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Setting the Agenda Labor's National Conversation on Gender Equity

Submission

of the

Women's Electoral Lobby Australia

August 2017

Women's Electoral Lobby, established in 1972, is an independent, non-party political lobby group dedicated to creating a society where women's participation and their ability to fulfill their potential are unrestricted, acknowledged and respected and where women and men share equally in society's responsibilities and rewards.

The Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) is a national, independent, non-party political, feminist lobby group that has worked tirelessly for 45 years to improve the position of women in society.

The Women's Electoral Lobby is dedicated to creating a society where women's participation and their ability to fulfil their potential are unrestricted, acknowledged and respected and where women and men share equally in society's responsibilities and rewards.

WEL applies a feminist approach to all its work from policy analysis and development to campaigning. WEL has developed a Feminist Policy Framework, which sets out the values, which we use to measure fairness for women and fairness for society. WEL believes that good policies should address these indicators and work with governments at all levels on achieving better and fairer policy outcomes.

Our current strategic focus areas include:

- Violence against women including securing crucial funding for women's refuges
- Financial security for women
- Women's reproductive rights

This submission responds specifically to questions that fall under our current priority areas. However, we consider all the issues raised within the guidance document to be significant for women.

1. WHAT STRATEGIES ARE NEEDED TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY AND INDEPENDENCE?

Improving women's economic security and independence requires improving women's opportunities and rewards in paid work, improving the treatment of women's earnings in the tax system, and addressing the many ways women are disadvantaged in the retirement incomes systems.

The deregulation of the labour market since the 1980s has fallen heavily on women, especially the most disadvantaged women. Many women are not being paid the legally required minimum rates, and superannuation contributions are not being made for many women. Employment has become more insecure and underemployment is rife. The compliance processes and institutions have been undermined. Only employees and former employees can make complaints about failure to meet legal requirements. There is very little proactive investigation of the widespread breaches of employment requirements. Widespread underpayment contributes to downward pressures on what is actually paid in the labour market.

Enterprise bargaining has disadvantaged women, whose capacity for effective bargaining is limited by their structurally weaker position in the labour market. At the same time, the award system has been weakened and protection by industrial institutions has declined. Pay systems increasingly lack transparency and involve high levels of employer discretion.

Penalty rates, on which many women rely to make a living wage, have already been reduced in some female-dominated jobs. Further reductions seem highly likely as employers announce their intentions to seek them.

1. Fair Work Act

The Fair Work Act needs to be extensively re-written to provide adequate protection in the labour market, including workable mechanisms for pay equity.

The pay equity provisions of the Fair Work Act are inadequate to enable women to achieve pay justice. The 2015 decision in the early childhood educators case narrowed the scope of the equal remuneration provisions and reintroduced the requirement for direct comparisons of male and female work, which has been a long-standing obstacle to achieving pay equity in the most female-dominated work, which is unlike male-dominated work. That the provisions are capable of these interpretations by the Full Bench demonstrates an urgent need for a comprehensive re-draft. The provisions need to be re-drafted consistent with the legislation and principles that were developed in the state jurisdictions in the 1990s and early 2000s, especially in NSW and Queensland. Those provisions and principles were based on extensive Pay Equity Inquiries, case studies, and industrial tribunals setting principles. The insights

developed in those processes provided effective ways of addressing gender-related undervaluation, which is an intrinsic and essential component of achieving pay equity, especially in the most female-dominated work. WEL's Pay Equity Policy provides further detail on what is needed for an effective pay equity jurisdiction.

2. Superannuation

A Women's Electoral Lobby member has provided this comparison of her superannuation situation compared with her husband's. It shows very clearly how this woman has been very disproportionately disadvantaged by her time out of the workforce to care for their children.

COMPARE THE PAIR

Gender and Age	Female 43 years	Male 48 years
Sectors	Female dominated health, community and education	Male dominated emergency services and aviation
Income and full time/ part time Nb. Have earned similar incomes at all stages in last twenty years	\$105,000 Full time	\$105,000 Full time
Current super balance	\$116,000 spread over four funds (three are compulsory award default funds with roll-over restrictions)	\$310,000 in one fund
Employment history and caring responsibilities	8 months maternity leave (12 weeks paid, 20 weeks unpaid) 5 years part time employment due to caring responsibilities Insecure contract work with compulsory default super funds linked to awards	Continuous full time work since entering the workforce

The current Australian superannuation system is not designed for women to succeed. It is a system that was designed for full time working men – and that is who it rewards. According to the latest figures, women are retiring with around half as much superannuation (53%) as men. (<http://www.asu.asn.au/news/categories/super/170720-new-report-reveals-retirement-is-not-so-super-for-women>).

The Senate Economics Committee found:

This is a problem born of many interrelated factors. At its heart, however, is the fact that women and men experience work very differently. Women are more likely to work in lower paid roles and lower paid fields, are more likely to work part-time or casually, and are more likely to take breaks from paid employment to provide unpaid care for others. Over their lifetimes, as a consequence, they will earn significantly less than men.

Australia's retirement income system does not adequately accommodate this difference. It structurally favours higher income earners who work full-time, without breaks, for the entirety of their working life. The women (and men) who do not fit this pattern of work face a significant handicap when saving for their retirement."

(http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Economics/Economic_security_for_women_in_retirement/Report, p xi)

It is a system that doesn't value women's financial sacrifices for families and broader community. In fact, the biggest factor in the gender imbalance in super is motherhood. (<http://www.asu.asn.au/news/categories/super/170720-new-report-reveals-retirement-is-not-so-super-for-women>). Superannuation should be a universal retirement income for all Australians as they age, rather than a tax haven and a mechanism for the intergenerational transfer of wealth.

There has been a growing call in recent years for action on women and superannuation. The glaring inequity in the statistics and the refusal of governments to act on this system (which is fundamentally tied to Australia's national taxation and welfare systems) have become too obvious to ignore. Now is the time for a major, mainstream political party to offer an alternative to the current system, and correct the systemic and structural inequality of the Australian superannuation system. WEL sees gender-based reform of superannuation as fundamentally important in tackling inequality.

In Bill Shorten's speech to an economic conference in Melbourne 21/7/17 he said that inequality fractures the nation because it fractures the links between "hard work and fair reward, the link between playing by the rules and getting ahead...[that]..Inequality kills hope. Inequality feeds the sense that the deck is stacked against ordinary people, that the fix is in and the deal is done."

