



A national pay equity unit?

The gender pay gap in Western Australia is substantially larger than the national average and much of the gap remains unexplained. The Pay Equity Unit believes that there is a common misconception that the mining industry is responsible for the comparatively large gap and that this is not the case because the health and community services, property and business services, finance and insurance and retail sectors all have higher gender pay gaps. More research is needed to challenge some basic assumptions about the factors behind the gender pay gap.

The need for a stronger focus on pay equity and the establishment of a national pay equity unit has been suggested by the Western Australian Department of Commerce in its submission to the House of Representatives Employment and Workplace Relations Committee's inquiry into pay equity and associated issues related to increasing female participation in the workforce.

Committee Chair, Ms Sharryn Jackson said, 'The establishment of the Pay Equity Unit in Western Australia has provided a clear focus on a number of issues in relation to the importance of pay equity and increasing female participation in the workforce at a time when there is a widening gender pay inequity in Australia.'

The Pay Equity Unit from the Western Australian Department of Commerce will appear before the House Employment and Workplace Relations Committee in Committee Room 1R3 Parliament House Canberra on Thursday 26 February from 11.15 am to discuss this and other issues relevant to pay equity and women's participation in the workforce.

Discussions should also cover other factors that may impact disproportionately on women's employment options and conditions and the need for further legislative reform to address pay equity in Australia.

The Committee will continue to welcome submissions to the inquiry.

Further details on the inquiry, including the terms of reference, background documents, membership of the Committee and advice on making submissions can be obtained on the Committee's website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/ewr>, by contacting the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4162 or emailing ewr.reps@aph.gov.au. This hearing will be webcast live (audio only) on: <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>

For media comment, please contact the Committee Chair, Sharryn Jackson, on (02) 6277 4044
For background information, contact the Committee Secretary, on (02) 6277 4162