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Gender pay gap persists in Australia's advertising and media sectors

By Andrew Birmingham - Martech | Ecom | CX Editor



Three years into company-level transparency, the numbers still sting. New data from Workplace Gender Equality Agency show pay gaps in parts of advertising and media stretching beyond 20%, and as high as 26% according to an analysis by TrinityP3.

What You Need to Know

- Workplace Gender Equality Agency has released its third annual employer gender pay gap figures, covering 10,500 employers and 5.9 million workers across the private sector (100+ staff).
- More than half of employers still favour men by over 11.2% on average total remuneration, despite incremental improvement.
- Progress is slow but steady. The median employer pay gap fell 0.9 percentage points to 11.2%; 22.5% of employers now sit within the target band of $\pm 5\%$ (up from 21.4% last year).
- Commonwealth public sector employer pay gaps have been published for the first time, expanding transparency beyond private enterprise.
- WGEA's Data Explorer allows employees to view their employer's gender pay gap, workforce gender split and average pay bands.
- How about media and advertising - Consultancy TrinityP3 analysed 30+ major sector employers, finding gaps as high as 26.2% in some major media companies and 20%+ among several multinational agencies.
- Mixed sector performance: Companies including Foxtel, Nine Publishing and Seven West Media showed improvement, but sector-wide disparities remain material.
- Context gap widening: Fewer companies are publishing accompanying employer statements to contextualise WGEA figures, a move TrinityP3 says signals a lack of proactive leadership.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) has released its gender pay gap figures for the third consecutive year, revealing a persistent disparity in pay between men and women within Australia's advertising and media sectors according to an analysis of the figures. The data, which covers private sector employers with 100 or more employees, underscores a significant issue that continues to challenge the industry.

The data released by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency covers 10,500 employers and nearly 5.9 million workers, revealing that while more companies are shrinking pay gaps, more than half still favour men by more than 11.2%.

For the first time, pay gaps for Commonwealth public sector employers have been published alongside private sector results, expanding scrutiny across government and business.

The figures are available through WGEA's Data Explorer, allowing employees to see their employer's gender pay gap, the gender composition of their workforce and the average pay of high and low earners.

WGEA's Employer Gender Pay Gaps Report found that more employer pay gaps are smaller than a year ago. Half of employers now report an average total remuneration gender pay gap below 11.2%, a reduction of 0.9 percentage points from the previous year.

The share of employers within a target range of plus or minus 5% has risen to 22.5%, up from 21.4% in 2023-24.

According to WGEA CEO Mary Wooldridge the public release of employer-level data has helped reignite momentum on gender equality after years of limited progress.

"Many employers have told us publishing their information has helped them prioritise fairness and equality and led to deeper engagement from the C-Suite and Board," Ms Wooldridge said.

"Results since 2024 show more employers now analyse how managers recruit employees, decide their pay and performance bonuses and determine promotions. Many are also looking past composition and pay to examine women and men's different experiences of access to parental leave, flexible working arrangements or safety in the workplace."

Media and advertising results

As to what it means in the world of media and advertising, TrinityP3, a marketing management consultancy, has analysed the submissions of over 30 major media and advertising employers. The consultancy's findings indicate that while some companies, such as Foxtel, Nine Publishing, and Seven



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West Media, have shown improvements, the overall gender pay gap remains a pressing concern. Average gender pay gaps are reported to be as large as 26.2% in some major media companies, with several multinational advertising agencies experiencing gaps exceeding 20%.

The mid-point for employer gender pay gaps across all industries stands at 11.2%, reflecting a decrease of 0.9 percentage points from the previous year. Despite this slight improvement, Lydia Feely, General Manager of TrinityP3, emphasises the need for a more concentrated effort to address the issue within the industry. "After three years of this data, it is clear that the annual pay gap numbers release has definitely elevated this issue. Our challenge is: how do we get employers to care about the pay gap the other 364 days of the year? While we have definitely seen some improvements among some players, there is still not enough being done," Feely stated.



A concerning trend noted by TrinityP3 is the decrease in the number of companies publishing their own pay gap reports, which provide critical context to the WGEA figures. Feely expressed surprise at this development, stating, "It really surprises me that, in the third year of this reporting, so many companies are still allowing these complex and important numbers to go out without taking the opportunity WGEA gives you to make an employer statement or report. Making a statement and providing context demonstrates - to current employees, potential recruits, and to the wider industry - that you are taking this issue seriously."

TrinityP3 advocates for companies to benchmark their performance against competitors to prevent regression on the pay gap issue. Feely remarked, "We know that companies who benchmark and track their performance do better in areas such as the gender pay gap. When companies establish where they are, they also then need to look at what other 'like-for-like' players are doing and look for the opportunities to improve."

Pay equity is a significant topic in TrinityP3's annual State of the Pitch report, which examines client expectations from agency and media partners. Darren Woolley, CEO of TrinityP3, highlighted the importance of addressing gender equality and the pay gap as a priority for corporations. "Pay equity is an issue that impacts both men and women. Each year we see around half of all pitches ask potential partners how they are addressing gender equality and the pay gap. This is why we make it a key part of our State of the Pitch research and why we are not also asking for it in our Agency Register. A growing number of corporations are rightly prioritising this issue across their own businesses and their suppliers," Woolley said.

Woolley further stressed the need for a sustained focus on closing the gender pay gap. "If our industry is committed to the principles of fairness and inclusiveness, then closing the ongoing gender pay gap must be a high, year-round priority. We need to see an ongoing focus on this by everyone from the board, C-suite, and shareholders down," he stated.

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