



**Beyond 2005...
Directions for the
Office for Women**

**Women's Futures Reference Group
Report**

**Presented to the Minister for the Status of Women
The Honourable Stephanie Key, MP
30th June 2005**

*Prepared on behalf of the Reference Group by:
Eleanor Ramsay
Monica Redden*

Dear Minister

It gives me great pleasure to present this report on our proposals for the future directions of the Office for Women.

We have considered current arrangements, priorities, commitments and strategies along with recent research and knowledge about effective mechanisms for ensuring women's status is integral to government business. Most importantly we have heard the voices of women's organisations, government agencies, advocacy groups and peak bodies about their views on the future directions for the Government's efforts to achieve equality for women in this State, and within that the role of the Office itself as the pivotal cog in the overall whole-of-government structures and processes which could be put into place to achieve this outcome.

Since February 2005 twenty-seven groups, community organisations, peak bodies and agencies have organised for the consultants and some members of the Reference Group to meet with their constituents and members. Over the past few months we have met with more than three hundred women connected with over one hundred and twenty four organisations, many of which represent the voices of hundreds (in some cases thousands) of members. These participants were keen to ensure their views were heard and engaged positively and constructively with the consultation process. The opportunity to contribute to reinvigorating and reorienting the gender equality work of the Government overall and of the Office for Women more specifically was eagerly taken up.

Participants were very clear and unwavering in their views that women as a group (and certain groups of women more particularly) remain disadvantaged in comparison to men in this State in a range of key areas. This report outlines how this Government can take a comprehensive whole-of-government approach to restructuring and strengthening the current arrangements to address the current inequities.

The Reference Group and the many women consulted have been pleased to be asked our views and congratulate the Minister in taking the initiative. We also offer our ongoing support in implementing the actions arising from this project.

This report reflects the findings from our consultation and includes recommendations designed to strengthen the effectiveness, clarity of purpose and strategic directions of the Office for Women and related structures and processes.

Maria Hagias
Chairperson, *Women's Futures* Reference Group
June 27th 2005

Acknowledgements

A very large number of people from the wider community and the government sector have given generously of their time and their thoughts during this project, particularly the members of the hard-working Reference Group and the many hundreds of women who contributed their views during the consultation. We would like to acknowledge the importance of their contribution and express our hope that we have done justice to the ideas and views communicated to us during the consultative and deliberative stages of the *Women's Futures* project.

In particular we would like to acknowledge the significance of the contribution made by the Chair of the Reference Group, Maria Hagias, whose skilful chairing of our many long and often intense discussions, wise counsel, and wonderful generosity of spirit were invaluable in achieving the outcomes recorded in this report. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with such a remarkable and talented woman, and we both thank her for her leadership, guidance and support throughout the project. Sue Vardon's leadership was important in ensuring the smooth operation of the project, and we thank her.

We would also like to acknowledge the significance of the contribution made by the third member of our team, Monika Schofield, who brought to this project not only her excellent research and writing skills, and extremely useful professional and academic experience, but her considerable interest in and commitment to gender equity issues. We also thank Rhiannon Burner for her efficiency, hard work and patient support in bringing this report to fruition.

And we pay tribute finally to the wisdom and spirited guidance given to us by the Aboriginal women who contributed their time, their voices and their insights during the consultation.

Eleanor Ramsay & Monica Redden

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Process for conducting the project.....	3
Recommendations	4
Key Findings	5
• High level statement of the Government's commitment to the achievement of greater gender equity/improvement in the status of SA women.....	5
• Political leadership and commitment.....	8
• Allocation of responsibilities across government and clear reporting, monitoring and accountability processes (whole-of-government) approach	10
• Women's Voices - consultation, community engagement, capacity building.....	13
• Clarity of roles and coordination of effort.....	16
• Parliamentary, legislative and other formal sanctions	20
Appendix i	22
Reference Group Members	
Appendix ii	23
Consultation Process	
Appendix iii	28
List of recommendations	

Executive Summary

The Women's Futures project explored elements of best practice identified from the approach to gender equity being taken by governments in those countries which are currently leading the world in addressing women's status. These countries are leading examples of systematic, coordinated and transparent mainstreaming of gender equality work across government, and between them they display all of the elements required for deep-seated and sustainable progress towards greater gender equality in public and private life. These international best practice elements include:

- a clear statement of the government's priorities for gender equality
- political leadership and commitment
- robust reporting, monitoring and accountability frameworks
- effective consultation, participation and engagement processes with the women's community
- clarity of roles and coordinating structures and
- legislative, parliamentary and other formal sanctions

During the consultation process, the views of peak bodies, advocacy groups, government agencies and key individuals were sought on the application of these best practice elements to strengthening the effectiveness of the State Government's own approach to the achievement of greater gender equity across the South Australian community.

Consistent themes raised throughout the consultation included:

- a. South Australian women remain disadvantaged in comparison to men and the work of the Government to address gender inequities is by no means finished. While the status of women as a whole requires fundamental improvement across a range of key dimensions, priority also needs to be given to the issues faced by particular groups of women, those who are the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, including Aboriginal, rural and remote, newly arrived immigrants and refugees, young and disabled women.
- b. The necessity for the Government, as a whole, to provide leadership and to accept responsibility and accountability for identifying and addressing women's issues, and the importance of not making this the sole responsibility of the Office for Women.
- c. The Office for Women, as it currently stands, recognizes it is not seen as having the necessary status required to have an impact on the directions and priorities of the public sector system.
- d. Areas of achievement such as the Women's Safety Strategy, the Women's Health Policy were applauded along with encouragement to continue to address women's status.
- e. Acknowledgement that South Australia was once recognised as the leader in social reform, including with respect to the status of women. Participants referred to the need for a *new approach* to addressing issues of importance to women. They were eager to believe that the *Women's Futures* project might offer the opportunity and signal a return to the State's leadership on these matters.
- f. It was emphasised that ongoing links between the Government's key policy office and the wider women's community are essential if the work of the

- Office, and of the Government itself, is to be informed by an understanding of issues of significance to women. In its absence, there was considerable confusion about how the Office currently determines priorities for its work.
- g. Full support for the Office for Women to address issues impacting on the lives of Aboriginal women.

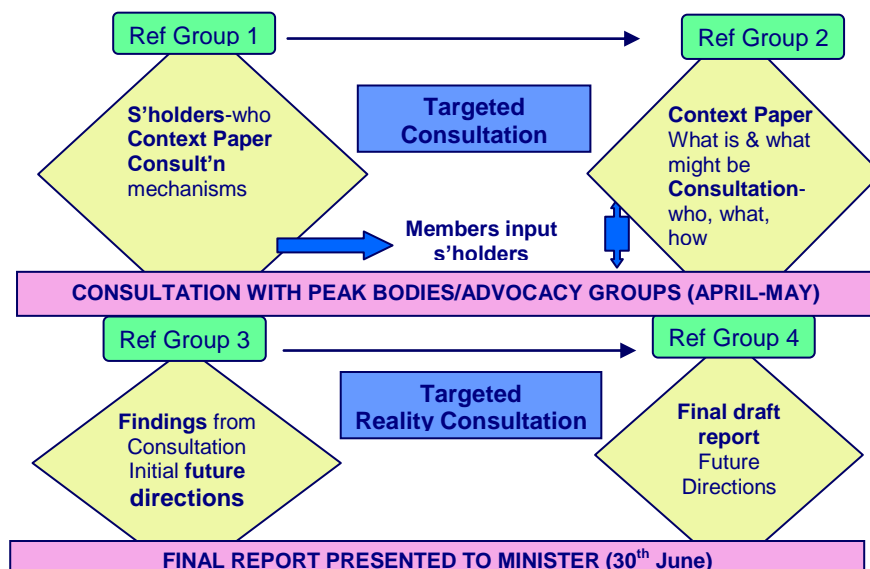
This report refers to the best practice characteristics of government mechanisms for addressing gender equity as a framework to address the concerns, ideas and strategies raised throughout the consultation. In doing so, this report and the project as a whole, *Women's Futures: New Directions for the Office for Women*, extends beyond defining the future role of the Office for Women (while recognising this as pivotal) recommending the means by which the Government can provide strong leadership and communicate commitment to women; put into place the structures and processes required for the state government system as a whole to effectively address gender equity; clarify the purpose and scope of the Office for Women to ensure it has influence across the government system; and ensure that the Government's gender equity priorities address issues that are raised by the voices of women across our community, through the renewed emphasis on the central role of community engagement in gender equity work.

