



30 July 2008

The Secretary  
Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations  
House of Representatives  
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Submission No:	11
Date Received:	6/8/08
Secretary:	P

Dear Ms Scariett

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

I write to provide the Committee with some insight on pay equity issues within the Local Government sector in Victoria. The City of Melbourne, and indeed all the Councils in Victoria, are covered either by Federal Awards and Agreements or by WorkChoices Agreements. These awards and agreements provide staff with rates of pay and conditions that compare favourably with other sectors and, in the City of Melbourne's case, we have benchmarked informally our pay rates and conditions with other Councils and believe them to be the best in the Industry.

Our view is that pay and remuneration arrangements for men and women at the City of Melbourne (CoM) are equitable and that our conditions of employment, particularly as they relate to returning mothers, are as flexible as any employer today. For example, the CoM provides:

- 14 weeks paid maternity leave or 28 weeks at 50% pay.
- Executives can spread their 14 week payment over a full year to pay for the use of their fully maintained company vehicle.
- Work Flexibility arrangements allow staff to work from home or change their core working hours as required.
- Part time or job share opportunities for returning mothers are actively sought and encouraged.
- A Keep in Touch program assists mothers and fathers on parental leave to keep up with what changes are occurring in the workplace to assist their reintegration.

In addition, CoM is currently considering some assistance with childcare, whether it be via childcare subsidies or the provision of child care places for staff.

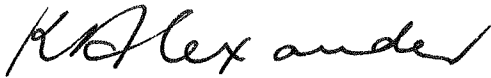
The challenge we see for CoM, and indeed the Local Government sector, is not in relation to pay equity, but how we can ensure a level playing field for women working part time or having just returned from maternity leave when it comes to training, development and promotional opportunities.

The CoM currently has 25% of its executive roles filled by women, yet women represent over 55% of all employees. As we look at the more Senior Branch Manager roles and Director roles, the representation of women becomes thinner and this will be the challenge to assist and encourage women into these leadership roles.

This scenario is not uncommon in the Victorian Local Government Sector. It is an issue that cannot, in my view, be fixed by legislation – it relies on organisations taking on the responsibility for developing women. Given the shortages that currently exist for a number of occupational groups, employers cannot afford not to take on this responsibility, as failure to do so can only lead to staff shortages and ultimately non-competitiveness.

I look forward to your Committee's findings on this topic and thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy Alexander". The signature is written in a cursive style with a checkmark at the end.

**Dr Kathy Alexander**  
Chief Executive Officer

CoM Ref 4769191