

WEL submission to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC)
prepared by Suzanne Hammond in co-operation with the National Foundation of
Australian Women (NFAW)

May 2008

Award Modernisation Process in particular dealing with the Aged Care Industry Award.

WEL recognises the importance of the award system in determining women's wages and to assist the Commission in its task set by Minister Gillard in March 2008 to modernise awards, we referred the AIRC to the Aged Care Industry

WEL rejects the proposals made by employer groups to include flexibility clauses to enable an employer and an employee to depart from the award. We point out this would give rise to another form of AWA.

We submit that awards should reflect Australia's responsibility to abide by the ILO Conventions 100 and 111 on anti-discrimination. We suggest the NSW Equal Remuneration Principles and Practice Direction may be useful in these considerations.

WEL submits that women workers in the Aged Care Industry are low paid as a result of gender related undervaluation of their work. Formal qualifications must be supplemented with Work skills which are often unrecognised. The increase in numbers of personal carers in this industry reflect a changed situation but one where there is no career path for these workers. Increasing community expectations means that workers have to deal with changes in demography, in technology, and the law in areas like privacy. Not surprisingly various large surveys report high levels of dissatisfaction with pay levels despite satisfaction with the job itself.

In order to address impending labour shortages, pay must reflect the value of the work, and WEL suggests that a reassessment of work skills would assist in obtaining equal pay for work performed.