Open Letter to Political Parties on Pay Equity

To Opposition Parties,

Care and support workers had their pay equity claim cancelled by the current Government. Unions and employers spent hundreds of hours on this claim. It was detailed, technical work based on the Equal Pay Act 1972.

Comparator roles were agreed. The level of undervaluation was determined to be between 24 and 38 percent, a gap that has left care and support workers underpaid for decades despite doing skilled, physically and emotionally demanding work that keeps vulnerable New Zealanders safe and supported.

The claim was all but agreed before the Government changed the Act and prevented care and support workers from progressing their claim. The extensive work already undertaken by unions and employers, including the agreed comparators and the assessment of undervaluation, should be recognised and form the basis of a settlement rather than requiring the parties to repeat work that has already been completed.

Unions had sought fixing by the Employment Relations Authority of $34-$42 per hour, this would be life changing for these women. It also matters for the sector more broadly, low pay drives staff out of care work, when demand is only growing.

We urge your Party to commit to settling and fully funding this claim within the first 100 days of being elected, on the basis of the agreed undervaluation. The work has been done. What is needed now is the political will to make it happen.

In doing so, we call on your Party to recognise that care and support services, including aged residential care, disability support, home and community support services and community mental health and addictions, are predominantly funded by the Crown. Any settlement must therefore be accompanied by a commitment to fully fund both the direct costs of the pay equity settlement and the consequential remuneration adjustments required across the wider care workforce, including those necessary to maintain appropriate pay differentials that recognise qualifications, experience, clinical responsibilities and professional accountability.

These costs must be explicitly recognised and incorporated into the government funding models for the services concerned so that providers are not required to absorb the additional costs of implementing the settlement.

Open Letter to Political Parties on Pay Equity

Signatories:

1. Access
2. ActionStation
3. Aged Care Association New Zealand
4. Aotearoa Women's Watch
5. Atamira Platform
6. Auckland Action Against Poverty
7. AUT Social Transformation Research Institute
8. BPW New Zealand
9. Carers New Zealand
10. CBCT
11. Disabled Persons Assembly NZ Inc.
12. E tū
13. Filipino Care Workers United
14. Home and Community Health Association
15. Migrant Action Trust
16. Mōkihi Hauora
17. National Council of Women of New Zealand
18. New Zealand Disability Support Network
19. New Zealand Nurses Organisation
20. NUPE
21. NZCTU Te Kauae Kaimahi
22. PSA Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi
23. Rodger Wright Harm Reduction Network
24. Te Mana Taki Havora Health Action Trust
25. Te Roopu Taurima
26. Te Wāhi Wāhine o Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland Women's Centre
27. Totara Farm Trust
28. Working Women's Resource Centre
29. YWCA