

YWCA Adelaide

2017 Policy Platform



YWCA
Adelaide

YWCA Adelaide

YWCA Adelaide is a feminist, not-for-profit young women's leadership organisation. Founded in 1880, we have proudly acted as a voice for women, young women and girls in South Australia for over 135 years. YWCA Adelaide engages early intervention and primary prevention approaches that align with our policy and program priorities, and applies a feminist lens. Although we acknowledge our Christian roots, our organisation is now a secular association that encourages inclusivity of women, young women and girls from all walks of life.

Our organisation is well respected for its work in advocating for greater gender equality and our efforts supporting women, young women and girls during every step of their leadership journey. Our key advocacy areas include (1) advancing women's leadership, (2) preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls, (3) encouraging women's overall health and wellbeing, and (4) facilitating women's economic empowerment.

YWCA Adelaide provides services and programs tailored to South Australian youth, with a specific focus on young women and girls aged between 7 and 30 years. We seek to build skills, experience, networks, self-esteem and resilience through advocacy, the promotion of gender equality, and the provision on education and support to individuals, families and communities.

Our organisation is part of the World YWCA movement - the world's largest women-led membership association with a global outreach of 25 million women, young women and girls. Founded in 1855, this global network of women leads social and economic change in over 120 countries worldwide. Across Australia, YWCA works with approximately 250,000 individuals and families per annum.

Vision: Women Leading Change

Purpose: To build strong and equitable communities through the development of women's leadership

Values:

- Gender Equality
- Diversity
- Leadership
- Women's Safety and Wellbeing
- Strong Communities
- Accountability

Introduction

YWCA Adelaide proudly supports the policy and advocacy work of the national and international YWCA movement.

YWCA Australia is the *national* association of YWCAs in Australia, undertaking advocacy as well as program and service delivery. Our organisation aligns with the key priorities of YWCA Australia, namely (1) women's leadership in Australia, (2) women's economic security and equal pay, (3) creating safe communities and healthy relationships, (4) promoting housing solutions for women, young people and families, and (5) promoting international women's human rights and global YWCA advocacy.

The *global* YWCA network is respected internationally for its participation at the Human Rights Commission and the United Nations, including program provision and advocacy. Our organisation supports the World YWCA's 'Vision 2035' global core priorities 2016-2019. These include (1) transformative young women and girls' leadership, (2) violence against women and girls, (3) child, early and forced marriage, (4) peace and justice, (5) sexual reproductive health and rights, (6) economic empowerment and Information, Communication and Technology (ICT), (7) social, economic and environmental justice and (8) faith and culture.

Guiding Principles

Ending gender stereotyping

YWCA Adelaide believes that gender stereotyping is fundamental to issues affecting women, young women and girls. Women are often limited by society's rigid patriarchal constructs, particularly when participating in the workforce, ensuring personal safety and expressing individualism.

YWCA Adelaide remains committed to advocating for open-mindedness in gender diversity and self-expression. Our organisation recognises that 'womanhood' is not bound by normative assumptions of what society depicts as 'female'. We celebrate the experiences of transwomen, transqueer, genderqueer, intersex, queer and sex-gender diverse persons.

Recognising intersectional discrimination

YWCA Adelaide recognises the intersection between gender inequality and other forms of oppression. Our organisation acknowledges the manifestation of this in different ways for women, young women and girls. These include, but are not limited to, sex, gender, race, ethnicity, ability, class/caste, faith, age, political beliefs, income level or source, sexuality and health status. Our organisation recognises and respects the complexities of lived experience and actively engages with women, young women and girls from all walks of life to inform our work and advocacy.

YWCA Adelaide further recognises diversity of sexual orientation, intersex and gender identity, people living with disability, and culturally, linguistically, racially and religiously diverse communities.

Valuing lived experience

YWCA Adelaide's policy and advocacy work are developed and influenced by the people with whom we work. This includes local communities, YWCA Adelaide members, young women who participate in our consultations, and research. We encourage and support women, young women and girls to vocalise their unique understanding of issues, and recognise the unique perspective that comes from personally living through an experience.

YWCA Adelaide recognises the importance of avoiding insincerity when working with individual experiences. We seek to engage women, young women and girls with empathy, authenticity and provide substantive assistance and understanding. Our organisation ensures that issues affecting the lives of women, young women and girls in Adelaide are brought to the attention of decision-makers.

Applying a feminist analysis

A feminist analysis highlights the power differentials and causal factors that underpin women's unequal and undervalued status in society. It enables us to identify patriarchal power structures and manifestations in relationships, communities and institutions. Applying a feminist analysis links our organisation to a global movement committed to achieving positive change in the lives of women, young women and girls, and the structures of their communities. In acknowledging our history, YWCA Adelaide appreciates our feminist legacy and recognises the wide range of life experiences encountered by women across the feminist movement.

YWCA Adelaide provides a safe space for women, young women and girls to identify their experiences of gender discrimination as a result of broader inequalities in society. Gender inequality is embedded in history, tradition and culture the world over. These inequalities affect women's experiences in varying ways such as in the workplace, in personal and professional relationships, and in their day-to-day lives.

Promoting the leadership of women and girls

YWCA Adelaide develops and supports the leadership of women, young woman and girls. Our organisation advocates for community, corporate and government support in building women's leadership in all contexts. YWCA Adelaide is further committed to addressing social barriers that inhibit women from fulfilling their leadership potential. We support women in defining their personal

experiences of leadership through the provision of leadership opportunities, development programs and support networks.

We are committed to identifying structural gender inequalities, such as power and privilege, which impact women's participation in leadership roles. We support the development of unique leadership identities by creating environments that encourage transformational leadership practices.

Advocating an intergenerational approach to equality

YWCA Adelaide works to ensure that our policy process responds to the different needs, interests and capacities of women, young women and girls as they move through different stages of their lives.

YWCA Adelaide recognises the benefits of advocacy and service provisions that impacts communities in a positive and genuine way, which can transcend individual generations. We encourage supportive intergenerational relationships founded on equality and respect.

YWCA Adelaide recognises both the individual impact of discrimination, and the widespread disadvantage felt by a group or community that may trigger inter-generational disadvantage. We believe that discrimination can also be indicative of an organisational, institutional or societal inequality. These entrenched forms of discrimination require individual, legislative and policy action.

Championing young women

YWCA Adelaide actively supports and promotes the empowerment and participation of young women and girls as decision-makers in leadership, policy development and advocacy. Our organisation recognises that the specific issues affecting young women differ from issues affecting other women and groups across society.

Valuing diversity and eliminating racism through reconciliation

YWCA Adelaide is committed to advocating for policies and programs that celebrate and promote diversity whilst working to eliminate racism in our communities. Our organisation embraces cultural and racial diversity by equalising access, addressing privilege and recognising the continued impact of colonialism on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

YWCA Adelaide is committed to reconciliation among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. Our organisation proudly champions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who have continuously preserved the culture, practices and traditions of their nation groups Australia-wide.

YWCA Adelaide apologises unreservedly for injustices inflicted upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons in Australia. We recognise that respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights, including self-determination, relationships to land and the maintenance and growth of cultures, is essential to creating a just and fair society for all Australians.

