

WOMEN IN
POWER AND
DECISION MAKING

C H A P T E R



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CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN

Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels

1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

OVERVIEW

Women have a right and a responsibility to participate in the decision-making processes that shape the nation. Unless women are full and active participants in all spheres of public and private life, across a wide range of decision-making positions, Australia's future will not reflect the talents, experience and aspirations of all citizens.

The Australian Government is committed to encouraging greater diversity among those occupying senior decision-making positions and strongly supports efforts to expand opportunities for women to participate in high level positions. Many Australian women have the appropriate experience, skills and ability to contribute to the decisions on important issues that affect our lives.

Since the early 1990s, women have increased and consolidated their representation in high level decision-making. Since 1995, there has been significant strengthening of the critical mass of Australian women in positions of leadership and decision-making.

During this time, the representation of women in the Australian national parliament has increased to nearly double the international average. Women's participation on government boards and at senior executive levels in the public sector has also consolidated beyond critical mass. In the private sector, women's representation in board, chief executive and senior level positions has doubled over the past five years but is still much lower than public sector boards.

Significant achievements since 1995 include:

- women currently comprise 24.5% of Commonwealth parliamentarians, nearly double the international average of 13.4%;
- women currently hold a record number of portfolios (20%) in the Commonwealth Parliament;
- 22% of State and Territory parliamentarians in 2000 are women, compared with 17% in 1995 and 9% in 1985;
- 25% of local government elected council members in 1997 were women, compared with 20% in 1992 and 13% in 1986;
- in 1998, the Australian Government appointed the first woman President to Australia's Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Professor Alice Enh Soon Tay;

- in 1998, the Australian Government appointed Ms Susan Halliday as the new Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Commissioner;
- women comprised 24.1% of Australian Government senior executives in June 1999, compared with 21.8% in 1998, 17% in 1994 and 10% in 1989;
- women occupied 30.9% of positions on Commonwealth government boards in 1999 compared to 30.5% in 1995; and
- the number of women on private sector boards is increasing, albeit from a low base. The most recent available survey indicates that women make up 10.3% of private sector non-executive board members, an increase from 4% in 1995.

The Australian Government believes that encouraging skilled and talented women to contribute to this country's decision-making processes is a far more effective way to increase women's participation than relying on quotas and targets.

Since 1995, the Australian Government and many State and Territory governments have increased their activities to maximise the number of women appointed on merit to senior positions of power and decision-making. Generally, measures have not

relied on prescription or compulsory quotas, but on identifying and promoting the considerable talent pool of Australian women. Australian women are selected on their merits to the highest levels of existing power structures, and have not relied on special treatment strategies.

There are no institutional barriers to women's electoral participation. Under the Australian electoral system, electors vote for candidates without constraints as to how they allocate their preferences. This is in contrast to many countries in which electors vote (for at least some seats) in the order decided by the relevant political party. The ability of individual voters to choose how to allocate their preferences is a fundamental strength of the Australian electoral system.

The Australian Government, with the support of the Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard MP, has actively pursued measures to identify and encourage suitably qualified and skilled women. The Australian Government has successfully used executive search (executive headhunter) processes to augment or replace self-nominated women's registers. It is trialling a strategic approach for early identification of upcoming vacancies, supported by awareness raising and lobbying among key decision-makers and improved monitoring tools.

In recent years, there has been ongoing attitudinal change to women in power and decision-making positions. The participation of women in a wide range of positions of power and decision-making is less likely to be reported as exceptional.

ACHIEVEMENTS FOR WOMEN SINCE 1995

WOMEN IN THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENT

There are currently 55 women in the Commonwealth Parliament: 33 women in the 148 member House of Representatives (Lower House) and 22 in the 76 member Senate (Upper House). This brings women's participation in the Commonwealth Parliament to 24.5%, an increase from 21.4% following the March 1996 election, and 14% following the 1993 federal election. The current rate is nearly double the international average of 13.4%.

Currently, there is a record number of women in the Federal Government Ministry. There are four female ministers, the equal highest number of women ministers of any previous federal government:

- Senator the Hon Jocelyn Newman, Minister for Family and Community Services, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women;
- Senator the Hon Amanda Vanstone, Minister for Justice and Customs;
- the Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP, Minister for Aged Care; and
- the Hon Jackie Kelly MP, Minister for Sport and Tourism.

There are also four female Parliamentary Secretaries:

- the Hon Sharman Stone MP (Environment and Heritage);
- the Hon Trish Worth MP (Education, Training and Youth Affairs);
- Senator the Hon Kay Patterson (Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Foreign Affairs); and
- Senator the Hon Judith Troeth (Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry).

Senator Margaret Reid is the first female President of the Australian Senate, a position which Senator Reid has held since 1996.

WOMEN IN STATE/TERRITORY PARLIAMENTS

During the last decade, the proportion of female State/Territory parliamentarians increased from 9% (1985), 17% (1995) to 22% (2000). Three

State/Territory governments have been led by women in recent years. The Australian Capital Territory currently has a woman Chief Minister, Kate Carnell MLA. The Northern Territory, Tasmania and New South Wales currently have women opposition leaders.

WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Women's representation in local government has generally been higher than their representation in State/Territory and Federal parliaments. In 1997, 25% of elected council members were women, compared to 13% in 1986 and 20% in 1992.

WOMEN IN THE JUDICIARY

In 1999, women comprised over 50% of university law graduates in Australia. However, research suggests that women lawyers are disproportionately represented in the lower echelons of law firms, government and the Bar, academia and the judiciary. Women comprise 14.1% of judges and magistrates in Australia (121 out of 854). Around 75% of these women are located in the State/Territory district or county courts (19 are appointed to federal courts and 11 are located in State/Territory supreme courts). Of those appointed to federal courts, the

majority are located in the Family Court. Attempts to address the under-representation of women in the judiciary are being made through more open selection and appointment processes and more determined processes to identify suitable women candidates for these positions.

In 2000, Diana Bryant QC became the first Chief Federal Magistrate of the new Federal Magistrates Service.

WOMEN IN SENIOR DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS

WOMEN ON AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT BOARDS

Women currently fill 30.9% of Commonwealth board positions where the Commonwealth has had total discretion over the appointment (December 1999). This compares with 30.5% in December 1995.

WOMEN ON PRIVATE SECTOR BOARDS

In the private sector, the proportion of women occupying board positions has doubled over the past five years but is still much lower than public sector boards. In 1998, women comprised over 10% of non-executive directors and filled 8.3% of private sector board positions, increasing from 4% in 1995

for both categories (Korn/Ferry International, 1999). This compares favourably to other western nations. While the number of female executive directors remains unchanged at 1.3%, the representation of women in managerial positions in the private sector has continued to rise over the past decade. In 1998, women comprised 27.3% of managers in companies covered by Affirmative Action legislation (100 or more employees), a rise from 17.2% in 1990.

WOMEN HEADS OF MISSIONS

Women make a significant contribution to Australia's foreign service both at home and overseas. The Australian Government is committed to increasing the role women play in the development and implementation of Australia's foreign and trade policies.

There are currently 11 out of 79 women Heads of Missions or Heads of Post.

The Australian Government has appointed 17 women as Heads of Missions or Posts since March 1996 (including the position of the Ambassador for the Environment). The appointments reflect the Australian Government's determination to give women equal opportunities to advance their careers and to ensure that the senior echelons of our diplomatic service reflect Australia's contemporary diversity.

WOMEN IN THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE

At June 1999, 48.3% of permanent employees of the Australian Public Service (APS) were women. Women comprised 24.1% of permanent employees in the Senior Executive Service in the APS as at June 1999. While there is still room for improvement, this represents a significant increase from 21.8% in June 1998, 17% in 1994 and 10% in 1989. 36.4% of new appointments to the Senior Executive Service between June 1998 and June 1999 were women, an increase from the 1998 figure of 34.6% and from the 1988 figure of 8%.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION ON BOARDS

The Australian Government is implementing initiatives as part of a broad strategy aimed at increasing the number of women appointed on merit to Commonwealth boards and bodies. These initiatives include the Executive Search Pilot Programme, Early Warning System and Appoint monitoring. As a measure of the importance placed on women in leadership, the Executive Search Pilot Programme and Early Warning System initiatives were launched by the Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard MP, on 27 March 1998.

