



**Gender-based  
undervaluation – priority  
awards review  
SCHADS Award**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgement of Country</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgement of Victim-Survivors</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>About Wesnet</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Gender-based undervaluation – priority awards review: SCHADS award</b>	<b>5</b>
Pay Protection	5
Recognition of industry experience, lived experience and cultural knowledge	5
Outstanding issues as noted in Deputy President O'Neill's Report to the Expert Panel on 16 December 2025	5
Conclusion	6



## Acknowledgements

### Acknowledgement of Country

Wesnet would like to acknowledge and pay respects to all First Nations people, as the traditional and only custodians of this country we call Australia. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the people of the lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung where our main office stands. Throughout the year we have had staff working in other nations including Eora, and Naarm, and we would like to acknowledge those traditional owners as well. We recognise First Nations peoples' culture, wisdom, and connection to this land and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future. We recognise the loss of land and culture, acknowledging the consequences of dispossession and colonisation on First Nations peoples. We acknowledge that sovereignty over this land was never ceded. This land always was and always will be Aboriginal land. First Nations women have multiple roles and identities relating to their culture, community, age, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity. Wesnet works tirelessly for an inclusive future free from violence. We acknowledge the strength and resilience of First Nations women, particularly those who have experienced domestic and family violence, and those who support and advocate for victim survivors of domestic and family violence. We pay our deepest respects to those who have lost loved ones as a result of domestic and family violence. Wesnet will actively work to be informed by the experiences and advocacy of First Nations women, and to support First Nations women in their quest for safety and equality.

### Acknowledgement of Victim-Survivors

Wesnet also takes this opportunity to acknowledge all victim-survivors of gender-based violence. We pay respect to those who did not survive and to their family members and friends.

## About Wesnet

We are the Peak body for Specialist Women's Domestic and Family Violence Services in Australia.

Our vision is a future where all women and children live free of domestic and family violence and its consequences.

With almost 350 eligible members across Australia, Wesnet represents a range of organisations and individuals including women's refuges, shelters, safe houses and information/ referral services.

Harnessing its large national network of members and associate members, Wesnet plays an important role in identifying unmet needs, canvassing new and emerging issues, facilitating policy and sector debate and providing expert advice to government to provide improved responses to the problem of domestic and family violence. We do this within our communities, and in partnership with non-government stakeholders.

Wesnet works within a feminist framework which promotes understanding domestic and family violence as gendered violence, and that women's and children's experiences are also intrinsically shaped by their ethnicity, culture, ability, age, gender identity and class.



## Gender-based undervaluation – priority awards review: SCHADS award

Wesnet welcomes the Fair Work Commission's invitation for further submissions in relation to the *Gender-based undervaluation – priority awards review* of the SCHADS award. We thank FWC and acknowledge the significant commitment and work on this review, as well as the collective efforts of our colleagues across a range of sectors for dedicating their time and advocacy throughout the review process.

Wesnet is supportive of the Alternative Structure for the SCHADS Award (December 2025) and believe that it is significantly improved in comparison to the Provisional Determination (April 2025). We draw your attention, in particular, to the following welcome adjustments and improvements between the Provisional Determination and the newer Alternative Structure below.

### Pay Protection

We are pleased to see the expanded classification structure and pay points in the Alternative Structure, representing positive steps toward protection for our workforce against wage regression. As noted in our previous submissions, we strongly advocate that any wage increases need to be commensurately reflected in Commonwealth and State/Territory government funding for the specialist domestic and family violence sector to ensure that our services are not forced to absorb funding shortfalls in the transition period.

### Recognition of industry experience, lived experience and cultural knowledge

The specialist domestic and family violence sector has its roots in the intersectional feminist activism and community action, and we will always deeply value the lived experience and cultural knowledge held across our workforces. Wesnet strongly supports the inclusion of the newly added definitions to recognise and value the critical skills, wisdom and insight of these practitioners who may not hold formal qualifications.

### Outstanding issues as noted in Deputy President O'Neill's Report to the Expert Panel on 16 December 2025

We support the following positions of the Australian Services Union (ASU) and Domestic Violence New South Wales (DVNSW) on the following outstanding issues.

**Issue 2:** The entry pay level for Social and Community Services (SACS) workers should be Level 5, not Level 2.

**Issue 4:** Pay point progression should not be contingent on full-time equivalent hours, in particular due to the associated negative gender-equity impacts.

**Issue 9:** We do not believe that formal qualifications should be required to attain classification at a certain level. As noted previously in this submission, other factors such as practice and industry experience, lived experience and cultural knowledge must be considered alongside relevant qualifications.

**Issue 10:** We support the proposed definition of equivalency of qualifications as noted in Report to the Expert Panel.

## Conclusion

Wesnet thanks the FWC again for the significant time and effort dedicated to this review process.

We strongly advocate that the Alternative Structure for the SCHADS Award (December 2025) is significantly preferable to the Provisional Determination (April 2025) and represents a more equitable and representative pay structure for our workforce.

As we move towards the end of this review process and look towards implementation of a new award structure, we urge the FWC to remain mindful of the significant effort and administrative work burden on frontline services associated with these changes. The implementation timeframes must not place undue pressure on our already stretched frontline services, and most importantly must be coordinated to align with the required commensurate core funding increases.

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