

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations
House of Representatives
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28 August 2008

Dear Ms Scarlett

PAY EQUITY AND ASSOCIATED ISSUES RELATED TO INCREASING FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKFORCE

In our latest EOWA report for 2007-2008, ETSA Utilities was able to report that women constituted 12% of our workforce and that overall there were no differences in pay between the average male and female salary in the same occupation.

Comparisons with like companies in the utilities sector indicate that a much lower representation of women in the workforce is not unique to our organisation but is prevalent industry wide. However, as an employer we acknowledge that more could be done to increase the female participation at ETSA Utilities. Over recent years our focus has been on ensuring we are encouraging females into trades, engineering and management roles in ETSA Utilities.

ETSA Utilities is also pursuing diversity initiatives as a core element of our business strategy. We actively support the principle of diversity in employment and are committed to ensuring that individuals are shown respect, treated fairly and that there is no unlawful discrimination in our working relationships. A Diversity Working Group (DWG), which I chair, was established in August 2007. Members of the group comprise representatives from various Departments within the organisation and individuals with a diverse range of work backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, genders, ages, job roles and levels of position within ETSA Utilities. The DWG's aim is to remove barriers to diversity, provide a forum for ideas and concerns relating to diversity and advice on formal and informal practices, policies and procedures. The Group also raises awareness of diversity, ensures we stay abreast of best practice, and to monitor organisational change to ensure it advances the interests of any under-represented groups.

While women (and men) identify good pay and bonuses as the most important factor when job seeking, women also consider promotion and support of women, flexible working conditions, the numbers of women in senior positions and provision of paid maternity leave as significant factors. One of the major challenges for governments and employers today is that, while the presence and status of women in paid employment has improved dramatically over the last 50 years, the progression of professional women into positions of leadership has been slow.

Office of the CEO

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Some of the initiatives that would assist the transition of women into positions of leadership include seeking to achieve a critical mass of women in management positions to avoid isolation and to limit minority/majority dynamics. Organisations also need to recognise and manage the resistance of both men and women to cultural change initiatives through ongoing communication and awareness raising.

Below you will find our response to specific feedback sought on the following areas:

- **The adequacy of current data to reliably monitor employment changes that may impact on pay equity issues;**

ETSA Utilities' employee data is managed in SAP and enables the tracking of employment changes which could impact on pay provisions. ETSA Utilities would support the use of the EOWA Pay Equity Tool which is aimed at helping organisations consider a range of variables including grade, organisational structure, employee status, hours worked and education level in the analysis of the gender pay distribution.

- **The need for education and information among employers, employees and trade unions in relation to pay equity issues;**

The organisation has a positive working relationship with all our unions and employees and there is a wide commitment that there needs to be pay equity for all employees. Education aimed at informing all parties of the main reasons causing gender pay inequity would be useful to ensure any issues within the organisation can be addressed.

- **Current structural arrangements in the negotiation of wages that may impact disproportionately on women;**

It is our view that there are no structural arrangements in the negotiation of wages that disadvantage our female employees or any of our other employees.

In ETSA Utilities:

- pay scales are the same for men and women on the salaried scale;
- Hay Evaluation System is applied for all salaried Job Descriptions; and
- pay scales for apprentices and Trades (wages employees) are based on same evaluation ie there is no differentiation between male and female pay scales.

- **The adequacy of recent and current equal remuneration provisions in state and federal workplace relations legislation;**

The current provisions in the state and federal workplace relations legislation sufficiently support equal remuneration provisions.

- **The adequacy of current arrangements to ensure fair access to training and promotion for women who have taken maternity leave and/or returned to work part time and/or sought flexible work hours;**

ETSA Utilities has a wide range of flexible working provisions that can be accessed by all staff. This includes 4 weeks of paid parental leave for births and adoptions.

In addition to this parental leave, women are entitled to a further 12 weeks of paid maternity leave. We believe that 16 weeks of paid leave available to new mothers is close to best practice in Australia. Part-time employees entitlements are on a pro-rata basis.

Upon returning to work following maternity leave, employees can access phased transition to work or return on a part-time basis.

In our view these provisions are extremely helpful in ensuring the participation of women in the workforce. However raising a family or looking after elderly parents are some of the reasons why women choose to remain within the workforce on a part time basis. Another challenge for governments and employers will be how to ensure that women's involvement part-time in the workforce doesn't disadvantage women in career prospects and therefore their pay prospects.

One option to overcome this is to encourage more job sharing. This strategy is usually well accepted at lower and middle levels of management however at senior management it is often not seen as a real alternative for employers.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lew Owens', written in a cursive style.

Lew Owens
Chief Executive Officer