



Australian Women's Coalition

**WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INSECURITY –
UNDER EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT.
OPTIONS FOR REFORM**



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INTRODUCTION

The National Foundation for Australian Women (NFAW) would like to welcome you and thank you for participating in this workshop.

The purpose of these consultation workshops, which will take place all across Australia, is to engage with stakeholders within communities, and gather the local perspectives on the issues raised about women's workforce participation in the report by The Australia Institute (TAI), *The Impact of the Recession on Women*.

The four national Alliances¹ of women's organisations have joined together with the NFAW to sponsor this project.

We also thank our sponsoring bodies in each city- these include States' Women's policy machinery and women's consultative committees, academic institutions, women's organisations, and in Broken Hill the Broken Hill Enterprise Development Centre Inc.

We are in a period of great economic change, and of policy change, which will have major impacts on the life-long economic security of women in Australia. The TAI Report has highlighted the underlying issues around the different pattern of female and male work-force attachment- the fact that so many women report that they want to work, but are unable to do so within four weeks because of matters such as caring responsibilities, yet are not currently counted as being unemployed is very significant. The nature of the ABS data surveys does not provide us with a picture of the characteristics of these women- yet anecdotal information tells us they will include not only women with skills who have become discouraged workers in consequence of the impacts of taxation and costs of child care. These women will include refugee and migrant women, women with a disability, indigenous women, women living in regions where there are also high levels of underemployment and lack of jobs.

Current policy settings pay little attention to these women. Yet the Commonwealth Treasury has consistently pointed out that future increases in productivity for the Australian economy will in part depend on improving current levels of women's workforce participation. To date, this principle has found clearest expression in participation requirements for people of working age in receipt of Government benefits- such as those with a disability, or sole parents.

The introduction of a new industrial relations system (Fair Work Australia) has potential for many changes in women's incomes, some as yet not well understood. There is already a degree of apprehension about the potential outcomes of the award modernisation process undertaken by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. The review of the Equal Opportunity in the

¹ Australian Women's Coalition, National Rural Women's Coalition, Security for Women, The WomenSpeak Alliance.

Workplace Act ² similarly has the potential to lead to improved approaches to reducing the current 17% gender wage gap. The ACTU and women's organisations, together with bodies such as the Australian Human Rights Commission Sex Discrimination Commission have formed a new alliance to work together on strategies such as reducing the gender pay gap , promoting family friendly work-places and improving social infrastructure such as child care- including school vacation and before and after school care³.

This alliance will build on the cooperative efforts which have led to the Commonwealth undertaking to introduce in 2011 a new National Paid Parental Leave Scheme.

Even more basic is the review of Australia's future tax system⁴, being led by the Secretary of the Treasury, Dr Ken Henry. Alongside changes in the 2009-10 Commonwealth Budget to pensions, the Review is examining retirement (superannuation) income policy as well as taxation⁵.

The women's organisations have made submissions to these reviews- some of these can be found on www.nfaw.org. We have raised the problems of current funding models for child care, the lack of attention to care for school age children, the way in which the current structure of tax punishes second income earners, the need for easier access to re-training. We have raised the need for reform to superannuation to enable women to make more provision for retirement, to avoid poverty in old age. These assume sustained and increasing women's workforce participation.

Dr Henry's review is due to report to Government by late 2009.

The reports from these workshops will also be with Government by year's end.

A recent speech by Dr Henry has raised some interesting thoughts:

⁶PARENTS could start to lose family benefits as their children reach school age under reforms flagged by the Treasury Secretary, Ken Henry.

'He also canvassed partly replacing payments to disadvantaged families with an increase in the direct provision of services, such as childcare and parenting programs.

'Dr Henry, who will hand down his review into the tax system in December, has made it clear the review is focusing on removing disincentives to work that are built into the welfare system.

² <http://www.eowa.gov.au/>

³ Open Letter attached

⁴ <http://taxreview.treasury.gov.au/Content/Content.aspx?doc=html/home.htm>

⁵ <http://taxreview.treasury.gov.au/Content/Content.aspx?doc=html/speeches/05.htm>

⁶ The Sydney Morning Herald 4 September 2009.

'In a speech yesterday, he suggested increasing payments to families with very young children, but then cutting back support as children get older to encourage parents back into the workplace.

