

MID YEAR REPORT JUNE 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.

From the beginning of this year, Security4women have moved along the lines of working groups that are open to anyone with expertise/interest (from other secretariats or academia, government, or women's sectors). We believe a lot of expertise also lies outside of the secretariats and we wish to harness this.

These two groups, The **Disaggregated Data Working Group and the Education & Training Working Group** will be able to provide relevant information to the OfW, the Social Inclusion Unit in Prime Minister Rudd's department as well as to the new office of Work and Family and other Ministries.

S4W Disaggregated Data Working group facilitated a meeting with the ABS after initial contact by NFAW as a follow on from recommendations of 2006 commissioned research from WISER- Women's Employment Status- Key Indicators (WESKI) and the concept of development of some national benchmarking of gender disaggregated data. Access to data sets are proving difficult for key players in voluntary organizations to access as well as to understand. Information and monitoring of gender equity indicators and statistical priorities for women and girls is needed to inform on policy.

The following recommendations were put forward:

Women's Year Book (or equivalent) During the Nineteen Nineties, ABS was producing (through OSW funding) an annual compendium of social data relevant to women – The Women's Year Book. Recommendation was made to the new Government that there be a resumption of comparable data analysis.

Women's Statistics User group advising the ABS. ABS already has many Statistics Advisory Groups but not one dealing specifically with Women's Statistics.

Main Indicators for Women: Australia Sex disaggregated data should be available for relevant statistical indicators at national level as matter of course particularly in the analysis undertaken by Government agencies such as ABS, DEEWR, FaHCSIA, Health etc. (The base data is all there held within the various agencies but not always dissected by gender in the public domain.)

The Outcomes from the meeting are very positive.

a) ABS has offered to host a Workshop on pay equity. The Working Group will be requesting similar workshops on priority topics such as education and health in order to progress the achievement of gender equality in Australia.

b) ABS will consider establishing a Gender Statistics Advisory Group with the Office for Women to identify emerging statistical priorities for policy development and monitoring of gender equity.

c) ABS has provided a copy of its report on the Gender Pay Gap published in its 2005 issue of Australian Social Trends and encourages continued contact with them.

The Education & Training Working Group organized an Invitational Symposium to plan for policy advocacy for women and girls across all sectors of education from early childhood, school, TAFE/VET, University and beyond. Underpinning this, discussion and action took place for an effective continuum of Out of school hours and Vacation care.

As a growing body of evidence shows, long term social and economic outcomes are significantly influenced by the investment Australia makes towards the education and training of our Nation. On measures of pre-school, school, vocational and tertiary education and research, Australia has fallen well behind its competitors.

Six organizations within S4W were represented at the symposium as well as invited experts, from South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria.

A short report containing an eight point strategy, social inclusion agenda and discussion papers has been prepared for the Office for Women and wider circulation.

The key issues identified as most significance were:-

- *Early Childhood Education Centres,**
- *Out of School Hours and Vacation Care,**
- *Adequate provision for the inclusion and positive outcomes for girls and women in the establishment of the trade schools across the nation.**
- *Poverty of students.**

S4W will focus on these priority issues in the weeks ahead.

Pay Equity Roundtable

Members of S4W attended the Roundtable on Pay Equity in Canberra. The overall goal was to develop a framework that could guide a national approach to improving gender pay equity, identify options, the roles of key stakeholders, possible structures and processes to maintain the momentum. S4W will be working closely with the ABS, OfW and other Departments to assist improvement and measurement of the gender pay gap.

CSW52

Alex Haynes, our past Network Co-ordinator, was part of the Australian Govt delegation to CSW52 in New York February this year and has produced two excellent reports on the Key priorities and outcomes.

In response to the outcomes of the 52nd session, Security4Women and the Office for Women co-hosted a follow-up Roundtable to discuss the outcomes of the session, and to identify key priorities for action, and strategies for the Australian women's sector to advance these priorities. (Reports have been circulated)

This year (CSW53), S4W have suggested to the OfW and other Secretariats a practical way to create greater capacity within NGO's and OfW to contribute to and participate in, the Commission of Status of Women.

CEDAW - S4W has accepted the invitation to be included in the preparation of the CEDAW Shadow report.

Input to OfW S4W has in the past weeks responded to projects which the Government and the Office for Women would like our views and opinion on. The development of the OfW website, two new women's leadership initiatives "The Skilled Women and Skilled Non-Government Organization's (NGO's).

Housing – our major Consultation for 2008

Security4Women identified housing as a priority area of investigation for 2008, recognising the centrality of appropriate housing in promoting lifelong economic wellbeing for Australian women: the mandate of Security 4Women.

A brief update: The first two stages (Parts A and B) of a research project being undertaken by the AHURI Southern Research Centre for Security4Women on women and housing.

Part A Briefing Paper: Why women (and housing)?

The first output of this project to be completed by June 11th 2008 will be the production of a short briefing paper on why Governments, the broader community and Security4Women need to specifically focus on housing issues for women; to put gender and housing back on the political agenda and to reinforce why it should be on the political landscape.

The paper will present a number of arguments for the focus on women and housing based on the statistics available on the economic and social circumstances of women in general and certain groups of women in particular (single parents, older lone women, social housing tenants, women escaping DV and homeless women), as a result of patterns of work, caring responsibilities, disability, and the impact of divorce and separation.

Part B Discussion Paper: Principal issues for women and housing now?

The second paper for this project will be a discussion paper on the key issues for women and housing as determined from current data and research, and some exploration of these issues into the future. It will also examine the impact of the key issues around housing for women on specific groups of women in particular.

New Member Organizations – S4W welcome Al Zahra Muslim Women's Association of NSW, Waltja Aboriginal Corporation of Alice Springs, and Immigrant women South Australia as new members.

Changes to Co-ordinator S4W

During mid March there were some changes made in relation to the Network Co-ordination of S4W. Elinor Buckley has taken on the role of Network Co-ordinator, and Alex Haynes is responsible for managing our major consultation, Housing, CSW 52 follow up, and completing Young Women Talk project.

Launch of DVD's Young Women Talk project.

S4W launched the "Young Women Talk" DVD's at a meeting in Sydney with the minister Hon. Tanya Plibersek last month. These stories from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women about learning and working around Australia are being

distributed widely throughout our networks. Please contact the Network Co-ordinator if you require any copies.

The balance of the Young Women Talk project is expected to be completed by the end of August 2008.

Financial Literacy Information facts sheets

“Women Understanding Money”

This new resource for women developed by the Financial Literacy Foundation in Association with OFW and S4W was launched earlier this year.

Paid Maternity Leave

Kathy Richards, Women Speak, Marie Coleman S4W/NFAW and Carolyn Lambert YWCA worked on a briefing paper, investigating Paid Maternity and other forms of leave that would support families, which was put to the Productivity Commission.

Working Women’s Centres – S4W worked hard among their members to advocate for continuation of these valuable Centres. So far South Australia and Northern Territory are able to continue this year, and it is hoped that we are able to see them operating well into the future in all States.

S4W website – is undergoing a revamp. This will make it more user friendly, easier to access, as well as to enable the latest news, reports, links to be readily available to all.