



Australian Government

Equal Opportunity for
Women in the Workplace Agency

media release

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EOWA calls for gender equality standards

In its submission to the review of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace (EOWW) Act (1999) and Agency, EOWA has made a series of recommendations to increase the pace of cultural change in Australian workplaces to improve outcomes for women.

Despite many improvements in the lives of working women since the legislation was introduced, Director Mairi Steele believes that progress has stalled and the approach to equal opportunity that resulted from the 1998 review is no longer driving improvements.

“One of the Agency’s major concerns about the existing legislation is that about one third of organisations covered by the Act are not meeting their responsibilities by reporting to Government on what they are doing to improve equal opportunities for women at work. This is wholly unacceptable and addressing it is one of the Agency’s main priorities in this review” she said.

“We recommend that the focus of the Act and the Agency remain on women but that there should be recognition that gender equality at work is about women and men. Until more men access workplace flexibility, these arrangements will continue to be seen as ‘solutions’ to the ‘problem’ of women’s employment rather than a means of supporting employees in managing their full range of responsibilities.”

The Agency recommends that industry-based gender equality standards are developed to help business progress from low or mediocre standards to better or best practice.

“We want to help business dip into the ‘too hard’ basket and address head-on the problems of pay equity and women’s development and advancement at work.”

EOWA’s recommendations include:

- Renaming the legislation the Workplace Equality Act to recognise that the removal of sex-based barriers to equal opportunity affects both women and men
- Strengthened reporting requirements to ensure genuine workplace consultation takes place between employers and employees
- A requirement that employers complete a Gender Equality Self-Audit against a series of specified gender equality standards that are set in discussion with industry
- A requirement for businesses to show progress over time
- Introducing the facility to report online and a making the self audit report available to employees and relevant unions
- Phased in workplace audits for organisations that do not meet their reporting obligations and where the Agency believes there is some misrepresentation
- Making pay equity analysis and addressing of pay inequality compulsory

[ENDS]

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For information about the review and to access the Agency’s submission go to www.eowa.gov.au