



Submission by:

**United Voice**

To:

**Fair Work Commission**

**Annual Wage Review 2016–17**

**C2017/1**

29 March 2017

This submission is made by United Voice. We seek an opportunity to address the Expert Panel in relation to this submission during the consultation hearings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JSchofield'.

Jo-Anne Schofield  
National Secretary

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## Introduction

- (1.) This submission to the Fair Work Commission Expert Panel (“the Panel”) Annual Wage Review (“the AWR”) concerning our proposal that a medium-term target is established for the level of the National Minimum Wage (“the NMW”). We seek an opportunity to further address the Panel in relation during the consultation hearings.
- (2.) United Voice is a union of workers organising to win better jobs, stronger communities, a fairer society and a sustainable future. While all Australian unions have an interest in the minimum wages fixation, the interests of United Voice and its members are intimately linked to the outcomes of this process.
- (3.) Our submission is again directed to the long-term trajectory of the NMW. We seek to reverse the trend that has seen minimum wage workers fallen behind over the last three decades.

## Background

- (4.) On 30 March 2016 United Voice filed a submission in the 2015-16 AWR. That submission argued that over a long period, Australia’s lowest paid workers have fallen behind and that minimum wages have failed to keep pace with incomes in the economy more generally. As a result, inequality has risen and the incidence of low-paid work has increased. Our submission suggested that the Panel convene in the second half of 2016 to consider whether it was appropriate to set a medium-term target for the level of the minimum wage and if so, what that target should be.

- (5.) On 27 July 2016, the 2016-17 Panel released a Statement indicating that it had decided to conduct a preliminary hearing into whether the Panel should adopt a medium-term target for the NMW
- (6.) In a written submission<sup>1</sup> United Voice proposed that the Panel adopt a medium-term (4 year) target of 60% of median wages for the NMW as an additional tool to assist the Panel in the performance of its annual obligations. The hearing regarding our claim was conducted on Monday, 24 October 2016.
- (7.) A decision on our preliminary proposal remains reserved. On Friday 23 March 2017 the Panel indicated to parties via a post on the FWC website and a subscriber email that:

*“...a decision will be made prior to the closing date for lodging submissions in reply (Thursday 13 April 2017). Any issues arising from the Decision can be dealt with in submissions in reply or during final consultations in May.”*

## **Summary of United Voice position.**

- (8.) United Voice maintains its support for our submission to the preliminary hearing that the Panel should establish a target of 60% of median wages for the NMW.
- (9.) The final position of United Voice in respect of these proceedings depends on the Panel’s reserved decision. While our precise response cannot be provided in advance of the decision, we indicate that:

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<sup>1</sup> United Voice submission, 10 October 2016.

- (a) If the Panel accepts our proposal for a target, we would propose a greatly accelerated adoption of the 60% standard; and
- (b) If the Panel rejects our proposal for a target, we would propose that the Panel set the NMW from 1 July 2017 as \$20 per hour (an increase of \$2.30 per hour or \$87.30 per week.).
- (10.) The position in (a) above is put to reserve our position in respect of timing of increases, including having regard to recent or shortly available data.
- (11.) The alternative in (b) above is advanced partly on the grounds that a rejection of our target claim may (subject to an examination of the Panel's decision) require a larger immediate increase in the level of the NMW (and consequential increases in other modern award wage rates) to remedy the low term decline in the relative living standards of the low paid and the failure to provide a fair safety net we identified in the preliminary proceedings.
- (12.) In support of these positions, we intend to rely on our earlier submissions in relation to the long-term trajectory of the NMW, the grounds set out below and such other material we provide the Panel in response to a decision on the preliminary issue.
- (13.) As an affiliated union with a deep interest in these proceedings, United Voice has been consulted by the ACTU about the content of their submissions to the Panel. United Voice also relies on the submissions of the ACTU, including their economic analysis, in support of our claims.

