

## **Report on the NSW Premier's Council for Women Survey – "A conversation with NSW Women about paid work"**

The NSW Premier's Council for Women (PCW) is an important representative body for women in NSW, and is chaired by the Minister for Women. The PCW advises the NSW Government on issues of concern to women, thereby providing an avenue for women to communicate with government on issues affecting women.

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## 1. Introduction

In late 2009, the Premier's Council for Women (PCW) proposed to the Minister that it should investigate what New South Wales women want and need in relation to paid work. In a first for the Council, it was decided to collect the data for the project primarily from an online survey to be completed by women in NSW. While to some extent this limited the responses to those who were computer literate and who had access to the internet, it did reach those who were work-ready in the twenty-first century when most jobs are advertised online. The survey, entitled, *A conversation with NSW women about paid work*, received over 1,600 responses.

This report summarises the survey data and the key themes and issues that were raised. In response to this analysis, the PCW has prepared a number of ideas, which the NSW Government could consider to better meet the needs and wants of NSW women in relation to paid work.

## 2. Survey Method and Analysis

The survey was launched by the Minister for Women, Ms Jodi McKay at a NSW Peak Women's Organisations meeting on 17 February 2010. The Peak's meeting was chosen as the ideal forum to launch the survey, given the meeting is typically attended by a diverse range of organisations representing women across a number of different areas. The PCW Deputy Chair, Ms Deirdre Mason, asked every participant at the Peak's meeting to promote the survey amongst their respective networks in order to help capture a survey sample as wide ranging as possible.

Following its launch, the survey was made available to NSW women online at the Office for Women's Policy website – <http://www.women.nsw.gov.au>. PCW members distributed the survey among their networks, including posting it in social networking sites.

The survey itself was structured to gather data on general questions such as age, geographical location, caring responsibilities, employment status and cultural background, in addition to responses based on a series of questions that asked respondents to consider their views and experiences in relation to paid work. Detailed results are provided in Part Six – Appendix.

Using the participant responses to the general questions, the first stage of the survey analysis involved sorting the information gathered in the survey by category. This was done so that the concerns of each particular category group in the survey could be easily identified.

Having segregated the survey data into categories, a comprehensive analysis of responses to the survey question *'If you could suggest one thing to the Premier that would make it easier to access and enjoy the job you want, what it would be?'* was undertaken. Priority was given to this question because it allowed survey respondents to broadly express their views in terms of what the NSW Government should be doing regarding women and work.

### 3. Survey Snapshot

Here is a brief summary of the survey's key numbers:

- 1,638 total responses
- 1,542 (94.1%) responses from women currently in the workforce
- 96 (5.9%) responses from women not currently in the workforce
- 51 (3.1%) responses from women currently looking for paid work
- 64 (3.9%) responses from women currently studying in preparation for paid work
- 1,056 (64.5%) responses from women living in Sydney
- 582 (35.5%) responses from women living outside of Sydney
- 55 (3.4%) responses from women who are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin
- 175 (10.9%) responses from women whose first language is not English

Across all category types, when asked the question *'If you could suggest one thing to the Premier that would make it easier to access and enjoy the job you want, what it would be?'* NSW women identified the following issues, in order, as being most important to them when considering paid work:

1. Flexible working arrangements
2. Improved and more reliable public transport
3. Greater availability of affordable child care
4. Provision of paid parental leave that is higher paying and longer in its duration
5. Better access to quality education and training
6. More mentoring and career progression opportunities
7. Better valuing of women's work/higher pay, in particular in the community sector
8. Improved job security
9. Pay equity
10. Supporting return to work for women after maternity leave or other extended absences from the workforce

### 4. What the Women of NSW Suggested to the Premier – by theme

#### *Flexible working arrangements*

"More family-friendly working hours, for both males and females, so that the responsibility for family management does not always need to fall on the mother."

"Family friendly working hours. I'm aware that managerial jobs don't sit well with flexible work arrangements, but in an ideal world I wouldn't have to sacrifice career progression for flexible work arrangements."

"Encourage NSW Departments to offer more job-shares and part time positions at senior levels, and promote acceptance of job-shares and part time work as valid, valuable and as effective as full time work."

#### *Improved and more reliable public transport*

"Improve public transport links from Parramatta to the rest of Sydney. This will broaden employment opportunities for people in Western Sydney."

"Fast, reliable, affordable public transport."

### ***Greater availability of affordable child care***

"Access to affordable out of school hours/vacation child care. Why come back to work to spend your whole wage on child care fees?"