(<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jul/20/bill-shorten-says-inequality-threatens-australias-economy-and-social-cohesion>)

This is very much Australian women's experience with superannuation. No matter how much you salary sacrifice, the system has been set up for women to fail. As Elizabeth Broderick puts it: "Is poverty to be the reward for a lifetime spent caring?"

(<http://www.women.anz.com/content/dam/Women/Documents/pdf/ANZ-Womens-Report-July-2015.pdf>, p.1)

The problem of the gender imbalance in superannuation in Australia has been articulated by feminist organisations such as WEL. It has been broadly acknowledged as unfair and entrenching disadvantage among the most disadvantaged. The Senate Economic References

Committee made recommendations coming out of its Inquiry in 2016 (http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Economics/Economic_security_for_women_in_retirement/Report), unions have prioritised it as an issue (<http://www.nteu.org.au/article/A-husband-is-not-a-retirement-plan-18568>, <https://www.australianunions.org.au/equalpay>, <http://www.asu.asn.au/news/categories/super/170720-new-report-reveals-retirement-is-not-so-super-for-women>), there is growing concern in the business community (<http://www.women.anz.com/content/dam/Women/Documents/pdf/ANZ-Womens-Report-July-2015.pdf>) .

As the ASU National Secretary David Smith said, “documenting the problem is not enough.” (<http://www.asu.asn.au/news/categories/super/170720-new-report-reveals-retirement-is-not-so-super-for-women>).

What strategies are needed to correct the gender imbalance in superannuation in Australia?

WEL notes that the fundamental gender problem about superannuation is unfixable because the system is designed to link retirement income to participation in paid work without crediting time out of the workforce for caring. As WEL’s Retirement Income and Superannuation Policy notes, time out of the workforce for caring responsibilities is credited in some other countries and this should be investigated as the highest priority.

Some measures to mitigate women’s disadvantage in the existing system include:

- Defining and publishing acceptable gender equitable ‘accumulation pathways’ for all levels of earnings
- Tracking all superannuation balances in order to trigger interventions for those who are falling behind. Such interventions could include government top-ups, tax relief, superannuation account fee discounts and the inclusion of a superannuation component to Family Tax Benefit B
- Inclusion of superannuation payments in carer payments and all parental leave payments
- Retention and expansion of the Low Income Superannuation Tax Offset
- Reducing the superannuation tax concession for high income earners
- Implementing the recommendations from the Senate Inquiry
- Making the superannuation system less complex for consumers so they can feel confident planning their retirement. Currently there are over 600 mysuper products. This is under consideration in the current Productivity Commission Inquiry.

Recognising that employment-related superannuation will not provide an adequate retirement income for some women, it is also important that the age pension be increased and maintained at an adequate level, based on objectively-set standards, rather than continuing at its currently internationally low level.

3. Tax system

The tax system needs to be made much more progressive and individually based with effective measures in place against tax evasion and avoidance.

Over the last 20 years, the income tax system became less progressive and, as Patricia Apps points out, the individual was replaced as the unit of taxation by a 'quasi-joint' taxation system, resulting in many partnered mothers paying effective marginal tax rates above the top rate on personal income, because of the withdrawal of family payments for dependent children on the basis of joint income.

The intersection of women's disadvantaged position in the labour market, the way women's earnings are treated in the tax system, and the operation of the superannuation system mean that women make up an increasing proportion of the aged poor, often dependent on the age pension, not owning a home, and finding it very difficult to have an adequate standard of living after a lifetime of working and caring.

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2. WHAT ACTIONS ARE NEEDED TO PROTECT WOMEN AND GIRLS FROM HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE?

WEL continues to advocate for measures to prevent violence against women.

A. WOMEN'S REFUGES PROVISION AND FUNDING

However our priority concern continues to be access to front line services including women's refuges and optimal funding for these services.

1. Labor current policy

WEL was pleased to see the 'Australian Women: Labor Positive Policies' document in June 2016

Ending the Scourge of Family Violence which stated inter alia (Page 8)

'Labor will invest \$88m* in a new Safe Housing Program to increase transitional housing options for women and children escaping domestic and family violence and to support programs that enable them to stay safe in their own homes.

Safe Housing will increase the number of refuges specifically available for women and children fleeing domestic violence and will fill the gap between crisis housing and longer term arrangements'

WEL seeks a reassurance from Labor that it is still committed to this policy.

2. Immediate work

2.1 Definition

WEL asks for a commitment by Labor to develop a national definition of women's specialist domestic violence refuges/shelters/safehouses. A great deal hinges on establishing a nationally agreed definition. From that definition everything else should flow e.g. women only services, staffed by women, clarity about the difference of women and children escaping domestic violence and the features of this experience/needs that differ from other homeless cohorts.

2.2 Over the next year

Women are set to benefit from the measures announced for systems improvement through the new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) announced in the 2017 Budget. WEL is pleased to know there is now long term secure indexed funding available for women's refuges, albeit within the Homelessness budget.

However urgent action is needed to ensure that in the NHHA bilateral negotiations with the states:

- Women's refuges are treated as a priority program
- There are quarantined funds in each State for women's refuges which have the specific and primary function to provide support and accommodation to women and their children experiencing domestic and family violence
- There is an outcomes measure for the provision of trained child-focussed staff in each refuge
- There are earmarked funds for services which work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disabilities, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTQI services and women who live in regional, rural or remote areas.

2.3 Level of Funding

WEL will also continue to pursue vigorously more funds for women's refuges. The national level of funding is still far too low. Too many women and their children are turned away and left to fend for themselves. In late May 2017 the ERA summit in Melbourne was told of many women and their children sleeping in their cars in the Capalaba Bunnings Carpark because the car park lighting makes it safer than other places <https://www.bunnings.com.au/stores/qld/capalaba>

In particular WEL is concerned for women who are at greater risk of violence or who face greater barriers in seeking help.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised from partner assaults than the general female population.
- Women with disabilities who are also more likely to experience violence than women without a disability.
- Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who may face violence as well as other challenges, such as language barriers and social isolation.
- Women who live in regional, rural or remote areas and are often a long way from services and face barriers to escaping violence and seeking support.
- Women who experience other types of disadvantage and stigma who are also at higher risk of violence or can experience difficulties accessing support.

In the 2017 Victorian budget, the Victorian Government committed to \$1.9bn for family violence programs. Matching Victoria's funding around Australia is WEL's benchmark. WEL will

lobby vigorously both Commonwealth and State governments to match the Victorian Government's commitment. Matching Victoria in all states will help improve equity of access to services for women and children escaping domestic violence.