## The interests of United Voice & our members.

- (14.) At page 9 of our preliminary submission filed on 10 October 2016, we described our interest in this proceeding as follows:

*“United Voice is a union of over 100,000 members with membership in every State and Territory of Australia. United Voice and its predecessor unions have been active in the Australian industrial landscape for over 100 years.*

*The union has a varied membership across the country but has common coverage in industries such as cleaning, security, hospitality, early childhood education and care, catering and significant coverage in industries such as health, aged and disability care, and home care. These industries can be characterised as having a high incidence of “low paid” work with wages either at or close to the minimum wage or the award minimum, placing the workers below two-thirds of adult median wages for full time work.*

*United Voice is a union of low-paid workers. Members’ interests are acutely affected by the AWR and by the trajectory of the minimum wage.*

*By way of example, hospitality workers, of whom United Voice has exclusive coverage, are amongst the lowest paid workers in Australia, with one of the highest rates of award reliance in the country. The median full time weekly earnings (before tax) for commercial cleaners is \$807, which is \$345 less than average before-tax weekly earnings of \$1,152. The figure for actual earnings is worse with an average of \$550 per week in commercial cleaning against \$950 in all industries.*

*Key United Voice industries, including hospitality, early childhood education and care, security, cleaning and social assistance services all have high levels of award dependency. Two thirds of United*

*Voice members are female, reflecting the high proportion of women who are reliant on the NMW or awards for their wages.*

*In summary, United Voice has a long history of representing the industrial interests of low paid workers in matters before the Fair Work Commission and its predecessor bodies. We have many members employed in industries where workers are “low paid” and receive either the minimum wage or the award wage. The preliminary hearing of this matter arose in response to a proposal put by United Voice in the 2015-16 AWR. “*

(Footnotes omitted.)

## **Further Grounds relied on in support of our claim.**

- (15.) In addition to our previous submissions and the material to be filed by the ACTU, United Voice relies on the following matters to support our contentions.

### **Worker experience.**

- (16.) Set out at Attachment A are seven case studies of United Voice members' personal experiences. The case studies were prepared by industrial officers of the union and recount conversations with the member concerned.
- (17.) The case studies omit full names at the request of the workers concerned (for a variety of employment and privacy reasons). While we anticipate issues as to the probative value of these studies may be raised, we provide them to the Panel on the basis that it is the representative (rather than narrowly specific) nature of their stories that should help inform the Panel's judgement.



- (18.) The case studies are drawn from key areas of Award dependency: hospitality, care, security, cleaning and hospitality. The case studies vary by gender, state, regional/urban location, age, mode of engagement and household composition.
- (19.) What the case studies identify is that the common lived experience of relying on Award minimum wages is one of insecurity, economic anxiety and a week-to-week existence.
- (20.) The case studies also give personal life to what, in our submission, the aggregate economic data also shows: that the safety net of minimum wages is below the level consistent with the stated object of the Act in section 3. The safety net is failing to meet these workers needs and has seen their relative living standards decline over decades. The experience of these workers expose that the safety net is failing to provide them with a “*decent standard of living*”<sup>2</sup> and is manifestly defective measured against the “*needs of the low paid*.”<sup>3</sup>

## **Normative questions & the case for an increase**

- (21.) While the Panel necessarily considers all relevant macro data in relation to the economy and the labour market, as well as relevant theoretical scholarship, this does not result in a “*mechanistic*” or “*formulaic*” approach.<sup>4</sup> These proceedings involve normative questions and welfare judgements<sup>5</sup>. The matters before the Panel involve normative considerations: questions of distribution, economic justice and fairness.

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<sup>2</sup> [2013] FWCFB 4000 at para. 361.

<sup>3</sup> *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) s 284.

<sup>4</sup> [2015] FWCFB 3500 at paras 10 and 12

<sup>5</sup> We have in mind here the distinction between positive and normative economics. See for example Marc Fleurbaey "Normative Economics and Theories of Distributive Justice," in John Davis, Alain Marciano and Jochen Runde (eds), *The Elgar Companion to Economics and Philosophy* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2004), chapter 7.

