TOURISM NT
NORTHERN TERRITORY
AUSTRALIA

Submission Number: 25
Date Received: 18/8/08

Northern
Territory
Government

19 August 2008

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

Dear Mr Worthington

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment to the inquiry into pay equity and associated issues related to increasing female participation in the workforce.

I have divided my comments into two areas: firstly those related to the tourism industry in the Northern Territory in general, and; secondly those relating specifically to Tourism NT.

NT Tourism Industry

As the tourism sector comprises employees from various industry sectors, rather than being identified as a discrete industry in its own right, it is difficult to track employment trends. However, using the "accommodation and food services" and "arts and recreation" industries as a loose proxy measures suggests that females employed in the Northern Territory tourism sector on average work less hours per week than men.

Table 1: Key NT Tourism Industry Proxy Measures

Tourism industry (proxy measure)	Males	Females
Count people employed	3,321	4,102
Median hours worked per week	40 hours	35-39 hours

Source: ABS Census 2006.

The tourism industry typically has a largely casual workforce, particularly in the Northern Territory where tourism remains highly seasonal. One consequence is that many individuals in the workforce are not entitled to parental leave or any other provisions. Where operators do employ fulltime staff Tourism NT understands there is no acknowledged difference in pay levels for men or women.

Tourism encompasses a wide variety of occupations. Some, such as a sole guide leading an extended tour, appear to appeal mostly to men and others, such as travel agents or housekeeping staff, have a high proportion of women.

Tourism NT understands that maternity leave provisions in small to medium tourism businesses are generally for six weeks unpaid leave, however many work to arrange flexible working conditions for the first 12 months afterwards. As the Northern Territory is

experiencing skills shortages across most industries, businesses are generally proving flexible as they attempt to retain skilled staff.

There have been unconfirmed suggestions that some major private sector organisations have an internal bias against recruiting younger women as they cannot afford what they see as the inevitable costs of maternity leave. If true, this raises implications which need to be addressed if the Australian Government plans to expand maternity leave obligations on businesses.

As far as Tourism NT is aware, unions are generally not actively encouraged or offered within tourism workplaces unless the employer is a large hospitality organisation.

Tourism NT

Tourism NT has a high proportion of female employees as per table 1. The impact on the organisation of managing the uptake miscellaneous leave entitlements (of which maternity leave is the main component) has increased dramatically over the past three years.

Table 1: Key Employment Statistics

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2004-06	2006-07
Total paid staff	98	128	149	133	133
% female employees	84%	86%	81%	74%	77%
Miscellaneous leave days per person	Na	Na	8.2	13.1	27.8

Note: Miscellaneous leave includes maternity and paternity leave, jury duty and leave without pay.
Source: Tourism NT Annual Report 2006-07.

Tourism NT staff of are employed under the *Northern Territory Tourist Commission Enterprise Agreement 2004* . The Agreement provides a flexible employment framework that underpins commercial business operations and provides the same level of entitlement to all employees. Tourism NT provides a mandatory 14 weeks paid maternity leave entitlement to employees and 1 week paid paternity leave, after 12 months continuous service.

Yours sincerely

MAREE TETLOW
CHIEF EXECUTIVE