

Queensland Women's Strategy

Submission prepared by
National Council of Women Qld Inc

December 2015

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1. Background

The National Council of Women of QLD (Inc.) (NCWQ) is affiliated with National Council of Women of Australia Inc. Ltd and the International Council of Women. Our patron is His Excellency the Honourable Paul de Jersey AC, Governor of Queensland.

The NCWQ seeks to work for the empowerment of women and families and to promote equal status for women in law and fact and to develop policies and responses on behalf of women on a statewide basis. It is on this basis that the NCWQ provides a submission to the Queensland Government for consideration in development of the Women's Strategy 2015.

2. Introduction

The NCWQ believes gender equality should look at education, health, living, safety, economic, ageing and opportunity and the submission has been formulated. These seven elements are aligned to the topic areas identified in Queensland Women 2015 (Office for Women, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, Queensland Government, 2015) and support the basic principle of gender equality in social, economic and physical status of women.

The Women's Strategy 2015 should look at all women, not just vulnerable women on the proposition that 'we lift others up as we climb'. This is an enabling and support strategy.

It is recognised that data sourced to develop strategies is often 3-4 years old (ABS Census Data). The pace of change in society and business is such that the strategy will need to rely on more contemporary research including but not limited to:

- (a) Women in Leadership (including barriers)
- (b) Economic Empowerment for women
- (c) Addressing the gender pay and super-annuation gap
- (d) Domestic Violence
- (e) Indigenous disadvantage

Strategies developed to enhance employment and financial security for women positively affect outcomes around safety, housing, health and wellbeing and domestic violence therefore enabling equality of social, economic and physical status to be achieved. Accordingly the areas of employment and women in leadership should be central to the development of the Women's Strategy 2015.

3. Domestic violence and safety

The release of the 'Not Now, Not Ever' Report and Recommendations (Bryce, 2015) provides considerable direction for areas of inclusion in the Women's Strategy however these two publications and ongoing oversight of both bodies of work through implementation must not be done in isolation from one another but rather must complement each other thereby avoiding duplication of effort and enabling consistency of messaging on both important issues to Queensland.

This submission does not propose to make recommendations regarding Domestic Violence having regard for the depth of work in the Not Now Not Ever Report however it is noted that the Domestic Violence response remains largely civil in nature and only becomes criminal in the case of a breach of a domestic violence order previously issued by the courts. It is recognized evidence for linked criminal offences such as assault and wilful damage is difficult to obtain having regard for the private nature of relationships and known psychological vulnerability of victim witnesses. These matters were subject of the Review by the Domestic Violence Taskforce however given domestic violence and gender equality are inextricably linked the Women's Strategy 2015 must acknowledge this and commit to accountability for the recommendations and outcomes of the Not Now Not Ever Report.

There are gendered patterns in crime across Queensland and Australia with perpetrators in sexual and stalking offences 9 times more likely to be male. Public discourse indicates a significant cultural and social shift is required. The most recent example to illustrate this is the rape of a 14 year old girl in Geelong, Victoria (ABC News, 2015) where social and other media reported the public response questioning the behaviour of the 14 year old child rather than the behaviour of the 4 male perpetrators inflicting violence upon a young 14 year old girl. Such abhorrent conclusions that question the female victim whose rights were violated rather than the male perpetrators are indicative of a need to 'ramp up' efforts for gender equality in every aspect of our society.

The Queensland Women's Strategy must include an education campaign that addresses these archaic social constructs that prevent equality of women in Queensland. In developing this strategy the Government should engage big business and industry stakeholders to become vocal advocates and part of the change in a similar way to the Male Champions of Change Program (Broderick, 2010) developed in 2010 by former Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick. Leaders in this campaign however need to be government and government departments.

NCWQ recommends prioritizing 'Healthy Relationships' education through the school curriculum.

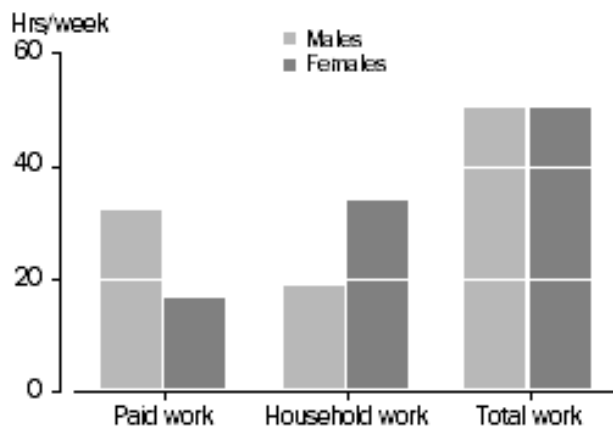
4. Economic empowerment

NCWQ Recommends engaging with business leaders and social researchers to find solutions to address the disparity between the pay and superannuation accumulation that exists between men and women.