(22.) To implement such objectives as the maintenance of “*a guaranteed safety net of fair, relevant and enforceable minimum terms and conditions*” while having regard to “*relative living standards and needs of the low paid*” and the promotion of “*social inclusion*”<sup>6</sup> is to deal with quintessentially normative questions.

(23.) So much is also clear from previous Panel decisions, for example:

*“[T] needs of the low paid, requires an examination of the extent to which low-paid workers are able to purchase the essentials for a ‘decent standard of living’ and to engage in community life. The assessment of what constitutes a decent standard of living is in turn influenced by contemporary norms.”*

(24.) As a Full Bench of the Fair Work Commission (“the Commission”) recently said:

*“It seems to us that what is ‘necessary’ to achieve the modern awards objective in a particular case is a value judgment”*<sup>8</sup>

(25.) We submit that fulfilling the function of issuing a NMW Order (and any variation to Modern Award rates) involves the Panel making an explicit welfare statement<sup>9</sup> having balanced sometimes competing considerations, for example: *the optimal level of the NMW is \$X*.

(26.) In our submission, a balancing of the various considerations (including both the data driven economic considerations and the more explicitly welfare based considerations including the

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<sup>6</sup> *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) ss 4, 134 and 284.

<sup>7</sup> *Annual Wage Review 2012-13* [2013] FWCFB 4000 at [361].

<sup>8</sup> *4 yearly review of modern awards–Penalty Rates* [2017] FWCFB 1001 at para. 136.

<sup>9</sup> A deliberative or analytical process (even one using an experimental framework) involving economic analysis routinely involves making welfare judgements in reaching conclusions. See Atkinson,

“Economics as a Moral Science, JRT Foundation Lecture (2008)

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/economics-moral-science-inaugural-jrf-lecture>

experiences of United Voice members reliant on the AWR outcome) supports the granting of our submission.

## **The Panel's Role and the Safety Net.**

(27.) The Parliament has tasked the Panel with the performance of a function in respect of the NMW and modern award wages which is a positive and not a passive one. Just as the modern awards objective provides that the FWC “*must establish and maintain a safety net*” the minimum wage objective places an obligation on the Panel: it “*must establish and maintain a safety net of fair minimum wages*”.<sup>10</sup> Both the minimum wage objective and the modern awards objective together with the object of the Act, apply in setting, varying or revoking modern award minimum wages in the AWR.<sup>11</sup>

(28.) The Commission is Australia’s most important labour market institution and its role (particularly in regards to setting minimum wages) is a vital one. The positive nature of the Panel’s obligation supports granting our submission. While aggregate data on the performance of the labour market (including about levels of increases in wages and salaries) are relevant considerations they are not determinative of the questions before the Panel.

(29.) The Panel’s role is not that of a mere cipher, to translate, or pass onto award dependent workers some, or all, of the wage increases delivered by collective bargaining or general increases in earned incomes. The Commission has a lead role as an independent institution, and its tasked to “*must establish and maintain*” may involve a substantial departure from the

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<sup>10</sup> *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) ss 134 and 284

<sup>11</sup> *Annual Wage Review 2015-16* [2016] FWCFB 3500 at para 133.

outcomes generated by other labour market instructions and mechanisms. In our submission, it is consistent with the Panel's obligation to grant our increase in full.

## **Labour market conditions.**

- (30.) Australia is currently in an unprecedented period of anaemic wages growth. With some very modest exceptions to the trend, the year on year rate of increase in the WPI has fallen continually since December 2010, consistently dropped below the previous record lows since statistics were kept in the current form. Moreover, these low rates of increase have prevailed across the economy – in contrast to previous periods where the macro result disguised sluggish and significant increases in various industries.
- (31.) Australia's highly flexible labour market settings, with a focus on enterprise bargaining, are designed (in part) to moderate wage growth either generally or in specific industries during downturns. However, the present situation suggests that the aggregate performance of our labour market institutions has failed to deliver fair outcomes. Particularly, in respect of living standards or a share of productivity gains and noting the continued resilience of corporate profits.
- (32.) Bearing in mind the institutional leadership role that the Commission has in establishing and maintaining the safety net, it is appropriate for the Panel to grant our submission in full, noting the role of minimum and modern award wages in protecting living standards, helping support consumer confidence and boosting aggregate demand and economic growth.

