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National Disability Services

Gender-based undervaluation review (SCHADS)



Background

- The Gender-based Undervaluation Review commenced in June 2024.
- The SCHADS Award was identified as one of five priority awards.
- The focus was on identifying areas of gender-based undervaluation.
- The FWC published a preliminary decision in April 2025; this was refined by submissions, conferencing and hearings throughout 2025.
- On 1 June 2026, the FWC published a decision with its Final Classification Structure (FCS).
- A further round of submissions was invited in relation to the decision.
- The FWC published a decision and determination on **11 September 2026**.

Key Findings

- Gender-based undervaluation exists in certain SCHADS Award schedules.
- Existing classification structures in the Award are highly complex:
  - similar work across the Award could attract different pay rates,
  - leads to misclassification and compliance risk.
- A new 10-level classification structure to replace Schedules B, C, E and F.
  - New rates of pay (largely consistent with SACS ERO and Schedule F rates).
  - Changes to pay points and pay point progression.
  - This is to commence on **1 October 2027**.
- Pay rates in Schedule E (Home care – disability) to increase by 15 percent.
  - Alignment with current Home care – aged care rates
  - **This is now proposed to commence on 1 December 2026** (not 1 October 2026)

Outline of FWC's September decision

Operative date of increases for Schedule E employees

- We highlighted that:
  - NDIS awaits a ministerial Pricing Determination via the new NDIS legislation.
  - Three categories of NDIS support involve work performed by Schedule E employees, funded at rates significantly lower than DSW benchmark rates (total $3.1bn p/a).
  - $200m in funding of these supports is needed to cover a 15 per cent pay increase.
  - Time is needed to realign systems, budgets and service agreements.
- The FWC balanced the above with its view that home care workers "*should not have to wait until October 2027*" for the pay increase.
- The FWC postponed the Schedule E pay increase **from 1 October 2026 to 1 December 2026**. NDS continues advocacy on pricing of home care items.

Outline of FWC's September decision

24-hour care – clause 25.8

- This applies to home care employees only, such that:
  - Workers agree to be available in the client's home for 24 hours.
  - Up to 8 hours care is paid at 155 percent of the appropriate pay rate.
  - Additional hours worked are treated and paid as overtime.
- The June decision threatened this, as the new definition for home care employee excluded personal care work.
- **The FWC now confirms the 24-hour care clause will continue to apply to employees providing personal care to a person with disability in a private residence.**

Outline of FWC's September decision

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- **The FWC now confirms the 24-hour care clause will continue to apply to employees providing personal care to a person with disability in a private residence.**

New architecture – Sectors and work streams

- Three sectors, supported by six work streams:

  Sectors

  Social and Community Services

  Crisis Assistance and Supported Housing

  Home Care

  Work streams

  Admin/Operational Support Work

  Social and Community Services Work

  Crisis Assistance and Supported Housing Work

  Disability Support Work

  Home Care Disability Work

  Home Care Aged Work

- Each work stream has a minimum entry point (and some have a maximum attainment level) in the Final Classification Structure.

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New architecture – Sectors and work streams

- Each work stream fits within a sector.
  - **Social and Community Services sector** includes:
    Administrative/ operational support work,
    Disability support work, and the
    Social and community services work streams.
  - **Home Care sector** comprises work performed within the definitions of the Home care aged work and the Home care disability work streams.
  - **Crisis Assistance and Supported Housing sector** comprises work within the definition of the Crisis assistance and supported housing work stream.
- The FWC notes the unsettled issue of whether Admin/operational support work should be covered in the Home Care and Crisis Assistance/SH sectors.

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Disability Support Work vs Home Care definition

- **Disability Support Work** means:
  - » engaging with a person with disability to provide them with personal care or support by an employee whose employer is in the social and community services sector.
- **Home Care Disability Work** means:
  - » domestic assistance or home maintenance that is provided to a client with a disability, performed by an employee whose employer is in the home care sector, but does not include disability support work.
- **Home Care Aged Work** means:
  - » personal care, domestic assistance or home maintenance that is provided to aged care clients, performed by an employee whose employer is in the home care sector.