Valuing an independent non-partisan voice

YWCA Adelaide is committed to working collaboratively whilst maintaining an independent voice on gender equality. Our organisation works in a non-partisan manner across the political spectrum. We interact with all relevant levels of government whilst engaging the private sector and community organisations. YWCA Adelaide is committed to providing decision-makers with current and relevant data on gender inequality.

YWCA Adelaide recognises the interdependence of human rights as the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights. We believe this interdependence is also crucial in realising civil and political rights, which fuels our engagement in political advocacy.

Valuing volunteering

YWCA Adelaide supports the vitality of volunteerism. Whilst supporting appropriate remuneration for work, our organisation has a strong volunteer-based work ethic that sustains and enriches both our organisation and the wider community.

Key Policy Priorities

Through consultations with our members and the broader community, YWCA Adelaide identified a myriad of issues that affect the lives of women, young women and girls. Amongst these issues emerged four key themes that have formed the basis of our policy priorities. These are:

- 1. Women's Leadership**
- 2. Women's Economic Empowerment**
- 3. Violence Against Women and Girls**
- 4. Women's Health and Wellbeing**

YWCA Adelaide acknowledges that the complexities faced by women, young women and girls cannot be reflected by a simple separation of issues. We commit to recognising other issues that affect the lives of women, young women and girls, and are mindful of the interaction these issues have with our four policy priorities.

Policy platform development

National YWCA She Speaks Survey

In 2014, the Australian network of YWCA organisations contracted the University of Queensland's Institute of Social Science Research (ISSR) to conduct the national *YWCA She Speaks Survey*. The survey covered a range of social and personal issues and highlighted the voices of young women and girls aged between 15 and 30 years. It was the largest survey of its kind, collecting information from 1,600 young women and girls across all States and Territories. Data collected maintained a focus on attitudes, perceptions and experiences.

While this survey had a focus on leadership, it also canvassed the views of respondents on a range of issues including respectful relationships, work, equal pay, family, gender stereotypes and body image.

YWCA Adelaide Policy Survey

In November 2014, a statewide Policy Survey was conducted to inform the future policy direction of the YWCA Adelaide. In total, 148 South Australian respondents completed the survey. The sample was comprised of YWCA Adelaide members, stakeholders, and other members of the South Australian community.

Of the participants who responded to survey questions regarding identity, 21% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 38% were from a culturally or linguistically diverse background, 14% were living with disability and 34% were same sex attracted.

In following with YWCA Adelaide's commitment to valuing lived experience, the results of the *YWCA She Speaks Survey* and the *YWCA Adelaide Policy Survey* will serve as a directional guide for this policy platform.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Policy Position

YWCA Adelaide believes in achieving positive social change through equal gender representation in leadership and decision making roles. Our organisation supports women in developing their own transformative leadership style.

Background

Women have the right to participate in decision-making pursuant to Articles 7, 8 and 14 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). As a state party to CEDAW, Australia has an obligation to 'take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country'.¹ In addition, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights supports 'everyone[s] ...right to equal access to public service'.²

Men continue to dominate Australia's top tier leadership positions.³ This dominance is sustained across appointment of federal and state parliamentarians, the judiciary, public service managers and non-public sector employees.

Quick facts:

- 25.1% of Workplace Gender Equality Agency reporting organisations have no women in key management positions⁴ while 10% of ASX 200 companies have no female board representation.⁵
- 27.4% of key management personnel, 23.6% of directorships, 15.4% of CEOs and 14.2% of chair positions are held by women.⁶
- Female representation steadily declines past the point of senior management, with 27.8% of general manager and executive role and 26.1% of key management personnel positions held by women.⁷

Women's leadership extends not only to women holding positions of leadership, but also to equal participation and inclusion in decision-making in the private and public spheres, the community and non-normative roles including autonomy over their own lives.

The economic and productivity gains associated with increased levels of female representation in positions of leadership are undeniable. 'Critical mass' theory, for example, examines the overwhelmingly positive impact witnessed when women occupy 20% or more positions in a workplace that involve leadership. There is currently a lack of development opportunities provided to young women.⁸

YWCA Adelaide places the pursuit of and investment in women's leadership at the forefront of its policy and advocacy agenda. The *YWCA She Speaks* survey identified gender stereotyping as the greatest hurdle observed by young women and girls in fulfilling their ambitions and potential as leaders. Our organisation responds to the overwhelming accounts of limited access to female orientated support services, training and leadership programs. YWCA Adelaide believes that

¹ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, 18 December 1979, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1249, Articles 7, 8 & 14.

² Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 21

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Gender Indicators, Australia, Feb 2016," 2016.

⁴ "Australia's Gender Equality Scorecard: Key Findings from WEGAs 2014-15 Reporting Data" (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, November 2015), https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2014-15-WGEA_SCORECARD.pdf.

⁵ "Gender Equality in ASX 200 Organisations" (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, June 2016), <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/gender-equality-asx-200.pdf>.

⁶ "Australia's Gender Equality Scorecard: Key Findings from WEGAs 2014-15 Reporting Data."

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Jay Newton-Small, *Broad Influence: How Women Are Changing the Way America Works*, 1st ed. (New York: Liberty Street - SUNY Press, 2016).

supporting women's leadership requires encouraging the value of individual identity, and using lived experience to shape leadership style.

Notable leadership barriers

The 'glass ceiling' is an 'unseen, yet unbreakable barrier that keeps marginalised groups including women and girls from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements'.⁹ This term is not exclusively applicable to the corporate sector, and instead encompasses women reaching for leadership positions across the professional spectrum.

In contrast, the 'glass escalator' refers to men in female-dominated careers such as nursing, teaching and social work being offered promotions faster and at higher levels than their female colleagues. The reverse is not observed for females in male-dominated careers.

Gender stereotypes

Portrayal of females as passive and subordinate thus influences acceptance of women in leadership roles. Rigid gender roles and stereotyping that typecast male dominated leadership are still prevalent in Australian society.

Power dynamics require critical awareness, particularly in challenging perceptions of non-diversity in leadership positions. These include, but are not limited to, privilege dynamics attributed to heterosexual, cis-gendered and able-bodied women.

YWCA Adelaide acknowledges the power, privilege and patriarchal values that impact on the lack of female leadership in Australia. Consequently, our organisation is committed to challenging gender stereotyping through advocacy and open dialogue.

Discrimination in the workplace

Women are subjected to a higher level of personal scrutiny than their male colleagues, which may affect performance. Judgements made on communication styles and personal appearance can lead to exclusion from leadership positions based on perception of unprofessionalism or simply being an insufficient 'cultural fit'.¹⁰ Women should not feel pressure to adopt traditional male mannerisms to gain traction in their workplace, nor distance themselves from affirmative action initiatives for fear of association.

The Australian Human Rights Commission in their *Supporting Working Parents* report, found that 1 in 2 mothers and 1 in 4 fathers experienced discrimination related to pregnancy, either before, during or after pregnancy.¹¹

Workplaces should ensure that there are flexible work options and effective transition back-to-work practices for working parents. Further, they should not only be encouraged to create more flexible working options for working mothers. Workplace cultures need to evolve to support fathers in their family roles and eliminate the stigma surrounding men leaving the workplace to adopt primary caregiver responsibilities.