## Appendix A – Member Case Studies

### Security

#### **Markus, Security Officer, ACT**

(Full-time, Security Officer, weekend and shift worker)

I am security officer. I work for a private security contracting company in Canberra. I have worked in the industry for 15 years. I work at a military facility and previously I have worked for government. I patrol the facility on foot and by vehicle, I check clearances, and I operate the control room. I also liaise with the client and direct key access. I hold high level government clearances. I have a Certificate II in security operations, applied senior first aide, and fire warden training.

There isn't a lot I can say that's friendly about the security industry. The only way I can make a liveable wage is working a lot of hours on shifts. Previously, I worked four days on and four days off roster. This was okay, I used to pursue my interest in music and film in my long breaks. I have even entered films in film festivals.

I now work on a rolling roster: I work two days on, two days off, then three days on, three days off, spread over days, nights and weekends. My shifts are so sporadic that I can't live a normal life. It's a nightmare; it took me 18 months to physically adjust. I now have severe depression and anxiety. My psychologist believes that this is connected to working shift-work. I smoke to deal with stress and fatigue from being a shift worker. And that isn't cheap. There's a lot of pain that comes with shift-work, and I rely on cigarettes to keep myself working. Substance abuse is massive in the industry and has affected me too.

I basically don't have a family or social life. I only see other shift-workers who have the same days off as I do. It's hard to be involved in group activities, so I really only see one person at a time. My sister invited me to her daughter's birthday but I couldn't go because it was in the break between my night shifts. My relationship with my current partner only works because she is a shift-worker.

I am permanent full-time employee. I am paid about \$20 per hour with allowances. I bring in between \$1680 and \$1800 a fortnight, depending the point in my roster cycle. My income is dependent on overtime and shift penalties.

I live by myself in my parent's granny flat. This is because my income dropped by around \$200 a fortnight after I changed employer due to a change of contract. I cannot afford the market rates in Canberra, which is expensive because of the high average income in the city.

I am paying off about \$40,000 in debt from a personal loan and my credit cards. I have had a car accident and a lot of trouble with my cars. In the past I bought older used cars. I have never bought a car built after 1998. My car broke down again last week. I need a new water pump and I can't afford to have it fixed by a mechanic. I have also gone into debt because of my medical issues. When I am on sick leave or annual leave, I am not paid my normal penalty rates, just the flat rate. I had surgery recently, and I ran out of sick leave, and had to use annual leave. I needed to return to work early, otherwise I would have had to take unpaid leave after my annual leave ran out. I needed to take unpaid leave anyway, because the pain was too great to keep working. I only earned \$1000 that fortnight. I needed to call the electricity company to say I couldn't pay the bill. I called my creditors and beg for time to pay off my debts. This was incredibly stressful.

When you are on 20 dollars an hour, any unexpected circumstance causes trouble. On these sorts of wages, if anything out of the ordinary happens, you're in trouble. I could have put money away, but that would have meant not having anything to enjoy my life. Security doesn't allow you to save a quantifiable amount, because your wages can vary so much. When I want to buy something, like a laptop, I need to go into debt.

I would really like to start a family, but I don't think that I could give my children a good quality of life on my wages. I wouldn't even attempt to buy a house on my wages. I have seen fuel prices sky-rocket, but my wages go up by cents each year. Bills increase, groceries go up, services go up, but my wages don't seem to keep up. I feel like I have gone backwards.

