

## News Release

Date: 21 May 2019

Contact: Brenda Pilott, SSPA national manager. Phone 027 430 6016. Email [manager@sspa.org.nz](mailto:manager@sspa.org.nz)

### Wellbeing budget needs to close the community social worker pay gap

Social workers employed by community organisations are hoping next week's wellbeing budget will help bridge the pay gap with their colleagues in Oranga Tamariki, the Ministry for Children.

Oranga Tamariki won a significant pay equity settlement last year which widened an existing pay gap with community-based social workers. According to information from the Social Workers Registration Board, nearly half of all Oranga Tamariki social workers earn between \$70,000 and \$100,000. By contrast, 40% of community based social workers earn between \$30,000 and \$50,000.

Community organisations are struggling to recruit and retain experienced social workers in particular, where the pay gap is currently at around 35%. This is already having an impact on their services, as senior roles cannot be filled.

"I've raised this issue directly with Ministers. I have written to them outlining the problems this pay gap is causing. I met with Minister Tracey Martin and with Ministers Robertson and Sepuloni before Christmas and urged them to address this funding problem in the Budget," said SSPA national manager Brenda Pilott.

"I believe these ministers do understand the problem community providers of social services are facing as a result of these pay pressures. They have told me they do. I believe Oranga Tamariki officials understand the problem too, as it's a shared problem, given they contract providers to deliver vital services to children and rely on them employing skilled social workers."

"Without additional funding to boost social worker wages, the pay gap will grow to around 50% by the end of this year, when Oranga Tamariki social workers receive a further pay equity payment. This will be untenable for the organisations that Oranga Tamariki is increasingly relying on to work with vulnerable children."

"There is a very clear expectation on the part of community providers that the Budget will go some way towards resolving the problem. This will not wait for yet another year," said Brenda Pilott

#### ABOUT SSPA

Social Service Providers Aotearoa represents some 200 non-profit organisations funded by government to work with vulnerable children, young people and families. Brenda Pilott is national manager of SSPA.