YWCA Adelaide is committed to addressing and challenging assumptions that align diversity initiatives with negative business outcomes, including misconceptions that associate lesser commitment with part-time and flexible work.

Leadership in male-dominated sectors

Women are majorly underrepresented in science, engineering, technology and mathematics (STEM) fields due to longstanding cultural perceptions.¹² These male dominated workplaces foster a culture that doubts female suitability to particular roles regardless of experience and education.

⁹ Harry Cominos, Lewis Bailey, and Robert d'Apice, "The Glass Ceiling Index" (GovHack, 2015), <http://www.the-glass-ceiling-index.org>.

¹⁰ Department of Social Services, "The Leadership Challenge: Women in Management" (Canberra: Australian Government, May 2008).

¹¹ Australian Human Rights Commission, 'Supporting Working Parents: Pregnancy and Return to Work National Review' Report, 2014

Women make up less than one third of STEM university graduates, with even lower figures reported amongst physics and astronomy industries.¹³ For example, in the field of engineering women represent between 7-13% of the workforce. Three times more men are likely to fall into the top income bracket in STEM industries than women holding the same doctorate-level qualifications.¹⁴

YWCA Adelaide supports services that actively encourage young women and girls to pursue education in male-dominated fields such as STEM, including mainstream initiatives that inform and educate school aged students about 'non-traditional' career opportunities.

Leadership pathways and targets

Developing advocacy, community engagement and authentic leadership skillsets enables women, young women and girls to use their voices to instigate positive change. Professional networks are fundamental to success across every sector, yet women and men have fundamentally different experiences in seeking out mentors and personal 'sponsorship' opportunities.

Structural forces such as patriarchy, sexism, bigotry and misogyny still fuel discrimination and limit women when pursuing leadership opportunities. It is important to deconstruct the impact of these forces in board composition, poor gender representation in male dominated sectors such as politics, agriculture and commerce, and low labour force participation. Unconscious gender bias results in women receiving less support and consideration for promotion opportunities in workplaces across all sectors.

YWCA Adelaide supports target and quota systems as temporary special measures to propel leadership pathways for women to reach positions such as board directors. Our organisation is committed to empowering women's voices and supporting their roles as decision makers at local, national and international levels.

Education

Positive leadership outcomes should be promoted through education, training and meaningful workplace development. These can be achieved through the development and implementation of training and mentoring opportunities for women, young women and girls in both formal and non-formal capacities. Non-formal work is inclusive of community engagement, unpaid work and situations of informal working conditions, particularly relating to household and family duties.

Further barriers and discrimination exist for women with caring responsibilities in obtaining education and leadership opportunities. Barriers include but are not limited to, combining formal education with pregnancy and subsequent parenting, access to quality childcare, and time spent away from the workforce.

YWCA Adelaide identifies vocational and technical education as important points of access for women into traditionally male dominated leadership positions. Societal attitudes should, however, be addressed in addition to recognising employment outcomes.

Independent pathways

Leadership pathways extend further than the mandated school curriculum, and should help inform young women and girls before patriarchal social bias makes an impact. Programs such as YWCA Adelaide's Every Girl program should be championed, which educate through enhancing girls' understanding of their rights, ability to influence community change and their sense of belonging. Building strength and resilience helps young women and girls in developing their own individual leadership identities.

¹² Sapna Cheryan et al., "Why Are Some STEM Fields More Gender Balanced than Others?," *Psychological Bulletin* 143, no. 1 (January 2017): 1–35.

¹³ Dr Ian Chubb, "National STEM Programme Index 2016" (Office of Australia's Chief Scientist, 2016), http://www.chiefscientist.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/SPI2016_release.pdf.

¹⁴ Ibid.

YWCA Adelaide supports services and programs that encourage women, young women and girls to continue pursuing leadership opportunities throughout their lives, and recognises how crucial they are in combatting stigma around females in leadership positions. YWCA Adelaide's SHE Leads leadership development program, women's leadership conference, board training initiatives and high school conference and programs demonstrate a holistic and encompassing array of services that promote female leadership and the development of personal leadership identities.

Recommendations

Government

1. Investing in the federal Office for Women *Women's Leadership and Development Strategy* which supports organisations to deliver gender equality in leadership roles at the national level
2. Increasing Australia's aid budget and continuing to fund women's empowerment initiatives in developing countries through continuing support of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy*
3. Encouraging government participation in the global debate on gender equality and encouraging Australia to be accountable in meeting its internationally recognised commitments on women's empowerment and participation in leadership and decision making
4. Continuing adequate funding for the programs and policy platform of the federal and state Office for Women, and continued commission and support of the role of Australia's Global Ambassador for Women and Girls
5. Investing in long-term, stable funding of women's leadership and development opportunities/programs such as YWCA Adelaide's suite of SHE Leads opportunities that connect young women to mentors
6. Creating a state-wide education system with a focus on critical thinking skills and promotion of developing individual leadership styles
7. Maintaining initiatives that inform and educate school aged students about 'non-traditional' career opportunities, including male-dominated fields such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)

Workplace

8. Developing policies and programs that support rather than deter women of childbearing age to seek out leadership opportunities such as promotions or professional development
9. Continuing formal and non-formal education, career development and leadership training opportunities for women and girls, including support of the practices and programs of YWCA Adelaide

Community

10. Introducing gender guidelines for content in children's books, television programs, computer games and other materials to ensure gender role stereotypes do not deter young women and girls from pursuing leadership in their personal and professional lives

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Policy Position

YWCA Adelaide believes in empowering women through economic independence, non-discrimination and gender equality.

Background

The Global Gender Gap report published by the World Economic Forum states that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but is linked to an overall national economic performance.¹⁵ Australia has ratified the International Labour Organisation's Convention concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers, and thus has a responsibility to protect women's rights to non-discrimination and gender equality. The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) offers additional human rights protection. Poverty caused by inadequate income support can be considered a breach of Australia's international human rights obligations.¹⁶

Women being economically empowered not only benefits the individual women and her immediate community; it also has broader positive implications for Australian society. Higher female workforce participation is linked to an overall higher national Gross Domestic Product (GDP).¹⁷ The Workplace Gender Equality Agency's support of gender equality is essential in improving national productivity and economic growth, improving organisational performance, enhancing the ability of companies to attract talent and retain employees, and encouraging diversity and organisational performance.¹⁸

A myriad of factors are essential to the achievement of economic empowerment for women. These factors are closely linked to those supporting women's rise in leadership. These include, but are not limited to, unconscious gendered biases in hiring, access to education and breadth of opportunity, workplace harassment and discrimination, affordable and appropriate child care, paid parental leave, supportive workplace cultures and adoption of flexible work practices.

YWCA Adelaide recognises the importance of labour market segregation, gender pay gap, discrimination and inequality, caring responsibilities that reduce workforce participation, financial literacy and relationship breakdown in women realising economic empowerment.

Quick facts:

- Women are found to do two-thirds of the world's work, yet earn less than 10% of the world's wages.¹⁹
- Australian women who work full-time can expect to earn 17.4% less over their lifetimes than their male counterparts.²⁰

Workplace participation

Women comprise 46.2% of all Australian employees. 24.8% of all employees are women who work full-time, while 21.4% work part-time. This equates to just under half of all working women doing so in a part-time or flexible capacity.²¹ The burden of housework and the discriminatory social

¹⁵ "Global Gender Gap Report 2016" (World Economic Forum, 2016), <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/>.

