



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the Senate Finance and
Public Administration Legislation Committee Report

*Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Setting Gender
Equality Targets) Bill 2024*

September 2025

Introduction

On 21 November 2024, the Senate referred an inquiry into the Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Setting Gender Equality Targets) Bill 2024 to the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee (the Committee).

The Committee received 31 submissions and a Committee hearing was held on 22 January 2025.

On 30 January 2025, the Committee tabled its report titled *Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Setting Gender Equality Targets) Bill 2024*.

The Government's formal response to the report and recommendation follow below. As part of preparing this response, the Government consulted the Workplace Gender Equality Agency as the agency responsible for administering the legislative framework which the Bill amends.

The Government supports the recommendations made by the Committee and notes the recommendation that the Bill be passed. The Government response also addresses the Coalition's dissenting recommendation.

Government Response to Committee Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Government Response
1.	The committee recommends the Australian Government provide full guidelines on what the Workplace Gender Equality Agency would accept as a 'reasonable excuse' for non-compliance.	The Australian Government agrees to this recommendation. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency's (WGEA) Compliance Strategy, updated in July 2025, assists relevant employers to understand their obligations and responsibilities under the <i>Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012</i> (WGE Act). It also details how WGEA identifies relevant employers that are non-compliant and responds to such non-compliance. The Strategy outlines several examples that WGEA would likely not consider as a reasonable excuse for non-compliance. WGEA relies on the same meaning of the term as in other legislation and at common law, with the test being, 'what an ordinary member of the community would accept as is reasonable in the circumstances.'
2.	The committee recommends the Workplace Gender Equality Agency closely consult unions on the development of guidance materials for reporting entities on target selection and compliance.	The Australian Government agrees to this recommendation. The gender equality targets scheme has been designed in consultation with a range of stakeholders. The Australian Government supports WGEA's continued consultation with relevant stakeholders, including unions, as part of the development of guidance materials for employers on target selection and compliance, where possible.
3.	The committee recommends the Australian Government consider that, should the Bill pass, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency should include in its reporting framework for gender equality reporting, questions on consultation undertaken with employees and workplace delegates.	The Australian Government agrees in principle to this recommendation. The Australian Government supports WGEA's existing efforts to encourage consultation between employers and their employees on issues concerning workplace gender equality. The proposed target for Gender Equality Indicator (GEI) 5 focuses on improving employee consultation. GEI 5 measures when, how and how often employers engage with their employees on issues of workplace gender equality, employers who will be subject to the targets scheme are already required to have a policy or strategy on employee consultation. The Australian Government will consider options to collect employer data on consultations undertaken between employers, their employees and workplace delegates on target selection and other measures to improve gender equality in the workplace. This would involve updating the employer questionnaire and the legislative framework. Any proposed amendments to the employer questionnaire would involve stakeholder consultation and be carefully considered for data value and utility, the established link with workplace gender

		equality outcomes, the reporting burden on employers, as well as privacy and legal considerations.
4.	The committee recommends the Australian Government consider applying Workplace Gender Equality Agency compliance requirements for procurement eligibility for government grants.	The Australian Government agrees to this recommendation. In 2025, through its <i>Building Australia's Future: Labor's Commitment to Women</i>, the Government committed to strengthening compliance with procurement rules which make sure the Government is only working with companies that meet WGEA requirements. The Australian Government is undertaking a review of the Workplace Gender Equality Procurement Principles and will consider this recommendation as part of the review. This work also implements Recommendation 8 of the 2021 Review of the WGE Act.
5.	The committee recommend that the bill be passed.	The Government notes the recommendation that the Bill be passed.

Government Response to Dissenting Recommendation

No.	Recommendation	Government Response
1.	Coalition Recommend the Bill not be passed.	The Government notes this recommendation.