

Government Senators' additional comments

Introduction

1.1 Government Senators acknowledge that a complex range of social and personal factors can contribute to the to the incidence and severity of domestic violence and reaffirm that the government is committed to creating a nation that respects all people including women and children, and that violence against others is never acceptable.¹ The need to respect women in particular was recognised by the Prime Minister the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP:

...disrespecting women does not always result in violence against women. But all violence against women begins with disrespecting women. We, as leaders, as a government, must make it and we will make it a clear national objective of ours to ensure that Australia is more respecting of women. Women must be respected. Disrespecting women is unacceptable. It is unacceptable at every level. At home, at the workplace, wherever. And I'd say that as parents, one of the most important things we must do is ensure that our sons respect their mothers and their sisters.

Because that is where this begins. It begins - violence against women begins with disrespecting women.²

1.2 Gender inequality can contribute to the prevalence of domestic violence, when gendered beliefs become values that build attitudes.³ However, government Senators recognise that gender inequality does not in-itself or alone cause domestic violence.

1.3 Government Senators note the prevalence of gender inequality in Australia, and are pleased to see that attitudes of violence towards women are gradually changing in Australia⁴ but recognise there is more work to do.

1.4 In addition to the government led initiatives outlined in the committee report, below are further programs the Commonwealth government is supporting to address gender inequality.

Education

1.5 As discussed in the committee report, the government continues to support initiatives such as the work of *The Line* in the Second Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children:

1 The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, Prime Minister, 'Transcript of Joint Press Conference: Women's Safety Package to Stop the Violence', 24 September 2015.

2 The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, Prime Minister, 'Transcript of Joint Press Conference: Women's Safety Package to Stop the Violence', 24 September 2015.

3 South Australian Premier's Council for Women, *Submission 6*, p. 2.

4 VicHealth, *Australians' attitudes to violence against women: 2013 National Community Attitudes Towards Violence against Women Survey – Research Summary*, September 2014, p. 5.

Successful social marketing campaigns, including The Line, have been able to support young people to change their attitudes and behaviours that contribute to violence. The Commonwealth Government will extend funding of The Line social marketing campaign until 2017 to ensure young people continue to have a safe place to discuss and debate relationship issues and form their own conclusions about what sort of behaviour crosses the line.⁵

1.6 Government Senators support national efforts to overcome the cultural, institutional and organisational factors that discourage girls and women from studying in typically masculine professions.

1.7 Government Senators note Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) findings that young Australian men and women are continuing to choose different educational pathways after school.⁶ The ABS shows that women tend to be under-represented in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and training:

Of the 2.7 million people with higher level STEM qualifications in 2010-11, men accounted for around four-fifths (81%). This is in stark contrast to non-STEM fields, where women make up the majority (60%) of those with qualifications at the Certificate III level or above.⁷

1.8 This disparity was further articulated by the Australian National Innovation and Science Agenda:

Only one in four IT graduates and fewer than one in 10 engineering graduates are women.

Further, women occupy fewer than one in five senior researcher positions in Australian universities and research institutes, and around one quarter of the STEM workforce overall.⁸

5 Second Action Plan 2013-2016 of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, p. 22.

6 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Perspectives on Education and Training: Australians with qualifications in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), 2010-11*, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4250.0.55.005~2010%E2%80%9311~Main%20Features~Demographic%20characteristics~5> (accessed on 6 October 2016), See also Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Gender Equality, Are we there yet?* [http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4125.0~Feb%202016~Media%20Release~Gender%20equality%20--%20are%20we%20there%20yet%3F%20\(Media%20Release\)~1](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4125.0~Feb%202016~Media%20Release~Gender%20equality%20--%20are%20we%20there%20yet%3F%20(Media%20Release)~1), (accessed 6 October 2016).

7 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Perspectives on Education and Training: Australians with qualifications in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), 2010-11*, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4250.0.55.005~2010%E2%80%9311~Main%20Features~Demographic%20characteristics~5> (accessed on 24 August 2016).

