



PRIME MINISTER

6 May 1974

RATIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANISATION CONVENTION ON EQUAL PAY

The Australian Government in its submission in the 1974 National Wage Case argued for an extension of the minimum wage to adult females. As a result of the successful outcome of this submission and of the submissions of the Women's Electoral Lobby, the Union of Australian Women and the National Council of Women of Australia, the Australian Government has now fulfilled its obligations under the I.L.O. Equal Remuneration Convention of 1951. Before Australia ratifies the Convention, however, the defaulting States have to agree to ratification.

The Prime Minister has sent telegrams to the Premiers of New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia urging that their governments take the necessary action to enable Australia to ratify the Convention as soon as possible. The governments of Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania have already done this.

The Australian Government attaches the utmost importance to ratifying this Convention. In June 1901 the federal Parliamentary Labor Party resolved to "support the equal payment of females with males when work of a similar character was performed and the hours of work were the same."

Immediately upon taking office the Whitlam Government successfully applied to re-open the 1972 National Wage Case in support of this principle. Women employed in the Australian Public Service were granted equal pay without a phasing-in period.

The Prime Minister said today that for their 21 years of office, after the Convention was adopted, Liberal and Country Party governments had failed to press for the ratification of this important Convention. Nowhere in the latest Liberal/Country Party policy for women is this principle supported and at no time have the leaders of those parties stated their intention to ratify this Convention. Worse still, last December, Mr. Snedden publicly stated that he did not think that women would be advantaged by passing legislation guaranteeing them equal pay, for this would affect their job opportunities.

The Prime Minister today reiterated the reply he then gave to Mr. Snedden. He said that he wanted to make it quite clear that he did not accept that women should only get jobs if they do them more cheaply: if they are doing the same job they should be paid the same money.

The Equal Pay Convention is the only I.L.O. human rights convention which the Australian Government has not yet ratified. The Whitlam Government has ratified all the remaining ones. Ratification of this Convention will clearly indicate the significance which Australia attaches to removing all forms of discrimination against women in our society. The Government's industrial policy places human rights and values first. It decrees that a proper share in the nation's productivity is the right of all persons - male and female - who are ready, willing and able to work.

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