

Health Professionals and Support Services (HPSS) Award Update (Provisional)

In April 2025, the Fair Work Commission (FWC) released a provisional decision outlining proposed changes to the Health Professionals and Support Services (HPSS) Award as part of a broader initiative to address gender-based undervaluation of work in key sectors, including health and community services.

The proposed changes are currently under review and have not yet been finalised. They aim to update the classification structure and associated minimum wage rates to more accurately reflect the value, complexity, and qualifications required for professional roles covered by the award, including physiotherapists.

The FWC has indicated several intended outcomes through its provisional recommendations:

- **Modernised Classification Structure:** A more streamlined and simplified classification model that clearly reflects entry-level qualifications
- **Revised Pay Rates:** Increased minimum hourly rates at key classification levels to better reflect work value and provide alignment with other benchmark figures, such as those used in the Aged Care Work Value case.
- **Recognition of Senior Roles:** Introduction of higher classification levels to acknowledge the contributions of senior clinicians, team leaders, and specialists with additional qualifications.
- **Improved Clarity and Consistency:** A structure that is easier for both employers and employees to understand and apply, reducing ambiguity in role classification and progression.

Key provisional outcomes:

Simplification of classifications

The provisional view has consolidated the complex set of classifications within the current HPSS award to **four** classifications - entry level – year 1; 2-3 years; 4-6 years and 7+ years. This aims to remove evaluative judgment around roles and responsibilities and rather, aligns award increases to *years of service*.

Entry level award set to minimum tertiary qualification

The provisional view aims to align the entry level hourly rate for a physiotherapist to the accepted standard/minimum tertiary qualification required to enter the profession.

The Australian Physiotherapy Council has set the minimum tertiary qualification for Physiotherapy at AQF7 (Bachelor level) for graduate entry to the workforce.

In the case of physiotherapy, where a graduate may complete a program at AQF Levels 7, 8 or 9, the provisional recommendations state that entry level award is set to AQF7. While this means that an employer is not obliged to offer above the minimum award rate for an employee who has attained a higher level of education above AQF7, it does not preclude individual salary negotiations in response to normal employment market forces.

Recognition of post-graduation qualifications:

The FWC provisional view does provide for additional, higher-level classifications, to recognise specialists with postgraduate qualifications, health professionals in supervisory or management roles, and those working in senior clinical or service management roles.

These roles would attract higher pay rates under the proposed changes, similar to what was recently established for aged care nurses under the Nurses Award. It's important to note that these classifications and rates are not currently part of the HPSS Award or Nurses Award 2020 but reflect the Fair Work Commission's provisional view. If implemented, the changes would provide clearer progression pathways for health professionals moving into leadership or advanced clinical roles.

The provisional view does not indicate whether the higher-classification award, for those with a post-graduate qualification, may be applied at entry level. Or, rather, if this award is intended to follow in progression with years of service classifications.

Timing of implementation:

The FWC have not provided any indication of the expected timing of implementation.

While this is provided as an **example only**, it is worth noting that the final decision to address gender-based undervaluation in the Pharmacy Industry Award 2020 adopted a staged approach, with increases to minimum wage rates implemented over a three-year period.

The APA has advocated for a similarly staged approach.

This example should be referenced with caution, as the final decision-making process may differ for the HPSS award.

Table 1 - Provisional comparison table*:

Note:

- The below table is the APA analysis* of the current HPSS award classifications compared with the proposed classifications, at the proposed standard entry level of AQF 7.
- The provisional HPSS award provides an entry level award at AQF 9, though it is unclear if this will be accessible to the profession of physiotherapy. For illustrative purposes, the AQF 9 provisional awards can be found in [Appendix – Table 2](#), and comparisons of AQF 7, 8, 9 can be found in [Appendix – Table 3](#))

