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Pay gaps persist still, Media and ads must change, Equality calls.

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WGEA's latest gender pay gap data highlights persistent disparities in media and advertising sectors

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) has released the 2023-24 gender pay gap figures for private sector employers with 100 or more employees. The data reveals notable disparities in pay across various sectors, with particular emphasis on the advertising and media industries.

The latest data on employer gender pay gaps in Australia, reveals that 56 per cent of employers have improved their gender pay gap in the past 12 months. Despite this progress, 79 per cent of employers still have a gender pay gap outside the target range of +/- 5%. Only 21 per cent of Australian employers have an average gender pay gap within the target range of -5 to +5 per cent.

The data encompasses over 5.3 million Australians, covering results for 7,800 individual employers and 1,700 corporate groups. This marks the second publication of employer gender pay gaps by WGEA, offering more detailed insights into workplace gender equality. For the first time, Australians can access both group and individual employer's gender pay gap data.

WGEA's findings indicate that 72% of all employers have a gender pay gap favouring men, with high-paying employers more likely to exhibit larger gaps. The agency has published both average and median gender pay gaps, providing insights into the drivers of these disparities. Only 15% of employers fall within the target range of +/- 5% for both average and median gender pay gaps.

The responses are ramping up and will likely dominate a lot of the industry conversations this week.

For instance, Sydney-based startup EvenBetter.ai has introduced an AI-driven platform that it says is designed to address gender pay gaps in the workplace. The platform aims to provide data-driven insights and tailored strategies, moving beyond traditional gender pay gap reporting methods.

EvenBetter.ai was co-founded by media and technology veterans Sorrel Kesby and Ayal Steiner and their platform has already attracted major customers, including Knight Frank and Fuji Australia. The pair say the technology is designed to organise and standardise raw pay data, utilising proprietary market benchmarks for high-precision analysis.

Meanwhile, TrinityP3, a marketing management and pitch consultancy, has highlighted the ongoing gender pay gap within advertising agencies and media owners. The consultancy points to significant pay gaps, with figures reaching over 20 per cent in some major Australian media companies. Multinational advertising holding groups report gaps ranging from 10 per cent to 27 per cent. These figures are set against a national average gender pay gap of 21.8 per cent across all industries.

Despite some high-profile media and advertising businesses reporting figures below the national average, TrinityP3 indicates that substantial work remains necessary to close the gap. The consultancy has analysed submissions from over 30 media and advertising employers, presenting their findings in interactive charts.

Companies such as Domain, Nine, and REA have published their own pay gap reports, providing additional context to the WGEA figures. Lydia Feely, General Manager of TrinityP3, remarked, "This is the second year where we have seen the WGEA pay gap numbers come out and clearly there are businesses who have spent the past 12 months working on addressing issues in their businesses around the gender pay gap."

Feely further stated, "That being said, the numbers put the problem front and centre. What is clear is that many adland and media businesses have a significant difference in how they pay their staff, based on gender, and we need to do more to close the ongoing pay gap."

TrinityP3 advocates for companies to benchmark and track their performance to improve gender pay gap outcomes. Feely noted, "We know that companies who benchmark and track their performance do better in areas such as the gender pay gap."

The consultancy has also campaigned for workplace safety and fairness, urging agencies to sign declarations on harassment policies. Feely commented on the transparency efforts by some companies, "It's good to see some companies, such as real estate classifieds Domain and REA, as well as News Corp, Nine, IPG Mediabrands, and Howatson + Co, publishing additional statements and giving context around their pay gap results."

Darren Woolley, CEO of TrinityP3, emphasised the need for continuous efforts from all levels of an organisation to address the gender pay gap. "If the industry is committed to being fair and inclusive, then closing the ongoing gender pay gap should be a high priority year round—not just the day the WGEA report lands. For real change to occur this needs to be an ongoing effort by everyone from the board, C-Suite and shareholders down," Woolley stated.

The WGEA figures and TrinityP3's analysis underscore the persistent challenges in achieving gender pay equality within the media and advertising sectors. As companies continue to publish their pay gap reports, the focus remains on driving change through transparency and accountability.

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