¹⁶ "Submission to the National Human Rights Consultation."

¹⁷ John Daley, "Game-Changers: Economic Reform Priorities for Australia" (Melbourne: GRATTAN Institute, June 2012).

¹⁸ "The Business Case for Gender Equality" (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, September 2016), <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/wgea-business-case-for-gender-equality.pdf>.

¹⁹ Economic Security4Women, "Sustainable Economic Empowerment" (Lifelong Economic Wellbeing for Women in Australia, 2016), <https://www.security4women.org.au/economic-wellbeing/issues/sustainable-economic-empowerment/>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ ABS (2016) Labour Force, Australia July 2016 cat. No. 6202.0

institutions that expect women to act as the domestic heads of the household lead many women to work part-time.²²

The workforce participation rate is 59.3% for women over 15 years, compared to 70.4% for men.²³ Both male and female employees are more likely to be engaged and motivated in workplaces that embrace and accept flexible working arrangements.²⁴ In 2014, the Australian Government, at the G20 Summit, committed to reducing the workforce participation rate between men and women by 25% by 2025. In 2012, the Grattan Institute estimated that if Australia increased the women's workforce participation rate by just 6%, the GDP would increase by \$25 billion by 2022.²⁵

Gender stereotypes facilitate a culture that fails to examine male caregiver contributions and the subsequent impact on women's workplace participation and leadership opportunities. This discriminatory culture can be addressed through the introduction of flexible working arrangements for all genders, and the differentiation between 'flexible' work and casual work that is insecure, unsustainable and can increase financial pressure.

YWCA Adelaide recognises that women undertaking paid work and caring responsibilities is crucial to changing workforce participation through working arrangements and workplace culture. Our organisation believes that the conversation should not focus solely on assisting women in juggling responsibilities, nor should women be automatically stereotyped as carers.

Recognition of unpaid work

Barriers to women's economic empowerment are often underpinned by social and cultural norms, notably stereotypes of women being inherently domestic. Unpaid work, while essential for households and communities, is often undervalued, and when viewed as a female responsibility can prevent women from pursuing other avenues such as paid work. Women are at higher risk of living in poverty after retirement, due to both a longer life expectancy, breaks in work resulting in lower income and superannuation, and a lifetime of un-paid and un-recognised caring work.

According to OECD, worldwide women spend on average double the amount of time on unpaid work that benefits their families and communities. According to the same study, when a woman spends three rather than five hours on unpaid work per day, their workforce participation rises by 20%.²⁶ When women living in poverty are undereducated and thus underemployed, their children are more likely to lack education opportunities and stay in the cycle of poverty. When unpaid work is recognised, it can therefore be reduced and redistributed.²⁷

YWCA Adelaide supports the redistribution of this work through policies such as paid parental leave, which challenges pre-conceived gender roles and gives women and men the freedom make their own choices when it comes to work or spending time on child care.

Gender pay and wealth gaps

Australia's economic system is yet to fully recognise the economic contribution of women as carers. On average, Australian women retire with around one third of men's retirement savings, often in the form of superannuation.²⁸

²² "Game-Changing Gender Data Launched - Media Release" (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2016), <https://www.wgea.gov.au/media-releases/game-changing-gender-data-launched>.

²³ "Gender Workplace Statistics at a Glance" (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, August 2016), https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Stats_at_a_Glance.pdf.

²⁴ David Kaplan, Jack Wiley, and Carl Maertz Jr, "The Role of Calculative Attachment in the Relationship between Diversity Climate and Retention," *Journal of Human Resources Management* 50, no. 2 (2011): 271–87.

²⁵ Daley, J., McGannon, C., and Ginnivan, L. 2012, 'Game-changers: Economic reform priorities for Australia', *Grattan Institute*, Melbourne.

²⁶ Gaelle Ferrant, Luca Maria Pesando, and Keiko Nowacka, "Unpaid Care Work: The Missing Link in the Analysis of Gender Gaps in Labour Outcomes" (OECD Development Centre, December 2014), https://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/Unpaid_care_work.pdf.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ "The Gender Gap in Retirement Savings" (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016), <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/gender-gap-retirement-savings>.

Continuing systemic and cultural barriers contribute to women experiencing financial disadvantage and subsequent female over-representation in key poverty indicators.²⁹ Women are over-represented in lower paid sectors and under-represented in workforce participation rates, leading to the current gender pay gap of 17.2%.³⁰

YWCA Adelaide supports initiatives that target the underrepresentation of women in management and senior leadership roles or traditionally male-dominated industries, limitations to equal education and opportunity, and structural and individual discrimination, unconscious or deliberate.

Paid parental leave and childcare

Australia's paid parental scheme is still far below average when ranked globally, with new mothers who do not paid employer entitlements receiving less than two months pay according to the national average rate.³¹

YWCA Adelaide recognises that the interaction between childcare benefit systems and the overall cost of quality childcare offers limited short-term financial benefit, and thus does not act as a strong incentive for working women who manage caregiving responsibilities.

Paid parental leave contributes not only to workforce productivity, but also the facilitation of gender equality in the home and the workplace. In addition, early childhood education and care is jointly important when considering workforce participation and productivity in a wider context.

YWCA Adelaide affirms that paid parental leave should be a shared responsibility between the government and employers, and supports the development of a comprehensive, equitable and sustainable system that links affordable quality childcare and paid parental leave. Our organisation recognises the positive developmental impacts that quality early childhood education and care have on mothers as well as children.³²

Support for vulnerable communities

Although a focus should be placed upon systems of income support that is fair, sustainable and unbiased, it is important to recognise various levels of intersectional discrimination that may come between an individual and securing sustainable employment. Gender, race and disability can impede access to the job market, particularly for unskilled and entry level jobs.

Vulnerable communities with greater risk of experiencing economic disadvantage include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse women, women living with disability, refugee and immigrant women, older and younger women, along with regional and remote women. Additionally, single parent families are at significant risk of falling below the poverty line, a noteworthy majority of which are headed by women.

YWCA Adelaide is committed to supporting all women in attaining economic empowerment.

Gender budgeting

Australia started as a leader in adopting and implementing gender budget analysis in the 1980s, however in recent years the Australian Government was found to have comparatively few systematic process that assess the impact of its budgets on women and girls.³³ Government programs and tax spending were among the areas that lacked appropriate and much needed review.

²⁹ Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), "Poverty in Australia 2014" (Sydney: ACOSS, 2014), http://www.acoss.org.au/images/uploads/ACOSS_Poverty_in_Australia_2014.pdf.

³⁰ "The Gender Gap in Retirement Savings."

³¹ Bianca Soldani, "How Australia Compares Internationally on Paid Parental Leave," *SBS News*, October 2016, <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2016/10/24/how-australia-compares-internationally-paid-parental-leave>.

³² Brown, A., & Harries, V. (2015). Infant sleep and night feeding patterns during later infancy: association with breastfeeding frequency, daytime complementary food intake, and infant weight. *Breastfeeding Medicine*, 10(5), 1-7.