The Government is also committed to encouraging women's greater

participation on private sector boards. It has provided funding towards the National Women's Leadership Project.

EXECUTIVE SEARCH PILOT PROGRAMME

The Executive Search Pilot Programme is testing whether executive search (head hunter) methods can be used to identify suitable women candidates for vacancies on boards and bodies in four Commonwealth departments. An executive search firm is conducting an identification and selection process for suitably qualified women with high level skills in a variety of fields and specialist areas who could be considered for appointment.

EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

The Early Warning System complements the Executive Search Pilot Programme and aims to impact on the process of appointments across all other Commonwealth departments. Details of suitably qualified women who could be considered for upcoming board vacancies are provided to departments to ensure that appropriately qualified women are considered early in the appointment process.

'APPOINT'

'*Appoint*' is a monitoring system that provides a whole-of-government status report on the representation of women

on Commonwealth boards and bodies. A report is compiled every six months based on information from all Commonwealth departments.

THE CABINET APPOINTMENT PROCESS

The Office of the Status of Women (OSW) maintains a close interest, through the Cabinet process of appointments, in potential candidates for significant appointments for which the Prime Minister's agreement is sought. OSW may brief the Prime Minister on upcoming appointments and put forward alternative women candidates. The Cabinet appointment process covers significant appointments to Commonwealth boards and bodies.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The Australian Government provided funding towards a National Women's Leadership Project, managed by the Australian Council of Businesswomen. The project is aimed at encouraging and promoting action by business and industry to increase women's participation on private sector boards. Strategies include the selection and training of suitable women candidates, mentoring and networking opportunities at a very high level, boardroom functions and other training

and developmental opportunities for potential female executives. The project has attracted support from major peak industry bodies such as KPMG Recruiting, the Australian Institute of Company Directors and the Committee for Economic Development of Australia. Over 200 women have been identified to participate in the project, including women from a range of industries and from all States and Territories.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S ROUND TABLE

The Government funds the Australian Women's Round Table, an annual two-day meeting with key women's NGOs and prominent Australian women. The participants represent a diverse range of women including Indigenous, rural, refugee, business, disability and older women, as well as women leaders from academia and the charitable, health and local government sectors.

The meeting provides an opportunity for Australian women to be informed first hand of Government policies and programmes and provide direct input to the Government on concerns of women in the community and to the policy making process.

REGIONAL AND STATE WOMEN'S ROUND TABLES

Regional and State women's round tables are conducted by the Minister

Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women and Women's Parliamentary Advisory Group members.

See also:

- The 'Women's Parliamentary Advisory Group' section in H: Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S NGO FUNDING PROGRAMME

In 1998-99, the Australian Government provided over \$840,000 to women's NGOs across a range of portfolios.

The Australian Government supports national women's NGOs through a \$500,000 annual *National Women's NGO Funding Programme* and through funding provided by line agencies. The aims of the programme are:

- to support broadly representative, effective and viable national women's NGOs that contribute actively to government policies and strategies affecting women; and
- enable a diverse range of women's views to be considered.

The programme was reviewed in 1999 in consultation with national women's NGOs. The programme has been updated in line with local and international best practice to provide outcome based funding. In 1999-2000, \$615,000 has been provided through OSW on direct and indirect assistance to 19 women's organisations:

- \$125,000 was provided to 13 women's organisations for continuation funding for the period 1 July – 30 September 1999;
- \$225,000 for the period 1 October 1999 to 30 June 2000 has been provided to three national women's organisations to provide national secretariat services. For the first time, these organisations will be funded over a period of 3 years and will receive \$100,000 per annum. These organisations are robust, vibrant, national and well established and represent women from a broad range of backgrounds and interests;
- \$230,000 has been provided to 12 national women's NGOs for projects in the period up to 30 June 2000. These projects offer clear and lasting outcomes in a diverse range of interests and will further strengthen the important voice of women throughout the community. This includes three leadership projects: a 'train the trainer' workshop and kit for women with disabilities; a national leadership kit for school students; and regional activities with current and future rural women, including Indigenous leaders;

See also:

- Women With Special Needs section below for further details on

initiatives for women with disabilities.

