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24 July 2008

Ms Cheryl Scarlett
Inquiry Secretary
Employment and Workplace Relations Committee
P O Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Scarlett

I refer to your letter of 15 July 2008 inviting a submission to the Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations on the issues surrounding pay equity and increasing female participation in the workplace.

I would like to provide a brief response on behalf of Centacare, the social services arm of the Catholic Church in Brisbane, and its legal entity the Corporation of the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane. Centacare employs over 3,000 persons providing a range of human and community services including support for people with a disability, the elderly (in their own homes) and children. Females comprise 80% of our workforce – of this number, 37% work on a part time basis and a further 30% on a casual basis of employment. Attached staff breakdown refers.

In recent years, we have actively supported the need for pay equity in the human and community services sector – a sector that, in our experience, is characterised by a predominance of female employment. At the base level, the nature of the work in this sector is often part time and structured around the needs of service recipients rather than traditional industrial norms or business opening hours. Female workers particularly those with their own elderly, family or child care needs take advantage of such work opportunities because of its potential for flexibility.

However, this participation rate is in jeopardy and appears undervalued by the community at large. Award pay rates in these sectors have not maintained parity with changes in the community – particularly the community's demands for a better skilled workforce to meet their needs at the professional and/or practical, hands-on care level. Changes in such award rates of pay based on either pay equity or work value have been slow to accommodate this changing industrial reality.

On the other hand, Governments (both State and Commonwealth) have identified this changing need and imposed their own requirements over the last decade. They have become more prescriptive in how services are provided by Church and other not-for-profit employers. The need for greater accountability and accreditation systems nowadays is a common characteristic of Government funding.

Generally speaking, we have accepted these demands as our commitment based on Catholic Social Teachings is to provide both professional and affordable services to those people who need support and/or care.

At the same time, Government funding formulas have not moved in accordance with these requirements. They do not readily acknowledge this need to reward and/or recognise the contribution of workers in these sectors. In allowing for escalation in a government service contract, the variable that effects funding tends to be tied to base award rates of pay or one-dimensional indicators such as movement in the Consumer Price Index.

In these circumstances, our workers are disadvantaged. Our clients are not in a position to pay for services. This reliance on Government funding and the limited and/or prescriptive nature of such funding give rise to pay inequities and the treatment we are able to afford female workers in the Church and not-for-profit sector.

The Catholic Church in Australia on behalf of its many and varied employers, nonetheless, is a strong advocate for justice and equity in employment.

The Commission may wish to put a broader view and/or their position on the various matters being considered by your Committee.

Yours faithfully



GEORGE KERYK
Director
Workplace Relations



EMPLOYEE NUMBERS BY EMPLOYMENT CATEGORY

	Women		Men		Casual		TOTAL STAFF	%	
	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time	Women	Men		Women	Men
Executive Directors			1				1	0	1
Directors	3		4				7	43%	57%
Managers	52	11	24	1	2	0	90	72%	28%
Supervisors	94	66	20	7	22	0	209	87%	13%
Field Staff	168	960	65	253	832	204	2482	79%	21%
Professional Staff	43	42	6	11	7	2	111	83%	17%
Administration Staff	76	63	3	2	49	4	197	95%	5%
TOTAL	436	1142	123	274	912	210	3097	80%	20%

Note: Based on employees on Meridian March 2008