Process for conducting the project

The Women's Futures project proceeded in three main stages: research, consultation, and the Reference Group's deliberations of all available information leading to the framing of its recommendations. The project was directed by a Reference Group appointed by the Minister, the members of which are listed at Appendix i. The two consultants, Eleanor Ramsay and Monica Redden were considerably assisted by the work of senior policy officer, Monika Schofield, made available from the Department for Families and Communities, as well as administrative and other support from that Department and the Minister's own office.

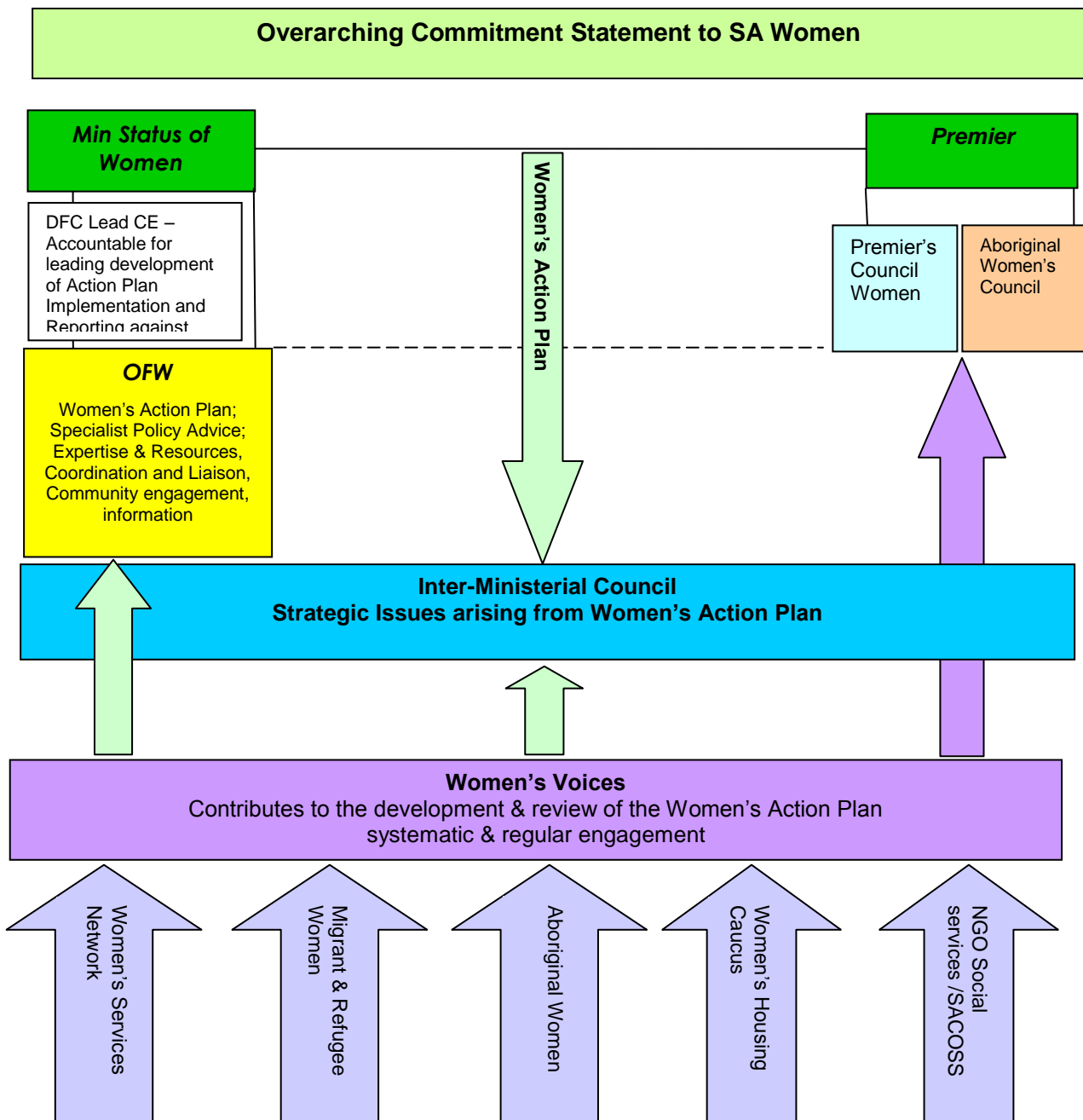
In brief (as demonstrated below), the Reference Group met for the first time in late February, to identify key stakeholders who should be targeted and the overall approach to be taken to the consultation phase, as well as to confirm the process for developing the context paper proposed by the consultants. During the next phase of the project, research was conducted on how other states, territories and other countries approach gender equality work within government, aimed at identifying elements of best practice from around the world. This research was summarised for consideration by the Reference Group at its second meeting, and provided the material for the context paper and summary document, both entitled *Women's Futures. Beyond 2005: Directions for the Office for Women*, which informed the consultations.

The summary of the context paper was distributed widely during the consultation process, with access to the full document available from the website of the Department of Families and Communities as well as hard copies at each of the consultation meetings. A period of intensive consultation followed in April and May, during which approximately 300 people met with the consultants, the policy officer and members of the Reference Group. Some twenty seven consultation meetings were held, attended by a range of relevant women's organisations, peak bodies, government agencies and advocacy groups, listed at Appendix ii, as well as individual meetings with key stakeholders and informants. Notes were kept of every meeting and discussion, and these were summarised for consideration by the Reference Group at its third meeting. Recommendations were framed based on the outcomes of the initial research and subsequent consultations, and after lengthy discussion and consideration by the Reference Group these were finalised and endorsed as presented in this report.



Recommendations

Recommendations are embedded in the report (see appendix iii for the amalgamated recommendations) under the six elements of international best practice. The whole-of-government approach (see diagram on the next page) illustrates how the government system can develop and strengthen a whole of government approach to improving women’s status in South Australia if the recommendations are endorsed. The map demonstrates the significance of strong political leadership, the importance of co-ordination and collaboration across the government system, the critical role that the Office will play in providing expert leadership and resources to the public sector, and the vital role that the Premier’s Council for Women and Aboriginal Women must play in bringing the voices of women to the Government’s advisory, implementation and review system.



Key Findings

This section provides key extracts from the three main stages of the overall Women's Futures project relating them to the recommendations: i.e. the initial research on international best practice, the subsequent consultations, and the decisions of the Reference Group in response to each of these elements.

