

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS NOVEMBER – MAY 2009

S4W strengths

S4W believes that lifelong economic wellbeing 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. S4W engages with Australian women to identify and evaluate the issues they face and establish those of primary importance.

Current focus of S4W

Gender perspective of the Global Financial Crisis

Our primary area of concern “lifelong economic wellbeing” has led S4W to commission a scoping study to assess the impacts the Global Financial Crisis is having on Australian women (including young women), and the outcomes for such women, of Governmental responses, i.e the economic stimulus packages, programs with a stimulatory impact, and training and re-skilling projects.

The study would initially assess efficacy and equity in measures announced and commenced and develop options for improvement in efficiency and equity outcomes. Similar aspects of Governmental responses to the GFC would also be studied in comparable economies.

This will form the basis of representations to Government(s) over time to make adjustments to their programs and policies.

Progress to date:

Survey of gender-sensitive responses to the global downturn Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom & United States of America by Dr Merrindahl Andrew has been completed.

Next steps:

The Australian Institute has been commissioned to conduct research and analysis on the impact of the GFC on, women's labour market outcomes, financial assets, and education and training. (Due for completion early July 2009)

This small scoping study is anticipated to be a precursor to a more extensive program, for which additional funding has been sought via a proposal to the OfW.

Collaboration

Representatives of S4W, including nominees from COSBOA, NFAW, WIRE, WAVE, WWC's, BPW, AFUW, AWE, WomenSpeak, and labour market economists.

Out of School Hours care

S4W believe female workforce attachment is important, both for national productivity, and women's life-long economic security. The provision of good quality, affordable care and education including OSHC is essential for the economy and for all parents.

We are concerned about current financing arrangements for child care and are focussing our strengths and collaborating with our networks to refer the issue to the Productivity Commission for thorough review and recommendations on new arrangements.

In collaboration with NFAW we have submitted on reform of child care (including OSHC) funding to both the Henry Review of Australia's Future Tax System, and the Senate Committee- which will start hearings in early July. We presented at the HoR standing Committee looking at Pay Equity and argued about inadequate access to child care/OSHC and other factors affecting female workforce participation. In collaboration with NFAW and AHRC we commissioned Newspoll and have that as a supporting set of data- dealing with work-life balance, and OHSC.

Next steps:

Letters being drafted to the Prime Minister, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Minister EEWR, Parliamentary Secretary Early Childhood, Minister FAHSCIA, Minister for Women highlighting our concerns and suggestions for future policy.

We welcome the following:

- The recent Government work through COAG to enhance minimum standards for under five's.
- Program for all children to have a year of pre-school education
- Policy to develop links between early childhood care and other social institutions such as schools, TAFE, health centres.

We also note that current financing mechanisms do not promote these co-locations

Collaboration:

S4W representation WIRE, WAVE, NFAW, AFUW, WWC's WomenSpeak and representation South Australia University

Commission on the Status of Women – CSW

S4W initiated a workshop prior to a meeting with the OfW in November 2008 to enable members of Alliances, OfW and other representatives to better understand the key themes, and prepare recommendations to OfW for input to the country statement. Co-ordinator attended the pre-departure briefing session in Canberra with the OfW.

Next steps:

As this is the 5th year review of the **Beijing Platform (B15)** S4W are collaborating with Carole Shaw in the rollout of the caravan for the B15 process and support of the “E” questionnaire. As an extension to this S4W website will link with the Jera International weblink.

Development of CSW - resource

Prepare a brief package (online reference) with links and load to S4W website to capture learning on CSW and downloading for training.

Collaboration:

All S4W, Wspeak, NRWC and AWC. Cassandra Goldie, Pip Dargan, Carole Shaw, representatives from OfW, past attendees at CSW

Paid Maternity Leave

The issue of an adequate national system of paid maternity leave is one of the major issues for working families. S4W felt it was critical that women and their organizations make an informed comment to the Productivity Commission on the options in the draft Report. S4W and NFAW provided the opportunity for national consultation throughout all the states, for women to comment and express their views on the options and respond to the Commission. Marie Coleman (NFAW) carried out a “road show” nationally. A summary of the Commission draft report and a pro forma was drafted to assist in sending comments to the Commission.

Collaboration:

Networks and representations of S4W, NFAW, Women’s Advisory Networks, Office for Women Policy, Women’s College University Sydney, Minister Advisory Council for Women, Women Tasmania.

Productivity Commissioners, Robert Fitzgerald and Angela McRae attended some of the consultations.

Housing

Our major consultation for 2008.

