

**Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women
Fourteenth session
16 January – 3 February 1995
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**Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women: Australia**

Second periodic report (Report considered at the thirteenth session)

593. The Committee emphasizes that the Convention has been recognized as one of the basic human rights instruments. The Government of Australia at the national level and at the international level has made significant efforts to put women's rights into the agenda at the International Human Rights Conference at Vienna, 1993, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly.

594. Furthermore, the Committee notes with approval that the Government has adopted the new National Agenda for Women in 1993. This is the second plan of action concerning activities that the Government adopted in order to improve the status of women.

595. At the legal level, there hardly exists any longer any discrimination on the basis of sex. Following an evaluation of legislation, several legislative amendments have been made.

596. The Committee, however, expresses its concern about reservations which the Government made when ratifying the Convention. Although there have been some developments in this area, the Committee is particularly concerned about the reservations on paid maternity leave. The Committee urges the Government to continue its efforts to withdraw its reservations.

597. The Committee expresses its concern about indigenous women, migrant women and particularly women from aboriginal groups and Torres Strait Island who are the most disadvantaged people in Australian society. The Government has been frank in its information to the Committee about these women. However, the status of these women is significantly different from other women living in Australia. Violence, life expectancy, unemployment and the health situation among aboriginal women are remaining problems.

598. The Committee urges that in the next report the Government provide more specific data concerning aboriginal women and about remaining obstacles that impede their progress to full equality.

599. The Committee also asks for information about improvements for the aboriginal women after the court decision Mabo and Others v. The State of Queensland. Will that decision permit aboriginal women to receive redistributed land on an equal basis with aboriginal men?

600. The Committee also expresses its concern about the Government's policy to encourage part-time work among women. Women need access to full-time work to achieve independent status and to improve their economic situation.

601. Finally, the Committee encourages the Government to adopt new temporary measures in order to increase women's participation in politics at the state and federal levels.