³³ OECD, "Women, Government and Policy Making in OECD Countries - Fostering Diversity for Inclusive Growth" (OECD Publishing, 2014), <https://uweboard.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/women-government-and-policy-making.pdf>.

Although policy areas such as violence against women and girls are the most commonly associated with gender budgeting, less recognised policies and programs may involve workplace participation, caring for the aging community of those living with disability, or support given to particular industries or geographical regions. For example, a gender lens can be applied to subsidies around women's unpaid work. Combinations of family payments, childcare policies and tax requirements can result in women being more financially viable if they maintain casual or paid-work rather than pursuing full-time workloads. Another example may focus on progressive income tax, with marginal rates that rise as income rises to support both the gender pay gap and workforce participation.

YWCA Adelaide is supports mechanisms and institutions that collate current sex disaggregated data, and recognises that it is essential in establishing a system of appropriate gender indicators to inform both external efforts and government action.

Recommendations

Government

1. Investing in measures to achieve the G20 commitment by the state and federal governments to close the gap between male and female labour force participation rates by 2.5% by 2025
2. Strengthening reporting requirements on gender through the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WEGA) and broaden scope of organisations required to submit gender disaggregated data
3. Adopting 30% gender quotas on public, private sector and non-for-profit boards, to be achieved in 5 years
4. Initiating a gendered analysis of housing affordability and homelessness in South Australia, and increasing funding for specialist services for low-income and single-parent families

Workplace

5. Supporting a system of six month paid parental leave (World Health Organisation (WHO) minimum breastfeeding recommendation) as an entitlement rather than a welfare benefit, and encouraging workplaces to 'top up' with their own paid parental leave provisions
6. Championing accreditation for workplaces that offer and follow through with flexible working practices such as flexi-hours and paid parental leave offered on a *non-discriminatory basis*
7. Supporting systems that include superannuation payments to mothers to address the gender superannuation gap and poverty risk for women with caring responsibilities
8. Advocating for policies and programs that address the narrow gender-based stereotypes that lead to discrimination and non-hiring of women in childbearing years
9. Advocating for income support systems that are sustainable, fair and equitable, namely those that do not discriminate due to gender, age, disability, race or sexual orientation, and benefit sole parent families

Community

10. Providing financial literacy education to women, young women and girls, particularly those who are marginalised and/or vulnerable and enabling them to work towards financial independence and/or long term economic security

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Policy Position

YWCA Adelaide advocates for policies, programs and laws that work to prevent violence against women and girls. Our organisation encourages a culture of equality that promotes respectful relationships.

Background

Violence against women and girls is recognised by the United Nations as 'any act of gender based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life'.³⁴ In committing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2015, Australia has an international obligation to prevent violence against women and girls as a fundamental human rights violation.³⁵

Gender violence can be defined as 'acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty'.³⁶ Violence is gendered if it supports and sustains gender norms, and may be used to regulate an individual's behaviour as per the preconceived gender-norms attributed to both men and women.³⁷

It is important to acknowledge that men, due to unequal perceptions of power distribution, overwhelmingly perpetrate the violence affecting young women and girls.³⁸

Violence against women and girls should be recognised in all its forms, including intimidation and harassment, sexual violence, state violence, bullying, human trafficking, domestic and intimate partner violence, emotional abuse and stalking. Domestic violence is accepted as involving the abuse of power and control.

Quick facts:

- One in three Australian women from the age of 15 onwards have experienced physical violence.³⁹
- One in five Australian women will experience sexual violence in some capacity over her lifetime.⁴⁰
- On average, at least one woman is killed by a partner or former partner each week in Australia.⁴¹
- Women are five times more likely than men to require medical attention or hospitalisation as a result of intimate partner violence.⁴²
- Women are three times more likely than men to experience violence from an intimate partner.⁴³

³⁴ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, 18 December 1979, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1249, Article 1

³⁵ United Nations (2015) Sustainable Development Goals

³⁶ United Nations Population Fund, "Strengthening Health System Responses to Gender-Based Violence – Defining Gender-Based Violence Fact Sheet," 2013, Strengthening Health System Responses to Gender-based Violence

³⁷ Dexter Voisin et al., "Community Violence Exposure and Sexual Behaviors in a Nationally Representative Sample of Young Adults: The Effects of Race/ethnicity and Gender," *Journal of Social Service Research* 41, no. 3 (2015): 295–306.

³⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Personal Safety Report," 2012.

³⁹ Peta Cox, "Violence against Women: Additional Analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey 2012" (Sydney: Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), 2015).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Tracy Cussen and Willow Bryant, "Domestic/family Homicide in Australia" (Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, May 2015), http://www.aic.gov.au/media_library/publications/rip/rip38/rip38.pdf.

⁴² Jenny Mouzos, "Femicide: An Overview of Major Findings" (Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, 1999), http://aic.gov.au/media_library/publications/tandi_pdf/tandi124.pdf.

⁴³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Personal Safety Report."

- In Australia, 95% of all victims of violence reported a male perpetrator.⁴⁴

Definition: Women's Safety

YWCA Adelaide acknowledges that violence can impact women and girls in both public and private life, and can be perpetrated by strangers as well as those with familiar faces. Rape and sexual assault can happen in both private and public spheres.

Public setting – sexual harassment

Violence and harassment affect women and girls in public spaces throughout the world, and can occur in rural areas as well as urban settings. Common forms of harassment and violence can range from unwanted remarks, 'cat calling' and inappropriate sexual advances, to grabbing or touching, rape, abduction and even violence resulting in death. In Australia, these actions are most commonly observed in schools and workplaces, in and around public transportation, and on streets or in shared public spaces. Whereas private violence is recognised as a human rights violation, violence and harassment in public spaces is often disregarded as a real and harmful form of violence against women and girls, leading to less policy and legislative responses.

The most effective way of regulating public violence and street harassment is through positive bystander intervention and community responsiveness. Bystanders are regarded as onlookers or spectators who witness an act of violence but are not the victim or perpetrator. To combat violence against women and girls, bystanders are encouraged to take an 'active' rather than a 'passive' role, and intervene in a safe and responsible way. It is imperative that the conversation is shifted away from victim blaming and directed towards perpetrator behaviour. YWCA Adelaide's campaign 'Rise Above The Pack' has a focus on positive bystander intervention.⁴⁵

Private setting – Domestic, family and intimate partner violence

Domestic violence refers to violence within the domestic setting. The term most commonly refers to male perpetrated violence against women, but can also encompass child or elder abuse. This form of violence against women and girls is often considered 'private violence' as it generally occurs within a private home environment, and can be physical, emotional, sexual, financial, mental and/or psychological.⁴⁶ Women are five times more likely than men to report fearing for their lives when victims of domestic violence.⁴⁷

'Family' violence is a serious issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in particular. Violence in Indigenous communities is multi-dimensional - the 'domestic' category doesn't always fit with Aboriginal communities experiences of violence as it may not occur in the traditional parameters of the home.⁴⁸

Often associated with domestic violence is 'intimate partner violence', defined as any behaviour, physical, sexual, or emotional, within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship. Intimate partner violence contributes to more death, disability and illness in women ages 15 to 44 than any other preventable risk factor.⁴⁹

It is commonly accepted that children who witness or experience domestic or family violence are more likely to become perpetrators or victims from adolescence through to adulthood.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ ABS 2013 personal safety, Australia 2012 Cat No. 4906.0

⁴⁵ See <http://riseabovethepack.com.au/>

⁴⁶ Our Watch, ANROWS, and VicHealth, "Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence against Women and Their Children in Australia" (Our Watch, 2015), <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/getmedia/c81eceab-c8a0-4f3a-a6fb-2202334b398b/Change-the-story-framework-prevent-violence-women-children-AA-new.pdf.aspx>.