'He said the current system, where government payments fall as a family's income rises, puts pressure on second-income earners to cut working hours.

"Perhaps the focus of the family payment system ... needs to be redirected towards providing a higher level of support for parents with very young children when their caring and nurturing role is the greatest, and supporting higher levels of workforce participation for parents and carers as children move into their school years," Dr Henry said.

"There would, of course, continue to be a need for assistance to low-income families with older children."

'His comments flag possible changes to family tax benefits, which taper off as a family's income rises, but are only loosely linked to the age of children.

'The maximum rate of Family Tax Benefit Part A rises from \$157 to \$204 a fortnight when a child turns 13. At age 16, the payments start to fall again.

'Dr Henry, speaking to the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth yesterday, said children whose parents were unemployed could get trapped in cycles of disadvantage.

He said governments needed to do more than hand out money, and suggested linking the welfare system directly to the provision of services. Childcare, for example, was typically under-utilised by low-income families, even though they had the most to benefit from such programs.

"Government assistance is more likely to be effective for disadvantaged children if it is provided in the form of ... services ... such as maternal and child health, affordable quality childcare, parenting programs, quality health and community health services," he said.

"And yet delivery must be made in a manner that presumes parent responsibility and builds trust in the services by those who need them most." `

So these workshops are timely in identifying and enabling a focus on specific regional issues which must inform policy changes.

We value your time and your advice in developing our next report to Government on means of ensuring the lifelong economic security for Australian women.

Marie Coleman.

Chair

Social Policy Committee

National Foundation for Australian Women.

September 2009.

EQUAL PAY DAY – OPEN LETTER

Monday 31 August 2009

The Hon Tanya Plibersek
Minister for Housing and Minister for the Status of Women
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Minister Plibersek,

We write to you to inform you of a new Equal Pay Alliance we have formed in order to promote equal pay and equal employment opportunities for all Australians.

As you know, many people in Australia believe women won equal pay in the 70s, but they are wrong.

It's almost 40 years since women were officially granted equal pay for equal work by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. Yet, a significant gender pay gap in Australia persists.

- Women in full-time paid work still earn 17% less than men or one million dollars less over a lifetime;
- While women are now more likely to have a tertiary qualification than men, women graduates will earn \$2,000 less than male graduates and \$7,400 less by the fifth year after graduation;
- Fewer than 2% of ASX 200 companies have a female chief executive officer and only 1 in 12 board directors are women; and
- Women retire with less than half the amount of savings in their superannuation accounts compared with men.

Our labour market and social structures continue to discriminate against women in employment.

On one hand, women have access to unprecedented levels of education and employment.

On the other, women continue to shoulder most of the unpaid housework, care of children and care of other dependents with a critical lack of access to childcare services and flexible work arrangements, to enable them to balance those two roles.

A lack of access to flexible work arrangements also presents a barrier for men to take on a greater share of caring responsibilities. This maintains the status quo of women being disproportionately responsible for caring responsibilities and consequently disadvantaged in the workplace.

We believe this inequity is not acceptable in modern Australia.

We have formed this Equal Pay Alliance to promote equal pay and employment opportunity for all individuals in Australia.

September 1st, is Equal Pay Day. On average, it takes women 14 months to earn the same amount that men earn in 12 months. Starting from the new financial year on 1st July, Equal Pay Day commemorates the day when women's earnings "catch up" to men's.

With your support, we pledge to work towards the eradication of unequal pay through the provision of *genuine* choices and opportunities for women. In particular we will campaign for:

- Meaningful reporting by employers of equal pay and employment opportunities;
- Regular independent monitoring and reporting to the Australian Parliament of progress to achieve gender equality, including progress towards achieving equal pay;
- A greater role for government agencies in auditing, promoting and implementing equal pay and employment opportunity programs in workplaces;
- Proper valuation and funding of wages and conditions for work traditionally carried out by women;
- Better regulation of flexible work arrangements for *women and men* with caring responsibilities and increased protection from discrimination on the grounds of family and carer responsibilities;
- Improved quality, accessible and affordable childcare including after school hours and vacation care; and
- Improved equal employment opportunity practices in workplaces including accredited work related training and professional development.

We look forward to the support of the Rudd government, employers and the community to achieve these reforms so our daughters won't need to work an extra two months to earn as much as their brothers.

