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The Secretary
Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations
House of Representatives
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To the Secretary,

In response to your inquiry regarding '*Pay equity and associated issues related to increasing female participation in the workforce*', please find comments and suggestions relating to the issues raised within the review.

The adequacy of current data to reliably monitor employment changes that may impact on pay equity issues;

Information relating to pay equity is made available on websites such as NSW Office of Industrial Relations and EOWA, however data is not readily available to Australian businesses unless they take the initiative to invest time in research and benchmarking. Whilst salary surveys and remuneration forums provide data, it is not usually gender specific, and for smaller organisations, may not be financially viable.

Recommendation: Encourage business to benchmark using pay equity data supplied by the Australian Government, audited through annual EOWA reporting requirements.

The need for education and information among employers, employees and trade unions in relation to pay equity issues;

Pay equity may not be deemed a priority within Australian organisations as there is little education or information provided to employers and employees on this matter. This includes selling the benefits of pay equity and increased female participation to all parties.

Recommendation: A number of issues need to be explored:

1. Resources to report, compare, and analyse organisational pay equity data
2. Privacy of pay data inhibiting employees from understanding their own pay equity
3. Privacy of comparative data in similar industries / businesses
4. Pay equity owners (commonly human resources) may not be required to report on the company's position to the CEO / Board
5. In largely male dominated industries, pay equity may not be deemed a priority given the small number of females
6. Legislative requirements are not reinforced or audited as other legislative requirements such as safety or discrimination may be.



Current structural arrangements in the negotiation of wages that may impact disproportionately on women;

It is common for workplace agreements to be negotiated for production / manufacturing roles. Therefore, negotiations may be focused on the male population where there are few females working in production environments. Often females working within these organisations are employed in administrative, professional and managerial roles. Their pays are therefore offered as individual common law contracts, and negotiations are consequently one on one rather than collective.

Recommendation: Provision of education and tools for women regarding negotiating their own pays, comparative data on pay equity, and potential flexible options. Ideally the government will provide support to women in the area of advocacy.

The adequacy of recent and current equal remuneration provisions in state and federal workplace relations legislation;

Any provision within an Act is only adequate if it is reinforced, potentially as a standard. Whilst employers are aware of the legislation, they may not deem it a priority unless some guidance and literature is provided.

Recommendation: Consider including some wording on pay equity in the Forward with Fairness Standard. This way, the legislation will be included on the Information Sheet provided to all employees, and is effectively reinforced.

The adequacy of current arrangements to ensure fair access to training and promotion for women who have taken maternity leave and / or returned to work part time and / or sought flexible work hours;

The current arrangements rely heavily on the employer agreeing to part time or flexible options with the provisor that operational needs must be met. This means that under any circumstance the employer may reject requests for part time or flexible work. Obviously an employer of choice will opt to provide these opportunities to attract and retain staff, however not all organisations are able or willing to provide fair access. Provision of provisions such as these for women on or returning to maternity leave can often be viewed as discriminatory against the male population. Clearly equal provisions need to be provided.

Recommendation: Include a provision in legislation that all parental leave / part time / flexible work arrangements are to be documented and agreed to by both parties, including options for training, transition back into the workplace, opportunities for promotion, etc.



The need for further legislative reform to address pay equity in Australia;

As previously mentioned, the legislation is adequate but requires reinforcement. Also, the area of pay equity is only one aspect of issues related to increasing female participation in the workforce. Further issues include:

- Heavy restrictions on the introduction of Affirmative Action programs
- Limited information for organisations relating to the benefits of increased female participation
- Limited financial support / tax benefits for introducing family friendly initiatives
- Little or no guidance or legislation at this stage from government on minimum paid maternity leave provisions

Recommendation: That each organisation with over 100 employees develop a diversity plan where they agree to increase female participation through a number of initiatives including maternity leave, flexible working conditions and pay equity. Reporting on the achievements may be provided through EOWA reporting.

Finally, thank you for the opportunity to respond to this inquiry. I would envisage that surveying female employees for their perspectives on this inquiry may also be useful to obtain a universal view.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Knut Austreid".

Knut Austreid
Vice President & Managing Director
Hydro Aluminium Kurri Kurri Pty Ltd