



## WAVE in 2015

**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.**

### **An active year**

2015 has been an active year for WAVE with a range of submissions and presentations around issues of concern to us, and a wonderful conference on 8 April in Melbourne. Again with lots of work by Elaine we have ensured our voice was heard on the international scene.

### **International matters**

1. The focus of the 2015 59<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 59) was that of Beijing +20, a review of the progress of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which is considered the global agenda for women's empowerment to promote equality, development, and peace for all women. The **Beijing Declaration** and Platform for Action was adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. The Platform for Action reaffirms the fundamental principle that the rights of women and girls are an "inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights." CSW 59 expressed concern that 20 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women, no country has fully achieved equality and empowerment for women and girls.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals call on Governments to:

*“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (SDG 4) & “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (SDG 5) – Open Working Group (2014)*

2. The G20 countries in Australia in November 2014 [made a commitment](#) to reduce the gender gap in workforce participation by 25% by 2025.

The summit acknowledged that one of the world's most significant barriers to global economic growth is the persistently low level of women's participation in the workforce compared with men's.

[G20 leaders announced](#) that by increasing female labour participation by 25% over the next 15 years, they would bring 100 million women into the workforce – thereby allowing the G20 countries to reach their goal to increase global economic growth by 2.1% by 2018.

Then Prime Minister Tony Abbott said the target is a "clear aspiration".

"An extraordinary achievement if we can deliver on this, but it is a clear aspiration and it is an achievable accountable goal," [he told ABC News](#).

In 2015, Senator Michaelia Cash, Minister assisting the Prime Minister for Women, in a media release entitled 'Women at the forefront of a productive Australia', said: "If Australia could match Canada with six percent more women in the paid workforce, the Australian economy would increase by about \$25 billion each year. And raising women's workforce participation to the same level as men's would boost the Australian economy by \$195 billion.... More women in the workforce will strengthen our country's economic resilience, increase family incomes, and ultimately boost Australia's economic growth.... We are partnering with industry and key organisations to improve incentives, remove barriers, enhance skills and support women's leadership aspirations through education and mentoring."

She also supported the political declaration from CSW59, welcoming the commitments to achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls and said Australia would continue to work towards implementing the called-for concrete actions. Given that she is now Minister for Women in the Turnbull government, we will continue to raise issues with her.

Despite the rhetoric of our Federal Government and commitment to these important compacts, the funding for women's programs in vocational education and training continues to be cut. WAVE has continued to make this point in a number of its submissions, and to support the various agencies in their work.

## **ACED**

WAVE is now linked with Australian Coalition for Education and Development (ACED), which also gives direct connection to the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and then to Global Partnership for Education (GPE). GPE has a focus on education for girls which WAVE needs to work to expand to include women and lifelong learning. Elaine has worked with ACED on a position statement in relation to Goals 4 and 5 in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and WAVE members Jen and Linda have attended meetings as well.

## **Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE)**

WAVE continues to work with ASPBAE in:

- supporting Leela Kruger to participate in a study exchange to the Phillipines this year;
- submitting a proposal to sponsor Zulaikha Shihab to participate in the Basic Leadership development course in Vietnam
- congratulating Elaine Butler in attending the Delhi regional workshop in October, with a focus on women, education and training, work and skills development.

## International Women's Day

We promoted and celebrated International Women's Day 'Make it happen', including by marching in NSW with our banner.

## Submissions

WAVE wrote a number of submissions to inquiries, including:

- Senate Inquiry into VET Private Providers
- NSW Upper House Inquiry into VET, where we made the following points:

*A marketised VET system in NSW, as in other states, has led to the proliferation of some aggressive marketing practices by some private providers or their brokers. Many women and girls have been targeted in this way. For some women who have not had previous opportunities to study for a career, the enticement of a Diploma (and maybe the promise of a job) would appear very attractive, especially if they were led to believe it would cost them nothing and could be achieved over a matter of months. WAVE believes that such marketing is a result of a market mentality being applied to education, where the dominant focus by education providers is making money not providing high quality educational opportunities for all.*

