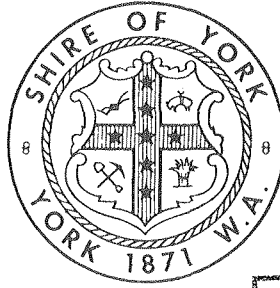


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All communications to be addressed
to the Chief Executive Officer

OUR REF: RH:jt PE.EMP
YOUR REF:

ENQUIRIES: Mr R Hooper

25 July 2008

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

Dear Cheryl

PAY EQUITY AND ASSOCIATED ISSUES TO INCREASING FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Thank you for your invitation of the 15th July, 2008 to have input on the above issues.

Please find set out below comments on specific matters:

1. ***Current structural arrangements in the negotiation of wages that may impact disproportionately in women.***

Comment

It is my opinion that this is primarily constrained by the historical and hierarchical system in place in many workplaces which tends to group numbers of women in particular categories rather than assessing the person or valuing the position individually or specifically.

Many awards and agreements are still based on levels, steps or other control mechanisms of structured progression to specific limits. This methodology does not measure or quantify skills, capacities or capabilities and staff are locked into bands rather than negotiating on value to the organisation.

2. ***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.***

Comment

From my experience in local government over the past 30 years one of the greatest inhibitors are other women in the workplace. Even where an employer is prepared to offer a promotion, flexible working conditions, etc women in the workplace sometimes view this as favouritism or special treatment and workplace conflict arises.

The speed of technological change is also a factor in this area as job requirements can change significantly over a short period and existing staff have outpaced those away from the workplace.

Small employment entities (up to 40 staff) may have no capacity to offer the alternatives of training and part-time/ flexible work hours.

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Secretary: <i>PH</i>

3. **Traditional values**

Comment

Due to the employment demographics in existence there may be need for generational change to cater for the high percentage of the work force who did not have the same opportunities and feel disadvantaged by what is offered and available.

This should be addressed from a whole of workplace perspective of changed and changing conditions of employment and not from a feminist viewpoint which may be counterproductive.

This is evidenced by female staff opposition to paid maternity leave, baby bonus systems and other matters which support emotional responses of envy rather than the benefits and advantages achieved.

There is still a degree of traditional scepticism about the ability of women to do specific jobs and while this is diminishing it still exists and it is difficult to change entrenched perceptions. Positive promotion of achievements by individuals and groups will continue to remove more barriers to equity.

4. **Value of Positions**

Comment

Workplace reform is needed on valuing the position and the person within the workplace to reduce the reliance on gender characterisation as occurs in many assessments.

If the value of the position within the organisation is paramount it will be immaterial who fills it as employment conditions and opportunities would be based on worth and contribution.

There is still a definite perception by some employers that people and particularly females of a certain demographic should not be employed not because they cannot meet job requirements and expectations but because they leave to get married, have a baby, etc.

This is really no different to the inequities of people of certain age groups who are not employed because they have a finite job life.

Education and positive promotion will reduce the level however a full generational change may be the only means of eradicating this type and level of bias.

I trust that this meets your requirements.

Yours faithfully



RAY HOOPER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER