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ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

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# WOMEN'S POLICY ACTION TANK

Putting Women at the Centre

## 2016 Forum Evaluation Report



Good Shepherd  
Australia New Zealand



THE POWER  
TO PERSUADE



# PUTTING WOMEN AT THE CENTRE: A POLICY FORUM EVALUATION REPORT

## **Women's Policy Action Tank**

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## About Putting Women at the Centre: A Policy Forum

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### Overview

Presented by the Women's Policy Action Tank, the 2016 *Putting Women at the Centre: A Policy Forum* (the Forum) brought together policy makers, advocates, practitioners and researchers from multiple sectors to cast a gender lens over policy design and implementation. By examining selected key areas impacting women's wellbeing, presenters and panellists traced the threads linking the lived experiences of diverse groups of women and the patterns of disadvantage that patriarchy creates. They considered the value of women-centred processes and user-centred perspectives. They explored how policy 'lands' for women, what tensions are held and what challenges are negotiated in the process.

Premised upon the networked policy development model articulated within the Power to Persuade project ([www.powertopersuade.org.au](http://www.powertopersuade.org.au)), the Forum built on the success of the 2015 *Power to Persuade: Gender Forum* held in Canberra. It also harnessed the momentum created through the recently launched 'Scorecard on Women and Policy,' an initiative that coordinates, encourages and supports gendered policy analysis and advocacy across a range of domains – not just those typically perceived as pertinent to women.

The Forum tackled different aspects of the policy-practice-research nexus, including what collaboration looks like in practice. Panels explored themes of rights, justice, distribution and economic security as they manifest for women. The compounding effects of gender-blind policies, especially those impacting on women at times of vulnerability, were uncovered. Different platforms for feminist civic participation were also discussed, along with concepts of voice, agency, and resistance.

The Forum was attended by members of community, legal, health, academic and government sectors.

This report presents evaluation findings of the 2016 Forum.

### About the Women's Policy Action Tank

The Women's Policy Action Tank (the Action Tank) was established in 2016 to facilitate coordinated efforts by a network of advocates to apply a gender lens to policy formulation and evaluation. It operates under the umbrella of Power to Persuade and is coordinated by the Women's Research, Advocacy and Policy (WRAP) Centre at Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand (GSANZ).

The Action Tank recognises that women and men experience the impacts of policy in divergent ways and seeks to bring attention to the fact that whilst specific policy areas such as childcare and domestic violence acknowledge this fact, the vast majority of policies are wrongly assumed to be gender-neutral – as providing the same treatment and generating the same impacts for both men and women. It responds to growing concern that this approach drastically fails women, contributing to a feminisation of poverty, negative health and safety consequences and an accrual of disadvantage across the lifespan.

The Action Tank seeks to support the development of better policy through analysis, research and application of specialist expertise. Advocacy occurs across a range of disciplines and is not limited to those in which gender issues are typically raised. Policy analyses are shared online at <http://powertopersuade.org.au/womens-policy-action-tank-blog-posts>. This blog aims to improve understanding and communications between the main groups involved in the policy process: government, researchers, the community sector and other service sectors.

## Acknowledgements

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### **Our sponsors and supporters**

We are grateful to the following organisations that contributed financially, in-kind or both to the 2016 Forum in addition to Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand and Power to Persuade:

- Melbourne School of Government, University of Melbourne
- University of New South Wales (UNSW) Canberra
- Jesuit Social Services
- RMIT University
- Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS)
- Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University

### **Governance and reference groups**

Forum directors were Dr Kathy Landvogt, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand (GSANZ) and Dr Gemma Carey, UNSW Canberra. Susan Maury and Jacki Holland, GSANZ, were the Project Coordinators, aided by Event Coordinator Clair Tanner.

The event organisers would like to acknowledge and thank members of the Forum reference group for their wisdom and contributions:

- Gemma Carey, UNSW Canberra
- Kay Cook, RMIT University
- Elena Campbell, Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University
- Glenn Jessop, Madeleine Calleja and Liz Pool, Jesuit Social Services
- Alex Kennedy, Melbourne School of Government, University of Melbourne
- Susan Feldman, Monash University
- Lauren Siegmann, String Theory

We would also like to acknowledge the generous support of Neda Ross and Jersey Higgins of VCOSS for coordinating ticket sales and registrations.

We are most thankful to our policy interns, Christie Parkinson and Louise Simms (RMIT University), for providing valuable contributions and support as members of the event team. This included advance planning and communications, logistics, communications and marketing support.

### **Presenters**

We gratefully acknowledge our Mistress of Ceremonies Kay Cook (RMIT University), and each of our presenters and facilitators (listed overleaf) for their expert and engaging content.

## Executive Summary

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A core objective of Power to Persuade activities is to build relationships, trust and dialogue between policy actors, as an important prerequisite for effective policy collaboration. The *Putting Women at the Centre* policy forum was successful in implementing this goal. It is implicit in evaluation outcomes that future activities need to continue to broaden and deepen these efforts.

The calibre of speakers, range of topics and design of the program were foremost amongst highlights identified by attendees. The forum themes of evidence, voice, agency, the power behind money, and justice for women resonated strongly. The breadth of experience and expertise amongst panellists, together with their use of practical examples and plain language sustained audience energy levels across the entire day. Momentum was also provided by the succinct presentations and panel discussions, and the change in panel style delivered by the final session was welcomed by attendees. Another highlight was the incorporation of the novel and innovative recording technique of graphic illustration into the proceedings. This gave interest without detracting in any way from the happenings on stage.

The forum succeeded in enhancing recognition that a) different policies can intersect in unintended ways to impact the lived experience of women, and b) different cohorts of women are impacted by particular policies in an enormous variety of ways. Feedback indicates there is scope to delve further into these complexities and to explore how to bring deeper understandings of these differences together to inform policy responses.

Collectively, attendee reactions to the day indicated a strong appeal in networking and professional development opportunities amongst policy actors and activists, with a focus upon application of gender analysis. There is an appetite for further forums and smaller events, as well as for ongoing publication of themed policy analyses.

Greater attention could be given at future events, it was highlighted, to acknowledging issues of diversity and intersectionality through representation on panels and via themed conversations. Discussions might also expand upon questions of how to collaborate across difference toward shared objectives.

In its ambition to raise awareness of the Action Tank blog amongst attendees the event was highly successful. Attendees, in the majority, expressed interest in becoming part of the Action Tank blog audience and should therefore be included in future communications. In recognition of the areas of interest favoured by attendees, it may be appropriate to implement a series of themed blog conversations, for example on the topics of women and money, homelessness and gender and place.

A more generously sized venue should be secured for future forums. Greater variety in presentation format should also be considered. This might, in part, be achieved by incorporating service user voices into panel discussions and by involving attendees in discussions through planned activities.

Overwhelmingly, feedback from the *Putting Women at the Centre* policy forum was positive and enthusiastic. Attendees described the day as warm, well-coordinated and rewarding. The event targeted and successfully attracted a committed, passionate and hardworking network of individuals keen to maintain their engagement with the Action Tank and to collaboratively advocate for policy change.

## The Program

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- 9.15am**      **WELCOME & INDIGENOUS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**
- **Key Cook** (Mistress of Ceremonies), Senior Lecturer, Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University  
**Assisted by Susan Maury**, Policy and Research Specialist, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand
- 9.20am**      **OPENING ADDRESS**
- **Dimity Fifer**, CEO, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand
- 9.35am**      **KEYNOTE CONVERSATION**
- **Facilitator: Julie Edwards**, CEO, Jesuit Social Service  
Conversationalists:
  - **Jocelyn Bignold**, CEO, McAuley Community Services for Women
  - **Liana Buchanan**, Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People
  - **Kristen Hilton**, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner
- 10.20am**      **Morning tea**
- 10.35am**      **PANEL ONE: WORKING THE SPACES OF POWER: EVIDENCE, VOICE AND AGENCY**
- **Facilitator: Susan Feldman**, Adjunct Associate Professor, School of Primary Health Care, Monash University  
Panelists:
  - **Helen Dickinson**, Associate Professor, Public Governance, Melbourne School of Government
  - **Summer May Finlay**, University of South Australia
  - **Hannah Gissane**, Project Coordinator, Equality Rights Alliance
  - **Ainslie van Onselen**, Director of Women's Markets, Inclusion & Diversity, Westpac
- 12.00pm**      **SPECIAL EVENT: LAUNCH OF 'ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC & FAMILY VIOLENCE' RESEARCH**
- **Dimity Fifer** (Mistress of Ceremonies), CEO, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand  
Key research findings:
  - **Tanya Corrie**, Development Lead - Financial Security, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand  
Formal launch and commendation of the report:
  - **Mary Crooks**, CEO, Victorian Women's Trust
- 12.30pm**      **Lunch**
- 1.15pm**      **PANEL TWO: THE POWER BEHIND MONEY**
- **Facilitator: Tanya Corrie**, Development Lead - Financial Security, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand  
Panelists:
  - **Kristin Natalier**, Associate Professor, School of Social and Policy Studies, Flinders University
  - **Lyndall Strazdins**, Associate Professor National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health and ARC Future Fellow, ANU
  - **Miranda Stewart**, Director, Tax and Transfer Policy Institute, Crawford School of Public Policy, ANU

- **Jan Breckenridge**, Associate Professor, School of Social Sciences, Arts and Social Sciences, University of New South Wales

2.40pm

**Afternoon Tea**

2.55pm

**PANEL THREE: JUSTICE FOR WOMEN**

- **Facilitator: Elena Campbell**, Senior Policy Officer, Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University
  - **Co-facilitator: Stacey Campton**, Senior Manager, Ngarara Willim Centre, RMIT University
- Panelists:
- **Pauline Spencer**, Magistracy of Victoria
  - **Keran Howe**, Executive Director, Women with Disabilities Victoria
  - **Jill Prior**, Principal Legal Officer, Law and Advocacy Centre for Women
  - **Rob Hulls**, Director, Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University

4.20pm

**CLOSING REMARKS**

- **Kathy Landvogt and Jacki Holland**, Women's Research Advocacy and Policy Centre, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand
- **Assisted by Lauren Siegmann**, StringTheory

4.30pm

**Close**

## Evaluation Feedback

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Feedback from Forum attendees was gathered via an evaluation survey distributed electronically at the conclusion of the Forum. The survey sought to understand alignment between the event and its aims:

- Applying a gendered policy analysis;
- Considering the divergent impacts of policy on women and men; and
- Encouraging networking and collaboration across sectors.

