

## ACT Gender Equality Forum - 12 February 2018

### Summary of Recommendations and Strategies

#### 1. Introduction and Background

The *ACT Gender Equality Forum: Sharing Stories of Success* was co-designed and co-facilitated by the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women (MACW) and the ACT Office for Women (OfW).

The forum's aim was to share inspirational stories and practical solutions that have resulted in positive outcomes towards gender equality, and to consider ways in which the learning from these can be applied in other community, business and government practices. This approach sought to support the implementation of the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-2026* and the *First Action Plan 2017-2019*.

Attendance included over 60 participants from across community organisations, business, and government. The forum was opened by ACT Minister for Women, the Hon Yvette Berry MLA followed by a key note speech by Dr Gail Crimmins. The University of the Sunshine Coast researcher encouraged participants to share stories to provoke awareness and change towards gender equality.

Participants were clustered into six themed discussions facilitated by MACW on topics including:

- Leadership
- Respectful relationships
- Housing and homelessness
- Women supporting women in business
- Changing gendered occupations
- Changing the system, not the woman

#### 2. Themed Discussions

##### 2.1 Leadership

Suggested strategies from workshop participants include:

- **Shared leadership** (collaboration) is considered a more functional strategy for women, that is people coming together to be guided by a person with the most expertise or relevant experience.
- Women are encouraged to **take opportunities or risks** which can lead to leadership roles.
- **Owning one's identity, being assertive in one's visibility** as an individual.
- Taking an **inclusive view and being open to all diversity**.

##### 2.2 Respectful Relationships

Suggested strategies from workshop participants include:

- **Encourage, and promote respectful relationships**, including the understanding of vulnerabilities of difference in people.
- **Education on what constitutes respectful relationships** for children, young adults, families and leaders e.g. Consent Matters Program, I Respect Initiative, Choose Respect and Respect Program.
- **Targeted relationship programs and community education** that is **evidence based**.
- **Policy and legislation change** to include respectful relationships and values.
- **Monitor and evaluate outcomes achieved** in education programs.
- **Cultural considerations and values, and age spectrum** should be included in discussions on respectful relationships.

## 2.3 Housing and Homelessness

Suggested strategies from workshop participants include:

- Housing options need to be **diverse, available and affordable**.
- Housing services need to cater to the demand from women at **different life stages**.
- Positive developments include: ACT Government ***Affordable Housing Strategy***; ***ACTCOSS Housing Choices Discussion Paper***; ***Domain Economical Housing articles***; ***YWCA Ageing in Place Group Housing***; **Onelink** homelessness support service.

## 2.4 Women Supporting Women in Business

Suggested strategies from workshop participants include:

- **Networking, collaboration, sharing spaces and building respectful relationships** within and across industry boundaries can contribute to broader opportunities e.g. Canberra Women in Business, women's forums.
- **Peer coaching and support and soft networking** empowers confidence in women's capabilities e.g. *Longhouse* model (shared work-space populated by mentors and funded through network of small business users).
- **Small business** can provide more scope for a values-driven focus and flexibility particularly with child rearing duties e.g. Rowdy Digital, Lead, Mamma Lead.

## 2.5 Changing Gendered Occupations

Suggested strategies from workshop participants include:

- Encourage **research into workplace specific issues**, collect data and explain within legislative and ethical frameworks to build solid arguments and mechanisms for change.
- Change will involve **workplace and gender-focused cultures** simultaneously.
- Invite **all parties to contribute and avoid tokenism**.
- Consider the **establishment of quotas** e.g. Emergency Services.
- **Challenge stereotypes** and encourage **mentoring** from people in male dominated professions.
- **Flexibility in working schedules** is required to address gendered issues.
- **Awareness raising** in the community is crucial e.g. 50/50 Initiative.
- **Avoid casualisation** of work in industry, which is targeting women in the community.
- Availability of **parent's rooms**.
- Review of **recruitment** processes.
- **Parental leave extended to fathers**.
- **Increase representation of women (and diversity) in politics and government**.
- Active focus on **tradeswomen**.
- **Gender neutral school uniform** policies in schools.

## 2.6 Changing the System Not the Woman

Suggested strategies from workshop participants include:

- Change should be directed to **people's attitudes, cultural norms** and **legislation**.
- **Recruitment processes** are important in targeting diversity in workplace.
- Consider **job descriptions** e.g. home based work availability, question gendered bias in skills and capabilities of job descriptions.
- Develop **safe person and safe space** targets in workplaces.
- Consider changes to **inflexibilities** in workplaces to become more flexible e.g. job share.
- Consider **gender balanced selection panels** and gender bias in interviewing questions.

## 3. Executive Recommendations and strategies

- Forum participants suggested increased involvement and presence of MACW and Office for Women in gender equality, and the necessity to raise their profile in the wider community, business and government.
- MACW and Office for Women could provide further opportunities for groups to collaborate, meet and deliver gender equality outcomes to the broader community.