

Statement

Overcoming barriers to employment for 'disadvantaged jobseekers'

4 September 2019

Policy makers, employment networks, employers and training providers can do more to help disadvantaged jobseekers gain viable employment and achieve financial security.

That's the view of Stella Avramopoulos, the CEO of Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand.

"We welcome the Victorian Parliament's inquiry into sustainable employment for disadvantaged jobseekers," Ms Avramopoulos said.

"In our submission we are very clear disadvantaged jobseekers should be better supported to gain sustainable employment."

A person's gender, ethnicity and caring responsibilities can affect their job prospects with impacts on their economic wellbeing that can last a lifetime.

"For many women, experiences of poor health, past or current experiences of violence and intensive caring duties mean that getting and keeping a job is unrealistic," Ms Avramopoulos said.

Women account for 47 per cent of employed people in Victoria yet they continue to be disadvantaged in the types and nature of the work they do. The growth of the on-demand economy has had a significant impact on women, who often need to fit employment around unpaid work.

The trend to hire employees on a contract basis, which strips away many basic worker protections, can lead to instances of exploitative employment practices.

"Integrated and tailored supports need to be developed to address this inequity. These include leave entitlements, flexibility in working arrangements that meet employees' needs and affordable quality childcare.

“Person-centred education and employment placements, links to community networks and financial incentives paid to women for becoming job-ready are approaches that have been successful in Australia and overseas.”

Increasing women’s workforce participation would bring significant social and economic benefits.

According to the Grattan Institute, removing disincentives for women to participate in employment would increase the size of the Australian economy by about \$25 billion per year. Policies that encourage men to do more unpaid care work can also support better employment outcomes for women.

“This is an area where the Victorian Government, as an employer of 9 per cent of Victoria’s workforce, can show some leadership,” Ms Avramopoulos said.

“It can also play a critical role in mitigating the effects of the Federal Government’s punitive compliance requirements for recipients of income support. We see the harm this policy causes for our financial counselling clients every day and it’s time for this to change.”

ENDS.

