



Australian Women's Coalition

**Barriers to Women's Employment  
Women and Recession Project**



**Adelaide  
consultation notes**



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## INTRODUCTION

The South Australian consultation workshop was organised by the South Australian Working Women's Centre and the South Australian Government Office for Women. It was hosted by the Northern Adelaide Career and Workforce Development Centre in Salisbury, a northern suburb of Adelaide.

## BACKGROUND

The date of the consultation, 13 November 2009, was the ninth consecutive day of an unseasonable heatwave with temperatures close to 40 degrees. The City of Adelaide had issued warnings to the public concerning heat measures, air-conditioned municipal libraries and community centres were thrown open for public refuge, with supplies of water, and the city's main bus terminal (which is air-conditioned) had been opened to homeless people. Attendance at public meetings was affected by these factors.

South Australia appears to have been affected differently by the downturn from the eastern states, and its economy and vital data<sup>1</sup> reflect this.

The unemployment rate for South Australia is lower than the national rate. In the year ended May 2009, average weekly full-time earnings in South Australia grew by 6.9% compared to 5.9% nationally.

South Australia's population increased by 18,600 during the year ended 31 March 2009.

The South Australian economy has been historically dependent on the car manufacturing and whitegoods industries, as well as on agriculture. The government has worked to diversify the economic base.

In collaboration with the Premier's Council for Women, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Australian Institute for Social Research, the State Office for Women maintains *Gender Indicators Online*<sup>2</sup>, an initiative to assist the implementation of the State Strategic Plan<sup>3</sup>

According to the City of Salisbury's website:

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, *1345.5-SA Stats, Dec 2009*, viewed 12 January 2010, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1345.4>

<sup>2</sup> South Australian Office of Women and Australian Institute for Social Research, n.d., *Gender Indicators Online*, viewed 12 January, 2009, <http://www.aisr.adelaide.edu.au/gio/>

<sup>3</sup> Government of South Australia, 2007. *South Australia Strategic Plan*, viewed 12 January 2010, [http://www.aisr.adelaide.edu.au/gio/data/theme\\_stratplan.html](http://www.aisr.adelaide.edu.au/gio/data/theme_stratplan.html)

One of South Australia's once struggling regions has transformed itself into a leading national economic hub, expected to outstrip State and other regional performances in business, job and residential growth over the next decade.

The City of Salisbury in Adelaide's north is further pushing its claim as the engine room of the South Australian economy and one of Australia's smartest and fastest growing regions with an independent report showing its gross regional product is set to reach \$4.0 billion by 2015, representing five per cent of South Australia's gross State product and producing a jobs 'bonanza'.

The ground-breaking regional analysis by leading national economists Professor Richard Blandy and Philip Hagan from AustralAsia Economics shows that Salisbury's growth rate has been helping to drive the South Australian economy for the past 15 years.

However it has really picked up the pace in the past five years to grow at 4.2 per cent per year compared to the State average of 3.0 per cent. Jobs in Salisbury also grew by 3.2 per cent, compared to 1.5 per cent, according to the study which is believed to be the first of its kind conducted in Australia.

Professor Blandy predicts Salisbury's growth rate is likely to continue at about 4.0 per cent over the next decade, alongside a State rate of 3.0 per cent, producing an extra 9,000 jobs for the region.

But the Blandy/Hagan Report also contains a major challenge for the region, warning that many local residents may miss out on the economic benefits being generated by Salisbury's dynamic economy unless they are given greater opportunities to study and train. Fifty per cent of the jobs expected to be created by 2015 would require a university degree<sup>4</sup>.

Alongside this, Salisbury is an area with many discouraged, and/or disengaged job seekers due to family and societal factors. The impact is doubled for women with disabilities whose unemployment rates are high.

## **SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION POINTS**

- Centrelink and NewStart data for local region show a 37-38% increase in applications over the past six months. Factory closures have a flow-on effect, hitting part-time workers and casual workers in the region – many of whom are women.
- The fear factor is discouraging some workers from transitioning from benefits to work. More supportive transitioning measures are needed. It was noted that people transitioning from disability pensions have a two-year period during which they can easily return to the benefit – something such as this is needed for individuals who have been on other benefits.

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<sup>4</sup> City of Salisbury, n.d. *News and Views*, 'Northern Adelaide region sets the pace for South Australian strategic growth', viewed 12 January 2010, <http://cweb.salisbury.sa.gov.au/manifest/servlet/page?pg=12949&stypen=html>

