

# SCHADS Industry Award Gender-based undervaluation review

# COSS Network Sector Update

## Jan 2026



## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the various lands from which we are joining today.

We honour their continuing connection to their communities, land, waters and culture. Their land was a place of learning, healing and connection, and never ceded.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

# Agenda

**Background**

**Key issues**

**Advocacy**

**Improvements and outstanding issues**

**Further actions**

Presented by



# Background

“In respect of the SCHADS Award, the Expert Panel [at the Fair Work Commission] found that minimum wage rates for social and community services employees, crisis accommodation employees and home care employees in disability care have been the subject of gender-based undervaluation”.

*Fair Work Commission (April 2025)  
Discussion Paper— Social, Community, Home Care and  
Disability Services Industry Award 2010.*



SCHAD Awards Review- Stakeholder briefing

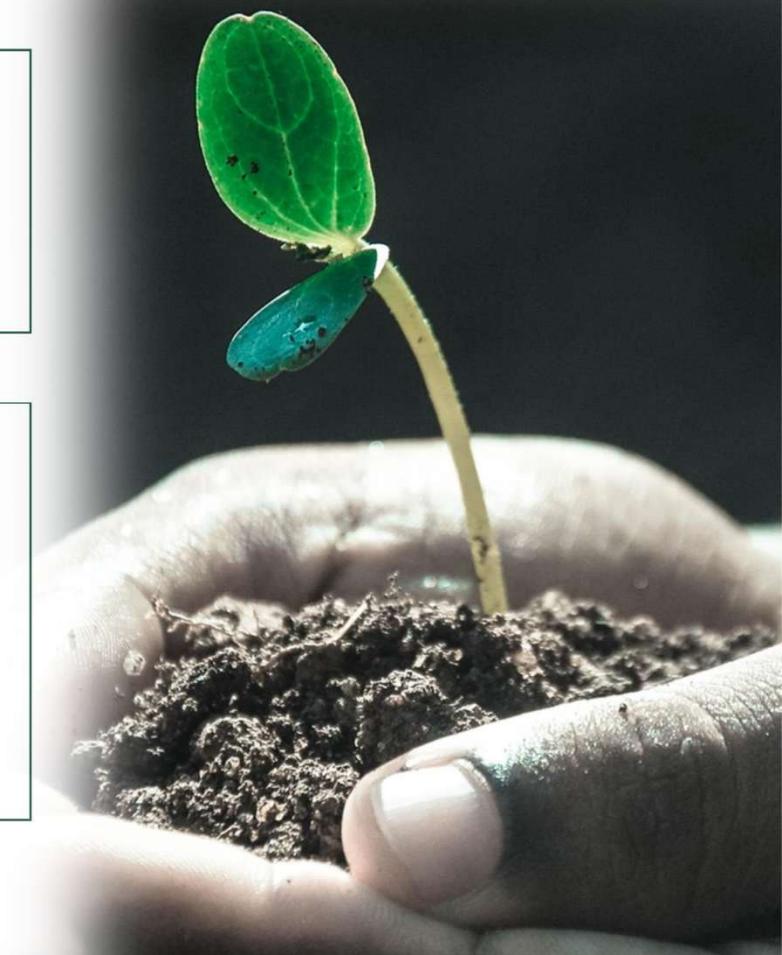
# Background

## 2024

- FWC initiated a review of five modern awards, including SCHADS 2010.
- The Australian Services Union (ASU) lodged a case to update the SCHADS Award, for its Skilled, Respected, Equal Campaign.

## 2025

- FWC released its decision and provisional views in April.
- Submissions and hearings to gain stakeholder views held from June – October.
- Closed conference facilitated by FWC for stakeholders in November – December.
- Alternative Structure released by FWC in December.



# Key issues

FWC's provisional determination recommended:

- Combining separate classifications into one single award
- Changes to classification levels and pay rates (incl. reduction)
- Heavy reliance on qualifications
- Translation methods complex and inequitable

It also lacked adequate recognition of skills and knowledge outside of qualifications, including lived experience



**These issues clearly indicated that FWC's provisional determination did not adequately recognise the diversity and complexity of the SACS roles and work.**



# What the sector told us – COSS Network Survey

## August 2025



572  
responses

Small,  
medium and  
large orgs



83% reported  
some staff  
were under  
SCHADS

40% had all  
staff under  
SCHADS



72% agreed  
qualification  
important

74% agreed  
prior  
skills/experience  
important



59% agreed  
lived  
experience  
and cultural  
knowledge  
should be  
recognised



# Advocacy

**The COSS Network advocated that the final structure must:**

- **protect** workers' pay and ensure no one goes backwards.
- adequately **reflect the diversity and value** of work undertaken in the sector
  - e.g. prior professional experience and lived experience must be considered.
- **prevent** further under-classification of workers, with greater clarity and guidance for translating to new award.
- **staged** implementation to manage funding and administrative impacts.

**The COSS Network has been acting for the sector by:**

- lodging joint submissions to FWC;
- information sessions and written updates for the sector;
- conducting a sector survey; and
- advocating at multiple hearings and conference days at FWC.



# Outcome – improvements and outstanding issues

## Alternative Structure includes:

- increased classification levels and pay points
- clearer conditions for progression in pay and classification
- specific definitions for roles and work in SACS
- greater equivalency between qualifications and prior professional experience and lived experience

## Issues to be resolved include:

- entry levels for disability support workers and SACS workers.
- inclusion of role definitions such as 'counsellor' and 'therapeutic case worker'.
- pay – progression for part time and casual employees, and proposed pay rate for Level 6
- qualification as a requirement for the performance of duties by the employer
- extending SCHADS to cover clerical employees in housing, home care and crisis accommodation.



## Further actions – have your say

As a result of sustained advocacy by stakeholders that participated in the closed conference, the FWC has agreed to another round of submissions, to ensure the sector's voices are further considered.

Individual organisations can provide feedback to FWC on the Alternative Structure, to help ensure the final Award structure is fair, fit for purpose and operationally viable.

### Submission deadlines

- Initial written submissions: 5:00 pm (AEDT),  
**Friday 6 February 2026**
- Submissions in reply: 5:00 pm (AEDT),  
**Friday 20 February 2026**

Email submissions to: [awards@fwc.gov.au](mailto:awards@fwc.gov.au).

### Suggestions for submission content:

1. Pay protection
2. Classification
3. Equivalency of qualifications and experience
4. Impact and implementation



**The COSS Network will lodge a joint submission in February.**

## A poll – share your views

In this section, we invite you to have a **direct say on the Alternative Structure.**

The 15-minute online poll includes ten questions and will:

- directly inform COSS Network submission to the FWC
- show collective views in the room live as we go
- support your own advocacy and submissions to FWC, if you wish.



**You are welcome to share further comments and questions in the chat section.**



[FWC SCHADS Alternative Structure](#)

[FWC SCHADS Award Draft Determination Paper](#)

[ASU SCHADS Award Draft Determination Paper](#)

[FWC SCHADS Award Discussion Paper](#)

[FWC Gender-based undervaluation – priority awards review webpage](#)

# Resources



# Questions?