⁴⁷ Mouzos, "Femicide: An Overview of Major Findings."

⁴⁸ <http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=6442458606>

⁴⁹ VicHealth, "The Health Costs of Violence: Measuring the Burden of Disease Caused by Intimate Partner Violence" (Department of Human Services Victoria, 2004), <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/the-health-costs-of-violence>.

⁵⁰ Kelly Richards, "Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice: Children's Exposure to Domestic Violence in Australia" (Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, 2011), http://www.aic.gov.au/media_library/publications/tandi_pdf/tandi419.pdf.

Primary prevention measures

The promotion of gender equality is essential in addressing violence against women and girls at a structural and fundamental level. Studies have shown that people who consider gender equality as an issue of low-priority are more likely to endorse violence-supportive rhetoric and broader gender-biased societal attitudes.⁵¹ A decreased awareness of issues relating to sexual and domestic violence has been linked with inconsideration of gender equality.⁵² Violence against women and girls occurs within the broader structures of discrimination and socially accepted circumstance.

While YWCA Adelaide strongly advocates for the provision of adequate front-line and crisis services for those experiencing domestic and family violence, it is imperative that focus be placed on proactively stopping violence before it occurs. The most effective way to change cultural and structural perceptions around violence against women and girls in society is through primary prevention.⁵³ Gaps exist in school curriculums that limit exposure to issues such as consent, respect, safe sex and sexuality, in particular those incorporating diversity as a key theme.

YWCA Adelaide favours early intervention and prevention strategies that focus on long-term violence prevention and shifting community attitudes. School-aged children are the principal targets for these programs. The overarching aim is to encourage Australian youth to challenge and redefine violence condoning gender stereotypes and restrictive gender roles. Respectful relationships education is fundamental in ensuring future generations have positive experiences with health, safety, respect and equality in their professional and family relationships.

Diversity in Experiences of Violence

Vulnerability to violence can be impacted by an intersection of identity axes such as sexuality, ability, race, socio-economic status and age. These intersections include, but are not limited to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women living with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse women, women who are economically disadvantaged, asylum seeker/refugee and immigrant women, sex workers, women in same-sex relationships, women who identify as non-binary gendered, women in institutions and, finally, young women.

YWCA Adelaide acknowledges that Australian women across all walks of life are affected by this pervasive violation and are impacted differently.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience both far higher rates and more severe forms of violence compared to other women.⁵⁴ Indigenous women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence related assaults than non-indigenous people, due in particular to the fact that this violence is not constrained to the home.⁵⁵

Other factors that contribute to Aboriginal family violence include, but are not limited to, dispossession, colonisation, intergenerational trauma and racism.

⁵¹ VicHealth, "Australians' Attitudes to Violence against Women: Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS)," 2014, <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/2013-national-community-attitudes-towards-violence-against-women-survey>.

⁵² *ibid*

⁵³ Inara Walden and Liz Wall, "Reflecting on Primary Prevention of Violence against Women: The Public Health Approach" (Melbourne: Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2014), <https://aifs.gov.au/publications/reflecting-primary-prevention-violence-against-women/introduction>.

⁵⁴ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, "Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2014" (Canberra: Productivity Commission, 2014), <http://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/overcoming-indigenous-disadvantage/key-indicators-2014/key-indicators-2014-overviewbooklet.pdf>.

⁵⁵ *ibid*

Rural women

Women in regional, rural and remote areas are more likely to experience domestic and intimate partner violence.⁵⁶ In small communities, it is likely that police, health professionals and allied health workers know both the victim and perpetrator, which can inhibit a woman's willingness to use local services. Fear of stigma, shame and lack of perpetrator accountability further deter women from seeking help.

Women living with disability

Women with disabilities experience violence at higher rates and more frequently, have fewer pathways to find safety, be subjected to violence for significantly longer periods of time, and experience violence at the hands of a greater number of perpetrators.⁵⁷ Evidence is mounting to suggest that women with disabilities are more likely to experience violence than those living without disability.⁵⁸

Same-sex attracted women

Rates of domestic violence amongst same sex relationships are similar to those in heterosexual relationships, although some unique aspects of violence including using the threat of outing a partner as a method of abuse and control of those who are not openly 'out'. Social homophobia can result in those in same sex relationships having difficulty accessing violence related services.⁵⁹

YWCA Adelaide supports universal reach through inclusive and tailored approaches so that people from all cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, or different abilities, sexualities and ages, and across different locations and settings, can participate equally in activities aiming to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women.

Accountability Measures

National Action Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children

The Australian Government's 'Third Action Plan 2016-2019' details a long-term commitment to changing Australia's attitudes to, and tolerance of, violence against women and girls. The priority areas range from prevention and early intervention strategies to perpetrator accountability. Sexual violence, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the impact of domestic violence on children are addressed.⁶⁰

Sustainable Development Goals

Violence prevention is addressed in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Namely (1) target 5.2. – Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls and (2) target 5.3. – Eliminate all harmful practices such as child, early forced marriage, and female genital mutilation. Without dedication towards the eradication of violence against women and girls, Australia will not successfully achieve the overarching purpose of the SDG and in particular goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Walden and Wall, "Reflecting on Primary Prevention of Violence against Women: The Public Health Approach."

⁵⁷ "Submission to the National Human Rights Consultation" (Australian Council of Social Service, 2009), http://www.acoss.org.au/images/uploads/ACOSS_submission_to_NHRC_Final.pdf.

⁵⁸ Cox, "Violence against Women: Additional Analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey 2012."

⁵⁹ <http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/471667/9735729/1291776287357/AVP+-+Another+Closet+Web.pdf?token=IKFawQqbY%2FMkyub4YFS5x4i8L6E%3D>

⁶⁰ <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/women/publications-articles/reducing-violence/national-plan-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-their-children/the-national-plan-to-reduce-violence-against-women-immediate-government-actions-april-2009?HTML>

⁶¹ Julie McKay, "Ending Violence against Women Is Imperative to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals" (Australian Council For International Development, 2016), <https://acfid.asn.au/blog-post/ending-violence-against-women-imperative-achieving-sustainable-development-goals>.

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979, and is intended as the principle international bill of rights for women. Australia is one of the 189 states that have ratified the treaty, despite concerns of the limitations on central government power. Australia is committed to implementing CEDAW in its federal constitutional system, and regularly reports to the Committee in fulfilling its obligations to achieving the elimination of discrimination against women.⁶²

Funding of services

The Australian Federal Government's \$100 million commitment to fund the 'Third Action Plan 2016-2019' includes funding directed towards frontline legal services, expanding national domestic and family services and early intervention programs.⁶³ Cuts made to frontline services such as access to legal aid and emergency housing have an overwhelmingly negative impact on women and girls. Ongoing and sustainable funding is critically important in allowing women and girls to leave behind circumstances of violence and abuse. For example, economic security and access to secure and affordable housing options is imperative in giving women options other than homelessness when escaping violent relationships.

