



WAVE in 2013

As a WAVE member you're part of a national network that advocates on behalf of women and girls in adult and vocational education and training. Your membership lends strength to our advocacy.

25th Anniversary National Conference

The conference celebrating our 25th birthday was held in Melbourne on 14 September 2012 at Conferences on Clarendon in Melbourne. We thank Catherine Davis in particular for helping to ensure a successful conference. There were some 80 attendees, and speeches from a range of interesting people including the Hon Sharon Bird, Parliamentary Secretary for Higher Education and Skills, and Tiga Bayles, Chair of the NVEAC. The day included workshops presented by many of our members and others, and an opportunity to discuss some of the significant issues around “Skills for All Australians: What about women and girls?”

The conference was followed by a Silver Anniversary dinner at a local south Melbourne restaurant with an after-dinner address by Alice Pung, the celebrated author.

The conference gave us the opportunity to hold a face-to-face AGM the night before, and the list of Executive members can be found at the end of the report.

WAVE Executive Meeting

Our Executive meeting was held in Sydney in February 2013, and we developed a workplan to guide our work over the year.

A Federal Election campaign

The Federal elections will have been held by the time we hold our 2013 AGM on 12 September, and the lead-up to the elections has kept us very busy in raising the issues of women and girls, and funding for a range of VET programs and support. WAVE again produced a set of election demands and our postcard was distributed far and wide, at conferences and events. We wrote to all Federal politicians with the postcard and in the letter, asked for the following commitments:

Australian women demand that gender equality is central to all 2013 Federal Election policies and promises. We require commitment to:

Ongoing provision for women and girls in all VET policies and programs

Education, training and retraining programs targeted specifically to women and girls

Gender informed career advice & counselling for women and girls

Technical and trade training for girls and women in areas of skill shortages, emergent occupations & industries

Increased training places targeting women in low paid casualised jobs

Appointment of women with gender expertise to VET committees & Advisory Boards

Australian women expect genuine commitment to & full implementation of gender equity policies in education, training & employment.

We eventually received replies from the Greens, ALP and Coalition, along with a range of MPs expressing their support for our views. The Greens said: “We share WAVE’s aim to increase opportunity for women’s access to quality vocational and educational training to improve employment outcomes for all women. This can be achieved by reducing the major barriers for women including reducing the cost of further education and funding public childcare services.”

The ALP addressed our demands and outlined the policies that they had pursued over the term of their Government to support women and girls in vocational and adult education.

The brief reply from the Coalition included the statement: “The Coalition will work with industry, State and Territory governments and stakeholders to ensure we have quality and effective vocational education and training programs that best equip women and their employers for the challenges of our industries and jobs.”

WAVE also worked with economic security for women (eS4W) and the newly created coalition of ‘A Fair Deal for Women’ to highlight a range of issues of concern to Australian women. These included:

- Support for women to obtain and keep decent jobs
- Access to quality education and training
- Improvements to income support especially for unemployed people and sole parents
- Measures to improve the gender pay gap
- Review of marginal tax rates to increase women’s labour force participation
- Measures to improve women’s superannuation in retirement
- Collection of data disaggregated by gender and impact assessments of policies on women
- Comprehensive review of child care

Whilst we again received responses from the three major parties, there was little of real substance in willingness to take on and address the issues we raised.

We also participated in the campaign launch for Women’s Electoral Lobby (WEL) and highlighted their election issues. Melanie Fernandez, the National Chair of WEL, spoke at an event in NSW launching our election demands.

The Victorian August WAVE event as part of ‘Cherchez la Femme’, also focused on speakers and discussions around feminism and the elections.

Lobbying at the Federal level

As well as these specific election demands, WAVE wrote to all the Federal Ministers on skills and training over the year, raising our major issues, and also specifically raised the matter of apprenticeships and supporting women and girls to take up and complete apprenticeships, not only in non-traditional trades but in new and emerging industries. A reply to one of our letters from the Commonwealth State Strategy Branch in December 2012 said: “The Australian Government acknowledges that in order for the VET sector to deliver skills for a competitive labour market, it must do more to engage and support women in VET training and higher education.”

