

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 28th June 2013

eS4W WELCOMES AMENDMENTS TO FAIR WORK ACT

economic Security4Women (eS4W) welcomes the amendments to the Fair Work Act passed on Thursday 27th June that expand the right to request flexible workplace arrangements.

“Today, many women are juggling paid work with their care responsibilities and this unpaid care work has a direct impact on their economic security. The expansion of the right to request will be of benefit to some of them” said Ms Sandra Cook, chairperson of eS4W and member of Business Professional Women Australia.

Women contribute at least 60 per cent of the estimated 21.4 billion hours of unpaid care work a year. Research¹ undertaken by eS4W found that unpaid care work was equivalent to²:

- 50.6 per cent of Gross Domestic Product
- 11.1 million Full Time Equivalent workers; and
- 1.2 times the total Australian full time employed work force

“The amount of time women spend on unpaid care work has a direct relationship to the economy as a whole and to their low levels of retirement savings; the barriers they face to leadership development and promotion to senior positions and their high representation in casual and insecure work” said Ms Sally Jope, Executive Officer of eS4W. “However the right to request flexible workplace arrangements does assist the combination of paid work and care and when shared between all members of a family it can contribute to an equality of economic outcomes for men and women”.

This right to request has been available to parents returning to work after a period of parental leave and has now been extended to enable greater workforce participation of parents with school-age children; workers with caring responsibilities; mature-age workers; workers with disability; and those suffering family violence and their carers.

“We still need to be sure that all employers reasonably consider all requests for flexible workplace arrangements made to them and do what they can to accommodate them within their business. We would like to see some mechanism to count how many requests are denied and for what reason but are mindful of creating more work for small business owners” said Ms Cook.

eS4W also welcomes the introduction of a long overdue remedy for victims of workplace bullying in line with the recommendations of the House of Representatives workplace bullying inquiry.

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Economic Security4Women is one of the six National Women’s Alliances funded by the Australian Government. It is an alliance of women’s organisations united in the belief that economic wellbeing and financial security are essential for women and will enable women of all ages to have an equal place in society.

¹ <http://www.security4women.org.au/projects/the-australian-care-economy/counting-on-care-work-in-australia>

² In 2010 figures