Best Practice Element 1

High level statement of the Government's commitment to the achievement of greater gender equity/improvement in the status of SA women

Lessons from international best practice

For the whole of the government apparatus to take genuine responsibility for and make ongoing and energetic efforts to progress its government's gender equality priorities, it is firstly necessary for that government to make a clear statement of those priorities, also communicating its own political will and commitment unambiguously.

Consultation outcomes

- Unanimous view from all consultations that a high level overarching statement of the Government's commitment to the achievement of gender equity is:
 - Essential in terms of signalling that gender equity issues are firmly on the Government's agenda, right alongside (and inter-related to) its economic, social inclusion and sustainability commitments
 - A prerequisite for the achievement of sector wide responsibility and accountability for implementation of these priorities
- Core elements and characteristics of this gender equity commitment statement to include:
 - Within a gender equity framework
 - At the level of broad principles
 - Clear, simple, memorable and enduring over time
 - Reflects women's diversity and identifies women who are most disadvantaged
 - Clarifies the relationship between gender equity and social inclusion
- Status of the gender equity commitment statement
 - It should be endorsed by the Cabinet
 - Whole of Parliament (cross-party) support or endorsement is highly desirable
- The overarching statement of Government commitment should frame the development of a South Australian action plan for women identifying key issues and priorities (and linking these to the State Strategic Plan)
 - Principles and criteria by which initial (and subsequent) Action Plan priorities are determined should be identified through consultation eg

- targeting women who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged, issues with the potential to have the widest/most enduring impact¹ etc
- The action plan consultation must ensure meaningful contribution from a diverse range of women's voices, not just hearing them, but actually listening to and being influenced by their views and experiences
 - Government agencies with responsibilities for providing key services for women and children should make an active contribution to this process
 - Participants generally supported the idea of holding a significant public event involving politicians, the community and key players/stakeholders, including experts in this field (eg a Women's/Gender Equity Summit in the Parliament)
 - Qualitative and quantitative performance indicators should be developed for each priority in the Action Plan.

Reference Group's decisions

Requirement for a high level whole-of-government statement was vehemently endorsed. It should be framed around gender equity principles and processes but clearly identified as a commitment to South Australian women (although its title should be as recommended below²), endorsed by the Cabinet and possibly the Parliament, aligned to the SA Strategic Plan, reflect principles of diversity and 'a fair go for all', and clearly communicate the Government's commitment to the achievement of greater gender equity. The development of both this statement and the action plan should be evidence based and community driven.

Recommendation 1a

The Minister for the Status of Women in conjunction with the Premier lead the development of a whole-of-government statement making explicit its commitment to the achievement of improvement to the status of women in SA within a gender equity framework, as follows:

- to be jointly developed by the Premier and Minister for Status of Women
- it be developed in consultation with the Premier's Council for Women and the women's community, in particular through the *Women's Voices* processes recommended below, and other key stakeholders, including within the public sector
- to be developed within a gender equity framework but with its leading phrases worded in terms of the status of women
- to be endorsed by the Cabinet, and cross-party support invited.

Recommendation 1b

That the South Australian Government's commitment statement (and related Action Plan) make explicit reference and give emphasis to Aboriginal women, encapsulating this approach in culturally appropriate words which convey sentiments such as moving forwards together, in partnership between women and men, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal South Australians.

¹ It was suggested that these priorities include both women's "practical" needs (that is, meeting currently unmet needs which are distinctive to women and particular groups of women) and "strategic" (that is, the changes required to change women's status in society towards greater gender equity)

² See Recommendation 1b

Recommendation 1c

That the Premier in conjunction with the Minister for Women lead the development of a whole-of-government Action Plan for South Australian women (arising from the Government's commitment statement) which will be:

- developed through a process of community consultation, overseen by the Premier's Council for Women and involving, in particular, the *Women's Voices* processes and structures and the Gender Equity Summit (recommended below) to:
 - firstly, recommend the principles and criteria for identifying the (initial and subsequent) priorities for the Action Plan
 - and secondly, take an evidence-based approach to determining the initial priorities for the Action Plan
- endorsed by the Cabinet, with overall implementation responsibility to be taken by the Minister for the Status of Women and the Chief Executive, DFC, with responsibility for each agreed priority allocated to a lead Minister and a lead Chief Executive with the necessary key actions, targets and budget allocation identified.

Best Practice Element 2

Political leadership and commitment

Lessons from international best practice

Best practice governments show the seriousness of their intentions and commitment by communicating and regularly re-stating their gender equity priorities in a consistent, unambiguous, and public way, with international experts advising that:

- Explicit, high profile and sustained political support for gender equity is perhaps the single most important variable in the success or failure of whole-of-government approaches, particularly in terms of holding line ministries accountable for the implementation of their government's gender equity priorities and goals
- The imprimatur of the head of government is required to overturn entrenched norms enabling new cross-government approaches to gender equity activities across government, and ensuring that the work of the specialist gender equity staff is taken seriously across government

Consultation outcomes

The following themes/views consistently came through during the consultations:

- Women's issues, need to be higher on the Government's political agenda and the Government needs to be much more proactive about women's issues putting SA into the lead in this field once again
- High levels of concern that women's issues, policies and processes seem marginalised, muted and inadequate, especially in the context of earlier SA leadership in this area
- Overt political commitment in this area is more significant than structures and processes. In common with the overarching high level Government statement on gender equity, political leadership and commitment is seen as a prerequisite to the whole of the government structures and apparatus taking women's issues seriously and making them a part of everyday responsibilities
- Gender equity needs to become the fourth plank of the Government's priorities and structures, with economic development, social inclusion and sustainability, without which the effectiveness and impact of the other three will be limited and the overall positive reform agenda unsustainable

Reference Group's decisions

The Reference Group was emphatic that strong and clear political leadership is the fundamental requirement for and determinant of the success or failure of whatever new or revised structures, policies and processes may result from its work. The issue is one of communication to change current perceptions across the public sector and the wider community. More specifically, the Group agreed that the Government's reinvigorated commitment and leadership in this area needs to be communicated through high profile public events and community engagement strategies in order to impact on the culture of the entire public sector and reach into the community.

Recommendation 2a

That the Government communicate its leadership with respect to gender equity to the rest of the government sector and to the wider community in far-reaching and unambiguous ways, including through the following two pivotal strategies:

- A Gender Equity Summit be held in Parliament House, hosted by the Premier and the Minister for the Status of Women, as a key element of the process to identify the priorities of the Government's Action Plan for SA women
- A paired residency be included in the Premier's Thinkers in Residence program by two internationally recognised gender equity experts, a man and a woman, to provide advice on advancing the Government's gender equity agenda.

