

PUBLIC SECTOR — GENDER PAY GAP

1520. Ms M.M. Quirk to the Minister for Women's Interests:

I refer to the growing trend that the gender pay gap within the Western Australian public sector is increasing and ask:

- (a) why is this occurring;
- (b) what measures are you taking to address the same; and
- (c) what implications does this have for attracting skilled women to the public sector?

Mrs L.M. Harvey replied:

- (a) The pay gap in the public sector has remained largely stable over the past five years. Currently, it is approximately 17 per cent, compared to the overall figure in Western Australia of around 26 per cent.
- (b) The Pay Equity Unit does not fall within my portfolio responsibilities. However, I am advised that the Labour Relations division of the Department of Commerce offers training and assistance to agencies wishing to undertake a pay equity audit to identify gender pay gaps and strategies to address them. In 2012, the Pay Equity Unit provided the Seventh Annual Pay Equity Reports to the 27 largest public sector agencies. These reports provide an overview of the gender pay gap and key gender related statistics for each agency. The release of the reports also coincides with an information seminar on pay equity, what it is and why it is important to the public sector. A range of initiatives to attract and retain skilled workers are led by the Public Sector Commission to ensure a highly skilled workforce through merit-based recruitment processes. Women's Interests, Department of Local Government and Communities, offers a range of tools and resources to increase the representation of women in leadership positions. Women's Interests also produces the Women's Report Card, which measures women's performance across a range of indicators, including the gender pay gap.
- (c) The public sector comprises 71.7 per cent women and 28.3 per cent men. Women make up a significantly higher proportion of the public sector workforce than the total Western Australian workforce. Women have a lower salary profile than men in the public sector, however, the gap is significantly smaller in the public sector than the broader workforce. Transparent pay scales and flexible work arrangements account in part for the attractiveness of the public sector to female workers. The Pay Equity Unit's information seminars on pay equity highlight the importance of flexibility in attracting and retaining women in a tight labour market.