



National Women's Alliances



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The six National Women's Alliances (the Alliances) represent over 180 women's organisations. They bring forward the views, voices and issues of Australian women and, in particular, women from marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

In January 2013 the Australian Government announced renewed funding for the Alliances. This funding renewal is accompanied with an increased level of funding, almost \$4.8 million for six Alliances over three years, up from \$3.6 million in the previous three years.

This ongoing support demonstrates the Government's commitment to gender equality. It also provides the Alliances certainty about their gender equality agenda and priorities over the next three financial years.

1. The Alliances

The National Women's Alliances are made up of a mix of sector-based and issues-based women's groups each with a distinct focus and a strong capacity for networking and advocacy activities.

The issues-based Alliances are:

- economic Security4Women
- Equality Rights Alliance
- Australian Women Against Violence Alliance

The sector-based Alliances are:

- National Rural Women's Coalition
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance
- Australian Migrant and Refugee Women's Alliance

The role of the Alliances is twofold:

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

2. Vision for the Alliances

The Australian Government has a vision for a reinvigorated women's movement in which the voices of all women are heard in addressing policy issues that affect women.

This vision is based upon a new movement for gender equality, which includes:

- Amplifying the voices of women and the women's movement;
- Ensuring interests and priorities of women are heard by Government; and
- Broadening women's networks to better represent the views of all women including Indigenous women, women from culturally diverse backgrounds, young women and women with disabilities.

Inequality between men and women remains a challenge in Australia. It shapes and limits women's ability to contribute to Australian society. The repercussions of gender inequality mean that Australian women and men, their families, communities and Australia as a whole are disadvantaged.

3. Further information on the Alliances can be found at:

http://fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/progserv/equal/Pages/engaging_womens_org.aspx

4. The Role of Office for Women

The Office for Women administers the funding for the National Women's Alliances program and support capacity building for the Alliances, including:

- Hosting annual forums for the Alliances;
- Managing a program of training and capacity building for the Alliances; and
- Managing an annual review of Alliances' work and the Program.

The Office for Women also provides support to Alliances to be in contact with other areas of Government who may have a role in the content of Alliances' work.

economic Security4Women (eS4W)

economic Security4Women (eS4W) focuses on the promotion of lifelong economic wellbeing for women. eS4W believe that economic wellbeing and financial security are essential ingredients to achieving equality for women and will enable women of all ages to have an equal place in society. Through advocacy and lobbying activities, eS4W aim to change policies which continue to have a negative impact on the long term economic security of women.

Activities in 2012-13

1. Economic Wellbeing

- Advocating for Government to include women and girls in 'skills connect – connecting skills to jobs' initiative, by:
 - Promoting recommendations from eS4W's Viable Work Report; and
 - Advocating the need for education and training of secondary school aged girls, ultimately aiming to encourage women's participation non-traditional areas of employment.

2. The Australian Care Economy

- Lobbying the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to regularly produce Household Satellite Accounts in line with the International System of National Accounts, similar to ABS Cat. No. 5240.0 *Unpaid Work and the Australian Economy 1997*.
- Developing:
 - A comprehensive set of estimates of the economic value of Care Work in Australia as a percentage of the gross domestic product; and
 - Relevant policy recommendations for future advocacy work.
- Advocating for flexible working conditions, in particular access to leave when required, flex-time, time in lieu and the ability to change start and finish times throughout the Australian workforce.

3. Pay and Gender Workforce Equity

- Lobbying for the development of an online pay equity kit for small to medium size enterprise's (SME's).
- Promoting information for an increased awareness of the issues around equal pay.
- Engaging with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency to ensure there is a focus on the SME sector.

Special Policy Project –

Women's Voices from the Flood Plains

- Advocating and lobby the findings of the *Women's Voices from the Flood Plains* report to address the economic needs of women in disaster relief and redevelopment.

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Equality Rights Alliance (ERA)

The Equality Rights Alliance (ERA) is Australia's largest network of organisations with an interest in advancing women's equality. ERA has a focus on gender equality, women's leadership and women's diversity, including bringing young women's voices to policy and decision making. To advance gender equality, ERA adopts a human rights framework and advocates for adherence to international human rights principles.

