



# Equal Pay, Equal Opportunity, Equal Rights

## Removing Workplace Barriers for Women

*The Greens' plan for improving the lives of working women*

Australia's working women are facing pressures from every direction. They need real choices, whole of life access to equitable income opportunities and a work-life balance that benefits themselves and their families.

Women in Australia comprise 45.8% of the workforce. They are 70% of all part time employees, 35% of all fulltime employees and more than half of all casuals<sup>1</sup>. It is our society's mothers and daughters who are overwhelmingly the carers of children, aging parents and family members with a disability<sup>2</sup>.

A woman's lifetime of lower pay, less fulltime work and family care means many women are today likely to outlive any superannuation savings they may receive. Increasing numbers face serious financial shortfalls in retirement.

**The Australian Greens recognise the challenges facing today's working women and are committed to supporting them with legislation that will better balance the financial gap that follows women through to their retirement.**

### > Give women more control over their time and work

Increasingly, Australian women are struggling to juggle their work life with their home life and caring responsibilities.

The Australian workforce averages the longest working week in the Western world.<sup>3</sup> While 40% full-time working fathers would prefer to work fewer hours, 20% of women working part-time would prefer to work more hours<sup>4</sup>.

**The Greens' Fair Work Amendment (Better Work/Life Balance) Bill** extended the right to request flexible work arrangements to all employees with 12 months service, long term casuals and employees with caring responsibilities. It also allowed Fair Work Australia to arbitrate and issue orders in disputes with employers. Labor and the Coalition voted together against the bill.

**The Greens will keep working for a fair distribution of working hours where possible, so women and their partners can more**

**equitably distribute and balance their work with their personal lives.**

### > Fairer superannuation for women

Women in Australia retire with just under one-third the superannuation accumulated by male workers<sup>5</sup>. 64% women aged 65-69 have no super, rising to 87% for women aged 70+yrs.<sup>6</sup>

**The Greens believe women should not be penalised for working lives disrupted by caring for children and parents, or by the limitations of part time work.** We want to legislate for superannuation changes that benefit – not disadvantage – women.

**The Greens will work to reform tax and superannuation rules to provide low-income earners and women with a bigger safety net for retirement.** This includes fairer superannuation tax concessions for low income earners who are mostly women.

**Superannuation tax concessions that cost the public purse around \$30 billion pa in 2011/2, are forecast to reach \$45 billion in 2015/16<sup>7</sup>. In 2012-13 the top 5% of earners, who are mostly men, will receive 20.3% of superannuation concessions<sup>8</sup>.**

The Greens:

- Support the low-income superannuation rebate. We need the Greens in the Senate to stop the Coalition removing this low-income superannuation top-up.
- Want to broaden women's eligibility for superannuation payments, including the transitional phase towards retirement.
- Support raising superannuation payments to 12%.
- Want superannuation payments included in paid parental leave.



## > Better paid parental leave

A fair and equitable paid parental leave scheme increases women's lifetime workforce participation, benefits productivity, and provides vitally important time for both parents and babies.<sup>9</sup>

The Greens recognise that paid parental leave should be a workplace right and want the Fair Work Act amended to include **guaranteed paid parental leave** for a minimum of six months, with superannuation entitlements, making it an enforceable workplace entitlement with proper pay.

The Greens' *Fair Work Amendment (Paid Parental Bill) 2010* would guarantee the primary carer with 26 weeks paid leave at the parents' salary to a cap of \$100,000 pa with a safety-net floor of the national minimum wage, including superannuation, which is omitted from the government's current 18 week scheme.

Under The Greens' scheme, partners would also be entitled to paid parental leave at 100% of their salary to a cap of \$100,000 pa. This scheme is more generous than Labor's scheme as well as being fairer and more affordable than the Coalition's scheme.

## > Reinstate a better parenting payment

At the start of this year, over 100,000 sole parents, mostly mothers, were forced onto Newstart payments with a cut of between \$60-\$120 pw income. Being a sole parent is a hard and often thankless job, and the cuts to income support inflicted by Labor and the Coalition were a devastating blow to those parents and their children. Many now live in greater poverty.

The Greens believe the Parenting Payment should reflect the importance of the job sole parents do, instead of punishing them and their children by cutting access to income support.

**Sole parents should receive additional income support by reversing the Parenting Payment cuts and a higher income-free threshold for sole parents. Better job services and an enforceable right for sole parents to ask for flexible working hours should be provided also.**

It is only through more generous and flexible support that sole parents can work to a more secure future for themselves and their children via work or study that is supported by adequate income, flexible working hours and quality childcare.

## > Winning equal pay

Over the past two decades the average gender pay gap has barely changed, and has widened from 15% since 2004<sup>10</sup>. Today, women working fulltime still earn nearly 17.6% less than men working fulltime.<sup>11</sup>

The pay gap of 21% in the private sector is much larger than the public sector, which is 13%. The occupations with the highest pay gap for fulltime workers is in sales (28%) and community and personal services (26.5%), and the "lowest" pay gap is for managers (20.5%) and professionals (21.1%).

A woman with children, on average, will earn around \$1 million less than a man with children in her lifetime.<sup>12</sup> Not only this, but a man with children will earn \$500,000 more than a man without children, but a woman with children will earn \$500,000 less than a woman without children.

In 2011 Fair Work Australia agreed that the undervaluing of social and community services workers, who are mostly professional and semi-professional women<sup>13</sup>, is largely due to gender<sup>14</sup>.

**The Greens are committed to balancing the pay scales for women by working to change the factors that contribute to the inequitable gender pay gap.**

## > More and better childcare

Australian women returning to work or study are struggling to find the quality affordable childcare they need, with years-long waiting lists for places blowing out across the country.