Questions sought to gauge how useful attendees found the Forum and to understand what would be useful for future events. There were 114 attendees at the Forum. 30 attendees responded to the evaluation survey. Feedback was also obtained through:

- an analysis of questions posed to panellists by table groups (captured on question cards – see Attachments One and Two);
- a summary and reflection by Lauren Siegmann from StringTheory on emergent themes;
- personal communications via email; and
- critical reflections from the event organisers.

Following is a summary of main themes from these sources.

### Networking, connecting and collaborating

One of the goals of the Forum was to bring people together from different sectors to share knowledge and build capacity.

Survey responses revealed attendance by practitioners from a vast range of specialisations. (See Figure 1 below).



**Figure 1: What is your area of policy specialisation? (A thematic overview)**

The friendly, welcoming and collective nature of the Forum was mentioned in many survey responses, with positive feedback highlighting how rewarding it was to bring together people who are passionate about women and policy.

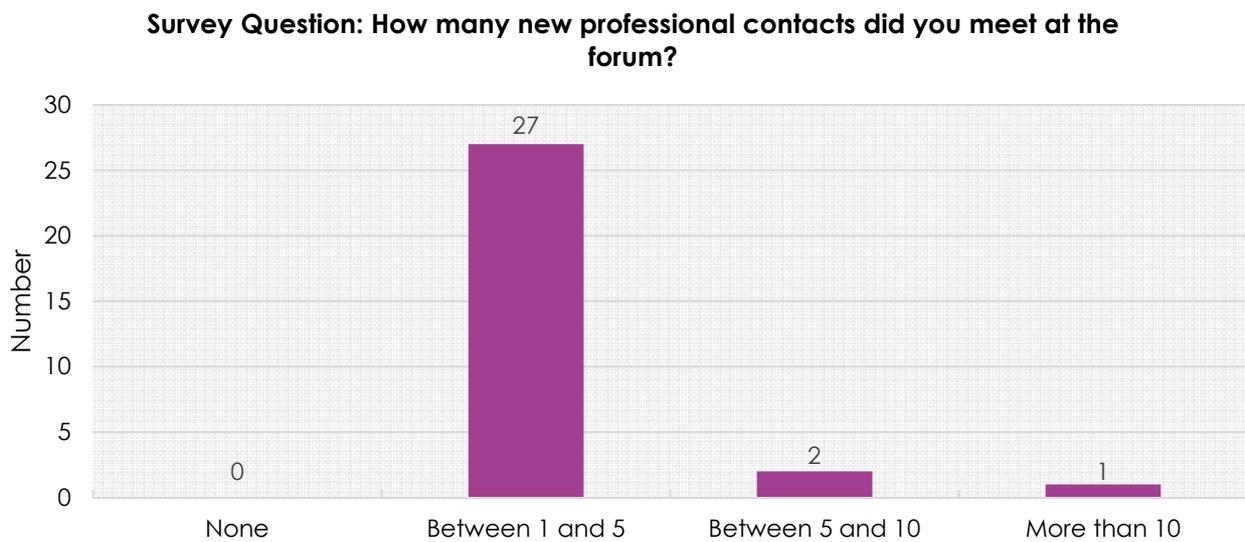
*"It was such a refreshing and exciting event – really great to be in a room of people who are committed to women's wellbeing. I felt rejuvenated afterwards – and the buzz is still there."*

*"Really enjoyed it. Very inspiring to be in a room full of such diverse and passionate women, (and some men)."*

*"It was a fantastic day - a room full of great women (and some men) who care about gender - a rarity these days and we should celebrate that! Thank you so much"*

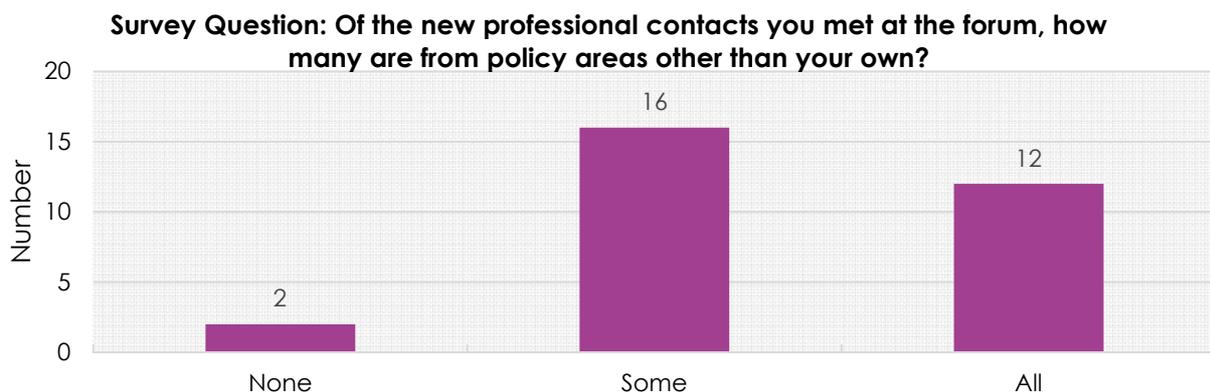
*"I really enjoyed listening to and meeting such brilliant women."*

Of the 30 survey respondents, all had made at least one new professional contact at the Forum (see Figure 2 below).



