



28 August 2008

House Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600
Australia



INQUIRY INTO PAY EQUITY AND ASSOCIATED ISSUES RELATED TO INCREASING FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKFORCE

annecto - the people network is a charity and community association incorporated in Victoria, and aims to increase opportunities and community inclusion for people with a disability. The organisation currently employs over 300 staff, the majority of whom are female.

On behalf of annecto - the people network, I would like to raise the following points, which we believe are relevant to this inquiry.

- *Caring work tends to be seen as female work, or 'women's work'*: Women are generally expected to do the caring and often voluntarily. This situation keeps women out of paid work in many instances and/or reduces their opportunities for better education and skills training, thus reducing access to better paid work opportunities.
- *Low pay for 'women's work'*: Caring work is not well paid compared with many occupations of comparable or less complexity. The predominantly female workforce is paid a pittance to do 'low value' work, caring for aging people and/or people with disabilities. This work is often undertaken in uncontrolled environments, working in people's private homes, and in the community.
- *An aging population* means that there are increasingly less people (mainly women) to provide voluntary care and support to their family members. People are living longer so there will increasingly be more older people and less long term care options available.
- *Contemporary social policies, community expectations and workforce demands* require more qualified and competent people to provide complex in-home and community care, so the value of work, especially what has been seen as 'women's work' requires urgent review in order to attract and retain a suitably qualified and remunerated workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to raise these points regarding work force issues in female participation.

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