

## **eS4W: Sharing information, identifying issues and raising concerns**

*Towards gender-sensitive policy-making: Applying a gender lens to the work of the Australian Government*

economic Security4Women is seeking a commitment from all political parties and independent representatives in both the House of Representatives and the Senate that the next Australian Government will adopt the principle that all reports, policy recommendations, legislation and program details include an analysis of their impact on women in Australia including women who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, women with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds and women living in regional, rural and remote locations.

We are seeking a commitment to the gender analysis of policy directions by Ministers and the adoption of gender responsive budgets by government departments with auditing performed by the Departments of Treasury and of Finance in consultation with Office for Women and the National Women's Alliances.

We propose that the next government phase in the publication of gender impact assessments and gender disaggregated data associated with Australian Government legislation, policies, budget and annual reports by 2015.

The intention is to ensure women in Australia do not suffer the consequences of direct or indirect discrimination and have the opportunity to enjoy full citizenship and equal access to the sources of life long economic wellbeing.

While women make up at least half of the population in Australia we are not equally represented

- In all levels of government
- At all levels of management and in all industries
- In decent work

Furthermore, women are more likely than men to experience multiple disadvantage, and also more likely to experience persistent disadvantage - the gap between men and women is wider the longer the disadvantage persists. Around 40 per cent of the people aged 18 to 64 years who experienced multiple disadvantage in 2006 experienced multiple disadvantage two years later<sup>1</sup> (See appendix 1).

We are also seeking your commitments on the following recommendations made by women from Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney and Brisbane in forums held by economic Security4Women. While the forums have focused on three key issues, the concern about the lack of secure work and the impact of insecure work on women's current and future economic security has been constant and pervasive.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/resources/how-australia-is-faring/multiple-disadvantage>.

We seek these commitments and offer the following information based on the key roles of the National Women's Alliances which are firstly, to actively engage with:

- the Australian Government and its agencies, including the Office for Women.
- our member organisations;
- individual women;
- other National Women's Alliances; and
- other stakeholders, which may include state / territory governments and mainstream non-government organisations representing the private and community sectors

and secondly, to progress the following, in relation to issues affecting women or equality between women and men:

- to identify and respond to policy issues specific to our Alliance;
- to share information, identify issues and raise concerns with the Government; and
- to explore opportunities to collaborate with the parties listed above to progress common issues of importance.

## **1. Gender equity**

Women are slipping behind on some dimensions of employment equality as a result of changes in the economy and industry practices. There is more insecure work, and reduced opportunity for gender pay parity. Of concern are recent figures showing female graduates are paid lower wages than men for the same work at the same skill level. Women looking for Full-time work have higher rates of unemployment than men and have higher rates of underemployment than men. The perennial arguments for 'a fair deal for women' must equally be at the centre of any policy or programs.

**Q** Will your party commit to bring a renewed focus and energy for equal opportunity for women across a range of dimensions of employment, in particular how both men and women can better balance their work and care responsibilities?

### **1.1 Workplace gender equity in the small business**

Over the past three years economic Security4Women has worked towards an increased understanding of the gender pay gap and gender pay issues particularly amongst women under 35 years.

We are continuing our focus on gender pay equity in the small to medium enterprises (SME) sector, working to engage and support small businesses in the steps and processes needed to ensure they offer pay equity across genders. We will also be narrowing this focus to the increasing number of women starting their own small businesses to explore if they are paying themselves an equitable wage and if they are able to save a proportion of their income for their retirements.

We do this as the SME sector is Australia's largest non-government employer, and we look forward to working with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency to develop the tools identified in our research – Attitudes to gender equity in small firms – that will help small businesses offer a gender equitable workplace that attracts and retains quality staff in a competitive labour environment. This support is necessary as SMEs generally lack formal systems to manage employment relationships, specifically human resource management expertise.

Our research found:

- 1.1.1. A lack of knowledge about gender pay equity within SMEs and managers and owner managers of SMEs who were generally noncommittal about applying a gender pay audit to their firms.
- 1.1.2. In SME's there are both 'traditional' attitudes of managers in relation to women's and men's work and more inclusive attitudes as a result of changes in the economy and society as a whole; it is the owner-manager's values, attitudes and previous work experience that are important in terms of their treatment of women
- 1.1.3. Awards hold back pay inequity between award covered, lower paid employees while pay equity gaps are biggest when individualised 'rewards' are given to high performing or 'meritorious' employees.

