



Gender out of balance

MORE than 90 per cent of Australian women believe that they do not enjoy equal rights according to the results of a new study conducted by leading cosmetic company the Heat Group and UNIFEM Australia, the United Nations Development Fund for women.

The Poll also revealed 41 per cent of women flagged domestic commitments, lack of support in the home and the resulting inability to work longer hours and promote themselves professionally as the major stumbling blocks to gender equality in Australia.

More than half of Australian women reported feeling pressure to conform to traditional female roles within the home, adding further disadvantages to the already challenging task of balancing the demand of both their personal and professional lives.

Conducted in the lead up to International Women's Day, the Heat Group and UNIFEM Australia poll reinforces calls for the Australian Government to do more to address continuing discrimination against women in Australia.

"Programs such as the Paid Parental Leave scheme may help to move these women from the home to the workplace with greater ease, however it also highlights other issues such as access to flexible hours, the wage gap and access to affordable child care are still key issues for women,"

said Gillian Franklin, Managing Director of the Heat Group.

Kate O'Reilly, Board Member of UNIFEM Australia, stated "it simply does not make economic sense not to have equality in the workplace."

She went on to say that "companies who support the full participation of women at all levels demonstrate stronger performance."

Business also received a bad wrap, with a high percentage of women – 41 per cent – feeling they had been passed over for promotion because of their sex, a trend that is particularly evident among women over 40.

"At the Heat Group our goal is to make it possible for more women to happily and successfully work and have children. We believe an investment in support for women aspiring to fulfil both career and family goals is a valuable investment in the future of the Australian economy."

Of the more than 500 women polled nationally, 69 per cent said they wanted more measures to improve the current situation of women in Australia; proving that despite progress being made gender equality in Australia still has a long way to go.