



eowa employer of choice for women 2003 organisational profile



Santa Sabina College

EOWA asked Santa Sabina College, to explain some of their initiatives and workplace programs instigated to achieve equal opportunity in the organisation, and why they are committed to being an 'EOWA Employer of Choice for Women' (EOCFW).

Organisation Information

INDUSTRY SECTOR	=	Education
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	=	235
% OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES	=	86%
% OF FEMALE SENIOR MANAGEMENT	=	77%

Q Why are you committed to becoming an EOCFW?

Our core business is education and in secondary school, the education of young women who are encouraged to take an active role in the community through participation in diverse roles. Becoming an Employer of Choice enables us to "live" the philosophical objectives of Affirmative Action and EOWA. It challenges us to ensure that our practices meet the goals of equal opportunity which we espouse as an educational institution. Therefore we seek to:

- Empower members of staff in order for them to fulfil their potential.
- Encourage women to take up diverse roles and provide supportive structures for women in achieving their individual goals.
- Provide training and education experiences for women.
- Identify those structures and issues which mitigate against women being able to balance the demands of work and family.
- Provide flexible work practices.
- Investigate and adopt best practice structures and systems to enable women to return from maternity leave and balance work and family life.

Q What did you do?

- Through the Affirmative Action Committee in 1996 undertook a survey of staff re childcare and its impact on women in the College.
- Identified the issues around childcare which affected our staff.
- Attempts to gain regular and suitable childcare difficult and having an impact on performance and commitment.
- Teachers identified the concern that interruptions to career due to lack of provision of childcare had a negative impact on career path and professional development.
- Principal support for the provision of on-site childcare led to it being an item on the Executive agenda and recommendations to the College Board.



eowa employer of choice for women 2003 organisational profile

- Working Board sub-committee conducted a feasibility study and recommended the building, on site, of a purpose built 40 place long day care centre for work based childcare. The Centre was completed and opened in 1998.
- Staff are able to salary package the fees at the Centre.

Q What were the challenges you had to overcome? How did you overcome them?

The project to provide on-site childcare for 0 – 5 year olds at Mary Bailey House Early Education Centre was well supported by senior management and the College Board. Apart from the challenges intrinsic to any capital project eg providing resources and building, our real challenges stemmed from external factors such as the gaining of Council approval for the project. The leadership of the Principal and general common sense overcame minority views eg:

- Is this a project providing equity? It will only benefit some staff.
- Staff with children in the Centre will be distracted by having them on site.

We were able to set up discussion at staff meetings to address these views and reinforced:

- On-site childcare was an indication of the College commitment to the pastoral support of staff.
- On-site childcare benefited the students in the College as staff were less anxious re childcare.
- Collegial teams were less impacted by the problems which some staff experienced related to flexibility and childcare options.
- All members of staff had some flexibility around what and when they were able to attend to personal matters during free periods and lunch and morning tea breaks.

Q What impact has it had on the business and on the women in the organisation?

- Staff return from maternity leave with more confidence and less anxiety.
- Positive impact on staff morale as staff perceive the benefits and also the commitment of the College to the needs of employees.
- Increase in the continuity of teaching and learning for students, given the retention of staff.
- The Centre has broadened the opportunities for students re learning experiences eg. English students writing children's books and reading their stories to the children at Mary Bailey House.
- Attracts applicants to the College who value the opportunity to work in a school community which supports staff in a practical way.
- Retention of excellent staff who are committed to the teaching and learning of their students, confident that their own children are being well cared for at Mary Bailey House Early Education Centre.