

Attachment A

11 Submission form—National Carer Strategy

Please consider the following questions. It is not necessary to answer each of the questions individually, just address those issues that most concern you.

Question 1: Do you think the Strategy as outlined in this discussion paper sets the right direction to meet the vision and aim to better support carers?

x Yes **No**

Comments:

Please refer to the attached report *The Australian Care Economy - a gender equity perspective* for further strategy suggestions.

Question 2: Do you agree with the five goals outlined in this discussion paper?

Goal 1 – Better recognition for carers **Yes** No

Goal 2 – Better support to help carers work **Yes** No

Goal 3 – Better information and support for carers **Yes** No

Goal 4 – Better education and training for carers **Yes** No

Goal 5 – Better health and wellbeing for carers **Yes** No

Comments:

Goal 1 Point 3

“Carers being recognised by health and community care professionals as partners in the provision of care”. Doctor patient confidentiality is causing issues with Carers. For example, Carers are not advised or consulted when their Consumers are placed on different medication or if medication levels are changed. Often the change of medication causes side affects or adverse reactions in the Consumer of which their Carer was neither consulted about nor informed about.

Goal 4 Point 2

“Carers being supported with the training and skills they need to undertake their caring responsibilities”. Respite that includes some sort of training and coping skills should be very highly regarded and supported. This form of respite is actually addressing Carers *“health and wellbeing”* so they can *“take part in all aspects of life in Australia, including work, community and family life”*.

Goal 5 Point 2

“Better support for carers’ physical, mental health and emotional wellbeing at all stages of caring”. It needs to be recognised that many Carers are as physically and mentally unwell as the Consumers they are looking after. If these Carers pass away, the health system will be left looking after the Consumer at a substantial cost to society. Carers' health should be a high priority if for no other reason than to save the Country money in the long term.

Further to Goal 5, Access to Respite is essential for Carers. Many Carers however fall through the gaps of accessing respite because some of their children (who don't have disabilities) are not eligible to be looked after by existing services. Therefore the Carer can't leave the family to obtain much needed respite. There are gaps in the system particularly when it comes to single mothers with little support.

Question 3: Tell us if you have any suggestions about how the goals could be improved.

Comments:

“Economic Security 4 Women” commissioned a report into the Australian Care Economy from a gender equity perspective (see full report attached). This report was funded by FaHCSIA through the Office for Women, launched on the 9th of November in Canberra by Senator Claire Moore on behalf of the Minister for the Status of Women, Kate Ellis MP. The information contained in this report is intended as a first step towards mapping the scope and importance of the care economy and identifying issues that need to be addressed.

The objectives of the initial report were to scope the Australian care economy by:

- Examining how the care economy may be defined
- Identifying the issues relevant to paid and unpaid care
- Collating a list of public policies which provide government support to the care economy
- Identifying the impact of the care economy on women’s economic wellbeing
- Researching recent statistics on the Australian care economy, and
- Identifying gaps in the literature and areas for further research.

Key messages of the report:

- The Care Economy is a relatively new but highly significant concept with increasing importance for the Australian economy and the economic wellbeing of citizens, especially women
- The Care Economy encompasses both macroeconomics and microeconomics. Macroeconomics encompasses the performance and decision-making of an entire economy: regional, state, national or global. Microeconomics views economic activity at an individual level, e.g. from the perspective of households or firms. Both are relevant to an economic assessment of the care economy
- The provision of care has public good qualities with the benefits of providing care, both paid and unpaid, ‘spilling over’ to the wider community. As people who require care cannot exercise consumer rights in the way that well people can, the public goods aspect and impaired consumer sovereignty signal an important role for government policy and public funding to support both paid and unpaid care

- The demand for care increases during economic downturn and the substantial role of public support in the care sector makes it particularly vulnerable to budget cuts
- Care work, both paid and unpaid, affects women's economic wellbeing. Paid care services are characterised by a highly feminised workforce with high levels of casual and part-time employment. Informal caring impacts negatively on women's lifetime earnings
- Because women have to balance their workforce participation with their caring responsibilities, a lack of workplace flexibility is instrumental in keeping the existing gendered division of labour in place
- The combination of an ageing population and increased longevity poses a challenge to the adequate future supply of caring labour. There will be an increasing number of care recipients with complex care needs. Rather than juggle the competing demands of paid work and care, many carers tend to reduce their paid working hours or exit the workforce
- There has been no comprehensive mapping of the Australian Care Economy as a whole. This mapping is a matter of urgency, especially as different statistical data measure and report on different aspects and the literature is also fragmented around different aspects of the care economy.

The initial research was commissioned by *Security4Women* and undertaken by Dr Valerie Adams in recognition of the importance of the care economy.

The care economy encompasses a broad range of activities and services which are provided in various combinations of paid or unpaid work. Caring activities usually involve close personal or emotional interaction. Often care provided within families is unpaid, such as parents caring for young children. Some care involves informal market work such as a family member providing child care for a relative with the terms of payment agreed informally between the two family members. Other forms of care involve paid employment such as nurses and child care workers and may be market substitutes for services women once provided in the home. As the majority of care is provided by women there is an interface between paid and unpaid care work and a tension in the allocation of time between unpaid care in the home and paid work in the market.

The relational nature of caring work prevents it from being subject to the usual economies of scale when supplied in a market.

Although there is a vast literature on different aspects of the care economy, to date there has been no comprehensive mapping of the care economy as a whole. Much of non-market work involves unpaid caring provided in the home and through the work of volunteers in community services provided by not-for-profit organisations. Also, a large and growing part of the paid economy is care work. The care economy plays a significant role in the development of social assets, social capital, human capital and social reproduction. If the supply of caring labour is inadequate in either quantity or quality, then the economy could be expected to not operate as well. The conceptualisation of the care economy is a way to make women's activities visible which is needed to develop policies that improve their economic well-being.