8 The Australian National Innovation and Science Agenda, *Opportunities for women in science, technology, engineering and maths*, <http://www.innovation.gov.au/page/opportunities-women-stem>, (accessed 6 October 2016).

1.9 Recognising the poor participation of young women in STEM fields, the Australian Government has provided \$13 million over five years to encourage women to choose to study and stay in STEM fields⁹ where the funding:

...builds on other National Innovation and Science Agenda initiatives designed to support girls and women.¹⁰

1.10 The government has also committed to investing:

\$31.2 million in internships and post-school career advice to increase support for women and girls to choose to study and work in science, technology, engineering and maths...¹¹

1.11 The government is providing \$2 million over four years to the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) for its new national project: *Securing Australia's Mathematical Workforce*. A core component of this project is to deliver:

...support to strengthen participation of women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in graduate programs in the mathematical sciences.¹²

1.12 The government is also encouraging women to participate and stay in STEM fields by supporting the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) Program which is:

A game-changing program that aims to improve the gender balance in Australian science....

...Diversity underlies innovation. This government support will enable us to grow the diverse, talented research sector that Australia needs to create, shape and maintain the innovative society we want in the future.¹³

Current national initiatives

Third Action Plan 2016-2019

1.13 On 28 October 2016, the government launched the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, Third Action Plan 2016-2019, which is:

...part of a long term commitment by governments to work together to change Australia's attitudes to, and tolerance for violence against women and their children.

9 Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister for Women, *'Turnbull Government supporting women to succeed in STEM'*, *Media Release*, 19 August 2016.

10 Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister for Women, *'Turnbull Government supporting women to succeed in STEM'*, *Media Release*, 19 August 2016.

11 The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, Prime Minister, *'Supporting more women and girls into STEM careers'*, *Media Release*, 26 June 2016.

12 Australian Government Department of Education and Training, *Australian Maths Sciences Institute (AMSI)*, <https://education.gov.au/australian-mathematical-sciences-institute-project>, (accessed 6 October 2016).

13 SAGE, *Funding boost to make a difference for women in science*, 9 December 2015, <http://www.sciencegenderequity.org.au/sage-pilot/funding-boost-women-in-science/>, (accessed 6 October 2016).

The Third Action Plan outlines what all governments, communities, businesses and individuals can do to reduce violence against women and their children. It sets out 36 practical actions, across six national priority areas, to be undertaken over the next three years.¹⁴

1.14 Below is an outline of further national initiatives being championed by government through the Office for Women to progress gender equality.

Secretaries Equality and Diversity Council

1.15 As discussed in the committee report, in April 2016 the government released the APS Gender Equality Strategy.¹⁵ As part of the strategy, the Secretaries Equality and Diversity Council (the Council) was formed. The Council comprises of 'all APS departmental secretaries along with two external members to provide insights and experience from outside of the public sector'.¹⁶

The Council was formed to:

...drive initiatives to break down formal and informal barriers to ensure the APS provides an inclusive and respectful workplace for everyone. This includes a focus on removing employment-related disadvantage and/or barriers.¹⁷

1.16 On 21 July 2016, the first meeting of the Council took place. During the meeting the Council agreed that:

Each Secretary will develop their own action plan, including gender equality stretch targets, for their departments and measures to meet the G20 target to reduce Australia's workforce participation gender gap by 25 per cent by 2025. These targets will be published, and progress against these targets will be measured and published annually. The Council also agreed

14 Commonwealth of Australia, *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children, Third Action Plan 2016-19*, 28 October 2016. See also Prime Minister, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP and Minister for Social Services, the Hon Christian Porter MP, 'Government strengthens investment to reduce violence against women and children', *Media Release*, 28 October 2016.

15 Australian Government, *Balancing the Future: The Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2016-19*.

16 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Secretaries Equality and Diversity Council*, <https://www.dpmc.gov.au/office-women/secretaries-equality-and-diversity-council>, (accessed 7 October 2016).

