

Beth Gaze: Critically evaluating the Sex Discrimination Act: what is its role in redressing gender inequality in Australia?

The SDA was adopted against strident opposition in 1984. This paper critically analyses its effect after twenty five years. The symbolic impact of prohibiting sex discrimination is clear, but the actual impact of the Act on practices in the workforce and elsewhere appears more limited. This paper will consider a range of factors that limit what the law can achieve, and ask whether reforming the Act would move us closer to its avowed objective of 'eliminating discrimination against persons on the ground of sex ...' and 'promot[ing] recognition and acceptance within the community of the principle of the equality of men and women'.