

Australia

The below response to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in respect of his request on “Women in Development” has been finalised during a caretaker period of the Commonwealth Government of Australia. This Report is authored by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Examples of actions to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment

1. *Integrating a gender perspective in national sustainable development policies and strategies*

All Australian Government departments are responsible for ensuring that their policies and programs meet the needs of Australians and are consistent with government priorities, including around gender equality. The Office for Women has made a commitment to gender mainstreaming across government and regularly work with other government (line) agencies in programme and policy design.

2. *Promoting active labour market policies on full and productive employment and decent work for women, eliminating gender-based discrimination in labour markets and enacting and enforcing minimum wages*

Australian Government policies for the productive employment for women have been recently supplemented through the 2018 Women’s Economic Security Statement (WESS) which builds on the *Towards 2025: An Australian Government Strategy to Boost Women’s Workforce Participation* strategy. It includes measures to increase women’s workforce participation, support economic independence and improve women’s earning potential, ranging from increasing accessibility for parental leave, financial-related assistance for women in family and domestic violence settings, and improving gender data collection and analysis capability.

Additionally, the national minimum wage is reviewed and set annually by the independent Fair Work Commission to ensure that a safety net of fair minimum wages is maintained.

3. *Eliminating gender-based occupational segregation and gender wage gaps, and improving recruitment, retention and promotion policies for women*

The Australian Government is taking various actions to address many of the drivers of pay inequity in the country. The *Towards 2025* strategy included measures for flexible work, paid parental leave, child care and early education, and encouraging women into non-traditional areas such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) industries.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) promotes and improves gender equality in Australian workplaces through the annual gender equality data reporting framework, which enables organisations to reflect on their gender profile and by providing employers with advice, tools and education to help improve their gender performance. Recently, as part of its 2018 WESS, the Government has provided funding for WGEA to upgrade its reporting and data management system and enable more employers to report their data.

4. *Accelerating the transition of women from informal to formal employment through access to decent work, social protection, quality childcare, and education and training, including for migrant women workers and domestic workers*

The Australian Government is on track to meet its G20 commitment to reduce the labour force participation rate gap between men and women by 25 per cent by 2025. As at March 2019, the gap has narrowed to 9.4 percentage points, or 90 per cent of the goal, meaning Australia is on track to meet the goal with six years to go. This has been achieved through a number of different measures at the Commonwealth level. Meeting this target will mean that, on top of current projections, an additional 200,000 Australian women will need to enter the workforce.

Independent Australian evaluations indicate that place-based approaches that focus on engagement act as a gateway for migrant and refugee women, and their children, to better access Government services. The *Community Hubs Australia* program aims to increase the social and economic participation of migrant women by linking them to services such as skills training, employment services, English classes and volunteering opportunities.

5. *Promoting the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities by recognizing, valuing, reducing and redistributing women's disproportionate share of unpaid and domestic work, increasing flexibility in working arrangements, such as part-time work, and making sustained investments in the care economy to expand access to quality childcare and care facilities for children and other dependents*

The WESS includes measures that aim to promote the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities. An example of a measure to reconcile work and family responsibilities in the WESS is reinstating and enhancing the Time Use Survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to gather better data on women's performance of unpaid work. The ABS Time Use Survey is intended to help the Government design policies that better integrate with people's lives, especially where childbirth has disrupted work patterns. It also aims to ensure better service delivery from Government departments.

6. *Promoting sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth strategies that benefit women by shifting employment from low-paid, low-skill and low-productivity sectors to more value-added activities [such as agribusiness, manufacturing, financial and business services], and ensuring that industrial upgrading linked to export expansion includes women*

The *Towards 2025* strategy and the measures under the WESS include recent initiatives to promote women in non-traditional industries. As an example, to support women in regional areas get back into employment, the Government will provide regional employers with professional assistance to review their business and identify and remove the barriers preventing them from attracting and retaining women returning to work after a career break. It will also find women who are looking to return to work and support them in that process. Starting as a pilot in regional Australia, the Career Revive initiative will initially partner with 30 medium-to-large regional employers and learnings from the pilot will inform further measures to support women's workforce participation in regional areas. The Career Revive initiative will also deliver an employer toolkit that will provide best practice, practical resources and learnings that will be available to all business.

