



19 August 2008

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

Attention: Ms Cheryl Scarlett – Inquiry Secretary

Dear Ms Scarlett

**Re: Pay Equity and associated issues related to increasing
Female participation in the workforce**

I refer to your letter of 15 July 2008 and your enquiry into pay equity and associated issues related to increasing female participation in the workforce.

The scope of your enquiry appears to be quite wide ranging with references to structural arrangements and provisions at national and/or state levels.

Conditions of employment for the majority of staff at Warringah Council are presently in accordance with a Notional Agreement Preserving a State Award (NAPSA) which includes flexibility in a range of provisions such as carers leave, paid maternity leave, parental leave, supporting parent leave, and work and family responsibilities.

Notwithstanding the above, the responses or suggestions provided below relate to our experiences within the local government industry and the local community. They cover a limited aspect of your enquiry and are put forward as follows:

1. There continues to be a need for education and information among employers, employees and trade unions in relation to pay equity issues. This is particularly important in the emerging climate of labour shortages and the ageing population in the Australian workforce where competition for quality employees as well as demands for more flexibility in working arrangements is increasing.
2. Current structural arrangements in the negotiation of wages, particularly for female dominated occupations / professions (eg: Child Care, Library staff), may impact disproportionately on women in relation to job value and commensurate wages levels. This may require further investigation and education of the various parties.
3. The NAPSA and EEO / anti-discrimination legislation provide for flexibility in a range of working arrangements for women who have taken maternity leave and/or returned to work part-time and/or sought flexible work hours. However, the area of fair access to training is one which could be further investigated throughout the employment sphere. Following a period of time away from

work, it may be appropriate to consider a formal "*re-induction*" process for relevant staff. This could include programmed training activities to revitalise skills and knowledge relevant to job success and reinforcing employee self-confidence, as well as options such as flexibility in how and when training is offered to women, so that family responsibilities are not unduly compromised.

Warringah Council would like to assist you in your enquiry where it is able to do so, and would be interested in your findings at a later time.

Yours sincerely



RIK Hart
General Manager