

economic Security4Women CSW101 Webinar – December 2018

Transcript Michelle Deshong presentation

REPRESENTATION IN THE GLOBAL ARENA

I thought it might be useful to provide a bit of a prospective from my own experience in terms of participating at various UN Fora but I've been at like United Nations permanent forums on indigenous issues CEDAW and or also CSW I think I've been to CSW about 5 times and of those visits I actually participated on the Government delegations for one of those years.

So, I thought I might do is talk very quickly about how the kind of representations come together, I do note that particularly some of the representations for the government delegations have been challenging over the years and I feel that it is getting even more challenging with the refinement of eligibility criteria.

So one of the issues as an Aboriginal woman is to make sure that we can continue to represent the voices of women of diversity and that intersectionality has to play a big part in our representation from Australia into this space because just as Carole said in the introduction, it's the marginalisation of women in a domestic space that is absolutely important for us to recognise and to utilise that global space to have influence and impact.

So one of the challenges I think that is really important for people when they are attending CSW is to have a bit of time pre-departure to understand what the critical issues are; to speak to people who are working in the field all the time, particularly if this is your first opportunity, touching base; being a part of the conversations; the teleconferences; working with people in the sector for a little while to get a bit of a handle of what might be the dominant themes and messages that we want to get across as part of that opportunity.

Also, from an Aboriginal perspective I think that it is absolutely imperative that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women must have the right to build their own collective positions and also be a part of that representation and delegation, not only for the Government delegation but also they must be fairly represented in NGOs more broadly. Partly because one of the commonalities that runs through that CSW space is, again as Carole mentioned, an opportunity to have some of the caucuses around particular themes and having participated in the Indigenous caucus for many years, what we see is a similarity in the conversations and the key messages and we actually can also get our own kind of mobilisation from that place.

I think one of the questions I would like to consider before they go to CSW is "What have you actually done to increase the capacity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to be a part of the celebrations, and if you haven't done anything, what might you do?" Similarly, for all women of diversity how are we engaging and understanding their view points.

I wanted to talk just briefly about some of the concerns I have had in previous years when one non-Indigenous NGO have been in this space and they have really spoken about critical indigenous issues and have misrepresented what that means for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders women.

I want to give a quick example of what this is about, a few years ago as many of you may know the intervention that was applied to Aboriginal people living in the Northern Territory, was a really distressing piece of legislation, it meant that the Racial Discrimination Act had to be lifted to enact it. It also created a number of different challenges domestically for indigenous people living under that

regime, and we have non-Indigenous people representing in that global space, basically saying the intervention was a really good thing. This was in contradiction to the messages that Indigenous women were putting into that space that it was actually a violation of our Racial Discrimination Act and a violation of our human rights in terms of our rights, choice and the way in which we engaged in our own business.

So I think you need to really be critically thinking about who you are there with, how you represent and what is the ramifications around your own representation and then finally the next thing I would like to say is PLEASE be very considerate of not taking the space of women of diversity. It's very easy for people to have access to lots of these networks and opportunities but in that international arena it is absolutely imperative that we must insure that everybody gets a fair opportunity to speak and to represent and that there are many of us who have been before and that are always available either pre or during the event, we are usually on big email networks and things like that, but being very clear about what we are going there to do, having a bit of a united voice around what the commonalities and things are and how we are empowering the voices of those most disadvantaged I think they are the key take aways that I would like to share with people.