The Australian Government has recently released the Advancing Women in STEM strategy which reiterates Australia's commitment to greater participation of women in the sectors of

science, technology, engineering and mathematics. This includes additional funding for the Science in Australia Gender Equity initiative which has been operating in recent years to improve gender equity in STEM in Australia. The Women in STEM Decadal Plan, developed by the Australian Academy of Science and the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering, was commissioned by the Government and released earlier this year. It provides a guiding framework to set the direction for all in the STEM sector to take action on gender equity, to create a diverse, inclusive and equitable STEM ecosystem, free of gender barriers to participation and progression.

Ending Violence Against Women

7. Take action to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination and the adoption of preventative measures to protect women and girls youth and children, from violence, abuse and neglect, sexual abuse, exploitation, harassment, trafficking in persons, and harmful practices, including by legislation.

Australia is strongly committed to reducing domestic, family and sexual assault in our community. The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (National Plan) is a 12 year national framework, being delivered through four three year plans, that aims to make Australia a place free from violence against women and their children. It brings together all levels of government, together with the non-government sector, business and communities. The Commonwealth's support for the Fourth Action Plan under the National Plan includes initiatives for prevention strategies including: to help eradicate domestic and family violence in our homes, workplaces, communities and clubs; to provide safe places for people impacted by domestic and family violence; to improve and build on frontline services to keep women and children safe; for 1800RESPECT, the national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service; and support and prevention strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The WESS included measures: to extend early release of superannuation on compassionate grounds to victims of family and domestic violence; supporting a No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) for women experiencing family and domestic violence; extending funding for Specialist Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships including funding for additional financial support services; and funding Legal Aid Commissions to support changes to family law that will ban direct cross-examination in certain cases where women escaping family violence fear cross-examination by their ex-partner.

The Australian Government has passed legislation to provide an entitlement to 5 days unpaid family and domestic violence leave for employees covered by the *Fair Work Act*. This will ensure all employees receive this entitlement regardless of what industrial instrument they are covered by.

The Australian Government has passed amendments to the *Enhancing Online Safety Act 2015* to prohibit posting, or threatening to post, an intimate image online without consent.

The practice of FGM/C is illegal in every state and territory of Australia. This includes performing FGM/C overseas on a child that usually resides in Australia. In 2015, the

Australian Government provided funding for the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health to deliver the National Education Toolkit Female Genital Mutilation Awareness Project. The toolkit provides a national coordination point for communities and service providers to share resources, information and knowledge that support victims and changes attitudes to end female genital mutilation and cutting.

8. *Taking into account the need to address negative social norms, and gender stereotypes, including in the labour market.*

The Australian Government recognises the impact of images and representation of women and girls, and of gender stereotypes in traditional and new media, on attitudes towards gender equality, the strength of gender roles and stereotypes and support for violence excusing attitudes. The National Stop it at the Start campaign targeted the 'influencers' of young people – like parents, friends, teachers and coaches – to help them change attitudes to violence against women and the underlying cause of violence against women – gender inequality and negative gender stereotypes.

Our Watch, a National Plan Partner, has a National Media Engagement Project aims to improve media reporting of violence against women and their children and to raise awareness of the impacts of gender stereotyping and inequality. It is implemented through various resources, including media capacity training for future and practising journalists and a national toolkit for engaging the media in the prevention of violence against women.

9. *Ending Discrimination in the world of work and policies of preventing and eliminating sexual harassment in the workplace*

Under the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth) and the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth), which gives effect to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and the Sex Discrimination Commissioner have key functions in promoting and protecting the human rights of women and girls, including on sexual harassment. The AHRC regularly produces a sexual harassment survey (2003, 2008, 2012, 2018) about the prevalence of sexual harassment experienced in Australian workplaces.

The Australian Government is supporting action on violence and discrimination by contributing to the AHRC National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces. The Inquiry is a world first and is being led by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, which will examine the nature and prevalence of sexual harassment in Australian workplaces, the drivers of this harassment and measures to address sexual harassment in Australian workplaces. The Inquiry will build on the outcomes of the AHRC sexual harassment survey and will recommend practical actions to address sexual harassment at work. The Inquiry will report in the second half of 2019.