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MEDIA RELEASE

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Minimum Standard for Gender Equality

As part of our commitment to gender equality, the Government has today announced a new Minimum Standard for businesses with more than 500 employees and a period of consultation on the additional reporting matters.

Labor passed the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* in December 2012 which contained reporting requirements for businesses with more than 100 employees, as well as the requirement for the Minister to prescribe a new Minimum Standard and for the introduction of additional reporting detail from 1 April 2014.

Minimum standard

To better support gender equality and diversity in the workplace, a new Minimum Standard for workplace gender equality will apply to reporting organisations with more than 500 employees from 1 October 2014.

The Minimum Standard is an additional requirement for large businesses and has been developed following consultation with industry, peak bodies and community groups. The new Minimum Standard announced today will require employers to put in place one or more strategies to:

- Support and improve gender equality in the workplace;
- Advance equal remuneration between male and female employees;
- Implement flexible work arrangements for employees with caring responsibilities; or
- Prevent sex-based harassment and discrimination.

Reporting Requirements

Contrary to recent misleading reports and commentary, the Government is not proposing to change the threshold of the current reporting requirements for companies with more than 100 employees or to abolish gender equality reporting.

The existing reporting requirements in operation today for employers with more than 100 employees remain unchanged.

The additional reporting requirements for businesses which were due to commence on 1 April will be deferred to allow for more consultation.

In line with our commitment to sensible and practical regulation, the Government will continue to work with industry and peak bodies to streamline the reporting detail within the established framework over the next six months to ensure that gender reporting actually drives results in the workplace.

It is welcome that both gender equality advocates and business accept that there is room for improvement in the reporting requirements as currently drafted.

Today's announcement means that the present system and reporting requirements will continue to operate while these consultations are ongoing. The results of these consultations will be announced later this year, to commence at the start of the next reporting period on 1 April 2015.

We want to make sure that we get this right and do not force new, onerous requirements that do not achieve the stated objectives. It is vital that we collect effective data, rather than just more data without consideration of whether it will achieve any real results.

The Government is committed to actively promoting gender equality in the workplace and supporting policies that help women and primary carers back into the workforce.

We are also introducing a genuine paid parental leave scheme and conducting a Productivity Review of the childcare system so we can better meet the childcare needs of families.

The consultation on reporting requirements will be led by the Department of Employment in consultation with the Office for Women within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

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