****

**ASU Submission**

**Fair Work Commission Expert Panel**

Annual Wage Review 2021-2022

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Submitter:** | Emeline Gaske, Assistant National Secretary |
| **Organisation:** | Australian Services Union |
| **Address:** | 116 Queensberry StreetCarlton South, Victoria, 3053 |
| **Phone:** | 03 9342 1400 |
| **Fax:** | 03 9342 1499 |
| **Email:** | egaske@asu.asn.au  |
| **Date:** | 6 May 2022 |

Contents

[The ASU 3](#_Toc102496637)

[A fair wage increase 3](#_Toc102496638)

[Wage rises should not be delayed 4](#_Toc102496639)

[Conclusion 6](#_Toc102496640)

# The ASU

The Australian Services Union ('**ASU**') is one of Australia's largest unions, representing approximately 135,000 members. ASU members work in a wide variety of industries and occupations in both the private, public and community sectors.

To assist the Commission in its deliberations on the Annual Wage Review, we have prepared further case studies that demonstrate the importance of the Australian Council of Trade Union's (‘**ACTU’**) claim to two groups of workers:

* Private sector administrative workers (covered by the *Clerks - Private Sector Award 2020)*; and
* Community and disability services sector workers (covered by the *Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010*).

# A fair wage increase

The ASU supports for the ACTU’s revised claim for a 5.5% increase to all awards effective from 1 July 2022. With inflation soaring to a 13 year high, the disparity between increases to wages and increases to the cost of living is hurting members.

The ACTU claim reflects the growing productivity of Australia's workers and the rapidly rising cost of living.

Employer organisations and lobby groups are variously calling for no pay increase or an inadequate increase, such as 2%. Any increase below the cost of living will see a real wage cut for our members and add to the continuing daily struggle for many.

In both the private sector administration[[1]](#footnote-1) and the community and disability services sector[[2]](#footnote-2) the workforce is predominately women. Women tend to carry the household responsibility of caring for any dependents. In the first quarter, cost of living "notable rises was…recorded across the food group (+2.8 per cent), [including] vegetables (+6.6 per cent), waters, soft drinks and juices (+5.6 per cent), fruit (+4.9 per cent) and beef (+7.6 per cent)."[[3]](#footnote-3) The ACTU pay claim will assist in meeting the cost of living.

Our members tell us a fair increase in their wages is necessary for housing security.

**Private Sector Case Study 1**

**Angela** is an administration officer. She is employed in Queensland. She is covered by the C*lerks - Private Sector Award 2020*.

"As a single parent working from home in a virtual admin role, I can't afford to own a car, struggle with my grocery bill and have very little left for anything after basics. I have avoided needed dental work due to not having the money to spare, which long term will probably end up costing me more."

"I have been warned by my real estate agent in advance my rent is likely to increase 30% at the end of the year as I live in a National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) property, and NRAS is ending. I don't know what we are going to do and am very anxious about the near future."

ASU members need a fair pay increase to help assist with the cost of health.

**Community and Disability Services Case Study 1**

**Rebecca** is a twenty-six-year-old. Family Violence case manager. She is employed in Victoria and part-time on 24 hours a week. Rebecca is employed in classification 5.1 of the *Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010* at $42.94 per hour.

Rebecca has a Bachelor of Psychology and has worked in social work for roughly 5 years.

"On a day-to-day basis, the work of a Family Violence case manager is pretty diverse. I assess the level of risk for our clients and the high risk, and those who need immediate help will receive our assistance first. We provide support with housing, support services for kids and other things clients need help with."

"I drive 30 minutes to work, and the cost of petrol has skyrocketed."

 "I currently live alone, and my rent is $290 per week. I would like more housing stability by buying my own house, but it seems like a difficult task to achieve at this stage. My mum, grandma and uncle receive Centrelink support, and I feel it is degrading not being able to provide my family with as much support as they need."

"I would like to stay working in social work, but it is a highly demanding job and very difficult to progress to manager. A lot of people burn out. Social Workers are exposed to vicarious trauma at work, and I cannot afford to see a psychologist because it is $200 out of pocket, and I receive a $100 rebate. It isn't appropriate to download our work issues onto our partners and friends because they have not been taught how to deal with vicarious trauma. An increase in my salary would go some way to helping me access further support."

"Receiving a 5% pay increase would be extremely validating. Our work has been at the forefront of the pandemic with increased demand. It would help with day to day living, and a pay increase would help break the cycle before I become a part of the cycle."