The Commonwealth, as part of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) should use its leverage to improve equity of access to domestic violence front line services.

2.4 Separate program: A Women and Children's Safety Program (WCSP)

WEL continues in its view that the optimal funding option would be a Women and Children's Safety Program (WCSP) separate from the current homelessness programs, which do not serve the specific needs of women and children escaping violence. Escaping domestic violence is vastly different in character from general homelessness and requires specialised programs. It is a crisis situation, which with the specialist help provided by refuges may eventually see women and their children returning to their home and community. A WCSP program has the capacity to support a much needed highly integrated systems approach. All relevant agencies, including child protection, police, legal services, family law, and health, need to be involved for an integrated cross-sector system to work.

B. AUSTRALIAN LAW REFORM COMMISSION REVIEW OF FAMILY LAW SYSTEM AND FUNDING FOR FAMILY LAW RELATED SERVICES

Women facing family violence could benefit from the Australian Law Reform Commission's comprehensive review to ensure the family law system meets the contemporary needs of families and effectively addresses family violence and child abuse. This review will report by the end of 2018 with interim reports to be delivered on key issues, providing a long overdue roadmap to contemporise the system. Efforts should be made to influence the terms of reference of the Review.

Women's organisations should be resourced to participate in this law reform process.

Women facing violence could also benefit from the budget announcement of \$80 million funding boost to frontline family law and family violence services.

This additional investment includes:

- \$12.7 million to establish Parenting Management Hearings;
- \$10.7 million for additional family consultants to deal with family law cases;
- \$3.4 million for additional domestic violence units; and

· \$55.7 million boost to Community Legal Centres and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (announced on 24 April 2017).

The decision on funding of Community Legal Centres (CLCs) reverses the government's previous 30% cut to CLCs that was to take effect on 1 July 2017. However there is still a need to ensure increased, secure and long term funding for the legal assistance sector, which provides vital assistance to women escaping domestic violence. Family Court processes are complex and not suitable for women who are unrepresented, and WEL believes significant resources additional to the funds announced in the budget for CLCs are required.

The time taken to resolve family court matters, combined with inadequate understanding in the Family Court of the situations of women who have experienced family violence, including the nature and frequency of financial abuse, have been widely acknowledged as major problems. WEL believes that the impact of the additional funding on the court's operations should be monitored and the

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3. WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING?

WEL believes that a strong well-funded public health system is the first and best guarantee of women's health and well-being. Australia's acutely gendered distribution of formal and informal care means that women shoulder most of the burden for caring for sick and vulnerable people as well as for people with a disability. Women have most contact with the medical system in these caring roles. The overall quality, accessibility and affordability of public health care is therefore of paramount importance to women as individuals and as care-givers in an inequitable care economy such as Australia's.

Australian women enjoy some of the best health care and outcomes in the world. However, the way in which women experience the health system continues to be shaped by gender, poverty, geography, age, ethnicity and sexuality. Ours is a health system where significant groups of women lack adequate and equitable access to health services. In particular, Indigenous women, women with a disability, women in rural and remote areas, migrant and refugee women, women as carers, older women, and lesbian and bisexual women, are at a greater risk of poor health outcomes: some – such as Indigenous women - dramatically so.

WEL has a number of specific focus areas which we would like to see reflected in the policies and commitments of our political parties. These are numbered below, but are not in priority order. A Labor Women's Policy which included initiatives in response to these areas could deliver improvements in Australian women's health outcomes, enhance their well-being and contribute to the general health and well-being of the population as a whole.

1. National focus on women's health

1.1 Develop a new National Women's Health Policy, Strategy and Plan with funding for delivery

WEL was pleased that in their 2016 election platform the ALP committed to a new policy to replace the policy published in 2009 and which now is outdated and has no status. Development of a new policy, plan, strategy and reporting mechanisms would entail the Federal Government- working with the health community, women's organisations and the states and territories - to put women's health and well-being back in the centre of the national health effort.

1.2 Reinstate funding for the Australian Women's Health Network

The current Government withdrew funding from the Australian Women's Health Network in 2016.

Since its establishment in 2009, the network has played a vital role in working with women's medical and health services to identify emerging issues and research areas in women's health. Development of a new National Women's Health Policy will require expert support through the peak organisations represented through the Network.

1.3 Support the Australian Women's Health Charter

Developed through the Australian Women's Network, the Charter identifies four key proposals to underpin a new national commitment to women's health: a new national women's health policy, a government funded independent women's health peak; women's advisory committees and diversity units in all Federal Government departments; funded National Conversations and sustainable ongoing funding.

1.4 Gender mainstreaming in all health policies

WEL strongly supports the recommendation in the AMA'S 2014 National Women's Health Policy that 'gender mainstreaming is adopted in national, state, territory and local health policies, and that a gender perspective is integrated into areas of policy that impact health, including ageing and aged care; income and family support; employment and workplace relations; childcare reform; and judicial and corrective services. The responsibility for translating gender mainstreaming into practice is system-wide and requires ongoing monitoring and accountability for outcomes'.

WEL is particularly concerned that some national statistical collections still do not disaggregate on the basis of gender or seek gender specific information. We would like to see gendered data collection (including where relevant transgendered data) mandated in all Commonwealth funded policy research, with exemptions where these can be evidenced as appropriate.

2. Affordable, flexible and accessible health care

Move to ensure that out of pocket costs for GPs are diminished or eliminated, by ending freezes on Medicare rebates and ensuing rebates remain in tandem with GP and allied health services costs. Ensure that affordable PBS co-payments are maintained.

Women account for approximately 60% of GP visits with a further 11% made by children. Increasing out of pocket costs shifts the burden of rising health care costs from government to patients. Such policies disproportionately impact women who have access to fewer economic resources, and are therefore more likely to consume less health care as a result. Cost increases to medicine disproportionately impact on women who have fewer economic resources

Increase funding for developing and implementing new models for of integrated primary care for people with multiple chronic conditions

Women are more likely to suffer from multiple chronic conditions than men as women live longer. As carers women are more likely to be in contact with the medical system supporting older relatives or as formal care workers. Such labour requires complex negotiations and time commitments, including scheduling and

travel, across the medical system. New models of coordinated care for sufferers of multiple chronic diseases will benefit women as patients and as carers.

3. A focus on women's health and well-being during the life course

Psychological distress and poor health linked to inequality over the life course

While medical models are very relevant to many issues in women's health, it is important to consider social and economic factors when seeking solutions and long term preventative measures.

