

S4W Update – July/August 2008

S4W believes that lifelong economic well being is a high priority for Australian women – it empowers women to make choices and live independently. It enriches all aspects of women's lives including their education, health, employment, personal safety and financial security over their lifetime.

Meeting of the National Women's Secretariats(NWS) and Face-to-Face meeting with the Office for Women

Members of the four NWS travelled to Broken Hill mid June to participate in the joint meeting with the Office4Women, hosted by the National Rural Women's Coalition. Highlights included:

- Presentation and participation by Senator Claire Moore,
- Robert Fitzgerald from the Productivity Commission held a discussion and facilitated feedback on the Productivity Commission's inquiry into Paid Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave.
- Workshop session was led by the OfW for contribution to the development of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children
- Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and support for the development of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Coalition.
- Discussion on UN mechanisms and capacity to be used to bring positive change for women in Australia eg. Support for Australia's accession to the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.

Successful funding recipients of Women's Leadership Development Projects.

At the joint mid year meeting in Broken Hill successful funding recipients were announced by the Minister's representative Senator Claire Moore. This has been the largest amount of money ever provided through the Women's Leadership Development Projects grants (WLDP) which demonstrates the Governments strong commitment to national women's NGO's to build sustainable projects and contribute to the revitalisation of the women's sector. S4W member organizations successful were: **WAVE (2 project grants) and AWE (one)** Congratulations and we look forward to hearing progress of these grants.

Updates from member organizations. I encourage sharing amongst S4W member organizations issues, inquiries, consultations or report writing which may be taking place. If you wish to share please send anything to me and I will include them in the monthly updates.

Meeting with Minister 29th July

The four NWS, Chairs and Coordinators met with Minister Plibersek, to inform her of the outcomes from our mid-year meeting as she was unable to attend. The Minister acknowledged the work of the Secretariats, and noted S4W progression with the Data Working Group, and particularly noted the issue of Out of School Hours and Vacation Care.

New member organizations:

We welcome **Asian Women at Work** – Sydney, as a new member organisation. Lina Cabaero is the co-ordinator and contact.

Hot Issues Report.

One of the key eight strategies recommended in the report “Shaping the Next Decade – Women & Girls Education” from the S4W Education and Training Working Group was a continuum of Out of School Hours and Vacation Care to be included in current and future policies. S4W considers it integral to the governments platform of support services needed to support working families, to set policy frameworks which enable women and families to have a continuum of access to effective out of school hours and vacation care for children 0-15 years. WIRE is currently conducting a survey of unmet demands, results of which will determine future process and action. For information on the survey go to www.wire.org.au and click on the survey link on the home page.

Inquiries and Consultations:

Since our mid-year face to face meeting in Broken Hill S4W members have been very busy responding to several inquiries and consultations. Where possible facilitation of joint NWS letters and/or submissions have been undertaken to enable S4W member organisations to contribute and endorse these vital inquiries.

National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children.

Written feedback from the Community is encouraged in the development of a National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children. During the mid-year meeting in Broken Hill, OfW provided an opportunity for the NWS to participate in a workshop covering a range of issues. Consultation papers have been distributed to the community and responses are to be returned to the OfW by the end of July. Particular responses by S4W/WWC's and WIRE organizations have been submitted. The Project Director and possibly a National Council member have agreed to attend the S4W meeting in Brisbane to seek comment on the draft Policy which is due for completion in December 2008. Contact person at OfW for is **Emily Maher**.

Inquiry into Gender Pay Equity (GPE) and associated issues relating to increasing female participation in the workforce.

On Thursday 26 June 2008 the Acting Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, The Hon Brendan O'Connor MP, asked the Committee to inquire into and report on /pay equity and associated issues related to increasing female participation in the workforce/.

The Committee has invited interested persons and organisations to make submissions addressing the terms of reference by ***Thursday 28 August 2008***. Please refer to their brochure called preparing a submission <http://www.apf.gov.au/house/committee/documnts/howsub.htm> for more information.