Yours sincerely,

Members of the Equal Pay Alliance (thus far)

Assoc/Prof Patricia Todd, Faculty of Business, UWA Business School
Association of Women Educators (AWE)
Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU)
Australian Women's Coalition (AWC)*
Business and Profession Women Australia (BPW)
Carers Australia
National Council of Women Australia (NCWA)
National Foundation of Australian Women (NFAW)
National Pay Equity Coalition (NPEC)
Professor Alison Preston, Graduate School of Business, Curtin University
Robyn Gaspari (Conflict Resolving Women's Network)
Sara Charlesworth RMIT
Security4Women*
Sex Discrimination Commissioner
South Australia Working Women's Centre
The Women and Work Research Group (WWRG)
The Work and Organisational Studies Student Society, University of Sydney (WOSOC)
VIEW clubs of Australia
Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE)
Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL)
Women's Information (WIRE)
WomenSpeak Network*
Work and Family Round Table
YWCA
2020Women

(* representing over 70 organisations)

SUMMARY- TAI REPORT

The Australian Institute (TAI) research report, titled 'Impact of the Recession on Women'⁷ was launched on Monday 24th August, 2009 by Sharan Burrow⁸. The Report was commissioned by the NFAW on behalf of Security for Women and Womenspeak.

The report from TAI draws attention to some important definitions made by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), which tend to have stricter meanings than they have in ordinary language; hidden employed, underemployed and unemployed are some of the definitions discussed⁹.

The *unemployed*, as defined by the ABS, are those aged 15 years and over who:

- Were not employed for more than one hour during the reference period (one week before they were surveyed) and
- Had actively looked for work at any time in the four weeks up to the end of the reference week and were available for work in the reference week, or
- Were waiting to begin a new job within four weeks from the end of the reference week and could have started in the reference week if the job had been available then.

The report finds that

- Unemployment is expected to reach 8.25 per cent by June 2010 and 8.5 per cent by the following June. The recession has not affected women's unemployment as seriously as it has men's; rather, women already faced chronic difficulties in the labour market, which will be exacerbated by the recession.¹⁰

⁷ For the full TAI report, please refer to <https://www.tai.org.au/>

⁸ Sharan Burrow is the President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), and Chair of the World Confederation of Trade Unions at the 15th World Congress in Sydney of the International Industrial Relations Society where the report was launched.

⁹ The *hidden unemployed* are defined as people who are not in the labour force but who want to work, are either actively looking for work but are not immediately available or are not actively looking for work but are available to start work within four weeks.

The *underemployed* are those who are in employment but who work fewer hours than they want to or would normally work in a full-time job. They are working less than fulltime because they have been stood down or there was insufficient work to keep them working fulltime.

¹⁰ NOTE: Although not cited in the TAI report, the unemployment rate for women with disabilities has been hovering round the 8% mark since 1998. The employment profile for women with disabilities follows similar

- Women comprise up to 80 per cent of the hidden unemployed in key age groups. Instead of being officially defined as unemployed, women are more likely to move directly from being defined as employed to being defined as out of the labour market entirely and then back in again.
- Lower incomes and broken working lives have serious financial impacts on women so that women retire with smaller superannuation balances, women's longer life spans mean their financial needs tend to be higher than men's in retirement.
- There is a considerable churn in female workers, with a third entering and leaving employment each year without being officially recognised as unemployed by the ABS.
- Women tend not to register as unemployed with Centrelink¹¹.
- There are significant regional variations.
- Periods of broken employment are reflected in poor levels of savings for retirement.

Whether in hidden unemployment or completely out of the labour market, women are likely to be more occupied with caring duties.

In regards to the caring responsibilities for women, the report found

- A large number of women fare differently in the labour market, mainly because of their child care responsibilities including for school age children.
- Women with young children are particularly vulnerable during recessionary periods but many drop out of the workforce as a matter of course when their children are young.
- Women tend to work part-time hours when they return to work after having children and to increase their hours as their children age. Men, however, seem more inclined to work full time when their family is in the life-cycle stage associated with young children.
- The presence of small children means that men increase their involvement in the labour market but women reduce theirs.
- Gender roles drive men's and women's participation rates and hours of work in different directions when children are present and influence men to claim benefits when both adults are unemployed.

