

economic Security4Women submissions to:

Budget Policy Division
Department of the Treasury
Langton Crescent
PARKES ACT 2600
Via email to: prebudgetsubs@treasury.gov.au

Contact officer: Mr Bill Brummitt

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economic Security4Women: Pre-Budget Submission

Executive Summary

economic Security4Women (eS4W) is one of six National Women's Alliances funded by the Australian Government. Our members – women's organisations from across the country (see attachment for details) – agree that lifelong economic well-being is a high priority for all Australian women. It empowers women to make choices and live independently and it enriches all aspects of women's lives including their education, health, employment, personal safety and financial security over their lifetime.

We suggest that any additional spending associated with our recommendations will be offset either with equivalent savings or increased revenue. This revenue will be a result of higher rates of participation of women in the workforce and or higher rates of pay for women with improved skills and qualifications who will have greater access to formerly male dominated industries and occupations.

Key Issues and recommendations

Care Economy

Investment in care economy will allow higher rates of female participation in the workforce.

1. Invest in paid care
 - 1.1 Increase government investment in paid care: Improve the wages and conditions of paid care workers to overcome skills shortages; Improve participation of women and girls in education and training to ensure they have access to skilled and well paid work.
2. Support workforce participation of unpaid carers
 - 2.1 Reform National Employment Standards to cover the needs of people in casual and contract positions. Many of whom do not work full time due to caring responsibilities.
 - 2.2 Develop incentives to maintain the employment of carers including strengthening their right to return to work and their right to request flexible working conditions that accommodate care work.
 - 2.3 Ensure carers have access to education and retraining while they are caring on a full time basis. Explore recognition of existing skills. Allow recipients of Carer Payment to study. Design carer services to support both study and work.
 - 2.4 Task the Productivity Commission to examine both the supply of quality, affordable and age appropriate child care, as well the effect of the taxation and welfare transfer systems interacting with the cost of child care and with women's participation in the workforce.
 - 2.5 Ensure formal care services – to carer and to person receiving care – are flexible, available and also based on an assessment of the carer's needs.
3. Ensure carers have adequate retirement incomes
 - 3.1 Reform National Employment Standards and Superannuation Contribution Guarantee Legislation to reflect the gendered nature of workforce and reduce the negative impact on retirement incomes of people who have taken leave, reduced their working hours, and or taken lower paid work, in order to accommodate care responsibilities, the majority of whom are women.
 - 3.2 Explore Carer Credits in public and private pension schemes and employer paid superannuation contributions during Parental Leave.

Gender disaggregated data

1. Reinstate funding to Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) to bring forward next Work, Life and Family Survey (WLFS) to 2016 and to run each 6 years. This information is needed to track changes in the Care Economy.
2. Expand the ABS Employee Earnings and Hours survey and conduct annually to collect data on the hourly earnings of part-time and casual workers, disaggregated by sex, industry occupation, age and method of pay setting.
3. Make resources available to the Australian Bureau of Statistics to address gaps in the annual Forms of Employment survey that lead to the underreporting of the use of agency workers and labour hire.
4. Make resources available to National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) so that all its publications and data sets are disaggregated by gender as a matter of course.

5. Make resources available to NCVET to provide as a matter of course and in the public domain gender data for enrolments and course completions disaggregated by both level of qualification and field of education.
6. Make resources available to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency to collect and analyse data to demonstrate the dimensions of inequality in workplaces (KPMG Review of EOWW Legislation).

Education and training for women and girls

Investment in education and training will enable women access to formerly male dominated industries and occupations that usually have higher rates of pay.

1. Establish and resource a National Strategy for Women and Girls in Vocational Education and Training (VET) with clear priorities and accountability mechanisms, including linking VET funding arrangements to key performance measures (KPMs) for women and girls, especially those most disadvantaged.
2. Ensure that all skills-related Australian Government programmes and policies identify and analyse their impacts on women and girls and provide enhanced opportunities to build the skills of Australian women and girls, particularly in emerging and non-traditional industries.
3. Restore programs to prepare women including migrant women and other marginalised women to re-enter the workforce.

Workplace gender equity in small to medium enterprises

Investment in small business will increase productivity and generate revenue.

1. Allocate additional resources to Workplace Gender Equity Agency to develop tools for SMEs to identify and reduce gender pay inequities and assist those firms to change business practices to ensure they get and keep the best person for the job.
2. Provide training about and resources for human resource management for SMEs with a focus on recruitment and selection processes, job analysis and job descriptions, developing performance management systems and reward systems and pay equity.
2. Maintain and strengthen a strong, effective and up-to-date modern award system to ensure minimum terms and conditions of employment, including, base pay rates, job requirements and other 'rewards' associated with particular jobs.
3. Expand the National Employment Standards to ensure coverage of all workers including those in casual employment and those on individual time limited contracts, many of whom are women.