4.1 Gender pay gap:

Women spend twice as much time doing unpaid work as men (ABS, 2014). The value of unpaid work in Australia has been estimated in Unpaid Work and the Australian Economy, 1997 (cat. no. 5240.0) as equivalent to almost half (48%) of Australia's Gross Domestic Product. (ABS, Census, Measures of Unpaid Work Factsheet, 2012.)

Time spend on paid work and household by sex¹- 2006



(Source: 2006 Time Use Survey; ABS 4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, March 2009)

NCWQ recommends government programs to quantify and provide compensation for the economic cost of women's unpaid work in domestic and caring roles, which make a substantial contribution to our economy and society with the cost estimated at a value of 48% of GDP.²

“With the increasing participation of married women in the paid labour force, the question arises as to how they combine paid and unpaid work and whether they carry a double burden. In 1992, unpaid household work occupied a substantial proportion (an average of 31%) of women's waking hours.”³

As much as Queensland can celebrate a reported decrease of 4.4% from 22.4% - 18% in the Gender Pay Gap from May 2014-May 2015 to ensure that Gender Pay Gap is no longer an area of concern in issues of Gender Equality the Queensland Women's Strategy must address all areas of women's employment, remuneration structure and pay scales.

¹ Average hours per week by all persons for primary activities.

² ABS, Census, Measures of Unpaid Work Factsheet, 2012.

³ ABS 4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, 1994.

The Gender Pay Gap is of concern across all industries of employment and is of greater concern in the private sectors. The Gender Pay Gap increases as both men and women approach retirement age which has a direct impact on compulsory superannuation contributions, as well as hindering a woman's ability to salary sacrifice towards her retirement financial planning.

The Gender Pay Gap is of concern across Awards, collective and individual pay agreements; more so in the areas of individual pay agreements.

Traditionally women work in industries where the remuneration levels are at or below the average Australian income; these industries include hospitality and catering; community and care services; administration and support services; manufacturing and commercial domestic services and sales workers adding to the Gender Pay Gap and earning capacity of a woman.

More and more woman during their employment years are required to assist with the care of their aging and elderly parents through providing respite for an aging parent who is the primary care provider of a spouse. This form of unpaid work supports and assists Australia's health and age care services financially and through work hours. The time taken by women away from the work force to provide this care for aging parents more then often is equivalent or higher than the standard 8 days Personal/Carers or Sick leave that exists in most industry and work place agreements, meaning that women are using annual leave or taking leave without pay, both of which are detrimental to the woman and add to the gender pay gap.

4.2 Recommendations

NCWQ recommends that the Queensland Women's Strategy encourages and supports all sectors; Public and Private to address what Gender Pay Gaps exist within their industries, take action to address the pay gap and remove it, thus ensuring Gender Equality in the workforce.

NCWQ recommends that Women's Strategy develops and distributes a guide for all women that can be used in employments sectors where individual pay agreements are set which can be used as a toolkit, point of reference and training guide during discussions and setting of individual agreements.

NCWQ recommends that the Women's Strategy develops a guide and tool kit that can be accessed and used when organisation's are addressing and developing collective pay agreements that ensure the issue of Gender Pay Gap is addressed and fully transparent in any agreements that are set.

NCWQ recommends that the Women's Strategy ensures that all Industrial Awards truly consider the genuine, measurable cost of living and inflation; thus ensuring that all Awards are addressed and increased accordingly.

NCWQ recommends that the Women's Strategy ensures that Penalties Rates continue to be a part of all Awards and included in collective pay agreements; as many women work in areas that work out of standard, accepted business hours and service industries that required covering all 24 hours within their shift structure.