Other Issues

Cyber Violence Against Women and Girls

Technology plays a constantly evolving role in the perpetration of violence against women and girls. Specifically, concerns relate to the proliferation of sexually explicit images and the question of individual consent. Legal regulations struggle to keep up to date with the constant and rapid development of technologies such as Internet, mobile phones and social media. This results in difficulties policing and regulating 'revenge porn', cyber stalking and online abuse.

Cyber violence statistics cannot accurately reflect the true depth of the problem, as they only consider incidents that are reported. A vast majority of school aged victims have never told a responsible adult they were bullied online.⁶⁴

YWCA Adelaide supports education that teaches practical skills for negotiating online spaces to ensure safe and respectful engagement and online relationships. Our organisation supports the 'Three S's' cyber violence framework outlined by UN Women that focuses on prevention through (1) Sensitization, (2) Safeguards and (3) Sanctions.⁶⁵ Our organisation further affirms that women and girls have the right to use technology platforms without fear or experience of violence and abuse, and that responsibility of acts related to such things as 'revenge porn', should be focused on the perpetrator rather than suggesting a victim change their behaviour.

Early Forced Marriage

Early Forced Marriage (EFM) is an issue that disproportionately affects women from minority cultural backgrounds. When girl children are forced into marriage, they risk falling pregnant while not mentally or physically ready, they have higher rates of dropping out of school and associated lack of opportunity, and higher risk of living in poverty. A significant link has been identified between EFM and human trafficking. This results in elements of violence, coercion and forced prostitution disproportionately affecting migrant and refugee populations. Of the 20 cases of suspected EFM in Australia in 2015, South Australia was one of four states of interest.⁶⁶

⁶² <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women-cedaw>

⁶³ Caitlin Chalmers et al., "School Policies on Bullying and Cyberbullying: Perspectives across Three Australian States," *Journal of Educational Research* 58, no. 1 (2016): 91–109.

⁶⁴ http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=jscs/report/chapter3.htm

⁶⁵ "Urgent Action Needed to Combat Online Violence against Women and Girls, Says New UN Report" (UN Women, 2015),

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/9/cyber-violence-report-press-release>.

⁶⁶ McKay, "Ending Violence against Women Is Imperative to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals."

YWCA Adelaide does not support any practices that purport women as property, or as individuals without the freedom and liberty to make their own decisions. Our organisation supports culturally sensitive services designed to support women and families that may be affected by EFM. These services may include, but are not limited to, training programs for the public sector to spot signs of human trafficking, and translation services well versed in the dialect of local refugee and migrant communities.

Recommendations

Government

1. Implementation, adequate resourcing, evaluation and monitoring of the *National Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Girls* and *South Australia's Women's Safety Strategy 2011-2022* with community consultation and engagement
2. Implementing the 5-step road map, 'Safety First in Family Law', and appropriate recommendations aimed at reducing trauma and supporting vulnerable women and children in family law cases
3. Extending provisions of existing emergency accommodation to cater to young women aged 15-18 who are escaping situations of violence
4. Providing adequate, stable, long-term funding for:
 - crisis lines
 - women's specialist violence services
 - family and relationship services
 - legal advice and assistance
 - accommodation, housing and homelessness support
 - women's health services
5. Providing adequate, stable and long-term funding for primary prevention programs aimed at ending violence against women. These include:
 - Education and training in the workplace on responding to and preventing violence, such as YWCA Adelaide's Rise Above The Pack campaign and Bystander Intervention Workshops
 - Ensuring school curriculums mandate respectful relationships and gender analysis as core subjects in primary and secondary school
 - Federal and South Australian Government funding to deliver YWCA Adelaide's Respect Ed teacher training, and Relationship Things and Respect Communicate Choose programs across South Australia
6. Including the status of being a victim/survivor of domestic and/or family violence as a protected attribute in anti-discrimination laws, applicable in all areas of public life
7. Establishing a systematic and ongoing family violence death review in South Australia, modelled on the Victorian Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths (VSRFVD)
8. Increasing staff and/or training for:
 - Staff in hospitals, thereby reducing the need for victims to fly to capital cities like Adelaide to receive appropriate counselling or medical treatment
 - Medical practitioners, nurses and hospital staff to recognise the signs of domestic violence
 - All members of the South Australian police force to assist with appropriate victim care response and encouraging accurate reporting practices, particularly in regional areas

Workplace

9. Directing corporate social responsibility budgets, and encouraging the private and public sector to show meaningful participation in local and national initiatives that support the elimination of violence against women and girls. These include:
 - International Day of the Elimination of Violence Against Women
 - Reclaim the Night
 - International Women's Day
 - South Australia's Rise Above the Pack campaign

Community

10. Investing in media campaigns to shift rhetoric from victim blaming towards perpetrator accountability

WOMEN'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Policy Position

YWCA Adelaide believes that the health and wellbeing of women, young women and girls is fundamental to achieving equality in society. Our organisation advocates for women, young women and girls to have access to comprehensive health care, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Background

Australia has an international obligation to 'take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning'.⁶⁷ This obligation is supported by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which cites 'everyone [as having] the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being'.⁶⁸

Health is not just the 'absence of disease or infirmity', but is inclusive of 'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing'.⁶⁹ Healthcare thus extends beyond simply the provision of basic health services to prioritising access to resources, freedom from violence and overarching gender equality. Access to information services, education, income and employment security and safe spaces are key to improving women's health across the board.

Universal access models of healthcare should be accessible to all women throughout each stage of their life, with systems that are respectful, appropriate, affordable and inclusive.

YWCA Adelaide expresses concern over the privatisation of healthcare systems and the impact this has on the length of hospital stays, bulkbilling of health care practitioners in remote areas, and increased out of pocket expenses. Women, particularly those acting as caregivers, access healthcare services more than men. This raises the need for a gender lens application to healthcare services and budgeting.

Women's health education

Comprehensive sexuality education is a crucial factor in informing young women and men about consensual relationships, respect, and reproductive and sexual health. Whether delivered in the national curriculum or as standalone programs, sexuality education helps young people understand and appreciate their own bodies, exercise their right to bodily-autonomy, understand and accept their own sexuality, and make future-conscious planning decisions. Relationships can involve interactions between co-workers, friends, family members, peers, friends, romantic and/or sexual partners.

Teaching young people about their behaviours leads to upholding their social responsibility to be accepting, compassionate, tolerant and respectful. Sexuality education applies a lens that allows young people to consider the impact discrimination has on different ethnicity, race, gender and sexual orientation.

YWCA Adelaide supports programs that develop skills such as critical thinking, negotiation, communication and assertiveness - the foundations of productive and respectful

⁶⁷ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, 18 December 1979, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1249, Article 12

⁶⁸ Article 25 UNDHR

⁶⁹ "Constitution of the World Health Organisation" (World Health Organisation, October 2006), http://www.who.int/governance/eb/who_constitution_en.pdf.

relationships. Our organisation supports young people exploring their values towards sexuality and reproductive health, and developing a broader respect for gender equality and human rights.