Emerging issues

- Reverse changes to Parenting Payment
 - Allow single parents to remain on Parenting Payment while looking for paid work and to receive part payments while they juggle work and family commitments OR
- Increase to Newstart Allowance
 - Increase Newstart Allowance to prevent all people not in paid employment from living in poverty. While current rates might support someone in the short term, those unemployed for three months or longer need a higher rate of income, improved access to education and training and better support to get work.
- Increased investment in single parent families and in the unemployed will generate revenue and ultimately contribute to increased productivity.
- Increase investment in affordable, well-located housing

Economic security is based on access to affordable and well located housing. eS4W encourages further public investment in all forms of social and affordable housing. We endorse the submission of Equality Rights Alliance.

eS4W is able to provide supporting information, or contacts for further discussion, on any of the topics within this submission, as well as on other issues affecting women's economic security.

Please contact our Coordinator on 1300 918 273 or email coordinator@security4women.org.au

1. Overview

eS4W is one of six National Women's Alliances funded by the Australian Government. Our members – women's organisations from across the country (see attachment) – agree that lifelong economic well-being is a high priority for all Australian women. It empowers women to make choices and live independently and it enriches all aspects of women's lives including their education, health, employment, personal safety and financial security over their lifetime (See Attachment 1: About economic Security4Women and list of member organisations).

Our members:

- identify barriers to women's economic security
- prioritise the key issues for action to bring about change
- engage with Government on behalf of all Australian women and
- advise and encourage government to formulate appropriate policy directions.

eS4W welcomes the Government's move from a surplus that would result in decreased investment in Australia's future well-being. We welcome investment in measures that will in the first instance improve the economic security for women and we believe will, in the longer term, generate revenue that will offset any additional spending.

Our pre-budget submission aims to provide insight into the challenges and opportunities facing women, based on the experiences of members of women's organisations who have a focus on economic security.

The following issues were identified by our member organisations and the related recommendations are based on research and consultation with those member organisations. Further detail on each issue can be found in the attachments.

2. Key issues and recommendations

A. Care Economy

As a nation, we need to recognise and count the contribution to productivity of paid and unpaid care, the efficiencies of retaining workers in the care sector and to maintain the supply of care. (See Attachment 2: 'Short supply and increasing demand in the care economy').

To do so eS4W makes the following suggestions:

A.1. Invest in paid care

A 1.1 Increase government investment in paid care: Improve the wages and conditions of paid care workers to overcome skills shortages; Improve participation of women and girls in education and training to ensure they have access to skilled and well paid work.

A 2. Support workforce participation of unpaid carers

A 2.1 Reform National Employment Standards to cover the needs of people in casual and contract positions. Many of whom do not work full time due to caring responsibilities.

A 2.2 Develop incentives to maintain the employment of carers including strengthening their right to return to work and their right to request flexible working conditions that accommodate care work.

A 2.3 Ensure carers have access to education and retraining while they are caring on a full time basis. Explore recognition of existing skills. Allow recipients of Carer Payment to study. Design carer services to support both study and work.

A 2.4 Task the Productivity Commission to examine both the supply of quality, affordable and age appropriate child care, as well the effect of the taxation and welfare transfer systems interacting with the cost of child care and with women's participation in the workforce.

A 2.5 Ensure formal care services – to carer and to person receiving care – are flexible, available and also based on an assessment of the carer's needs.

A.3. Ensure carers have adequate retirement incomes

A 3.1 Reform National Employment Standards and Superannuation Contribution Guarantee Legislation to reflect the gendered nature of the care workforce and reduce the negative impact on retirement incomes of people who have taken leave, reduced their working hours, and or taken lower paid work, in order to accommodate care responsibilities, the majority of whom are women.

A 3.2 Explore Carer Credits in public and private pension schemes and employer paid superannuation contributions during Parental Leave.

B. Gender disaggregated data

Member organisations of eS4W need ready access to gender disaggregated data to track trends as well as the current status and position of women and girls in the areas of our core business, and so provide evidence for issues in our ongoing dialogue with Government.

In order to be able to measure improvements or otherwise in the economic security of women, eS4W advocates for the need for publically accessible statistical data disaggregated by sex as a matter of course in all relevant data domains and collections and by all relevant agencies.

To do so eS4W makes the following suggestions.