Recommendation 2b

Reflecting the goals of the State Strategic Plan and as a clear demonstration of the Government's commitment to gender equity, that the Cabinet's Executive Committee at all times to include at least one of the women Ministers and preferably two women.³

³ In order to address issues of critical mass, tokenism, and marginalisation of minority representation which might otherwise undermine the intentions of this recommendation if there were to be a sole woman member of such a significant and powerful government committee

Best Practice Element 3

Allocation of responsibilities across government and clear reporting, monitoring and accountability processes (whole-of-government) approach

Lessons from international best practice

Robust accountability mechanisms are consistently identified as a crucial component of effective gender mainstreaming. Experience internationally indicates that ensuring the required level of accountability across the different layers and sectors of government remains a pivotal challenge, despite political will and commitment. In addition to a clear statement of the government's priorities for gender equity, underpinned by overt political will and commitment from the highest levels, systematic reporting, monitoring, evaluation and effective accountability processes are required if these priorities are to be energetically implemented across the whole of the government apparatus. Evidence-based approaches to whole-of-government gender equity planning, reporting, monitoring and accountability includes:

- Using information on the relative position of men and women to give an accurate picture of current realities, to identify appropriate action, and to monitor progress towards agreed indicators
- Using the budget process to analyse both inputs and outcomes of gender equity work across government to influence budget and program planning, to determine input allocations against identified gender equity priorities as well as analysing outputs and outcomes against agreed targets

Consultation outcomes

Every consultation underlined the importance of a transparent process for the allocation of responsibilities across government agencies and departments, and their subsequent reporting of and accountability for implementation outcomes, with specific suggestions as follows:

- A clear process for the allocation of responsibilities to Ministers and their agencies for the implementation of the Government's gender equity priorities, eg lead Ministers and lead Chief Executives for each of the priorities in the State's action plan for SA women, and for the Plan overall
- Establishment of a formal structure to coordinate reporting and monitoring of outcomes from the State's action plan for SA women at the state-wide and agency levels - eg an interdepartmental committee of chief executives, or an inter-ministerial council, or a high level gender equity board
- Introduction and management of gender sensitive budget processes by the establishment of formal mechanisms and processes, within agencies and at the state-wide level, to ensure that gender issues are at the forefront of funding and project decisions rather than at the end, as in earlier approaches to gender budgets eg by the establishment of a Gender Budget Analysis Unit within the Treasury and/or secondment into the Office for Women of an expert in gender sensitive budget processes to provide training and advice to agencies
- Use of gender disaggregated data and analysis, eg requirement that all cabinet submissions, legislative and policy proposals include a gender impact statement; gender disaggregated data and indicators to be used to inform all key government plans, including the State Strategic Plan; gender audits to be piloted in key departments; all departments/agencies required

to use gender analysis as part of their planning, monitoring and evaluation of their program outcomes; and the Office for Women to conduct regular implementation reviews of agencies' achievements against their gender equity action plans

- Using the performance management system: eg Ministers', Chief Executives' and Senior Managers' performance agreements to include gender equity indicators/targets for their agencies/portfolios (derived from the state-wide ones integral to the State's action plan for women); and gender equity indicators incorporated into performance management processes at management levels across the public service.

Reference Group's decisions

The Reference Group's discussions on this issue revolved around the need for leadership and implementation responsibilities to emanate from the highest level of Government (sometimes referred to as the fourth plank of the Government's forward reform agenda) to communicate in a clear and unambiguous way to the whole government sector and to the wider community the Government's commitment to achieving genuine and enduring progress in this area and its significance for the State's future.

Recommendation 3a

To ensure clear and transparent responsibility, reporting and accountability arrangements (and as required to meet international best practice in this area), that:

- the Premier, Minister for the Status of Women and Chief Executive, DFC drive the implementation of the Action Plan for women, with implementation and reporting responsibilities clearly allocated to relevant Ministers and Chief Executives⁴
- key components/clusters of issues be referred (by the Premier and Minister for Status of Women) for implementation to appropriate whole-of-government structures and processes e.g. the Inter-Ministerial Council⁵, inter-departmental committees, the Social Inclusion Unit (eg women and poverty issues) etc.
- the Premier's Council for Women provide advice and oversee an evaluative analysis regarding implementation outcomes, in consultation with key stakeholders and the wider community through the *Women's Voices* structures.

Recommendation 3b

That the Government establish an Inter-Ministerial Council to take a whole-of-government approach to monitoring the overall implementation of the plan and addressing major references arising from the Action Plan, the first of such references being Work-Life issues, to be:

- Chaired by the Premier
- Composed of relevant Ministers, including the Minister for the Status of Women, the Chair of the Premier's Council for Women, Aboriginal representation,⁶ and non-government gender equity experts.

⁴ See Recommendation 1c above

⁵ See Recommendation 3b

⁶ In particular, from whatever high level Aboriginal advisory body may be established by the Government (see Recommendation 6a below)

Recommendation 3c

That the Office for Women perform a pivotal role in assisting the public sector to fulfil its implementation, reporting and evaluation responsibilities with respect to the Government's Action Plan for women ins SA, through capacity building, liaison, research and other advisory functions.

Recommendation 3d

That the Government introduce gender sensitive budget processes and requirements across the public sector, supported by training and advice to agencies through secondment of expertise in this area in to the Office for Women.

Recommendation 3e

That the Government introduce Gender Impact Statements for all Cabinet Submissions.

Best Practice Element 4

Women's Voices - consultation, community engagement, capacity building

Lessons from international best practice

Effective consultative, participatory and engagement mechanisms with the wider women's movement and non-government women's organisations are critical to ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of government policies and programs. And capacity building work with non-government partners is crucial if effective gender equality is to be sustained over the long-term. Effective alliances and ongoing collaboration can achieve a successful strategy of inside-outside advocacy to promote the gender equity agenda and women's empowerment. Alternatively, poor relationships between government gender equality mechanisms and women's organisations in civil society have resulted in competition for scarce resources and duplication of effort, undermining their effectiveness, credibility and impact on both sides.

Consultation outcomes

This matter was raised in the consultations more often than any other single issue with an overwhelming majority of the consultation meetings stressing the inadequacy of current arrangements in terms of consultation, community engagement and capacity building with the wider women's movement and non-government women's organisations. Views expressed in a wide range of the consultations revolved around the following themes:

- The breakdown in communication with women on the ground has meant that the women's community, including non-government women's organisations, is feeling dis-empowered and cut off from government processes
- Most particularly, urgent attention, additional resources and more effective structures are required to ensure meaningful two-way communication between Aboriginal women and government
- The Office for Women needs to be more proactive in providing information, collaborating, consulting, building capacity and interacting with women's organisations, with large numbers of participants recommending that this role should be given much greater emphasis, resources and attention than currently
- Women's expertise and experiences should directly inform government policy and program development, and form a significant part of the evidence-based approach to gender equity work within government
- Much more concerted and effective efforts need to be made to involve and engage women from particular constituencies, especially Indigenous women, younger women, women from new, emerging and established immigrant and refugee communities, women with disabilities, groups of women who are particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged due to their circumstances, and women from rural and isolated communities
- There is currently no formal mechanism or structure to enable women's voices to be heard, to advocate on behalf of women, to coordinate advice to Government, to monitor implementation outcomes from the Government's policies and programs, and to facilitate engagement and contribution to the work of the Office for Women

- Strengthening and reinvigorating women's networks by engagement of women in the community and building strategic connections has a multi-layered impact in terms of:
 - supporting and encouraging greater understanding of differences
 - enabling the voices of diverse women to be heard
 - creating cohesion and capacity to collaborate at the grass-roots level
 - strengthening the calibre of the community and
 - reinforcing the message that women are important
- One specific suggestion was to use the national women's secretariats and networks (Women Speak) to link with a diverse range of women and women's networks, including active local women and their constituencies.

Reference Group's decisions

The Reference Group's decision was swift and unanimous re the desirability and need to restructure/realign the Office for Women's resources and priorities around consultation, capacity building and community engagement with the women's community. The need for clearer and more effective processes and arrangements for communication between the wider women's movement and the Office for Women and Premier's Council was acknowledged as a significant issue, and recognition given to the significant role of the Women's Services Network in this context. The Reference Group was in strong agreement that additional resources and a new high level advisory body is required to ensure Aboriginal women's voices have a clear and effective pathway into government decision making and accountability processes.

