

**Question on Notice**  
**No. 437**  
**Asked on Tuesday, 13 March 2007**

**MR WEIGHTMAN** ASKED THE MINISTER FOR STATE DEVELOPMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (MR MICKEL)—

QUESTION:

Will he enlighten the constituents of Cleveland of what his department is doing to remedy the apparent pay inequity as it relates to women?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Government is committed to addressing inequities in the pay system. The pursuit of pay equity is important in ensuring the equitable participation of women in the workforce and in encouraging that workforce participation, particularly in the context of national skills and labour shortages, lower population growth and an ageing population.

While gains in the area of pay equity have been made in Queensland since the QIRC's pay equity inquiry in 2000-2001, progress in this area stands to be undermined by the Federal Government's unfair Work Choices amendments to the Workplace Relations Act 1996

The recently released report of the QIRC Inquiry into Work Choices found that the Federal Act weakens the Equal Remuneration Principle (ERP) and will adversely impact on the pursuit of gender pay equity. Furthermore, submissions to the Inquiry highlighted the role the award system had played in supporting the wages and employment conditions of female workers including provisions supporting greater work-life balance and thereby their greater participation in the workforce. The loss of these protections was seen as negatively impacting on the pay and conditions of women workers. The Inquiry noted that under Work Choices the issue of pay equity would require close monitoring.

Currently, Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates suggest that women earn, on average, less than eighty-five per cent of the wages received by men. It is clear that if the gains made by the earlier Queensland Pay Equity Inquiry and initiatives are not to be completely lost, proactive measures are needed now.

I have therefore directed the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, under section 265(3)(b) of the *Industrial Relations Act 1999*, to hold an inquiry into pay equity in Queensland. The QIRC has the expertise and resources to deal with this matter in a timely fashion.

In broad terms, the purpose of the inquiry will be to review the outcomes and impact of the earlier Queensland Pay Equity Inquiry conducted in 2000/01 and to consider alternative means to advance gender pay equity in light of the Federal Government's Work Choices amendments to the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (Work Choices). The inquiry is to provide a final report and recommendation by 28 September 2007.

We are doing what the Howard Government will not, standing up for the rights of Queensland's working women and their families.