



# Women's Electoral Lobby NSW

## Annual Report 2016

### NATIONAL ISSUES

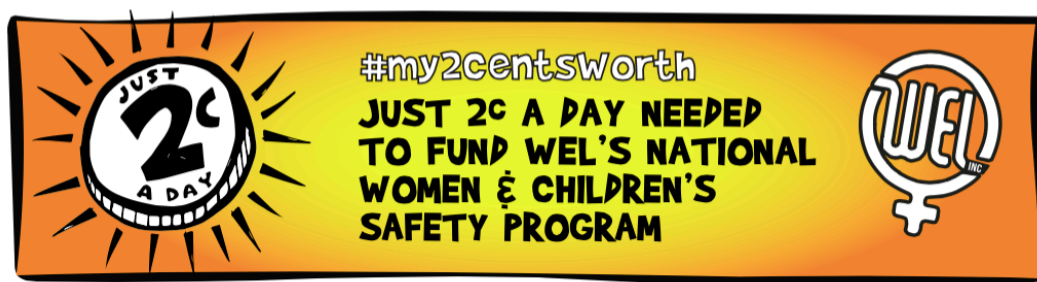
**WEL NSW** led WEL's national work. **WEL's** priorities and activities were defined by the Federal Election held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July. In December, 2015 we ran a survey of WEL members to identify issues which they considered of highest priority for the election. This gave us a starting point for our strategy planning for the campaign in January.

Some national policies were revised. We worked with on the ground services in Liverpool and Campbelltown to run four women only Election **Table Talks**. This allowed us to discuss what the major parties policies would do to alleviate financial pressures on women and their families. In return, we provided sessions on how to use your vote well in conjunction with explanations of the Senate voting changes. There was a real appetite for the Table Talks which motivated women to mobilise and lobby their local candidates and to help them to vote strategically. These **Table Talks** were organised and facilitated by Sandy Killick and Prue Mooney, Policy and Campaign Coordinator. We also contributed to NFAW's Party Policy Comparative Analysis.

We developed a ten point Action Plan -

1. Eliminating violence against women
2. An equitable taxation system
3. Adequate retirement income for women
4. Social security
5. Vocational education and training
6. Job security, flexibility, and working time
7. Gender pay equity
8. Affordable housing
9. Child care
10. Strengthening women's representation at decision making levels

Our main focus in the campaign was to increase and secure long term funding for women's refuges. This campaign was led tirelessly by Helen L'Orange as Convenor of WEL's Violence against Women Action Group.



We asked people to take the 2 cents a day pledge. WEL calculated that the \$200 million a year (for five years) needed from the Commonwealth to fund the **Women and Children's Safety Program (WCSP)** is just **2 cents per Australian per day**.

The overall demand by WEL was a commitment from Commonwealth and State Governments of \$2 billion over five years. It was supported by 33 women's organisations. Three political parties also supported the campaign and post- election, WEL continued lobbying COAG and relevant Commonwealth and State Ministers as well as maintaining pressure on various bureaucrats involved in the preparation of Housing Discussion Paper.

As part of the policy revision process, we organised two **Roundtables** with experts in the field of **Women and Affordable Housing** on 4<sup>th</sup> April led by Mary O'Sullivan in collaboration with OWN and **Work and Family** on 27<sup>th</sup> April led by Philippa Hall. The outcomes from these were incorporated into our Program of Action. WEL national policies on Pay Equity, Flexibility and Job Security and Affordable Housing have been updated.

The Executive agreed on a range of lessons learned from the 2016 Federal Election among which were: the importance of starting early; building relationships with key partners; developing an angle to achieve prominence in a crowded field; building teamwork and WEL's capacity; clarifying roles such as policy development, social media and online engagement, fundraising and communication coordination points.

## **NEW SOUTH WALES ISSUES**

At the state level we have campaigned on elder abuse [http://www.wel.org.au/affordable\\_housing](http://www.wel.org.au/affordable_housing) and reproductive rights [http://www.wel.org.au/reproductive\\_rights](http://www.wel.org.au/reproductive_rights)

**WEL** appeared at a hearing of the **Upper House Committee on Elder Abuse** on 22<sup>nd</sup> February with representatives from the Older Women's Network.