Activities in 2012-13

1. Closing the wealth gap for women

ERA is working to provide Government with strategic input on key issues affecting women for the Federal Budget 2013-14 and increase the skills of women's advocates to participate in Federal Budget processes. As part of this project, ERA is:

- Convening discussions with member organisations and prepare a pre-budget submission for Federal Budget 2013-14;
- Advocating for the Federal Budget to respond to key issues affecting women, with an overarching recommendation for an increased gender focus in the planning stages of the Budget;
- Hosting a training workshop for members on methods for obtaining and using statistical data in support of Federal Budget submissions; and
- Maintaining the online budget resources hub established in 2011-12 through the ERA website.

2. Women's Equality in Laws

ERA is advocating for Government to adopt a series of recommendations promoting stronger protections against gender discrimination in the Government's draft consolidated anti-discrimination legislation. As part of this project, ERA is:

- Maintaining a watching brief on the progress of the Government's anti-discrimination law consolidation project and make submissions, if required, following the release of the draft bill; and
- Promoting advocacy resources on key recommendations to strengthen and improve anti-discrimination protections for women, in particular women from diverse life situations and backgrounds.

3. Housing Policy to Meet the Needs of Women

ERA is advocating for the development of a long-term national strategy for affordable and accessible housing that includes a gender analysis and response to women's housing needs. As part of this project, ERA is:

- Establishing a member-led working group to identify key areas of housing needs for women and prepare ERA's policy position in relation to these areas;
- Including recommendations regarding affordable housing for women in our pre-budget submission;
- Working with stakeholders in the housing sector to ensure that recommendations for affordable housing include a gender focus on accessible housing; and
- Maintaining the online resources hub established in 2011-12 through the ERA website.

Special Policy Project –

Gender Aware Policy Analysis and Stronger, Resourced Gender Machinery

ERA continues to host the Settle Petal website (www.settlepetal.org.au) to encourage women under 30 years to actively engage in a debate about issues facing Australian women. The strategic direction of the website is overseen by the ERA Young Women's Advisory Group (YWAG).

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Australian Migrant and Refugee Women's Alliance (AMaRWA)

The Australian Migrant and Refugee Women's Alliance (AMaRWA) aims to represent the voices and interests of migrant and refugee women living in Australia. AMaRWA advocates for the issues concerning migrant and refugee women at the national level to ensure their interests are represented in government policy.

Activities in 2012-2013

1. Responding to emerging issues affecting migrant and refugee women

AMaRWA provides an opportunity for the migrant and refugee community to develop a thorough knowledge and awareness of the key issues affecting their communities. AMaRWA draw on members' involvement with and knowledge of issues affecting migrant and refugee women by connecting these communities with up to date research, media releases, conferences and events.

2. Leadership, Lobbying and Mentoring program for Young Women

In 2013 AMaRWA is delivering the Young Women's Professional Leadership and Mentoring training program. The program aims to develop the understanding of cultural diversity and cultural perspectives of leadership and mentoring through a gendered lens. This will be achieved by:

- Developing the "Train the Trainer" Manual in order to provide community and government organisations with gender training tool relevant to CALD communities;
- Training at least 20 young women from all states and territories on leadership capacity building in order to advocate for the needs and interests of CALD communities;
- Delivering a sustainable mentoring program through partnership with the new Prominent Women in Dialogue Advisory Group; and
- Drafting a policy on training for young women from CALD backgrounds.

3. Migrant Women and Employment

- Lobbying and advocating for appropriate job services network and migrant workers' support network in partnership with Asian Women at Work, Unions, Fair Work Australia and other partner organisations around Australia.
- Continuing to lobby for the ratification of the *United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families*.
- Monitoring and following up on proposed items tabled at the AMaRWA Employment Roundtable in September 2012. In particular,
 - Insecure work
 - Precarious work environments
 - Migrant Workers Employment Rights
 - Sustainable employment pathways for women from CALD backgrounds

4. Migrant and Refugee Women and Domestic Violence and Family Violence

- The Stand Up! Eliminating all forms of violence against women from CALD Backgrounds National Conference, held from 28 to 30 April, is the first National Conference bringing together multi-disciplinary experts and grassroots activists to identify gaps, barriers and solutions to the elimination of violence against CALD Women in Australia.
- The Conference will assist policy development and development of background papers on respective topical issues.