**Tony, Security Officer, ACT**

(Full-time, Security Officer Level 3, 12 hour shift worker, 4 dependents)

I am security officer. I work for private security contracting company. I am 48 years old and I live with my partner and my three kids. I man the main gate at an office building at a defence site. I issue passes to people, check vehicles and makes sure that everyone coming in has the correct clearances. I injured my back a long time ago, being a security officer was the job I could do without affecting my back. I needed this job to support my family. There's not much money in it, but it pays the bills.

I work 12 hour shifts in an 84 hour a fortnight roster. I work days, and I can do this because I work the long hours. The weekends are the only time I get to see my kids. I used to work nights and weekends, I used to work 7 days to make ends meet. It was hard not seeing my kids, they grow up so quickly. You just miss out if you aren't there.

I am a Full-time Security Officer Level 3, I am paid \$20.80. I take home about \$1540 each fortnight. My family also receives Family Tax Benefit A and B, which comes to about \$256 a fortnight. This isn't a big help when you have a large family. It's just my wage that's supporting three the kids and paying off my house. With that I am paying about \$400 a fortnight on my mortgage. I spend about \$200 a fortnight on fuel. We have the car I use to get to work, and a family car that my wife uses to take my kids to school. I also need to pay for parking at work. Its only \$4 a day, but that still adds up. The rest of my money goes on groceries and school fees. I'm careful with money. I make my own sandwiches for work as I cannot afford to buy my meals or get a coffee.



We have trouble with bills and unexpected big expenses. It's very hard when the electricity bills come up. We put away spare money so that we can pay off the bill, but usually we have to pay off the bill bit by bit. Sometimes when we finally pay off one bill, the next one comes up. The rates on my house are the real killer, when the rates come in we struggle to get by.

You try to give your kids everything. We put aside 10 or 5 dollars away when we can to go on holiday. We need holidays otherwise we would just be sitting around all day doing nothing. We go to the coast, or go camping, something cheap. I'll usually try to get overtime to pay for excursions and other things, but sometimes I am just too tired to work another day. My mother-in-law helps out when they have excursions or school related costs. They try to keep it from me, so I don't feel bad.

## **Hospitality**

### **Krystle, Chef, Regional NSW**

(Cook Trade Person Grade 3, age 29, irregular hours, weekend and shift-worker.)

I am a chef. I work at a Tapas and Wine bar in Dubbo, NSW. Apart from cooking, I clean and do the dishes. I do the prep work. I maintain my equipment. I create and cost menus and order stock. I also do stock takes. Included in all that we need to satisfy our customers' needs. I like creating new meals, and giving people new flavours and satisfaction but there is a lot of pain that comes with this work.

I work very hard for very long hours. I work twelve hours most days and we are lucky if we get a break. If I work a split shift that will be the only break I have that day. I do functions of 100 plus people. We could do two to three functions in a week. Last week, we had two cocktail and board functions with degustation menus. There were about 140 people at each function.

They were both on the same night, with 40 general walk in public too. On the Sunday, we had a private event with a busload of people. I was not on duty in the kitchens, but I had to help set up before the function and clean up afterwards. On my other days off, I am expected to attend meetings and prepare my menus.

I am working between 25 and 30 hours each week, but I can work a lot more if I am needed. I work mornings, nights, weekends and public holidays. I get paid penalty rates when I work on the weekends.

I have many qualifications. I have diplomas in professional cookery, pastries and hotel management. I am also a City and Guilds qualified chef, which is a world-wide recognition of my skill. I passed these qualifications with a distinction.

I am a Cook (Trades Person) grade 3 and I get paid about \$23 per hour with allowances and shift rates. I earn between \$500 and \$650 each week, depending on the hours I work. I live pay cheque to pay cheque. Even if I work my butt off, I'm in the negative. This is not enough money to get by. I cannot afford my own place to live so I live with my father. This makes me feel kind of useless and dependent.

