

WEL Australia Annual Report 2015-2016



This year WEL reached out to our members to shape our campaigning priorities in the context of a federal election. We asked members what were their key priorities for change and the issues that mattered most to them. As a result of this WEL's key campaign priority this year was reducing violence against women and ensuring funding for vital supports for women experiencing or at risk of violence. We also continued our focus on women's financial empowerment through pay equity, employment rights such as flexibility and job security, and ensuring women have adequate retirement incomes.

We engaged and mobilised our members and supporters through a range of activity, including events, grassroots actions, submissions, social media and collaboration with other community organisations.

Federal Election

WEL developed a [Plan for Action](#) to address ten priority areas to make a real difference in improving gender equality across our Nation:

- Eliminating violence against women
- An equitable taxation system
- Adequate retirement income for women
- Social security
- Vocational education and training
- Job security, flexibility, and working time
- Gender pay equity
- Affordable housing
- Child care
- Strengthening women's representation at decision making levels



We mobilised our members and volunteers to undertake advocacy around our key priorities and lobby their local candidates to adopt policies in line with the Plan for Action.

We partnered with local community services in marginal Sydney electorates, Liverpool and Campbelltown, to run a series of election *Table Talks*. These sessions brought together women across these communities to discuss how the major parties policies stack up when it came to financial pressures on women and their families. The *Table Talks* also provided participants with a session on how they could best use their vote and unpacked Senate voting changes.

WEL held two Roundtables to shape our Plan for Action with experts on Women and Affordable Housing and Work and Family.

WEL contributed to the federal election public debate through media coverage and policy conversations, including contributing to the National Foundation for Australian Women's Party Policy Comparative Analysis.

Women and Children's Safety Program

Our main campaign this year was to increase and secure long term funding for women's refuges as vital supports for women experiencing violence. Led by our Violence against Women Action Group, this campaign brought together a coalition of women's and community services to advocate for the Commonwealth to fund the *Women and Children's Safety Program*. This program requires a commitment of \$200 million a year for five years.

We mobilised supporters to 'take the 2 cents a day pledge', the calculated cost of this program per Australian per day.

Overall, this campaign called for a commitment from Commonwealth and State Governments of \$2 billion over five years. It was supported by 33 women's organisations. The campaign received political support from three parties. WEL also utilised our response to the budget to focused squarely on our priority of funding for frontline support services. WEL had a representative in the Budget Lockup, distributed media releases and utilised our social media to promote our analysis.



National Women's Alliances

WEL maintained our active role in the National Women's Alliances through representation in all Equality Rights Alliance (ERA) Working Groups and participating in developing the ERA work-plan and the annual advocacy day at Federal Parliament. This work is key to WEL's coalition building and networking, and strengthening our reach and influence.

Submissions

WEL has individually and collaboratively produced submissions to a range of inquiries throughout the year, including a Pre-Budget Submission, COAG Domestic Violence Summit Submission, Report to International Alliance of Women Annual Meeting – Paris 2015, provided feedback to and endorsed ERA submissions, the CEDAW NGO report, and the National Women’s Alliances combined submission to the Australian government on the CSW60 priorities.

Looking forward

After a number of years serving as Chair I am stepping down. It has been an honour serving in this role. I wish to extend my great appreciation for the work and support of our National Committee who lead and drive WEL in their own states and on a national level – no easy task. I am truly hopeful and inspired by all that WEL can and will do. WEL brings together and builds on a strong, resilient women’s movement of passion, commitment, energy and intelligence and together we can make real change happen.

Melanie Fernandez, WELA Chair

