

## Opening Statement

Good Afternoon, I am Mary Wooldridge, Director of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. I am pleased to be able to appear here before the committee for the first time in my role as the Director of WGEA.

To start, I would like to join the Minister and pay tribute to my predecessor Libby Lyons. During her tenure, she significantly raised the profile and impact of the Agency and its work. Gender equality is now a mainstream business issue in this country and Libby played a major role in achieving this.

In terms of the budget - we are very pleased to have received a significant funding boost of \$4.35 million over 4 years and a commitment to review the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* over the course of the year.

This will enable the Agency to strengthen our role in preventing workplace sexual harassment and to further adapt our reporting and data management system for the planned mandated reporting by all Australian Public Service agencies. This funding also satisfies recommendations 42 and 43 of the Respect@Work report.

We last appeared before this Committee in October 2020, and since then we have released our seventh year of gender equality data, our 2019-20 biennial Progress Report and in partnership with the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, the sixth report in the Gender Equity Insights Series.

Our dataset now covers 4.3 million employees from 4943 reporting Companies across Australia.

The results are consistent – there are modest improvements in most indicators.

For the first time since we started collecting data, over 50% of employers now offer paid primary carer's leave to their employees. Women's promotions and appointments to managerial roles continue to rise, access to flexible work has improved and there was another solid increase in employer action on family and domestic violence.

The gender pay gap continues its steady decline, but still sits at 20.1% for total remuneration and pay gaps remain across every industry and occupation. On current trends, the WGEA total remuneration gender pay gap will not close for another 26 years.

Increasing numbers of employers are analysing their gender pay gaps and developing policies and strategies, however we still have too many who stop there and do not actually implement the policies or take other actions to address the identified gaps – this is a significant opportunity for the Agency and we will continue to work closely with employers to close these action gaps.

It is important to note that all our reports published so far do not include the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Agency is currently collecting the data for 2020-21 from reporting organisations through our new reporting system.

The development of this new system has largely progressed well, aside from some of the usual technical glitches, and it went live in April.

We look forward to sharing the findings of our next dataset with you later this year.

Thank you for your time today. I welcome any questions that you might have.