**WEL** organised a **Decriminalisation of Abortion** Roundtable on 18<sup>th</sup> October chaired by Wendy McCarthy with policy work and organisational liaison led by Mary O'Sullivan. We are hoping that insights derived from the discussion on that day will assist us to develop a campaign leading up to the 2019 State Election for reproductive rights and improved access for women to abortion services.

## **DEPUTATIONS**

1. Elizabeth Koff – Deputy Secretary, NSW Ministry of Health regarding our campaign for separate funding for women's refugees.
2. Sophie Cotsis – former Shadow Minister for Housing and the Status of Women regarding Elder Abuse inquiry hearings, social housing, violence against women, reproductive rights.
3. Office for Women – Louise McSorley, Amy Laffin, Stewart Thomas (Housing) and others in Canberra regarding strategies for the Women and Children's Safety Program and the future for National Partnership Agreements on Housing and Homelessness.
4. Tracy Howe – NCOSS CEO regarding separate funding for women's refugees and related issues.
5. Darren Goodsir – Editor-in-Chief, Sydney Morning Herald regarding coverage of women's issues.
6. Penny Sharpe – ALP MLC, Shadow Minister for Environment and Heritage and Shadow Minister for Trade regarding exclusion zones around abortion clinics and related issues.

7. Libby Davies – CEO White Ribbon regarding separate funding for women’s refuges and related issues.
8. Dr Mehreen Faruqi – Greens MLC with responsibility for the Status of Women and the prevention of Family and Domestic Violence regarding decriminalisation of abortion Bill.
9. David de Carvalho – Deputy Secretary, NSW Department of Family and Community Services regarding Women and Children’s Safety Program.
10. Tanya Plibersek – Shadow Minister for Education and Shadow Minister for Women regarding a range of issues including WEL’s campaign for separate funding for women’s refuges.



*WEL’s meeting with Tanya Plibersek, October 2016  
L to R: WEL NSW Executive members Phillippa Hall, Helen L’Orange and Sinead O’Connell*

## **PRESENTATIONS**

1. Lane Cove Women’s Action and Information Group.
2. Zonta Club of North Sydney
3. The Women’s Club, Sydney.
4. NSW Domestic and Family Violence Forum
5. Lecture on Women’s Rights to University of Sydney students.

## **SUBMISSIONS**

**2016-2017 Pre-Budget Submission** to Australian Treasurer, Scott Morrison.

We made a submission to the Commonwealth Government’s **Discussion Paper on Redesigning VET Fee-HELP** on 30<sup>th</sup> June.

With OWN, WEL prepared a submission with recommendations in response to the NSW Family and Community Services **Homelessness Discussion Paper**.

## **EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

WEL participated in the **IWD March**. We organised a stall for Fair Day. We held a very successful **Women Stand Up for WEL Comedy Night** fundraiser on 23<sup>rd</sup> March at Paddington RSL facilitated by Liz Stephens and ably supported by Amanda Keeling, our Fundraising and Membership Engagement Coordinator.

WEL ran an online **Equal Pay Day** awareness campaign attracting involvement from members and supporters as well as politicians.



*Equal Pay Day 2016*

*L to R: Tammy Franks MLC (Greens) and members of the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association – just some of the participants in WEL's Equal Pay Day awareness campaign this year.*

As part of our work with the Coalition for Women's Refuges, we visited women's refuges now operating under the **Specialist Homelessness Services** program in Katoomba, Rooty Hill and Dee Why. We participated as members of a panel at the **Penrith Election Breakfast** organised by Western Sydney Community Forum as well as attending a **Meet the Candidates** forum organised by SBS at Liverpool RSL on 16<sup>th</sup> June and **Shelter Election Forum** on 7<sup>th</sup> June. Two WEL representatives attended the **National Multicultural Women's Conference** in Parramatta on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of November.