- \$35,000 has been allocated for capacity building partnerships with a further four women's NGOs. The resources and training opportunities arising from this exercise will be made available to other women's groups throughout Australia.

The Australian Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard MP, has encouraged all government agencies to consider women's NGOs in their funding programmes. This strategy reflects the Government's commitment to a more integrated approach to gender issues and helps to build stronger links between NGOs with particular sectoral interests and relevant government agencies. Women's organisations have been encouraged to work more closely with the portfolios in which they have a specific policy interest. This has led to better communications and participation in policy decision-making between specific government agencies and women client groups.

In 1999-2000, more than \$460,000 is to be provided by other Australian Government agencies to women's NGOs, an increase of \$100,000 over the previous financial year. Some examples are:

- Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia has created a grants programme to provide operational support for national rural women's

NGOs. In 1999-2000, the Foundation for Australian Agricultural Women and Australian Women in Agriculture will each receive grants of \$45,000 and the Women's Industry Network will receive \$10,000 to help it set up a national office. The grants programme will operate for three years, at the end of which time the organisations supported are expected to have arranged other sources of ongoing funding; and

- funding of \$50,000 a year over two years to the National Council of Single Mothers and their Children to assist them to better represent the interests of single mother families and other lone parent families has been provided through the Department of Family and Community Services.

OSW has also provided assistance with capacity building training and support across the women's NGO sector. The aim is to strengthen women's NGOs' effectiveness and capacity to effectively represent the interests of women and to influence policy.

WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The Australian Government has funded various initiatives aimed at developing women's capacity to enter senior positions in the Australian Public

Service. The *Senior Women in Management Programme* is a unique management development programme designed to significantly enhance the skills and abilities of high achieving APS senior women managers. In addition, core leadership skills have been developed for senior executives in the Australian Public Service – the *Senior Executive Leadership Capability Framework*. This Framework aims to achieve high performance leadership. Another key initiative is a series of training films for both the public and private sectors on leadership and teamwork in the workplace. Gender issues will be a focus of the films, which are expected to be launched in May 2000.

WOMEN IN UNIVERSITY

To improve the representation of women in policy and decision-making positions, the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee established a *Register of Senior University Women*. The Register contains a comprehensive list of women with experience and expertise and who could be more widely utilised within the higher education, Government and business sectors. The Register is regularly updated with current contact information, and relevant details of over 2,950 senior university women. It is disseminated in hard copy to universities and government agencies and is also

available on the Internet (www.avcc.edu.au).

WOMEN IN SPORT LEADERSHIP

The Australian Government has provided an additional \$144 million to the Australian Sports Commission over five years to 2002-03. This will permit the continued expansion of the *Active Australia* initiative that includes a focus on increasing the quality and quantity of women's participation in sport and physical activity.

The Australian Government has revised its national policy and plan for women and girls in sport and physical activity. The revised policy, launched in September 1999, includes practical strategies that support the full involvement of all women and girls in sport, recreation and physical activity in Australia. It also highlights the important contribution of women to leadership and management positions in sport and provides practical examples of encouraging women into these positions.

The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games will mark the centenary of women's participation in the Olympic Games. The Government has developed several projects to commemorate this significant event and to highlight the contribution and achievements of women in sport. These include:

- a women and sport scholarship/

exchange between Australia and France;

- a schools' education package; and
- a major function co-hosted by the Australian and French Governments.

WOMEN IN POLITICS

In 1997, OSW updated and republished *Every Woman's Guide to Getting into Politics*, an easy-to-use, non-partisan handbook for women interested in becoming involved in politics at any level. The Guide lists sources of training and experience in public speaking and presentation and includes basic information on political campaigning. The Guide has been widely distributed and is available via the Internet at www.dpmmc.gov.au/osw. In addition, the Government updated the booklet *Getting the Message Through* in October 1999. It provides information and contact details on all women in the Commonwealth Parliament, as well as information on Parliamentary Committees to assist women to gain greater access to Parliament and the Parliamentary Committee system. The booklet is available free of charge.