"After school care provided at the school grounds to reduce costs to parents. Suggest coordinated afterschool sport and creative arts program utilising the government facilities. The program would encourage active kids, and make it easier for dual income families to make ends meet. At the moment, I have to miss lunch on Thursdays to get the kids to their after school athletics on time, and they simply cannot do other extra sport as I am at work and cannot take them to the training sessions held at 4pm. This could be part of an extended school program that gives kids access to sports that they would normally be doing anyway, but in a safe kid friendly purpose built facility."

"There is very limited before school care available, I would suggest a push to promote more schools offering this service. It would certainly relieve some of the stress I face everyday. I am however lucky that I have access to after school care at St Therese Mascot until 6pm."

### ***Provision of paid parental leave that is higher paying and longer in its duration***

"An adequate amount of time in a good universal paid parental leave scheme please. Even if it's a federal matter, I think NSW can act now to lead the charge. The Federal Govt's scheme, while okay, could be much much better."

"Paid (or unpaid) leave entitlements for fathers would allow women greater choice in balancing child care and returning to work. A lack of entitlement to parental leave for fathers continues to force the entire responsibility and employment sacrifices of child care solely onto women. Men can, and should take a more active role in child care but are prevented from doing so by having no right to secure employment which includes parental leave. Paid maternity leave is essential, but paid paternity leave is what will truly give women employment choice and economic freedom."

### ***Better access to quality education and training***

"That all employers supply sufficient training and skill development opportunities in order for employees to keep growing and learning. It's important to keep up-to date in an ever-changing industry such as my own (media)."

"Support more women in updating skills especially after their return from maternity leave or after their child is gone to school because I found it that mainly when at home after child bearing and rearing we have virtually need to update skills because of world moving very fast."

"To set up training workshops for women who want to add to their skills or learn new skills to help them obtain new jobs either within their workplace or externally, especially for those women who are returning to the workforce after having children etc."

### ***More mentoring and career progression opportunities***

"Equal pay and equal opportunity to develop into managerial roles. I would also like to see more networking opportunities for young females with older females in order to share skills, tips and contacts."

"Career Counselling Services Centre/s for women returning to work from extended leave from workplaces and for older women who wish to have a career change but need guidance."

"I would love to have a network of women in various paid jobs to use as mentors, especially to discuss issues of job satisfaction, work/life balance etc. If a mentoring program is not practical, some sort of semi-regular forum where women from a variety of backgrounds speak and answer questions about their working lives would be great."

### ***Better valuing of women's work/higher pay, in particular in the community sector***

"I am fortunate to have placed myself in a position where I make a significant contribution to society. This satisfaction with my work, though, is not an excuse to get paid little and struggle to support an equally satisfactory lifestyle outside of work. I couldn't maintain a family lifestyle with children on the money I'm earning. Self employment is an option if it were only money that mattered, however it is isolating, with less potential and contribution for the wider community. Workers who contribute to societal wellbeing within the wider community deserve to be paid accordingly."

"I would also like to see equal pay for community service workers, which is a female dominated sector."

### ***Improved job security***

"More job security, as a single mum in a temporary position I feel that job security would be very beneficial and discourage me from looking for jobs elsewhere. On a more positive note, I really like the ability to purchase extra leave - this works well with school holidays."

"Long term job security is my priority and the key; it will allow me to positively manage all other aspects."

### ***Pay equity***

"Be paid more money for the hours I work, including the overtime hours I work."

"Remove gender inequity in pay for like work; no penalty to be paid by women for being the only ones who can have children."

### ***Supporting return to work for women after maternity leave or other extended absences from the workforce***

"Recognition for my previous (current) excellent performance when I return from having children in the future. I do not want to be disadvantaged if/when I choose to start a family."

"I don't know the answer, but returning part time after maternity leave can be a bit of a shock after working full time prior to having children. Your pay and career has not moved in a year and you feel you are being left behind."

## 5. Responding to the Survey Findings, ideas for the NSW Government to consider

- a) Preparation of a best practice principles document that promotes good quality flexible work for NSW employees in public and private sector jobs. As part of this process the NSW Government might like to consider initiatives being implemented in other state jurisdictions.
- b) NSW Government to consider the recommendations listed in *Making it Fair* – the Commonwealth Parliamentary report on the inquiry into pay equity and associated issues related to increasing female participation in the workforce. Where appropriate, the NSW Government could lobby the Commonwealth to implement key recommendations.
- c) That the NSW Government consider developing a support line to help women re-enter the workforce, either from maternity leave or other extended absences. This could be managed by NSW Industrial Relations or alternatively the NSW Government could lobby the Commonwealth for Fair Work Australia to provide such a service.
- d) NSW Industrial Relations or the NSW Public Sector Workforce conducts a pay equity audit report for the NSW public service.
- e) The NSW Government conducts an audit examining which NSW public schools provide out of ordinary school hours (OOSH) care, who are the service providers, and the quality of service being provided, with a view to addressing possible service supply and service quality issues.
- f) NSW Government to promote examples of child care/OOSH best practice, with the intention that this be replicated by all child care/OOSH providers in NSW.
- g) NSW Government to establish and host a webpage that facilitates matches between prospective women mentees and mentors, for both the private and public sectors.