Focus: why Governments, industry and the broader community need to specifically focus on housing issues for women; to put “gender and housing” back on the political agenda and to conclusively reinforce why it should be considered now.

S4W thought it was time to reassess, plan for and accommodate the diverse housing needs of women. The stark reality for many women (and their families) is that they will be less economically secure across their lives and into old age, if they do not have access to appropriate housing.

Final discussion paper has been completed and presented to the OfW and the Minister.

Next steps:

Support and participation at National Women's Housing Conference in Melbourne in August 2009. Designed by Women's Housing Ltd (Vic) to discuss both; broad issues of women and housing and: specific issues of women in the community housing workforce. We feel this is very topical right across the country as the Federal and

State governments look to develop their social housing provision through the community housing sectors.

Collaboration:

AHURI Flinders University, Women's Housing Caucus, YWCA, Alex Haynes.

Preparation for Alliance Review and transition to new model

In preparation for the transition to the new Alliance model to be handed down by Minister Plibersek, S4W members have met for a face to face meetings in Melbourne and Sydney where a new structure was determined to strengthen our framework, governance, and operating principles in readiness for the tendering process. To enable the new structure to be formed, nominations were called for positions in the new structure and we are very pleased to be able to announce Kate Gunn, as Chair of S4W. Kate is President of National Foundation of Australian Women (NFAW) and has over 20 years of business experience in the private sector.

Next steps:

Submission of Expression of Interest for funding for the Security4Women Alliance. We look forward to enhancing our collective vision and build our capacity to enable fuller participation by all women in, and through democratic processes.

Submission writer has been engaged.

CEDAW (Input to the Shadow Report)

Australia's accession to the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women came into effect March 2009.

Work has now commenced on the preparation of this report and S4W members have been involved in teleconferences to plan progression of this work. Member organizations also attended workshops in States/Territories.

S4W Data Working Group

The Australian Government's combined 6th and 7th CEDAW Report released in Oct-December 2008, contains a section on data collection. The Government is currently undertaking a gender indicators "stock take" to identify gaps in the availability and accessibility of sex disaggregated data, including data for indigenous Australians, people with disability, and people from low socio-economic and rural and remote backgrounds. Our Data Working Group is discussion ways of providing input to this stock take.

Additional S4W projects planned

Vocational Education and Training (VET) Policy update 2009-2010

An up-to-date policy paper building on and extending previous WAVE & S4W work and priorities (including new trends) for information and advocacy.

The national policy "Women: Shaping our Future (albeit never properly implemented) is due to expire 2010.

Without national policy guidelines for women and girls, especially those most at risk, there is no platform from which to advocate for and argue that any consideration should be directed towards girls and women in this major portfolio area, at national or state/territory levels.

Vocational training is a key central tool in federal and state government's economic policies, strategies and economic stimulus packages to address the global economic downturn, and specifically to stimulate the economy; to link training with paid employment; to decrease unemployment of youth and other welfare recipients, as well as to 'deepen' Australia's skills base.

Next steps:

Project commenced consultants engaged - to be completed mid August 2009

Consultation & Research – Key Issues & Trends 2004-2008

Over the past five years, Security4Women has undertaken a number of key consultations and research activities, most of which include significant information and findings of importance to women, with recommendations for government policy and action and suggestions for monitoring and review. Collectively, these reports have the potential to provide a 'longitudinal' database for S4W, and further inform OfW.

As a follow up it is proposed that a knowledgeable (feminist) researcher be commissioned to collect, collate, analyse and critically review S4W's major research and consultation reports for the period 2004- 2008 inclusive; and prepare a report of same, highlighting the key findings, trends, issues, and identifying matters for which follow up and action is still required.

The report should include a précis of previous work undertaken by S4W, textual and tabular collation of qualitative and quantitative data, identification of themes, as well as issues which require further consideration and/or monitoring and review and possible future considerations/action

Next steps:

Project brief written. Engagement of a consultant researcher.

Focus Group – “How to Kit”

Women's organizations have identified that they need assistance to gather information among their communities. S4W will develop a simple focus group kit – a 'how to kit' (guidelines and templates) for women and women's organisations to carry out their own qualitative research. This generic kit and guidelines will be available via our website, so that it can be easily accessed, downloaded and utilised.

Next steps:

Write project brief, allocate budget and engage project officer.

Submissions presented.

Not for Profit

National Women's Health survey

Pensioner and Taxation review in collaboration with NFAW

Kate Gunn, Chair

Elly Buckley Co-ordinator

28th May 2009