Emerging Issue – Female Genital Mutilation in Australia

AMaRWA is conducting research on the prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Australia. Currently there is no data on the extent of FGM practice in Australia; nor on the number of girls taken overseas for the performance of the act. However significant portions of the Australian population are migrants or refugees from FGM-practicing countries, such as Sudan, Somalia and Egypt amongst others.

AMaRWA hosted a roundtable in February 2013 to allow members of Parliament and their staff to hear directly from female survivors and professionals working in communities.

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National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC)

Since its establishment in 2003 the National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC) has continued to strengthen and build a national network for rural, regional and remote women. The network acts as a platform through which rural women can voice their needs and interests in policy development and research.

NRWC work to support and grow vibrant rural, regional and remote communities by enhancing the wellbeing of women, and acknowledge their contribution to Australian life.

The objectives of the NRWC are to:

- o Represent the diverse views of women in rural, regional and remote Australia;
- o Provide advice to the Australian Government on policy issues relevant to the views and circumstances of rural women; and
- o Contribute to building a positive profile of rural women, their achievements and issues.

Activities in 2012-2013

1. Networking Women in Rural Australia

This project supports and strengthens NRWC's existing networks by creating an accessible new information portal and communication hub for rural and remote women. This online platform will openly and freely comment on issues and policies affecting them and their communities by:

- Continuing to develop a national networking strategy;
- Developing the E-learn and Leadership Program to increase the participation of women in local government decision-making processes;
- Running the Cuppa With™ Program, a series of practical seminars that provide training and development opportunities for rural women's needs;
- Providing online leadership training to young women in business; and
- Using online networks to promote awareness and impacts of family violence and disaster management on rural women.

2. Strengthen Rural Women's Influence

In February 2013 the National Rural Women's Conference provided an interactive platform through which rural, regional and remote women could discuss the issues important to their communities and businesses. The Conference hosted 40 keynote speakers, workshops and discussions which highlighted women's diverse experiences of entrepreneurship, leadership in disaster management, and issues of family violence and food security.

The Rural Women's Summit was held in conjunction with the Conference. The Summit provided an opportunity for women to develop strategies to influence

the future direction of their own businesses, industries, communities and governments. These interests were progressed by:

- Ensuring the needs and interests of women from culturally diverse rural, regional and remote communities are heard by Government;
- Developing an Outcomes Paper for Government to highlight key issues important to rural women; and
- Lobbying for rural affairs to be placed under one portfolio within Prime Minister and Cabinet and advocating for 'rural proofing' of policies.

3. Promoting rural women's representation on boards

This project will strengthen the leadership capacity of a wide range of individual women and women's groups by promoting their representation on boards. NRWC will develop pathways for rural women's active participation in Boards through online and face to face training. These pathways will enable rural women to have a stronger voice and influence on policy. This will be achieved by:

- Further developing NRWC's membership base to involve individual women and women's organisations, particularly those who have limited experience in political decision-making and policy advocacy;
- Establishing an advisory group with representatives in all states and territories;
- Supporting and promoting active participation in Alliance activities by all member organisations; and
- Producing a quarterly newsletter with opportunities for participation in Alliance activities which is to be distributed throughout the member network.

Special Policy Projects –

Weather the Storm: Women Prepare

The Weather the Storm project is a 15-hour program bringing community women together to share experiences in living with the risk of disasters.

This project aims to support communities to maintain awareness, build resilience, and develop a culture of community preparedness in disaster management.

The Family Violence Project: Stopping Violence before it Happens

In September 2012 the Australian Government released a toolkit aimed at stopping violence against women in rural communities. The toolkit is the result of consultations with women and community services workers in remote communities and provides straightforward advice, practical resources and ideas for community-led action.

"The Stopping Violence Before it Happens" toolkit is available free online through the Network at www.nrwn.org.au/toolkits or hard copies can be ordered through the NRWC webpage at www.nrwc.com.au.

