

MEDIA RELEASE

17 March 2023

Biennial report on workplace gender equality progress

Minister for Women, Senator the Hon. Katy Gallagher, has tabled the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's (WGEA) biennial *Progress Report* in Parliament today.

The Report sets out progress of Australian employers against six key gender equality indicators.

It shows that Australia's world-leading gender equality reporting program has helped achieve significant improvements in gender equality in workplaces since it was first implemented in 2013-14, but that further initiatives are needed for continued momentum.

Since 2013-14, the gender pay gap in Australia has fallen from 28.6% to 22.8% and the proportion of women CEOs has increased 5 percentage points, with over one in five (22.3%) companies reporting they had a female CEO in 2021-2022.

Importantly, nearly 4 in 5 employers (77.7%) now have an overall policy or strategy in place to support gender equality, up 11.5 percentage points from 2013-14.

The Report finds, however, that over the last two years progress is stalling and, for the first time, there was no reduction in the gender pay gap, with it remaining at 22.8%.

It indicates reform is needed to drive further growth.

WGEA Director Mary Wooldridge said while the current Act had enabled development of a world-leading gender equality dataset, the slowing pace of change signals the need for a renewed approach.

"We are at a turning point in our work – and in the state of workplace gender equality in Australia," Ms Wooldridge said.

"This report is a detailed analysis of where we are progressing and where we have more work to do. It serves as an important tool for accountability and shows a need for a renewed approach that will ensure Australia remains a leader in gender equality.

"The past two years have been a time of reflection on what has worked, and strategic thinking about what needs to change to accelerate the rate of improvement."

The Agency's last *Progress Report 2019-20* recommended a detailed review of the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* and its associated Legislative Instruments.

This 2021 Review found change was not happening fast enough. It made 10 recommendations, a number of which will be implemented by the *Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Closing the Gender Pay Gap) Bill 2023* currently before the Parliament.

They include changes that will enable WGEA to publish employer gender pay gaps, by mean, median and employer remuneration quartiles, as well as collecting more detailed information relating to sexual harassment and discrimination, employee data on age and location, and CEO remuneration.

The reforms also set new standards for larger companies to have policies or strategies on all the gender equality indicators and requires employers to present the WGEA summary and benchmarking reports to their Boards.



Another recent reform is the expansion of the Agency's reach with the requirement that Commonwealth public sector employers with 100 or more employees report their workforce data to WGEA in 2023.

Ms Wooldridge said these reforms will help cement Australia's leadership on workplace gender equality.

"Employers play a critical role in achieving gender equality," Ms Wooldridge said.

"International experience shows that publishing employer gender pay gaps leads companies to prioritise gender equality and to a lowering of pay gaps.

"Improved transparency and accountability will also better equip employees, and potential employees, with the information they need to make informed decisions about their own employment and improves their bargaining position.

"We are excited to work with employers to help them address their gender pay gaps and the factors contributing to them and to strengthen transparency and accountability."

The *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 Section 12(2A)* requires WGEA to provide a biennial Progress Report to the Minister, and for the Minister to table it in Parliament.

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About the Agency: *The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) is an Australian Government statutory agency charged with promoting and improving gender equality in Australian workplaces.*

To compare results on the state of workplace gender equality in Australia visit the Data Explorer at www.wgea.gov.au

Key Facts: Biennial *Progress Report for the Workplace Gender Equality Agency*

Analysis of Employer Census reporting data in the *Progress Report 2021-2022* provides a snapshot of progress on key indicators of gender equality in workplaces, and where we still have more work to do, particularly:

- the national gender pay gap based on total remuneration stalled for the first time in 2022 at 22.8%.
- the gender pay gap in two industries, Construction, and Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services has increased since 2013-14.
- a small increase in women's representation on governing bodies, with women making up 31.3% of Board Members and Chairs in 2021-22, up from 28.1% in 2019-20.
- significant increases across the board on all types of flexible work.
- an increase in the proportion of employers conducting a gender pay gap analysis from 46.4% in 2019-20 to 54%, but more than 40% of companies are still failing to take any action as a result.
- a decline in the proportion of employers consulting employees on issues of gender equality from 53.9% in 2020 to 47.8% in 2022.
- nearly 4.5 million employees are now covered by WGEA reporting.

The *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* requires relevant employers with 100 or more employees (relevant employers) to report annually to WGEA against six gender equality indicators (GEIs). They are:

GEI 1 – gender composition of the workforce

GEI 2 – gender composition of governing bodies of relevant employers

GEI 3 – equal remuneration between women and men

GEI 4 – availability and utility of employment terms, conditions and practices relating to flexible working arrangements for employees and to working arrangements supporting employees with family or caring responsibilities

GEI 5 – consultation with employees on issues concerning gender equality in the workplace

GEI 6 – any other matters specified by the Minister – sex-based harassment and discrimination

Gender pay gaps for total remuneration by ANZSIC division, as a percentage of men's earnings

Industry	Reporting Period 2013-14	Reporting Period 2019-20	Reporting Period 2020-21	Reporting Period 2021-22	Change (in pp) Between 2019-20 and 2021-22	Change (in pp) Between 2013-14 and 2021-22
Accommodation and Food Services	19.1	7.4	6.0	6.9	-0.5	-12.2
Financial and Insurance Services	38.8	30.3	29.5	28.6	-1.7	-10.2
Administrative and Support Services	21.0	12.8	15.1	11.8	-1.0	-9.2
Information Media and Telecommunications	27.3	23.4	18.5	20.6	-2.8	-6.7
Public Administration and Safety	10.3	6.0	4.7	3.7	-2.3	-6.6
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	29.8	22.4	24.6	23.5	+1.1	-6.3
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	24.0	22.3	20.5	18.8	-3.5	-5.2
Arts and Recreation Services	18.7	15.0	9.9	13.7	-1.3	-5.0
Manufacturing	17.1	13.8	13.8	12.3	-1.5	-4.8
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	23.3	19.7	16.7	19.3	-0.4	-4.0
Retail Trade	17.2	12.4	12.7	13.3	+0.9	-3.9
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	18.9	13.9	14.0	15.9	+2.0	-3.0
Mining	17.4	13.4	14.3	14.4	+1.0	-3.0
Other Services	20.0	18.8	18.3	18.0	-0.8	-2.0
Wholesale Trade	17.5	16.1	15.0	15.7	-0.4	-1.8
Education and Training	12.2	10.1	10.5	10.5	+0.4	-1.7
Health Care and Social Assistance	13.6	13.9	14.4	13.4	-0.5	-0.2
Construction	28.1	27.5	30.6	29.0	+1.5	+0.9
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	25.6	25.0	21.7	27.6	+2.6	+2.0
Overall	28.6	23.3	22.8	22.8	-0.5	-5.8

Source: WGEA Progress Report 2021-22, p. 21