

## eS4W Forum: Background paper

### Education + training: Are they sufficient for the economic security for women

#### About economic Security4Women

**eS4W** is an alliance of women's organisations united in the belief that economic wellbeing and financial security are essential for women and will enable women of all ages to have an equal place in society.

The role of eS4W is to:

- bring together women's organisations and individuals from across Australia to share information, identify barriers to women's economic security and to identify solutions by prioritising the key issues for action to bring about change
- engage actively with the Australian Government on policy issues as part of a better more informed and representative dialogue between women and government.

#### Context of forum

One of the barriers to economic security that women have identified is the difficulties in accessing affordable education and training for women of all ages and eS4W has focused on this topic since 2004.

The most recent research project on this topic was completed in 2012 by Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE) for economic Security4Women<sup>1</sup>. It demonstrated that attention to effectively support women into science, technology, engineering and mathematics-based careers is still inadequate.

**This is supported by a 2013 report by NSW Women on the pattern of women's employment in trade and technical jobs in Australia (specifically NSW)<sup>2</sup>.**

"In many technical and professional occupations women's share of the workforce has been increasing over time. For example, women have made up 50 per cent or more of professional occupations since the mid-2000s. However, there are more challenges in the construction, automotive and electro-technology trades where women have been the 'missing 48 per cent' - less than two per cent of the workforce - for the last 25 years".

eS4W is concerned about the flow on effects of this gender segregation; it impacts on women' in the long term as they are over represented in lower paid occupations and get less benefits which in turn impacts on their retirement savings and in many cases results in higher rates of poverty in old age.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.security4women.org.au/projects/education-and-training-of-girls-and-women/1439-2>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.women.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/268010/3000\\_WNSW-OccasionalPaper\\_document\\_ART.pdf](http://www.women.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/268010/3000_WNSW-OccasionalPaper_document_ART.pdf)

NSW Women cites 'deeply embedded cultural attitudes and practices' that influence how girls perceive work in non-traditional trades, how employers and workers view female workers, and how the jobs themselves are structured, often having been designed to suit men's rather than women's lives.

NSW Women also suggests that the education and training system tends to replicate these labour market divisions between 'women's' and 'men's' jobs.

Our concern is that this results in the gender pay gap and women's lack of retirement savings/superannuation balances.

### Speakers at the forum

**At the upcoming forum, Kira Clarke<sup>3</sup>** will present initial findings from the three year research project 'Vocations: the link between post compulsory education and the labour market'<sup>4</sup> that suggest outcomes for many young women from VET in Schools reinforce existing gender divisions and the gender segregated labour force.

Another project supported by eS4W in 2010, the Girls Into Trades Project<sup>5</sup> prompted new thinking around future directions to increase the interest of female students in Years 9 to 12 in non-traditional occupations and industries. Findings included the need for:

- information and practical experience in a wider range of trades for these students, responses to interest in associated business possibilities, and
- support for finding further information about trades and training and employment opportunities.

This is currently being considered for development in the next three years of eS4W activity.

But is education enough?

The Work and Careers in Australian Universities Survey<sup>6</sup> has found that a significant proportion of even an educated workforce - over four-fifths of staff have a degree, with 37 per cent having a Bachelor degree, 42 per cent having a post-graduate qualification and 5 per cent a PhD – **do not have economic security as they are employed on fixed-term contracts or casual hourly paid contracts.**

- Almost half (44 per cent) of the academic staff are on fixed-term contracts, as are 28 per cent of professional/general staff. By definition, all sessional teaching staff are on casual contracts.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.security4women.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Girls-into-Trades-11-December1.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.griffith.edu.au/business-government/centre-work-organisation-wellbeing/research/regulation-institutions/projects/work-careers-australian-universities>

**Dr Kaye Broadbent**<sup>7</sup>, a member of the research team will speak on the survey observations of an ongoing pattern of gender segregation among professional/general staff.

- Greater proportions of women than men are at HEW 4 and HEW 5 levels (36 % of women and 20% of men), with lower proportions for HEW 8 and above (23 % of women compared to 37% of men).
- Women are present in higher concentrations in faculties and schools doing administrative and clerical work whereas men are in greater numbers within information services and technology and facilities management.
- Men are more likely than women to occupy management positions (23% of men and 16% of women) and are more likely to supervise staff and manage a budget. Just over one third of the men (37%) earn more than \$78,000 per annum compared with one-fifth (19%) of the women.

This trend in the Higher Education sector reinforced the concerns raised about Insecure Work at two forums hosted by eS4W in Melbourne and Adelaide last year<sup>8</sup>.

#### **Other speakers yet to be confirmed will consider**

- **What is happening for young women in high schools and what is needed?**
- **How can partnerships with Trade Training Centres be improved for young women?**
- **What post school options are there for young women with disabilities?**

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<sup>8</sup> Summary of issues raised at Melbourne and Adelaide forums on Insecure Work hosted by eS4W - .  
<http://www.security4women.org.au/wp-content/uploads/es4wSummaryMelAdel2012.pdf>