



S4W Lifelong
Economic
Wellbeing
for Women



Australian Women's Coalition

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

**Brisbane
consultation notes**



Women**Speak**

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INTRODUCTION

The Brisbane consultation on the Australia Institute's report *The Impact of the Recession on Women*¹ was held on 20 October 2009 at the premises of the Queensland Government Office for Women. The event was facilitated by the Australian Federation of University Women (Queensland) (AFUWQ), the Queensland Working Women's Service (QWWS) (on behalf of Security for Women), the National Foundation for Australian Women (NFAW) and the WomenSpeak Alliance. A list of attendees is at Attachment 1.

Invitations were distributed through both the QWWS and AFUWQ. A prototype invitation is at Attachment 2.

Dr Mary Crawford, (Queensland University of Technology(QUT) and AFUWQ) summarised the discussions.

BACKGROUND

Brisbane, the capital city of Queensland, is situated in the populous southeast corner of the state.

Queensland statistics (gender specific)

The following data has been taken from the Queensland Office for Women's Profile: Queensland Women 2009².

Demographics

- Queensland is the most decentralised state in mainland Australia, with only 44.4% of the state's population living in the Brisbane Statistical Division³.
- In June 2008, 4,279,411 people lived in Queensland with female residents making up 50% of Queensland's population⁴.

¹ David Richardson, 2009, *The Impact of the Recession on Women: Background Paper*, The Australia Institute, viewed 12 January 2010, <https://www.tai.org.au/index.php?q=node%2F19&type=1&pubid=698&act=display>

² Queensland Office for Women, *Profile: Queensland Women 2009*, viewed 12 January 2010, <http://www.women.qld.gov.au/resources/statistical-snapshot/index.html#profile2009>

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008, *Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2006-07*, Cat.no. 3218.0, viewed 19 January 2009, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/productsbyCatalogue/797F86DBD192B8F8CA2568A9001393CD?OpenDocument>

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008, *June Quarter Australian Demographic Statistics*, 'Table 4. Estimated Resident Population, States and Territories (Number)', data cube: Excel spreadsheet, Cat. no. 3101.0, viewed 15 January 2009, [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/ABS@Archive.nsf/0/4BAE255174B705F6CA25751200106395/\\$File/310104.xls#A2060827J](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/ABS@Archive.nsf/0/4BAE255174B705F6CA25751200106395/$File/310104.xls#A2060827J)

- In 2006, approximately 3.6% of Queensland females self-identified as Indigenous⁵.
- In 2006, an estimated 19.4% of Queensland females were born overseas⁶.
- Based on 2006 Census data, 8.1% of Queensland females spoke a language other than English at home⁷.
- The median age of Queensland women at June 2008 was 36.9 years⁸.

Economic security

- In 2008, Queensland women earned an average of \$976.10 per week in full-time ordinary time earnings – \$181.20 less than men, who earned an average of \$1,157.30⁹.
- As at December 2008, the labour force participation rate for Queensland women was 61.0% compared with 73.8% for Queensland men¹⁰.
- In 2007–08, the unemployment rate for Queensland females was 4.2%, compared with 3.2% for Queensland males¹¹.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008, *Experimental Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2006*, 'Table 1 Experimental estimated resident Australian Indigenous population, States and Territories–5-year age groups (to 85 and over)–30 June 2006' data cube: Excel spreadsheet, Cat. no. 3238.0.55.001, viewed 15 January 2009, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3238.0.55.001Jun%202006?OpenDocument>

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006, 'Queensland, Country of Birth of Person (full classification) by Sex', viewed 20 January 2009, <http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au>

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006, 'Queensland, Language Spoken at Home (full classification) by Sex', viewed 20 January 2009, <http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au>

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008, *Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories, June 2008*, 'Table 3. Median age, by sex – at 30 June', data cube: Excel spreadsheet, Cat. no. 3201.0, viewed 20 January 2009, [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/A7DE6348189B0330CA25751D000B042D/\\$File/32010do001_200806.xls#TopOfTable_Table_3](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/A7DE6348189B0330CA25751D000B042D/$File/32010do001_200806.xls#TopOfTable_Table_3)

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008, *Average Weekly Earnings Australia, August 2008*, 'Table 13C Average Weekly Earnings, Queensland (Dollars) – Original', data cube: Excel spreadsheet, Cat. no. 6302.0, viewed 30 January 2009, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6302.0Aug%202008?OpenDocument>

