

MEDIA RELEASE

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eS4W supports IWD 2017
“Empower a Woman, empower a nation”

eS4W acknowledges this international women’s day and asks that we all renew our efforts to increase women’s participation in the workforce. The 2017 theme for International Women’s Day – [“Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030”](#) is as relevant to Australia as it is to the international community. Only 50 per cent of working age women are represented in the labour force globally, compared to 76 per cent of men. Importantly, an overwhelming majority of women are “employed” in the informal economy, subsidizing care and domestic work, and concentrated in lower-paid, lower-skill occupations with little or no social protection. Achieving gender equality in the world of work is imperative for sustainable development and eS4W will be participating in Parallel and Side Events at this years Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations in New York, to emphasise our Government’s commitment to the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (in particular: #4 Quality Education; #5 Gender Equality; #8 Decent Work and Economic Growth).

Australia’s female employment participation rate is slowly climbing (currently 59.5%) but remains highly segregated. More than half of all new jobs being created are forecast to be in just four sectors: Health Care and Social Assistance; Professional Scientific and Technical Services; Education and Training; and Retail Trade. Of these Health Care and Social Assistance is predicted to lead with 250,200 new jobs by 2020. This was one of the trends discussed at the recent JERA International Who Cares! National Forum in Melbourne. In particular, the Forum also focused on the amount of unpaid care provided by women – having a direct impact on women’s ability to fully engage in the formal economy. Looking at care work as an economic activity is a way of making women’s work visible, so that it can be valued. We find that women continue to provide the majority of unpaid care (1:48)¹; this reduces their capacity to participate fully in the paid workforce resulting in a long term negative impact on their financial security. Of equal concern is the 13% gender pay gap in the feminised areas such as Health Care and Social Assistance, where around 80% of employees are women.

Overcoming barriers to increasing women’s participation and closing the gender pay gap would provide huge economic benefits: if women were to participate in today’s economy identically to men, it would add \$28 trillion, or 26% to the global GDP by 2025.

Media contact:

Roselynn Anderson, eS4W Chair, M: 0418 715 359 | chair@security4women.org.au

¹ <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/australian-unpaid-care-work-and-the-labour-market.pdf>