

Research Workshop Series

Abstract

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Presentation by:

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A Capabilities Approach to Gender Equity in Tax

On May 13, 2008, the new Australian Labor government announced a review of Australia's Future Tax System (the Review), which is due to report at the end of 2009. The Review was born of a '2020 Summit' held in April 2008 by the new government soon after it came to office, succeeding 11 years of conservative Liberal-National government. It has a broad remit to examine Australia's federal income tax and transfer (welfare) systems, which are the primary focus of this chapter. It is the first major review to do this in Australia since the Asprey Committee which reported more than 30 years ago (Asprey 1975), although other reviews have examined business and international taxation. In particular, the Review examines the combined and interactive effect on individuals of the personal income tax system and the income support transfer (or welfare) system, which it describes overall as the 'tax-transfer system'. This nomenclature adopted by the Review is used throughout this chapter. The Review has consulted widely with the public and tax experts and Review papers make frequent reference to submissions, most of which are published.

Gender issues are at play at some crucial points in the Review papers, including the Architecture Paper (Treasury 2008a) and the Consultation Paper (Treasury 2008b). In particular, the Review's discussion of workforce participation seems to take seriously the impact of the tax-transfer system on women's work choices. In other contexts, including the taxation of capital and savings, gender largely disappears from the analysis