17 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Secretaries Equality and Diversity Council*, <https://www.dpmc.gov.au/office-women/secretaries-equality-and-diversity-council>, (accessed 7 October 2016).

to adopt the Panel Pledge, which will require us all to step up our advocacy for the higher representation of women at public and professional forums.¹⁸

Grants and Funding

1.17 The Office of Women has administrative responsibility for the Women's Leadership and Development Strategy (WLDS) which:

...provides funding and support to organisations aimed at improving gender equality and support for women's economic empowerment and opportunity, safety and leadership.¹⁹

1.18 In addition to providing grants to organisations which improve gender equality, the WLDS funds five National Women's Alliances:

The five National Women's Alliances (the Alliances) represent over 180 women's organisations. They bring forward the views, voices and issues of Australian women and, in particular, women from marginalised and disadvantaged groups. The Alliances take the lead in ensuring that the voices of as many women as possible are heard, especially those who in the past have found it difficult to engage in advocacy and decision making.

In line with their Funding Agreements, the role of the Alliances is twofold:

- bring together women's organisations and individuals from across Australia to share information, identify issues that affect them, and identify solutions
- engage actively with the Australian Government on policy issues as part of a better more informed and representative dialogue between women and government.²⁰

Helping working parents

1.19 The Australian Government has established the 'Supporting Working Parents Website' which contains information for employers and employees about issues such as understanding the legal framework, leave and returning to work.²¹

- 18 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Communique – 21 July 2016*, 6 September 2016, <https://www.dpmc.gov.au/news-centre/government/secretaries-equality-diversity-council-communique-july-2016>, (accessed 7 October 2016). The Panel Pledge is a Male Champions of Change initiative that asks men, who are invited to speak at or participate in a professional forum to make a proactive effort to include women on the panel. Further information can be found at: <http://malechampionsofchange.com/commit-to-the-panel-pledge/>.
- 19 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Office for Women, *Grants and Funding*, <https://www.dpmc.gov.au/office-women/grants-and-funding>, (accessed 10 October 2016).
- 20 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Office for Women, *National Women's Alliances*, <https://www.dpmc.gov.au/office-women/grants-and-funding/national-womens-alliances>, (accessed 10 October 2016).
- 21 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Office For Women, *Office for Women: reflecting on the year that was*, <https://www.dpmc.gov.au/news-centre/office-women/office-women-reflecting-year-was>, (accessed 10 October 2016).
See: <https://www.supportingworkingparents.gov.au/>.

Financial literacy

1.20 The government is working to ensure that women are able to access information to achieve greater economic security because:

Greater financial literacy has a direct link with boosting women's economic participation, including strengthening women's retirement incomes.²²

1.21 The government has now established several educational tools to boost financial literacy:

The Women's Money Toolkit is a free online resource providing practical tools for women to better manage their finances. The toolkit was developed in partnership with the Australian Securities and Investment Commission, who provide a number of other financial literacy tools on their Money Smart website.²³

1.22 Further, the government is working to address the financial abuse aspects of domestic violence:

In partnership with Good Shepherd Microfinance the Government has launched online training to help financial councillors to identify financial abuse and assist victims of abuse to access support.²⁴

Employment

Boards

1.23 The government is committed to the equal representation of gender on government boards. In September 2016 the Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards Report 2015-16 was released. The report shows that the government has achieved its target of women holding at least 40 per cent of government board positions.²⁵

1.24 Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister for Women, commented on the work to increase female representation on government boards and the achievements made by the government:

22 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Financial Literacy*, <https://www.dpmc.gov.au/office-women/economic-security/financial-literacy>, (accessed 7 October 2016).

23 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Financial Literacy*, <https://www.dpmc.gov.au/office-women/economic-security/financial-literacy>, (accessed 7 October 2016). The Women's Money Toolkit can be found at <https://www.moneysmart.gov.au/life-events-and-you/women/womens-money-toolkit>.

24 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Financial Literacy*, <https://www.dpmc.gov.au/office-women/economic-security/financial-literacy>, (accessed 7 October 2016).

25 As at 30 June 2016, there were 332 boards with a total of 2,351 members, 953 (40.5 per cent) women. *Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards Report 2015-2016*, p. 5.