The classification of 'workforce' is narrowly defined. To be classified as 'outside the workforce' means that an individual has not worked nor sought work in the last month and/or is not available for work in the next month. That may well exclude people who are keen to work but would expect to take more than four weeks to organise themselves and their children. Many of those defined as 'outside the workforce' would actually consider themselves to be unemployed

trends to that of their non-disabled counterparts but with significantly more negative outcomes for any parameter measured.

¹¹ <http://www.centrelink.gov.au/>

and potentially part of the workforce and this would include people who are of legitimate interest in the present study.

In order to address women's disadvantaged labour-market status, the Stimulus could be rebalanced in favour of first, public service spending for better employment effects and second, greater emphasis on labour market programs.

When discussing women in labour-market or VET programs, this report found

- Women tend to benefit disproportionately from labour-market programs; however, as traditionally designed, labour-market programs are unlikely to attract many of the women who could benefit.
- Objective assessments of the labour market and the design of appropriate programs need to reflect the actual movements of women into and out of the workforce, both in the short term and over the course of their lives.
- The level of income support is an important issue while increasing the adequacy of income support is stimulatory and fair.
- Current stimulus packages have been 'male orientated' rather than encouraging 'female orientated' jobs in human services where many women work.
- Women are not well served by current stimulus projects and could benefit more from targeted labour market and VET programs.

Some points for discussion:

1. How does some of the information presented above, reflect in your city?
2. What are your experiences of regional variations?
3. What are the availabilities of child care and out of school hours and vacation care?
4. What are the availabilities of access to TAFE and VET programs for women wanting to gain further education?
5. What are the availabilities of such social infrastructure for Indigenous, migrant and young women and women with a disability?

For the full TAI report, please see the TAI website, or alternatively, the TAI report and media statements are available on www.nfaw.org.au

Regional unemployment rates (actual) – July 2009

Unemployment Rate ; NEW SOUTH WALES ; Females ;

South Eastern Statistical Region ; Females ;	5.4
Sydney Major Statistical Region ; Females ;	5.9
Inner Sydney and Inner Western Sydney Statistical Regions ; Females ;	4.2
Inner Sydney Statistical Region ; Females ;	5.0
Inner Western Sydney Statistical Region ; Females ;	2.1
Eastern Suburbs Statistical Region ; Females ;	3.9
St George-Sutherland Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.5
Canterbury-Bankstown Statistical Region ; Females ;	10.7
Fairfield-Liverpool and Outer South Western Sydney Statistical Regions ; Females ;	11.3
Fairfield-Liverpool Statistical Region ; Females ;	12.9
Outer South Western Sydney Statistical Region ; Females ;	9.2
Central Western Sydney Statistical Region ; Females ;	5.0
North Western Sydney Statistical Region ; Females ;	7.2
Lower Northern Sydney Statistical Region ; Females ;	1.8
Central Northern Sydney Statistical Region ; Females ;	3.8
Northern Beaches Statistical Region ; Females ;	6.2
Gosford-Wyong Statistical Region ; Females ;	6.1
Balance of New South Wales Major Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.3
Hunter Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.7
Newcastle Statistical Region Sector ; Females ;	4.3
Hunter excluding Newcastle ; Females ;	6.2
Illawarra and South Eastern Statistical Regions ; Females ;	2.8
Illawarra Statistical Region ; Females ;	2.1
Wollongong Statistical Region Sector ; Females ;	2.4
Illawarra excluding Wollongong ; Females ;	1.5

Richmond-Tweed and Mid-North Coast Statistical Regions ; Females ;	3.9
Northern, Far West-North Western and Central West Statistical Regions ; Females ;	5.5
Northern, North Western and Central West Statistical Divisions ; Females ;	3.6
Far West Statistical Division ; Females ;	3.8
Murray-Murrumbidgee Statistical Region ; Females ;	0.0
	5.8

Unemployment Rate ; VICTORIA ; Females ;

