



**Mackay
Sugar
Limited**
Corporate Office

14 August 2008

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Employment & Workplace Relations
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Submission Number: 21
Date Received: 14/08/08

Attention: Ms Cheryl Scarlett

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PAY AND EQUITY ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKFORCE

Thank-you for your invitation to contribute to the inquiry into potential disadvantages relative to increasing participation of women in the workforce.

The terms of reference contained in your letter of 15th July are broad, however in order to provide an insight into Mackay Sugar's response to this situation I will address each of your points in turn.

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

Mackay Sugar can adequately track personnel on ordinary, long service and maternity leave.

We can also track personnel resigning from the company via a formal exit interview process. Data is collected in a confidential manner on reasons for resignation, enabling us to capture any issues which may arise from maternity leave or the inequitable treatment of our women employees.

Additionally a range of company personnel fulfil a secondary role as Equal Opportunity and Discrimination Contact Officers. These people and their contact details have been made known within the workplace and they are always available for advice or assistance. Their intervention records provide another valuable source of data collection on the equitable treatment of women employees.

Mackay Sugar's remuneration systems are equitable to all employees. Weekly wages employees are respondent to a certified agreement whereby personnel are paid for the position they occupy and the role they perform regardless of gender, with overtime and allowances available in line with work commitments and at the employee's discretion.

Staff employees are recompensed on a salary percentage basis commensurate with market rate, prevailing economic and agreed performance conditions.

Access to the many and varied roles within Mackay Sugar, whether by way of recruitment or for promotion, is via a process of application, selection and interview based upon the principles of

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targeted selection (behavioural selection techniques). Positions are filled by persons considered best able to perform the role.

Results of an advertising campaign for the 2008 seasonal recruitment drive shows that of the 454 applications, 37% were from women. In practice, 32% of appointees were women. We believe this clearly demonstrates Mackay Sugar's equitable treatment of women pursuing employment opportunities with our company.

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

Through Mackay Sugar's bi-annual refresher training for EEO and Discrimination Contact Officers, our sites have adequate access to the latest trends and techniques and this information is in turn disseminated to site managers and selection panels.

The company also enjoys close working relationships with the three unions represented on our work site – the AWU, the AMWU and the ETU.

If at any time the company is challenged on the processes used to make decisions affecting employees, consensus is typically achieved via an 'open-book' approach with union organisers allowing the company to demonstrate how it has met its obligations for procedural fairness and equal opportunity.

Overall we believe that unions and our employees, regardless of gender, race or qualification, are adequately aware of their rights and responsibilities concerning equal opportunity, fair pay and conditions in the workplace.

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

Mackay Sugar negotiates with the three unions mentioned above to arrive at a collective bargaining agreement for the employees. Union organisers lead the employee negotiations and are guided by the presence of Mackay Sugar employee delegates.

The company is about to commence the negotiation process for the next agreement, therefore proactive measures will be taken in order to balance the sensitivity of decisions which may impact disproportionately on women. The company delegates will also promote equity in pay and conditions for women wherever possible during the course of these negotiations.

The adequacy of recent and current arrangements to ensure fair access to training and promotion for women who have undertaken maternity leave and/or returned to work part time and/or sought flexible working hours

Mackay Sugar is a seasonal business which relies heavily upon a seasonal workforce returning year after year. This extends to women returning to the workforce following maternity leave, or those who have been out of the workforce for a protracted period of time.

Job sharing in situations where employees are returning from maternity leave is encouraged where possible in order to ensure that valued personnel and their skills are retained. Indeed, this recently occurred within our laboratory staff, realising a happy compromise for the employees concerned and a highly flexible and efficient result for the company.

The company also offers employment to mothers-to-be. Support in the form of regular health monitoring for these employees is available and their return to work after maternity leave is encouraged, once medical fitness is established. This practice applies to full and part time employees, apprentices and qualified women alike.

In all instances, women are included in needs based training and can also request skills training relative to the application and skills needed to fulfil their role.

Promotion, as indicated above, is handled on the same basis as recruitment, purely targeted selection based. All are free to apply and all are considered on their merits.

The need for further legislative reforms to address pay equity in Australia

It is this company's collective view that the current legislative arrangements are adequate to protect the rights of women regarding pay equity and opportunity in the workplace.

It is considered that a female employee expressing discontent regarding a pay or equity issue, can expect to receive internal support in redressing the situation. This internal support is reinforced by strong relationships with Unions further by publicly available third party support, such ADCQ and others.

Summary comments

- Pay in Mackay Sugar is generally fair and equitable;
- The current Certified Agreement and salary review for staff positions ensures pay equity in line with positions held;
- Promotion opportunities are based upon capability; however the right of challenge does exist;
- Clear position descriptions describe roles and par levels accurately and do not discriminate on the basis of gender;
- Mackay Sugar does not currently have paid maternity leave, but has the capacity to approve up to 12 months leave without pay and does comply with family/carer's leave entitlements;
- Mackay Sugar actively recruits and hires women into the business;
- The three unions support our approach to equal opportunity;
- A shortage of labour in the region has led to an increase in women applying for and accepting roles in Mackay Sugar;
- Women are employed in the following non-traditional areas in Mackay Sugar:
 - Apprentice Fitters and Boilermakers;
 - Carrier Hands;
 - Day Cleaners – (Industrial process cleaners with skid steer loader qualifications);
 - Test and Tag inspectors;
 - Engineers;
 - Engineers' Assistants – (Crane, Rigging and Dogging qualifications);
 - Planners;
 - Procurement officers;
 - Locomotive (Train) Drivers;
 - Forklift Operators;
 - Train Driver's Assistants;
 - Sugar Manufacturing Process Operator Roles.

We trust this information proves helpful to you and remain available for further comment should this be considered necessary.

Yours faithfully



Quinton Hildebrand
Chief Executive Officer