

## The cost of being female? 64 extra days at work

By Clare Buttner / Sep 03, 2013



Today is Equal Pay Day. It falls on the September 3 as a symbolic reminder of the additional 64 days from 1 July that the average woman has to work to earn what the average man took home the previous financial year. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) is calling on employers to help close the pay gap.

The Equal Pay Day calculation is based on the current national gender pay gap - 17.5% which equates to the average full-time woman earning \$266.20 less each week than the average full-time working man. For example \$1252.20 a week compared to \$1518.40. The annual difference is \$13,842.40.

WGEA director Helen Conway says the national gender pay gap is a high-level figure that is impacted by industrial segregation and pay inequities at both an organisational and job level.

"People often ask, 'Does this mean employers pay women less than men for doing the exact same job?'" Conway says. "While that may be true in some instances, the issue is more complicated. An organisation may pay women and men doing the same jobs the same amounts, but have an organisation-wide gender pay gap because women are under-represented in management, and over-represented in lower-paid roles".

The uneven spread of women and men across industries also plays a part. "Workers in female-dominated industries tend to receive lower wages than those in male-dominated industries such as mining," Conway says.

Disaggregating the national gender pay gap across industries shows us that the female-dominated health care and social assistance industry has the highest gender pay gap (32.3%, up from 31.3% in May 2012), followed by finance and insurance (31.4% down from 32.7%) and professional, scientific and technical services (30.1% up 3 percentage points from 27.1%).

From next year non-public sector employers with 100 or more staff will be required by legislation to report on remuneration data broken down by gender, the existence of any remuneration policy or strategy, whether such a policy or strategy includes specific gender pay equity objectives whether a gender remuneration gap analysis has been undertaken, and, if so, when it was undertaken, and what actions were taken as a result. This will give employers useful data to assist them identify whether they have a gender pay gap and WGEA will use this data to create educational benchmarks so employers can assess how they compare to their peers and pinpoint areas for improvement.

"If employers are committed to addressing the gender pay gap at an occupational and organisational level, we could expect to see some reduction in the national gender pay gap which would result in greater economic security for women during their working lives and in retirement," Conway says.

"Employers will benefit by attracting and retaining talented staff, reducing their turnover and accessing a larger pool of talent."

### What can employers do?

- **Undertake a payroll analysis** to identify and eliminate any occupational gender pay gap (i.e. between women and men doing the same or similar jobs) and set goals for decreasing any organisational gender pay gap (which may be a result of a lack of women in senior roles). See WGEA's [Payroll Analysis Tool](#) and guidelines.
- **Examine whether HR processes**, including those around recruitment, performance assessment and recognition, lead to unequal outcomes between genders. For example are men more likely to be awarded bonuses or pay increases than women? See [WGEA's Equal remuneration](#) between women and men for advice.
- **Increase the promotion of women to senior roles**. For advice on how to do this see WGEA's target setting tool and guidelines.
- Eliminate gender bias in job evaluation to **ensure that female-dominated roles are rewarded on the same basis as male-dominated roles** requiring similar skills. See [Australian Standard on Gender Inclusive Job Evaluation and Grading](#) and WGEA's [guide to the Standard](#).
- **Provide transparency in relation to wage brackets/salary bands**
- **Create a gender inclusive workplace culture** at all levels of the organisation. WGEA's [employee opinion survey](#) can be used to assess employee perceptions of gender equality within an organisation.
- In male dominated industries, work with industry associations and educational institutions to **source highly-skilled women** and ensure women know the variety of career options that are available to them from an early age. See [Australian Human Rights Commission's Women in Male Dominated Industries Toolkit](#).

- Respond to the growing demand for more flexible work by enabling employees – women and men – to **access flexible working arrangements**. See WGEA's advice on implementing flexible working arrangements to support employees with family or caring responsibilities, creating flexible work by design, and managing pregnancy, potential pregnancy, parental leave and breastfeeding.

Comment: I think an error may have been made in the headline graphic - the 64 days is the difference between an average woman and an average man according to the article, not for the same job as per the headline graphic.