Recommendation 4a

That a high level Aboriginal women's advisory body to the Premier be established:

- to work with Aboriginal women and their communities throughout the State to identify priority issues
- to advise the Premier and the Premier's Council for Women on issues and priorities for Aboriginal women
- to monitor the Government's response to these issues and priorities
- with formal links to the Premier's Council for Women, including an annual joint meeting of both Councils, and more regular communication between their Chairs, formation of relevant joint sub-committees and working groups etc.

Recommendation 4b

That the Chief Executive, DFC ensure the Office for Women has established with the Premier's Council for Women clear principles and an operating framework which will underpin their strengthened focus on community engagement⁷ and ensure they have the capacities and understanding required to reflect this commitment in practice.

⁷ See Recommendation 5b below

Recommendation 4c

That a new South Australian *Women's Voices* structure and processes be established (based on similar models such as the Women Speak structures) to:

- Provide clear two-way communication processes and relationships between government gender equity structures and processes and the wider women's movement across the State
- Be the main conduit for two-way communication and consultation between the Premier's Council for Women and the diverse women's communities and organisations the interests of which it represents
- Consist of a range of strands, such as an Aboriginal women's strand, the Women's Services Network, a SACOSS-type strand, incorporated women's organisations,⁸ a women's housing strand,⁹ a women's health strand etc.
- Contribute to the development of the Action Plan for SA women by identifying common issues across the themes and focus areas represented by these strands.

See also recommendation 5b below re the restructuring/refocussing of the staffing and other resources of the Office for Women around an enhanced focus on community engagement et al.

⁸ CWA, Zonta, Girl Guides etc

⁹ eg the recently re-established Women's Housing Caucus

Best Practice Element 5

Clarity of roles and coordination of effort

Lessons from international best practice

Best practice lessons drawn by international experts underline the significance of integrated strategies and systems for initiating, coordinating and monitoring equality work across government structures and agencies. Clarity of roles and relationships between the different components of the overall gender equality machinery within government is also important, not least to achieve high levels of collaboration and coordination, including between mainstream government planning and budget processes and gender structures as well as between the government and non-government sectors. Lack of clarity about mandates and functions inhibits the development of collaboration and support between different gender equality structures, undermining their overall effectiveness and preventing the synergies which have been identified internationally as an element of best practice.

Consultation outcomes

There was a strong and often repeated view that the current disjunction and confusion between key structures and functions in the gender equity work of government is reducing the effectiveness of efforts (individually and collectively) and preventing desirable levels of coordination and collaboration. For women's organisations, peaks and networks, much greater clarity about how and with whom to make strategic connections within government structures impacts on the effectiveness and impact of their own capacity and contribution to gender equity work: ie clarification of structures and roles is not just a matter of information but about strategic relationships. More specifically the following suggestions were made to achieve the inter-related outcomes of greater clarity of roles and relationships of those with responsibilities for aspects of gender equity within the government system, and increased collaboration and coordination between them and with non-government organisations, networks, peaks and the women's community:

- Clarity about the Government's gender equity commitment and priorities is a prerequisite, including alignment of existing government priorities, and most especially the State Strategic Plan, with gender focused planning, monitoring and reporting
- Need for the Office for Women to fulfil a central coordination function to facilitate inter-agency collaboration in gender equity work
- The need for women's voices to have clear and effective avenues for two-way communication and engagement with the government's gender equity efforts
- The roles of and relationship between Office for Women and the Premier's Council for Women needs articulation, clarification and widespread communication
- Mapping of the current 'gender focal points'/key contacts, advisory and decision-making bodies, resources and services across the government and non-government sectors to enable better coordination and collaboration between them
- Establishment of a Gender Equity Policy Officers Network across policy, service, advisory and advocacy functions and structures which could

include officers with responsibilities for other key 'population' groups such as the Indigenous, CALD, youth, aging, disability sectors

Reference Group's decisions

The Reference Group endorsed the views from the consultation about the need for greater clarity of roles and relationships, and the significance of achieving this in terms of enhancing current levels of collaboration across the public sector and beyond, as well as facilitating much greater community engagement with the Government's gender equity agenda.

Recommendation 5a

That the key roles of the Office for Women be confirmed as follows:

- to lead change and provide leadership and coordination of the whole-of-government approach to gender equity
- to provide the Government, the Inter-Ministerial Council, the Premier's Council for Women and other government advisory and service providers with policy advice and strategic insights with respect to the issues and needs of South Australian women, including Aboriginal women and other particular populations of women
- to provide specialist policy advice about priorities, issues and needs of Aboriginal women, and to coordinate consultation, engagement and capacity building functions with and for Aboriginal women, in liaison with relevant government agencies and community organisations
- to provide specialist and targeted information to women across the State, in collaboration with other information and service providers
- to facilitate cooperation and coordination across the public sector, by such approaches as regular auditing of agencies' strategic and business plans to identify opportunities for enhanced collaboration and joint initiatives
- to drive the consultation, engagement and capacity building processes with the wider women's community¹⁰
- to provide coordination and liaison between the gender equity work of government and non-government organisations

Recommendation 5b

That the staffing and other resources of the entire Office for Women (that is, the Policy Office, the Women's Information Service, and the secretariat to the Premier's Council for Women) be restructured and realigned to fulfil the role as described in 5a and more specifically so that:

- A significant proportion of resources is dedicated to the inter-related functions of information, communication, consultation, community engagement and capacity building with the wider women's movement (organisations, networks, peaks, advocacy groups etc, both existing and emerging), and that these functions become one of the core roles of the restructured Office for Women
- Adequate staffing and other resources are available to provide the strengthened focus on Aboriginal women recommended above (including the required critical mass of Aboriginal women staff within the Office).

¹⁰ See Recommendation 5b

Recommendation 5c

That the Office for Women prepare a Strategic Plan outlining its roles, priorities and directions outlined above, as well as its contribution to the Government's commitment to gender equity and the implementation of the Action Plan for SA women.

Recommendation 5d

That the restructure/re-alignment process¹¹ include specific attention to the Women's Information Service, as follows:

- To confirm its role as the specialist source of information to women in the State through telephone and internet information services
- To clarify the expectation that it become a significant source of information and advice about issues for women to the Office for Women, to the Premier's Council for Women, to the Inter-Ministerial Council¹² and to other government structures and processes (eg inter-departmental committees which may be established to implement the Action Plan etc);
- To remove the existing drop-in and computer access functions, with these resources being reassigned to the community outreach functions outlined above¹³
- To enhance collaboration with other information and service providers, including Services SA, public libraries throughout the State, local councils, and services which target specific populations of women with particular information needs (including Aboriginal women, rural and remote women, migrants and refugees, women with a disability, homeless women etc)
- To increase the accessibility, reach, relevance and effectiveness of its information services to women through this collaboration and optimal use of the latest developments in technology and information management.

Recommendation 5e

That expertise and staffing resources available to the Office for Women be:

- resourced to the level required to ensure the office has the capacities needed to fulfil the role outlined above
- enhanced by the capacity to have required staff out-posted to the Office from across the public service (as occurs with the Social Inclusion Unit), particularly from those agencies with implementation responsibilities for the Government's Action Plan, as well as experts in priority areas from outside of the government sector.

