

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2011-12 Supplementary Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 6

Question No: 158

Topic: Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Cash asked:

EOWA's primary role is to Administer the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999 (the Act).

In respect of its functions, please advise on what EOWA is doing to:

- a) Advise and assists relevant employers in the development and implementation of workplace programs;
- b) Issue guidelines to assist relevant employers to achieve the purposes of the Act;
- c) Monitor the lodging of reports by relevant employers as required by the Act and to review those reports and deal with them in accordance with the Act;
- d) Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of workplace programs in achieving the purposes of the Act;
- e) Undertake research, educational programs and other programs for the purpose of promoting equal opportunity for women in the workplace;
- f) Promote understanding and acceptance, and public discussion, of equal opportunity for women in the workplace;
- g) Review the effectiveness of the Act in achieving its purposes;
- h) Report to the Minister on matters in relation to equal opportunity for women in the workplace?

Answer:

- a) EOWA develops materials and tools across all seven employment matters to assist employers develop and implement workplace programs. As part of the equal opportunity report assessment process, EOWA Client Consultants also provide reporting organisations with industry-specific workplace program assistance. Advice and assistance on workplace programs is provided via EOWA's website, telephone, face-to-face meetings, workshop programs and presentations.

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- b) EOWA has developed a range of guidelines and templates to assist employers with reporting and workplace program development. These include but are not limited to the Compliance Guidelines, Sample Public Report, Public Report Template and Workplace Analysis Toolkit. These educational materials are available on EOWA's website, included in communication emails to reporting organisations, are discussed with clients during telephone conversations and included in workshops.
- c) Each year, EOWA receives equal opportunity reports from organisations due to report in that year under the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999 (EOWW Act). Organisations are sent reminders if reports are not submitted by the due date. As required under the EOWW Act, organisations are given 28 days' notice to submit a report before they are named as non-compliant in EOWA's Annual Report that is tabled in Parliament each year. Each report is reviewed and assessed for compliance with the EOWW Act by one of EOWA's Client Consultants. Organisations whose reports are assessed as non-compliant are contacted to obtain the information necessary for them to reach compliance with the EOWW Act. Any organisation that does not furnish this additional information is followed up on numerous occasions. Should the required information not be forthcoming, that organisation would be named as a non-compliant employer for that reporting year.
- d) Each year, qualitative and quantitative data is captured from employers' equal opportunity reports, EOWA Employer of Choice for Women (EOCFW) applications and EOWA's annual survey of reporting organisations. This research collects data on the provision and prevalence of specific employer initiatives, as well as opinion data on emerging issues for employers in maximising outcomes for both female employees and the business. This enables EOWA to monitor and evaluate workplace programs.
- e) The Agency produces and contributes to a range of research publications, for example the EOWA Census of Women in Leadership; (A)gender in the Boardroom; Industry Verticals; Pay, Power & Position: Beyond the 2008 EOWA Australian Census of Women in Leadership; Doing Things Differently: Case Studies of Work-Life Innovation in Six Australian Workplaces; and EOWA reporting surveys.

Workshops are also offered to educate reporting organisations on the legislative requirements of the Act and on developing leading practice.

On its website, EOWA also provides educational resources such as its pay equity tools, cost-of-turnover calculator, and other employment matter educational materials. EOWA's Business Achievement Awards (BAA) and the EOCFW citation also serve to educate clients by providing templates demonstrating what successful organisations need to do to advance women and remove barriers. Case studies and examples from successful organisations in the BAA and EOCFW programs are used to educate stakeholders via our website, in speeches and workshops.

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- f) EOWA conducts media campaigns to highlight the business benefits of equal opportunity and showcase organisations that are leading the way in this area.

Speeches by EOWA staff and representatives are delivered throughout the year to promote an understanding of equal opportunity issues for women in the workplace.

EOWA also produces a biennial Australian Census of Women in Leadership, partnering with a research organisation and Catalyst. The Census raises awareness of the under-representation of women in board and executive leadership positions for the top 200 organisations listed on the Australian Securities Exchange.

The EOCFW citation and Business Achievement Awards also continually attract attention from the media, business and community. These high profile programs continue to lead public debate on issues for women in Australian workplaces.

- g) Analysing the qualitative and quantitative information provided by reporting organisations as mentioned above enables EOWA to understand changes to, and review the effectiveness of, equal opportunity programs. EOWA has also initiated independent research surveying reporting organisations on its services and the effectiveness of the legislation in achieving equal opportunity in workplaces. This was carried out in 2003 and 2006. In 2009, the government conducted a formal review of the EOWW Act and EOWA. EOWA made a formal written submission to this review.
- h) Each year, EOWA submits its Annual Report to the Minister that includes information on its operations and on matters relating to equal opportunity for women in the workplace.