Melbourne Major Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.6
North Western Melbourne Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.3
Outer Western Melbourne Statistical Region ; Females ;	5.7
Inner Melbourne Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.9
North Eastern Melbourne Statistical Region ; Females ;	3.4
Inner Eastern Melbourne Statistical Region ; Females ;	2.4
Southern Melbourne Statistical Region ; Females ;	5.0
Outer Eastern Melbourne Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.7
South Eastern Melbourne Statistical Region ; Females ;	3.1
Mornington Peninsula Statistical Region ; Females ;	6.0
Balance of Victoria Major Statistical Region ; Females ;	3.6
Barwon-Western District Statistical Region ; Females ;	5.6
Central Highlands-Wimmera Statistical Region ; Females ;	7.0
Loddon-Mallee Statistical Region ; Females ;	3.0
Goulburn-Ovens-Murray Statistical Region ; Females ;	7.9
All Gippsland Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.6
	3.9

Unemployment Rate ; QUEENSLAND ; Females ;

Brisbane Major Statistical Region ; Females ;	5.1
Brisbane City Inner Ring Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.3
Brisbane City Outer Ring Statistical Region ; Females ;	3.8
South and East BSD Balance Statistical Region ; Females ;	3.7
North BSD Balance Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.0
Ipswich City Statistical Region ; Females ;	5.2
Balance of Queensland Major Statistical Region ; Females ;	7.4
	5.7
Gold Coast Statistical Region ; Females ;	6.4
Gold Coast North Statistical Region Sector ; Females ;	3.3
Gold Coast South Statistical Region Sector ; Females ;	6.8
Sunshine Coast Statistical Region ; Females ;	6.8
West Moreton Statistical Region ; Females ;	0.0
Wide Bay-Burnett Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.3
Mackay-Fitzroy-Central West Statistical Region ; Females ;	6.4
Darling Downs-South West Statistical Region ; Females ;	3.1
Northern-North West Statistical Region ; Females ;	2.2
Far North Statistical Region ; Females ;	10.7

Note: Highlighted figures are those subject to high statistical errors. The Australian Bureau of Statistics warns against relying too much on those figures.

Unemployment Rate ; SOUTH AUSTRALIA ; Females ;		Unemployment Rate ; TASMANIA ; Females ;	
Adelaide Major Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.5	Greater Hobart Statistical Division ; Females ;	3.7
Northern Adelaide Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.7	Balance of Tasmania ; Females ;	3.3
Western Adelaide Statistical Region ; Females ;	6.9	Southern Statistical Division ; Females ;	4.1
Eastern Adelaide Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.1	Northern Statistical Region Sector ; Females ;	7.1
Southern Adelaide Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.8	Mersey-Lyell Statistical Region Sector ; Females ;	4.2
Balance of South Australia Major Statistical Region ; Females ;	2.9		2.8
Southern and Eastern SA Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.0		
	5.0	Unemployment Rate ; NORTHERN TERRITORY ; Females ;	
Northern and Western SA Statistical Region ; Females ;	2.0		4.7
Unemployment Rate ; WESTERN AUSTRALIA ; Females ;		Unemployment Rate ; AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY ; Females ;	
Perth Major Statistical Region ; Females ;	5.2		3.1
Central Metropolitan Statistical Region ; Females ;	5.2		
East Metropolitan Statistical Region ; Females ;	3.6	Unemployment Rate ; AUSTRALIA ; Females ;	
North Metropolitan Statistical Region ; Females ;	5.5		4.9
South West Metropolitan Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.9		
South East Metropolitan Statistical Region ; Females ;	4.0		
Balance of Western Australia Major Statistical Region ; Females ;	7.1		
Lower Western WA Statistical Region ; Females ;	5.1		
Remainder-Balance WA Statistical Region ; Females ;	3.8		
	7.0		

BRIEF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)¹²

The VET System¹³

- Funding for the VET system is provided by the Australian Government, state and territory governments, industry bodies, employers and individual students through fees.¹⁴
- The shift over the last decade to a contestable training market has resulted in restricting access. Recent NCVER research highlights the conflict between the policy of increased competition between training providers and ensuring affordability of VET courses for people from disadvantaged backgrounds.¹⁵ This means that many recently arrived migrants and refugees are among the most disadvantaged job seekers.
- Women with disabilities continue to be under-trained and under-employed and over-represented in the 'hidden' unemployment cohort.
- Governance of the system is through a complex inter-governmental system of Ministerial and officials' councils¹⁶
- There is a clear link between women's long-term economic security and equitable access to, participation in, and outcomes from vocational education and training. Vocational education and training offers a pathway to employment to unemployed and underemployed Australians and up-skilling or career progression for existing workers
- The Commonwealth has announced a number of Stimulus related training packages without fees. However, eligibility for these is restricted to persons registered with Centrelink or who have a letter of redundancy from a previous employer. Unemployed or underemployed female workers are unlikely to be eligible for these – further disadvantaging them in efforts to upgrade their skills and employability.¹⁷ Many such women would also require access to child care, including OSHC, to participate in re-training.