...the proportion of female board directors has increased from 39.1 per cent at 30 June 2015 to 40.5 per cent at 30 June 2016, exceeding the 40 per cent target for 2015-16.

The report shows that a concerted effort by Government to increase female representation on government boards is translating into meaningful results...Women comprised 46.5 per cent of new appointees over 2015-16, up 8 per cent from 2014-15. Encouragingly, the report also showed the number of women holding Chair and Deputy Chair positions has risen to 32 per cent.²⁶

1.25 On International Women's Day 2016, in an address at the National Press Club, Minister Cash announced new government targets:

...I am pleased to announce that the Government will now commit to increasing this target to 50 per cent representation across all Australian Government boards, with a minimum of 40 per cent on each board. Correcting the imbalance will require concerted efforts by all portfolio Ministers, including myself. I am very confident that with pro-active efforts by all Ministers, we can achieve this target.

The Government is taking a whole of government approach to increasing the number of women on boards.²⁷

1.26 To strengthen the government's ability to meet its new targets, the government has invested in the Boardlinks website, a database that 'connects Australia's industry leading women with opportunities to be considered for Australian Government board appointments.'²⁸

1.27 As outlined by Minister Cash, a revamped Boardlinks website is key in supporting the government to achieve this target:

This new website will mean candidates interested in applying for a Government board position can now create and update their individual profiles, enabling decision makers to access the most up-to-date information and find the best candidate for the position...

We want to make it as straightforward as possible to find suitably qualified women so we can continue to increase female representation on Government boards.²⁹

26 Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister for Women, 'Coalition meets target for women on Government boards', *Media Release*, 29 September 2016.

27 Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister for Women, 'Address to the National Press Club-International Women's Day', 8 March 2016.

28 Board:links, *Opportunity across the Board*, <https://www.boardlinks.gov.au/>, (accessed 6 October 2016).

29 Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister for Women, 'Coalition meets target for women on government boards', *Media Release*, 29 September 2016.

1.28 Government Senators acknowledge criticism in the media that not all government portfolios have women holding 40 per cent of board positions.³⁰ The Minister responded in relation to her own portfolio:

I had the opportunity to make one appointment and I did [appoint a woman]. The issue that I have had is that the majority of boards in my portfolio are nominated by external bodies, whether they are employer organisations or unions.

I have no discretion. I ultimately have to accept their appointment.³¹

1.29 The Minister announced that in an effort to address this issue:

From July next year, a gender breakdown of all externally nominated board appointments will be made publicly available in the hope transparency will drive change.³²

Addressing pay gap assertions

1.30 Government Senators refute assertions made in the media regarding pay equity in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet:

The pay gap under the leadership of Martin Parkinson is not imagined. It's explicit. Parkinson is not just the head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, he is also a member of Male Champions of Change.

Yet an advertisement for Executive Level 1 advisers, in the divisions of Social Policy and Office for Women in PM&C offer different – and unequal – salaries for the women's jobs.³³

1.31 Government Senators support the response from the Secretary of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and Male Champion of Change, Dr Michael Parkinson:

There is a pay gap for comparable positions across my department. But the issues raised in relation to a specific position advertised in the Office for Women compared to other roles at PM&C are not related to gender.

Instead, they are driven by the reality that the Australian Public Service (APS) does not have a single employment agreement. There are many enterprise agreements across the APS, with different conditions and rates of pay.³⁴

30 Jessica Irvine, 'Minister for Women Michaelia Cash oversees department with lowest female representation on government boards', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 September 2016.

31 Jessica Irvine, 'Minister for Women Michaelia Cash oversees department with lowest female representation on government boards', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 September 2016.

32 Jessica Irvine, 'Minister for Women Michaelia Cash oversees department with lowest female representation on government boards', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 September 2016.

33 Jenna Price, 'Federal Coalition failing to walk the walk on pay equity', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 September 2016.

34 Australian Government, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Statement from Martin Parkinson – Gender equality and the office for Women*, 12 September 2016.