**Figure 2: Number of new professional contacts met at the forum by each respondent**

Most of these new connections were made across policy areas (see Figure 3 below).



**Figure 3: Number of new professional contacts met from different policy areas**

These results indicate that there was ample opportunity for attendees to meet people with specialisations that differed to their own and to create meaningful connections. Additional feedback, however, reflected a desire for even greater diversity amongst the audience, particularly with respect to groups such as Indigenous women.

*"Ensure more diversity amongst the participants even if that means funding attendance. Having more diverse views [and] experiences would have added depth to the table conversations when engaging with question activities etc."*

This event successfully implemented the goal of Power to Persuade to build relationships, trust and dialogue between policy actors, as an important prerequisite for effective policy collaboration. Future activities need to continue to broaden and deepen these efforts.

## Highlights

*"Loved it" ...; "It was excellent, plan to attend in the future" ...; "It was great - lots of energy and enthusiasm!" ...; "An extremely valuable day - thank you" ...; "It was a fantastic day... thank you so much" ...; "Well done and congratulations on a great event" ...; "Everything was great" ...; "I thought the forum was very well organized, stimulating and friendly" ...; "very interesting to hear about the challenges in public policy for women."*

Participants identified the calibre of speakers, range of topics and design of the program as key Forum highlights. The consensus was that the quality and range of presenters was excellent and the program well-designed. The language and content was easy to grasp, and the use of practical examples throughout panel discussions greatly enhanced the accessibility of what were sometimes challenging concepts.

*"The diversity of speakers and presentations was fantastic - invigorating and provided me with information I hadn't seen before."*

*"A most excellent program - all speakers and facilitators were fantastic and kept the energy and engagement in the room until the end (and very few people left early)."*

*"Really great cross-section of new research and coal-face insights. Amazing range of presenters. Great work!"*

*"All experts from different fields had one thing in common; gender concerns, and the key points they made were inspiring to me, even though they didn't address the specific area of my work."*

Of all panels, *Panel 3: Justice for Women* had greatest resonance with a number of survey respondents. The "hypothetical" case study approach of the session was a particular highlight with many expressing that following the 'stories' of three fictional composite women through various aspects of the criminal justice system brought the policy shortcomings alive. Deviating from the standard panel arrangements (formal research and practice presentations followed by panel discussions) proved very effective, particularly because the discussion was well-organised into questions put to the panel by the co-facilitators. Panellists used plain language and practical 'tested' examples. Storytelling proved an effective means of getting points across.

*"It was evident that panel 3 was well thought through by the co-facilitators. This leadership and the format they used of running a Q&A discussion worked very well to engage the panellists and the audience and create a very collaborative discussion."*

*"I found the format of the final panel discussion by far the best to encourage discussion and to think about client-centred policy."*

Other presentations that were identified as a highlight included those by Summer May Finlay, on Aboriginal perspective and inclusion on policy formation; Lyndall Strazdins, on gender, time and work; Miranda Stewart, on gender and tax rates; Kristin Natalier's talk on micro-aggressions; Ainslie van Onselen, on Westpac's gender quotas; and Rob Hulls' statement that if we eliminate gendered violence, we would also eliminate the need for women's prisons or youth detention. The word "insightful" was often used to describe the concepts these speakers discussed in their presentations.

Other noted highlights were the Keynote Conversation between two Victorian Commissioners and two social service leaders, and observing the creation of graphic illustrations by Jessamy Gee of 'Think in Colour'.

*"...an incredible way of capturing the discussions".*

The forum themes of evidence, voice, agency, the power behind money, and justice for women resonated strongly with attendees. Positive audience energy levels, attributable to the breadth of experience and expertise amongst panellists, together with their use of practical examples and plain language, were maintained across the entire day. Structuring the presentations around concise presentations and panel discussion gave positive momentum to the forum, however the audience was appreciative of the change in style provided by the final panel for the day. Incorporating the novel and innovative recording technique of graphic illustration into the proceedings also gave interest without detracting in any way from the happenings on the stage.

### **Key moments and learnings**

Survey respondents reported a great variety of key moments from the Forum. Common themes that emerged included the importance of diversity, positionality<sup>1</sup> and intersectionality, and an appreciation for the "wrap-around" nature of policy.

