

WAVE – Women in Adult and Vocational Education Inc. – Vocational Education and Training Action Plan Campaign

At the end of 2009 NVEAC was finalising a new model for 'equity', in what appeared to be a gender neutral context. This new model will set the scene for the foreseeable future, for how 'equity' is enacted through national and state VET policies. It will impact directly on women and girls. There are nearly 800,000 women enrolled in VET across Australia, mostly in traditional female areas of study. About five million women are in the workforce. Over 2.2 million work part-time and these are 72% approximately of the part-time workforce. Their earnings capacity can only improve dramatically if they train or retrain into higher paying jobs or work longer hours. All the pay equity and work life balance arguments cut across this scenario. Vocational training in areas of high skill demand or in the emerging green economy is essential for women into the future. (Sobski/WEL November 2009)

WAVE knows from long experience and many case studies, research and reports that unless programs are targeted and well resourced, and support is gender and culturally sensitive, for the most disadvantaged women and men, training success or even course completion is not assured. Diversifying the courses women undertake and increasing their level of VET qualification must continue to be a goal. (Sobski/WEL 2009)

S4W in collaboration with WAVE has conducted research & projects over time that confirms the above. An Action and follow up for direct policy intervention are now required at this critical time.

Recent S4W reports that reference the issues raised above include:

- S4W Collation Report 2004-2008
- Women and Vocational Education and Training: Strategies for Gender Inclusive VET Reform Aug 2009
- Interim National Report Consultations on Women's Experiences of Barriers to Workforce Attachment 2009

S4W and WAVE recognized that it was urgent that a national vocational education and training action plan be developed, coordinated and implemented to inform and advocate direct to policy makers, departments and relevant Ministers in relation to how 'equity' is enacted through national and state policies and its impact directly on women and girls in VET. WAVE was positioned to drive a post card campaign.

WAVE identified 7 major issues, supplementing the 2009 S4W/WAVE Report with further consultation. Following this, WAVE conducted consultations through national networks to prioritise and finalise the key points for the Postcard content from the key issues. A one page Federal Election Flyer is also in production to support the postcards (Att.1). The key points displayed on the Postcard are:

1. make women's learning needs central to all long term VET strategies and policies
2. implement a VET strategic framework for women with clear priorities & accountability mechanisms
3. ensure access to funded relevant training that enhances career pathways for women
4. ensure employment creation programs and employer-based incentive schemes benefit women
5. ensure gender expertise on all national VET equity advisory committees & working groups
6. collect, analyse and publish performance and outcome data that include trends over time and are disaggregated by gender and demographic characteristics.

The consultation ensured relevance, fostered ownership of the material and also enhanced promotion & distribution of the postcards. The post design postcard is now in print.

Further, a strategic plan has been developed for the distribution of the campaign material.

Given the approaching Budget cycle, several state elections and a forthcoming federal election, this process will have considerable life in it for many months to come.