Women have a higher level of mental disorders than men in all age groups. Women's unequal social and economic position links with a wide range of health and well-being indicators, including some which we discuss elsewhere in this submission: domestic violence, sexual assault, a greater susceptibility to elder abuse, anxiety and depression arising from financial insecurity in old age and high rates of depression arising from the relentless labour of formal and informal caring..

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics In 2014-15 13.7% of women and 9.8% of men aged 18 years and over experienced high or very high levels of psychological distress. The highest proportion of people reporting this level of distress were young women aged 18-24 years (20.0% in 2014-15 compared with 11.1% of young men).

3.1 Young women: Expand programs addressing adolescent mental health with a focus on young women

Adolescence and young adulthood is becoming an increasingly vulnerable phase for young women. ABS 2007 data reported that almost a third of young women reported a mental illness compared to a quarter of young men. The emergence of new forms of intimate and potentially psychologically traumatic social media and the attendant intensification of focus on women's bodies and sexuality has made the transition to adulthood an increasingly painful and dangerous journey for many young women.

Adolescent and young women are more likely to have negative body image or body image dissatisfaction, which is in turn linked to a range of physical and psychological health concerns and risk-taking behaviours, including the development of eating disorders, depression, self-harm and suicide

A major contributor to the rise in young people suffering from depression and other mental health conditions lies in the insecurity and uncertain futures faced by young people- particularly young women. Unemployment is at 13.5% of the youth labour force, which is the highest rate in 40 years, and many young people are underemployed.

Women aged 20-24 have a much higher rate of underemployment than men of the same age. The job market is increasingly casualised, and as young people have little or no working experience they are more likely than other groups to work in non-permanent jobs.

Commonwealth government health programs need to factor in the broader cultural, social and economic challenges young women face. Programs which address adolescent mental health issues need to be expanded and underpinned with a specific gender dimension, taking account of new areas of vulnerability such as those endured by transitioning and transgender teenagers.

3.2 Adult women : Wholistic analysis of the impact of specific policies and fiscal measures on women's lives

3.2.1 Support for women and their babies

WEL's policies on childcare, pay equality and equal work address critical aspects of women's autonomy and well-being. However we also believe that the limited support available to enable mothers to resume economically independent lives and care for their children impinges on women's health and well-being during this life stage. Commonwealth health policy and funding should recognise that pregnancy and the postnatal period are a time of vulnerability to poor mental health, and high quality care is needed for women before, during and after birth, particularly for women with existing mental illnesses. Women in mid-life have a higher prevalence of mental illness than other age groups, and women's role as primary carers can also have a significant impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

WEL would also like to see a much more proactive approach on the part of the Commonwealth to supporting women and their babies through pregnancy, birth and into early childhood. All Australian children should be entitled to free or almost free early childhood education and new mothers should not suffer economic penalties through exclusion from the workforce, under employment or inflexible work arrangements and expectations. To enhance the well-being of mothers and their children Australia needs a positive and proactive range of natal and post-natal policies and should investigate approaches in countries such as France and the Scandinavian countries.

3.2.2 Women as primary carers

Women's role as primary carers can also have a significant impact on their mental health and wellbeing. Expensive or limited childcare provision, intermittent or part-time work out of necessity, inequitable distribution of care work within the household, experiences of violence and assault all affect women's well-being in this life phase.

The Labor Party should commit to a wholistic analyses of the impact of specific policies and fiscal measures on women's lives, with the aim of increasing women's autonomy and independence in adult life and mitigating the corrosive impact of Australia's highly gendered division of labour which is one of the most pronounced in the OECD.

3.3 Older women

3.3.1 Factors influencing well-being

A number of factors impinge on the well-being of women as they enter middle age - not the least being caring responsibilities for their own children as well as older relatives

In the category aged 45 to 54, a little under 25% of women suffer from mental disorders and in the 55 to 64 age bracket around 18% of women have problems with mental health.

Importantly, older Australians of CALD background suffer higher levels of depression and mental health conditions than Anglo Saxon Australians and there is evidence that older CALD women in particular have high rates of depression.

Seventy percent of primary carers are women and are most likely to be older themselves, with the largest age category being 55-66. Two thirds of primary carers live in households in the bottom 2 quintiles of gross household income.

Carers, especially carers of the elderly, experienced significantly lower well-being and significantly higher psychological distress than Australian averages. The Australian Unity Well-being Index indicates that carers have the lowest well being of any group, including the unemployed and homeless. One long-term approach to reducing violence and abuse, especially psychological abuse against older women, would be to provide greater and more tangible support and assistance for carers.

3.3.2 Housing and older women's well-being

'The crisis in housing affordability also has a specific impact on older women.

This cohort of women aged 45 and over earn less, are more likely to be underemployed, work part-time (or are not participating in the labor market for periods of caring) and have less accumulated wealth over the life course than their male counterparts. The 2011-12 ABS survey of income and housing shows that many more female (42%) than male (27%) lone parents live in the low income households most in need of affordable and secure housing. Significantly more women than men also access specialist homelessness services with the largest proportion of these being women feeling violence and abuse.

Single, elderly female households continue to experience the highest rates of poverty in Australia - excluding the poverty experienced in Aboriginal communities. For example the HILDA survey for 2015 shows in terms of income 38% of single, older women households live in poverty, compared with 34% of older men, the next largest category. Single, elderly female households are also at the greatest risk of persistent permanent poverty.

The impact of a permanent state of poverty is well researched. Those in states of disadvantage commonly experience all welfare reliance, social exclusion and poor health outcomes.

Financial decisions for older women in these situations can be urgent and difficult to make independently of pressure from family members, whether the older person lives in a residential care facility or in their own home. Times of crisis almost always entail complex financial decisions relating to home or family and coincide with increased vulnerability on the part of the older people.

There is emerging evidence that the market based model of care instituted under the My Aged Care legislation is failing some older people, particularly those needing housing and higher levels of care. Seventy percent of residential aged care clients are women. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the prohibitive costs of residential aged care and the scarcity in Australia of transitional models of community based housing and shared social care are causing many older women to continue to endure housing situations which are inappropriate and can be tantamount to hidden homelessness.