A 2nd Gender Pay Equity roundtable in Canberra was hosted by the OfW on 30th July recognizing that not all expert voices may have been able to attend the table in April. The roundtable was facilitated by Ms Suzanne Hammond, Federal Women's Industrial Officer, Community and Public Sector Union. S4W member organizations were represented by NFAW, WWC's and WAVE. The focus was a review of the 11 key recommendations from the earlier roundtable plus up to date information on legislation and developments such as the New Employment Standards, Award Modernisation, and the House of Representatives Pay Equity Inquiry. OfW report will be distributed when it comes to hand. Further details on the inquiry can be obtained from www.apf.gov.au/ewr

Inquiry into the effectiveness of the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1984 by the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee.

The Senate requested an inquiry into the effectiveness of the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act of 1984, in eliminating discrimination and to promote gender equality. S4W and Women's Speak are in the process of co-ordinating and submitting a collaborative response. Terms of Reference were distributed widely through our member organizations followed by participation in two teleconferences with experts and representatives to facilitate the process and draft a final response. Following, the submission will be distributed widely for endorsement. Individual submissions from S4W member organizations have also been undertaken. **(Deadline for submissions 8th August.)**

Inquiry into Paid Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave. –

The draft report of the public inquiry by the Productivity Commission is due to be released in late September, with a final report due to go to Government by February 2009. NFAW/S4W have submitted a funding proposal to consult women's organizations nation wide on the preferred options as per the draft report. If funding is successful, NFAW/S4W will take the draft report to each State and Territory to consult as widely as possible on women's views and report back to the Commission. For information on progress of the inquiry it is useful to register online with the Productivity Commission www.pc.gov.au/register.

Consultation on Australia becoming a party to the Optional Protocol (OP) to CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women

The Australian Government in deciding whether or not to sign on to the OP is consulting with Commonwealth Ministers and the wider community. As an outcome of the NWS meeting in Broken Hill, a joint letter to support Australia's accession to the OP was drafted and endorsed by over 30 organisations.

CEDAW Shadow report

Women's NGO's have been successful in receiving funding to produce a CEDAW Shadow Report. S4W members have been involved in a teleconference in July with Women's Speak members to plan the progression of this Report. Updates will be distributed as they come to hand.

CSW53 Commission on the Status of Women

To help prepare for the 53rd session of CSW, the Office for Women will co-host with the Australian women's sector, a roundtable discussion in 2008. It is anticipated this discussion will guide and inform the NWS reports on the CSW priority theme **which are now due on 30 November 2008**. Following CSW there will be another roundtable in April 2009, to discuss the CSW agreed conclusions and how to the NWS and Government could take them forward. We welcome the advice from the Minister that two delegates will be funded by the Australian Government to attend the next session of the Commission in March 2009. Participation of an expert adviser from the community sector and an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women to be a part of the Australian delegation. Below is a draft timeline for preparation, engagement and collaboration of the working group. **Contact at the OfW is Anne O'Rourke or Elizabeth Haigh..**

Item	Date
Role description and selection criteria for CSW delegates released	Late August 2008
Applications for delegates close	September 2008
Notification of selected delegates	September 2008
United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women's Expert Group Meeting	6-9 October 2008
Roundtable – CSW preparations	2nd week October 2008
National Women's Secretariat reports deadline	30 November 2008
Pre-departure CSW training	January 2009
CSW	2-13 March 2009
Post-CSW Roundtable	April 2009

****Please note – this is a working document and dates maybe subject to change***

Superannuation Contribution Tax

One of our member organizations, the Australia Federation of University Women recently wrote to Senator Nick Sherry supporting his suggestion of removing the 15 per cent super contributions tax for women as one way of bringing their retirement savings in line with men. In 2006, at its Triennial Conference in Canberra, the Federation passed the following Resolution:

Superannuation Contributions Tax

The 33rd Conference of AFUW calls upon the Australian Government to abolish Superannuation Contributions Tax.