I need my car for work, but it costs a lot of money. I struggle to put fuel in my car every week. I also have my car repayments and insurance. I have a serious illness. I need to see my doctor every week, which costs \$80. And every three months, I have a specialist appointment. The specialist may then ask me to go to Sydney for further checks. I will then need to pay for the appointment, plus accommodation and travel. It is hard for me to pay for my medication, which costs \$100 per week.

I must also make minimum payments of \$2000 per year on my student debt. It is very difficult sometimes to find money to pay for this.

Chefs are expected to provide their own equipment and uniform. My work will provide one knife, which is hard to share between 2 cooks and an apprentice, so I carry my own knife kit. My kit costs \$700. A knife will last about two years. I need a uniform for every day of the week due to OH&S reasons. You cannot wear an unwashed uniform in a kitchen, so I can go through two uniforms in a day. Working long hours means I cannot wash them between shifts. A uniform will cost about \$100 all up. I must also wear work boots in the kitchen.

Everything else goes on bills and groceries. I cannot go out with friends, Sunday drives or see movies. I have difficulty buying new clothes or shoes.

It feels like no matter how hard I work I cannot get ahead. If I am still working at the same job in ten years, it just won't be liveable. I have looked into getting other jobs, but in a small town it's unlikely that I'll find better work. If I want a higher pay rate, I choose to be casual, but then I am not guaranteed any work. I would have to retrain to find work in a new industry, but I already have a lot of student debt.

## **Phoebe, Hospitality Worker, Hobart**

(Casual, Bartender / Waitress, age 26, weekend and shift-worker)

I have worked in hospitality for 7 years. I have done many things in hospitality; I have been a kitchen-hand, a barista and even done a bit of gaming. At the moment I work as a bartender and waitress at a pub in Hobart. I like fact that I am interacting with people. I learnt a lot of self-confidence doing the job. I was shy when I started and now I can communicate with

anyone. I take orders, serve drinks, restack shelves, and run food out. I also clean the business. I practice good OH&S and look after my clients; I call them taxis when they are leaving. I feel that hospitality respects experience; I can walk into a job anywhere and know what to do.

I work as a casual. I am paid about \$23.63 per hour. I work three days a week and my shifts are about 6 hours long. Usually, I work Saturdays but I sometimes work on Sundays too. In a week, I will normally earn between \$350 and \$450, with the casual loading and penalty rates.

I used to work full-time and I was paid a salary. I was working 40 to 45 hours each week and I was only bringing home about \$750. One of the reasons I cut back to being casual was amount of hours I worked didn't match the money I was earning and the sacrifices I was making. When I worked long hours, I had to sacrifice social events: birthdays, Christmases and socializing with other people. It can be very lonely working in hospitality. I worked a lot of overtime, and that meant I had to cut back on sleep, which had an impact on my mental health. I went without food during long shifts. The industry is very high pressure, every single place I have worked they've never put on extra staff to compensate for extra workload. If they think people can handle the workload, they won't spend the extra money on wages. I made a lot of sacrifices for that job, but you can tell yourself that the penalty rates make it worthwhile. If I was being paid less than what I was earning, the job would not have been worth it.

I am living with my parents to save some cash, so that I can move Melbourne to continue my education. I moved back home after I quit my full-time job, because I couldn't afford to rent and to save money for my education with a smaller workload. I used to rent a room in a share house, I was paying \$130 in rent each week. My electricity bills were \$150 a month. I also

paid my internet bill of \$40 dollars a month and my mobile phone bill of \$30 a month. I used to walk to and from work, which saved money. I spent \$70 to \$100 dollars per week on groceries. I never had the fanciest things. I bought second hand furniture and a modest television. The thing I spent the most money on was a mattress, because I couldn't sleep on the old one it was too springy and old. I bought it on credit and gradually paid that off. If I had big unexpected expenses, I wouldn't be able to pay for it upfront. I would need to pay it off over time.

As a full-time hospitality worker you can accumulate some cash and have some spending money. But that doesn't mean I could go on holiday. It means I could save up to buy an old car or a new mattress, and even that took a long period of time.

