



**Pay equity and associated issues related to increasing female participation in
the workforce**

**Submission of
The Recruitment and Consulting Services Association**

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The Recruitment and Consulting Services Association

The Recruitment and Consulting Services Association Ltd ('RCSA') is the peak body of the employment services industry in Australia and New Zealand.

Formed in 1996 the RCSA boasts a national membership of 3,000, all of which are drawn from a diverse range of organisations and individuals including small owner-operator businesses, listed and non-listed Australian companies and Australia's large multinational corporations.

Members of the RCSA provide an extensive range of employment services including on-hired employee services ('labour hire employees'), contracting services ('including labour hire independent contractors'), recruitment services, *Job Network* services and consulting services.

The RCSA has its Corporate office in Melbourne and two Secretariats located in Victoria, and New South Wales, It has an administration function in all other states and territories and in New Zealand.

The RCSA is instrumental in setting standards in the employment services industry. Such standards are set and maintained in relation to individual and corporate member professional development, education, training, industry compliance, industry performance and the establishment and maintenance of sustainable and effective legislative and regulatory regimes relevant to the industry.

The RCSA Australia/New Zealand boasts a very effective member committee structure that review and contribute to the establishment of professional conduct and equitable outcomes for corporate members, individual members, employees of corporate members (direct and on-hired) and independent contractors.

Committees include the Australia/New Zealand Workplace Relations Committee, Australia/New Zealand Workers Compensation and Occupational Health and Safety Committee, Australia New Zealand Insurance Committee, Australia New Zealand Continuing Professional Education Committee and the Australia New Zealand Taxation Committee. This committee structure, which is supported by State based committees provides the RCSA with an unparalleled capacity to respond to discussions of this nature in a manner that is accurate, effective and insightful.

The RCSA is proud of its dedicated service to, and representation of, on-hired employee service providers in Australia and boasts the greatest understanding of this contemporary form of employment.

Introduction

The Recruitment and Consulting Services Association (RCSA) provides the following information in response to the request from the Employment and Workplace Relations Committee dated 15 July 2008.

Makeup of the Recruitment Workforce

Survey results conducted on behalf of RCSA of its members earlier this year showed a total recruitment workforce made up of 70% or more of women in the 25 to 35 year age group. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to RCSA to identify any potential disadvantages in relation to female participation in the workforce in order to help eliminate these obstacles.

It is possible that the gender pay gap can make women less likely to participate in the workforce. This means that employers are missing out on skills, knowledge and experience in workers. The ageing population in Australia also means that the availability of skilled workers could be a long-term problem for Australian business. Best practice employers in the recruiting industry see addressing any pay equity issues as a key part of any attraction and retention strategy.

Addressing pay equity means that all barriers to workforce participation and career progression for female employees needs to be removed. This could involve:

- undertaking a pay equity audit;
- reviewing human resource policies and practices to ensure that they do not directly or indirectly discriminate against women; and
- ensuring flexible work arrangements at all levels is available.

The level of female participation in the workforce is strongly influenced by the fact that many women have dependent children. The availability of flexible work arrangements would be a key way in which to overcome this and encourage more women to return to work and be involved in the workforce. In turn, this would allow businesses to retain the skills and knowledge of existing employees avoid to costs associated with re-hiring and re-training. Employers who are finding it difficult to find suitable candidates for roles may need to think outside the traditional square and may need to consider advertising part-time work, job share arrangements, working from home arrangements and employment that fits around school holidays and school hours.

Women's participation in the labour force and thus the availability of their skills for employers is affected by a range of factors. Australian employers have the capacity to overcome many of the factors discouraging women's participation.

The level of remuneration in industries that attract female worker such as retail, education and nursing need to be reviewed to encourage greater workforce participation in these sectors. These industries have traditionally been undervalued and therefore underpaid.

A workplace culture that supports and actively values pay equity is one in which all employees, part time or full time, male or female are appropriately rewarded, recognised for their contribution and provided with opportunities for career

progression.

The RCSA is willing to act as ambassadors in the area to assist its members and other employers to put strategies in place to overcome the pay and gender equity challenge.