



**The Hon Kate Ellis MP**  
Minister for Employment Participation and Child Care  
Minister for the Status of Women

MN11-000846

The Hon Julia Gillard MP  
Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

You will be aware that the Australian Government is committed to improving economic outcomes for women and their representation in leadership positions. As part of this commitment, we are seeking to improve the gender balance on Australian Government Boards. We announced an election commitment of 40 per cent representation of women on government boards by 2015. This 40:40:20 target has been set at the portfolio level allowing flexibility in the make-up of individual boards.

I am pleased to report that a snapshot across all government boards, as at 30 June 2010, reported 34.5 per cent of all members were women, an increase from the previous year. While this is significantly better than women's representation on boards in the private sector (currently 11.4 per cent), there is need for a greater focus.

Over the last decade, only the portfolios of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and Immigration and Citizenship, have consistently met a 40 per cent target. However, there are signs this is changing. This report shows that in 2009-10, a total of five portfolios met the 40 per cent target.

Each portfolio will need to meet this target over the coming years.

It is clear, however, that more work needs to be done to meet our commitment in most portfolios and that some portfolios have a significant amount of work to do. If we are to change the overall percentage, it is also important that portfolios with relatively large numbers of board positions take into account their extra responsibility to lift our overall target of 40 per cent as quickly as possible.

With ministerial leadership, I am confident that we will be able to meet the Government's commitment in a relatively short period of time.

Electorate Office  
161a Main North Road  
Nailsworth SA 5083  
Telephone: (08) 8269 2433  
Facsimile: (08) 8269 2488

Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Telephone: (02) 6277 7630  
Facsimile: (02) 6273 5188

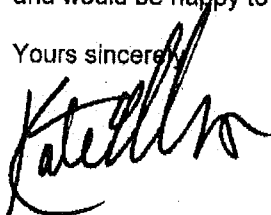
The Office for Women is currently analysing feedback from a survey questionnaire sent to your agency in December 2010. The outcomes, including identifying barriers to meeting the 40 per cent target and highlighting strategies that are making a positive difference, will be collated and input into a strategy paper for consideration by all agencies. By mid-year, I will be seeking advice from you on forward directions to ensure all portfolios can meet and maintain the Government's election commitment of 40 per cent of women on portfolio boards by 2015. I intend to reflect these plans in this year's report on Women in Government Boards to demonstrate this Government's commitment to meeting the target.

A Gender Panel established by the Office for Women is now available to support the development of gender expertise across the Australian Government by providing a range of services to promote the integration of gender equality into policy, programs and research across the whole of government. Your Department may wish to consider using the Panel's expertise to assist in developing strategies to increase gender balance on your portfolio's boards and bodies.

As a result of extensive ongoing liaison with all agencies on verifying data provided last year on gender representation on Boards, I will be now re-releasing the *Women on Australian Government Boards Report 2009-2010* (the 2009-10 Report), a copy of which has been attached for your information.

I would appreciate your assistance in ensuring that your Department is responsive to the need for active and ongoing measures. Your and your Department's attention to, and action towards, this important issue are integral to the success of meeting the target. I look forward to significant progress being made hopefully well before 2015 and would be happy to discuss this matter with you further.

Yours sincerely



**KATE ELLIS MP**

Encl.