees in your workplace are organised, we can approach your employer and ask them to join the MEA. In joining the MEA we can work together to secure your wages and conditions, and continue to campaign for funding to improve conditions in our industry.

Each year the government increases funding levels to keep up with inflation and wage increases. This is referred to as Funding Indexation.

**From 1 July 2009 ACT NGO Services will receive indexation of 3.15%**

The ASU supports employers passing this onto employees as wage increases of at least 3.15%, from July 1 regardless of whether the employer is party to the MEA.

## ACT WORKERS CARE



Joining the MEA is the first step to securing employment conditions for SACS Workers in the ACT, However the recent decision of the Queensland Industrial Relations commission, will have huge implications at a National Level. This decision, to be phased in over 18 months, will see Queensland workers being paid on average 25%-30% more than their colleagues in many other states. We need to ensure that ACT community Services and Community Service workers are not treated as second class.

## How can we achieve the new QLD pay rates in the ACT?

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The only way that we can achieve wage rates like those of our colleagues in Queensland, is for both the ACT and Federal Government to significantly increase funding into the sector. The CARE campaign demands immediate action from Governments on this.

### **All ACT SACS workers need to join with our colleagues in NSW and Join the CARE Campaign.**

The CARE campaign is not a campaign against SACS employers. This is a campaign aimed at government and aimed at making government responsible for properly funding the community sector. The Queensland decision has explicitly stated that the vital work of Community services is undervalued. We must demand equal pay now.

For more information on the CARE campaign, or to get involved in the ACT CARE Committee contact Natalie Lang on 1300 784 278 or email [natalie@asu.org.au](mailto:natalie@asu.org.au) or visit [www.asumembers.org.au/care-campaign](http://www.asumembers.org.au/care-campaign)

## What's on? June – August

The ASU will be working with ACTCOSS and a number of organizations to negotiate stream one of the new MEA. This will involve the ASU members and Organisers:

- Holding workplace meetings to resolve to call upon employers to join the MEA
- A forum of employers held in conjunction with the ASU and ACTCOSS to initiate bargaining for the MEA. Date to be confirmed (for more information email [natalie@asu.org.au](mailto:natalie@asu.org.au))
- MEA negotiations
- Lodgment of the SACS ACT Multi enterprise Agreement.