Furthermore, SMEs have been difficult to reach with information and advice about a range of business topics generally and more so about those difficult to understand such as pay equity.

**Q** Will your party commit to identify and supply the resources required by small business and maintain the award system and other policy directions that contribute to improved gender equality outcomes?

## **2. Decent work**

In late 2012, economic Security4Women co-hosted two forums (Melbourne and Adelaide) to apply a gender lens to the findings of the Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work and to ensure gender was firmly on the agenda when members of the trade union movement met with civil society to consider alternatives to the increasingly insecure nature of work.

Issues raised at the forums included:

### **2.1 Labour regulation**

That current labour law is failing women. Most importantly the *National Employment Standards* need to be extended to include casual workers. Currently they exclude a very large proportion – one quarter - of female workers who are in casual work.

Given that women are the majority of casual workers; this could be seen to be a violation of the Australian Government's commitment to gender equity.

**Q** Will your party commit to extend the NES to casual employees by introducing 'deeming provisions' so that casual employees can accrue the same entitlements over time as permanent employees?

### **2.2 The role of government in fostering insecure employment**

Government practices in terms of procurement and contracting can foster insecure employment for women in feminized occupations especially in areas such as health care, social services, education.

**Q** Will your party commit to consider all the recommendations from the Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work? In particular, we seek your commitment that your government will act to influence the adoption of fair and consistent employment practices, terms and

conditions throughout its own internal operations and also in those services provided for and on its behalf through procurement and contract labour arrangements?

*The Inquiry was informed about the role of government as a facilitator of insecure employment in two major respects:*

- 1. The growth of expenditure upon and engagement of non-continuing employees and workers in historically core activities of the public services of the Federal and state governments.*
- 2. The current models of government contracting and funding of activities to private sector and not-for-profit sector organisations directly contributes to the adoption of insecure employment mechanisms by those entities.*

*Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia 2012 p52.*

### **2.3 Income support**

A further issue relating to government relates to the welfare to work model of income support that aims to get people into work as quickly as possible with no obligation on the employment services to ensure that the work is long term or will provide a living wage. This is important for the women who are pressured into low paid casual jobs rather than being assisted into better quality sustainable employment. Rather than investing in the skills and education of many disadvantaged job seekers to improve their chances of using such work as a bridge into decent work, many become trapped in insecure work without any options.

**Q** Will your party commit to support job seekers into decent work through the combination of income support, work and study?

## **3. The Care Economy**

### **3.1 Care work and paid work**

As you know many women today struggle to balance care responsibilities and paid employment, especially permanent and full time work. In part this is due to job designs and entrenched attitudes and gendered stereotypes as well as insufficient, suitable and affordable care options.

The result is that many women take up casual part time jobs that are not in their best long term labour market and economic interests. While many businesses, organizations and government talk about work-life balance, this is not the reality for many women.

**Q** Will your party commit to the provision of care options that facilitate the participation of unpaid carers in the workforce and or in education and training to upgrade their skills?

economic Security4Women has commissioned two pieces of work that apply a gender lens on the supply and demand of care work and explore the impact of the care economy on women's lifelong economic security (<http://www.security4women.org.au/projects/the-australian-care-economy>).

In March 2013 a broad range of women were invited to consider as a whole four pieces of research on paid and unpaid care that included our research and 'Valuing Unpaid Care'

published by Australian Human Rights Commission. They came up with the following suggestions to policy makers:

### **3.2 *To promote gender equity, to recognise the economic value of care, its contribution to productivity and to invest in the care economy***

Already family members engage in discussions about the opportunity cost associated with providing unpaid care to relatives and friends. Only as the gender pay gap narrows, will there be less incentive for women to 'normally' be primary carers.

**Q** Will your party commit to

3.2.1 Continue to support all carers and extend and tailor that support to those who wish to remain in the workforce and or who wish to study/train in anticipation of returning to decent work.

3.2.2 Explore the potential to build on past informal caring responsibilities and link mature age women with the paid care sector.

3.2.3 Explore CALD workforce issues in the care economy

3.2.4 Promote the business case for pay equity and permanence in paid care work; acknowledging the value of retaining workers and building on their skills; acknowledging the relational nature of care work.

