

PROJECT REVALUE-AU

Revaluing Work and Evaluating Labour-market Adjustment in Australia

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When the law re-prices work, what does the labour market do?

For two decades, Australian tribunals have repeatedly found that work performed mainly by women in community services, disability support, children's services, dental assisting and aged care is historically undervalued, and have ordered large, staged corrections to its legal price. What these landmark decisions become in the labour market is far less clear. A tribunal can re-set the value of work; it cannot dictate how employers, workers, funders and service markets respond.

Project REVALUE-AU studies that response. Its central move is to separate three things that policy debate routinely conflates: **legal revaluation**, the decision that finds undervaluation and sets new rates; **implemented treatment**, the classifications, operative dates and staged instalments through which new rates reach payrolls; and **realised adjustment**, what then happens to wages, hours, employment, retention, mobility, employer behaviour, funding and service delivery. Legal timing is documented with unusual precision, yet economic exposure is invisible in standard worker data. Measuring across that gap, by building methods to evaluate wage interventions clear in law but imperfectly observed in data, is the project's core contribution.

THE AUSTRALIAN ADVANTAGE

Australia's award system has produced a sequence of revaluation events with no close international parallel: Queensland's pay-equity decisions of 2005-09; the national Social, Community and Disability Services Equal Remuneration Order of 2012 (SACS), phased in instalments to 2020; the 2022-24 aged-care decisions, including an interim 15 per cent increase for direct-care classifications; and the 2024-25 priority-awards review now carrying revaluation into dental assisting and other feminised occupations. REVALUE-AU converts this sequence into a verified legal-economic event dataset (mechanism, coverage, quantum, staging, operative dates) and builds a focused hierarchy of empirical studies on that foundation. The result is an evidence platform, not a collection of wage cases.

PROOF OF CONCEPT, THEN SCALE

The approach is tested. A completed pilot study evaluates the 2012 order in HILDA and delivers two findings that shape the programme. Long-window, worker-level evaluation of these events is feasible in available data. And naive evaluation misleads: household surveys never record award coverage, classifications or over-award pay, so even a legally sharp intervention appears blurred. Treatment measurement is therefore the research frontier, not a nuisance. HILDA anchors transparent designs across verified events. Prospective extensions through the PLIDA Longitudinal Labour Force Survey and Single Touch Payroll, subject to access and approvals, would add sample size, frequency and sharper exposure measurement for contemporary matters such as aged care. Identification is matched to each case, and causal claims stay within what each design can support: these are quasi-experimental institutional events, not random experiments.

WHY A BUSINESS SCHOOL

In substance, this is a programme about organisations and markets: how employers absorb a mandated re-pricing of their core workforce through wage structures, hours, staffing, retention, fees and publicly funded budgets, in sectors at the centre of Australia's care economy. It speaks simultaneously to labour economics, employment relations, human resource management and public policy, and it generates durable assets: a reusable national event dataset, a stream of scholarly papers, doctoral projects and standing engagement with tribunals, employer bodies and government. That engagement is the natural ground for later Linkage partnerships. The foundations are in place; the open question is the programme's institutional home. That is the conversation this page is meant to start.