

MEDIA RELEASE:

92% of Australian women say gender balance not equal, urgent action needed

8 March 2010

92% 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% 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 today 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% – feeling they had been passed over for promotion because of their sex, a trend that is particularly evident amongst 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 fulfill 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% 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 had a long way to go.

ABOUT THE HEAT GROUP:

Heat is committed to improving quality of life for Australian women and contributing to the economic prosperity of Australia. Heat engages with women every month via the Heat Poll, a research initiative that provides valuable insight into the needs and wants of Australian women, their opinions and the issues they face.

From its earliest days, Heat has been strongly committed to creating a modern, flexible workplace. As a parent herself, Managing Director Gillian Franklin is acutely aware of the challenges of balancing work and family. Heat’s leadership team also understand that by supporting staff in achieving work-life balance they will retain their talents for longer and become an employer of choice. Having an 85 per cent female workforce simply reinforces the need for flexibility.

ABOUT UNIFEM:

UNIFEM provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programs and strategies that promote women’s human rights, political participation and economic security in more than 100 countries worldwide. UNIFEM Australia works to raise awareness of gender and development issues, engage the support of government and raise funds for UNIFEM projects

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY:

International Women’s Day (8 March) is a global day celebrating the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future.

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This year, UNIFEM Australia has joined forces with Heat to mark International Women's Day. Heat, under the leadership of successful businesswoman, Gillian Franklin, regularly captures the views and concerns of Australian women. The results of the polls are collated and shared with the business community, media and Government, in an effort to contribute to making positive change for Australia women.

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Interviews and photo opportunities:

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