Classification Level	Pay Point	Current Hourly Rate	New Proposed Classification Entry at AQF7	Proposed Hourly Rate
Level 1	Pay point 1 (UG 2 qualification)	\$28.50		n/a
	Pay point 2 (3 year degree)	\$29.60	Entry level - 1st year	38.14
	Pay point 3 (4 year degree entry)	\$30.91	2nd – 3rd year	40.16
	Pay point 4 (ACF 9 - Masters degree entry)	\$31.97		
	Pay point 5 (PhD entry)	\$34.83	4th – 6th year	43.72
	Pay point 6	\$36.07		
Level 2	Pay point 1	\$36.26		
	Pay point 2	\$37.58		
	Pay point 3	\$39.02	7th Year+	47.28
	Pay point 4	\$40.57		
Level 3	Pay point 1	\$42.33	Specialist with additional post-graduate qualifications or Supervisor	50.83
	Pay point 2	\$43.52		
	Pay point 3	\$44.45	After 5 years at Level 2.1	\$53.95
	Pay point 4	\$46.43	Manager/Senior Specialist	\$58.02
	Pay point 5	\$48.14		
Level 4	Pay point 1	\$51.25		
	Pay point 2	\$54.69		
	Pay point 3	\$59.48		
	Pay point 4	\$65.66	Senior manager	\$65.81

*Disclaimer: This information is released as at 20 May 2025. While this information has been carefully prepared, it is intended for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for decision-making without seeking further advice.

FAQs – Proposed award changes and what they mean for you

1. I work in a private practice. Should I be discussing the terms of my agreement with my employer?

The Fair Work Commission (FWC) has proposed changes that may lead to increased minimum pay rates in the Health Professionals and Support Services Award. However, these changes are still under review and have not been finalised. For now, we recommend:

- Staying informed through official updates from your employer or the APA.
- Being patient as the process takes time and no immediate action is required on your part.
- Speaking to your HR representative or employer if you have specific concerns or questions.

2. As the minimum entry award is set at AQF7 (Bachelor) if I attain a higher level of qualification, such as a Masters (AQF9), does the award provide for a higher pay point for me at entry to the workforce?

The provisional view of the FWC is to standardise the award at entry to the workforce at the minimum acceptable education required, which, for physiotherapy, has been set by the APC at Bachelor level (AQF7).

While the proposed award provides for additional, higher-level classifications (to recognise the skill set of specialists with postgraduate qualifications, health professionals in supervisory or management roles, and those working in senior clinical or service management roles) it is not yet clear if this pay point is accessible at *entry level* for those entering the workforce with a post-graduate degree.

While the aim of an award is to set a minimum, this does not preclude an individual negotiating their own arrangements based on market forces.

3. As an employer, what should I be doing now?

It's important to note that the initial decision issued by the Fair Work Commission is provisional, and nothing is confirmed at this stage. The FWC have sought ongoing consultation, and the APA is actively engaged in that process.

As these changes are still in the proposal stage, we encourage employers to stay informed but to not make any immediate decisions until further details are confirmed. While we understand the desire to stay ahead of potential developments, it is important to approach this matter with caution and informed planning.

Employers may wish to consider undertaking a preliminary review of their employment arrangements and model the potential areas of impact - the information available in the provisional view indicates that any change is likely to affect all types of employment arrangements. The proposed minimum rate increases do not target or exempt any particular category. Whether an employee is paid a salary, hourly rate, or a retainer with a bonus/commission structure, employers will need to ensure that the new minimum rates are met in each individual pay period.

4. As an Employer, do I need to update the employment contracts of my team members, now?

No, not immediately. These are proposed changes only and the specifics as they relate to different employment structures is not yet clear.

However, proposed changes may necessitate contract wording updates in the future, particularly for agreements and policies related to bonuses or pay structures.

5. How are different classifications affected?

Some detail on the proposed changes to classifications is included in Table 1 - [comparison table](#) which outlines the provisional changes and how they may impact existing classification levels.