*"I was particularly impressed with the presentations that talked about not having to reach consensus and that voices, [especially] minority voices, are worth listening to without a need to box and package that view, but to help us broaden our minds. It was very inspiring..."*

One respondent noted that all the sessions included people from very different disciplines, making it clear how diverse policies converge in unhelpful ways for women. There was also general appreciation that much can be learnt from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by slowing down and working together to create a strong intersectional framework for policy analysis.

Similarly, other key learnings were the importance of collaboration and voice, with an understanding that policy must be understood first and foremost from people's lived experiences.

*"Collaboration is key to finding solutions to social issues."*

*"That it's ok to remember we don't have to address all issues of gender equality - we are part of a networked community and each of us brings strengths and specialisations."*

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<sup>1</sup> The term positionality is used here in the sense of being conscious of one's own position in relation to the topic and/or research setting – taking into account one's own context including education, identities, class, race, gender, culture etc.

Other themes and topics that inspired attendees included the use of statistical data and stories as evidence, ideas for progressing organisational gender equity, ideas for justice and advocacy, how to enable men to participate in caring duties, and the concept of problematising the gendered world rather than “fixing” women.

One respondent referred to ‘the amount of work to be done!’ as a key message. Another noted “all policy affects women there is no such thing as ‘women’s policy’ - if a policy doesn’t work for half the population it is a bad policy”.

The forum succeeded in enhancing recognition that a) different policies can intersect in unintended ways to impact the lived experience of women, and b) different cohorts of women are impacted by particular policies in an enormous variety of ways. There is scope to delve further into these complexities and to explore how to bring deeper understandings of these differences together to inform policy responses.

### **Moving forward**

Attendees were asked for their suggestions on how the Action Tank could facilitate continued work on effective policy for women following on from the forum: “What action(s) do you suggest over the coming 12 months?”

A common recommendation was to explore the voices that were left out of the conversation, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, but also increased representation from other marginalised groups, service users, government representatives and corporate sector groups. In this context it was suggested that other lenses be applied to analyses and that greater consideration be given to transgender and intersex women’s issues.

Participants contemplated how panel discussions could be strengthened in future iterations of the event:

*“I would recommend that speakers be asked next time to consider not only the theme given, with details and questions to consider, but also putting forward one to three key practical ideas for ways forward on the question they are discussing. If speakers could provide these beforehand to each other, this would make panel sessions more collaborative and key recommendations worked over before being taken up by the WRAP team post-event.”*

They commented also on issues they felt could benefit from further exploration:

*“One area I think is missing from the debate is the trouble within the culture of ‘contract work’ and how this impacts on women. So what happens is a cycle of work and debt. This is an issue that does not seem to be addressed and has the potential to cause massive social disruption in future years.”*

Feedback also highlighted the need to engage with key officials and policy makers to advocate for change.

*“To facilitate work on effective policy for women there has to be engagement with government and policy thinkers within the public service. For me that was the real missing voice in the discussion at the policy forum. Talking about solutions and new approaches can’t happen if the people who have the most power and influence in that area are absent. We have to be careful not to focus too much on speaking to ourselves or preaching to the converted and look for opportunities to work collaboratively, rather than taking an ‘us versus them’ attitude toward government.”*

*“Engage with the key presenting players to champion and mentor interest groups. There was so much potential power in that room with so many knowledgeable people that must be harnessed for progress.”*

Many respondents proposed running smaller seminars or action tank meetings on key topics in between annual Forums. Suggested topics include finance/taxation/money, gendered violence, and/or the justice system. It was recommended that support be given to the fostering of cross-pollination between mainstream and specialist women's organisations. A general desire for more regular engagement with issues and time for reflection was clearly evident.

*“I'd love to be involved in regular meetups to continue the discussion / share insights from our respective practice areas”*

*“Perhaps regular meetings/ formation of a committee to lobby/advocate for gender analysis/lens where needed”*

*“Mini-online forums for particular issues/policy areas where people with an interest in that issue can share ideas/articles etc.”*

*“Hold ongoing 6 monthly action tanks with more reflective time.”*

*“Hold smaller events such as panel discussions, in between the annual forum.”*

Similarly, some expressed a wish for regular updates highlighting research and advocacy developments, events and opportunities for members of the policy network.

*“Continue to publish articles and policy analyses to provide the specific information on policies and also raise the profile of how women are disadvantaged by policy to a more general public.”*

Continuing collaboration was another core theme. Participants noted the value in the emerging network generated through the Forum and online blog. The Action Tank ought to be used to connect people, link up their various areas of speciality, initiate new interdisciplinary research, and advocate for relevant agenda items.

*“Identify all the issues - work with strategists who do this work for a living and establish solutions. Use a strength based approach.”*

*“I would like to explore how we can take more collective action together on the issues discussed at the Action Tank.”*

*“Use self-determination - create women's circles and encourage other women to create women's circles as a conduit to policy development where the personal becomes political- be prepared to do more and create spaces for connection and collaboration.”*

*“Using the policy think tank to foster other think tanks with a gendered lens e.g. Disability Policy Action tank with gender focus affiliated to Women's Policy Action tank.”*

*“I also think the question about how to bring men into this space and partner with them better needs to be explored. I kept thinking I wish all the men in my life were here listening to this”*

*“I think the value is in the informal network so not specifically any 'actions' to come out except connecting people and continuing to advocate for these agenda items.”*

There were also suggestions for more personal inspiration from speakers and others.