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, *Qld Stats, Jan 2009*, Cat. no. 1318.3, viewed 30 January 2009, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/1318.3Main%20Features4Jan%202009#Anchor4>

¹¹ Queensland Government Office of Economic and Statistical Research, 2008, *Labour Force Status Rates by Sex, Queensland, 1978–79 to 2007–08*, viewed 30 January 2009, <http://www.oesr.qld.gov.au/queensland-by-theme/economic-performance/labour/tables/labour-force-status-sex-qld/index.shtml>

- Women comprised 73.9% of Queensland's part-time workforce in 2008, and of all Queensland women who worked in 2008, 44.9% worked part-time¹².
- In September 2006, 57,100 or 13.5% of female part-time workers in Queensland were under-employed, meaning they would have preferred to work more hours and were available to work more hours¹³.
- Labour force participation and employment rates are lower for Queensland's sole mothers than partnered mothers¹⁴.
- 9.5% of Queenslanders reported providing unpaid assistance to a person with a disability in 2006, and 62.4% of these were female¹⁵.
- More Queensland females than males access emergency supported accommodation due to homelessness. Females are particularly overrepresented in the 15–19 year old age group, which comprises almost 10% of all Supported Accommodation Assistance Program clients in Queensland¹⁶.
- In Queensland in 2006–07, domestic and family violence accounted for 41.0% of emergency housing support accessed by sole females with children and 32.9% of emergency housing support for unaccompanied females who were aged 25 years and over¹⁷.
- Indigenous women and girls are overrepresented amongst the homeless, comprising 27.7% of female clients of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program in Queensland in 2006–07.

¹² Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, *Labour Force, December 2008*, Cat. no. 6202.0, viewed 28 January 2009, [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/81BA0B35D2A2009BCA25753E00136A35/\\$File/62020_dec%202008.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/81BA0B35D2A2009BCA25753E00136A35/$File/62020_dec%202008.pdf)

¹³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007, 'Populations, State or Territory of Residence', table, Underemployed workers, Cat. no. 6265.0, ABS, Canberra, September, p. 25.

¹⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006, 'Queensland, Age of Dependent Children by Labour Force Status by Sex of Parents for Couple Families' and 'Queensland, Age of Dependent Children by Labour Force Status by Sex of Parents for One Parent Families', viewed 5 February 2009, <http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au>

¹⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006, 'Queensland, Unpaid Assistance to a Person with a Disability (a), by Age, by Sex', viewed 22 January 2009, <http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au>

¹⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008, *Homeless People in SAAP, SAAP National Data Collection Annual Report, 2006-2007, Queensland supplementary tables*, 'Table 4.1: SAAP clients: age, by sex, Australia, 2006-07', Cat. no. HOU 185, AIHW, Canberra, p. 21.

¹⁷ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008, *Homeless People in SAAP, SAAP National Data Collection Annual Report, 2006-2007*, 'Table 5.3 Queensland Supplementary Tables', Cat. no. HOU 185, AIHW, Canberra, p. 19.

Brisbane demographic statistics (non gender specific)

The following information relates to the Brisbane Statistical Division (SD) which includes Local Government Areas of Brisbane; Caboolture; Ipswich; Logan; Pine Rivers; Redcliffe; Redland; and Beaudesert^{18,19}

- The estimated resident population of the Brisbane SD in 2008 was 1,945,639 persons.
- As at 30 June 2008, it was estimated that of those persons residing in the Brisbane SD: 20% were aged 0–14 years; 69% were aged 15–64 years; and 11% were aged 65 years and over.
- Based on 2006 Census results, it is estimated that approximately 1.7% of Brisbane SD residents identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- Based on 2006 Census results, it is estimated that approximately 22% of Brisbane SD residents were born overseas (10.6% reported being born in a non English speaking country).
- The composition of families residing in the Brisbane SD at the time of the 2006 Census was as follows:
 - couple family with no children – 36% of all families
 - couple family with children – 45% of all families
 - one parent family – 16% of all families.
- At the time of the 2006 Census, 55.4% of Brisbane SD residents aged 15 years and over stated year 11 or 12 as their highest level of schooling, while 52.6% of Brisbane SD residents reported having post-school qualifications (degree, diploma or certificate).
- 'Manufacturing', 'Health Care and Social Assistance' and 'Retail Trade' were the most common industries in which Brisbane SD residents were employed at the time of the 2006 Census. Collectively, one-third of Brisbane SD residents worked across these industries.

