

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND**  
**INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO**  
**2010-11 Supplementary Estimates Hearings**

**Outcome Number:** 6

**Question No:** 207

**Topic:** “Making it Fair” Report Recommendations

**Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Cash** asked:

In respect of Recommendation 43: *That the Minister for the Status of Women provide an annual statement to Parliament on Australia’s progress in improving women’s economic and financial independence which includes an analysis of the pay equity situation in Australia.*

- a) Please provide an overview of the progress made in the last 12 months in improving women’s economic and financial independence?
- b) Does the Government agree with the recommendation and if so when does the Minister intend to release this statement.

**Answer:**

This Report and its recommendations are being considered by Government.

The Government has implemented significant initiatives towards improving women’s economic security and financial independence laid the foundations for further reform.

These reforms include:

- Under the Fair Work Act, the Government introduced a set of National Employment Standards from 1 January 2010, including the right for parents to request flexible working arrangements until their child reaches school age or until a child with a disability turns 18. The new Standards also effectively double the amount of unpaid parental leave available to families, providing both parents with separate periods of up to 12 months’ leave, or one parent with the ability to request up to 12 months’ extra unpaid parental leave.
- The Government has introduced reforms to the Sex Discrimination Act to ensure that families have options for sharing caring and paid work responsibilities.
- The Government has provided \$731 million over 5 years for a comprehensive Paid Parental Leave scheme, providing 18 weeks’ leave paid at the federal minimum wage, able to be shared between both parents. This will promote women’s continued engagement in the workforce, which is of vital importance to securing their long term economic outcomes. The scheme applies to births and adoptions after January 2011.
- Women remain disproportionately reliant on Australia’s pension system and it is vital for women’s economic future that pensions deliver an adequate standard of living. The Government has delivered \$14.2 billion for pension reform. Since September 2009 single pensioners on the full rate have received increases of \$115 per fortnight and \$95 per fortnight for pensioner couples (combined).

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- The Office for Women has reviewed the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act and Agency, and the Government has undertaken pre-implementation work towards strengthening the Agencies work in promoting equality in private sector workplaces.