*“Perhaps extending the arguments with having some people who could talk about their personal experiences and achievements.”*

*“Showcase successful innovations to inspire as role models.”*

*“A mentoring program would be great.”*

Some suggested that the event had generated sufficient energy to underwrite an advocacy campaign.

*“Meeting with the policy makers and asking/demanding change. Insisting targets be set - Westpac outcomes were so impressive.”*

The role of future forums were also mentioned.

*“Another forum like this with varied speakers would be a great way to continue to develop professionally.”*

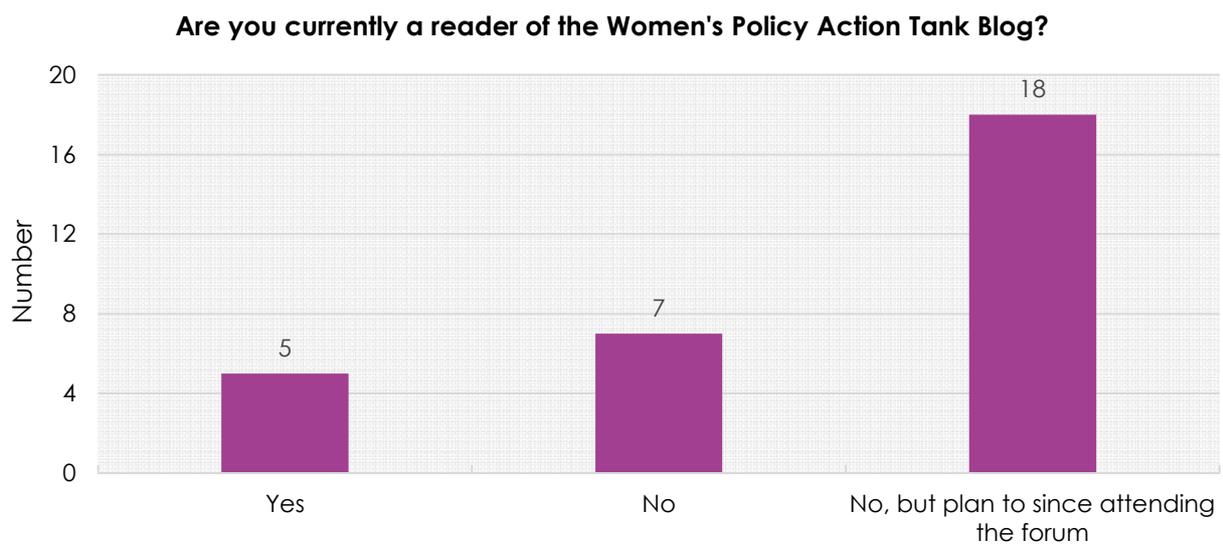
*“Gatherings like this one certainly are very worthwhile, I think, given that this might be a moment for the analysis of gender to re-emerge in a socio-political environment where it has previously been silenced.”*

Collectively, this feedback indicates strong interest in further networking and professional development opportunities amongst policy actors and activists, with a focus upon application of gender analysis. There is an apparent appetite for further forums and smaller events, as well as for ongoing publication of policy analyses.

Future events could do more to acknowledge issues of diversity and intersectionality through representation on panels and via themed conversations. Discussions might also expand upon questions of how to collaborate across difference toward shared objectives.

### **Women’s Policy Action Tank blog**

The Action Tank blog enables conversations to continue beyond the forum. Nine survey respondents (30 per cent) were regular readers of the blog prior to attending this year’s Forum. Of the remaining twenty-one, roughly 75% said that they plan to read it after the event.



**Figure 4: Women’s Policy Action Tank blog readership**

Feedback suggested that the blog needs to be promoted more widely. Recommendations included:

- setting up a mailing list to send out blog post updates directly to email addresses;
- improving the website layout to a more standardised format to better highlight themes and clearly separate WPAT from general PTP posts;
- creating a search function that allows readers to browse subheadings by topic;
- engaging in more comprehensive debate across issues;
- inviting targeted potential contributors to ensure more diverse ideas and knowledge is shared;
- regular posting or themed monthly approaches; and
- more creative tactics, like working with artists to express certain ideas.

Forty per cent of respondents (12/30) said that they would be interested in contributing a policy analysis or blog. A variety of topics were suggested, including women and money, single mothers, women's health policy, incarcerated women, child support and post-separation parenting, affordable housing, young women's voices in policy formation, family violence, homelessness, mental health, and the impacts of gender and place, particularly in rural and regional communities.

The forum successfully raised awareness of the Action Tank blog amongst attendees, and prompted consideration of how both the content and reach of the blog might be expanded. In recognition of interest in particular topics amongst attendees, it may be appropriate to implement a series of themed blog conversations. Attendees, in the majority, expressed interest in becoming part of the Action Tank blog audience and should therefore be included in future communications.