In regard to the action required as staff advance through levels of classification, the proposed decision does not currently provide any specific detail on how progression through pay points would work under a revised structure, or whether the existing progression model will change at all. For now, it's reasonable to continue applying the same level of preparedness you would under the current award provisions.

Under the existing award, employers are required to track experience gained over time. For full-time employees, this generally involves conducting a review once they've met the necessary timeframe for progression. For part-time or casual employees, it means monitoring the number of hours worked until they meet the required threshold.

Any annual reviews conducted now should already be outlining any applicable level increases, and those changes would typically be documented through updated employment contracts or letters of variation.

6. Will other professions or roles be affected by these changes (e.g. other staff employed within a private practice)?

Based on the information currently available, it appears that the proposed changes would only apply to health professional employees, such as physiotherapists. While the Fair Work Commission's provisional decision does mention a reclassification of roles like dental assistants and pathology assistants, these changes are unlikely to be relevant to APA members.

Of course, ongoing developments should continue to be monitored through the consultation process in case of any change.

7. How long will implementation take, if changes go ahead?

The FWC has not published a definitive timeline beyond the next hearing scheduled for 20 May 2025, which the APA will attend following the submission of our formal response.

While no rollout details have been provided, the APA has strongly advocated for a staged implementation to ensure changes are introduced in a coordinated, pragmatic way—supporting the viability of private practices and minimising impacts on patients.

We will keep members informed of all milestone dates as they become available.

While this is provided as an **example only**, it is worth noting that the final decision to address gender-based undervaluation in the Pharmacy Industry Award 2020 adopted a staged approach, with increases to minimum wage rates implemented over a three-year period. The APA has advocated for a similarly staged approach. However, this example should be referenced with caution, as the final decision-making process may differ for the HPSS award.

8. How will this affect my practice specifically?

Each practice will be affected differently depending on how staff are currently classified and remunerated. As the Commission's recommendations are still provisional, we urge members not to act prematurely.

In time, we recommend seeking advice tailored to your circumstances from a qualified HR advisor or employment lawyer.

Premium Principal members of the APA Business Group are reminded they have access to [HR in Practice](#), a dedicated advisory service for practice-specific HR support. If you're not currently using this service and would like to learn more, please contact the APA at info@australian.physio.

9. How does the FWC balance mandated award rate increases with the financial pressures faced by small physiotherapy businesses? Particularly when funding models such as Medicare, DVA and NDIS remain static?

This is a concern the APA shares with our members. The FWC has a specific mandate to ensure that minimum award rates reflect the value of work, promote gender equity, and provide fair and equitable wages - particularly where undervaluation has been identified. It does not have oversight of broader funding mechanisms, such as Medicare, private health insurance rebates, or mechanisms including DVA and NDIS, which are set by separate government bodies.

This disconnect between rising employment costs and static or constrained funding sources creates real pressure for private practices and community providers - many of whom operate as small businesses. The APA continues to advocate strongly for funding reform across all relevant channels to ensure that the physiotherapy profession remains viable, sustainable, and accessible for patients.

While we support the principles behind fair and equitable pay, we also recognise the importance of how these changes are implemented. That's why the APA is now engaging directly with the Commission - to ensure the impact on physiotherapy is clearly understood, and to advocate for a practical and phased approach that considers the realities of service delivery, funding limitations, and patient access.

10. Do these changes affect hospitals?

Our preliminary understanding is that private hospitals may need to review the details of any enterprise bargaining agreements once the FWC's final decision is issued, to ensure compliance with any updated minimum award conditions.

The impact on public hospitals and state-based systems will depend on jurisdiction-specific arrangements and any applicable state awards.

Need help?

HR in Practice

Premium Principal members of the APA Business Group have access to *HR in Practice HelpDesk*– a dedicated advisory service offering practice-specific HR support.