We attended the Annual Luncheon of Jessie Street National Women's Library, the Edna Awards evening, Emily's List Polka Dot Ball, and rallied with activists on **Reclaim the Night**.

We hosted discussions with Dorosday Kenneth, Director of Women's Affairs from Vanuatu and Charmaine Scotty, Minister for Education and Home Affairs from Nauru.

## **PEOPLE**

The WEL Team continues to grow. New women joined for the Federal Election campaign ably supported by Prue Mooney and Kaitlyn Birkett, Volunteer Coordinator. The members of the Election Action Group helped us to communicate our policy demands through social media liaising with Amanda Keeling. They also worked on a scorecard to hand out at polling booths.





*L to R: WEL Executive and members at the Reproductive Rights Roundtable Oct 2016  
and WEL Federal Election Campaign Volunteers, Sahra and Lisa*

The Transition Implementation Team continued to work under the leadership of Sandy Killick. It aimed to ensure that the reforms agreed by WEL NSW following its review in 2014 stayed on track and that we continued to adapt to changing needs. It also aimed to provide an ongoing management support role. Key tasks completed were the compilation manuals on Governance and Volunteer Coordination.

In July, we lost Prue Mooney to a position in the National Office for Women, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. In her time, Prue worked to find new policy partners, raise our profile and communicate our priorities.

We are looking for more volunteers to grow our action groups, particularly reproductive rights, and for a second volunteer coordinator as well as digital coordinators to expand our reach.

## **STUDENT PLACEMENT**

This year WEL provided five UTS student placements in the subject of **Politics, Ideologies, Beliefs** in the Communications Degree program. Students met with Amanda Keeling and Sinead O'Connell who outlined WEL's history and campaign areas, as well as answering student questions about WEL's current work. Students also attended working group meetings to see WEL in action.

## **FUNDRAISING AND MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT**

The work outlined in this annual report couldn't have happened without the generous support of our membership base. Our role as an independent, advocacy organisation relies heavily on public support, and we thank our members for continuing to believe in the vision of WEL.

With the addition of contractor Amanda Keeling to fulfil WEL's Membership, Engagement and Fundraising role, the organisation has seen a membership increase of over 100% since November last year. A sustained effort was made to create a range of fun and interesting events for WEL members to take part in. The first half of 2016 was a busy time with WEL members coming together to take part in the **IWD March**, which kicked off in Hyde Park. This year WEL decided to have a presence at **Fair Day** held in Victoria Park, which

was another opportunity to raise our profile and recruit new members. The major fundraising event for the year was the hugely successful **Women Stand Up for WEL** Comedy Night on the 23rd March 2016 at the Paddington RSL, facilitated by Liz Stevens and supported by Amanda Keeling. Most recently, WEL members rallied with other feminist activists and took to the city streets for Reclaim The Night.



*International Women's Day March and Rally 2016*

As part of our membership engagement work, we have focused on raising WEL's digital profile and this year WEL has reached a much wider audience on social media channels and presented as a lively, active, lobby. WEL's online fundraising campaign during the Federal Election for the Women and Children's Safety Program helped secure funds to continue this vital work.

Kaitlyn Birkett, WEL's volunteer manager has made a significant contribution in growing the volunteer base to support the campaign action groups. As a volunteer organisation, WEL relies solely on the passion of its volunteer base. This year WEL's volunteers met to discuss action areas and policy, assisted with running events and campaigns, and handed out 'how to make your vote count' flyers before the Federal Election. They were also on hand to march and rally for women's rights at events where WEL was taking part. We are grateful for the time and dedication given to the organisation by our volunteer team.

Following an advertising and interview process in May, we invited Maeva Freeman to join WEL NSW Executive with responsibility for leading the Fundraising Strategy Group working closely with Amanda Keeling. A major challenge after the activity for the Federal Election was to put a sustained effort into fundraising so that WEL can continue its independent advocacy role. WEL NSW's fundraising strategy involves building several streams including membership, events, and fundraising appeals. WEL has had some initial success in raising funds through our members and supporters. We will continue to invest in growing our membership base, create a regular giving program and attract bequests. In the upcoming year WEL will endeavour to draw interest from major donors to help raise the significant amount needed to ensure the organisation is sustainable and enable WEL to continue to elevate the voices of women and advocate on their behalf in our campaigning work.