# Wage rises should not be delayed

The Expert Panel should implement the ACTU pay claim increase from 1 July 2022. The Expert Panel should reject any call to delay or stagger the increase. Members are hurting right now, there is an urgent need to raise wages to at least keep up with inflation right now.

Many employer organisations and lobby groups have made submissions to delay any increase. They have relied on misconceived reasoning, including the upcoming increase in the superannuation guarantee. The Expert Panel should note that, on average, women retire with 47% less superannuation than their male counterparts.[[4]](#footnote-4) An increase effective 1 July 2022 will assist in addressing economic insecurity now and retirement.

A delay in the increase to Award rates will see a further difficulty for our members in ensuring they meet the cost of living, but an increase effective 1 July is necessary to assist in gender equity.

Members are telling us that a delay in a pay increase will impact their retirement.

**Private Sector Case Study 2**

**Mary** is a sixty-one year old woman. She works in Victoria and is a call centre operator. She is paid $25.41 per hour (level 3 of the Clerks - Private Sector Award 2020) and receives a 30% loading when she completes nightshift. Mary is employed full-time.

"I live in Geelong and care for my mother, but need to travel to Oakleigh for work. I use a combination of driving and v-line. You can certainly see the cost of petrol increasing."

"In some sense, I feel lucky because I now just look after my mother and me and my children are adults. But I am 61 and will only pay off my mortgage in 5 years' time – that will bring me to 66 years old."

"Helping my mother is really important to me. Helping her though, slows my retirement plans. I pay many of her medical bills and other bills that the pension doesn't cover. For example, I recently paid for a skin spot removal that Medicare didn't cover. My brother occasionally helps mum when I am working, but he runs a farm which is long hours and physically demanding."

"When my marriage broke down, I needed to rebuild, and now I do not have enough money in my superannuation. I do contribute a small amount to it, but retirement within the next five years isn't possible for me."

"I don't receive a carer's allowance, so all the costs of looking after my mother comes out of her pension or is on me."

"A pay increase would allow me to see some friends and have some respite looking after my mum. It would also help me pay more money into my mortgage. Any delay in a pay increase only adds more obstacles."

Members are saying that any delay devalues their hard work.

**Community and Disability Services Case Study 2**

**Sam** is a thirty-two-year-old person. They are a case worker in homelessness and family violence. Sam is employed in classification 5 of the *Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010.*

Sam's centre works with medium-term clients (2 years) and provides housing and other services during that period.

"My role includes navigating and advocating at Centrelink, IVOs, police and medical issues for our clients. Our core function is to assist and help identify any underlying trauma and work with other professionals in the space to improve our clients' lives".

"I want to acknowledge some of my privileges because I am not destitute, but I am a low paid worker and support my teenage brother. I current rent and cannot afford to buy."

"The cost of our medical bills is pretty much all out of pocket. I have skipped dental work because it is too expensive and direct my money into ensuring my brother is supported and my education."

"I have two TAFE degrees, one bachelor's and currently studying a Master's in Education degree. I use all my annual leave for when I need to do placements at school. While I love my job, I don't think buying a house is achievable right now under the Award."

"An increase of about $80 a fortnight would help cover the pocket of expense of psychologist which would lead me to be a better a person and have a better work practice. I believe in accessing the allied health system."

"I want to live a life of bread and roses, that is to have the essentials but also access to going out to dinner and the movies. Right now, though, I save up to go out around once a month."

"Historically, social work has been seen as women's work and not valued. A pay increase would help value the hard work we have put in. Any delay simply devalues our hard work."

# Conclusion

The evidence shows that the cost of living continues to increase, and workers are being left behind. Our submission brings to the attention of the Expert Panel the real-life stories of members and the impacts that a fair and reasonable pay increase will have on our members. Any calls by businesses to delay a pay increase or not award a pay increase at all should be rejected.

1. Labour Force, Australia, Detailed (6291.0.55.001 - EQ08 - Employed persons by Occupation unit group of main job (ANZSCO), Sex, State and Territory, August 1986 onwards). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Labour Force, Australia, Detailed (6291.0.55.001 - EQ08 - Employed persons by Occupation unit group of main job (ANZSCO), Sex, State and Territory, August 1986 onwards). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. ABS, ‘CPI rose 2.1% in the March 2022 quarter’ (Press Release, 27/04/2022) <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/cpi-rose-21-march-2022-quarter> viewd 02/05/2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Hetherington, David and Warwick Smith, *Not So Super, For Women* (Report, July 2017) 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)