



19 February 2009

Roundtable to promote part-time work

Minister for Women, Verity Firth will today host a roundtable discussion of business, union, government and industry leaders to look at ways of promoting the quality of part-time work.

Ms Firth said 60% of women returning to the workforce after having a child work in part-time positions.

“Part-time work is an important solution for the many women returning to work after having a child who are seeking to combine family and work responsibilities,” said Ms Firth.

“However part-time work is often associated with more restricted career paths, poorer-quality work opportunities, less secure employment, and limited access to leave and other work-related conditions.

“The roundtable will look at promoting quality part-time work that reflects the training and expertise of workers and provides them with opportunity for career development,” said Ms Firth.

The roundtable has been organised in collaboration with Diversity Council Australia and will include representatives from many of the state’s major corporations including:

- BHP Billiton
- Stockland
- Freehills
- Australian Securities Exchange
- Merrill Lynch
- ING
- Ernst & Young
- Westpac

Other organisations represented include the Productivity Commission, Sydney Chamber of Commerce, Local Government and Shires Association, Spastic Centre of NSW, University of New South Wales and University of Sydney.

“Part-time work has grown from 10% of our total workforce in 1966 to 29% in 2007,” said Ms Firth.

“There are a lot of myths about the value of part-time work, such as that it is too expensive and that part-time workers cannot fill senior and managerial positions.

“But by offering part-time work to valued employees, businesses avoid the high costs of recruitment and retraining. And part-time work can be an attractive incentive for skilled and older workers, especially in businesses unable to provide financial incentives,” said Ms Firth.

A recent study by the Productivity Commission (2008) found that based on ABS data part-time workers receive lower pay per hour than full-time workers. Overall, part-time workers received around 93 per cent of the mean hourly wage of a person who worked full-time in 2006.

Research by Dr Jenny Charmers and Trish Hill in the Australian Bulletin of Labour (Aug 2007) found that women’s earning potential goes backwards, the longer they work part-time.

Women working one year part-time will earn 5% less when they return to full-time work than someone who was worked full time continuously. Working part time for 10 years, will see women earn 26% less than a full-time counterpart.

In 2007 the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission recommended Federal Government action in promoting the development of quality part-time work, in particular through working in consultation with relevant employer and employee organisations to develop industry specific resources.

Media contact: Lisa Bateman 0437 140 029