¹² Content for this section is drawn from: *Women and Vocational Education & Training: Strategies for gender inclusive VET reform. A policy background paper. S4W/WAVE, 7th August 2009. For the full report, please refer to <http://www.wave.org.au/> &/or <http://www.security4women.com/>*

¹³ *Women and Vocational Education & Training: Strategies for gender inclusive VET reform. A policy background paper. S4W/WAVE, 7th August 2009.*

¹⁴ *ibid pp. 4*

¹⁵ *Karmel, T, Beddie, F & Dawe, S (Eds.) (March 2009), Competition in the Training Market, Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*¹⁶

¹⁶

¹⁷http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues/national_training_system/how_training_system_governed.htm 4.<http://treasurer.gov.au/DisplayDocs.aspx?doc=factsheets/2009/001.htm&pageID=011&min=wms&Year=&DocType=3>

Workforce Participation

- As at 30 March 2008, Australia's female population was 10,700,779, representing 50.3 per cent of the total population. Of these approximately half, just over 5 million Australian women, are in the labour force. This represents 57.8 per cent of all women aged 15 years and over and means that women comprise 45.3 per cent of Australia's total labour force. Of these employed women nearly 2.2 million work part-time, representing 44.5 per cent of all employed women and 71.9 per cent of the part-time workforce. Part-time work is the dominant form of employment for women in lower skilled occupations such as clerical, sales and service workers, although part-time work is also common among female Professionals.
- From available ABS data, in 2003 the participation rate for women with disabilities (46.9%)¹⁸ was found to be much lower than that of their non-disabled counterparts (56.2%)¹⁹. Women with disabilities are twice as likely to be in part-time employment as men with disabilities⁶.
- Women's entry into the workforce has been the single greatest shift in the Australian labour market in the last 30 years. Women remain underemployed. They are more likely than men to have significant breaks in employment due to their caring roles in families. When they are out of the workforce they are less likely to access government services which lead to an under-reporting of the true level of women's unemployment (20).
- Amongst young people who have not completed secondary education, being female or having a health problem or disability are contributing factors to having extended periods outside the labour force and full-time education.²¹

VET Participation

- In 2007, 794,200 women enrolled in vocational education and training (VET) courses, representing 47.7 per cent of all VET students.
- 136,850 of these women were enrolled in apprentices and traineeships, which represents 33.0 per cent of all apprentices and trainees in-training.
- Despite these encouraging figures, data just released highlight falling female enrolments in apprenticeship courses. (NCVER 2009)
- Women tend to be enrolled in limited segments of VET courses
- Women returning to work, or training, need career counselling, assistance with costs and assistance with child care.

¹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004 Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings Australia, Cat.No.: 4430.0 2003

¹⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2009 *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery* Table 01. (Labour force status by Social marital status, Age and Sex) Cat. No. 6291.0.55.001 viewed 6 September
<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6291.0.55.001Jul%202009?OpenDocument>

²⁰ Richardson, David (2009) Exits and Entrances: the impact of the recession on women (Draft in Confidence) The Australian Institute

²¹ Hillman, K 2005, *Young People outside the Labour Force and Full-time Education: Activities and Profiles*, LSAY Research Report 45, viewed 6 September 2009, http://www.ncver.edu.au/lsay_pubs/research/LSAY_lsay45.pdf

- In 2008 the population of students with a disability declined by 2.7% compared with 2007.²² The decline in overall female enrolments is likely to be reflected in a decline in enrolled numbers of women with disabilities. (VET data is not publicly available disaggregated by both disability and gender.)
- Women with disabilities are less likely to undertake further studies compared to their non-disabled counterparts and are more likely to re-enrol in the same subjects or subjects at the same level. A high proportion enrol in 'enabling' courses (in the 'other' level of qualification category) which do not lead to employment outcomes.²³
- COAG has recently agreed to a workplan for further major reforms to the Vocational Education and Training system. It is unclear if COAG will adequately address these concerns

Individual Approaches

These data do not adequately reflect specific local circumstances and particular policies which may either advantage or disadvantage some groups of women.