Brisbane demographic statistics (gender specific)

The following information relates to the Brisbane region and reflects results of the 2006 Census²⁰:

¹⁸ For a map of the area see: <http://www.oesr.qld.gov.au/queensland-by-theme/demography/maps/qld-sd-wall-maps/sd-qld-2008.pdf>

¹⁹ Office of Economic and Statistical Research, 2009, *Queensland Regional Profiles: Brisbane Statistical Division*, viewed 14 October 2009, http://statistics.oesr.qld.gov.au/report-viewer/run?_report=qld-reg-profile.rptdesign&sessionId=75DB7E4C264D7096E043A18F39297096&format=pdf

- Just over half (51.8%) of Brisbane region residents with university qualifications were women.
- Of those Brisbane region residents aged 15–64 years and not in the labour force, almost two-thirds were women. Just over half (51.1%) of these women were married.
- Brisbane women were more likely than their male counterparts to undertake voluntary work (58.9% women).
- Approximately 11% of families in the Brisbane region were one-parent families with dependent children. The parent in most (86.0%) of these families was female. Just over 65% of all lone parents were in the labour force.
- At the time of the 2006 Census, there were 78,239 families in the Brisbane Region with a female parent and at least one child aged 0–4 years. In just over half (55.2% or 43,162) of these families, the female parent was in the labour force.

Employment for women, in particular, is strongly related to levels of educational achievement. National data show women clustered in retail and hospitality, as well in health and caring industries, where salary levels are low and are influenced by the level of government subsidies.

Stemming from Queensland's first Inquiry into Pay Equity in 2002, the state has a system that can deal with pay inequity through the adoption of an Equal Remuneration Principle (ERP), which works in conjunction with other industrial legislation. These measures allow the work that is predominantly performed by women to be assessed to determine if the work is undervalued on the ground of gender. It further examines how industrial instruments such as Awards are implemented to ensure that the ERP is entrenched.

Queensland women workers in the child-care, dental and most recently the social and community services have benefited from significant increases in pay after testing the principle.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION POINTS

- Women's full-time jobs have held up better than men's in the current crisis. However, there is a high level of hidden unemployment and under-employment among women. Many of these women are ineligible

²⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008, *Brisbane: A Social Atlas 2006*, Cat. no. 2030.3, viewed 14 October 2009, [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/1DE1CF6BBB83B252CA25740E00799D92/\\$File/20303_2006.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/1DE1CF6BBB83B252CA25740E00799D92/$File/20303_2006.pdf)

for training programs and this makes their re-entry into the workforce exceedingly difficult. There is also a wide disparity between regions in Queensland – those with mines in the area (e.g. Surat Basin) actually have skills shortages while areas dependent on tourism and services seem to be making cuts if not to jobs then to hours worked.

- There is a need to support the workplace culture by identifying different avenues for women to find out about positions which have skills shortages and disseminating information. There is also a need for coordination by the local and state governments to plan the workforce demands of such areas and to ensure infrastructure is available for people willing to move to areas where there is employment. The importance of combining work experience with training programs was also noted.
- Child-care was cited as a key issue for all women whether in the workforce or trying to gain entry. This is particularly so for those with school-age children – the cost of outside school hours care and vacation care is extremely high and for those in lowly paid jobs is prohibitive and a disincentive to education and employment. This is a key issue which needs urgent attention for women to engage in the workforce.
- Migrant and refugee women have particular issues – language, culture, and knowledge of systems. A more holistic approach is needed when addressing the challenges faced by culturally and linguistically diverse women trying to enter or re-enter the workforce.
- Australia brings in the highest proportion of refugee women-at-risk, knowing they have a very low likelihood of ever getting employed. Although there are apprenticeships and traineeships, many people that come to Australia as a refugee do not have literacy or numeracy skills and cannot access the traineeships due to a lack of basic skills. Furthermore, many migrant women lack confidence and often suffer from depression as they do not know about English or training programs. Thus, many women who want to work lack the support or opportunity to develop their skills.
- While some agencies offer programs which lead to employment outcomes (often funded through their own fund raising) there is a need for a more flexible approach to the way these programs are funded so that particular concerns can be addressed. There is also a need for a work experience component to enable migrant and refugee women to become acculturated in the Australian work environment.