- Transport is an issue: a woman living in Salisbury might be able to find a job in a nearby locality, but only with four bus changes and several hours on each part of the journey to and from work.
- There is a lack of affordable age-appropriate care for school age children. School vacation programs used to be linked to schools and recreation policies.
- Micro-finance might be a useful strategy to introduce. This could help low-income families to acquire a car (thereby addressing public transport problems), or to access affordable home ownership.
- Access to TAFE is a problem. Fees are a disincentive because current Commonwealth policies don't offer fee relief to women who have been working as casuals and lose jobs – these women don't get letters of dismissal. Access to child-care training would be a help.
- Employment and pre-employment services are needed for people who aren't under compulsion to attend. This would provide a better level of motivation. There is a lack of financial support available to support discouraged job seekers.
- Young people have problems finding jobs – not all are suited to continuing in formal study.
- There is a significant cluster of refugees from Northern Africa in the region which poses specific issues in terms of local support services, access to training, and jobs. Local TAFE systems are not suited to providing appropriate support to these groups. There is a lack of pre-formal courses targeted at this population.
- Local factories have cut back hours to five weeks on, five weeks off. This means many wives need to seek supplementary work to maintain household incomes. The cutbacks also have flow-on effects for local small businesses.
- Employer attitudes need to change so that they are more responsive to work-family balance issues. For example, there is a high turnover of workers at the local Inghams<sup>5</sup>. Job-sharing options would likely reduce turnover and training costs.
- Housing is a problem, particularly the high cost and shortage in supply.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.inghams.com.au/enterprises/sitedocument.aspx?docID=397>

- Mental health and other issues are not being given appropriate attention by government services, due to cutbacks.
- There are problems with the availability of support services for people with disabilities which is a major issue for family carers. For example, there are delays in accessing replacement equipment such as wheelchairs and buses can't carry some wheelchairs. Better policy approaches are needed for people with a disability.

## **POLICY ISSUES**

- There need to be mechanisms to share success stories highlighting what individuals have done/achieved to overcome barriers.
- There needs to be better access to community mental health and drug and alcohol services. Currently people with all manner of problems – such as depression and anxiety – face huge waiting lists. There are services for the younger job seekers, but little for those aged 25 and over.
- The improvements to Commonwealth measures to support registered/eligible job seekers are welcome initiatives to help deal with presentation issues (for example, teeth, spectacles, clothes, one-off payment of bills, two weeks of child-care). But these are available only once an individual has reached a nadir. The policy should aim to prevent people becoming discouraged: help should kick in earlier to 'stop discouraging the disempowered'.
- A regional focus in responses to the economic downturn is important.
- There is a deplorable lack of useful, gender-specific data to enable better planning of education, training and other services.
- TAFE courses need to have fees reduced. They are a barrier to women without eligibility for benefits or registration with bodies such as Workskills.
- Accessible community services are needed for people with a disability, and the disability policy needs a human rights underpinning. Many people with a disability feel they suffer from community stereotyping.
- Retirement and superannuation are a concern for women, many of whom are delaying retirement and fear the lack of a guarantee under present policy that they won't lose their existing savings. There needs to be a universal superannuation scheme.

- Current tax policies are a disincentive for women as second income earners. The policies need to change to reduce the barriers.
- There is a need for innovative local job creation schemes – for example local horticulture initiatives could employ local people.
- The lack of adequate public transport is a tremendous barrier.
- Care program models need to be developed. For example, bringing sport and recreation youth workers back into the system although public liability insurance issues have probably made many providers risk-averse.

## REFERENCES

- Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, *1345.5-SA Stats, Dec 2009*, viewed 12 January 2010, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1345.4>
- City of Salisbury, n.d. *News and Views*, 'Northern Adelaide region sets the pace for South Australian strategic growth', viewed 12 January 2010, <http://cweb.salisbury.sa.gov.au/manifest/servlet/page?pg=12949&stypen=html>
- Government of South Australia, 2007. *South Australia Strategic Plan*, viewed 12 January 2010, [http://www.aisr.adelaide.edu.au/gio/data/theme\\_stratplan.html](http://www.aisr.adelaide.edu.au/gio/data/theme_stratplan.html)
- South Australian Office of Women and Australian Institute for Social Research, n.d., *Gender Indicators Online*, viewed 12 January, 2009, <http://www.aisr.adelaide.edu.au/gio/>

## **ATTACHMENT 1**

### **Attendees:**

Sandra Dann – SA Working Women's Centre

Annika Levai – SA Women's Information Service

Emily Glover – SA Women's Information Service

Amanda Underwood – SA Office for Women

Jacqui Shepherd – Northern Futures

Margaret Marinos – Workskills Inc.

Yvonne Todd – Business and Professional Women (BPW)

Valerie Bonython – Business and Professional Women (BPW)

Jill Fowler – Women with Disabilities Aust.

Karen Lynch – Anglicare SA

Ann Byerley – Anglicare SA

Karen Atherton – Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU)

**ATTACHMENT 2**

**Invitation**

**'The Recession and The Impact on Women'**

Venue:

Northern Adelaide Career and Workforce  
Development Centre

8 John Street, Salisbury

Date:

Friday 13 November 2009

Time:

9:30am — 12:30pm

Morning Tea Provided

For More Information:  
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RSVP: Working Women's Centre on [wwc@wwc.org.au](mailto:wwc@wwc.org.au) or 8410 6449