## **FINANCES**

WEL continued to implement the recommendations of the review conducted in 2014 on WEL revitalisation and renewal. We are continuing to operate at a loss with the hiring of two contractors to undertake critical work of policy and campaign coordination as well as fundraising and membership engagement. This has enabled WEL to strengthen its online presence and profile.

The departure of Prue Mooney in July to another position has allowed the Executive to review this role and recruitment for a replacement has been put on hold until our financial situation is on a firmer footing.

We acknowledge with gratitude the support of the **City of Sydney** through its provision of rent-free accommodation to **OWN** with which WEL has a Memorandum of Understanding to share the Victoria Street premises.

Overall **income** in 2015/16 was \$32, 698 exceeding the previous financial year by \$18,421 or 129%. Membership revenue of \$8,620 was approximately 92% greater than the previous year. Donation revenue of approximately \$19,000 exceeded the previous year by 84%.

The major fundraising events for the year were the Comedy Night and WEL's campaign during the Federal Election for the Women and Children's Safety Program.

In 2015/16, WEL NSW clarified its relationship with National Foundation of Australian Women for use of its preferred donor fund, in existence for some years. Donors to WEL NSW can elect to donate through this fund and receive tax concessions.

WEL NSW **expenditure exceeded income** by \$97,502 during 2015/2016. WEL implemented the **Nationbuilder** digital platform for its membership database.

WEL finished 2015/16 with a **cash position** of \$11,585 and **investments** of \$158,721.

## **WEL NSW EXECUTIVE**

The Executive Committee welcomed new members, Toni Milne, Treasurer and Maeva Freeman expertise in fundraising, Sinead O'Connell, Secretary, Jane Bullen, expertise in housing, homelessness and domestic violence and Philippa Hall, expertise in pay equity, industrial relations and economic policy.

Toni Milne, WEL's Treasurer has assumed the role from Anne Barber and Jann Skinner has agreed to undertake the role of Honorary Auditor for WEL NSW from Cate Turner.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Toni extends her thanks to Jann for her support and advice for the auditing of the year's accounts.

Anne Barber, Melanie Fernandez, Kate O'Brien and Gabe Kavanagh are stepping down from WEL NSW Executive this year. Charity Danquah left earlier in the year for the United Kingdom and is seeking to extend her experience. Charity and Kate were both valued members of the WEL Violence against Women Action group.

Anne Barber has contributed to WEL for some decades. She has been indefatigable, candid, direct and unswerving in her work for all feminist causes. She has a unique, no-nonsense perspective marked by pragmatism and a desire to get things done. Her organisation of the Edna Awards, when WEL NSW was



responsible for these, and International Women's Day marches and the day to day administration of WEL is matched only by her commitment to archiving its records and ensuring its history is preserved. She has remained with WEL through its difficult years and persevered when reform and renewal required energetic engagement. We owe her a deep debt.

Melanie served as National Convenor of WEL for four years and represented it on the Equality Rights Alliance (ERA). Gabe made a contribution as a member of the Young Women's Advisory Group of ERA.

We acknowledge all their work and place our appreciation on the record.

WEL will strive to be an inclusive, effective, and relevant feminist lobby group. We are striving to ensure that WEL has a diverse appeal so that it can rightly represent women from a range of backgrounds. We rely on the support of our members. Financial, in-kind and practical support is vital to our flourishing into the future.

Jozefa Sobski is stepping down as Convenor after three years. She is remaining on the Executive. She extends her thanks to all members and supporters. They ensure the organisation can continue as a feminist, non-profit, self-funded, non-party political lobby group dedicated to creating a society where women's participation and potential are unrestricted, acknowledged and respected and where women and men share equally in society's responsibilities and rewards.

