

Thursday 1 October 2009

WOMEN CELEBRATE 25 YEARS OF SEX DISCRIMINATION ACT

Minister for Women Linda Burney today asked women to do something special to celebrate 25 years since the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 came into effect.

Ms Burney said that to mark the anniversary, the Sex Discrimination Act Conference was being held in Canberra on 1 and 2 October.

“Women have come a long way since the inception of the Sex Discrimination Act, which helped pave the way for women to progress in education, the workforce, politics and other areas of society,” Ms Burney said.

“It may be hard to believe but there was a time when job advertisements would have different wage rates for men and women. Same job, different wage.

“This anniversary gives us all the chance to consider where we are today and compare it to how different things were 25 years ago before the legislation came in.

“Today, more than 50 per cent of students in higher education are women.

“We now make up 45 per cent of the labour force and, as at June 2009, 24 per cent of judges and 38 per cent of magistrates are women.

“The role of women in the workplace is crucial to the productivity our nation generates.

“While women have made great leaps in achieving equality, there is still some way to go.

“There are not enough women in politics, in the higher management levels of corporations or on boards of directors, and we still face discrimination in the workplace and society to some extent, despite the fact that Governments have legislated to make discrimination illegal.

“For real equality to happen, women need the opportunities so that we can show what we are capable of. Women also need the confidence to take on difficult challenges and pursue positions of power and influence.”

Ms Burney said the NSW Government is strongly committed to eliminating sex discrimination and promoting gender equality in all aspects of work and social life.

“This Government has shown leadership in supporting women to overcome barriers through comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation,” she said.

“Our *Making the Public Sector Work Better For Women Strategy* aims to improve women’s recruitment, development and retention in the sector.

“Already, the number of women newly appointed to NSW Government boards and committees increased from 19 per cent in 1995 to 41 per cent in June 2009.”

Media contact: Anh Dang 9228 4455 / 0427 783 208