The times I've struggled the most have been when I was working part-time or casual. As a casual, it's hard to budget because your hours change so much. You don't have minimum set hours; you can work between 0 hours and forty hours each week. You can earn a lot of cash sometimes, but you can also be sacked for silly reasons. If you are a part-timer, you only work your contracted hours, and you take a pay cut from being a casual. It can be hard to scrape by. You can either have the stability of a contract or the money as a casual. I think that this makes it hard to stay in the industry and I think the recent cuts to penalty rates will mean that less people will look at the hospitality industry long term.

Because of the wage cuts, young people won't stay in the industry or be motivated to find long-term jobs in hospitality. It just won't seem worth it. People might want casual shifts on the weekends, but they won't be attracted to more long term jobs. I think that is sad because hospitality is a rewarding industry: you can grow as a person, learn confidence and

communication skills. These are skills you can take to other industries. Hospitality rewards hard working people with experience and confidence, but not necessarily with good pay. I think that the Commission should increase the base rate of pay. Even if the Commission thinks Sundays aren't important anymore, people still need to earn a living wage. It's important to keep people away from the poverty line.

## **Home Care**

### **Veronica, Home Care Worker, Liverpool**

(Permanent part-time, Home Care Worker Level 2, age 68, irregular hours)

I am a homecare worker. I have worked in Home Care since about September, 2001. I am 68 years old.

I provide personal care, domestic help, transport, social support, and respite care to people who are aged or have a disability. My duties include, bathing clients, taking them to medical appointments, helping clients engage in the community and assisting them with house work. The work is physically exhausting. I do a lot of housework for my clients. Many of my clients have limited mobility, so I often need to physically lift them. I am an older person myself. This work is hard.

My clients are all very different people with very different problems. This can make the work very demanding. I deal with people who are sick or dying. Many of my clients are older people, who are scared and angry at the end of their life. Other clients suffer from dementia or severe mental illnesses. They can present difficult behaviours, which I have to manage. It is

emotionally draining and exhausting. Some of my clients live in putrid conditions. I regularly come into contact with urine, faeces and household rubbish.

I have a *Certificate III in Aged Care Work* and a *Certificate III in Health Service Assistance – (Client/Patient Services)*. I have completed at least 21 other qualifications and training programs, including specialist competencies in dementia care, harm identification and person-centred approaches.

I am a permanent part-time Level 2 Home Care Employee, I am paid \$20.33. In an average week I earn about \$350.

I am contracted to work for 10 hours a week. I have the shifts fixed in my contract, but I am regularly asked to do more work. I end up working about 20 hours each week. My working day can be spread over 12 hours, but I might only be paid to work for 5 of those hours. I sometimes sit in my car for over 45 minutes between shifts with no pay. I cannot return home during this time because this will take too long and will cost too much money in petrol. I do not have many options to fill the time I spend waiting because I cannot afford to spend any money. I cannot afford to go shopping or have a coffee at a café.

I will need to work more than 10 hours in a day, or more than 38 hours in a week, before I am paid overtime. My employer has always been very careful to keep my hours strictly within those limits.

I spend most of my money on groceries and bills. I do not have much spare for luxuries, entertainment or holidays. I rarely even leave the suburb I live in because I cannot afford the cost of travel. This makes it difficult to see my grandchildren. I was only able to visit my daughter in Queensland last year because I was granted a part pension in August 2015, which

has made by income more stable. I have other grandchildren in Sydney, but I only see them every three months.

Since August 2015, I have relied on my part pension of \$350 to supplement the income from my work. I chose to reduce my working hours and apply for the part pension in the hope of improving my quality of life. I am in fact getting more money, even with my reduced working hours, than before I was granted the pension. The part pension has given me more financial security than working 5 days each week and I am much less stressed.