*Now is the time we should be strengthening not weakening TAFE, and should be looking for more comprehensive and sophisticated indicators of educational quality rather than investing precious training dollars cracking down on roorting that has been allowed to flourish through poor public policy.*

- Senate Inquiry into current levels of access and attainment for students with disability in the school system, and the impact on students and families associated with inadequate levels of support, with Sue Salthouse raising the important issues of:

*Despite these obligations and those outlined in the Disability Standards for Education under the Disability Discrimination Act 1991, women and girls with disabilities do not have equal access to education. Only 9% of students who attain Year 12 level are students with disabilities, whereas 20% of all students obtaining a Year 10 certificate are students with disabilities. This latter percentage approximately parallels the % of young people with disabilities in the population<sup>2</sup>. The attrition rates between Year 10 and Year 12 indicate that levels of support in the final two years of school are grossly inadequate.*

*The Disability Standards for Education have not resulted in major gains for students with disabilities, with 10% of students still in special schools, one quarter attending special classes with mainstream school and almost one quarter have been refused enrolment at some time.*

## Federal Budget 2015

The Australian Government announced its **2015-16 Federal Budget** on 12 May 2015. There is very little change in the Federal Government's priorities in our sector.

The following is taken from a report prepared for the National Federation of Australian Women (NFAW). *There are nearly 900,000 female VET students. They represent 47.9% of all students (Australian Vocational Education and Training Statistics, NCVER, 2014). Their fields of educational study and skills development remain concentrated in a certain fields like management and commerce, society and culture, food, hospitality and personal services, health and education. The government's major programs under Building Skills and Capability are focussed on male dominated industries. The government is allocating \$1.8 billion to the states and territories to support their skills training systems. It anticipates 1.5 million students will benefit from VET in 2015. This is far fewer than the 1.87 million who accessed training in 2013. (Students and Courses, NCVER, 2013)*

WAVE has raised questions with the Federal VET Opposition spokesperson Sharon Bird around the budget.

### **WAVE National Conference 2015**

In April WAVE held a National Conference 2015 “Leaders, teachers, learners, leavers: Women in the Australian VET market” in partnership with Manufacturing Skills Australia to discuss some of the significant issues facing women and girls in adult and vocational education today. It was a great half day, and the feedback from participants was positive. Thanks to all those who worked so hard for the day, particularly Manufacturing Skills Australia for its sponsorship, Jane Newton and Carly Hobbs for their work, Kira Clarke for the report and social media, Jen Walsh for the venue, and Waltja and Joy Taylor for the wonderful speaker gifts.

The wonderful line-up of speakers included Erica Smith, Susan Hopgood, the Hon. Marsha Thomson MP, Kira Clarke, Sally Thompson, Ruth Schubert, Joy Taylor, Sam Sheppard, Elaine Butler and Jane Newton. Recommendations arising from the conference focused on WAVE continuing to raise the issues for women and girls in VET and adult education, through a range of partnerships.

#### **Four themes were strongly supported as future action for WAVE and our membership**

- Making the invisible visible – WAVE ‘s advocacy can help make women ‘s educational needs more visible, and continue to address the absence of gender from VET policy
- WAVE can profile elected ‘friends of women’ in Parliament to target networking and lobbying and strengthen relationships
- A Scholarship Program needs to be created to get more women into VET leadership, and on boards and committees to achieve 50% participation in decision making areas
- Action needs to be targeted re women and employment/pay gap so women can achieve economic independence

Prior to the conference WAVE was interviewed by VELG magazine, the Federal Government’s ‘Skills At Work’ newsletter and “Making Connections’ in NSW around our organisation, conference and networking.

## **WAVE 2015 Action Plan**

WAVE held its annual face-to-face Executive meeting at Melbourne University on the afternoon before the conference, with some very useful discussion around our priorities and where we need to put our energies.

WAVE's 2015 Action Plan arose from the Executive meeting. It has five areas of focus: Communication Strategies; Strategic relationships; Advocacy & lobbying; Supporting membership & Administration.