HONOURS, AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

The Australian Government recognises the enormous contribution women make to Australia and is committed to ensuring that their efforts

and achievements are appropriately recognised.

While not specifically for women, the two major Australian Government awards schemes – the *Order of Australia Awards Scheme* and the *National Australia Day Council Awards Scheme* – provide national recognition for the contributions of many women.

Awards in the *Order of Australia* are announced on Australia Day and on the Queen's Birthday each year and provide national recognition of outstanding achievement and service to the community at all levels in a diverse range of fields and areas of endeavour. On Australia Day 2000, women received 30.4% of the honours awarded. Nominations for women continued to increase in 2000, 230 nominations for women were considered, with 57% awarded. Among the 131 exceptional women recognised on Australia Day 2000 were the following women who were appointed an Officer in the Order of Australia: Betty Johnson (AO) for service to the community as a consumer advocate and for her work with the Older Women's Network Australia and the Australian Pensioners' and Superannuants' Federation; Ann Sefton (AO) for service to medical education; and Stella O'Donnell (AO) for service to the advancement of pharmaceutical science. In 1999, three women received

the highest honour, the Companion in the Order of Australia. They were Professor Suzanne Cory for service to science; Kaarene Fitzgerald for service to the community in relation to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome; and Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, CBE, AM for public service and leadership to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The Government also supports the National Australia Day Awards scheme which includes the Australian of the Year, Young Australian of the Year, Senior Australian of the Year, Community of the Year, Australian Achievers and Aussie of the Month awards. 2000 award recipients include Lorna Fejo, for her work with the Aboriginal community and to the wider Australian community; Kaarene Fitzgerald, AC who established the Sudden Infant Death Research Foundation Inc; and Vicki Wilson, OAM, Australian netball team captain from 1996-1999.

The Australian Government has sought to increase further the number of nominations for women and other under-represented groups through the development of a number of strategies to raise awareness about the honours system. For example, a newsletter *It's an Honour* and a dedicated Internet web site (www.itsanhonour.gov.au) have been developed to provide information on awards in the honours system including nomination procedures.

In addition, there are a number of other national measures to recognise achievements both within and outside of Government. Some of these specifically recognise women's achievements and contributions:

- the Australian Government is one of the sponsors of the *Telstra Business Women's Awards* which recognises and supports the important role business women make to the Australian economy. The awards aim to recognise the achievements of outstanding women, affirm the value and ability of women in the workplace and highlight the role that business women make to the Australian community, its economy and employment. Sponsorship is to the value of \$70,000;
- the *Network of Women's Executive Woman of the Year* recognises excellence in business;
- the Businesswomen's Hall of Fame, an initiative of the Australian Businesswomen's Network, recognises the achievements of Australian businesswomen;
- the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation's (RIRDC) Rural Women's Award to recognise and encourage the vital contribution women make to rural Australia;
- the Sculpture Garden of the Australian War Memorial acknowledges the contribution of

women during war time. The Sculpture Garden was opened by the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women, Senator the Hon Jocelyn Newman, in March 1999. All women who contributed to Australia's war effort on the home front are commemorated, including those in the Land Army, the munitions, parachute and other factories, and those who cared for disabled veterans at home. Design and construction of the memorial was funded by the Australian Government and management of the project was assisted by an advisory group of ex-service women and women who are currently serving; and

- the Australian Service Nurses' National Memorial was opened in October 1999 in Canberra to commemorate 100 years of Service nursing. The Australian Government provided additional funding of \$0.5 million in 1999-2000 to this Memorial.

See also:

- The 'Women with special needs' section below.

