



YWCA Australia Workplace Gender Equality Act Reporting matters consultation response January 2013

Consultation Process to develop reporting matters under the Workplace Gender Equality Act

Thank you for the opportunity to make this brief response to the above consultation process.

YWCA Australia congratulates the Australian Government for reforming this important area of regulation to bring about lasting change in Australian workplaces. We support the aim of ensuring that the reporting matters are useful for identifying and measuring an organisation's progress towards gender equality, and encourage improvements in gender equality in the workplace.

YWCA Australia

YWCA Australia is the national association of YWCAs in Australia and is part of the World YWCA movement. We are a women-led organisation that achieves positive change by providing advocacy, programs and services for women, families and communities.

YWCAs undertake advocacy and deliver services and programs that develop the leadership and collective power of women and girls, support individuals, their families and communities at critical times, and promote gender equality and community strengthening.

Possible considerations in Issues Paper

Key outcomes

In our view, the key outcomes sufficiently reflect the intent of the Act and do not need to be expanded or amended at this stage.

Other matters

In relation to the other matters in the Issues Paper, YWCA Australia endorses the joint submission of **Women on Boards** and the **National Foundation for Women**, which analyses the Issues Paper in some detail, drawing on the particular expertise of those organisations.

Landmark Gender Audit of Community Sector

We would also like to refer you to a joint report by YWCA Australia, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and Women on Boards called *Reflecting Gender Diversity*.¹ The report details the results of the first ever study of gender diversity in Australia's community welfare sector, showing the participation of women in leadership positions in that sector.

The results showed both good news and bad news, finding that the participation of women on boards and senior management positions in Australia's community welfare sector is higher than in other sectors, but still has some way to go to achieve true gender equality, especially in organisations with larger turnovers.

In a sector where women comprise up to 85% of the workforce, women make up 51.4% of the board directors among organisations who responded to the survey. This compares favourably against the gender composition of both public and the private sector boards. However, women are less likely to be in the formal office bearer positions than men – the percentage never rises above 50%, meaning that over half of all formal positions reported are still held by men (only 44% of boards surveyed had a woman as a President; 37% as a Vice President; 31% as Treasurer; and 35% as Secretary).

It is an even more complicated story when factors such as financial turnover are introduced. Our groundbreaking Gender Disparity Index of Community Sector Boards shows that men are more likely than women to be on the boards of organisations with financial turnovers greater than \$30 million, and women are more likely than men to be on boards of organisations with a financial turnover of less than \$1 million.

In our view, this may be linked to the under-representation of women on public and private sector boards – if women have experience in organisations with smaller financial turnover they may be reluctant to transfer to a board with a higher turnover, more likely in the private and government sector.

Targeted consultations

We would welcome the opportunity to participate in the targeted consultations you will be holding soon.

We are also happy to have our comments on this submission made public.

More information

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¹Available at ywca.org.au/sites/ywca.org.au/files/docs/NFP%20Boards%20and%20Gender%20Diversity%202012%20final.pdf