Recommendation 5f

In the light of changes recommended in this report, that the Office for Women and the Premier's Council for Women develop a joint statement which clearly outlines their respective future roles and the structural and functional arrangements between them, and of their relationship with the wider women's community, for widespread communication throughout the government sector and the women's community.

¹¹ Referred in Recommendation 5b

¹² See Recommendation 3b

¹³ See Recommendation 5b

Recommendation 5g

That the Office for Women work with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation to conduct a cultural sensitivity audit of and put into place a professional development program for staff in the Office and for members of the Premier's Council for Women, to ensure that the necessary capacities and understandings are in place which will be required to achieve the recommended strengthening of commitment to Aboriginal women's issues.¹⁴

Recommendation 5h

That following the finalisation of the Government's Action Plan and the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Council, that consideration be given to relocating the Office for Women into the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

¹⁴ See Recommendations 5a and 5b

Best Practice Element 6

Parliamentary, legislative and other formal sanctions

Lessons from international best practice

Internationally many governments underline the seriousness of their gender equity intentions and policy priorities by putting in place domestic legislative sanctions, through reference to their international obligations, and by means of parliamentary structures and procedures. Parliamentary standing committees on gender equity in some countries have had a significant impact in terms of agenda setting on equality issues and 'equality proofing' of legislative proposals, using such means as commissioning research on the status of women (including particular populations of women) in various areas of economic and social life; promoting greater representation of women in decision making within parliaments, executives, and ministerially appointed public bodies and advisory committees; and by putting otherwise neglected issues (such as domestic violence and trafficking of women and children) onto the political agenda. The parliaments of some countries, states and provinces have cross-party or intra-party caucuses of women parliamentarians which work to promote gender equality in and through the parliament, by scrutinising parliamentary procedures, structures and matters under debate.

Consultation outcomes

A common view was that legislative frameworks and sanctions are needed for sustainability of activity, achievements and progress in gender equity, so that they remain robust across time and survive changes in government leadership and composition ("government proofing"). Many participants expressed the view that the Parliament has a significant, potentially effective (but currently under-utilised) role to play in gender equity work, and together with the Government should (amongst other gender equity functions) provide leadership and a role model to the community (eg family friendly sitting hours as in NSW, child care etc., behavioural standards, a review of procedures and Standing Orders). The two most commonly mentioned suggestions were the establishment of

- A Parliamentary (cross-party) women's caucus, or other structure to facilitate networking amongst women parliamentarians
- A formal structure within the Parliament to enable collaboration on gender equity issues; eg a parliamentary standing committee which would enable male colleagues to actively engage in the work

Other suggestions included:

- Gender equity specialists to be brought into the Cabinet and Executive Council
- Training to be provided for Parliamentarians and judges re gender equity
- Strengthening the statutory powers of the Equal Opportunity Commission to address inequality more proactively (c/f the much stronger powers of the Tasmanian Commissioner for Children)
- An annual Cabinet on gender equity and social inclusion
- Establishment of an Equality Ombudsman or an equality function within the existing Ombudsman's Office
- Using CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) more strategically as a formal framework and sanction for gender equity work in the State

- Establishment of a Cabinet Liaison Officer with responsibility for issues impacting on different population groups within (or different lenses into) the SA community (Indigenous peoples, women, youth, aged, immigrants and refugees etc)

There was strong support for the establishment of a Premier's Aboriginal Women's Advisory Council, with emphasis on the need for the Office for Women to strengthen its focus on addressing issues pertinent to Aboriginal women.

Reference Group's decisions

The Reference Group accepted the view that formal structures and processes (including within the Parliament) would make a positive contribution to the Government's gender equity agenda, especially with respect to ensuring that its commitments are communicated forcefully and progressed by all elements of the state apparatus. No recommendations have been made in this area in recognition that the operation of the Parliament is outside the terms of reference of this project. Nevertheless these ideas are canvassed in the preliminary comments above to reflect international best practice, out of respect for the views raised in the consultation, and to provoke further thought and discussion among relevant stakeholders.

Recommendation 6a

That the Government hold an annual Cabinet meeting on gender equity and social inclusion focussed on progressing implementation of the Government's priorities in the Action Plan for SA women and the Social Inclusion references, and identifying new and emerging priorities for attention in these inter-related areas.

Recommendation 6b

That the Equal Opportunity Act be reviewed to strengthen the Commissioner's powers with respect to monitoring and investigation, for example to ensure that government services and processes are fair and equitable to all members of the community.

Appendix i
Reference Group Members

Maria Hagias (Chair)

Jude Allen

Margaret Allen

Val Baldwin

Lois Boswell

Janet Giles

Ann-Marie Hayes

Felicity Lord

Lindy McAdam

Sharon Meagher

Gayle Peak

Suzanne Roux

Mary Shattock

Eugenia Tsoulis

Eleanor Ramsay (Consultant)

Monica Redden (Consultant)

Monika Schofield (Policy Officer, DFC)

Rhiannon Burner (Project Support, Office of the Minister for the Status of Women)

Appendix ii

Consultation Process

A wide range of consultations were held with organisations and groups (both government and non government) as well as with individuals from the beginning of April to the end of May 2005

Approximately 300 people of a range of levels, backgrounds and organisations participated in the group consultations and comprehensive summaries of these meetings were written as a result. The summaries were presented to the Reference Group for their deliberations.

Group consultations hosted by:

1. Migrant Resource Centre (Session 1): newly arrived communities
2. Migrant Resource Centre (Session 2): established communities
3. Workcover Women's Focus Group
4. Zonta-Women's Status Regional Reps
5. SA Country Women's Association Inc
6. SA Unions (Youth Network)
7. Office for Women
8. Aboriginal Women in Public Sector
9. SA Unions (Women Delegates)
10. Senior Women
11. Women in Academic Sector (Session 1) I
12. Education Sector Union
13. Business SA
14. Women's Housing Sector
15. Carers Association
16. SACOSS members
17. Premier's Council for Women
18. Women in Academic Sector (Session 2)
19. Community Information Strategies Australia
20. Government Women (organised by Jan Andrews)
21. Women's Information Service Support Group
22. Women's Services Network
23. Youth Sector (YACSA)
24. Women's Health MAC
25. Senior Management Council
26. Disability Sector
27. TAFE SA Ceduna (Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) employees)

Individual meetings/events attended

- Linda Matthews, SA Commissioner for Equal Opportunity
- Nick Poletti (& Penny Gal), Director of the Public Sector Reform Unit
- Jeff Walsh (& Meg Barnett), Commissioner for Public Employment
- Jan Andrews, Deputy Commissioner for Public Employment
- Tim Flannery, Chair, SA Sustainability Roundtable
- Carmel O'Loughlin, ex-Director of the Office for Women
- Sandra Kank, MP, and Democrats spokesperson on Women
- Joan Hall, MP and opposition spokesperson on Women

- Madeleine Woolley, Executive Director, Social Inclusion Unit
- PSA Conference- ER presentation
- Josephine Tiddy (ex Commissioner for Equal Opportunity)
- Carol Treloar, A/Executive Director, Arts & ex-Director of the Office for the Status of Women
- Senior women in DECS, led by Margery Evans, Executive Director, People and Culture
- Mal Hyde (Police Commissioner),
- Jim Birch (CE, Department of Health),
- Anne Summers, author of Death of Equality and Australia's first Director of the Office of the Status of Women in Prime Minister and Cabinet

Participants of the group consultations were from the following range of organisations, groups, departments and agencies