Older women in rental accommodation are particularly exposed to housing insecurity and isolation. Labor Policy should seek to respond to this challenge through encouraging states to develop innovative models of affordable rental housing for single older women, embedded in strong community, social (including intergenerational) and caring contexts. Recent evidence of uneven and unreliable regulatory oversight of residential care and nursing homes and their lack

of accountability for the public funds they enjoy also requires an assertive policy response from Labor.

4. Reproductive Health

4.1 A national strategy

WEL supports the development of a national sexual and reproductive health strategy, which should address the social determinants of sexual and reproductive ill health. Such a strategy, developed in conjunction with the states and territories could encompass programs to educate and support Australians (including LGBTQI) in relation to sexuality, fertility planning and control, sexual and reproductive health within the context of good relationships, including information about abortion.

4.2 National consistency in Abortion laws and enhanced access to public health facilities

21.06.2017

WEL is pleased to see that a majority of states and territories have now removed abortion from the criminal code. We hope that Queensland and NSW will follow suit in the foreseeable future.

Abortion law remains the province of the states and territories with the consequence that there is now emerging a legislative pattern with many different and even contradictory features. In some states, such as Northern Territory and South Australia abortion remains partly in the criminal code, in others such as Victoria and ACT the decision to terminate a pregnancy is between a woman and her doctor with Victoria requiring two doctors to consult for abortions after 24 weeks. Gestational limits after which abortion is not allowed or where varying constraints prevail, differ from state to state, as do other conditions such as requirements for counselling (WA) and provisions for exclusion zones.

WEL believes that the Labor Women's Policy should commit the Minister for Health in a future Labor Government to initiate development of a national evidence based clinical guideline to achieve consistency in Australian laws relating to the medical procedures and judgements relating to terminations. The basis of such a guideline should be the most recent medical and scientific research and best practice.

Women in rural and regional Australia also suffer major inequities in access to reproductive health services, advice on birth control options and termination services in comparison with women in metropolitan Australia. In many areas of Australia public hospitals do not provide terminations and women are compelled to attend private clinics after long journeys and pay substantial costs, even with the Medicare benefit. Indigenous women in remote areas suffer particularly from lack of access to reproductive health and termination services. The Labor Party Women's Policy should commit to a future Labor Government providing national leadership on this matter so that public hospitals and health facilities in all states provide termination services and support as they do other medical procedures.

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4. WHAT STRATEGIES DO WE NEED TO EASE THE STRAIN OF BALANCING WORK AND CARING RESPONSIBILITIES?

Balancing work and caring responsibilities requires clearly defined entitlements to employment flexibilities and to leave for caring responsibilities. These entitlements must be secured by effective and adequately resourced complaints and compliance mechanisms.

Balancing work and caring responsibilities also requires access to affordable quality services to support carers and people needing care, including childcare (including before and after school care and vacation care), respite care, and home care.

It is important that employment security is not compromised by the need to meet caring responsibilities.

It is evident that caring responsibilities fall especially to women, and that they come with significant disadvantages in women's access to employment generally and to particular types of employment, employment security, employment progression, remuneration, retirement income, and access to the working hours women would prefer ([WEL's policy Flexibility and Job Security](#) has more detail on these issues}. We are still a long way from women and men fairly sharing paid and unpaid work.

It is equally evident that Australian society relies heavily on the caring work women do, in unpaid work as well as in the paid workforce.

Unemployment and under-employment sometimes occur because it is not possible to find work that accommodates caring responsibilities. Self-reported unemployment is at 9.3%, and self-reported under-employment is at 8.3%, according to the 8 May 2017 Roy Morgan Research finding 9233. The Australian Bureau of Statistics data, using a standard of one hour of work in a month as employed, has 7.2% of employed men and 11.4% of employed women as underemployed (The Labour Force 6202 February 2017).

An increasing proportion of all employment is part time. A much higher proportion of women than men work part time and a significant reason women work part time is to meet caring responsibilities. Australia already has one of the highest levels of part time work in the OECD. Part time work can often be involuntary part time unemployment. Where women are not able to choose the hours they would prefer to work because of their caring responsibilities, economic independence and well-being are diminished in the short and long term.

A strong framework for flexibility and job security for the whole workforce is needed. The National Employment Standards and modern award protections should be strengthened and maintained by:

- Increasing job security by providing for casual workers to move to an ongoing contract after 12 months of regular employment
- Retaining current penalty rates in all modern awards
- Establishing firm working time minima, including a minimum engagement of four hours for casual and part-time workers

Enhancing the operation and uptake of the right to request flexible working arrangements by:

- Removing the 12 month service requirement for eligibility
- Requiring that employers reasonably accommodate requests for flexible work by providing a right to appeal refusals as applies to other National Employment Standards
- Developing and disseminating detailed guidance material on the right to request flexible working arrangements and initiating a Fair Work Ombudsman campaign to raise awareness of this right
- Providing for paid domestic violence leave and for paid leave for palliative care
- Restricting maximum weekly hours of work to 38 hours except by mutual agreement and requiring written agreement to a regular pattern of hours and written agreement to and adequate notice of changes to hours for part-time workers.
- Affordable access to good quality services for children, elderly people, people with a disability and others who need care on a short or long term basis is critically important for the well-being of the people who need care, and critically important to support the ongoing workforce participation of carers.

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5. HOW CAN WE IMPROVE GENDER EQUALITY WITHIN EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND THROUGH EDUCATION AND TRAINING?

WEL supports a publicly-funded education and training system with student needs-based schools funding as its basis. Access to education should be a right of every citizen irrespective of gender, race, age, socio-economic status, sexuality, disability, ethnic or religious background.

Education should be affordable and services widely distributed. Fees should be affordable and fee exemptions, subsidies, waivers, scholarships, cadetships and the like should be part of the mix of financial support with student loans and allowances.

A good education increases the opportunity for all individuals to gain satisfying employment with reasonable income and better prospects for advancement and maintaining or improving quality of life. National investment in education should be maintained at OECD average levels. Such investment is widely accepted as securing the future economy of the nation and its productivity and innovative culture.

Women and girls in Australia have improved their educational attainment and achievement since the adoption by all state and territory governments of non-sexist education, equal opportunity or gender equity policies in the early eighties and beyond. The Commonwealth Schools Commission's **National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools, 1987**, endorsed by all governments and education systems contributed also to this major improvement in attainment which is continuing.

Nevertheless, there are still areas of educational provision and practice which continue to produce outcomes for women and girls which perpetuate gender inequality and inequity.

WEL has number of issues and concerns it would like to raise and some recommended approaches to these for consideration by the ALP in relation to all sector of education: Early Childhood Education (ECE), schooling, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education.