Women’s sexual and reproductive health / reproductive rights

YWCA Adelaide affirms that women are entitled to autonomy over their bodies and their reproductive systems. The right to control over personal fertility and sexuality is a basic element to female empowerment and personal development. Women should have easy access to information and services concerning abortion, contraception, pap smears, sexually transmitted infections and diseases, female specific illnesses such as breast and cervical cancer, the morning after pill and sexuality. These services should be delivered without judgement, prejudice, or partiality.

YWCA Adelaide advocates for the decriminalisation of abortion across all Australian jurisdictions. Our organisation advocates for the provision of information and services that champion the right of women to bodily autonomy and control over their sexual and reproductive health.

Body image and self-esteem (body esteem)

Unrealistic body image portrayal and hyper sexualisation result in a culture of non-inclusivity and body shaming. The media and digital space makes unrealistic portrayals of ‘acceptable’ body type more accessible and thus more influential, particularly to young women and girls.

Body esteem is increasingly important as women move further into traditionally male spaces such as gender normative leadership roles. Pressure to conform to socially acceptable norms increases, and oppressive standards of femininity are often consciously or subconsciously enforced. Self-confidence and sense of self can be negatively affected when women are encouraged to conform to narrow gender roles perpetuated by society.⁷⁰

YWCA Adelaide supports initiatives that encourage body positivity and diversity, the exploration of female sexuality expressions and wellbeing through developing positive self-esteem. Our organisation believes that every woman deserves to feel self-worth and comfortable in her own skin.

Safe spaces

The realisation of gender equality is impossible without access to safe and affordable housing options for women, young women and girls. Women are more likely than men to live below the poverty line and as a result, require special consideration when experiencing issues with housing. Additionally, domestic and family violence significantly impact homelessness. A lack of appropriate and affordable housing options results in women and their children being unable to leave situations of abuse.

This concept of ‘safe spaces’ for women does not always involve physical housing. The positive impact of supportive communities should and cannot be overemphasised. These may involve spaces for women to discuss issues in the workplace or their homes, in their personal or professional lives, and be met with empathy, understanding and support. The marginalisation of women is an issue that is still considered ‘taboo’ to some extent in society, thus it is important for women to feel that they can voice their experiences without facing judgement or dismissal. Many women do not feel safe in certain spaces due to fear of violence or discrimination. As a result, the provision of safe, supportive and autonomous spaces for women should be prioritised.

YWCA Adelaide supports the creation and maintenance of safe spaces for women, young women and girls. This may include, but is not limited to, housing options for women escaping situations of domestic violence, support groups, child care and parenting communities and discussion spaces.

⁷⁰ “SHE Speaks Survey 2014” (YWCA Australia, 2014), <http://www.ywca.org.au/news/shespeaks2014>.

Other issues

Diversity in experience

The marginalisation of minority groups adversely affects the health and wellbeing of women who have a fundamental right to appropriate and inclusive healthcare. This includes the unique health care needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse women, women living with a disability, refugee and immigrant women, older and younger women, women living regionally and remotely, same-sex attracted women and women with non-binary gender identity.

For example, transgender persons who identify with or have transitioned from one binary gender to another may still require medical procedures specific to their biology. Pap smears, birth control, breast screenings and gender unique diseases such as prostate or ovarian cancer should be accessible without discrimination or judgement from health care providers.

YWCA Adelaide champions inclusivity as embodied by health care providers, and supports the fundamental right of minority groups to appropriate health care.

Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a medically unnecessary practice with adverse physical, psychological and sexual consequences, sustained by social and cultural beliefs.⁷¹ Procedures can have immediate complications including excessive bleeding, infection, psychological trauma and death. Associated health programs can include, but are not limited to, heightened risk of infection, increased risk of complications in childbirth and chronic pain. Mental health and wellbeing have also been cited as at risk in the long-term.⁷²

FGM has been illegal in South Australia since April 1997. It is currently covered under the Children's Protection Act 1993 (s26) and the Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1993 (s33).⁷³ Unfortunately, this culturally fuelled practice is still observed and adversely affects migrant populations, particularly non-consenting girl children.

YWCA Adelaide encourages programs and support networks for those women affected by FGM. This includes education, training and supportive supervision for midwives when caring for women affected by FGM. This support should be accessible to every primary provider of women during pregnancy and childbirth. Our organisation acknowledges the importance of balancing early intervention practices with respect for cultural beliefs and customs, while maintaining an understanding of basic human rights.

Recommendations

Government

1. Developing comprehensive sexuality education programs that incorporate the following global best practice standards, using the Netherlands system of sexuality education as a model:
 - Respect for human rights and diversity, with sexuality education affirmed as a right.
 - Supporting and incorporating diverse expressions of sexuality and identity alongside heteronormative sexual education
 - Fostering of norms and attitudes that promote gender equality and inclusion
 - Addressing vulnerabilities and exclusion
 - Local ownership and cultural relevance

⁷¹ SA Health, "South Australian Perinatal Practice Guidelines - Female Genital Mutilation" (Government of South Australia, 2015), <http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/04961e804ee46be5bc81bdd150ce4f37/Female-genital-mutilation-WCHN-PPG-20032012.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=04961e804ee46be5bc81bdd150ce4f37>.

⁷² The National Education Toolkit for Female Genital Mutilation (NETFA), "Position Paper - Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting" (NETFA, 2016), http://www.netfa.com.au/downloads/Position_Paper.pdf.

⁷³ "Criminal Offences - Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)" (Legal Services Commission of South Australia, 2014), <http://www.lawhandbook.sa.gov.au/ch12s05s01s05.php>.

- A positive life-cycle approach to sexuality
- 2. Developing health policy that is grounded in a social model of health and promotes, develops and implements services for the physical, mental, spiritual and social wellbeing of women
- 3. Promoting health care training using an approved inclusive language guide, to respect people of intersex, transgender and gender diverse experiences in accessing healthcare, in particular gendered procedures such as HPV vaccine and pap smears
- 4. Supporting a health system that responds to the particular needs of women with disability, low-income women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, same-sex attracted women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women in rural, regional and remote communities
- 5. Decriminalising abortion and increasing access to abortion for women in regional, rural and remote areas, as well as financially disadvantaged women. This would include developing legislation that protects the privacy of women accessing sexual health and termination services, and the staff and practitioners providing these services
- 6. Removing the Good & Services Tax (GST) on tampons and sanitary pads
- 7. Developing a State-wide e-resources portal to facilitate ease of access to information and services concerning abortion, contraception, pap smears, sexually transmitted infections and diseases, female specific illnesses such as breast and cervical cancer, the morning after pill and sexuality
- 8. Providing Medicare-funded birth control and protection from sexually transmitted infections (including birth control pills, intrauterine devices, female condoms and the morning after pill), abortions (including chemical abortion), pap smears and the cervical cancer vaccine
- 9. Ensuring age appropriate gender and culturally specific education about positive self-image is included in primary and high school

Community

- 10. Developing standards across media and marketing materials that provide a more realistic reflection of the diversity of women. This may include the introduction of standardised clothing sizes in Australia as a mechanism to address body image issues, especially amongst young women