

Educational excellence and Catholic Values

Guidelines

Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace

Printed: 2006

Related Documents:

Maintaining Right Relations

Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace : Public Report/s

Managing Work and Family Responsibilities for schools staff

Managing Work and Family Responsibilities for CEO staff

Stay in Touch Program

Part 4B Discrimination on the ground of a person's responsibilities as a carer and the Family Provisions Test Case

Job Sharing Procedures

Contact:

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Review date:

2009



Catholic Education Office
Diocese of Parramatta

Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace

Policy Statement

The vision statement for Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Parramatta includes as key values “an inviting, inclusive and just culture and a commitment to the ongoing development of staff”. In addition, the Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Parramatta has as one of its goals “to value and encourage every person’s growth and contribution”.¹

The Catholic Education Office is committed to furthering these goals and aspirations through the formal and measurable provision of equal employment opportunities for women employed both in schools and at the Catholic Education Office. This commitment to equal opportunity for women is supported by workplace programs as legislated in the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999* and through the provision of a framework for school and office-based policies and practices specific to local circumstances.

The legislative context

As an employer, the Catholic Education Office is bound by the provisions of the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999*. This legislation promotes the principle that employment for women should be dealt with on the basis of merit and seeks to eliminate discrimination against women in relation to employment matters. It aims to achieve the provision of equal opportunity for women in relation to employment matters and requires workplace consultation between employers and employees on issues concerning equal opportunity for women in the relation to employment.

The Catholic Education Office provides an annual report to the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency, to demonstrate its compliance with the requirements of this legislation.

Workplace programs

In implementing and evaluating its workplace program, the Catholic Education Office will take appropriate action to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in relation to employment matters and will take measures to achieve equal opportunity for women in the relation to employment matters.

In particular, the Catholic Education Office will:

- ◆ regularly evaluate and develop its recruitment and promotion practices to ensure that they are based on principles of merit with reference to job requirements
- ◆ provide professional opportunities to support women in acquiring the appropriate skills for promotion to leadership roles
- ◆ undertake regular monitoring and analysis of information in regard to gender issues in employment to identify and address areas for further attention
- ◆ exercise a leadership role and assist leaders in schools to develop their awareness of equal opportunity issues and implementation of appropriate strategies
- ◆ provide opportunities for consultation with employees and trade union representatives to identify and address issues and concerns

Schools will:

- ◆ evaluate their recruitment and promotion practices for all staff to ensure that they are based on principles of merit with reference to job requirements
- ◆ provide professional opportunities to support women in acquiring the appropriate skills for promotion to leadership roles

¹ Vision Statement, Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Parramatta, approved by Parramatta Diocesan Schools Board December 1999, Printed February 2000

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- ◆ ensure that existing and proposed changes to school organisation and working conditions are evaluated in relation to their impact on staff with family responsibilities
- ◆ conduct sexual harassment training at least every second year
- ◆ provide information to the system on issues and concerns in relation to equal opportunity in the workplace and areas requiring further system initiatives
- ◆ undertake awareness raising activities leading to equal opportunity at the local level

Policy and program implementation

It is the responsibility of the Executive Director of Schools, together with senior personnel at system and school level, to see that this policy and the equal opportunity program for women are fully implemented. The operational responsibility for this area rests with the Department of Human Services through the Division of Employment Relations.

Policy and program evaluation

These will be evaluated every three years through an appropriate consultative process.

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Support document

What does 'equal opportunity' mean?

Equal Opportunity (EO) means that all employees have equal access to the opportunities that are available at work. This means that all employees are treated with fairness and respect in that they are not subject to discrimination or harassment in the workplace. 'Equal opportunity' enables every employee to fully contribute.

Why does the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999* remain relevant?

Our industry has particular characteristics. It has a feminised workforce, while having a non-representative proportion of males in leadership positions. At the same time, males are under-represented in the primary schools. Structures in schools including timetabling and curriculum organisation present challenges for school administrators in regard to providing flexible work practices for those managing family and caring responsibilities.

The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) provides detailed information on the progress of women in the world of work.

Statistics for 2004 show:

- ◇ girls are doing equally well as boys at school- over 50% of HSC leavers are girls
- ◇ 58% of university graduates are female
- ◇ women have access to paid work in all Australian organisations
 - 49% of professionals are women
 - 49% of property investors are women
 - 47% of shareholders are women and
 - 35% of small business owners are women.