WEL is aware that there are state and territory differences, regional variations and differences in participation, achievement among groups of women and girls particularly if they are also of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) background; have a disability; live in a remote area or certain parts of major metropolitan areas; are recent arrivals from war-torn countries or refugee camps; and/or are from low socio-economic background.

It is these compounding differences and some gender differences which generally result in educational outcomes that may have an enduring impact on a woman's life; decreasing prospects, opportunities and quality of life, while increasing the risk of entrenching poverty and

hardship with concomitant risk of homelessness, subjection to violence and debilitating cycles of dependence on social welfare and/or charitable support.

1. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE)

This sector has been governed by a **COAG National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education** which has been extended to 2019. In 2014, all jurisdictions met the 95% benchmark to have children enrolled in the year before full-time school in quality early childhood education programs. Approximately, 1.1 million children attend ECE services in Australia with almost 150,000 educators, predominantly women. This is a significant female workforce which has an important role in influencing notions of gender and cultural identity.

Providers operate under a single regulatory model and a National Quality Framework within two nationally approved learning frameworks. As at January, 2016 there were 15,166 approved services across Australia offering long day care, pre-school/kindergarten, outside school hours' care and family day care. The majority, that is, 6741 are private for profit providers, with 4519 or 67% of these having a quality rating. Of all other provider types, 77% have a quality rating.

The importance of this sector in laying foundations for future well-being is inestimable.

1.1 Gender Stereotyping. Framework review - WEL supports the work of the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority and the various standards set for educators and providers. WEL is concerned, however, that the **Early Years Learning Framework: Belonging, Being and Becoming** is silent on gender stereotyping.

WEL recommends that when reviewing the **Framework**, the promotion of gender equity is woven through the key elements - the principles, practice and learning outcomes. WEL acknowledges from all the research that children's understanding of gender is influenced by their experiences at school, with family, and in the community through media and games. Their early learning experience is critical to their future conceptions of gender, their self- identity, esteem, confidence and notions of their capability.

1.2 Professional training - WEL recommends that reflective professional practice focused on the elimination of gender bias be mandatory in undergraduate and VET courses for Early Childhood Education students. Gender stereotyping in ECE settings should be challenged with the objective of encouraging boys and girls to value and respect each other, be fair in play and relationships so that they may benefit equally from their early learning experiences and thrive as they develop and mature.

1.3 Minimum Provision of ECE - WEL supports a national approach to ECE that aims to ensure that all four year olds access 15, and progressively more hours of quality pre-school per week with the longer term aim of expanding provision to three year olds.

1.4 Trained Staff and Ratios - WEL recommends that this ECE be available in all communities and staffed by appropriately trained and qualified caregivers with child to staff ratios benchmarked against those providers exceeding the National Quality Standard of service.

1.5 Expansion of Public Provision - WEL recommends that national agreements accord priority to establishing more public provision in ECE to ensure that the most disadvantaged children have access which is affordable and of a high quality in a gender fair, culturally inclusive and sensitive learning environment.

1.6 No Budget Cuts to Data Collection - WEL is opposed to the recent budget cut of \$4.6 million to the Australian Early Development Census which measures the physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills and communication and general knowledge of all children in their first year of school. Statistical collections are essential to evidence-based policy making and, in particular, to establishing areas of need. Fields for such collections should be *disaggregated by gender*.

2. SCHOOLING

The schools sector has been a site for debate and contest about funding, curriculum, teaching practice, governance and leadership among many other issues. Schools need to ensure, however, that student participation, performance and achievement is not adversely affected by rigid notions of gender or gender stereotyping setting different expectations for girls than that for boys.

There are over 6500 government schools and over 2700 non-government schools in Australia. The teaching workforce is overwhelmingly female with over 100,000 males and nearly 282,000 females or full-time equivalent teaching staff in Australia.

The development of school curriculum is led by the **Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)** in collaboration with state authorities and the non-Government education sector. ACARA is responsible for providing “a world-class” curriculum from Foundation to Year 12 in specified learning areas.

The Federal Government’s proposed new fairer school funding model will be implemented from 2018. It is claiming this as a “truly needs-based funding model”, but unfortunately it is not sector blind with the Federal Government funding 80% of the non-Government sector and only 20% of the Government sector schools. The new arrangements are aimed to focus on student need, with a Schooling Resource Standard as recommended by the Gonski **Review of Funding for Schooling, 2011**. Commentators and experts, however, are divided on whether student needs will set the resource standard required.

2.1 Student Needs-Based Funding Model - WEL supports a needs-based funding model that provides additional funding to schools for disadvantage. It views this as a welcome first step towards genuine funding reform and fairer funding of school students into the future.

There are issues facing girls in our schools and women, as the majority of the teaching workforce, which need also to be addressed, but many of these are the responsibility of state and territory jurisdictions.

2.2 Adequate Funding for STEM Strategy - WEL recommends that the **National STEM School Education Strategy 2016-2026** be funded at adequate levels. The current national allocation to this implementation of actions is, at best, tokenistic and, at worst, derisory, given the scale of the problem of the decline in participation in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics identified by the Chief Scientist.

WEL considers that this Strategy should have a strong focus on improving girls' participation in secondary science, computer technology and advanced mathematics as the decline in their participation and attainment is from a much lower base than that of boys.

2.3 Funding for Industry Partnerships - WEL supports partnerships and collaboration with industry to broaden girls' career and further education horizons. Such partnerships need to be supported by government-funded programs underwriting school and State initiatives so that the current rapid growth in ICT professionals and engineering jobs may be viewed by girls as potential careers for their future.

2.4 ATSI Targeted Programs for Girls - WEL recommends that the gap between Year 12 for young women from low and high socio-economic backgrounds be the subject of targeted national programs initiated by the Education Council of Australian Ministers. In particular, a program addressing the unsatisfactory Year 12 completion by ATSI girls in certain regions, be established with community leadership, involvement and ownership.

2.5 Collection and reporting of Gender Disaggregated Data - WEL notes that ACARA produced the **National Report on Schooling, 2014**. While there is some data in that report disaggregated by sex, it is in significant respects deficient because little gender data is presented, particularly as it is relevant to the latter years of schooling, that is, from Years 10 to 12. In order to formulate effective policy and develop targeted programs to address particular areas of disadvantage, it is essential that gender disaggregated data be collected and analysed by educational researchers and policy makers. **WEL** recommends that schooling gender data be collected and analysed as a matter of routine.

