



BPW Australia

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BPW Australia's submission to consultation on review of the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012

BPW Australia takes action for women's equality at work, on boards and in leadership, and works for women's economic independence and equal opportunity. BPW Australia is a founding member of economicSecurity4Women, Australian Gender Equality Agency and is affiliated with BPW International.

BPW International develops the business, professional and leadership potential of women through our advocacy, mentoring, networking, skill building and economic empowerment programs and projects around the world, and works for global gender equality in power and decision-making through our advocacy and UN participation.

BPW membership includes employers and employees, corporate women and small business women, women in professions and trades, and from the non-profit and government sectors.

BPW Australia calls on government, employer and industry stakeholders, unions and employee advocates to collaborate and actively promote and implement best-practice strategies to eliminate the persistent gaps in Australia's economy that particularly affect women.

BPW Australia policy is developed by our members through resolutions debated and passed at our National Conferences. BPW's focus is currently on:

- *women's economic security including pay equity, paid parental leave, social security and poverty, retirement incomes and superannuation, and housing security especially for older women*
- *women's representation in leadership in Parliaments, governments, boards and business*

BPW Australia submits that the following be incorporated into the consultation on review of the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012.

Jacqueline

Jacqueline Graham GRSC

President, BPW Australia

BPW Australia takes national action for women's equality – at work, on boards, in leadership

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E: [REDACTED]

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BPW (Business and Professional Women) Australia is a unique network of women (both employers and employees) who focus on issues that affect women and the world of work. We actively lobby government on their behalf, and play a leading role in Equal Pay Day each year.

Our projects, programs and campaigns include gender equity, financial security, leadership and education for women. We also support and encourage business to sign up for the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPS) and the UN Global Compact. We have consultative status at the UN through the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and participate in Commission for the Status of Women (CSW) each year.

BPW Australia submits the following for consultation on review of the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012

Pay transparency

BPW has a global campaign to close the gender pay gap and, in many countries, the campaign includes removing the gag in pay contracts that prevents an employee from asking what a colleague earns or telling them what she earns. BPW Australia advocates for legislation to enforce pay transparency in employment contracts. The OECD, ILO and UN Women's Equal Pay International Coalition have identified pay transparency as an important tool in closing the gap. Australia still allows pay secrecy clauses in employment contracts and agreements that ban workers from telling their colleagues what they get paid. Other countries are making such clauses illegal as a means of reducing the pay gap within organisations and workplaces.

Pay secrecy has been enforced through employee contracts, employer policy and workplace culture that prevent employees from sharing information about their salaries. In 2015, a Bill to amend the Fair Work Act 2009 aimed to render unenforceable any requirement in an award, enterprise agreement or contract of employment that prohibits an employee from disclosing their pay. It didn't progress and lapsed and now with review of WGEA powers it must be restored again, recognising pay transparency is critical to addressing the pay gap.

The case for including pay transparency as a strategy to address pay inequity is well made by [David Burkus](#) in his TED talk, where he points out that pay secrecy makes it easier to ignore the discrimination that's already contributing to the gender pay gap. He reports that in government, where salaries relate to classification so this information is accessible, the gender wage gap is less. Eliminating pay secrecy clauses in employment contracts enables employees to challenge any discrepancy in pay rates that seems unfair or unjustified.

BPW Australia advocates for Australian political parties to address the unfair and unacceptable national gender pay gap by making secrecy clauses in contracts and company policies illegal and unenforceable as a strategy to help close the gender pay gap.

Paid parental leave

Australia needs to review our paid parental leave scheme and bring it into line with what families expect and receive in most other countries. The payments must include the superannuation guarantee to reduce the parenting penalty that impacts women's retirement incomes and economic security, leaving too many older women in poverty. BPW Australia advocates that paid parental leave be doubled to 40 weeks. Australia came very late to the paid parental leave party and remains far behind the OECD average for repayments and duration of PPL – p14 of the AEI-[Brookings Working Group](#) 2017 report on Paid Family Leave. Other countries have enhanced their PPL in the meantime, and Australia is falling further behind.

Paid parental leave should offer parents the flexibility to decide how to allocate their time to the new child and their work, allowing 6 weeks exclusively for the mother post-birth and the remainder shared between both parents as they determine themselves.

End of Submission

Contact details

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