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

In November 2006 Tourism Western Australia made a submission to the House of Representatives Employment, Workplace Relations and Workforce Participation Committee on Workforce Challenges in the Australian Tourism Sector. The submission highlighted the importance of the contribution of women in the tourism sector and made several recommendations to increase their participation.

The submission noted the:

- Greater opportunities for women to participate in the labour force over the past two decades and subsequently their increased representation and their participation rate rise.
- Western Australian Government reforms (through the Skills Formation Taskforce) which aimed at encouraging greater participation of women (and other under represented groups such as Indigenous Australians, and the mature-aged) in apprenticeships and traineeships.
- Variety of job types in the tourism industry with considerable flexibility which might attract part time workers.
- Need to diversify to alternative sources of workforce (such as women returning to work) and for recruitment and retention strategies to target such 'new' labour groups.
- The changing demographics of the new labour pools (such as women re-entering the workforce, amongst others) requiring many challenges to be considered, especially in regard to the often scarce resources available in regional and remote areas.
- Feedback from industry suggesting that training delivery needs to be more flexible, such as being based on the needs assessed, as well as providing the option of online delivery. This would support those without the ability to attend a classroom course, such as in the regions and for more specific course requirements that may not be feasible to conduct without a threshold of a minimum number of students.



Specifically, the submission stated that:

More women on average join the WA labour force each year than men. Greater opportunities for women to participate in the labour force (including the availability of child care services, greater educational opportunities and greater flexibility in working arrangements such as part-time and casual employment) has almost doubled the number of women employed in WA since 1984-85. Many women with family responsibilities or as sole parents or furthering education, seek part-time and casual employment. As this type of employment is typically that found in the tourism and hospitality industry, there are considerable opportunities for potential 'fit'. Recognised prior learning (RPL) and short practical training courses could provide a relatively quick transition for many women to participate in tourism and hospitality.

Specific recommendations in the submission, related to women re-entering the workforce, included:

- That the Australian Government support industry initiatives aimed at developing currently underutilised labour markets.
- That customised recruitment strategies be developed and piloted with special focus on the underutilised labour sources.
- That the tourism destination town of Albany be targeted for a special pilot employment project aimed specifically at increasing the employment of women re-entering the workforce.
- In conjunction with other training needs assessments outlined elsewhere in the submission, develop or modify a range of courses suitable for
  - The new labour pools to be targeted for work in the tourism and hospitality industry (women – amongst others)
  - Flexible delivery via online modes to individuals and groups.

Following consideration of all submissions and public consultation undertaken nationally, the Committee's final report contained no specific recommendations on the workforce or training needs of women per se.

It is believed that the matters raised in the submission (identified above) highlight the significant opportunities for the economy from this sector of the community to be recognised and targeted for improved training, employment options and rates of pay, especially in the tourism and hospitality industries.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to this enquiry.

Yours sincerely



RICHARD MUIRHEAD  
Chief Executive Officer

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