



Speech by

KAREN STRUTHERS

MEMBER FOR ARCHERFIELD

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SEX HANDICAP

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (10.24 a.m.): Honourable members should be very disturbed: Australia is facing a sex handicap until the year 2175. "Sex handicap" is the term used to refer to the gender gap that exists between men and women in the work force.

When will women in Australia achieve equality with men in the top levels of the work force? Recently, the Affirmative Action Agency found that the disappointing answer is: not for another 177 years. That is because, last year, women's representation in management in Australia increased by a meagre 0.5%. There has also been little improvement in occupational segregation. Women represent 89.8% of nurses and 97.9% of secretaries, but comprise only 0.01% of the mechanical engineering trade. Working women, including part-time and casual workers, earn 65.3% of male earnings. Queensland women continue to earn less than men.

It is encouraging that our Government Ministers have taken steps to improve the status of women. Minister Judy Spence has some useful programs under way and Minister Matt Foley set the cat among the pigeons with his recent judicial appointments. We now need to see more senior women police, firefighters, ambos, and other senior executives. It is also very encouraging to hear today that the Brisbane Club members are finally acknowledging that women hold CEO positions and run significant businesses. The club is soon to hold an historic vote to accept women as members. I trust that the ayes will have it when that vote is taken this week.