### **3.3 *To build on and increase the official recognition of unpaid carers***

**Q** Will your party commit to:

3.3.1 Increase income support for unpaid carer's and align it with the Age Pension;

3.3.2 Offer affordable and accessible training to mature aged carers who are looking to return to the work force

3.3.3 Improve paid care services to support social and economic participation of unpaid carers

3.3.4 Model Paid Carers Leave on Paid Parental Leave and extend it to other forms of unpaid care commitments

3.3.5 Explore the provision of superannuation carer credits and implement them in the next term of government

3.3.6 Make changes to the provision of Aged Care Pension to recognise the previous contribution of unpaid care work that has had a negative impact on retirement savings.

## **4. Education, training and career pathways for women and girls**

While women and girls are completing secondary and further education and training at similar and sometimes higher rates as their male counterparts, the pay gap continues, the labour market remains deeply segregated along gender lines and women remain under represented in senior executive roles and on boards and over represented in casual work. We believe one of the causes of occupational segregation and gender-based discrimination in employment is the lack of a gender

lens being applied to the policy portfolios of Education, Training and Workplace Relations, Social Inclusion and in the COAG Indicators.

More needs to be done to encourage women and girls into non-traditional industries and occupations (<http://www.security4women.org.au/projects/education-and-training-of-girls-and-women>) and the current provision of education and training does not guarantee economic security for women in the short or long term.

Our most recent forum in Brisbane agreed that:

1. While women have the right to education, options and results, more needs to be done to result in better employment outcomes. As stated above, insecure work can be found in all industries and occupations; at all levels including the higher education sector where it is affecting academic staff with high levels of education and training. Decent work is not insecure, casual work and casual work is not always a bridge to permanent work; for many women it is a trap with limited pathways out.

**Q** Will your party commit to a more informed and representative dialogue between women and governments; with industry and employer bodies; with the trade union movement and professional associations to ensure that education and training creates steps and pathways for women and girls into decent work?

*Decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men. Viewed in June 2013 at <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>*

2. Career Exploration that outlines strategic pathways into decent work is needed for girls and young women as they transition from school into adult life. These pathways are often made up of steps that include: study, employment, parenting, unemployment, underemployment, learning life skills and combinations of all.

**Q** Will your party commit to explore permanent secondary school-based programs to attract young women into non-traditional occupations and industries with better pay and conditions: examples to build on include RoboGirls; Girls into Trades; Girls into Hard Hats; Supporting Teenagers with Education, Mothering and Mentoring program (STEMM)?

We need school based programs for girls that are set in the context of their long term economic wellbeing with modules around gender segregation in the labour market, pay and conditions; employment rights; financial literacy; non-traditional jobs, industries and introductions into technologies.

School-based career guidance needs to be updated and widened to ensure girls get exposure to a range of careers and the opportunity to explore many; it also needs to start with students at younger ages in primary school and Years 7 & 8.

Keeping the focus on female students, career exploration needs to be set in context of the factors that influence career choices: family; subjects liked; cost; transport and

community while exploring what students need for long term economic security and a strategic pathway to that end.

These programs need to reflect the different circumstances and provide positive impacts for girls with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and or CALD backgrounds.

It is important for school based programs to create and maintain links with: local employers and Chambers of Commerce and Industry; industry associations; employee associations; non-government organisations; other schools; family; teachers; the wider community as well as a range of individual women working in non-traditional occupations and industries.

3. Gender needs to be acknowledged in the NPSI and in the process of meeting student needs as girls and young women do experience barriers to decent work and require additional support while the wider community comes to embrace gender equity.

**Q** Will your party commit to disaggregating by gender and subject streams student outcome benchmarks to demonstrate that girls have access to equal employment outcomes as a result of their education?

and

**Q** Will your party commit to making available loadings for programs that encourage girls to explore non-traditional occupations and industries?

#### **4.1 Skills development and VET reforms**

The Australian Government needs to ensure that national skills and VET reforms build the best available opportunities for women.

**Q** Will your party commit to the following necessary steps to provide these:

1. Establishing a National Strategy for Women and Girls in Vocational Education and Training with clear priorities and accountability mechanisms, including linking VET funding arrangements to key performance measures (KPMs) for women and girls, especially those most disadvantaged.

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

2. Ensuring that all skills-related Australian Government programmes and policies provide enhanced opportunities to build the skills of Australian women and girls, particularly in emerging and non-traditional industries.