Aboriginal Health Division, Department of Health
Aboriginal Family Support Service (AFSS)
Aboriginal Justice Advocacy Committee (AJAC)
Adelaide University
Afghan United Association
Anglicare SA
Arts SA
Asia Pacific Business Council for Women
Attorney General's
Australian Church Women
Australian Democrats
Australian Education Union
Australian Manufacturing Workers Union
Australian Services Union
Birthline
Business and Professional Women Australia
Business SA
Carers Association
Catherine House
Central Eastern DV Service
Centrelink
Centrelink Multicultural Services
Cervix Screening Program
Children Youth and Family Services (CYFS)
Chisholm Place
Commissioner of Police
Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP)
Community Information Strategies Australia Inc.
City of Tea Tree Gully
Council of Women of Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds
CREATE Foundation
Dale St Women's Health Centre
Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation (DAARE)
Department for Administrative and Information Services (DAIS)
Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS)

Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH)
Department for Families and Communities (DFC)
Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST)
Department of Health (DH)
Department of Justice
Department of Primary Industries and Resources SA (DPIRSA)
Department of Trade and Economic Development (DTED)
Department of Treasury & Finance (DTF)
Department of Transport, Energy & Infrastructure
Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation (DWLBC)
Disability Action Inc
Equal Opportunity Commission of SA
Independent Education Union (SA)
Iraqi Women's and Husseinie Muslim Women's Association
Filipino community organisations (3)
Finlayson's Lawyers
Flinders & Far North Community Health Service
Flinders University
Guide Dogs Association SA/NT
HomeStart
Housing Advice and Support SA (HASSA), Anglicare
Karna Plains School
Lutheran Community Care
Migrant Resource Centre of SA
Migrant Women's Lobby Group (MWLG)
Migrant Women's Support & Accommodation Service Inc
Multicultural Communities Council of SA Inc
Muslim Women's Association of SA Inc
Multicultural SA
National Council for Women (NCW)
Non-English Speaking Background Domestic Violence Action Group (NESBDVAG)
Northern Domestic Violence Service
Northern Women's Community Health Centre
OARS SA
Office for the Ageing, DFC
Office for the Commissioner for Public Employment
Office for Women
Older Women's Advisory Committee
Parks Community Health Service
Pregnancy Advisory Centre
Premier's Council for Women
Reconciliation SA
Retired Union Members Association
Riverland Regional Health Service (RRHS) Women's Health
'Rubys' Youth & Parent Services
SA Country Women's Assoc. (CWA)
SA Police
SA Unions
SA Unions (Youth Network)
SA Water

Salvation Army
Senior Management Council
Seniors Information Service (SIS)
Service SA
Service to Youth Council Inc.
Shelter SA
Shine SA
Social Inclusion Unit
South Australian Community Housing Authority (SACHA)
South Australian Council of Social Services (SACOSS)
South Australian Housing Trust (SAHT)
South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission (SAMEAC)
South East Asian Women's Association SA Inc
Southern Women's Community Health Centre
SSABSA
TAFE SA (Adelaide City, Elizabeth & Gawler/Barossa Valley campuses)
The Maxima Group
The Women's Housing Association (TWHa)
Transport SA
Union of Australian Women
Uniting Care Wesley
United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) Status of Women Network
University of South Australia
Women's Futures Reference Group
Women's Health MAC
Women's Information Service
Women's Information Services' Support Group
Women's Services Network
Women Studies Resource Centre, Voluntary Management Collective
Women with Disabilities, Australia
Workcover Corporation Women's Focus Group
Working Women's Centre SA Inc
Yarredi Services, Port Lincoln
Yarrow Place
Young Women's and Children's Support Services
Young Women's and Children's Support Services Inc (YWACSS)
Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)
Youth Affairs Council of South Australia (YACSA)
Zonta

Written Submissions Received

- Bruggemann, Richard (CEO, Intellectual Disability Services Council).
- Executive women and Policy Officers (Department for Administrative and Information Services).
- 'Response from several women from Office for the Ageing'. Submission prepared by Ruth Russell, Sue McKinnon and Jenni Adams, Senior Project Officers, Office for the Ageing, DFC
- Ponas, Irene (Administration Officer, Premier's Council for Women).
- Bulbeck, Chilla. 'A challenging proposal for the ideal model of gender equality structures and processes: An Office for Gender Equity'. Submission presented at Academic Sector consultation 28 April 2005.

- McKinnon, Sue (Senior Project Officer, Office for the Ageing, DFC). 'Ageing and Community Care Issues Impacting on Older Women'.
- Richard Buggemann (CEO, Intellectual Disability Services Council). 'Issues for Women with Disability and their Carers'.

Appendix iii

List of recommendations

Best Practice Element 1

High level statement of the Government's commitment to the achievement of greater gender equity/improvement in the status of SA women

Recommendation 1a

The Minister for the Status of Women in conjunction with the Premier lead the development of a whole-of-government statement making explicit its commitment to the achievement of improvement to the status of women in SA within a gender equity framework, as follows:

- to be jointly developed by the Premier and Minister for Status of Women
- it be developed in consultation with the Premier's Council for Women and the women's community, in particular through the *Women's Voices* processes recommended below, and other key stakeholders, including within the public sector
- to be developed within a gender equity framework but with its leading phrases worded in terms of the status of women
- to be endorsed by the Cabinet, and cross-party support invited.

Recommendation 1b

That the South Australian Government's commitment statement (and related Action Plan) make explicit reference and give emphasis to Aboriginal women, encapsulating this approach in culturally appropriate words which convey sentiments such as moving forwards together, in partnership between women and men, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal South Australians.

Recommendation 1c

That the Premier in conjunction with the Minister for Women lead the development of a whole-of-government Action Plan for South Australian women (arising from the Government's commitment statement) which will be:

- developed through a process of community consultation, overseen by the Premier's Council for Women and involving, in particular, the *Women's Voices* processes and structures and the Gender Equity Summit (recommended below) to:
 - firstly, recommend the principles and criteria for identifying the (initial and subsequent) priorities for the Action Plan
 - and secondly, take an evidence-based approach to determining the initial priorities for the Action Plan
- endorsed by the Cabinet, with overall implementation responsibility to be taken by the Minister for the Status of Women and the Chief Executive, DFC, with responsibility for each agreed priority allocated to a lead Minister and a lead Chief Executive with the necessary key actions, targets and budget allocation identified.

Best Practice Element 2

Political leadership and commitment

Recommendation 2a

That the Government communicate its leadership with respect to gender equity to the rest of the government sector and to the wider community in far-reaching and unambiguous ways, including through the following two pivotal strategies:

- A Gender Equity Summit be held in Parliament House, hosted by the Premier and the Minister for the Status of Women, as a key element of the process to identify the priorities of the Government's Action Plan for SA women
- A paired residency be included in the Premier's Thinkers in Residence program by two internationally recognised gender equity experts, a man and a woman, to provide advice on advancing the Government's gender equity agenda.

Recommendation 2b

Reflecting the goals of the State Strategic Plan and as a clear demonstration of the Government's commitment to gender equity, that the Cabinet's Executive Committee at all times to include at least one of the women Ministers and preferably two women.

