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# MEDIA RELEASE



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## **INDUSTRY SUPPORT FOR GENDER EQUALITY CAUTIONED BY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

The intention to promote gender equity and increase women's participation in the workforce that is behind the Australian Government's legislation to overhaul the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency, introduced today, is sound, but caution is needed in assessing the new reporting requirements to ensure they have practical benefit and are not misused for extraneous purposes, says the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Speaking following the introduction of these laws into the Australian parliament today, ACCI Chief Executive Peter Anderson said:

"Reasonable steps to modernise the Act and encourage greater participation by women in the labour force is warranted but caution remains about whether reporting requirements do the trick or simply add to red tape. The government and its officials have consulted well in the lead up to the amendments being made even though these industry concerns remain."

The amendments introduce new reporting requirements on medium to larger firms requiring all private sector organisations with 100 employees or more to provide detailed information to a new government agency, as well as meeting new "minimum standards" by 2014 and

beyond.

“The government made some concessions to business during the consultations, including a longer lead time for minimum standards commencing and limiting reporting requirements to only larger firms. However, this new framework would still introduce a new compliance burden for many employers that will need to be monitored for practicality and effectiveness.”

“The mandatory reporting system on a range of “gender equality indicators” which will be prescribed by the Minister at a future date, will mean that businesses which fail to meet these government targets, will be named and shamed in public reports, and may be locked out of government tendering contracts. Of concern is the fact that the Bill is also one-sided in that it only applies to the private sector and not government employers”.

“Many firms have developed innovative ways to support and enhance equity and diversity in their workplace. Our fear is that new regulatory measures, despite good intentions, may result in employers focusing on complying with red-tape obligations rather than developing and enhancing these programs and policies”.

For more information:

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