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National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance (NATSIWA)

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance (NATSIWA) is a national group aimed at empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to make strong, strategic and effective policy advocacy interventions into issues affecting them and their communities. Working closely with its members, NATSIWA bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's voices to both priority issues for the Government and to emerging and hidden issues that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their communities are facing.

Activities in 2012-13

1. Public and Political Participation on emerging issues regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women

- Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women to participate in the review of the Australian Constitution to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- Building relationships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders to raise awareness of Aboriginal Women's perspectives on constitutional change, particularly advocating for a gendered perspective;
- Preparing a report highlighting the issues addressed/ not addressed by Government relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) report. NATSIWA's report will be presented to CEDAW and the Australian Government Office for Women.

2. Raise the profile of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women as a national network

- Highlighting the gender impact of the rollout of Stronger Futures and ensuring Aboriginal women have a political voice in this policy intervention;
- Monitoring opinion pieces, media commentary and policy/program reform under Stronger Futures and Constitutional Recognition to ensure the national network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women have the opportunity to stay informed; and
- Using a story-centred methodology, bringing the voices of Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory affected by policies under *Stronger Futures* and Income Management to policy decision-makers.

3. Human Rights – Violence against Women and Child Protection

- Conducting a survey in consultation with families and key government and non-government stakeholders in regards to the reunification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with their families.
- Producing a report for government and non-government stakeholders identifying the issues of reunification and making recommendations on how to improve the reunification process.
- Producing a report card on how Government is delivering strategy 3.3 of the *National Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children*.

Special Policy Project – Superannuation issues for Indigenous women

NATSIWA consults with Indigenous women, government and industry bodies on superannuation issues effecting Indigenous women.

On 5 February 2013 a report addressing superannuation issues for Indigenous women was released by Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, at the NATSIWA Member's meeting.

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Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)

The key area of focus for the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) is addressing violence against women to ensure that all women and children are able to live free from all forms of violence and abuse.

AWAVA recognises that violence against women is both a consequence and cause of gender inequality in all sectors of society that must be addressed by promoting women's empowerment.

Activities in 2012-13

1. Create better information flows between government policy makers and a wide-range of grassroots organisations through the Alliance

Support and promote the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children* (the National Plan) by:

- Actively participating on the National Plan Implementation Panel and National Plan Advisory Groups;
- Promoting the *Stopping Violence Against Women Before It Happens: A Practical Toolkit for Communities*, developed in partnership with the National Rural Women's Coalition and Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research;
- Providing information on progress with the National Plan at federal and state/territory-level through AWAVA's website and member network to support community organisations to actively work with the plan;
- Advocating and lobbying to Government and other relevant stakeholders on policy issues relating to the prevention and reduction of violence against women; and
- Preparing a submission for the Federal Budget 2013-14.

2. Lead and foster best practice regarding violence against women both in the region and internationally

- Co-ordinating with NATSIWA to produce the NGOs' Follow-up Report in response to the CEDAW Committee's 2010 interim recommendation on addressing violence against women.
- Engaging with sector during CEDAW process.

3. Lack of gender analysis on public understanding about violence against women

- Developing key position papers and fact sheets on topics such as Men's Behaviour Change Programs, Early and Forced Marriage, Domestic and Family Violence, and Sexual Violence.
- Engaging with AWAVA members to ensure that AWAVA is representative of its members and the wider community and that they have an effective mechanism to highlight emerging issues in the sector.
- Providing the community with educational resources, particularly for school-aged children that puts violence into the context of gender and equal rights via the Australian Women's Timeline.

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Joint Alliance Activities in 2012-13

Collaboration Project – Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

The 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women will be held in New York from 4 to 15 March 2013. The priority theme will be the *elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls*. There will also be a review theme on the *equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men*, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS. The collaboration project will focus on:

- Consultation across the Alliances to identify 2-3 key recommendations around pay equity for women, education and awareness regarding domestic violence and women's economic capacity to earn and support themselves.

Collaboration Project – Women's Priorities 2013

The six National Women's Alliances are working together in 2012-13 to:

- Raise the public and political profile of six key issues affecting women;
- Advocate for routine gender impact analysis at the earliest stage of policy and legislation development; and
- Encourage women to be active participants in public and political life, with a focus on enrolling to vote.

For more information:

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