Best Practice Element 3

Allocation of responsibilities across government and clear reporting, monitoring and accountability processes (whole-of-government) approach

Recommendation 3a

To ensure clear and transparent responsibility, reporting and accountability arrangements (and as required to meet international best practice in this area), that:

- the Premier, Minister for the Status of Women and Chief Executive, DFC drive the implementation of the Action Plan for women, with implementation and reporting responsibilities clearly allocated to relevant Ministers and Chief Executives¹⁵
- key components/clusters of issues be referred (by the Premier and Minister for Status of Women) for implementation to appropriate whole-of-government structures and processes e.g. the Inter-Ministerial Council¹⁶, inter-departmental committees, the Social Inclusion Unit (eg women and poverty issues) etc.
- the Premier's Council for Women provide advice and evaluative analysis regarding implementation outcomes, in consultation with key stakeholders and the wider community through the *Women's Voices* structures.

¹⁵ See Recommendation 1c above

¹⁶ See Recommendation 3b

Recommendation 3b

That the Government establish an Inter-Ministerial Council to take a whole-of-government approach to monitoring the overall implementation of the plan and addressing major references arising from the Action Plan, the first of such references being Work-Life issues, to be:

- Chaired by the Premier
- Composed of relevant Ministers, including the Minister for the Status of Women, the Chair of the Premier's Council for Women, Aboriginal representation,¹⁷ and non-government gender equity experts.

Recommendation 3c

That the Office for Women perform a pivotal role in assisting the public sector to fulfil its implementation, reporting and evaluation responsibilities with respect to the Government's Action Plan for women in SA, through capacity building, liaison, research and other advisory functions.

Recommendation 3d

That the Government introduce gender sensitive budget processes and requirements across the public sector, supported by training and advice to agencies through secondment of expertise in this area in to the Office for Women.

Recommendation 3e

That the Government introduce Gender Impact Statements for all Cabinet Submissions.

Best Practice Element 4

Women's Voices - consultation, community engagement, capacity building

Recommendation 4a

That a high level Aboriginal women's advisory body to the Premier be established:

- to work with Aboriginal women and their communities throughout the State to identify priority issues
- to advise the Premier and the Premier's Council for Women on issues and priorities for Aboriginal women
- to monitor the Government's response to these issues and priorities
- with formal links to the Premier's Council for Women, including an annual joint meeting of both Councils, and more regular communication between their Chairs, formation of relevant joint sub-committees and working groups etc.

Recommendation 4b

That the Chief Executive, DFC ensure the Office for Women has established with the Premier's Council for Women clear principles and an operating framework which will underpin their strengthened focus on community

¹⁷ In particular, from whatever high level Aboriginal advisory body may be established by the Government (see Recommendation 6a below)

engagement¹⁸ and ensure they have the capacities and understanding required to reflect this commitment in practice.

Recommendation 4c

That a new South Australian *Women's Voices* structure and processes be established (based on similar models such as the Women Speak structures) to:

- Provide clear two-way communication processes and relationships between government gender equity structures and processes and the wider women's movement across the State
- Be the main conduit for two-way communication and consultation between the Premier's Council for Women and the diverse women's communities and organisations the interests of which it represents
- Consist of a range of strands, such as an Aboriginal women's strand, the Women's Services Network, a SACOSS-type strand, incorporated women's organisations, a women's housing strand, a women's health strand etc.
- Contribute to the development of the Action Plan for SA women by identifying common issues across the themes and focus areas represented by these strands.

Best Practice Element 5

Clarity of roles and coordination of effort

Recommendation 5a

That the key roles of the Office for Women be confirmed as follows:

- o to lead change and provide leadership and coordination of the whole-of-government approach to gender equity
- o to provide the Government, the Inter-Ministerial Council, the Premier's Council for Women and other government advisory and service providers with policy advice and strategic insights with respect to the issues and needs of South Australian women, including Aboriginal women and other particular populations of women
- o to provide specialist policy advice about priorities, issues and needs of Aboriginal women, and to coordinate consultation, engagement and capacity building functions with and for Aboriginal women, in liaison with relevant government agencies and community organisations
- o to provide specialist and targeted information to women across the State, in collaboration with other information and service providers
- o to facilitate cooperation and coordination across the public sector, by such approaches as regular auditing of agencies' strategic and business plans to identify opportunities for enhanced collaboration and joint initiatives
- o to drive the consultation, engagement and capacity building processes with the wider women's community
- o to provide coordination and liaison between the gender equity work of government and non-government organisations

Recommendation 5b

¹⁸ See Recommendation 5b below

That the staffing and other resources of the entire Office for Women (that is, the Policy Office, the Women's Information Service, and the secretariat to the Premier's Council for Women) be restructured and realigned to fulfil the role as described in 5a and more specifically so that:

- A significant proportion of resources is dedicated to the inter-related functions of information, communication, consultation, community engagement and capacity building with the wider women's movement (organisations, networks, peaks, advocacy groups etc, both existing and emerging), and that these functions become one of the core roles of the restructured Office for Women
- Adequate staffing and other resources are available to provide the strengthened focus on Aboriginal women recommended above (including the required critical mass of Aboriginal women staff within the Office).

Recommendation 5c

That the Office for Women prepare a Strategic Plan outlining its roles, priorities and directions outlined above, as well as its contribution to the Government's commitment to gender equity and the implementation of the Action Plan for SA women.

Recommendation 5d

That the restructure/re-alignment process include specific attention to the Women's Information Service, as follows:

- To confirm its role as the specialist source of information to women in the State through telephone and internet information services
- To clarify the expectation that it become a significant source of information and advice about issues for women to the Office for Women, to the Premier's Council for Women, to the Inter-Ministerial Council and to other government structures and processes (eg inter-departmental committees which may be established to implement the Action Plan etc);
- To remove the existing drop-in and computer access functions, with these resources being reassigned to the community outreach functions outlined above
- To enhance collaboration with other information and service providers, including Services SA, public libraries throughout the State, local councils, and services which target specific populations of women with particular information needs (including Aboriginal women, rural and remote women, migrants and refugees, women with a disability, homeless women etc)
- To increase the accessibility, reach, relevance and effectiveness of its information services to women through this collaboration and optimal use of the latest developments in technology and information management

Recommendation 5e

That expertise and staffing resources available to the Office for Women be:

- resourced to the level required to ensure the office has the capacities needed to fulfil the role outlined above
- enhanced by the capacity to have required staff out-posted to the Office from across the public service (as occurs with the Social Inclusion Unit), particularly from those agencies with implementation responsibilities for the Government's Action Plan, as well as experts in priority areas from outside of the government sector

Recommendation 5f

In the light of changes recommended in this report, that the Office for Women and the Premier's Council for Women develop a joint statement which clearly outlines their respective future roles and the structural and functional arrangements between them, and of their relationship with the wider women's community, for widespread communication throughout the government sector and the women's community.

Recommendation 5g

That the Office for Women work with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation to conduct a cultural sensitivity audit of and put into place a professional development program for staff in the Office and for members of the Premier's Council for Women, to ensure that the necessary capacities and understandings are in place which will be required to achieve the recommended strengthening of commitment to Aboriginal women's issues.

Recommendation 5h

That following the finalisation of the Government's Action Plan and the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Council, that consideration be given to relocating the Office for Women into the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Best Practice Element 6

Parliamentary, legislative and other formal sanctions

Recommendation 6a

That the Government hold an annual Cabinet meeting on gender equity and social inclusion focussed on progressing implementation of the Government's priorities in the Action Plan for SA women and the Social Inclusion references, and identifying new and emerging priorities for attention in these inter-related areas.

Recommendation 6b

That the Equal Opportunity Act be reviewed to strengthen the Commissioner's powers with respect to monitoring and investigation, for example to ensure that government services and processes are fair and equitable to all members of the community.