NATIONAL ESTATE GRANTS PROGRAMME

A project has been funded under the *National Estate Grants Programme* to increase the visibility and

representation of women. The project is identifying, interpreting and promoting places that represent the heritage values of women's roles and experiences in Australian society and history.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT

The Office of the Status of Women (OSW) received a grant from the National Council for the Centenary of Federation of \$105,300 to produce a celebratory book on Australian women's history and women's contribution in shaping Australia. The book will be published in 2001, as part of Australia's centenary year. The emphasis of the book will be on new material about experiences general to women rather than those outside the usual range. The book will have a very special feature - real life stories from ordinary Australians collected through the Australian Women's History Search.

WOMEN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

RURAL WOMEN

In November 1998, the Commonwealth-State Standing Committee on Agriculture and Resource Management published *A Vision for Change: National Plan for Women in Agriculture and Resource Management*. The Plan contains

principles, strategies and best practice case studies to assist organisations to better support the roles of women in agriculture and resource management. The Plan was endorsed by 115 public, private and community organisations and provides the framework for individual State action plans.

On World Rural Women's Day 1999, the Government launched two initiatives for women from regional and rural areas.

The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation's (RIRDC) Rural Women's Award is a joint initiative that was announced on World Rural Women's Day 1999.

The Award is designed to recognise and encourage the vital contribution women make to rural Australia. The Award builds on the success of the previous ABC Radio's Australian Rural Woman of the Year Award and is open to all women involved in agriculture, natural resource management and related service industries. The Award comprises seven state and territory winners. Each winner will receive a bursary of up to \$20,000 that may be used for activities that build their management, business or leadership skills, for example, a study tour or formal education. State and territory winners and runners-up also attended a national leadership seminar in March that provided them with leadership and management training, media

and presentation skills and networking opportunities

The *Women as Clients Strategy*, part of the larger *National Plan for Women in Agriculture and Resource Development*, ensures that the needs of regional women are considered in the policy development process.

In recognition of the need to strengthen the voice of women in the decision-making process, the Australian Government established the Regional Women's Advisory Council in 1999. The seven council members are appointed by, and report to, the Minister for Transport and Regional Services. The women members provide advice on issues identified as matters of major concern to people and communities in rural and regional Australia. The Council plays an important role in giving women greater access to Australian Government decision-making processes.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia has established and maintains the *Balance database* of women with experience and expertise in rural areas to encourage more appointments of women to departmental boards and committees. It is also participating in the *Executive Search Pilot Programme* with the Office of the Status of Women to 'head-hunt' suitable women for positions on Commonwealth boards.

The Australian Government funds an annual national scholarship for a

mature age rural woman to participate in the *Australian Rural Leadership Programme*.

INDIGENOUS WOMEN

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) comprises a network of 35 Regional Councils around Australia, a Board of Commissioners established through the election of Indigenous representatives, and an administrative arm to provide support. Regional Councils are elected every three years. ATSIC recognises the need to identify ways in which the cultural traditions of Indigenous women can be preserved for future generations and the need to strengthen Indigenous women's networks and promote improved coordination between women's organisations and other agencies.

The fourth round of ATSIC elections took place in October 1999, with a record 34% of candidates being women. The elections resulted in a record number of women councillors elected (30%), compared with the 1996 election (23% females elected).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of office holders of incorporated Indigenous community organisations are women. A comprehensive database is to be established to quantify the actual situation with the view to targeting corporate governance education to geographical or functional areas where women may be under-represented.

A national Women's Advisory Committee advises the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board of Commissioners on the impact of policies and programmes on Indigenous women.

WOMEN FROM CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the Australian Public Service will benefit from the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*. In adhering to the seven principles of the *Charter*, agencies are encouraged to recognise the needs of migrant women and to address these appropriately in the design, development and implementation of all public service policies and programmes. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs monitors the implementation of the *Charter*.

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs manages the *Select* register. While not specifically a register of women, *Select* was developed to encourage an increase in the number of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who occupy positions on government advisory boards and bodies. People listed with the *Select* register work in a

wide variety of fields, for example commerce, community and welfare services, consumer affairs, legal services and the building and rural industries.