However, Australian working women:

- ◇ participate in the most gender-segregated workforce in the world
- ◇ are significantly under-represented in leadership roles across the public, private and political sectors
- ◇ are significantly over-represented in low-paid low status work
- ◇ receive on average 84% of men's full time weekly earnings for doing the same work for a full time week
- ◇ continue to experience discrimination and workplace harassment
- ◇ have the highest part time participation in the industrialized world which in many organizations prevents them getting into more senior positions
- ◇ continue to take the prime responsibility for caring and
- ◇ retire with much less superannuation.

What does the legislation require of the system?

To comply with the Act, our workplace programs need to address seven key employment matters. Each year, as a system we must analyse our workplace profile, identify issues for women, take action to address them, evaluate these actions and report to the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA)*.

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What are the key areas?

The key areas are:

1. recruitment and selection
2. promotion, transfer and termination
3. training and development
4. work organisation
5. conditions of service
6. arrangements for dealing with sex based harassment
7. arrangements for dealing with pregnant and potentially pregnant employees and employees who are breastfeeding

System level workplace programs

In implementing and evaluating its workplace program, the Catholic Education Office takes appropriate action to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in relation to employment matters and takes measures to achieve equal opportunity for women in the relation to employment matters. As part of the system level program, relevant policies, procedures and resources are developed and periodically evaluated. The annual report to the EOWA is used to evaluate the impact of policies, procedures and programs.

How can schools and the Catholic Education Office work units fulfil their obligations?

1. **By evaluating their recruitment and promotion practices for all staff to ensure that they are based on principles of merit with reference to job requirements**

For example:

- collecting information for your school or the Catholic Education Office departments or divisions on the numbers of men and women applying for positions, being short listed, being interviewed, being appointed
- asking staff about their perceptions of equity in your recruitment, selection and appointment processes, including internal vacancies
- periodically revising job descriptions to ensure that they reflect the job requirements and not the particular qualities of the person who had the job previously
- checking that interviews are conducted in accordance with sound principles: asking the same questions, aiming for gender balance on panels, ensuring appropriate briefing of panel in equal opportunity principles, inviting panel members from outside the school to provide a particular perspective or expertise
- encouraging a culture which recognizes the value of different work patterns, for example, where employees may not spend long hours out of class at the school, but they may be meeting their job requirements very well through marking and preparation at home when family responsibilities are met
- monitoring patterns of transfer and promotion for male and female employees
- using exit interviews.

2. **Through providing professional opportunities to support women in acquiring the appropriate skills for promotion to leadership role or higher classification levels.**

For example:

- encouraging women to enrol in system leadership development programs

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- giving women experiences in the widest possible range of skills and experiences
- including a career development component in annual interviews/planning/ appraisal processes
- facilitating access to acting positions
- providing access to developmental experiences such as taskforces, projects or committees at school and system level
- providing mentoring experiences
- ensuring men and women on leave (e.g. LSL, family leave) have information about promotion opportunities and internal vacancies.

3. Through evaluating existing arrangements and proposed changes to school organisation and working conditions to assist employees manage their work and home responsibilities

For example:

- implementing *Managing Work and Home Responsibilities* policy statement
- ensuring consultation and communication occurs about meeting times, changes to starting and finishing times
- providing access to professional development at school level for part-time employees
- maintaining contact with staff on leave, for example, through the *Stay in Touch Program*
- considering timetable needs
- forward planning, communication and consultation with staff
- managing out-of-hours commitments.

4. By communicating about issues and concerns in relation to equal opportunity in the workplace and areas requiring further system initiatives

For example:

- the *CEO/IEU Equal Employment Opportunities for Women in the Workplace Committee* meets quarterly. It includes representation from teachers, support staff, principals, the Independent Education Union, CEO
- an EOWW sharepoint is available on StaffNET
- an annual report is provided to EOWA.

5. By undertaking awareness raising activities leading to equal opportunity at the local level

For example:

- incorporating equal opportunity information and perspectives into routines and procedures such as induction of new and beginning staff at school and Catholic Education Office
- including relevant policies in school staff handbooks and Catholic Education Office procedures manuals
- including information and discussion about relevant policies in the annual planning cycle for staff meetings/ staff development days
- ensure that at the school level and within the Catholic Education Office, relevant system policies, programs and resources are well publicised and easily accessible, for example, *Maintaining Right Relations* policy, *Jobshare Procedures*, leave entitlements
- ensure *Maintaining Right Relations* training is conducted with all staff at least every two years
- ensure that staff know the appropriate school based person and the Catholic Education Office contact for advice and assistance in any matters related to equal opportunity, including harassment.

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Resources

The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA), www.eowa.gov.au is the statutory body whose role is to administer the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act (1999) Commonwealth and, through education, assist organizations to achieve equal opportunity for women. Their website gives access to a wide range of resources.

Their quarterly publication, *Action News*, is available both electronically and in print form.