### **Donna, Home Care Worker, Regional NSW**

(Permanent part-time, Home Care Worker Level 2, age 63, irregular hours)

I am home care worker. I work for Coast Community Connections, they are a not-for profit provider of home care and disability support. I work with elderly and disabled people. I drive to people's homes where I assist with showering and house cleaning. I also take my clients to doctors' appointments and go shopping with them. I clean up faeces and urine. I pick up after my clients and administer medicine. I am alone in my client's home. I do all the jobs, like being a nurse or a cleaner, but just one person. I like my job, but sometimes it can be tiring. I have to be there for my clients, sometimes they can be down in the dumps and I need to support them. I am only meant to do light house cleaning, but lately I have been expected to do full house cleaning.

I like the working with the elderly because I like giving them the care that they need. I have been in the same job for 9 years. I have permanent clients who I have worked with for years. I also have some that I do who have just come out of hospital. I became a home care worker



because I wanted to do something different, being around older people and caring. I have a lot of pride in my work.

I am a permanent part-time employee, Level 2 Home Care Worker. I am paid \$20.33 per hour. I work 14 hours a week over two days. I am paid about \$640 a fortnight.

My employer can cancel my shifts if a client doesn't need the service. If a client goes to hospital, and they can't find other work for you, you won't be paid for that. If that happens, I will not be paid for those hours. It's not like a normal wage: if they can't find work then you won't be paid.

I live with both my son and my partner. My partner works full-time. I own my own home. If I didn't have a partner working full-time I wouldn't be able to get by on my current hours. I would need to work five days, but I wouldn't get the full 38 hour week. I would work broken shifts with large gaps where I don't get paid. The people I work with get distressed because they struggle to earn enough and find it difficult to get by. Lots of people at work don't get enough shifts to have living income, but work still brings on more people. I do not know what I would do if I had to support my family.

## **Cleaning**

### **Ruth, Cleaner, Outer Suburban Sydney**

(Full-time, CSE Level 2, 2 dependents, age 52).

My job is cleaning in a shopping centre: looking after the floor and cleaning the toilets and emptying bins. I like the environment where I work and I like the interaction with the customers. I like to be on the go, not at a sit-down office job.

I work for a cleaning contracting company. They mainly service shopping centres and commercial buildings. I have worked for the same company for 16 years. I started cleaning during the Olympics in 2000.

I am a full-time permanent employee. I work Monday to Friday, 9:30 to 5:30. I am a Cleaning Services Award L2 and I receive a supervisor's allowance. I get paid every fortnight, my after tax income is around \$1380. I am the main income earner for family.

I live in outer suburban Sydney (Riverstone) with my husband and my son. My husband doesn't work because he has some health problems. My son is fourteen and he goes to school. He is the youngest of 5 children.

I am renting through a housing co-operative. My rent is based on the income of the people living in the house. At the moment, I pay rent of \$840 fortnight; this includes my water bill. I am paying so much in rent because my older son used to live with me. His income pushed the rent up but he has moved out. My rent will be this high until May, when it should drop to \$600 a fortnight.

I also pay \$95 per fortnight for electricity from my centre link payment. I catch the train to work and it costs me about \$40 a week. I spend about \$400 per fortnight on groceries. I also need to spend money on medicine and health care. My husband needs ventalin and eye drops because of his asthma and allergies. I have a health care card, but there is still a cost.

I also have debts. I have just finished paying off a car each week at \$100 a week. I pay my union dues. Since my older son moved out of home and my rent increased, I have borrowed money from my children to get by. When I registered the car, I did not have enough money for the registration, so I had to borrow the money. I will need to wait for tax time to pay that off, and then I will need to register the car again. If the car needs a service, I will need to put it off until I can afford it.

We don't really go on holidays and it is a luxury to take my son on an outing or to the pictures. I have difficulty finding the money to send my son on school excursions and camps. Recently, I have had to find the money for a deposit for three excursions. I had to go without in groceries that week to make sure we had the money.

I go without luxuries to make sure my family has what it needs. I haven't had a haircut for a year.