

**Submission Number: 52**  
**Date Received: 28/8/08**

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26 August 2008

The Secretary  
Standing Committee on Employment & Workplace Relations  
House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
E-mail: ewr.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary

**Re: Pay equity and associated issues related to increasing female participation in the workforce**

The terms of reference relating to this submission do not present any issues to Vodafone Australia, however, Vodafone welcomes the opportunity to comment on best practice and future opportunities with government policy.

Vodafone Australia is committed to providing a workplace which pro-actively supports equal opportunity for women. As of July 2008, women represented approximately fifty-five percent (55%) of the permanent workforce, and of these eighteen percent (18%) were working on a part time basis.

Vodafone Australia chooses to reward its employees with market competitive pay practices which are well above minimum legislative requirements, and as such state and federal legislation which underpins employment legislation and remuneration provisions does not directly impact on decision making. All people are treated equally with regard to pay and benefits, with reward opportunities based on skill, knowledge, experience and the size and accountability of the role.

Female employees of Vodafone Australia have confirmed through employee surveys, personal interviews and conversation with their leader that the biggest challenges they face with regard to participation in the workforce on returning from maternity leave are the access and costs associated with childcare.

Vodafone Australia has adopted best practice with regard to maternity leave. Permanent employees are offered three (3) months fully paid maternity leave for each child they have while in employment. They have the flexibility to take this pay over three (3) or six (6) months. Prior to commencing maternity leave, women are provided with a comprehensive toolkit of information and contacts.

On average, at any time Vodafone has approximately five percent (5%) of women on maternity leave, and the return rate is extremely high at ninety-one percent (91%), with sixty-six percent (66%) returning on a part-time basis.

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Vodafone Australia is extremely supportive of encouraging women to return to work at the completion of their maternity leave and pro-actively works with the employee and their manager to facilitate an outcome which works for the company and the individual.

Vodafone provides a flexible workplace where most employees, depending on the nature of their role, have the flexibility to work from home on a regular basis. In addition, there is the ability to have a great deal of flexibility in the time of day worked and the duration of hours worked per day, subject to OH&S requirements.

This level of flexibility is valued by women who are returning from maternity leave, affording them the opportunity to transition from full-time mother to full-time or part-time employee. It also assists in reducing the burden of childcare access and costs.

Vodafone Australia would welcome government policy that continues to increase accessibility to child care facilities and to support the reduction of child care costs, in particular the ability to salary sacrifice child care payments to a registered provider, regardless of the location of the provider, as well as further increasing the child care tax rebate to greater than fifty percent (50%) of out of pocket child care expenses.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Wendy Lenton', with a checkmark at the end.

**Wendy Lenton**  
Director – People & Brand