APA Business Premium Principal members

This service is available by joining the Business Group as a [premium principal member](https://australian.physio/membership/national-groups/business).
[<https://australian.physio/membership/national-groups/business>]

If you wish to access this service, please call 1300 306 622 (9:00am to 5:00pm, Monday to Friday, Sydney time) or info@australian.physio



Disclaimer

This information has been prepared based on publicly available information relating to the Fair Work Commission's provisional decision regarding proposed changes to the Health Professionals and Support Services Award 2020 (HPSS Award).

Please note that:

- These figures reflect potential increases only and are subject to change at any time.
- The Fair Work Commission's decision is not yet final, and further consultation with stakeholders is still underway.
- As such, the rates provided are intended solely as an illustrative guide to help members understand the likely impact of the proposed changes, should they be implemented.

We strongly encourage members to stay informed and monitor updates from the Fair Work Commission as this process progresses. If you are unsure how these changes may affect your workplace, please seek tailored advice.

APPENDIX:

Table 2: Comparison Table* - Provisional view of AQF9 entry level and classification

Note: The provisional HPSS award provides an entry level award at AQF9, though it is unclear if this will be accessible to the profession of Physiotherapists.

Classification Level	Pay Point	Current Hourly Rate	New Proposed Classification Entry at AQF9	Proposed Hourly Rate
Level 1	Pay point 1 (UG 2 qualification)	\$28.50		
	Pay point 2 (3 year degree)	\$29.60		
	Pay point 3 (4 year degree entry)	\$30.91		
	Pay point 4 (ACF 9 - Masters degree entry)	\$31.97		
	Pay point 5 (PhD entry)	\$34.83		
	Pay point 6	\$36.07		
Level 2 -	Pay point 1	\$36.26		
	Pay point 2	\$37.58		
	Pay point 3	\$39.02		
	Pay point 4	\$40.57		
Level 3	Pay point 1	\$42.33	Entry level - 1st year	41.94
	Pay point 2	\$43.52	2nd – 3rd year	44.14
	Pay point 3	\$44.45	4th – 6th year	46.34
	Pay point 4	\$46.43	7th Year+	50.08
	Pay point 5	\$48.14	Specialist with additional post-graduate qualifications or supervisor	50.83
Level 4	Pay point 1	\$51.25	After 5 years at Level 2.1	53.95
	Pay point 2	\$54.69	Manager/Senior Specialist	58.02
	Pay point 3	\$59.48		
	Pay point 4	\$65.66	Senior manager	65.81

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Table 3: Comparison Table* – Classifications of AQF 7, 8 and 9

Note: The provisional HPSS award also provides an entry level award at AQF8 and 9, though it is unclear if this will be accessible to the profession of Physiotherapists.)

Classification Level		Pay Point	Current Hourly Rate
Level 1		Pay point 1 (UG 2[11] qualification)	\$28.50
		Pay point 2 (3 year degree)	\$29.60
		Pay point 3 (4 year degree entry)	\$30.91
		Pay point 4 (ACF 9 - Masters degree entry)	\$31.97
		Pay point 5 (PhD entry)	\$34.83
		Pay point 6	\$36.07
Level 2 -		Pay point 1	\$36.26
		Pay point 2	\$37.58
		Pay point 3	\$39.02
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Level 3		Pay point 1	\$42.33
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		Pay point 3	\$44.45
		Pay point 4	\$46.43
		Pay point 5	\$48.14
Level 4		Pay point 1	\$51.25
		Pay point 2	\$54.69
		Pay point 3	\$59.48
		Pay point 4	\$65.66

New Proposed Classification - Proposed Hourly Rates			
	AQF7	AQF 8	AQF9
	n/a	n/a	n/a
Entry level - 1st year	38.14	39.29	41.94
2nd – 3rd year	40.16	41.36	44.14
4th – 6th year	43.72	45.03	46.34
7th Year+	47.28	49.85	50.08
Specialist with additional post-graduate qualifications or	\$50.83		
After 5 years at Level 2.1	\$53.95		
Manager/Senior Specialist	\$58.02		
Senior manager	\$65.81		



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