



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: 8 MARCH 2020 GENERATION EQUALITY

On International Women's Day, IEU members are called to challenge stereotypes, fight bias, and campaign for Gender Equality.

International Women's Day is time to reflect on progress, to call for change and to celebrate the courage and determination of the women who changed history, and those who will advance gender equality into the future.

However, International Women's Day is not simply an occasion to review how far women have come in their struggle for equality, peace and development. It is also an opportunity to unite, network and mobilise for meaningful change.

Generation Equality is a call to action to join forces across generations, to create a world where every woman has equal opportunities to fulfil their full potential. Equal access to education and income are central to levelling the playing field for women around the world.

An Equal World Is An Enabled World

IEU members can and do make a difference in our world.

With our individual actions and our conversations, we challenge behaviours and mindsets that have a negative impact on women.

With our sense of collective, we negotiate and secure positive industrial provisions which support gender equality and provide for safe workplaces.

With our public actions and rallies we join with other union members to call upon governments to take leadership to bring about positive change on issues such as gender violence

Collectively we take responsibility for change and we make things happen!

And We Need To Continue To Take Action As The System Is Failing Women

There is no doubt that the system is failing women in almost all aspects of their working lives. Gender inequalities are still deeply embedded in every society. Women suffer from lack of access to decent work and face occupational segregation and gender wage gaps.

In many countries, women are denied access to basic education and health care and are victims of violence and discrimination. They are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes.

The most recent Gender Gap Report (2020) highlights it will take 99.5 years to achieve gender parity globally, while the gender gap in economic participation will take 257 years to close. This indicates a glacial slowing down as the 2019 report indicated 202 years to close the economic participation gap.

A total of 153 countries have been measured by the World Economic Forum. Iceland takes the top position for the 11th year running, followed by the Scandinavian countries. The UK and Canada rate 21 and 19 respectively.

For the past decade, it has not been good news for Australia. In 2006, Australia was ranked #15 in the world for gender equality overall. In 2020, Australia is now ranked #44 in the world for gender equality overall. Scoring just above Australia on the gender equality ladder are Jamaica, Bolivia and Lao PDR.

New Zealand occupies #6.

The System Is Failing Australian Women And Girls

There are reasons for Australia's low ranking on the global gender gap. Here are the facts.

- Australian women account for 92% of primary carers for children with disabilities, 70% of primary carers for parents and 52% of primary carers for partners.¹ Such caregiving situations cause financial challenges through the loss of wages from reduced hours, part-time employment, time out of the workforce, family leave or early retirement.
- The national full time gender pay gap is 13.9% and it has remained stuck between 14% and 19% for the past two decades². This means that while women comprise roughly 47.4% of all employees in Australia, women's full time earnings are \$242.90 less per week than men.³
- Women constitute 37.7% of all full-time employees and 68.2% of all part-time employees⁴
- Women, on average, retire with superannuation balances 47% lower than men. Women's poor retirement balance are the result of compounding issues throughout working life and structures of the system.⁵
- 1 in 6 women have experienced violence at some time in their adult life.⁶
- One-third of women (33%) have been sexually harassed since the age of 15, while a quarter of women (25%) aged 15 years and older have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.⁷
- Women remain underrepresented in leadership roles in schools. Despite high proportion of women in education, women hold only 65.5% of primary leadership and 48.2 % of secondary leadership roles.
- Women continued to be outnumbered by men in Parliament. In 2019, 30.5% of Federal parliamentarians in the House of Representatives are women. However for the first time ever, there are equal representation of women to men in the Senate.⁸

Why Is It Taking So Long?

With the plethora of gender equality and inclusion programs and projects across the world, how is it that we are slowing down our progress, when we should be speeding up.

Research shows that the strongest forces behind persistent gender gaps are harmful social norms and stereotypes that limit expectations of what women can or should do. These outdated norms discriminate against women in many situations and are deeply ingrained.

1 Workplace Gender Equality Agency

2 Workplace Gender Equality Agency 2020

3 Workplace Gender Equality Agency, <http://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/stats-at-a-glance.pdf>), February 2018

4 ABS 2020 Labour Force

5 ACTU Living Well After Work; Submission to Retirement Income Review 2020

6 (Australian Bureau of Statistics. Personal Safety Survey 2012)

7 (Australian Bureau of Statistics. Personal Safety Survey 2012)

8 www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library

Since all areas of life relate to gender equality, efforts must be made to cut the roots of gender discrimination wherever they appear.

What Can Be Done Right Now?

A gender equal world will be healthier, wealthier and safer for all. So let's make it happen!

We must **challenge** the formal and informal structures which continue to prohibit gender equity. Equality is not simply a women's issue. It is everyone's issue

We must **challenge** stereotypes and the perception of the "ideal worker" which is held by many employers and governments. Women, who bear the bulk of responsibilities for caring, simply do not fit into these false perceptions of the ideal worker. The gender pay gap would be considerably reduced and could vanish altogether if workplaces did not disproportionately reward individuals who laboured long hours and worked full time employment

We must **challenge** sexist language and behaviour in all contexts as such attitudes only serve to reinforce gender inequality.

We must **campaign** for comprehensive legal and industrial change which protects and enhances the position of women. We need greater access to secure part time flexible work, to paid family and domestic violence leave and to stronger superannuation provisions which recognise the caregivers.

We must **campaign** for effective education of both men and women to raises awareness of the issues affecting women, particularly in regard to sexual harassment and violence.

Discussions In The Workplace

It is important that both women and men do not shy away from discussing gender equality with employers and work colleagues. Sometimes, these discussions may make employers and colleagues uncomfortable as it requires a large shift to the way people are used to thinking.

But we cannot make change, if we do not speak out.

On International Women's Day, IEU Members Asked TO Campaign for Equality

Women issues are Union issues. Collectively we can make change happen. Collectively we can each help to create a gender equal world.

IEU members are encourage to:

- **Hold discussions in schools to educate colleagues on the need for progress.**
- **Attend their Branch activities during the week of 2 March** (*Specifics of IEU activities around the country are located on the relevant IEU websites*).
- **Share your best #EachforEqual photograph with your IEU Branch to show your commitment to gender equality.** Resources are located at <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/SelfieCards>

Together, we can build a gender equal world