2.6 Recognition of Gender in Curriculum Design - WEL recommends that ACARA be asked to adopt a Statement of Equity Principles as adopted by the **NSW Education Standards Authority**. While ACARA recognizes student diversity in its curriculum design process, the statement does not mention gender as a key factor among the others like students with a disability, gifted and talented students, students with an additional language or dialect, ATSI students, students from remote and regional contexts or students with any combination of these. There is ample national and international research to demonstrate the importance of gender as a determinant

of attainment and achievement. Curriculum documents should encourage all educators to reflect on their practice and to consider the limiting effects of gender stereotyping as well as ensuring that curriculum and teaching promotes gender equality and equity and respectful relationships.

2.7 Gender Equity of ACARA Board - WEL notes that the ACARA Board Chair and Deputy Chair are male. Of the other ten Board members, there are four women. The teaching workforce is overwhelmingly female. **WEL** considers that there ought to be a higher proportion of women on the Board. This should be a matter of principle and practice and part of the Education and Training portfolio's gender equity strategy.

3. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)

VET is the sector which aims to educate and equip citizens of all ages with skills to enter or re-enter the workforce; to retrain for a new job or to upgrade for an existing job. It was committed to lifelong learning and welcomed adults who wished to undertake further education.

It is a sector which has suffered successive structural and policy reform for more than two decades. This reform and restructuring of VET, the majority of which was once the publicly-funded and owned TAFE system, has resulted in the creation and expansion of a demand-driven competitive training system, much of it private. This has been accompanied by progressive increases in student fees.

This deliberate policy supported by all governments has led to a steady decline in TAFE's share of the public dollar. The private, for profit, providers which proliferate in the sector have a business model dependent on government for their income mainly from student loan schemes.

TAFE Institutes and colleges across Australia, which offered women students a full range of courses and special programs customized to their needs, have been undermined and forced into operating like businesses competing with each other and private providers rather than collaborating as education and training institutions. The economies of scale from which they once benefited have been destroyed by this commercial education business model.

In 2017/18 Federal Budget, the **COAG National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform** has apparently ended with the introduction of the **Skilling Australians Fund** of \$1.4 billion over four years. This Fund is to be created from a levy on businesses sponsoring migrant workers under new temporary skill shortage visa program.

3.1 Reinvest in VET Public Provision - WEL supports a publicly-funded TAFE system focussed on restoring confidence in and integrity of VET, committed to gender equity and diversity, accountable to government for fulfilling its community service obligations and delivering courses across the nation through its campuses and Colleges, its online network in workplaces

and community settings responsive to big industry and commerce as well as small business owners and communities.

3.2 Review VET Funding Priorities - WEL recommends a review of the Federal Government's VET funding priorities to address concerns about the inequitable and discriminatory approach to industry skills training which has the unintended consequence of excluding women because the training priorities are industry-driven, and gender segregation is entrenched in many of the growth industries accorded priority for various support programs. The **Skilling Australians Fund** should include among its outcomes increasing the proportion of girls and women in occupational training that is dominated by men.

3.3 Programs for Women into Trades - WEL supports targeted program funding to address the continuing decline in female enrolments in VET and the small proportion of them enrolled in apprenticeships and traineeships in a narrow gender segregated range of these programs. There have been numerous programs piloted to encourage girls into trades over the years. Inevitably, these have foundered when specialist funding and learning support has been withdrawn. Such programs need to be part of the mainstream of offerings in all regions through all publicly funded training providers.

WEL acknowledges that though women's educational attainment at Year 12 and Certificates II and III in the 18-24 year age group is higher than for men, for the most vulnerable group, that is, those not fully engaged in education and/or employment (those who were not studying or working at all; studying part-time and not working; or not studying, but were in part-time work), there were more young women than men.

Of these, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the most vulnerable with almost 50.5% of men and 66.9% of women aged 20-24 in 2012 identified as part of this group. The Higher Education sector's Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP) is recommended by WEL as a useful model to introduce into the VET sector to address some of these intractable issues.

3.4 Labour Market Programs for Newstart recipients - WEL recommends that appropriate TAFE labour market program support be delivered to all young people vulnerable to partial or no engagement with education and employment. Instead of punitive social welfare policies around pensions and Newstart allowances, **WEL believes** we need to encourage these young people and the long term unemployed into education and training with appropriate and qualified levels of learning support.

3.5 Prevent rorting of VET Student Loan Scheme by Providers - WEL advises that the new **VET Student Loans Scheme** needs to be rigorously supervised because a concern remains that, private, for profit, providers will continue to identify loopholes in the system and exploit the most vulnerable seeking education and training. Data on enrolments by gender, race, disability etc of those availing themselves of the new Scheme need to be collected to provide the

evidence for the effectiveness of the reforms and ensure that the Scheme is delivering the support to those needing it for courses which will lead to secure employment.

The **VET –FEE- HELP Scheme** was rorted by a large number of private providers. During the period when the Scheme’s cost blew out to billions, it has been estimated that almost two thirds of borrowers were women. If they completed their course successfully, they were highly likely to gain employment in low paid and increasingly insecure feminized industries. The Scheme has been cleaned up and reformed with many courses eligible being removed from the list and providers de-registered from eligibility for accessing the new loans scheme. But in the rush to replace the Scheme, following numerous reports of unscrupulous behaviour by providers and a national discussion paper exposing the scandal, the Government introduced reforms without an appropriate administrative infrastructure to ensure against future rorting. While there are now loan caps, an approved course list and fewer eligible VET providers, there is a continuing risk that providers will short change students as they struggle to cut costs and survive with the new regime. Large providers are being liquidated or facing sanction from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC). It is time to reinvest in the public Technical and Further Education (TAFE) system and rebuild it to prepare future citizens for the transforming and transformed economy.

3.6 Adequate Student Income Support - WEL supports indexed increases in student allowances, such as Austudy, Abstudy, Youth Allowance and other payments to ensure that they meet basic living costs during the period of a study program.

4. HIGHER EDUCATION (HE)

Over the last three decades, women have advanced in this sector as a proportion of staff at all levels, in number of student enrolments and in their distribution across fields of study. Most Australian universities have gender equity strategies or policies to support women students. Women comprise more than half of the student body in many universities. Of 1.3 million HE students in 2016, more than half or 58% are women.