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New architecture – Ten classification levels

Classification	Minimum weekly rate	Minimum hourly rate	
Level 1.1	**$ 999.40**	**$ 26.30**	
Level 1.2	$ 1031.60	$ 27.15	
Level 2.1	**$ 1182.80**	**$ 31.13**	
Level 2.2	$ 1248.50	$ 32.86	
Level 3.1	**$ 1314.20**	**$ 34.58**	← **Certificate III benchmark**
Level 3.2	$ 1366.80	$ 35.97	
Level 3.3	$ 1419.40	$ 37.35	
Level 4.1	**$ 1433.80**	**$ 37.73**	← **Certificate IV**
Level 5.1	**$ 1472.00**	**$ 38.74**	← **Diploma benchmark**
Level 5.2	$ 1511.10	$ 39.77	
Level 5.3	$ 1543.40	$ 40.62	
Level 5.4	$ 1575.10	$ 41.45	

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New architecture – Ten classification levels

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Classification	Minimum weekly rate	Minimum hourly rate	
Level 6.1	**$1579.30**	**$ 41.56**	← **Degree benchmark**
Level 6.2	$1610.50	$ 42.38	
Level 6.3	$1719.30	$ 45.24	
Level 6.4	$1783.20	$ 46.93	
Level 6.5	$1822.90	$ 47.97	
Level 7.1	**$1938.10**	**$ 51.00**	
Level 7.2	$1979.90	$ 52.10	
Level 7.3	$2026.00	$ 53.32	
Level 8.1	**$2117.50**	**$ 55.72**	← **Post-grad benchmark**
Level 8.2	$2164.30	$ 56.96	
Level 8.3	$2211.20	$ 58.19	
Level 9.1	**$2290.20**	**$ 60.27**	
Level 9.2	$2338.30	$ 61.53	
Level 9.3	$2385.90	$ 62.79	
Level 10.1	**$2484.70**	**$ 65.39**	
Level 10.2	$2533.60	$ 66.67	
Level 10.3	$2582.60	$ 67.96	

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Classification definitions – minimum entry

- **Level 1** applies to an employee who performs administrative/operational support work.
- **Level 2** applies to:
  - » **Admin employees** with more than 24 months' experience at Level 1.
  - » **Disability support workers** with less than 12 months' experience (and no Cert III).
  - » **Home care employees**.
- **Level 3** applies to Certificate III qualified employees, or DSWs with >12 months' exp.
- **Level 4** applies to Certificate IV qualified employees, whose role requires or involves, as a necessary part, performing duties substantially related to the qualification.
- **Level 5** applies to:
  - » **Disability support work** employees who supervise/train others, schedules work, or have overall responsibility for the personal care of residents/clients.
  - » **Caseworkers/Practitioners** such as support coordinators or PBS practitioners.

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Minimum entry points – SACS (from 1 October 2027)

- **Administrative/Operational Support Work:**
  - Entry at Level 1 (less than 24 months' experience), otherwise Level 2.1
- **Disability Support Work**:
  - Entry at Level 2.2 (if no Cert III and less than 12 months' experience)
  - Level 3.1 after 12 months' experience, or Cert III attainment
- **Social and Community Services Work:**
  - Entry at Level 3
- **Home Care Aged/Disability Work:**
  - Entry at Level 2.1 (if less than 3 months' relevant industry experience).
  - Level 2.2 after 3 months' experience.
- **Caseworker/Practitioner (Support Coordinator/PBS Practitioner):**
  - Entry at Level 5

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Minimum entry points within classification levels
(from 1 October 2027)

