



# EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE AGENCY

annual report 1999 – 2000



eowa<sup>en</sup>

Working with employers to advance women and business



# EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE AGENCY

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ISSN 1444-4321

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# Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency

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The Hon. Peter Reith MP  
Minister for Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

I have pleasure in presenting to you the Annual Report for the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency for the year 1999-2000.

This report has been prepared in accordance with subsection 63(1) of the *Public Service Act 1999* and subsection 12(1) of the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999*.

This report covers the period from 1 June 1999 to 31 May 2000.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Fiona Krautil'.

Fiona Krautil  
Director of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency  
9 October 2000



# Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency

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## **Vision**

To inspire Australian employers to bring about a real and fundamental shift in the way they value, utilise, reward and promote women, creating a sustainable social and economic future for all Australians.

## **Mission**

To inspire Australian employers to take action to improve equal opportunity outcomes for women in the workplace by:

- developing a pragmatic and solution orientated approach
- developing strong business/organisational relationships so that they fully capitalise on their female talent and improve their business competitiveness.

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## Review by Director

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Fiona Krautil  
Director

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I am delighted to be able to report how much the new Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) has achieved over the past year. We have:

- completed the final reporting cycle under the previous *Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women Act 1986)*;
- made significant progress in implementing the Government's response to the '*Unfinished Business*' review; and
- made significant progress in implementing the new *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999*.

As part of the implementation of the new Act, employers were not required to report to EOWA in 2000. This enabled EOWA to focus its resources on educating employers on the new requirements of the Act and develop educative materials, including the new *Voluntary Report Form* and educational guidelines, to assist employers to comply with the amended legislation. Under the new Act, employers are required to develop a workplace program for the period 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2001, with a view to reporting on their actions by 31 May 2001.

Major consultation with reporting organisations and other key stakeholders revealed that EOWA is now perceived as an organisation that is primarily advisory in nature and provides a pragmatic, solutions oriented, approach for clients, while maintaining an ongoing regulatory role. Employers responses to our shift in focus has been enthusiastic. In November and December 1999, I undertook a series of national consultative forums with employers and other key stakeholders to explore and identify how to effectively implement the Act for employers. The initial 10 forums quickly grew to 26 in total, and I met with over 500 participants.

This consultation process was an integral part of gaining employer 'buy in' to EOWA's new direction and the new reporting frame-

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## FOREWORD

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### REVIEW BY DIRECTOR

work. It also provided critical employer input that enabled EOWA to develop effective new educational guidelines and a new *Voluntary Report Form*, that would assist employers to meet the requirements of the new Act and add value to their business' bottom line. In March 2000, a second series of national roundtables were held to discuss the *Voluntary Report Form* and educational guidelines and gather client feedback. Again the response from employers and the comments on, both the EOWA direction and the educational materials that have been developed, has been extremely positive.

Our new Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Advisory Board was launched in August 1999 in Sydney by our Minister the Hon. Peter Reith. The launch of the EEO Advisory Board, whose focus is to encourage links between the EOWA and business, was also well attended by employer representatives. This has also been the case with other Board functions held to coincide with Board meetings in Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane.

The EEO Advisory Board has met four times over the past year and has significantly assisted the EOWA to develop partnerships with key stakeholders and also provided valuable feedback on the *Voluntary Report Form* and educational guidelines.

Our drive to improve two-way communica-

tion between the EOWA and our clients has highlighted the importance of using web-based technology. It allows us to provide the latest information resources, in an easily accessible and affordable way, to all employers across Australia. Consultation feedback has identified that over 90 per cent of EOWA clients would like to obtain and submit their annual progress report on-line. The EOWA has invested resources this year to develop an information technology specification to enable reports to be submitted electronically in 2001.

As part of repositioning EOWA, to increase the emphasis on its educative role, it has been important to use the enactment of the revised legislation to re-energise action to achieve equal opportunity for women in the workplace, particularly in corporate Australia. The EOWA focus on creating partnerships commenced with two key national events. Working in partnership with the National Diversity Think Tank, Work+Life Strategies and the Council for Equal Opportunity in Employment Limited, EOWA organised the *Catalyst for Change* event which brought together Australian corporate, government and academic leaders to discuss the issues, challenges and opportunities in advancing women in the workplace.

EOWA also undertook the *Women In The Workplace - Opportunities For Business In The New Millennium, Best Practice Awards* in partnership with the Australian Chamber of

Commerce and Industry and the Council for Equal Opportunity in Employment Limited. These awards recognised the best practice achievement of organisations during the last year of the previous Affirmative Action Act. We were honoured to have the Hon. Peter Reith, Minister for Employment Workplace Relations and Small Business, and Senator Helen Coonan in attendance to present the awards and congratulate the participants.

Ensuring that we are able to deliver to employers a new flexible reporting process and 'value added' educational services, will be a major challenge. With the continuance of annual reporting, EOWA will be looking to develop innovative business processes and IT solutions to enable us to deliver on this.

I am greatly appreciative of the following individuals and organisations for the support and assistance provided to EOWA in achieving our goals. Firstly to the staff at EOWA. The renewed focus of the EOWA on education has required a significant realignment of our internal culture and way of operating. The changes that have been achieved and the work undertaken in 1999-2000, could not have occurred without staff willingness to commit to our new direction.

Thank you also to the Hon. Peter Reith, Minister for Employment Workplace Relations and Small Business, and Peter Shergold, the department's Secretary and his

Workplace Relations Policy and Legal Group. A special thanks to the members of the new Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Board and Deanne Bevan as chair, and the many employers and individuals with whom we have worked to achieve such significant change.