NCWQ recommends the Women's Strategy to support the introduction of Employer and Company tax incentives for work places and industries that consider and implement flexible work arrangements for both women and men who are support care givers to aging parents. Other considerations for this recommendation would include tax incentives for all work places and industries that increase the amount of paid carers and personal leave from 8 – 12 days per year.⁴

5. Gender inequality in retirement

5.1 Exacerbation due to longer life expectancy

“The average retirement payout for women is \$112,600 and \$198,000 for men. And the problem is further exacerbated for women as they have longer life expectancy than men. This means that more women than men will be reliant on the full or part Age Pension – and for a longer period - and that they're at greater risk than men of experiencing a sharp decline in their standard of living when they finish working.⁵

5.2 Recommendations

NCWQ recommends superannuation tax incentives in proportion to work hours lost, for women, who have sustained forced absences and reduced paid work hours due to providing care for the children, aged, disabled or infirmed in our society.

NCWQ recommends access for women to voluntary additional contributions to their superannuation, at any age, to fund times of economic disadvantage with forced absence from the paid workforce, such as during maternity or sick leave.

6. Paid Work Participation and Career Advancement

Unavailability and high cost of suitable child-care is a significant barrier to women's participation in paid work. To enable, participation and career advancement in the workforce, women require accessible, affordable child and respite care.

7. indigenous women

It is appalling that indigenous women remain vulnerable in every measure of equality and the Women's Strategy must consider specific strategies aimed at this group to deliberately enhance economic and social participation. It is no longer good enough to have 'good intentions', objectives, mission statements and values that espouse a 'work toward' attitude for indigenous women.

⁴ Source: https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Gender_Pay_Gap_Factsheet.pdf

⁵ Workplace Gender Equality Agency 2015.

The Government must identify and deliberately and actively implement measurable strategies aimed at enhancing the participation of indigenous women in the economy.

The Women's Strategy must be intentional in ensuring strategies complement Federal level strategies so as to ensure agencies are not working at cross purposes.

8. Women in leadership

8.1 Increased participation is vital

There is a considerable body of evidence that supports the need to move more women into the labour force to enhance the economic viability of Queensland and Australia. This is concluded based on the changing demography and among other things the need to open opportunity to the full talent pool.

In spite of data revealing more women complete secondary education in Queensland this has not translated to addressing the gender pay gap once employment commences. There is a plethora of data to inform the gender pay gap and one of the most glaring findings is despite women completing exactly the same post-secondary education, their pay is on average at least 17% less than their male counterparts.⁶

Economic capacity is essential to society in the information and technology age. The pace of change, its volatility, uncertainty and complexity requires critical examination and application of strategies to move women into employment and into leadership positions.

That there are barriers to the progression of women is not in doubt. What is in doubt or not well understood is the nature of those barriers and the extent to which they are consciously or unconsciously constructed.

The Women's Strategy must elevate Government as a leader. Quotas remain unpalatable to many however overseas in countries like Norway, there have been considerable advances in gender equality where quotas have been applied. The Queensland Government has set a target of 50/50 on Government Boards and Committees and it is recommended the target be moved to a mandatory arrangement. Government must be the leader in this space.

Strategies should include requiring all government agencies and bodies to develop gender equity talent programs to advance women to senior and executive levels. All Government departments, agencies and bodies must also have 50/50 targets by 2020 for women on their board or in executive level appointments.

Contracts for Executive Directors and Chief Executive Officers as well as SES level must include at minimum targets and measurable outcomes that change the equality landscape in every department. Measures for contract performance should equate to

⁶ Queensland Government, 2015.

Workplace Gender Equality Agency criteria and the Women on Boards' "traffic light" index in 2013.⁷

All Government agencies and departments should report gender outcomes formally similar to the legislated obligations for businesses and agencies to report to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency where there are a range of performance indicators and performance metrics.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency is an Australian Government statutory agency created by the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012.

The Agency is charged with promoting and improving gender equality in Australian workplaces.

Government contracts and engagements with the commercial sector need to look at suppliers and beyond to ensure those companies are demonstrating overt commitment and action to gender equality. This will take significant leadership and the backdrop to this is the economic development and viability of Queensland rests upon growing women in leadership and achieving gender equity.

Government, Government Departments and Agencies will be more engaged, more productive and more effective when the most important decisions are made by an equal proportion of men and women.

Extensive global research shows organizations with the highest proportion of women in leadership significantly outperform others. This should not be a goal for Queensland but a reality.