A recent Greens' poll of over 1,000 parents found 67% of parents were struggling to find or keep a childcare place. With 79% having had their ability to work impacted by lack of childcare.

**The Greens' Capital Grants Fund will commit \$200 million over 4 years from 1 July 2014** to build new community or not-for-profit childcare centres, or to improve and expand facilities and services for the highest need types of care.

**The Greens want to:**

- create incentives for workplaces to establish on-site childcare facilities
- increase funding to community-based, affordable childcare alternatives,
- provide publicly funded childcare for low- and middle-income families, where carers are working or studying.

## > Protection against discrimination at work for domestic violence victims

Nearly a third of Australian workers in a 2011 national survey<sup>15</sup> reported they had experienced domestic violence, with one in



five reporting their partner's violence being received at the workplace and impacting on their work lives.

The Greens' amendment to the *Fair Work Amendment (Better Work/Life Balance) Bill 2012* extended the right to request flexible working arrangements to those affected by domestic violence.

The Greens' amendment to the *Fair Work Amendment Bill 2013* inserted discrimination at work on the basis of domestic violence as a distinct and separate form of discrimination.

Both Labor and the Coalition opposed these protections.

**The Greens will continue to work for workplace entitlements that could reduce the impact of domestic violence in the workplace, and for increased protection from employer discrimination to workers experiencing family violence.**

## > Get women on board

A growing body of research is showing a company needs a minimum of 30% female board members to perform optimally, deliver value to shareholders and remunerate senior female employees appropriately.

In Australia's ASX200 company boardrooms there are just 15.8% women, with ¼ of companies having no women on their boards compared to women represented on 39.3% of government boards<sup>16</sup>

**The Greens understand that more women on boards is not just an issue of gender equality, but makes better economic sense. The Greens supported the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace* legislation which sets minimum standards for gender equality indicators employers must work to meet and improve upon. This includes gender composition of their boards, pay equity and flexible work arrangements for both parents so they can better share family caring responsibilities.**

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/factsheets/ssbrochure08/ssbrochure08.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Cameron, *What's choice got to do with it?* 2013. Policy Brief 55. Australia Institute.

<https://www.tai.org.au/index.php?q=node%2F19&pubid=1199&act=display>

<sup>6</sup> ABS.4125.0-Gender Indicators, Australia, Jan 2013.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4125.0main+features1230Jan%202013>

<sup>7</sup> Treasury, Aust Got. Tax Expenditures Statement 2012. (Feb 2013) Table 1.1

[http://www.treasury.gov.au/~media/Treasury/Publications%20and%20Media/Publications/2013/TEs/downloads/PDF/TEs\\_2013\\_Consolidated.ashx](http://www.treasury.gov.au/~media/Treasury/Publications%20and%20Media/Publications/2013/TEs/downloads/PDF/TEs_2013_Consolidated.ashx)

<sup>8</sup> Treasury. Aust Govt. *Distributional analysis of superannuation taxation concessions*. [http://www.treasury.gov.au/Policy-](http://www.treasury.gov.au/Policy-Topics/SuperannuationAndRetirement/Superannuation-Roundtable/Distributional-analysis-of-superannuation-taxation-concessions)

[Topics/SuperannuationAndRetirement/Superannuation-Roundtable/Distributional-analysis-of-superannuation-taxation-concessions](http://www.treasury.gov.au/Policy-Topics/SuperannuationAndRetirement/Superannuation-Roundtable/Distributional-analysis-of-superannuation-taxation-concessions)

<sup>9</sup> Productivity Commission inquiry report, *Paid Parental Leave: Support for Parents with Newborn Children*, No 47. 28/2/2009.

<sup>10</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency. *Gender pay gap statistics*. Feb 2013. Aust Govt. [http://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013-02-](http://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013-02-Gender%20pay%20gap%20statistics.pdf)

[Gender%20pay%20gap%20statistics.pdf](http://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013-02-Gender%20pay%20gap%20statistics.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> WGEA. *Gender workplace statistics at a glance*. Op cit.

<sup>12</sup> National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) Income & Wealth Report. *She works hard for the money*. 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Fair Work Aust Decision. Equal Remuneration Case. 16 May 2011. [Para 238] [http://www.fwc.gov.au/decisionssigned/html/2011fwafb2700.htm#P1384\\_193791](http://www.fwc.gov.au/decisionssigned/html/2011fwafb2700.htm#P1384_193791)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid [para 285]

<sup>15</sup> McFerran. *Safe at home, Safe at Work?* National Domestic Violence and the Workplace Survey (2011). Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse. <http://www.dvandwork.unsw.edu.au/download/file/fid/28>

<sup>16</sup> Boardroom Diversity Index 2013. WomenOnBoards.

<http://www.womenonboards.org.au/pubs/bdi/2013/index.htm>

<sup>1</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), *Gender workplace statistics at a glance*. July 2013. Aust Govt. [http://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013-07-25%20-%20Stats%20at%20a%20Glance\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013-07-25%20-%20Stats%20at%20a%20Glance_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> NCSEM, *Women Carers in Financial Stress Report*. Carers Aust. 2009. [www.carersaustralia.com.au/storage/Women-Carers-Financial-Stress-Oct-2009.pdf](http://www.carersaustralia.com.au/storage/Women-Carers-Financial-Stress-Oct-2009.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Fear & Denniss, *Something for Nothing*, The Australia Institute Policy Brief No.7, 2009. [www.tai.org.au/index.php?q=node%2F19&pubid=702&act=display](http://www.tai.org.au/index.php?q=node%2F19&pubid=702&act=display)

<sup>4</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies. *Work and Family responsibilities through life*. 2008.