Classification	Minimum weekly rate	Minimum hourly rate	
Level 1.1	**$ 999.40**	**$ 26.30**	← Admin. minimum entry
Level 1.2	$ 1031.60	$ 27.15	
Level 2.1	**$ 1182.80**	**$ 31.13**	← Home Care minimum entry
Level 2.2	$ 1248.50	$ 32.86	← DSW minimum entry
Level 3.1	**$ 1314.20**	**$ 34.58**	← **Certificate III benchmark**
Level 3.2	$ 1366.80	$ 35.97	
Level 3.3	$ 1419.40	$ 37.35	
Level 4.1	**$ 1433.80**	**$ 37.73**	← **Certificate IV**
Level 5.1	**$ 1472.00**	**$ 38.74**	← **Diploma benchmark**
Level 5.2	$ 1511.10	$ 39.77	Caseworker/Practitioner minimum entry
Level 5.3	$ 1543.40	$ 40.62	
Level 5.4	$ 1575.10	$ 41.45	

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Schedule E (Home care) rates (from 1 December 2026)

Classification	Minimum weekly rate	Minimum hourly rate
Level 1.1	**$1,192.30**	**$ 31.38**
Level 2.1	**$1,192.30**	**$ 33.19**
Level 2.2	$1,192.30	$ 33.41
Level 3.1	**$1,192.30**	**$ 33.87**
Level 3.2	$1,192.30	$ 34.92
Level 4.1	**$1,192.30**	**$ 36.95**
Level 4.2	$1,192.30	$ 37.68
Level 5.1	**$1,192.30**	**$ 39.62**
Level 5.2	$1,192.30	$ 40.58

Please note:

These are base minimum rates of pay.

For casual workers, the 25 percent casual loading must be added.

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National Disability Services

Application to vary SCHADS Award vehicle allowance



Background

- In April, unions filed an application to increase the vehicle allowance payable under 41 modern awards, including SCHADS, due to the Middle East fuel crisis.
- Relates to clause 20.7(a) of SCHADS Award, where employees are reimbursed when they use their own vehicle for work duties.
- The reimbursement rate was 99 cents per km, reviewed annually.
- The reimbursement rate increased to $1.01 per km from 1 July 2026 due to the Annual Wage Review (independent of this matter).

FWC decision outcome (26 August 2026)

- The FWC found that DSWs and aged care workers fundamentally rely on using their own vehicles in their daily work.
- As such, only the SCHADS Award and Aged Care Award would be amended by the decision.
- The FWC rejected a permanent increase, on the basis that any response should only address the present circumstances (fuel crisis).
- Based on cumulative increases in petrol retail prices from 1 March 2026 until 23 August, the vehicle allowance will be temporarily increased to **$1.05 per kilometre from 1 September 2026 until 28 February 2027**.

Beyond 28 February 2027…

- The FWC chose to address the 2026 fuel crisis/price spike with a temporary measure, as opposed to any permanent change to the vehicle allowance or methodology for calculating this.
- As such, the vehicle allowance will return to $1.01 per kilometre from 1 March 2027 until the Annual Wage Review 2027.
- The FWC made clear that the temporary increase will not affect the FWC's approach in dealing with expense-related allowances as part of the Annual Wage Review 2027.

National Disability Services

Application to vary SCHADS Award sleepover clauses



Background

- The FWC *Parkerville* case commenced in late 2023, joined with union applications and then published the Stage 1 decision in April 2026.
- The Stage 1 variations came into effect on 1 June 2026:
  - Sleepover cannot be treated as break between shifts.
  - Sleepover shifts involving pre- and post- sleepover portions of work must be treated as one shift (i.e. they cannot be treated as two separate shifts).
  - Sleepover shifts can involve 12 ordinary hours (where they involve pre- and post- sleepover portions).
  - Portions of work on a sleepover are treated separately for the purposes of shift loadings.
  - Overtime is payable where an employee works more than 12 hours (combined sleepover/active duty) per shift or per day.

Stage 2 proceedings

- The FWC is now considering further proposals put forward by unions:
  - Sleepover allowance increased to around $350 per night (currently $62).
  - Sleepovers cannot be rostered where the employee is "*expected or scheduled to perform work*" during the sleepover (incl. any medication administration, pressure checks, client checks, etc.).
  - Where the employee performs work on 3+ occasions, the employee must be paid 8 hours' pay at OT rates.
- These proposals could significantly limit the circumstances in which sleepovers can be utilised and impose significant costs.