## Feedback on Event Logistics

Participants proposed several practical changes to improve the event. In commenting on the more practical aspects of the day, the venue received some minor criticism. It was suggested that preference be given to a space with more room in which people could circulate and network and to a facility with more than two female toilets and greater accessibility. As one survey respondent noted, having only two female toilets and poor accessibility *“made for a funny and ironic moment but perhaps better avoided.”*

In relation to the format of the day, giving voice to the lived experiences of women was a recurring theme; presentations from people talking about their lived experiences could sit alongside other high-level policy perspectives in future. Respondents would also like more variable presentation formats, suggesting it would be more engaging if there were not the same format for every session. More opportunities for participation by attendees would also be appreciated, as would smaller, more diverse panels.

*“While everyone was interesting, the number of people on the panels detracted from depth and made the day feel very rushed for time. It was well articulated in the opening that the space was very privileged to begin with and that was handled well, however as always, more attention could be paid to increasing inclusion and diversity of voices.”*

Additional comments included:

*“Too few of the question cards were answered so it was a bit of a waste of time.”*

Following the event, respondents asked for more rapid access to slides and material presented by panellists.

A more generously sized venue should be secured for future iterations of the event. Greater variety in presentation format should also be considered. This might, in part, be achieved by incorporating story-telling, case studies and service user voices into panel discussions and by involving attendees in discussions through planned activities.

## Recommendations

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On the basis of collated event feedback, a number of recommendations are proposed in relation to convening, developing content and formatting future Women's Policy Action Tank events. Whilst this report is primarily an evaluation of the *Forum*, opinion was also captured regarding future directions for the Action Tank more broadly. This was in recognition of the Forum's role in building the Action Tank network and linking participants and advocates to blog activities and other dialogue. The following recommendations therefore apply both to future iterations of the event and Action Tank activities and outputs:

1. Find new ways to market the event and engage with corporate, government and other stakeholders in order to enhance diversity amongst the audience and panellists/authors
2. Ensure that issues of diversity and intersectionality are respected in panel representation, articles and papers
3. Consider using a variety of panel/presentation formats for future panel events, ensuring that high-level and theoretical concepts are offered in conjunction with practical examples; in particular, incorporate story-telling, case studies and service user perspectives into panel discussions and other discourse
4. Place more emphasis on fostering collective action and collaborating across difference in advocating for change
5. Consider running smaller-scale seminars on a more frequent basis
6. Provide regular updates on research findings to members of the Forum network
7. Create a regular blog posting schedule and consider themed approaches
8. Host future events in a more generously sized venue.

## Conclusion

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In all, the Forum was very well received. Feedback from the day suggests that it was a well-coordinated, inspiring and worthwhile event. Gratitude was expressed amongst those who participated and the organising team was commended by many.

The notion of intersectionality makes concepts increasingly complex, however it is vital that the diversity of voices in this space are heard moving forward. This is a key consideration for future forums.

Finally, whilst attendees acknowledged the considerable amount of work to be done, the depth of feedback reflects a committed, passionate and hardworking network of individuals willing to engage in the issues and advocate for change.

## Attachment 1: Questions posed to panellists by forum participants

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Organisers provided each table group with a set of blank question cards. Forum participants were encouraged to record their questions on the cards in response to panel discussions. The questions were moderated by the panel facilitators and posed to the panellists (as far as time allowed). The following questions were recorded. Those that were put to the panellists on the day are noted "asked".

### PANEL 1

Are we really talking here about gender and not just sex? (Binaries, biology)

How does Westpac ensure/combine meritorious appointment with quotas?

Westpac's approach to leadership – is the strategy also targeting other layers of disadvantage, for example targeting people with disabilities as leaders, are you balancing gender there? (Asked)

If money talks – How does the panel think we can embed a gender lens in all founding and budget decisions:

- Government
- Corporate
- Philanthropy/Community (Asked)

As a mainstream women's organisation, what advice can you give about incorporating/learning from Aboriginal women? Especially when Aboriginal organisations are so busy and under-resourced. (Asked)

Also how to capture diversity e.g. Aboriginal women's voices/views

How would you (from your different perspectives e.g. corporate, advocacy, indigenous), how you would make women's issues men's issues? (Asked)

In a social media context of gendered harassment and violence, and where women are stepping back from engagement in social media how do we balance the risks of disruption with safety? (Asked)

Does Westpac measure and share the experience of women in leadership? And does that inform how you will meet targets?

Are you aware of programs/initiatives to assist organisations to better incorporate stories/lived experiences/women's voices and diversity?

What is the gap/lack of evidence around collaboration?

How do we best engage men in promoting gender equality?

Why are men “invisible” in this space?

Helen Dickinson, can you please expand on the insights from feminist theory that can make us better at collaboration. (Including skills)

How do you enable diversity/intersectionality with processes and organisations meaningfully – risk of tokenism?

What have been the qualitative impact of greater percentage of women in leadership at Westpac?

