

MINCO COMMUNIQUE

COMMONWEALTH, STATE, TERRITORY AND NEW ZEALAND MINISTERS' CONFERENCE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The Hon. Jennifer Rankine, MP, Minister for the Status of Women of South Australia hosted the Australian and New Zealand Ministers Conference on the Status of Women (MINCO) in Adelaide on Friday 22 September 2006.

Ministers welcomed as observers Dr Ana Pessoa, Minister for State Administration, East Timor; the Hon Alisi Taumoepeau, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Tonga; and Ms Sarah Dyer from the Solomon Islands, and noted the importance of exchanging ideas with Australia's Pacific Rim neighbours.

Ministers also valued the opportunity to meet with delegates of the fifth National Indigenous Women's Gathering. The Gathering presented eight recommendations to Ministers enshrining the future of the Gathering and highlighted the need to address Indigenous family violence. Ministers welcomed the delegates' views and agreed to continue to work collaboratively with the Gathering of Indigenous Women, and to establish a more effective process for input to future Ministers' Conferences for the Status of Women.

As agreed at last year's Conference, Ministers have progressed initiatives to communicate with women the importance of saving for retirement and maximising their superannuation holdings. They have agreed to fund the development of checklists and summary guides, for distribution to community organisations, financial institutions and policy makers to effectively communicate superannuation and financial literacy messages to women during their different life stages.

Building on the initiative Ministers took last year to improve the number of women on boards, Ministers agreed to undertake a stock-take of mentoring programs in their jurisdictions, to ensure that mentoring training is underpinned by nationally accredited competencies, and to sponsor and expand mentoring programs in their jurisdictions.

Ministers have agreed that the Chair of the Conference will write to the Australian Government Minister for Ageing to ensure a gender perspective is accommodated in the forthcoming community and aged care workforce census and survey in 2007. To maintain ongoing communication about the survey, Ministers proposed that the Australian Government Office for Women be represented on the reference group developing the survey instrument.

Ministers agreed to commission the OECD to undertake research to investigate the economic impacts of gender-based occupational segregation.

Women's safety was also an issue of focus for Ministers. They endorsed the establishment of the cross-jurisdictional working party on sexual slavery and the trafficking of women to report to the Ministerial Council on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and to the Ministers Conference on the Status of Women. The working party, to include jurisdictional representatives from the multicultural affairs and women's portfolios, will examine issues of trafficking and sexual assault.

Ministers also noted the results of the recently released Personal Safety Survey and agreed to review its National Safety Taskforce Workplan in the light of these results.

Ministers noted that grandparents caring for grandchildren had been considered by the recent Community and Disability Services Ministerial Council (CDSMC). Given the particular impact on grandmothers who are informally caring for grandchildren, the Chair of the Ministers Conference for the Status of Women will write to the Chair of CDSMC requesting that the impact on women of fulfilling this role be specifically taken into account in the review CDSMC is undertaking.

Childcare, employment participation by women, and the impact of both the *WorkChoices* and Welfare to Work legislation were discussed. State and Territory Ministers agreed childcare continued to be a major issue for women across Australia and they noted the need to provide high quality childcare services in rural, regional, urban and remote areas with reforms to be referred to COAG for consideration in February next year. They also noted that low wages and poor conditions of employment for childcare workers were contributing to a shortage of appropriate staff.

State and Territory Ministers noted the detrimental impact of *WorkChoices* legislation on women and have agreed to support research in their respective jurisdictions to monitor the impact of *WorkChoices* and the Welfare to Work changes on women.

The meeting was attended by: the South Australian Minister for the Status of Women, the Hon Jennifer Rankine MP as chair of the meeting; the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Women's Issues, the Hon Julie Bishop MP; the New Zealand Minister for Women's Affairs, the Hon Lianne Dalziel; the Northern Territory Minister for Family and Community Affairs, the Hon Delia Lawrie MLA; the Queensland Minister for Women, the Hon Linda Lavarch MLA; the New South Wales Minister for Women, the Hon Sandra Nori MP; the Hon Michelle O'Byrne MP, Parliamentary Secretary, representing the Premier of Tasmania, the Hon Paul Lennon MHA; the Western Australian Minister for Women's Interests, the Hon Margaret Quirk MLA; and Ms Mary Gillett representing the Victorian Minister for Women's Affairs, the Hon Mary Delahunty MP.