



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

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Submission to the Consultation on Review of the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012

From: The Women and Work Research Group
<http://sydney.edu.au/business/research/wwrg>

WGEA Review – Consultations
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
PO Box 6500
CANBERRA ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Review Committee,

I write to you as Co-Director of the Women and Work Research Group at the University of Sydney Business School, and also on behalf of Professor Rae Cooper and Dr Meraiah Foley.

Established in 2006, the goal of the Women and Work Research Group is to build equitable workplaces and sustainable careers for women. Through our research we aim to expand our knowledge and research expertise on women and work in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. Ongoing public and political debates about family leave, industrial relations, access to childcare, declining birth rates and low levels of female representation on company boards, highlight the need for quality research in this field.

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Given resourcing constraints due to COVID-19 we can only provide a brief submission. I note however that I and Professor Cooper attended consultation sessions. Furthermore, we are members of the Work and Family Policy RoundTable and fully endorse their submission. We also endorse the submissions of the National Federation of Australian Women and Chief Executive Women, and of Alexandra Heron.

We note that the WGEA has undertaken some excellent work in raising awareness of gender equality matters at the workplace level and of gathering data. We also note however that Australia's ranking in terms of gender equality has been slipping and there are aspects of WGEA's functioning that could be changed in order to improve Australia's position and the state of gender equality in Australian workplaces.

In brief, we recommend the following:

1. Sanctions on organisations who fail to report be tightened.
2. Transparency of reporting in terms of data at an organisation level is needed to enhance knowledge levels in the community.
3. Specifically, we agree that greater pay transparency at an organisational level is needed as it is well known that this is a key factor in narrowing the gender pay gap. All remuneration data should be made public.
4. That pay equity audits be required to be followed up with actions to address the gender pay gap.
5. Reporting of sexual harassment and discrimination should be a key indicator and reported to the Board.
6. Consideration be given to requiring organisations of less than 100 employees to report against key indicators such as pay, gender composition, parental leave and sexual harassment.
7. An explicit objective be included in the Act that it seeks to achieve gender-based respect at work.
8. That organisations be required to report on how respect is shown to all workers, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity or other criteria as determined in anti-discrimination legislation.
9. That in terms of additional data, it is recommended that given the ageing of the Australian workforce and population, coupled with the increasing



proportion of mature age women working, that a specific question be included which would request employers to investigate and better understand the extent of employees' informal eldercare responsibilities and how organisational policies may appropriately address these.

10. Further, in terms of additional data it is recommended that information about flexible working, specifically in relation to spatial flexibility (that is, where employees are working and what technology they are provided with), be collected. This is particularly important following COVID-19 mandated working from home arrangements.
11. That mandatory data collection also include gender and intersecting forms of diversity, including employee age (year of birth), primary work location, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background, cultural background, and disability.
12. In relation to the WGEA data explorer website, that funding be provided to continue to support and enhance the accessible provision of data. This is an invaluable resource in teaching for us in higher education.



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