WAVE also supported various ACTU campaigns over the year, including attending the ACTU Summit on precarious employment. We wrote to relevant Federal MPs supporting the ACTU campaign around changes to the Fair Work Act with stronger processes for carers to access flexible working hours.

As part of the Federal budget process, we also made a pre-budget submission around additional funding to support increased educational programs for women and girls. Part of this submission highlighted the need to support sole parents being moved on to Newstart Allowances, and the need for funding to enact the Agreed Conclusions from Commission of the Status of Women (CSW) 55, March 2011, in relation to *Access and participation of women and girls in education, training and science and technology, including for the promotion of women’s equal access to full employment and decent work*

Changes in VET

The current changes in the VET system including the introduction of a competitive training market with contestable funding, absorbed much of our attention over the year.

We wrote a couple of letters/submissions to the Queensland Government around their proposed changes, and reminding them of the need to support programs for women and girls particularly in areas such as mining and calling on our research in ‘Viable Work’. We engaged in some dialogue with the Queensland Department around these changes.

We wrote to the NSW Minister for Education about Community Service Obligations being extended to support women and girls in VET, and also to the NSW Treasurer. We made two submissions in NSW to the IPART Inquiry into fees and charges, reminding the Government of the impact of increased fees on many disadvantaged groups.

We made a major submission to the National TAFE Inquiry raising concerns at the impact of the competitive training market on the public

provider, and highlighting its critical role in providing vocational education and training for many mature women returning to the workforce, amongst others. This was supported by a submission from eS4W, and as a consequence I participated in the public hearing on TAFE in Brisbane as an eS4W Council member. The three community groups at the hearing raised the following points:

- * the importance of TAFE to communities and individuals
- * the importance of access education as well as further education for women upskilling/returning to the workforce
- * the need for more women in the workforce and the role of TAFE in supporting this
- * the need for sustainable funding for access and equity courses, and women's programs
- * TAFE's role in providing for equity groups
- * the value of women's programs – pathways to vocational courses, and how they can be integrated with industry requirements
- * the need for focus on and targeted funding for women in emerging and non-traditional trades, as well as networking and support for women
- * the eS4W claims for a National Strategy for women and girls in VET, and all skills related programs and policies identifying and analysing their impacts on women and girls

State/territory level

Most states and territories participated in International Women's Day events which we highlighted in our newsletter this year.

In NSW we visited the Parliamentary Secretary for Skills and Training, Gabrielle Upton, and gave input as part of a WEL submission on the Women in NSW 2012 report.

NSW events over the year have included:

- * an end of 2012 year at Bankstown TAFE College with speaker Kathy Rankin on 'Making strong connections: women in non-traditional trades'
- * an International women's day event with speaker Kira Clarke on youth
- * a launch of our election campaign with speaker Melanie Fernandez, National Chair of WEL
- * a dinner at Mt Druitt TAFE with speaker Paula Abood on 'Promoting women's rights through human rights'
- * a get together at St George TAFE college with speaker Jane Newton, research Manager Manufacturing Skills Australia on 'Women in the Manufacturing Sector'

Victoria has participated in a Cherchez la Femme event around feminism and the election handing out WAVE postcards, and is planning a September dinner on an election de-brief 'Is gender equality still on the agenda?'

Connections

We continue to expand our connections with a variety of groups through links on our websites and exchanging information about events. We

have attended events held by some of these groups and had discussions as to how we can work together for the benefit of women and girls.

These include:

- * Marian Baird from Women and Work research Group at Sydney University
- * Ass Prof JaneMaree Maher from the Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research at Monash University
- * the Diversity Council of Australia and their Mining and Resources Network
- * Manufacturing Skills Australia
- * Australian Council for Private Education Trainers (ACPET)
- * Group Training Australia
- * Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL)
- * A Fair Deal for Women
- * Rural Women's Network
- * Asia South Pacific Association of Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE)
- * Adult Learning Australia (ALA)
- * Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA)
- * TAFE Managers' Association
- * TAFE Directors Australia
- * ACTU
- * Australian Education Union (AEU)
- * National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU)
- * National VET Equity Advisory Council (NVEAC)
- * Australian VET Productivity Agency (AWPA)
- * Sisters Inside

A number of discussions were held with TAFE NSW around an MOU that would support WAVE's work in NSW and give us increased opportunities to jointly work together. Unfortunately this does not look like being finalised at this stage.