There are, however, some gender differences in fields of study and more male staff holding positions at senior academic levels. The proportion of women holding senior academic positions declines to 25% though they are 44% (19,900) of all academic staff (Total: 44,500) on figures published by **Universities Australia** for 2014. Among the 66,600 or so non-academic staff in universities, there are 44,100 women.

With such a large number of women working or studying on campus or living in residential colleges, it is critical that good and effective institutional policies are in place for women’s safety.

4.1 Safe Campuses -WEL endorses all efforts by university governing bodies, student associations and other agencies to promote the prevention of sexual harassment and sexual assault on campus and in residential colleges. WEL considers that all universities should have

policies and effective processes for ensuring women's safety with adequate action against perpetrators supported by sanction and appropriate student suspension or expulsion with police intervention a requirement for criminal conduct. **WEL believes** there should be appropriate counselling support and referral for students who report sexual assault or other types of violence and harassment on campus. The Federal Government should ensure through the performance reporting process for universities that all universities have policies, processes and services in place to ensure a safe studying environment. National campaigns for respectful relationships like *Respect, Now Always* should be supported with university funds.

Increases in University fees have grown steadily in all fields. Financial and other support for university students includes the more traditional income support and scholarships. In 2016, the Department of Human Services reported that there were 19,237 females and 16,910 males on Austudy; on ABSTUDY with a living allowance, there were 4549 females and 3114 males. Those receiving student allowances, however, were a very small number compared to a total population of university students for 2016 of 1.3 million across Australia. Apart from Austudy and ABSTUDY students, income support includes: Youth Allowance for those aged 16-24 years; Student Start -Up Loan/Scholarships to be repaid once income reaches a certain threshold; Relocation Scholarships for ABSTUDY or Youth Allowance Students who relocated from a remote or regional area; Commonwealth Scholarships program which supports eligible Indigenous HE students. There are five categories of these scholarships.

There are two categories of HE loans (HELP). **HECS-HELP** is a scheme which provides loans to eligible students studying in a Commonwealth supported place. **FEE-HELP** loans provide eligible fee-paying students with assistance towards their university fees. In both cases loans are repaid by recipients once their income exceeds a minimum annual threshold. This will be \$42,000 from 1 July, 2018 with a 1% repayment rate. This amount is just \$7000 above the minimum wage. There are a series of income thresholds increasing to \$119,882 with a 10% repayment rate. Analysts from the National Foundation of Australian Women (NFAW) in their **Gender Lens on Budget, 2017-18** have calculated that the new thresholds will result in graduates having to repay HELP sooner and lower paid graduates paying a higher proportion of their income. Women graduates who earn less than men on average are likely to be hardest hit by this proposed regime.

4.2 Fair Student Loan Schemes - WEL does not support changes to HELP which will have detrimental impacts on lower paid graduates, most of whom are likely to be women. The Federal Government should test for differential gender and other group impacts of their proposed changes and adjust the thresholds to ensure equity and fairness and not to create unnecessary hardship in the early working lives of graduates and in the period of family formation.

The **Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP)** introduced in 2010, was established on a foundation of twenty years of equity policies. Over its history, 2679 projects have been funded, operating in 37 eligible universities. The program over the time to 2016 has

supported 310,000 students. It is a model national equity program targeted at people of low SES background, with a disability, ATSI people, people from regional and remote areas, those from a non-English speaking background and women in non-traditional areas of study. Obviously, women are a proportion of each of the other groups. Although universities may collect gender disaggregated data. There are none provided by the ACIL Allen Consulting group's HEPPP evaluation published in March, 2017.

The greatest proportion of HEPPP funding and the greatest proportion of programs was for low SES students, 72% and 67% respectively. The next group to attract most funding and programs was ATSI students, 15% and 19% respectively. Only 1% of funding and programs were targeted specifically to women in non-traditional areas of study (**WINTA**)

Of concern to **WEL** is that the ACIL Allen Consulting group evaluation questions the case for inclusion of WINTA on the basis of the classification provided in the Martin Report (1994) as female student enrolment comprising less than 40%. The female share is 40.2% of enrolments in: Natural and Physical Sciences, Information Technology, Engineering and Related Technologies, Architecture and Building, Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies, Management and Commerce.

4.3 Continue HEPPP funding for all groups. WEL does not support any decrease in HEPPP funding or such tightening of provisions that it will weaken the program. HEPPP should continue with all targeted groups with an appropriate adjustment of WINTA to narrow the fields relevant to its objectives of increasing female enrolments at all levels of study.

Women are still under-represented in Engineering and Related technologies, Information Technology, Architecture and Building and over-represented in Health, Education and Society and Culture and Creative Arts. (See ABS **Education and Work**, Australia, May, 2016.)

There are programs to improve gender equity in all these fields. One of these is the Gender Equity in STEM funded from National Innovation and Science Agenda. It is an initiative of the Australian Academy of Science in partnership with the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering run by the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE). The program promotes the Athena SWAN Charter of principles introduced in the UK in 2005 by the Equality Challenge Unit in response to a chronic under-representation of women in science leadership. To participate in the awards program institutions must accept the ten charter principles.

4.4 Athena SWAN Principles for Gender Equity and Diversity in Academia. WEL recommends that all universities adopt the ten Charter principles or an Australian variant.

The ten principles:

1. We acknowledge that academia cannot reach its full potential unless it can benefit from the talents of all.

- 2. We commit to advancing gender equality in academia, in particular addressing the loss of women across the career pipeline and the absence of women from senior academic, professional and support roles.**
- 3. We commit to addressing unequal gender representation across academic disciplines and professional and support functions. In this we recognise disciplinary differences including the particularly high loss rate of women in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine.**
- 4. We commit to tackling the gender pay gap.**
- 5. We commit to removing the obstacles faced by women, in particular, at major points of career development and progression including the transition for PhD into a sustainable academic career.**
- 6. We commit to addressing the negative consequences of using short-term contracts for the retention and progression of staff in academia, particularly women.**
- 7. We commit to tackling the discriminatory treatment often experienced by transgender people.**
- 8. We acknowledge that advancing gender equality demands commitment and actions from all levels of the organization and, in particular active leadership from those in senior roles.**
- 9. We commit to making and mainstreaming sustainable structural and cultural changes to advance gender equality, recognizing that initiatives and actions that support individuals alone will not advance equality.**
- 10. All individuals have identities shaped by several different factors. We commit to considering the intersection of gender and other factors wherever possible.**

WEL's advice on Education and Training does not cover all issues, but it attempts to provide a basis for good gender equity policy to promote equality within education and training and through education and training.

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