- B 1. Reinstate funding to Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) to bring forward next Work, Life and Family Survey (WLFS) to 2016 and to run each 6 years. This information is particularly needed to track changes in the Care Economy.
- B 2. Expand the ABS Employee Earnings and Hours survey and conduct annually so that data is available annually on the hourly earnings of part-time and casual workers, disaggregated by gender, industry occupation, age and method of pay setting.
- B 3. Make resources available to the Australian Bureau of Statistics to address gaps in the annual Forms of Employment survey that lead to the underreporting of the use of agency workers and labour hire.
- B 4. Make resources available to National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) so that all its publications and data sets are disaggregated by gender as a matter of course; in particular all commentary and graphs in NCVER publications – and especially in the case of data re apprenticeships and traineeships as required by international (and national) conventions.
- B 5. Make resources available to NCVER to provide as a matter of course and in the public domain gender data for enrolments and course completions disaggregated by both level of qualification and field of education. Such data are vital to address labour uptake in industries and occupations that are masculinised and/or feminised, as well as where there are known skill shortages.
- B 6. Make resources available to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency to collect and analyse data to demonstrate the dimensions of inequality in workplaces (KPMG Review of EOWW Legislation) and to produce data to measure progress over time, which can be used to educate employers about best practice. Use data to identify and understand hidden issues of WGE.

C. Education and training for women and girls

There has been no national policy framework for women and girls in education since 1996 and the recently expired national strategy for Vocational Education and Training (VET) (2004-2010) - that called for gender analysis of the top two KPMs - was not implemented.

The Australian Government needs to ensure that national skills and VET reforms build the best available opportunities for women to participate in the workforce and to therefore contribute to an increase in productivity (See Attachment 3 'Career pathways for women and girls in emergent 'green' industries and non-traditional occupations').

To do so eS4W makes the following suggestions.

- C 1. Establish and resource a National Strategy for Women and Girls in VET with clear priorities and accountability mechanisms, including linking VET funding arrangements to key performance measures (KPMs) for women and girls, especially those most disadvantaged.
- C 2. Ensure that all skills-related Australian Government programmes and policies identify and analyse their impacts on women and girls and provide enhanced opportunities to build the skills of Australian women and girls, particularly in emerging and non-traditional industries.
- C 3. Restore programs to prepare women including migrant women and other marginalised women to re-enter the workforce.

D. Workplace gender equity in small to medium enterprises

Significant advances around gender pay equity and women's workforce participation have been made in the large firms of Australia; they are required to report to the Australian Government on their progress towards the elimination of discrimination and on their contribution to gender equality in the workplace. However while small to medium enterprises (SMEs) are a vital part of the Australian economy, providing almost half of total industry employment and employing many women, many are not aware of the business case for gender equality in the workforce. As a result they are unable to demonstrate gender pay equity or are not prepared to consider more flexible working arrangements and are therefore less able to take advantage of the increased participation of women in the workforce (See Attachment 4 'Pay and Workforce Gender Equity').

To do so eS4W makes the following suggestions.

- D 1. Reverse the cuts made to the then Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) in 2012-13 budget and increase funding to Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA).
- D 2. Allocate additional resources to WGE Agency to develop tools for SMEs to identify and reduce gender pay inequities and assist those firms to change business practices to ensure they get and keep the best person for the job.
- D 3. Allocate additional resources to promote to SME's the business case, the good economic and productivity arguments, for increased participation of women in workforce.
- D 4. Provide training about and resources for human resource management for SMEs with a focus on recruitment and selection processes, job analysis and job descriptions, developing performance management systems and reward systems and pay equity.
- D 5. Maintain and strengthen a strong, effective and up-to-date modern award system to ensure minimum terms and conditions of employment, including, base pay rates, job requirements and other 'rewards' associated with particular jobs.
- D 6. Expand the National Employment Standards to ensure coverage of all workers including those in casual employment and those on individual time limited contracts, many of whom are women.
- D 7. Develop and fund strategies to overcome barriers to equality in women's employment. In particular:
 - Access to age appropriate and affordable childcare.
 - Access to leadership training;
 - Access to flexible working arrangements, especially on return from parental leave.

E. Emerging issues

- E.1. Reverse changes to Parenting Payment
Allow single parents to remain on Parenting Payment while looking for paid work and to receive part payments while they juggle work and family commitments
- E.2. Increase to Newstart Allowance
Increase Newstart Allowance to prevent unemployed people living in poverty. While current rates might support someone in the short term, those unemployed for three months or longer need a higher rate of income and greater support to get work.

- E.3. Increase investment in affordable, well-located housing
Economic security is based on access to affordable and well located housing. eS4W encourages further public investment in all forms of social and affordable housing. eS4W endorses the Pre-Budget Submission made by our sister organisation, Equality Rights Alliance.

3. Appendices

- Position papers:
- List of members
- Letters of endorsements (from members)