There may be specific State/Territory initiatives to address particular concerns which could be replicated elsewhere.

²² National Council for Vocational and Educational Research Ltd 2008; Australian Vocational Education and Training Statistics, Student outcomes viewed 6 September 2009, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistics/surveys/sos08/sos08.pdf>

²³ Phan, O & Ball, K 2001, *Outcomes from enabling courses*, NCVET Ltd 2001, viewed 6 September 2009 at <http://www.ncver.edu.au/research/core/cp9906.pdf>

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS CARE (OSHC) ²⁴

Access to OSHC is an important factor influencing women's workforce participation; age appropriate programs are important for the care, development and protection of children in the absence of one or both parents at work.

States and Territories provide the regulatory framework for such services.

Patterns of demand for OSHC services are influenced by State/Territory patterns of school hours and school vacations. In some jurisdictions, school facilities are commonly used for service operation, however, school systems are less likely to be providers of services.

Workers in the sector are rarely union members, and pay and conditions are low.

The Commonwealth Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care²⁵ is the prime Commonwealth policy and program agency for OSHC.²⁶ The details of support for OSHC are provided on that site²⁷.

Commonwealth policies and programs which support OSHC are market driven - providing access for parents, under certain conditions, to Child Care Benefit²⁸ and Child Care Rebate²⁹ (a taxation benefit) payable to parents. Beyond a small, one-off Set Up grant, there is no effective government provision for capital works (including new facilities or refurbishing of old facilities). While there is no limit placed on the numbers of services which may apply for accreditation, there is no regional planning process and in consequence there are areas of under or nil provision, and limited scope for co-location of services with other child care facilities which young siblings may attend. Anecdotal information suggests inadequate provision of services for children with special needs, such as children with a disability who attend special schools during term time.

The Commonwealth funded National Child Care Accreditation Council is responsible for accrediting child services - without such accreditation a using parent cannot claim Child Care benefit nor taxation relief for a child's care costs.³⁰

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Childcare surveys report on the numbers of children aged 0-12 using approved child care facilities. The survey

²⁴ OSHC will be defined as inclusive of both before and after school hours and school vacation care programs for school attendees.

²⁵ <http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/OECECC/Pages/home.aspx>

²⁶

http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Resources/Documents/FactSheets/Fact%20Sheet%204_260609.pdf

²⁷ http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Resources/Documents/OSHC_ProgramGuidelines_040809.pdf

²⁸ http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Resources/Documents/FactSheets/Fact%20Sheet%202_260609.pdf

²⁹ <http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Resources/Pages/ChildCareRebate.aspx>

³⁰ <http://www.ncac.gov.au/>

does not report on the numbers of children for whom working parents make no use of formal or accredited child care services.

Research shows that to achieve work-life balance work-force attached women seeking to manage to balance caring for children of school age will accept lower paid, less responsible positions, geographically more accessible jobs, and work part-time. Inability to find child care facilities in close proximity to a workplace, or readily accessible by public transport between the workplace and home, is an added barrier to workforce participation for women with disabilities. The re-location of OSHC to a regional centre often means that a term-time workable transport arrangement becomes untenable.

Concerning numbers of parents report they made no formal arrangements for care of school age children, either before and after school or during school vacations.³¹

Many women will drop out of the work-force entirely.

Women aged 25-45 constitute up to 80% of the 'hidden unemployed' - reporting to the Australian Bureau of Statistics³² that they wish to work but are unable to start within four weeks because of caring responsibilities. Many of these women may have poor English language skills, and need access to affordable TAFE style programs - which they often cannot afford.

These facts are all inter-related with women's lower life-time earnings, and consequence under-provision for retirement savings.

As well, they are a factor in women's inability to satisfactorily negotiate with employers so as to achieve higher wages and parity with male full-time employees. As at August 2008 women's average weekly income was 84% of mean's average weekly income.³³ The situation has worsened in 2009.

³¹ <http://www.nfaw.org/newspoll-survey-report/>

³² Women and Recession- Report to The NFAW, S4W and WomenSpeak by the Australia Institute 2009

³³

http://www.eowa.gov.au/Information_Centres/Media_Centre/Key_Issues_for_Women_in_the_Workplace/Pay_Equity.asp