



Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.

PO Box 224, Enmore NSW 2042

www.afgw.org.au

3 August 2012

Ms Kate Ellis MP
Minister for Employment Participation and Childcare
Parliament House
Canberra 2600

Dear Ms Ellis,

Re: Gender Pay Gap and Imperative Need for Improvements in the Provision of Child Care

I write on behalf of the Australian Federation of Graduate Women (AFGW), an organization which has as one of its Objectives “to improve the status and wellbeing of women and girls”.

AFGW is an affiliate of the International Federation of University Women and voted enthusiastically for the following Resolution passed at the 2010 IFUW Conference:

WORK-LIFE BALANCE FOR WOMEN BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL CAREERS AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

The 30th IFUW Conference resolves that National Federations and Associations (NFAs):

1. urge their governments to ratify ILO Convention 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities (1981);
2. urge their governments and the private sector to introduce more flexible labour market policies and practices to provide better employment opportunities and career development for women;
- 3. urge their governments to provide high quality, affordable state funded nursery and childcare placements to allow women to continue in their professional life after starting a family;**
4. encourage co-operation with other women’s and men’s organizations to promote a more equal society with men taking their equal share of family responsibilities and care;
5. encourage all generations to give each other mutual support; and
6. encourage young women beginning professional careers to make full use of mentors and mutual support networks.

I am sure that you share the disappointment of many Australian women at the contents of the recent EOWA report, *Gender Pay Gap Statistics*. One measure of these statistics shows that not only has the gap not declined in the past year, but that it has actually grown worse (by 1.5 percentage points) over the period of 18 years.

The gender pay gap is a complex issue, but it is in the interests of Australia that it be reduced, not only in order to encourage more women into the workforce (as urged by the Productivity Commission and the Grattan Institute) or to reduce women's dependence on social security payments in old age, but also as a matter of social equity. We note that Australia's international ranking for gender equality has dropped from 17 in 2007 to a current 23.

There are identifiable measures to help to encourage women into the workforce in better-paid, more senior, and fulltime jobs. One of these has already been taken by the current government with the introduction of paid maternity leave, which AFGW strongly supported. It also supports provision of another essential element: accessible, adequate and affordable childcare, including care for out-of-school hours. We agree with the position stated by Anne Summers in her annual Fraser oration (reported in the *Sun Herald*, 29 July) that current childcare is either unavailable, unaffordable or insufficiently flexible to meet the needs of large numbers of women.

It is imperative that the review of childcare recently announced by the Prime Minister result in steps that address urgently all three aspects of availability, affordability and flexibility. We urge you as the responsible Minister to do everything in your power to produce such a result.

Yours sincerely

Dr Jane Baker

President AFGW

Cc Ms. Julie Collins MP

Minister for the Status of Women