### **Partnerships and working with other groups**

WAVE continued to make this a priority in 2015, and continued to raise issues and work with the Industry Skills Councils. We have acknowledged the need to sit down and strengthen our ties with Adult Learning Australia (ALA), and Elaine has attended a couple of meetings as part of this aim. Linda attended an event at VET network in September leading to discussions as to how we might also work with them. Holding our conference prior to the AVETRA conference enabled a number of women to attend both events and this was a very positive move for our continued relationship with AVETRA. This is also highlighted with again holding some joint October VET events.

Our ties with Waltja in the Northern Territory remain strong, and thanks to Joy Taylor in her support there. We congratulated Waltja for being the winner of the national Indigenous Governance Award at the end of 2014.

WAVE continues to work with ASPBAE (Asia South Pacific Association for Basic & Adult Education) (<http://www.aspbae.org>)

This collaboration is especially important as we move to framing of the post 2015 global education agenda that will replace the Millennium Goals that expire next year. It also links WAVE with other key global organisations working on the 'Post 2015' Agenda, and a stand alone goal for education, including UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) & the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE).

This year WAVE helped sponsor Leela Kruger from Waltja Tjutanku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation, as part of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) study exchange. This was held in the Philippines and Leela provided a report back to WAVE for the newsletter which noted: "a very special thank you to Elaine Butler and WAVE for giving me the opportunity to be part of the very first Study Exchange organised by ASPBAE. This has been such a great learning experience for me to learn about life long learning education in the Philippines and learning from other Adult Education Practitioners from different countries in our region."

### **Zulaikha Shihab's placement with WAVE**

WAVE has provided a placement for Zulaikha Shihab this year as she undertakes a research paper at RMIT entitled: Gender and Education: Mapping global/local policy platforms.

This project aims to:

- map and analyse key policy decision points and outcomes of the emerging Post-2015 agenda, including key global, regional, national/local stakeholders and statements of intent,
- the Australian Government's position and
- consider how this might inform future advocacy approaches in the interrelated areas of gender, education (with a focus on post compulsory education and training), and decent work for women's organizations such as WAVE (Women in Adult & Vocational Education).

Background to Zulaikha's paper states: The decisions and outcomes of these debates in the international arena have significant impacts on a national scale. While they put a spotlight on particular issues internationally, they also have the potential to influence national gender and education policies, and shape international guidelines and norms. Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade states that through its foreign policy Australia aims to be "a global leader on gender equality and women's empowerment" (DFAT 2015), but how do these international decisions and statements evolve and translate into action? Some issues highlighted at the beginning of negotiations are often disregarded through the evolution of discussion. For example, although the Education For All goals highlighted lifelong learning, the MDGs primarily focused on primary education. How do these issues fall off the agenda?

Based on the mapping exercise, the research aims to answer the questions:

1. What are the critical points for global policy making for women, in relation to education and work?
2. How do we move the agenda of lifelong learning for women forward?
3. How should organizations approach advocacy in the current global setting?

WAVE has provided the virtual workplace for this project, and Elaine Butler has acted as one of Zulaikha's supervisors along with Robbie at RMIT. WAVE is well placed to take on further interns.

## **Research**

WAVE women Kira Clarke and Linda Simon continued to present papers arising from the research project for eS4W, on broadening the career options for young women, including one at the International Network on Innovative Apprenticeships (INAP) conference in Ballarat in September, entitled: Apprenticeships should work for women too: supporting meaningful exploration of 'non-traditional careers' for young women.

Linda presented a paper to the NCVET conference in Sydney in July, entitled 'Market Rules!' The paper had the following abstract:

*In 1999, Butler and Ferrier wrote a landmark report for NCVET entitled 'Don't be too polite girls'. As part of this extensive literature research and review, the authors noted that women's participation rate in VET had improved, but that there were continuing problems,*

*including women "... clustering in fields of study and at lower levels, less employer support for external training, under-representation and low completion rates in apprenticeships in non-traditional areas ...". (1999:vii) They also observed that the diminishing commitment to equity in a marketised VET system would present even greater challenges for many women. (Butler and Ferrier, 1999)*