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

The Australian Government recognises that developing leadership skills is a major issue for women with disabilities. In recognition of the demand for more training opportunities for women with disabilities to acquire leadership skills, the Government has allocated \$25,000 to Women with Disabilities Australia, a national women's NGO, to conduct a National Leadership and Mentoring Training Workshop. The project will use a train the trainer model for women with disabilities and will involve women from each State and Territory. The project will aim to develop a model of best practice in leadership and mentoring training for women with disabilities.

EXAMPLES OF STATE AND TERRITORY INITIATIVES

NEW SOUTH WALES

The NSW Government established a Women's Advisory Committee and Strategic Plan in 1998 to increase participation of women on Reserve

Trust Boards. Subsequently, the number of women on Reserve Trust Boards increased from 8.9% [1997] to 16% [1998] and reporting on board appointments has improved.

Since 1995, women in NSW senior public sector positions have increased from 15% to 21%. The number of women CEOs has increased from 8 to 19.

The NSW Government aims to increase the number of women decision makers in the sport and recreation industry through performance agreements with all funded organisations and the *Women in Sport and Recreation Administration Scholarship Programme*.

VICTORIA

The Victorian Government is strongly committed to ensuring that women are well represented among decision makers and leaders in our community, including at board and committee level. A register of women, the VicWomen Directory, has a listing of over eleven hundred women interested in, and available for board appointments. Government departments are encouraged to consult the Directory when making recommendations for new appointments and reappointments.

The Government will also be developing targets with Government departments

to increase the representation of women on Government boards and committees and will work with the private sector to do the same.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

The ACT Government has made a commitment to measurably improve the status of women by the year 2000. This includes gender balance on structures such as boards and committees.

The ACT encourages women's participation in decision-making processes in a number of ways.

The *Representation of Women in the Government* policy is aimed at ensuring balanced representation in the composition of ACT government boards and committees. This includes, as appropriate, women, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Indigenous people and people with disabilities. Responsibility rests initially with the agency seeking to appoint members to boards and/or committees. Nominations are sought through advertising for vacancies, with the advertisement noting that the government encourages nominations from people of all ages representing all sections of the community.

As at 31 December 1998, women constituted 41% of the membership of statutory and non-statutory

government boards and committees, and 31% of the total ACT Public Service at the Executive level.

QUEENSLAND

Queensland women's representation on statutory bodies comprised some 23.4% of positions in July 1998 and has increased by 8% since 1993. The *Register of Women*, a database of women who wish to be considered for appointment to Government boards, is maintained by the Office of Women's Policy.

A *Women on Boards* kit was launched in September 1999 that provides information on women in decision-making.

New strategies including working with the chief executives of government agencies, are being implemented in an attempt to increase the representation of women on government statutory authorities.

A number of government departments are working to introduce changes in cultural, systemic and structural conditions to achieve immediate and long term improvements for women. Strategies include the introduction of mentoring programmes, targeted training and career development and the implementation of flexible working arrangements to improve work and family choices.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The South Australian Government has a goal of 50% representation by women on government boards and committees by 2000. The current representation is 31.85% (April 1999).

A *Women's Register* of over 450 names is maintained to provide candidates to ministers, government agencies, the community and private sectors. An executive search firm conducts regular executive searches on behalf of the South Australian Office for the Status of Women to provide additional names of women suitable for appointment to government boards.

The South Australian Government has sponsored the following initiatives:

- *Springboard and Women, Leadership and the Future* project offers training and professional development specifically for women;
- the *Graduate Certificate in Business Programme, New Leadership for Women and Men* is a joint venture between the Housing Group and the University of South Australia; and
- the *Women towards Leadership Programme* is offered annually by the Department of Transport, Urban Planning and the Arts. More than 80 women have participated over the last four years.

The Office of Recreation and Sport's *Women in Sport and Recreation*

Mentoring Project aims to increase the participation of women in leadership and decision making. There are plans for a mentoring programme for women of non-English speaking background to increase the participation of their communities in recreation and sport. A scholarship fund has been established to assist women coaches to further their coaching careers. They will be given access to elite level coaching

A Rural Women's Interactive Database

curriculum vitae and provides training and information for women interested in serving on boards and committees. The database is promoted to government and industry. Project staff work cooperatively with the South Australian Office for the Status of Women.