- There was also concern for the ability of former carers to enter the workforce. Re-entry to the workforce is often a challenge and a shock for many carers. Many women forget that they are someone else aside from being a carer, and often lack the confidence and capacity to develop skills. There is a need for programs which target carers to help them develop their skills if they are to overcome the barriers to employment.
- Other women with particular concerns are Indigenous women and those escaping domestic violence. This highlights the need for policies which provide for the integration of support services as well as delivering training and/or education. It was also noted that there is also a lack of gender disaggregated data on Indigenous women and highlighted the need for such information.
- Pay equity was also a key theme – the need for women to have full-time, well-paid employment as a right. (It was noted that Education Queensland continues to offer contracts to large numbers of people, hence continuing the insecurity of work attachment and a cost shifting practice – saving the state government money at the expense of the federal government). There is also a need to change the interactions between the tax system and welfare payments. The lack of pay equity for women has long-term consequences as the effects flow on to superannuation levels and the public pension scheme. It was also noted that employers should receive training on pay rights and flexible work practices as there are many rights they are not aware of.
- Some participants also suggested the need for an information program which could be developed by a Coalition of Women's Groups, Unions and coordinated by the Office of Women (Queensland). This could be offered through neighbourhood centres as this is often the first point of call for many women seeking assistance. Further discussion also raised the need for school-aged women to be informed about the range of courses now open to them, especially in the trades and the mining industry both of which offer full-time well-paid jobs.

POLICY ISSUES

- Employment programs need to be holistic and able to adapt to the individual needs – age, gender, and people at different 'work ready' stages, especially women trying to enter/re-enter the workforce who still have caring responsibilities. Employment programs also need to address specific issues in particular regions.

- Child-care costs need to be reviewed – especially in relation to women with responsibilities for school-age children. This includes before and after school care and vacation care.
- The campaign for pay equity needs to be continued. It has important economic consequences for women as they get older, particularly in relation to superannuation. It also has considerable consequences for government spending as women without superannuation remain in the public pension system. One of the strategies could be to try to get women to enter non-traditional female work – for example the mining industry where pay is high.
- The interaction between the tax system and the welfare system needs to be examined, particularly the impact this has on people's entry/re-entry into the workforce.
- An education/information campaign for high school students needs to be developed to inform young people of the consequences of not having full-time well-paid employment. This could be possibly be developed by a coalition of women's groups, unions and the Office of Women, and offered through neighbourhood centres.
- A peak body of neighbourhood centres within Queensland should be created to enable sharing of information and resources and to offer support as well as becoming a more powerful advocacy body.
- Employers need to be educated about flexible work practices and pay rights and employees' right to request working arrangements that accommodate work–life balances.

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ATTACHMENT 1

Attendees:

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Attachment 2

Invitation:

AFUW Q invitation: similar text used by Queensland Working Women's Service.

Dear

I am writing on behalf of Security 4 Women (National Women's Secretariat, the Queensland Working Women's Service, the National Foundation for Australian Women (NFAW) and the Australian Federation of University Women Queensland to invite you to attend a consultation with Queensland women on the topic of the impact of global recession on women. This will be held at the meeting room of the Qld Government Office for Women (313 Adelaide St) on **Tuesday 20 October** from 10:00am till 12:00 noon. A second consultation will be held in Cairns the following day.

The consultation will be based around a recent report commissioned by S4W and the NFAW undertaken by the Australia Institute that revealed a number of concerns about the hidden nature of women's unemployment. Our organizations are conducting the consultation and hoping to attract around **20-40** key stakeholders from the women's employment and training sector to participate in the discussions that will then be utilised to feed back into broader public policy discussions.

The report highlights the labour market consequences of inadequate child care arrangements, especially out of school hours and vacation care and also found that:

- the Budget Papers suggest hidden unemployment is likely to rise significantly in the next 12 months
- there is concern that the current stimulus packages have been 'male orientated' rather than encouraging 'female orientated' jobs in human services where many women work
- there are significant regional and state variations of female unemployment
- there is considerable churn in female workers who aren't recognised as unemployed by the ABS and who don't register as unemployed with Centrelink.

A copy of the report is attached for your information.

Please respond to m.crawford@qut.edu.au if you or your organization is able to attend.

Regards,

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