*There is no analysis of gender or equity in 'Skills for all Australians'; the 2012 reform of the national vocational education and training system to address skills shortages across the economy.*

3. Requiring State and Territory governments and relevant private service providers to, as a condition of receiving Commonwealth funding for VET and related activities, commit to

and report against the key outcomes of a new National Strategy for Women and Girls in Vocational Education and Training

4. Ensuring the resources are available to report on whether Australian government policies and programs are effectively supporting women and girls into career and employment pathways in emerging and non-traditional industries
5. Recognising the complexity and challenges associated with gender and how it intersects with other structural and systemic labour market barriers and discrimination, resource Workplace Gender Equality Agency or other parties through the National Research Council, to undertake research and analysis on mechanisms to enhance participation of women and girls in emerging and non-traditional career pathways, including examining international best practice.

The Australian Government needs to ensure that its policies and programmes are gender inclusive to meet the commitments it made to international agreements especially CSW 55 2011-Access and participation of women and girls in education, training and science and technology, including the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work.

## Appendix 1 Gender analysis

Gender analysis examines the differences in women's and men's lives, including those which lead to social and economic inequity for either gender, and applies this understanding to policy development and service delivery.

Gender analysis is concerned with the underlying causes of these inequities, and aims to achieve positive change for the disadvantaged gender. Gender analysis provides a basis for analysis of the evidence-based differences between women's and men's lives, and this removes the possibility of analysis being based on incorrect assumptions and stereotypes.

Gender analysis aims to achieve equity, rather than equality.

**Gender equality is based on the premise that women and men should be treated in the same way. This approach has been criticised in failing to recognise that equal treatment will not produce equitable results, because women and men have different life experiences.**

Meanwhile, a gender equity approach takes into consideration the differences in women's and men's lives and recognises that different approaches may be needed to produce outcomes that are equitable.

Gender analysis recognises that:

- Women's and men's lives and therefore experiences, needs, issues and priorities are different
- Women's lives are not all the same; the interests that women have in common may be determined as much by their social position or their ethnic identity as by the fact they are women
- Women's and men's life experiences, needs, issues and priorities are different for different ethnic and racial groups
- The life experiences, needs, issues, and priorities vary for different groups of women and men dependent on age, ethnicity, disability, income levels, employment status, marital status, sexual orientation and whether they have dependants
- Different strategies may be necessary to achieve equitable outcomes for women and men and different groups of women and men.

### Gender budgeting

The process of mainstreaming gender budgeting should eventually result in gender responsive budgets. The terms gender responsive budgets, gender-sensitive budgets, gender budgets and women's budgets are often used inter-changeably.

Gender budgeting

- Refers to the process of conceiving, planning, approving, executing, monitoring, analysing and auditing budgets in a gender-sensitive way
- Involves analysis of actual expenditure and revenue (usually of governments) on women and girls as compared to expenditures on men and boys
- Helps Governments to decide how policies need to be made, adjusted and reprioritized
- Is a tool for effective policy implementation where one can check if the allocations are in line with policy commitments and are having the desired impact

## Five Steps of Gender Budgeting

1. An analysis of the situation for women and men and girls and boys (and the different sub-groups) in a given sector.
2. An assessment of the extent to which the sector's policy addresses the gender issues and gaps described in the first step. This step should include an assessment of the relevant legislation, policies, programs and schemes. It includes an analysis of both the written policy as well as the implicit policy reflected in government activities. It should examine the extent to which the above meet the socio-economic and other rights of women.
3. An assessment of the adequacy of budget allocations to implement the gender sensitive policies and programs identified in step 2 above.
4. Monitoring whether the money was spent as planned, what was delivered and to whom? This involves checking both financially and the physical deliverables (disaggregated by sex)
5. An assessment of the impact of the policy / program / scheme and the extent to which the situation described in step 1 has been changed, in the direction of greater gender equality.

### **Gender Auditing**

Gender Auditing is part of the Gender Budgeting process. Gender auditing is the process that is conducted after the budget has been adopted and implemented. It is the process of reviewing financial outlays – looking at trends over time, percentage shares etc.; analysing and assessing systems actually put in place, processes adopted, outcomes and impacts of budgetary outlays vis-à-vis what was planned – all this through a gender lens.

The three main components of Gender Budgeting are Policy Appraisal, Gender Budgeting and Gender Auditing.