Ainslie, what was the impetus for having gender equality at Westpac? Was it just because the CEO at the time prioritised it or were there other influential forces?

How does the policy development process account for lived experience while also attending to ideas and evidence from other policy actions? What is the place and space of experts, who are not “experts by experience”? Who/what gets privileged?

How do networked organisations give voice to the most marginalised? E.g. those living in extreme poverty are constrained in their ability to participate/advocate.

Summer May Finlay, what strategies do you think could be used to increase Aboriginal women's active participation in the policy space? That is, how to break down structural barriers.

Collaboration: Helen Dickinson, please give more insight into Craft vs Science Mechanistic Technical (Asked)

## **PANEL 2**

Lyndall Strazdins, in your research did you see any differences in the experiences of part time versus full time work i.e. women in part time roles working harder than in full time roles (because part time jobs are often full time jobs with less pay!)

Miranda, how can we reinstate the budget analysis/gender case analysis on economic policy for women? (This is no longer done by Office for Women).

Kristin Natalier, is there a strategy or policy that can address or counter micro aggressions at the institutional level? i.e. Centrelink.

How do you get a multi sectoral response to dealing with these issues?

How would better valuing outside of economics care and domestic work impact women's economic security and how can we do this?

Jan, Breckenridge, how can we change work place culture to make it more supportive of women experiencing domestic & family violence? And safe?

Kristin Natalier, if micro aggression is reflective of the macro ..... what is the fit between effective gendered policy and the current experience of women.

Miranda Stewart, what are the solutions to high Effective Marginal Tax Rate for women, if we want to maintain a tightly targeted income support system?

Explain what the Nordic countries are doing structurally/systematically to address pay inequities and how we can model this here?

Name one change you would make in tax/welfare systems to encourage men's participation in care??

What about consideration being given to older women who wish to work past the age of 65? Or change their working circumstances to supplement their income or pension.

Lyndall Strazdins and Jan Breckenridge, a comment on the "Nordic Paradox" i.e. Nordic countries score highly on Equality Indicators BUT ++ Family violence. Any thoughts on why?

Miranda Stewart, how aware are the powers that be of the disproportionality in marginal tax rates? Any chance of change.

Miranda Stewart, how do you address the perverse incentives that are keeping women out of the workplace, without negatively impacting the women that need these services and benefits?

Miranda Stewart, please explain the rationale for supporting raising the GST which is a regressive tax, and when there are other less regressive options.

Strategies for promoting the caring roles for men.

Lyndall Strazdins, how do we make it happen?

- Shorter work days
- Men caring more.

How do we support men to work less and take on more care responsibilities? (Asked)

## Attachment 2: Answers recorded by forum participants during table based discussions

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In the latter part of the forum Lauren Siegmann (StringTheory) led an activity to bring the synthesised views participants into the discussion. These have also informed this report's reflections and recommendations. Tables were each given one or two questions to contemplate. The questions, and the answers these are recorded below:

### **What role could the Women's Policy Action Tank play in contributing to feminist theory and practice around collaboration.**

Get an expert to write a P2P blog entry on the topic.

Put it on the program for the 2017 policy forum.

### **How can the Women's Policy Action Tank support diverse groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to engage in policy process?**

Provide education and training about policy process.

Do research with Aboriginal TSI women to better understand their needs and expectations around gender responsive policy process.

Work hard to ensure inclusion of ATSI women in policy activities.

### **How can Women's Policy Acton Tank give voice to the lived experiences of women and include this with other lines of evidence?**

Presentations from people talking about their lived experience rather than high-level policy perspective.

Story Telling.

Representation of decision making bodies.

### **How can the Women's Policy Action Tank become a meaningful commentator of economic and financial issues that affect women?**

Get amongst it.

Recruit gender-sensitive economists.

Engage in economics language and translate it for everyone else.

Maximising the network of people involved in and engaged with the Women's Policy Action Tank.

Used lived experience and storytelling.

Use influence to destigmatise accessing welfare.

### **How can the Women's Policy Action Tank ensure that intersectionality is meaningfully incorporated into its vision, mission, and strategies?**

Ensure inclusion and representation of wide range of voices and groups.

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Apply other lenses to the gender lens (economic, disability, Indigeneity, etc.).

Foster cross-pollination between mainstream and specialist women's organisations (including outreach).

Ask community.

Invite peak bodies and organisations to the table.

Network.

Specific Think Tanks around intersectionality.

More engagement with people with lived experiences.

Research on what a universally accessible service would look like and its components.

More inclusion of men as shared responsibilities and as listeners.

### **How can the Women's Policy Action Tank engage men in its vision, mission, and strategy?**

Invite men to participate in the decision-making process – regarding the vision, mission and strategy development.

Ask men about what they want out of life.

Partner with male advocacy groups.

Engage with corporates around importance and flexibility regarding care responsibilities.

### **What is the role of the Women's Policy Action Tank in working with people who identify across a range of gendered identities?**

Trans women's issues and intersex women's issues are women's issues and therefore fall under the group's broad mandate.

There are important issues of intersectionality between women's rights and the rights of sex and gender diverse people and communities.



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