

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Mates over Merit: The Women in Media Report**

A blokey culture that rewards 'mates over merit', tolerates sexual harassment and abuse, pays lip service to work-family balance, and perpetuates the gender pay gap has been exposed by a landmark survey of women in the Australian media.

According to the survey by Women In Media, a mentoring, networking and advocacy group supported by the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance:

\*Discrimination remains rife, with policies "on paper, not in practice": Only 11% of respondents rated them "very effective".

\*41% of women said they'd been harassed, bullied or trolled on social media, while engaging with audiences; several were silenced, or changed career.

\*Only 16% of respondents were aware of their employer's strategies to deal with threats.

\*Almost half (48%) said they'd experienced intimidation, abuse or sexual harassment in the workplace.

\*A quarter of the women who'd taken maternity leave said they'd been discriminated against, upon return to work. Some said they'd been put on the 'mummy track'.

\*One in three (34%) said they didn't feel confident to speak up about discrimination.

\*There's evidence of an entrenched gender pay gap (reinforced by research from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency of a 23.3% gap in the sector).

"Progress towards equality for women in media is disappointingly slow," Tracey Spicer, national convenor of Women in Media, said. "While there are more women than ever before working in the industry, they still dominate the lower paid, less powerful positions."

"The media is often called a mirror of society. But it is failing to reflect our diversity."

Katelin McNerney, director of MEAA's Media section, said the union would use these findings to work with media employers to "fully harness the incredible potential of their female workforce".

Strategies include audits and action on the gender pay gap; improved procedures to deal with social media harassment; and anti-discrimination policies to be put into practice.

"Outdated attitudes and ineffective policies are holding women back from making their fullest and most creative contribution to the media landscape, at a time when innovation, diversity and new ways of thinking are desperately needed to help our industry transition and meet the challenges of a new digital era," McNerney said. "While we have secured some improvements, media companies



have been slow to adopt pay transparency, superannuation during parental leave, and dedicated family violence leave.”

*The survey was developed by the national steering committee of Women in Media and researcher Beverley Uther, and conducted by iSentia. It collected data from 1054 Australian journalists between September and December 2015, with 91.8% of the respondents being women.*

*The full survey is available for download at [www.womeninmedia.net](http://www.womeninmedia.net)*

**For more information or comment, contact national convenor of Women in Media, Tracey Spicer, [tracey@spicercommunications.biz](mailto:tracey@spicercommunications.biz) (0411) 281 854 or director of MEAA Media, Katelin McInerney, [katelin.mcinerney@meaa.org](mailto:katelin.mcinerney@meaa.org) (0423) 020 463. Please see quotes from respondents on the following pages. Interviews available, upon request.**

## The Women in Media Report: Quotes from our respondents.

### Social media trolling

*"Definitely - it's had a huge impact including being the cause of changing my career as a journalist."*

Communications Manager, 21-25 years experience

*"Quite constant death and rape threats when working in federal politics and writing a weekly column. It's honestly par for the course for women in federal politics."*

In-house journalist, print, 11-15 years' experience

*"Yes. I block and report more often now, and don't engage in controversial topics."*

Editor/Product, all media, 11-15 years experience

### Discrimination and parental leave

*"The policy is still open to interpretation and bias. My own experience and context comes from having children. My two direct managers/editors do not have children. I've witnessed women returning to work after maternity leave who were 'managed' into accepting lesser roles and told they're more 'family-friendly'. I was also told by my direct manager that having children was not an excuse for not being able to work 10-12 hour days or take on last-minute overtime as she 'managed to keep her legs closed'."*

In-house journalists, print, 16-20 years experience

*"We have few women in management positions and if you have children or work part time there is little opportunity for more senior roles."*

In-house journalist, print, 16-20 years experience

*"As such a 24/7 industry, taking time for yourself or to care for a family etc. can be challenging. It is often looked down on if you're not 'on call' all the time and this can be particularly hard for women who are more commonly in carer roles. Also a youth/singlehood stigma (not exclusive to the media) that without a family etc. to care for you should be more available and on call."*

Communications manager, online, less than five years experience

*"There is nothing about maternity leave mentioned in our contracts, and I know they are not strong believers in flexibility -- therefore having children will prohibit women from being able to keep their jobs, even though they could do it all remotely and at different hours than 9-6."*

In-house journalist, online, 5-10 years experience

## Gender Pay Gap

*"A male colleague I started with as a trainee told me when he hit a six-figure salary. We're just as experienced and capable. I am far from six-figures."*

In-house journalist, print, 11-15 years

*"I recently found out that a staff member who was directly below me in the management line earned exactly 19% more than me. Since I recently applied for maternity leave, this staff member has also been promoted to a senior position that had been promised to me prior to my pregnancy."*

Editor/Producer, print, 5-10 years experience

## Sexual Harassment and Bullying

*"There is a strong 'boys' club' mentality in my workplace, and while not all of the guys perpetuate it the few who do are quite senior and are rarely, if ever, called out over it. On several occasions derogatory language about sexual orientation is used. There is also one colleague who has tried to engage me in conversations about his sex life, despite my clear lack of interest in the topic."*

Technical role, radio, less than five years experience

*"At one \*\*\*\*\* worksite where I was employed as a producer/broadcaster I and other women were abused as 'bitches' etc. Once when I complained I was told to 'let it go' because he was 'a good journalist'. -A \*\*\*\*\* sports reporter made a racist comment about Asians when knowing my partner at the time was Asian, he later called me a 'bitch' in front of his manager - who did nothing."*

In-house journalist, online, more than 25 years' experience

*"After rejecting the unwanted advances of a fellow employee, the employee had a huge tantrum that ground the production to a halt. I was to blame. Also, touching or pinching of arses and boobs is common."*

Designer & graphic artist, print, 5-10 years experience