



SSPA

SSPA Alert

SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS AOTEAROA. 3 APRIL 2018

SSPA Alert is to tell you about current events and seek your ideas and feedback.

SOCIAL WORKERS AND PAY EQUITY

What's happening?

Through their union, the PSA, social workers at Oranga Tamariki are now well down the track in pursuit of their pay equity claim.

It is heartening to see this push for the proper recognition of the work of Oranga Tamariki social workers. But we also need to see the value of social work recognised across the profession. Otherwise, the existing inequity in social worker pay between Oranga Tamariki and the community sector will be exacerbated and NGOs will increasingly struggle to attract and retain social workers.

Brenda Pilott for SSPA, Trevor McGlinchey for NZCCSS and Ros Rice for Community Networks Aotearoa have written jointly to the Government and called for a fair funding model that would enable NGOs to remedy the pay inequity between NGO and Oranga Tamariki social workers. [Read it here.](#)

The issues

The pay gap

Oranga Tamariki social workers are currently paid an estimated 18 to 20% more than NGO social workers. A pay equity settlement that applies only to Oranga Tamariki social workers will widen this already significant gap and exacerbate the inequity in rates of pay for social workers.

The introduction of mandatory registration will reinforce the fact that social workers are a single professional group, often working with the same clients, regardless of whether their employer is Oranga Tamariki, an NGO, a school or a district health board. There is a strong argument for shared rates of pay across the profession.

Pay inequities between sectors will be stark and have a serious impact on the ability of the community sector to recruit and retain social workers and, in turn, to respond to their community's needs in the delivery of services.

Funding

The funding model is at the root of the problem. Most service providers have not had a funding increase for 10 years. Many are using up their reserves to subsidise operational costs. In this financial climate, ensuring equitable rates of pay for social workers is an unachievable goal.

SSPA strongly argues the case for additional funding that is specifically targeted to addressing pay equity between sectors and across the profession, in addition to general funding increases to meet rising costs.

What SSPA is doing

Our sector is faced with a critical situation that demands an urgent response.

In our letter written jointly with NZCCSS and Community Networks Aotearoa, we called for a funding increase in this year's Budget specifically to close the pay gap for community sector social workers.

We recognise this does not address the fundamental flaws with the funding model. That work will continue. But the immediate imperative is to prevent an inequity that will have serious consequences for the sector and our ability to provide the level of service our clients need.

This is a priority issue for the sector and SSPA is working constructively with all the main players, including government ministers, the PSA, and social service providers to reach a solution to the current and growing inequity in rates of pay for social workers.

What you can do

To help us build our case, we will be coming to you for information on social worker collective agreements and rates of pay. In the meantime we would welcome your thoughts on this important issue.

While the PSA is the main union for social workers, we would also like to know which other unions represent social workers in your organisation so we can discuss the issues with them.

Please send any information you have and your thoughts to SSPA national manager Brenda Pilott – email manager@sspa.org.nz or phone 027 430 6016.

