

Wednesday, 1 March 2023

## **COLES RECOGNISED AS EMPLOYER OF CHOICE FOR GENDER EQUALITY** ***National fundraiser to support women in the workforce launches today***

Coles Group has been awarded Employer of Choice for Gender Equality (EOCGE) by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) for its active commitment to achieving gender equality.

Coles was recognised for its leadership, increased learning and development opportunities, narrowing gender remuneration gaps, encouraging flexible working, preventing sex-based harassment and discrimination, and meeting targets for improving gender equality outcomes.

The recognition by WGEA as an Employer of Choice for Gender Equality is the gold standard certification for employers who are committed to making positive, measurable improvements in workplace gender equality practices, with research revealing holders of the citation are improving on key gender equality metrics at a faster rate than other employers.<sup>1</sup>

Director of WGEA, Mary Woolridge said: "Leading employers, like Coles, have stepped up to the plate by taking action to accelerate change for gender equality in the workplace."

"Critically, EOCGE employers are delivering an approach that results in better support structures in place for working families; stronger actions to address pay inequalities; and strategic recruitment, promotion and retention practices that encourage the full participation of women at work."

Coles Group General Manager Corporate and Indigenous Affairs and chair of the Coles Gender Equity Steering Committee, Sally Fielke, said the company was proud to be recognised for its progress.

"Gender equity is fundamental to our ambition to build a strong, diverse and inclusive culture at Coles. We've continued to push for gender balance, setting targets for more women in leadership, and supporting a range of programs including talent attraction programs like RelaunchER, our accelerator program for store managers, as well as initiatives to retain the incredible women we have in our business," Ms Fielke said.

"We're committed to creating a workplace where everyone feels valued and supported, so we continue to attract the best people to Coles."

The announcement comes as Coles today launches a fundraising campaign for national charity Fitted for Work, to support Australian women experiencing disadvantage to get into or return to the workforce.

Research shows that 99% of Aussie women looking for work do not feel they have enough money saved for their future, while nearly a quarter of women (24%) feel they have just enough money to cover the basic needs.<sup>2</sup>

For two weeks from today, Coles will donate 10 cents from every haircare, skincare and cosmetic product sold in supermarkets nationally, with funds raised helping Fitted for Work support unemployed and underemployed

<sup>1</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency

<sup>2</sup> Women at Work survey (Fitted for Work) February 2023

Australian women through initiatives such as recruitment workshops, a personal outfitting service, distributing workwear parcels from donated items, and post-employment mentorships.

Fitted for Work Managing Director Donna de Zwart said funds raised will help women across Australia to be fitted for work and fitted for life.

“Right now, women in Australia are overwhelmed and worried about the future, facing cost-of-living pressures, and widespread housing stress,” Ms de Zwart said.

“The generous donations from Coles this March will help thousands of women on their journey towards not only finding employment but experiencing social connection and a sense of purpose.”

Since 2005 Fitted for Work has supported over 40,000 women, with those accessing Fitted for Work's services taking an average of 73 days to find employment compared with a national average of 17 months for women.<sup>3</sup>

Sally Fielke said: “Ahead of International Women's Day, it's important we think about what we can all do to support the economic potential of women. We know how important organisations like Fitted for Work are with helping women from all walks of life get work, keep work and build successful careers.”

“We encourage our customers to get behind Fitted for Work by purchasing a haircare, skincare or cosmetic product from any Coles supermarket during the campaign.”

### **Fitted for Work research insights**

In the lead up to International Women's Day 2023, Fitted for Work undertook a survey of 258 current and former clients who accessed Fitted for Work services between July 2022 and January 2023. At the time of the survey, 35% of respondents have been looking for work for six months or more.

Key findings from the research include -

- Of women surveyed:
  - 37% had other responsibilities that restricted them from working
  - 62% struggle with their mental and/or physical health
  - 23% feel discriminated against because of who they are
  - 46% are returning to work after a gap in employment
  - 33% are looking to make – or have recently made – a shift in careers
- Of women surveyed who are currently looking for work:
  - 99% do not feel they have enough money to save for their future
  - 63% do not feel financially stable
  - 24% feel they have just enough money to cover basic needs
  - 72% feel anxious about their job search
  - 30% do not feel connected with those around them.

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**For further information, please contact**

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