In the letter to Senator Sherry AFUW states, quote “We are pleased to see that you understand that splitting superannuation tax for couples benefits only a limited number of women and is no solution to the incontrovertible fact that women's average retirement payouts are almost half that of men because many spend time out of the workforce, work for less pay or work in part-time and casual employment.”

Whilst S4W are hoping that the outcome of the Pay Equity enquiry will go some of the way towards bridging the gap, this recommendation surrounding Superannuation will certainly directly influence the level of women's retirement income.

Sex Discrimination Commissioner – “Roadmap towards gender equality” What matters to Australian women and men.”

On Tuesday, 22 July 2008 the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick spoke at the launch of Gender Equality, “What matters to Australian women and men” and outlined her plan of action which she said was shaped from many of the stories and ideas shared with her during her National “Listening Tour”.

“Progress towards gender equality has stalled. We have more work to do if we want to ensure women and men live in a fair and equal Australia”

Commissioner Broderick identified the following five areas where she will be focussing her efforts to improve gender equality in Australia:

- **Increasing the number of women in leadership positions, including a focus on supporting Indigenous women's leadership;**
- **Balancing paid work and family responsibilities beginning with the implementation of a national government funded paid maternity leave scheme;**
- **Driving down the incidence of sexual harassment;**
- **Reducing the gender gap in retirement savings; and**
- **Strengthening laws to address sex discrimination and promote gender equality.**

The community report and media kit, including fact sheets on each of the focus areas is available from www.humanrights.gov.au/listeningtour/launch

National Rural Women's Summit 27 and 28th June 2008

The Chair of S4W, Ann McClintock attended the National Rural Women's Summit in Canberra at the end of June. Recommendations from the Summit covered the following issues:

Families and Children, Vocational Training, Representation in Decision making, Education, Young People, Community Building, Health, Climate Change – environment and water, Infrastructure, Transport and Telecommunications.

Bradley Review of Higher Education

AFUW made submission to the Bradley Review of Higher Education, with a Supplementary one on Indigenous issues largely prepared by a member in South Australia. There were 31 Recommendations in the main submission including 15 that have been included to improve the capacity of all students, but especially those from Indigenous and low SES groups, to participate successfully in higher education. Copies of these Submissions are now available on the AFUW Website at :

<http://www.afuw.org.au/advocacyFS.htm>

WANTED volunteers to be part of a small working group to assist the “new look” of our S4W website. PLEASE CONTACT Coordinator asap.

Coming events:

AWE – Conference Cairns 1st – 3rd October 2008

The Association of Women Educators invites you to their bi-annual Conference to be held this October in Cairns. Keynote speakers are Nerida Wilson, Professor Julie Mills and Gina Archer. Please go to their website for full information on Call for Papers and Registration.

www.awe.asn.au

Partnerships for Social Inclusion:

The Director of the Centre for Public Policy, Professor Brian Galligan, would like to invite you to participate in the upcoming **Partnerships for Social Inclusion** to be held on October 15 and 16 and the Grand Hyatt, Melbourne. This conference is a collaboration between the CPP, the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development and the OECD's Local Economic and Employment Development Programme.

Both the **Call for Papers** and **Registrations** are now open. Please contact the link below for further information.

www.public-policy.unimelb.edu.au/conference08

S4W Face to Face meeting 17th and 18th October.

A reminder that the S4W next f/f meeting will be held in Brisbane on Friday and Saturday 17th&18th October. Over the next month preparations will commence, and a call for agenda items including possible topics to be worked on for the year ahead, will be distributed.

Face to Face meeting 2 – OfW and NWS

The last f/f meeting with the OfW and NWS for the year will be held in November to provide updates on current activities and discuss issues identified as important. Further notification as to where the meeting will be held to enable the Minister to attend will be distributed.

Upcoming WomenSpeak Community Gatherings

WomenSpeak community gatherings and consultations on standing in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women will take place next

Sydney (Monday 15th September) and Toowoomba (Friday 3 October)

If you would like more information on the planning for either of these gatherings, please **contact Kathy Richards**
email womenspeak@ywca.org.au