



Australian Government

Equal Opportunity for
Women in the Workplace Agency



annual report

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The Hon Kevin Andrews MP
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Minister

I have pleasure in presenting to you the Annual Report of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency for the year 2005-2006.

The report has been prepared in accordance with Part III, subsection 12(1) of the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999*, which requires EOWA, as soon as practicable, and in any event within 6 months, after each 31 May, to submit to the Minister a report on its operations during the year that ended on that 31 May.

This Annual Report covers the period from 1 July 2005 – 30 June 2006 but also includes EOWA's most current report assessment data from compliance reports submitted for the 1 April 2005 – 31 May 2006 reporting year.

Yours sincerely

Anna McPhee
16 October 2006



Our Vision

To create an Australia where women in the workplace can achieve their greatest potential

Our Mission

To inspire Australian employers to create workplaces where women's contribution is valued and recognised. EOWA works to achieve this by:

- Providing unique, leading-edge knowledge and solutions
- Building strategic alliances and partnerships
- Engaging community debate to increase the rate of change

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For more information about EOWA and its role and functions, please visit our **website:** www.eowa.gov.au

An electronic copy of the annual report is available at:
http://www.eowa.gov.au/Information_Centres/Resource_Centre/EOWA_Publications/Annual_Reports/EOWA_Annual_Report_05_06.asp

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Review by Director

Review by Director



Anna McPhee
Director, EOWA

The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency maintains its unique position to track the progress of equal opportunity in Australian workplaces, gaining unparalleled knowledge that we share with organisations and the community to drive ongoing improvement.

In April 2006, an independent survey of reporting organisations was conducted to investigate perceptions of EOWA's service delivery, particularly evaluating the effectiveness of the services provided, its impact and outcomes relating to gender equity, and the general awareness of the services the Agency provides.

Compared to 2003, respondents rate EOWA as being significantly more effective in providing advice and information to assist in improving outcomes for working women in 2006. 84% of respondents in 2006 believe EOWA is effective in providing advice and information to assist with improving outcomes for working women, compared to 63% in 2003. More than two in five respondents (42%) believe that EOWA is “very effective” or “extremely effective” in providing advice and information to assist in improving outcomes for working women, compared to only 27% in 2003.

The *EOWA Industry Verticals* series, which was launched in early 2005, continued to encourage organisations to self-evaluate and drive equal opportunity initiatives with the release of two new publications focusing on the Education and Finance and Insurance sectors.

A second edition of the *Leading Edge Initiatives* publication was distributed to all reporting organisations, showcasing organisations that have leading practice EO workplace programs in place. Leading-practice initiatives include up to 26 weeks paid maternity leave, mentoring and career development opportunities for talented women and flexible working hours or rostering to accommodate staff members with caring responsibilities.

The 2005 EOWA Business Achievement Awards (BAAs) were an excellent barometer of the ways in which businesses are driving change. The event included the inaugural Award for Outstanding EEO Practice in the Advancement of Mature-Aged Women, which is now a permanent BAA category. It was particularly encouraging to see a number of organisations utilising the many talents of the maturing workforce, as these organisations are clearly working towards overcoming the challenges of the emerging skills shortage.

In addition, it is rewarding to see the changes that those organisations reporting to EOWA are making. The 2005 EOWA survey on paid parental leave revealed that 46% of reporting organisations are now providing paid maternity leave, up from 41% in 2004 and 36% in 2003. Furthermore, 32% of organisations provide paid paternity leave, an increase from 17% in 2001.

Paid maternity leave is just one initiative in a suite that can help business to retain female staff, and increasing numbers of organisations are providing flexible working hours, opportunities to work from home, part-time and job-share opportunities and succession planning. Our findings clearly support the solid business case for providing a range of conditions that help employees to manage their work/life balance.

While progress has been made, the barriers that hinder women's greater participation at all levels within business are enduring. EOWA will continue to work collaboratively with employers in 2006-07 with a particular focus on greater workplace flexibility, including providing quality part-time work and ensuring job re-design is part of that process, and addressing the needs of a mature workforce. In addition, an emphasis will be placed on promoting performance measures to focus on outcomes for the organisation, rather than on the number of hours worked.

Through the sharing of equal opportunity initiatives and innovations of employers with both business and the community, we hope not only to inspire organisations to undertake similar initiatives, but also equip them with the practical knowledge and industry insights needed to realise the full benefits they can generate, for both the business and for women.

The outstanding work of the staff at the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency is integral to supporting Australian women in the workforce to achieve their greatest potential.