## 6. Appendix (the statistical information gathered by the survey)

A range of demographic data was collected in the survey. The data has been broken down by age, whether participants have caring responsibilities, women from non-English speaking backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, location and a comparison of the survey's regional breakdowns with ABS regional data.

### **Responses breakdown: If you could suggest one thing to the Premier that would make it easier to access and enjoy the job you want, what would it be?**

*Please note – of the 1,638 survey respondents, 547 women did not write anything in response to this question.*

#### **By age**

- Age 20-24: 66 responses, 4% of total responses. Main concerns: better access to quality education and training; more career progression and mentoring opportunities; and flexible working arrangements.
- Age 25-29: 174 responses, 10.2% of total responses. Main concerns: provision of paid parental leave; better access to quality education and training; more career progression and mentoring opportunities; and flexible working arrangements.
- Age 30-34: 226 responses, 13.8% of total responses. Main concerns: provision of paid parental leave; better access to quality education and training; more career progression and mentoring opportunities; flexible working arrangements; and greater availability of affordable child care.
- Age 35-39: 226 responses, 13.8% of total responses. Main concerns: provision of paid parental leave; flexible working arrangements; and greater availability of affordable child care.
- Age 40-44: 225 responses, 13.7% of total responses. Main concerns: better pay; pay equity; greater availability of affordable child care; and flexible working arrangements.
- Age 45-49: 231 responses, 14.1% of total responses. Main concerns: better pay; pay equity; flexible working arrangements; and address age discrimination issues.
- Age 50-54: 237 responses, 14.5% of total responses. Main concerns: better pay; pay equity; flexible working arrangements; and address age discrimination issues.
- Age 55 plus: 246 responses, 15% of total responses. Main concerns: job security; address age discrimination issues; and flexible working arrangements.

*Please note there were three responses from women under the age of nineteen and four responses where the age was left blank. These were not included in the responses breakdown by age analysis.*

## **Women with children and/or other caring responsibilities:**

Of the 1,638 total responses, 482 (29.4%) women said they had school age children; 220 (13.4%) women said they had children younger than school age; 256 (15.6%) women said they had other care responsibilities, such as elder care; and 857 (52.3%) women said they no caring responsibilities.

### *Key themes for women with caring responsibilities:*

1. Improved access to flexible working arrangements, including greater opportunities to work part time or on a job share basis (in senior positions also, not only in the entry to mid level positions)
2. Provision of a paid parental scheme that is higher paying and longer in its duration
3. Greater availability of affordable child care
4. Better valuing of women's work/higher pay
5. Improved and more reliable public transport

*Please note: survey respondents were asked three questions about child/caring responsibilities. Survey respondents were able to yes to each question, and many women said they have multiple children/caring responsibilities e.g. toddlers, school age children and elder care. Survey respondents who answered no to all three questions were deemed to have no caring responsibilities.*

## **Women whose first language is not English:**

Of the 1,638 total responses, 175 (10.7%) women said English is not their first language.

### *Key themes, in order, for women whose first language is not English:*

1. Improved access to flexible working arrangements, including greater opportunities to work part time or from home
2. Greater availability of affordable child care
3. Improved and more reliable public transport
4. Better access to quality education and training
5. Provision of a paid parental scheme that is higher paying and longer in its duration

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women:**

Of the total 1,638 responses, 55 (3.4%) women said they were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) background. 24 (1.5%) women of ATSI background said they lived in Sydney. 30 (1.8%) women of ATSI background said they lived in regional NSW.

### *Key themes for Sydney ATSI women:*

- Improved and more reliable public transport
- Greater availability of affordable child care
- Better access to quality education and training

### *Key themes for regional ATSI women:*

- Improved access to flexible working arrangements
- Greater availability of affordable child care
- Improved and more reliable public transport

### *Key themes, in order, for all ATSI women:*

1. Better access to quality education and training
2. Improved access to flexible working arrangements
3. Improved and more reliable public transport
4. Better valuing of women's work/higher pay
5. Culturally appropriate workplaces

