



**Australian
Human Rights
Commission**

everyone, everywhere, everyday

Friday, 28 August 2009

Statement from the Sex Discrimination Commissioner

Women applaud Indigenous Australia

"Yesterday was an historic event for all women everywhere," was the response from Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, to the release of the Report (Our future in our hands) about a new National Representative Body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Report proposes that gender equality is mandated at all levels of governance for Australia's new national voice for Indigenous peoples - a national first.

Commissioner Broderick said: "The proposed National Representative Body sets a new benchmark for any public organisation in this country. With Australia's poor record on supporting women into leadership particularly in the private sector, I am delighted that our country's First Peoples are setting the pace - and challenging the rest of us."

Megan Davis, Director of the Indigenous Law Centre at the University of New South Wales and an Aboriginal woman from South East Queensland agreed. "This is a major step forward for our people in ensuring that women and men will share equally in developing our national vision for Indigenous policy in Australia. A strong national organisation is vital to tackling Indigenous disadvantage and the proposed National Representative Body will ensure that Indigenous women are at the table."

Bronwyn Penrith, Chair of Mudgin-Gal Aboriginal Corporation in Redfern, New South Wales, was also fully supportive of the gender equality framework. "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are often the backbone of our communities and head many of our families. It is very important that our women are at the highest levels of governance, both in Indigenous Australia and elsewhere."

Leading Australian feminist, Anne Summers, welcomed the example set by the new body. "Most Australian public and private institutions are still run exclusively by men so it is heartening to see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders showing a different and better way. All Australians will benefit from women participating equally in decision-making in all our important bodies."

"I hope that non-Indigenous Australia will follow the example set by this new body and greatly increase the numbers of women in decision-making positions in our leading private and public organisations."

The *Diversity on Boards of Directors* Report found a decline in the number of female directors of ASX top 200 companies from 8.7 percent in 2006 to 8.3 percent in 2008, and senior line management roles held by women from 7.4 percent in 2006 to only 5.9 percent today.

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