

Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry: Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Setting Gender Equality Targets) Bill 2024

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Introduction:

I am submitting this document in response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Setting Gender Equality Targets) Bill 2024. This bill represents a significant step forward in promoting workplace gender equality across Australia. I commend its objectives and offer recommendations to enhance its implementation and effectiveness.

Support for the Bill:

1. Accountability and Progress:

The requirement for large employers to set measurable gender equality targets and report their progress will foster accountability and encourage tangible actions towards workplace diversity.

2. Flexibility for Employers:

Allowing employers to select targets relevant to their operations ensures the framework is adaptable across industries while maintaining a focus on meaningful outcomes.

3. Alignment with Broader Goals:

The bill supports Australia's commitment to gender equality and aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5.

Recommendations:

1. Enhanced Support for Implementation:

To ease the transition, the government should provide resources such as templates, workshops, and tools to help employers set realistic targets and accurately report on progress.

2. Clarification on "Reasonable Excuse":

The bill should define what constitutes an acceptable "reasonable excuse" for non-compliance to ensure fairness and consistency in its enforcement.

3. Streamlined Reporting for Smaller Subsidiaries:

Subsidiaries with 100 or more employees, as included under the revised definitions, may find

compliance challenging. Simplified reporting options should be considered for these smaller entities.

4. Robust Data Privacy Measures:

Reporting on gender equality involves handling sensitive employee data. The bill must include clear guidelines to protect confidentiality and comply with existing privacy laws.

5. Independent Evaluation:

Establishing an independent body to monitor the impact of the legislation would ensure that it achieves its goals without imposing undue burdens on businesses.

Anticipated Challenges:

1. Stakeholder Resistance:

Certain industry groups have expressed concerns about the bill's administrative requirements. Continued dialogue and collaboration with stakeholders will be essential to address these concerns effectively.

2. Setting Realistic Targets:

Employers may initially prioritise easier goals. Providing clear benchmarks and industry-specific examples will help ensure targets are ambitious yet achievable.

Conclusion:

The Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Setting Gender Equality Targets) Bill 2024 represents a bold and necessary step towards achieving gender equity in Australian workplaces. By addressing the outlined recommendations, the bill can enhance its effectiveness and gain broader support from stakeholders.

I welcome the opportunity to contribute further to this inquiry and am available to provide additional input if required.

Greg Peak