The scientific and economic case for gender equality has been proven. The ongoing moral or social case remains unclear. Overcoming gendered language and perceptions that surround women in leadership will be difficult. There is compelling evidence that workplace cultures reinforce certain norms and values and perpetuate the process of unconscious bias that affords men competitive advantages. The Women's Strategy must implement strategies that address structural barriers to women in leadership particularly around the merit process. The challenge is ensuring the Queensland Women's Strategy 2015 puts in place strategies and measures that address this issue unambiguously. We need to not be afraid to have the conversation out loud and be deliberate in our actions. This recognizes that equality for women advantages everyone.

8.2 Recommendations

Dedicated Leadership

- (a) The Queensland Government should make an explicit commitment statement about the value of gender equality in management and leadership.
- (b) Targets (if not quotas) should be set and held to account in performance agreements.

⁷ <http://www.womenonboards.org.au/pubs/traffic-light/2013-traffic-lights/>.

- (c) Implement unconscious bias training in all government departments.
- (d) Include senior women in key decision-making bodies and embed formally the target for 50/50 women on boards by 2020.

Talent Development

- (e) Provide career development that can be measured in outcomes.
- (f) Create and implement mentoring and coaching programs.
- (g) Over-represent women in existing development programs
- (h) Target, recruit and develop women for leadership roles.

Workplace Flexibility

- (i) Although policies and procedures exist, unwritten barriers to access to workplace flexibility remains requiring the development of a best practice guide for Government.
- (j) Provide a peer review platform between government agencies and departments on workplace flexibility and leadership development programs.

Attraction Recruitment and Selection

- (k) Deliberately and explicitly promote senior women as role models
- (l) Include in performance agreement contracts and PDAs efforts made by senior staff and executive to encourage women to apply for positions and promotions.
- (m) Review job descriptions and job application processes to eliminate gender bias including the use of external commercial selection agencies processes.

Governance

- (n) Government Departments and agencies to report on the proportion of women apply and achieving promotion.
- (o) All Government departments and agencies to report on gender data by level or rank.
- (p) Develop a 'Male Champions for Change' Program where outcomes are reported annually similar to that reported to the WGEA.

Domestic violence

Ensure strategies developed around gender crime are shared and given domestic violence and gender equality are inextricably linked the Women's Strategy 2015 must acknowledge this and commit to accountability for the recommendations and outcomes of the Not Now Not Ever Report.

Development of a communication education and awareness strategy that campaigns to address the social biases around gender and violence.

9. Healthcare

Overall, women have access to excellent health-care in Queensland but the NCWQ recognizes and recommends reform to address gender inequality in the following areas:

9.1 Breast Cancer Diagnosis:

Breast cancer affects one in eight Queensland women in their lifetime. We currently have an excellent breast-screen programme, but lack access to rapid diagnostic services for symptomatic women. Women with a suspicious breast lump, currently face costs of over one thousand dollars to get a diagnostic mammogram, ultrasound and breast biopsy or face a delay in diagnosis and treatment if they have to wait for a specialist appointment to access diagnostic tests through the public hospital symptoms.

NCWQ recommends government funding for rapid access diagnostic clinics in affiliation with existing breast-screen clinics.

9.2 Access to termination of pregnancy services for medical indications

The current legislation surrounding Termination of Pregnancy, forces private and public patients to have medically necessary procedures (e.g. for gross fetal abnormalities such as anencephaly, absence of a head, diagnosed on antenatal ultrasound) in the private abortion clinics with the burden of costs, and emotional distress due to exposure to anti-abortion protestors.

NCWQ recommends a legislative review and change to allow women to access to medically necessary termination of pregnancy procedures performed by existing public gynecology clinics.

9.3 Peri-natal Psychiatry

There is a significant acute shortage of inpatient public hospital beds for women and their babies with severe postnatal depression with suicidality, homicidal ideation and psychosis. It is not suitable for these vulnerable women and babies to be admitted alongside adult male and female mental health and with disturbed behavior and drug and alcohol problems.

NCWQ recommends funding and prioritizing provision of inpatient mother and baby beds for women with severe postnatal depression and psychosis.

10. Poverty and homelessness

NCWQ recommends adequate and equal bed numbers for women and men and provision for women with children for emergency accommodation.

We recommend free provision of sanitary hygiene products and condoms and access to shower and toilet facilities for homeless women to preserve dignity, prevent unplanned pregnancy and prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted infections.

References

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