*Sixteen years have passed, with the VET system being subject to ongoing significant changes including the 2012 agreement on a new market-driven funding model for vocational education. "Markets require a rationing of education, and the creation of hierarchies and mechanisms of competition". (Connell, 2013:99) VET is now a highly complex public/private industry firmly located with/in a competitive market place. What has this meant for women and girls engaging in VET?*

*This paper compares the VET landscapes of 1999 and 2015, focusing on equity policy, framing equity and equity-related strategies, and implications for women.*

Linda and Annette Bonnici are presenting a paper at the 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Researching Work and Learning in Singapore in December. The paper draws on three pieces of WAVE research, and is entitled: That's no job for a lady: understanding the impact of gender on successful career options. It opens with the statement: "*Gender inequality is not just about economic empowerment. It is a moral imperative. It is about fairness and equity and includes many political, social and cultural dimensions. It is also a key factor in self-reported well-being and happiness across the world.*" (OECD, 2012, p. 13) The paper seeks to position the research findings in terms of three key "levers to pull" in order to lift female workforce participation: social change, policy change and workplace change. (Osborne-Crowley, 2014)

## **Ordinary women with extraordinary lives**

WAVE is supporting a new national project, working with the National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame and 8CCC Community Radio in Alice Springs. The project involves researching and documenting stories of women who were and are first in their field, adding more women's stories to the Ordinary Women Extraordinary Lives exhibition at the Hall of Fame. These stories are being made into a radio series as well as adding an audio dimension to the exhibition. The series will be available later this year through the Community Radio Network which distributes radio programs to community radio stations across Australia, and also online. Quentin Bryce – whose story will feature in the radio series - officially launched this project on International Women's Day in Alice Springs. A great project for our NT convenor Joy Taylor.

## **Lobbying 2015**

WAVE continues to write to politicians and political parties at election times and when relevant issues are raised publicly.

## **Equality Rights Alliance (ERA) and economic Security 4 Women (eS4W)**

We continue to attend eS4W and ERA meetings, including the forums run by the National Womens' Alliances on international engagement, looking at international treaties and agreements, and Australia's role in advocating for women's groups.

### **Resources**

WAVE has developed:

- \* a flier about WAVE, its organisation and its work
- \* a membership card to be handed out at events
- \* a postcard outlining our main aims for these two years. The postcard says:  
*Australia's women and girls expect:*
  - \* *access to a strong, national, public vocational education and training system*
  - \* *career advice, counselling and targeted support to undertake training for viable, well-paid, tenured jobs*
  - \* *technical and trade training in all areas of skill shortages, emergent occupations and industries*
  - \* *training provisions should be high quality, affordable, inclusive and relevant for the diversity of all Australian women*

### **Website**

The development of the website continues. We have taken the decision to move to a wordpress platform rather than Joomla, but are still waiting the migration of information to the new site. Hopefully we will find it easier to get help on this new site.

### **Social Media**

Elaine continues to do a great job with Facebook, with help from others on occasions. We are planning to develop a Social Media policy to guide what we put out there.

### **WAVE Executive members**

There have again been changes to WAVE Executive over the year, and we have welcomed Jane, Demmi, Gina and Sally to Executive.

**WAVE Executive member Sue Salthouse** has been appointed to the Prime Minister's Advisory Panel to Reduce Violence Against Women. WAVE congratulates Sue and supports WWDA who has strongly advocated for the need to ensure women with disabilities are represented on this important national Advisory panel.

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

**Public Officer** – Elinor Buckley

**National Secretary** – Robyn Woolley

**Assistant National Secretary** – Kimberley Turner-Zeller

**National Treasurer** - Annette Bonnici

**Past National Convenor and WAVE Ambassador** – Elaine Butler

**Rural and Regional Liaison person** – Cecilia Blackwell

**State and Territory Convenors**

**ACT** – Sue Salthouse

**Northern Territory** – Joy Taylor

**NSW** – Jane Newton

**Queensland** – Gina Meibusch and Sally Queitzsch

**Victoria** – Kira Clarke, Jen Walsh and Demmi Paris

**Western Australia** – Sue Thompson

**Linda Simon – National Convenor**

**2 October 2015**