Tenders

We made two submissions over the year to undertake research. The first was with the Women and Research Group at Sydney University in tendering to undertake research sponsored by the Board of Vocational Education and Training (BVET) in NSW around women in non-traditional trades. The second was for funding from Women NSW to interview female training award winners to discuss strategies for their success once again particularly in non-traditional trades areas. Unfortunately we won neither. However this is part of our work that we need to continue to highlight and develop partnerships around.

Representation

WAVE nominated Victorian Executive member Kira Clarke to participate in the September 2013 ASPBAE Basic Leadership

Development Course in Yangon, Myanmar ‘Youth Voices in Education’, and we look forward to hearing from Kira about her experiences.

NSW Executive member Menaka Cooke undertook a workshop at the 2013 National Union of Students conference for WAVE.

Sue Salthouse, our ACT Executive member, and Linda Simon represented WAVE at the ACTU National Community Summit – Creating Secure Jobs and Better Society.

Economic Security 4 Women (eS4W)

Elaine Butler and Linda Simon represent WAVE on the Council of eS4W, attending face-to-face meetings and participating in teleconferences, including on the Education and Training working group. Members also participated in eS4W events on the Care Economy, Insecure Employment, and capacity building workshops.

Communication

WAVE continued to produce and disseminate Newsletters, and has developed new membership postcards and ‘About WAVE’ fliers. These have been distributed to all Executive members to distribute to their networks. We looked forward to having a new website this year, but the contracted organisation has let us down, involving us in action to recoup funds. Hopefully work will take place again on the website. Thanks to Annette Bonnici and Kimberley Zeller-Turner for their work on the website over the year in attempting to keep it up to-date.

www.wave.org.au

Elaine Butler has the main responsibility for communicating about events, research and interesting issues through our Facebook page and we thank her for that. We did briefly operate twitter arising from the Conference last year, but would welcome offers of support from members to keep this going.

Elaine also does an incredible job in keeping Executive members up-to-date with issues around the country and internationally relating to education and women and girls, enabling us to respond in a timely manner wherever possible.

Research

Annette Bonnici and Linda Simon undertook a research project and presented a paper at the AVETRA Conference in April entitled ‘A Course for a Lifetime’. The research was based on five case studies of women’s programs offered in TAFE, and compared the outcomes of these courses with the NVEAC principles for successful equity programs, including:

- * supported learner pathways and transitions built into the learning experience
- * training being integrated with work experience and/or aligned with areas of labour

- * embedded support for foundation skills
- * the voice of the learner being heard and acted upon

All of the case studies demonstrated these principles. The research has been used to support our representations in a range of areas, including with NVEAC, AWPA and the Federal Government.

WAVE continues to support its representations with referrals to its signature work:

'I can't think of any occupation women can't do!' Career Pathways for Women and Girls: Emergent and Non-traditional Occupations and Industries (Viable Work), undertaken in 2011 and on the website.

Thanks to WAVE Executive members for their work over the year on behalf of all WAVE members.

Public Officer – Elinor Buckley

National Secretary – Kimberley Turner-Zeller

National Treasurer and Memberships - Annette Bonnici

Immediate Past National Convenors – Elaine Butler and Robyn Woolley

Rural and Regional Liaison person – Cecilia Blackwell

State and Territory Convenors

ACT – Sue Salthouse

Northern Territory – Joy Taylor

NSW – Menaka Cooke and Sandy Rogers

South Australia – Janette Riggs and Helaine Costello

Victoria – Kira Clarke and Jen Walsh (and thanks to Catherine Davis for her work over the years)

Western Australia – Helen Farrell (for her brief period of work)

- **WAVE Website** <http://www.wave.org.au/> Work continues on the updating and enhancing the capacity of the website, including transfer of materials, and archiving where appropriate.
- **Facebook** - See: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/WAVE-Women-Girls-Education-Training-in-Australia/142859425735889?gid=50644841539> Please visit the site, 'like' us, share with your friends and contribute.
- **Newsletters** – WAVE continues to produce regular newsletters outlining significant issues and events, and places these on the website.