

MEDIA RELEASE

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eS4W welcomes the leap forward for equal opportunity in the workplace

eS4W welcomes the passing of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Amendment Bill 2012 in the senate last night.

'This Bill represents a leap forward for the equal opportunity for everyone to participate in the workplace' said Kimberly James, Executive Officer, of economic Security4Women (eS4W), a national alliance of women's organisations.

'We believe that these long overdue reforms will lead to a greater commitment from business, both large and small; to ensure that gender equality is central to all aspects of employment.' said Sandra Cook, the Chairperson of eS4W.

'Moreover, the principal objects (of the amendment bill) explicitly family and caring responsibilities as key components of gender equality. We appreciate the inclusion in the definition of employment matters, of flexible working arrangements – so important to many women.'

The change in focus of the Act to include both men and women will promote and improve gender equality in the workplace and in particular acknowledges the barriers to men's shared participation in family and care work.

When this care work is fully valued and recognised, women can participate fully in the workforce while caring responsibilities across Australian society are well met.

eS4W supports the increased focus on smaller businesses; the Agency can now play a key role in assisting these businesses to become equal opportunity workplaces and reduce the gender pay gap – a key ingredient for them attracting and retaining valuable staff.

Kimberly James, a small business owner herself believes that the enhanced functions of the Agency will mean these businesses can benefit from advice and assistance to ensure they can compete with large businesses, for skilled women workers who are looking for flexible working arrangements and pay equity.

eS4W would now like the Agency to be provided with adequate resources and expertise to ensure the implementation of proposed research and programs for the purpose of promoting, monitoring and improving gender equality in the workplace and to reach and influence to the full range of employers, particularly given the scale and nature of micro, small and medium businesses in Australia, their significant role in employing Australian women.

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