

Submission No:	24
Date Received:	14. 8. 08
Secretary:	10



House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations

Inquiry into **Pay equity and associated issues relating to increasing female participation in the workplace**

BACKGROUND

Macquarie Textiles Group Limited was established in 1869. Today, Macquarie Textiles has its manufacturing centre in Albury, NSW with sales and design centres in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, employing some 99 employees in differing roles from manufacturing through design to sales and administration.

Macquarie's activities include:

Design and manufacture wool and wool blend apparel fabrics with particular emphasis on:

- Natural stretch and Lycra stretch,
- Wrinkle resistance,
- Soil release finish, and
- Machine washable / easy care wool fabrics.

Design and manufacture of commercial furnishing fabrics with focus on innovative and technically demanding products:

- New fibres and blends such as wool & bamboo,
- The use of environmentally sustainable materials and processes such as ECO wool,
- External accreditation for products such as the GECA (Good Environmental Choice Australia) Australian ECO label program and CASA (Civil Aviation Safety Authority) manufacturing approval,
- Development of novel and functional finishes such as an antibacterial water-proof finish, and
- 100% polyester healthcare furnishing fabric with antibacterial finish.

All design and production activities now incorporate the Lean Principles of continuous improvement developed through the use of Value Stream Mapping. These have resulted in the ability to address the manufacturing needs of short lead times and small runs that are necessary to compete against the lower priced imported goods on offer.

Macquarie supports the principles of Equal Opportunity and endorses a policy of making decisions based on Business need and ethics without countenance to gender, race, religion or other discriminatory issues. Policies and procedures ensure that the aim of employment is to employ the "best person" for the job.



ADEQUACY OF CURRENT DATA

Current data does not provide adequate definitions of the terms and/or measurements used. Current reported data stereo types classifications without describing the variables that may skew the information.

Published data seems to support responsibility and job description equity, but does not seem to account for any experience factors, market rate variables or skill set differences.

Our experience shows that history has supported a male dominated industry with few females supporting the technical expertise required in advanced positions. Although this is changing within Macquarie with the policy of the best person for the job, it still maintains a discrepancy in females to males at senior positions. Note that Macquarie Textiles is fortunate to have a labour turnover of less than 5%, therefore, the opportunities to test the policy are limited.

Skill set differences within a category, for example, senior executive, can account for discrepancies without reflecting gender bias. CEO salary ranges against other senior roles provides a skewing depending on the gender of the CEO. This does not give a genuine reflection of female discrimination in wages.

EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

Factors that show differences without gender differentials should be included in information. Education and information should be directed to "the best person for the job" without imposing a gender slant.

CURRENT STRUCTURAL ARRANGEMENTS

Percentage increases expand the salary differences where increases are given in percent and differences are viewed in dollar disparities.

EQUAL REMUNERATION PROVISIONS

Current provisions are satisfactory.

FAIR ACCESS TO TRAINING AND PROMOTION

Current arrangements are satisfactory.

FURTHER LEGISLATION

Not required where the emphasis is on the "best person".