



Australian
Human Rights
Commission

Unleashing the power of gender equality

Priorities of Kate Jenkins
Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner
November 2017

**“The world will never realize
100 per cent of its goals if
50 per cent of its people cannot
realize their full potential. When
we unleash the power of women,
we can secure the future for all.”**

Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General 2015



Over the last century we have made **significant progress** for women: increased participation in education and work; increased prominence of women in leadership roles in many spheres of life; adopting international and domestic laws to eliminate discrimination on the basis of sex. We have seen equal pay for work of equal value enshrined in law and employers required to report on the gender pay gap. Rape in marriage is now illegal and there is a National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children. We have sworn in the first female Prime Minister and elected the first Indigenous woman to the Federal Parliament.

However gender equality is yet to be achieved in Australia.

Despite Australia ranking as **first** for educational attainment for women in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Index, our overall ranking in gender equality has **regressed** from 15th in 2006 to 46th in 2016. Australia ranks 42nd in women's economic participation and opportunity, 72nd in health and survival and 61st in political empowerment.¹

My purpose as Sex Discrimination Commissioner is to **advance** gender equality, consistent with the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW). **Achieving** gender equality in Australia is a role I share with all of you. It requires collaboration across government, community and business.

Within the resources of the Australian Human Rights Commission, I have chosen to **prioritise** the prevention of violence against women and girls, women's economic security and empowerment and diversity in leadership across the high impact settings of workplaces, education and sport. My role as the Sex Discrimination Commissioner involves a number of activities, including: education and awareness, collaboration and connection, influencing policy and legislation, research and projects, and international engagement. After reflecting on the current state of gender equality in Australia over the last 12 months, my new focus areas going forward are women living in rural, regional and remote areas, technology and a commitment to intersectionality.

This document outlines **why** I have determined these priorities and what I plan to do. But to be able to see any progress will require the collective efforts of us all. I look forward to working with you and alongside you to **unleash** the true power of gender equality for Australia.

Kate Jenkins

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS



Indigenous women are **35 times** more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence related assaults.²



More than **70%** of women with disabilities have been victims of violent sexual encounters at some time in their lives.³



Domestic and family violence is the leading cause of death and disability for women aged 18-44.⁴



51% university students were sexually harassed on at least one occasion in 2016.⁵



90% of boys and **60%** of girls have seen online porn⁶ and **88%** of scenes of most popular porn include physical aggression towards women.⁷

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY AND EMPOWERMENT



The average full-time weekly wage for a woman is **15.3%** less than a man's.⁸



73% of Australian employees work in either male or female-dominated workplaces.⁹



Women retire with **half (53%)** the superannuation as men and are **2.5 times** more likely to live in poverty in old age.¹⁰

DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP



In September 2017, there were **eleven** female CEOs in the ASX200.¹²



The total number of women in the federal Parliament following the 2016 election was **73 (32%)**¹³ including **3** Indigenous women.¹⁴

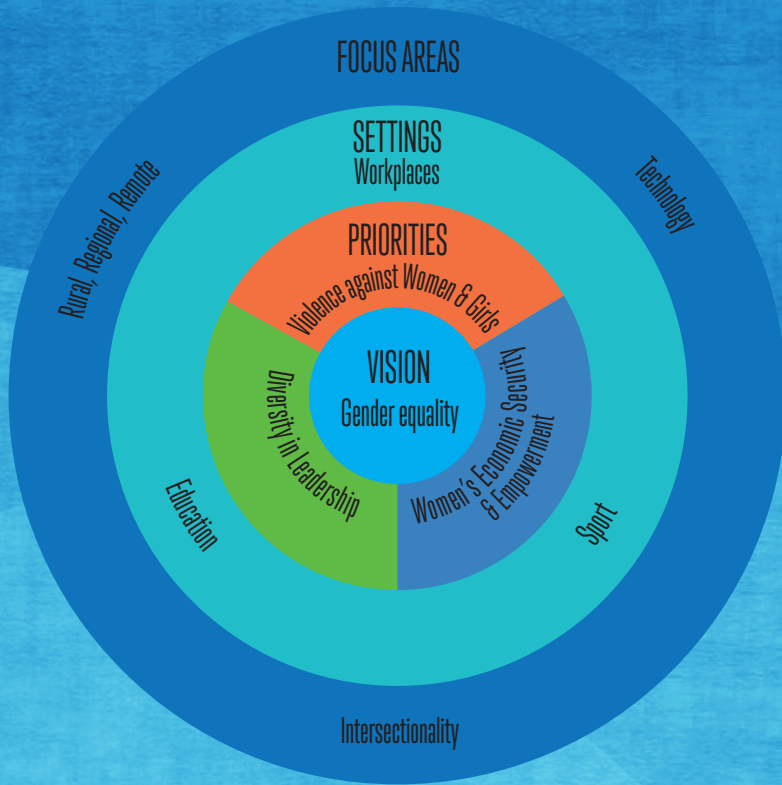


58% of the Australian Public Service are women but they hold only **40%** of the most senior leadership roles.¹⁵



In 2015, **2.5%** of ASX directors were culturally diverse women.¹⁶

Sex Discrimination Commissioner's Priorities and Focus



MY PRIORITIES

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY AND EMPOWERMENT

DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP

MY ACTIONS

- Conduct the Commission's fourth sexual harassment prevalence survey.
- Lead the domestic violence death review project to build national data on family violence deaths to improve policy responses.
- Monitor universities' responses to the *Change the Course* report on sexual harassment and sexual assault.
- Co-Chair Play by the Rules, promoting grass-roots sport to be safe, fair and inclusive for all.

