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SA Power Networks initiates major action on pay equality

SA Power Networks has confirmed its leadership as an employer of choice, announcing changes to maternity and parental leave arrangements to ensure women in particular are not financially disadvantaged during their careers. It's also announced action to support employees who are victims of domestic violence.

"We have a strong commitment to diversity, fairness and a supportive workplace," said David Syme, General Manager, People and Culture. "As part of our commitment to eliminate any gender pay gap, we have introduced a number of improvements for women on maternity leave or men who become the primary care giver of their child.

"The changes mean superannuation and performance-related payments will be paid to female or male staff while on maternity/parental leave. Additionally, if they have performed higher duties for at least six of the preceding 12 months, they will continue to receive the temporary higher class duties rate while on leave. We also provide truly flexible work arrangements to allow staff with family commitments to stay in the workforce."

Mr Syme said there was clear evidence that women in particular are disadvantaged financially due to career interruptions around family. Income is lost through slowed promotion and no superannuation while on maternity leave and the impact is compounded over future years.

"We have been working with our Gender Diversity Group on initiatives to support a more diverse workplace and these changes were seen as crucial to demonstrating our genuine commitment on gender and diversity," he said.

"We are very proud to introduce these changes as there are very few organisations nationally that provide this type of benefit. It reflects our position as a significant employer of choice in South Australia and our determination to ensure fairness."

Mr Syme said SA Power Networks recognised that employers also needed to deal with the impact of domestic violence, which statistics show is widespread in Australia*.

"We have developed a directive to give guidance to leaders and our employees as we believe we should be supporting any employee who may be a victim of domestic violence. Key features of this directive are:

- SA Power Networks' commitment to support employees who are impacted by domestic violence;
- a leave provision of up to 10 days paid special leave per calendar year; and
- a commitment to workplace support, including flexible work arrangements wherever practicable and free counselling support.

"We don't have all the answers on tackling this issue, but we are keen to do what we can to address the consequences and support those who need help," Mr Syme said.

*2012 ABS Personal Safety Survey shows in Australia:

- 1 in 6 women had experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former partner.
- 1 in 4 women had experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner.
- 1 in 19 men had experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former partner.
- 1 in 7 men had experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner.

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