

## Preface

# Making the Link 16

***Making the Link: Affirmative Action and Employment Relations No. 16* brings together papers from the 2004 Women, Management and Employment Relations Conference. The back section, or appendices, provides further papers reflecting on current issues in the broad debate on equal employment opportunity.**

Chapter One is presented by Angela Knox and Ed Davis, from the Division of Economic and Financial Studies at Macquarie University. They explore developments over the past 12 months and note both some indications of slow progress towards EEO and evidence of some significant improvements. Overall, the impression is “slow going”.

In Chapter Two, Anne Summers questions whether “Gender is still on the Agenda”. Drawing on themes from her *The End of Equality* (Random House, 2003), she argues that women’s issues have disappeared from political debate. Despite some appearances to the contrary, women have gone backwards. The proportion of women in full-time employment has not increased in 30 years; there has been little reduction in pay inequity and women face a huge disadvantage in superannuation.

Chapter Three features the address by Guy Russo, CEO of McDonalds Australia. He illustrates the lesson learned within this organisation that more needed to be done to identify and remove the barriers facing women at work. An important reflection of progress on this front is that nine of the 21 senior managers are women and five of the nine are in line-management positions.

In Chapter Four, Margy Osmond, CEO of the NSW State Chamber of Commerce, further underlines the message that, “leadership is women’s business”. She reflects on the crucial role played by mentors, who can do so much to assist staff to advance their careers within organisations.

Natasha Stott Despoja is a senator and spokesperson on the status of women for the Australian Democrats. She is a former leader of the party. In Chapter Five she outlines evidence that women remain disadvantaged within the political arena. Women remain poorly represented and reporting of women in politics too often puts them down. Her plea is that women should act more strategically to access power and support each other when they have achieved higher levels of influence. “It is time for a radical shake up in politics and business” (p.20).

Mara Moustafine, national director of Amnesty International Australia, delivered the after-dinner address. Her focus, in Chapter Six, is the extent of violence against women, which she describes as, “a global human rights scandal of unparalleled

dimension” (p.21). She contends that governments must do more to protect women and criminalise rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Chapter Seven is written by David Moore and the material is linked to the presentation at the conference on managing workplace stress. This presentation featured Australian actor Grant Dodwell and several colleagues playing out a workplace-based scenario designed to illustrate various approaches to managing tensions at work. The actors remained in their parts to discuss with conference participants what happened, why and their feelings. It was a most effective way of bringing issues to the surface and encouraging a deeper understanding.

The months leading up to the conference saw a significant national debate about paid maternity leave. Marian Baird, Sydney University, in Chapter Eight, explores the evidence on the extent to which paid maternity leave is available within Australia. She finds that very few enterprise agreements provide for paid maternity leave and this is particularly the case for the private sector. Less than 4 percent of agreements provide for 14 or more weeks on paid maternity leave. She concludes that there is considerable scope to improve maternity leave arrangements.

There are seven appendices. The first, authored by Juliet Bourke and Graeme Russell, presents the results of a survey into care arrangements and workplace implications.

The second, by Jawad Syed and Faiza Ali, examines the plight of ethnic women in the Australian labour market.

The third is a short piece by Susan Ryan looking at the obstacles facing women aspiring to top leadership.

The fourth, by Patricia Todd and Joan Eveline, presents the recommendations of the recent review of pay inequity in Western Australia.

The fifth, by Nicholas Apoifis, looks critically at the Howard government’s policies towards women.

The sixth, by Kerry Tilbrook, compares the effectiveness of affirmative action measures in American and Australian universities.

The final appendix presents recent Australian Bureau of Statistics data on women and work.

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**Ed Davis and Valerie Pratt**

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