## By location:

- Greater Sydney: 1,056 responses, 64.5% of total responses. Main concerns: better pay; pay equity; flexible working arrangements; provision of paid parental leave; improved and more reliable public transport; and greater availability of affordable child care.
- Western Sydney: 293 responses, 17.8% of total responses. Main concerns: flexible working arrangements; improved and more reliable public transport; provision of paid parental leave; better valuing of women's work/higher pay; and pay equity.
- Illawarra: 89 responses, 5.4% of total responses. Main concerns: better valuing of women's work/higher pay; pay equity; flexible working arrangements; provision of paid parental leave; improved and more reliable public transport; greater availability of affordable child care; and greater investment in regional NSW to increase job opportunities.
- Central Coast: 37 responses, 2.3% of total responses. Main concerns: greater investment in regional NSW to increase job opportunities; provision of paid parental leave; improved and more reliable public transport; and greater availability of affordable child care.
- The Hunter: 122 responses, 7.5% of total responses. Main concerns: greater investment in regional NSW to increase job opportunities; provision of paid parental leave; improved and more reliable public transport; and greater availability of affordable child care.
- North Coast NSW: 96 responses, 5.9% of total responses. Main concerns: better valuing of women's work/higher pay; pay equity; flexible working arrangements; greater investment in regional NSW to increase job opportunities; and improved and more reliable public transport.
- Central/Far West NSW: 120 responses, 7.3% of total responses. Main concerns: better valuing of women's work/higher pay; pay equity; flexible working arrangements; greater investment in regional NSW to increase job opportunities; and improved and more reliable public transport.
- Capital Region: 101 responses, 6.2% of total responses. Main concerns: better valuing of women's work/higher pay; pay equity; flexible working arrangements; provision of paid parental leave; greater investment in regional NSW to increase job opportunities; and improved and more reliable public transport.
- Combined Non-metropolitan NSW Regions: 565 responses, 34.5% of total responses. Main concerns: better valuing of women's work/higher pay; pay equity; flexible working arrangements; provision of paid parental leave; greater investment in regional NSW to increase job opportunities; and improved and more reliable public transport.

*Key themes, in order, for Sydney metropolitan residents:*

1. Improved access to flexible working arrangements, including greater opportunities to work part time or from home
2. Improved and more reliable public transport
3. Greater availability of affordable child care
4. Provision of a paid parental scheme that is higher paying and longer in its duration
5. More mentoring and career progression opportunities
6. Better access to quality education and training
7. Better valuing of women's work/higher pay, in particular in the community sector
8. Job security
9. Pay Equity
10. Supporting return to work for women after maternity leave or other extended absences from the workforce

*Key themes, in order, for non-metropolitan residents:*

1. Improved access to flexible working arrangements, including greater opportunities to work part time or from home, and more flexibility around start and finish times
2. Regional issues, primarily concerning greater regional investment and the flow on effect this will have for employment/education opportunities and quality of infrastructure
3. Greater availability of affordable child care
4. Provision of a paid parental scheme that is higher paying and longer in its duration
5. Improved and more reliable public transport
6. More mentoring and career progression opportunities
7. Better access to quality education and training
8. Better valuing of women's work/higher pay, in particular in the community sector
9. Pay equity
10. Supporting return to work for women after maternity leave or other extended absences from the workforce

## Regional survey responses compared with ABS population statistics

An interesting feature of the survey is that the breakdown of survey responses by region broadly mirrors the ABS regional breakdowns. However it is important to note that unlike the ABS survey the PCW survey is not a random sample.<sup>1</sup>

### *NSW Women and Work Survey Responses by Region*

<b>Region</b>	<b>Region Responses</b>	<b>Percentage of total responses</b>
Greater Sydney	1,056	64.47%
The Illawarra/Wollongong	89	5.43%
Central Coast	37	2.26%
The Hunter/Newcastle	122	7.45%
North Coast NSW	96	5.86%
Central/Far West NSW	120	7.33%
Capital Region	101	6.17%
Greater Western Sydney	293	17.89%

*Note – percentages based on survey response number of 1,638*

### *ABS Population - NSW State and Regional Indicators December 2009*

<b>Region</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Percentage of total population</b>
Greater Sydney	4,336,374	62.96%
The Illawarra/Wollongong	418,062	6%
Central Coast	306,383	4.45%
The Hunter/Newcastle	624,399	9%
North Coast NSW	532,921	7.74%
Central/Far West NSW	201,805	2.93%
Capital Region	549,135	7.97%
Greater Western Sydney	1,846,236	26.80%

*Note – Percentages based on NSW population of 6,888,014*

<sup>1</sup> The regional boundaries used in the survey also differ to those used by the ABS. In the survey, respondents were asked to provide their postcode. These postcodes were matched against the Australia Post postcode database to determine the region of each respondent. As the Australia Post boundaries differ to the ABS boundaries it was not possible to get a perfect sync between the survey response regions and the ABS regions. The ABS survey is at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/1338.1~Dec+2009~Main+Features~Statistics+News+NSW?OpenDocument/>