TASMANIA

committed to ensuring that women comprise 50% of the membership of government boards, committees and authorities by 2001. As at 30 June 1998, women comprised 26.9% of the membership of Tasmanian Government

The Tasmanian *Women's Register* aims to increase women's participation on Government boards, committees and authorities. The second edition of the

available to both government and private sector boards, committees

committed to ensuring that by 2001, women comprise 35% of the Senior Executive Service (SES). While approximately 64% of State Public Servants are women, women currently comprise only 26.8% of the SES, an increase from 19% in 1996. In order to increase women's involvement in the SES, strategies include:

- a mentoring programme for women in the public sector; and
- a *Management Skills for Women Programme* which targets women who are in, or aspiring to, programme was offered twice in 1998 and will run again in 1999.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Decision-making is a priority area in the second Western Australian Government

Two Year Plan for Women.

Fifty one government agencies have made over 200 individual commitments to improve women's decision-making. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet works in partnership with the Women's Policy Development Office to bring together agencies with an interest in improving women's decision-making to implement

collaborative initiatives. Forty three agencies are committed to improving gender balance on government boards and committees against the June 1998 baseline and develop women's confidence in decision-making and management.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Northern Territory Aboriginal Development Unit (ADU) in the Department of Education, is the main Northern Territory Government agency responsible for employment and training matters for Aboriginal Territorians. ADU has sponsored Indigenous women to attend the *Management Skills for Women* programme for women in supervisory and pre-management positions in the public sector. The Department also funds Indigenous women to attend conferences to gain knowledge and skills to take back to their communities.

OBSTACLES AND LEARNING POINTS

CONCERNS OF WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY

- Women are concerned that there is a need for increased mechanisms to support women's representation in leadership and decision-making

positions across society. Many women are excluded from high-level leadership positions, particularly in the private sector.

- There is a need to address the barriers faced by Indigenous women and women from non-English speaking backgrounds to access power and decision-making positions.

LEARNING POINTS

- There have been very encouraging initial results from the use of executive search ('head-hunter') practices for the nomination of women for positions of power and decision-making.
- Public attitudes to women in positions of power and decision-making have changed, with the appointment of women to senior levels increasingly accepted as unexceptional.
- There is no shortage of highly skilled women in Australia for appointment on merit, and merit-based processes continue to be preferred over quotas. There is little public support for quota-driven affirmative action policies, which risk trivialising the achievements and potential contribution of women if their appointment is seen to be otherwise than on merit.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

- Notwithstanding the commitment of governments at all levels, time is needed to change embedded cultures and practices. It takes time for women with increased education and middle-high level management skills to advance to the highest echelons. In the case of appointments to boards, time is needed to effect a changeover of existing members due to duration of terms.
- There remain structural and attitudinal barriers to the fullest participation of women in positions of power and decision-making. Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner has undertaken research highlighting the continued existence of sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace. The Australian Government's review of the *Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act 1986* also pointed to the continued under-representation of women at senior levels in private and public sector employment. Unless women enjoy workplaces free of harassment and are able to progress on their merits in their professional and work lives, the goal of maximising women's capacity to contribute in decision-making positions cannot be fully realised. Governments need the support of businesses and other key sectors in the community to tackle these problems.

- The Australian Government report, *Enterprising Nation – Renewing Australia's Managers to Meet the Challenges of the Asia-Pacific Century*, released in April 1995, raised concerns at certain private sector practices, remarking on the lack of diversity among many private sector boards and their age makeup. These institutional factors and 'old guard' mentality can retard the rapid accession of women on their merits.

FUTURE COMMITMENTS

Future commitments for women are incorporated above.

In the Australian Government system, new funding commitments are customarily announced in the annual Federal Budget. Additional commitments may be publicly announced in the context of the election platform or at other occasions.

The Australian Government's future budget commitments for women are comprehensively outlined in *Delivering on our Commitments for Women, the Budget Ministerial Statement on Women* from the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women. A copy of this statement has been provided in response to Part 2 (Financial and Institutional measures).

