

18th June 2012

Dr. Peter Shergold
Chair
National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)
P O Box 8288
Station Arcade, SA 5000

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you on behalf of the members of economic Security4Women (eS4W) about the need for NCVER to publish more data disaggregated by gender.

eS4W is one of six National Women's Alliances funded by the Australian Government. Its member organisations (see attachment) agree that lifelong economic well-being is a high priority for all Australian women:

- it empowers women to make choices and live independently and
- it enriches all aspects of women's lives including their education, health, employment, personal safety and financial security over their lifetime.

eS4W members:

- identify barriers to women's economic security
- prioritise the key issues for action to bring about change
- engage with Government on behalf of all Australian women and
- advise and encourage government to formulate appropriate policy directions.

The responsibilities listed above rely on the ability of member organisations of eS4W to readily access gender disaggregated data to track trends as well as the current status and position of women and girls in areas of our core business, and so provide evidence for issues in our ongoing dialogue with Government. eS4W is also represented on the ABS Gender Statistics Advisory Group (GSAC).

Education, training and employment outcomes are central to our core focus and activities.

As 'Australia's principle provider of vocational education training research and statistics'¹, NCVER is responsible for collecting, managing, analysing, evaluating and communicating research and statistics about VET nationally, including to the wider community. *Therefore, we request that accessible relevant gender disaggregated data be published by NCVER as a matter of course in ALL your publications and data sets.*

¹ NCVER Webpage: <http://www.ncver.edu.au/>

In particular, all commentary and graphs in NCVER publications – and especially in the case of data re apprenticeships and traineeships – should be disaggregated by gender, as required by international (and national) conventions. Such data are vital to address labour uptake in industries and occupations that are masculinised and/or feminised, as well as where there are known skill shortages.

We respectfully request that NCVER provides as a matter of course and in the public domain gender data for enrolments and course completions disaggregated by both level of qualification and field of education. In doing so, NCVER will demonstrate its contribution to the improvement in Australia's education and training system by ensuring that policy and practice are based on sound evidence for use nationally and internationally. This will enhance the ability to monitor and evaluate the impacts of any policy directions on the uptake of women and girls of traineeships and apprenticeships in vocational education and training (VET). Despite several approaches over many years by some member organisations, these important statistics are still not being made available in the public domain by NCVER.

As you are aware, Australia has ratified a number of international human rights instruments and treaties that include demands in relation to gender equality, including the collection, monitoring and dissemination of gender disaggregated data, with gender either as a key focus or integrated within the documentation. As a signatory, Australia is then legally obliged to work towards the progressive realization of the treaty and is obliged to submit country reports to the relevant treaty monitoring committee at regular intervals on the progress it has made towards implementing the rights contained in the treaty. When each report is reviewed by the respective Committee, the Australian Government must send representatives to discuss the report with committee members; provide responses to questions raised; and subsequently act on the committee's concluding observations and final recommendations once the review has been completed. In general the committees see the national reports as a 'rolling reporting system' and expect each report to build on the previous one.

NGOs, including eS4W, WAVE² and AFGW³ are involved in the reporting processes in a variety of ways. However, we are frustrated that gender disaggregated data is still not made publically available as a matter of course by NCVER.

There are three treaty monitoring bodies particularly concerned with the right to education, namely: the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). All three encourage NGOs such as eS4W, WAVE and AFGW to participate in the reporting process and provide opportunities for them to do so.

Similarly, Australia is a signatory to and regularly attends the Commission on the Status of

² Women in Adult and Vocational Education Inc (WAVE). See: <http://www.wave.org.au/>

³ Australian Federation of Graduate Women (AFGW). See: <http://www.afgw.org.au/>

Women (CSW) that was established in 1946 as 'the principal global policy-making body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women'. As a functional Commission of the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), CSW has the mandate to 'include the functions of promoting the objectives of equality, development and peace, monitoring the implementation of measures for the advancement of women, and reviewing and appraising progress made at the national, sub-regional, regional and global levels'. It assists ECOSOC by

- (a) Monitoring, reviewing and appraising progress achieved and problems encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at all levels, and should advise the Council thereon;
- (b) Continuing to ensure support for mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations activities and develop further its catalytic role in that regard in other areas;
- (c) Identifying issues where United Nations system-wide coordination needs to be improved in order to assist the Council in its coordination function;
- (d) Identifying emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men that requires consideration and make substantive recommendations thereon;
- (e) Maintaining and enhancing public awareness and support for the implementation of the Platform for Action.

In particular, the focus of CSW55 2011 was '*Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work*'. The Agreed Conclusions, attached for your information, include specific reference to gender disaggregated data. As above, this will be subject to reporting by Australia.

We note that NCVER, in association with TAFE South Australia, is recognised as a UNESCO Regional Centre of Excellence in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). As such, it is essential that NCVER demonstrate its commitment to its affiliation with provision of excellence, through publication of all data disaggregated by gender, along with a significant increase in attention paid to gender in all NCVER research.

As an example, we note that the Apprentice and Trainee Statistics for the September quarter 2011 do include some data disaggregated by gender and some that is not. Most of these tables are not sufficiently detailed and rarely disaggregated by gender – only the Total attending/enrolled for each table is listed. This is of little use for monitoring of gender trends by field of education and level of course. In addition, no graphs or commentary have a gender analysis.

We look forward to your considered reply with an outline of your approach to ensure data disaggregated by gender will be available to enable the reporting processes described above.

We are happy to offer further detailed explanations and descriptions of the data required if necessary and have skilled and qualified members who are available for consultations.

Yours faithfully



Kimberly James
Executive Officer
economic Security4 Women (eS4W)

Atts.

List of eS4W members
eS4W Viable Work Position Paper
CSW 55 Conclusions

Cc Dr. Tom Karmel
Managing Director
National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)