Gendered workforce

1.32 There is consensus that accessing childcare is a barrier to women's workforce participation. In June 2016, the Prime Minister recognised this issue and announced:

Over the next four years, the Government will invest around \$40 billion in child care and early learning support - including more than \$3 billion in additional funding - under the Jobs for Families Child Care Package, to provide greater choices for families.³⁵

1.33 The government has also been making gains in addressing gendered workforce participation. This year, the government, in partnership with Master Builders, launched 'Women in Construction' to encourage women's participation in the building and construction industry. Mr Wilhelm Harnisch, Chief Executive Officer, Master Builders Australia, reported:

The Commonwealth Government will provide \$250,000 in funding over 12 months for this pilot program under its Women's Leadership and Development strategy to help increase the participation and employment of women in the building industry.³⁶

1.34 Minister Cash outlined the importance of government initiatives to change gendered workforce perceptions:

We know that at the moment just 11 percent of employees in building and construction are women and in terms of the exit rate from the industry, the rate of women exiting is 40 percent higher than men. That is why industry-led partnerships, like the Advancing Women in Building and Construction are just so important. In particular, though, as the Prime Minister has said, we need to see cultural change.³⁷

1.35 The government further described the overarching purpose of the program:

The pilot programme will encourage more women to enter into and lead successful careers in the overwhelmingly male-dominated sector.

Greater gender equality across industries will also help address the gender pay gap, which will remain entrenched so long as certain sectors continue to be dominated by either men or women.

35 See: <https://www.liberal.org.au/latest-news/2016/06/11/turnbull-coalitions-commitment-supporting-australian-women>, (accessed 10 October 2016).

36 Mr Wilhelm Harnisch, Chief Executive Officer, Master Builders Australia, *Boosting Women's Participation in Building Top Priority For Master Builders*, <http://www.masterbuilders.com.au/newsarticles/boosting-womens-participation-in-buildingtop-priority-for-master-builders> (accessed 7 October 2016).

37 The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, Prime Minister, 'Doorstop with Employment Minister Cash, Bert Van Manen MP, Senator Jo Lindgren', 27 April 2016.

The mentoring programme will match female senior industry leaders with female industry newcomers to support them in their pursuit of long-term and rewarding careers in building and construction.³⁸

Contributing to addressing gender inequality internationally

1.36 In 2014 Australia's Aid Policy established gender equality and women's empowerment as a priority for development and the target requires 80 per cent of all Australia's aid, regardless of objectives, perform effectively in promoting gender equality. In February 2016, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade released the Gender equality and women's empowerment strategy which outlines the government's efforts on gender equality.³⁹

1.37 The strategy will drive progress in three key areas: ending violence against women and girls; women's economic empowerment; and women's participation in leadership and peacebuilding.⁴⁰

1.38 Building on the government's efforts to prioritise gender equality across Australia's foreign affairs and aid work,⁴¹ in September 2016, Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Minister for International Development and the Pacific, launched the Gender Action Platform (GAP) which is a competitive grants program for non-government organisations promoting gender equality for women and girls in the Indo-Pacific region:

The Australian Government's \$10 million investment in the GAP will enable NGOs accredited under the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) to develop and implement projects that empower and improve outcomes for women and girls.

The GAP builds on the Coalition Government's efforts to support initiatives that promote women's economic empowerment, women's participation in leadership and peacebuilding, and drive progress in ending gender based violence.⁴²

38 The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, Prime Minister, 'Supporting Women in Building and Construction', *Media Release*, 27 April 2016.

39 Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Gender equality and women's empowerment strategy, February 2016.

40 The Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs, 'Gender equality and women's empowerment strategy', *Media Release*, 29 February 2016.

41 Since 2014, the government has established a \$50 million Gender Equality Fund with a target requiring 80 per cent of Australian aid perform effectively in promoting gender equality. See also the Hon Julie Bishop MP, 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy', *Media Release*, 29 February 2016.

42 Senator the Hon Concetta Fieravanti-Wells, Minister for International Development and the Pacific, 'Launch of the Gender Action Platform', *Media Release*, 5 September 2016.

Senator James Paterson
Deputy Chair

Senator Bridget McKenzie