Question 4: What should the Australian Government focus on under the goals to better support carers now and into the future?

Comments: (please refer to the attached report for further details)

Recommendation 1 (see pp. 9 & 10) That *Security4Women* commission a study using a similar methodology to the *Counting on Care Work* study in Massachusetts using data from, for example, the 2006 Census of Population and Housing and the 2006 Time Use Survey. This study will require estimates to be calculated (or updated) of the economic value of both paid and unpaid 'care work' in Australia.

Recommendation 2 (see p. 12)

That the Australian Bureau of Statistics undertake regular Time Use Surveys in the same year as the Census of Population and Housing to inform decisions regarding support for unpaid care work.

Recommendation 3 (see pp. 12 & 13)

That the Australian Bureau of Statistics regularly produces satellite accounts in line with the international System of National Accounts so that estimates of the value of unpaid care services are available for comparison with the value of Gross Domestic Product.

Gender equity

Recommendation 4 (see pp. 14 & 15)

That *Security4Women* lobby for policies that encourage men as well as women to combine paid work with care in the home to rectify the gender imbalance in the provision of unpaid care in line with international best practice which includes specified 'daddy leave' days, parental leave paid at replacement level and flexible leave provisions.

Intergenerational caring

Recommendation 5 (see p. 16)

That *Security4Women* investigate what forms of support would assist 'sandwich' generation carers who are caring for children as well as an adult family member who requires care.

Recommendation 6 (see p. 18)

That *Security4Women* advocate for the availability of paid and unpaid leave to cover family, friend and neighbourhood care, similar to parental leave provisions, to assist carers to participate in the labour market.

Recommendation 7 (see p. 19)

That *Security4Women* advocate for increased instrumental support for unpaid care in the form of affordable assistance from formal care services such as domiciliary care. That *Security4Women* advocate for increased instrumental support for unpaid care in the form of affordable assistance from formal care services such as domiciliary care.

Recommendation 8 (see p. 19) That *Security4Women* advocate for an increase in the availability and affordability of respite care for sole-parent carers, carers on a low income, and carers of people with a disability, mental illness or chronic conditions.

Recommendation 9 (see p.20)

That the Australian Government works with State/Territory Governments to reduce the waiting lists for respite care of families with disabled children.

Recommendation 10 (see p. 20)

That FaHCSIA undertake a proper assessment of the needs of families with disabled children and establish a minimum amount of respite care to be made available to families of differing circumstances.

Formal care

Recommendation 11 (see p. 35)

That *Security4Women* in conjunction with *Fair Work Australia* and other relevant bodies advocate for improved wages and working conditions for direct care staff employed in the community services industry.

Recommendation 12 (see p. 37)

That *Security4Women* in conjunction with *Fair Work Australia* and other relevant bodies advocate for increased wages and better working conditions for nurses and carers employed in residential aged care.

Impact on women's economic wellbeing

Recommendation 13 (see p. 62)

That *Security4Women* advocate for increased public funding to improve the income of carers providing extended care in the home.

Recommendation 14 (see pp. 64 & 65)

That *Security4Women* lobby for government intervention to address the gender wage gap in Australian workplaces.

Recommendation 15 (see p. 72)

That *Security4Women* in conjunction with *Fair Work Australia* and other relevant bodies advocate for flexible working conditions, in particular access to leave when required and flex-time, time off in lieu and the ability to change starting and finishing times throughout the Australian workforce to enable employees to undertake both child care and care for disabled or elderly adults.

Recommendation 16 (see pp. 76 – 79)

That *Security4Women* in conjunction with the *Office for Women* and other relevant organisations commission further research investigating the care economy, especially from a gender equity perspective, to address the paucity of data identified and so to better inform decision making.

Question 5: Is there anything else that you would like to add that has not already been captured?

X Yes No

Comments:

Please see our full report “Scoping the Australian Care Economy – A Gender Equity Perspective” attached.

Other information

To help us analyse the responses we receive, we would like to know a little bit more about you.

These questions are optional and you don't have to answer them for your submission to be considered.

However, please note page 12 explains information regarding privacy and confidentiality of any information you choose to submit.

Section A is for individual carers. Section B is for organisations. Please answer the questions in one section only.

Economic Security 4 Women – who are we?

eS4W is one of the six National Women's Alliances funded by the federal Office for Women. Being an alliance means that we work together with other women's organisations to achieve common goals to benefit Australian women and girls. In our case, we work towards improving women's economic well-being, including enhancing their potential to establish and achieve their financial goals.

eS4W engages with Australian women, and through consultation and research identifies the most important economic issues for women. eS4W prioritises the areas that need immediate and lasting change, advises Governments so they can formulate appropriate gender-inclusive policies and lobbies for change to benefit women. 90% of Carers are women, hence our focus on the Care Economy.

Current Member Organisations:

- AFGW Australian Federation of Graduate Women
- APESMA Assoc. of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Management Australia
- AWE Association of Women Educators
- BPWA Business and Professional Women Australia
- COSBOA The Council of Small Business Organisation of Australia
- DEAF HEAL'F
- IWFCI International Women's Federation of Commerce and Industry
- NAWIC National Association of Women in Construction
- NFAW National Foundation of Australian Women
- NTWWC, QWWS & WWCSA Working Women's Centres in NT, QLD and SA
- QVWC Queen Victoria Women's Centre
- VIEW Clubs Voice Interest and Education of Women
- WALTJA Aboriginal Community Association
- WAVE Women in Adult and Vocational Education
- WIRE Women's Information
- YWAS Young Workers' Advisory Service