- Develop guidelines for the application of special measures under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 to advance substantial equality between men and women.
- Educate employers and employees on the rights and obligations in the workplace related to pregnancy, parental leave and return to work.
- Raise awareness and understanding of the levers affecting women's economic security through their lifetime.

- Work collaboratively with the Australian Defence Force on cultural reform across the three services.
- Work with the Male Champions of Change to improve the representation of women in leadership positions and in non-traditional roles across their organisations.
- Promote the benefits of women's and girls' leadership and representation in decision-making roles.

MY ADVOCACY

- Challenge everyday sexism and low level sexual harassment where we live, work, learn and play.
- Promote broader social equality and address structural discrimination and intersectional disadvantage.

- Challenge the structural and attitudinal barriers affecting working parents, including: parental leave, superannuation, flexible work, childcare, and sharing of unpaid work.
- Promote benefits of reducing gender-segregated workforces.

- Advocate for improved representation of women and girls in political, corporate, sporting and organisational leadership roles.
- Promote and facilitate opportunities for women and girls to have their voices heard at a local, national and international level.

This work will be focused on the following settings:

Where we live, learn, work and play were identified as high impact settings for change in *Change the Story*¹⁷ – a shared national framework developed by Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia.

WORKPLACES

WHY

Work is a critical enabler for all.

REACH

A high proportion of our population are or seek to be engaged in work and others depend on the financial support of workers.

ADDRESSES CHALLENGES

Workplaces have potential to remove barriers including: sexual harassment, gender pay gap, discrimination against working parents, gender segregation in roles and sectors, sharing of unpaid work and more.

OPPORTUNITIES

Workplaces offer an equal opportunity for productive and engaging work while recognising the value of caring responsibilities.

BENEFITS

Individuals and families benefit from economic security and increased wellbeing. The workplace benefits from increased productivity and innovation. The community benefits from better economic outcomes.

EDUCATION

Education provides the foundation for life.

Every person has an experience of education either personally or through someone they know – from early childhood, schools, tertiary through to work programs and further education.

There is the potential to reduce gender-segregated courses and career paths in education and through education to increase understanding of disrespectful attitudes that underpin violence against women and children.

The education life cycle offers opportunities to change attitudes and reduce violence while empowering women and men, girls and boys equally to succeed in all sectors.

Impact of education on young people will influence our culture and the next generation of leaders.

SPORT

Sport and physical activity supports better physical, social and mental health for all.

Most of our community are touched by sport in some way as a participant, coach, volunteer, supporter or spectator.

There is potential for sport to address barriers to gender equality and demonstrate respect for women and girls through increased participation, leadership roles, access to facilities, equal pay sponsorship and media coverage.

Sport brings diverse people together through a uniting passion. Growing interest in female sport creates opportunities for elite sportswomen and supports women and girls actively participate in any sport.

Individuals benefit from increased physical, social and mental health. The community benefits from policies and actions taken in sport to progress gender equality. The economy benefits from expanding the sports industry.

In advancing gender equality my work will pay particular attention to the following areas of focus:

WHY RURAL, REGIONAL AND REMOTE?

Despite experiencing additional barriers to equality, women and some men in rural, regional and remote communities are working collectively to make progress towards gender equality. However gender-based stereotypes can often affect their voices being heard in decision making. Few options for employment, services and support leave women living in rural, regional and remote areas at higher risk of violence and discrimination.

To monitor our progress and inform future actions, we will:

- Collaborate with other agencies to build our knowledge and evidence on barriers to gender equality.
- Report on our international engagement.
- Publish a report card on the status of women and girls relevant to the priority areas (where available).
- Share developments, tools, expertise and best practice on gender equality.

WHY TECHNOLOGY?

Technology provides many opportunities to progress gender equality, including access to flexible work, diverse collaboration, improved connection and greater innovation. There are new and lucrative work opportunities in the male-dominated technology industry and potential to increase the participation of women and girls. However technology can also facilitate abuse towards women, for example in family violence situations, through pornography and by abuse on social media.

WHY INTERSECTIONALITY?

To achieve gender equality we need to understand the diversity of women's experiences and their impact on their lives. Some women face multiple intersecting barriers to equality. In recognition of this, I will work with the:

- Age Discrimination Commissioner on older women and homelessness.
- Children's Commissioner on preventing violence against girls and issues faced by teenage parents.
- Disability Discrimination Commissioner on violence against women with disabilities.
- Social Justice Commissioner on issues faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls.
- Race Discrimination Commissioner on leadership of culturally and linguistically diverse women and sport.
- Human Rights Commissioner on technology and human rights issues relevant to sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status.

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