

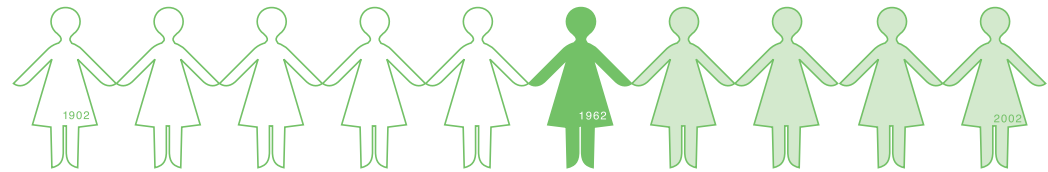


NSW GOVERNMENT

ACTION PLAN FOR WOMEN

2002–2004

equality families justice education violence work safety power leadership training communities health



100 YEARS OF SUFFRAGE

FOREWORD

We are pleased to present the Carr Government's 2002-2004 Action Plan for Women. It complements the Government's policy statement, Supporting Families, Strengthening Communities. It demonstrates how we are making progress on the issues that are important for women in NSW and it introduces our plans for the future.

The Action Plan is grounded on the principles of equity, access, rights and participation and so focuses on women with the least access to social and economic resources. It reflects the commitments made in the Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, to promote further progress on achieving Australia's commitments under the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

We have made much progress towards a society in which women have full and equal access to every benefit and opportunity in our community, where women's needs are recognised and addressed in government policies and services. We celebrate that progress and the important social, cultural, political and economic contributions women make to society, through all the work women do in the paid workforce, as volunteers in the community and in the home.

The NSW Government will continue to build on the achievements of the first and second Carr Governments in removing obstacles to women's full participation in society. This means recognising that in some areas of social life women have different experiences and needs from men. Gender equity aids both men and women. It builds stronger families and

communities by supporting everyone's capacity to develop, to participate and to contribute. The Plan also recognises that age, race, ethnicity, location and social and economic circumstances all affect women's needs and options.

The concerns and needs addressed in the Action Plan are all about the daily experiences of women in NSW: paid and unpaid work, health and housing, violence and safety, justice and legal equality, child care, education and training, decision-making and leadership, access to information.

This Action Plan reflects our continuing commitment to listen to women speak about their lives, to work in partnerships throughout the community and to use the resources and powers of Government to help improve the position of women, now and through future generations.



The Hon. Bob Carr, MP
Premier of New South Wales



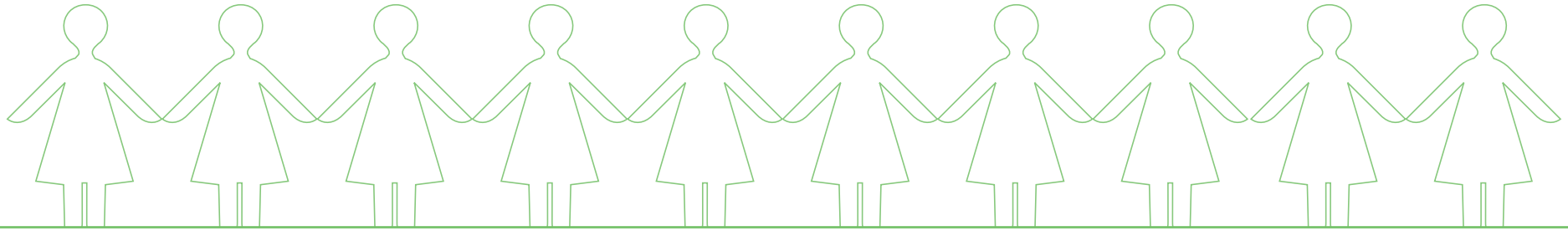
The Hon. Sandra Nori, MP
Minister for Women

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INTRODUCTION

equalityfamilies**justice**education**violence**work**safety**power**leadership**training**communities**health

The Carr Government will continue to work with the people of NSW to maintain and improve their quality of life. That means focusing on the core business of state government — providing public services for public benefit. It means working with community organisations, volunteers, councils, local clubs and businesses who all contribute to the well being of individuals and the health of communities.

The Carr Government will:

- ◆ Continue its commitment to the principles of access, equity, rights and participation;
- ◆ Focus on early intervention and prevention;
- ◆ Make services more accessible and responsive; and
- ◆ Support and promote voluntary and community effort and the work of non-government organisations.

Reconciliation and empowering Aboriginal people

The Carr Government is committed to working with Aboriginal people to ensure their rights and opportunities are equal to all other Australians. We support the principle of self determination for Aboriginal people and reconciliation based on justice and respect.

The NSW Government is setting new standards of accountability for government agencies in improving the education and health of Aboriginal people. The Government's Plan, *Partnerships – A New Way of Doing Business*, strongly focuses on Aboriginal leadership and economic independence. The Plan will

demonstrate the Government's commitment to working with local leadership for local solutions. Aboriginal communities will play a key role in developing and implementing the plan. The NSW Government recognises the important role Aboriginal women play in their communities as leaders, as workers, and in supporting and caring for their families.

The Carr Government recently established Australia's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Business Unit within the Department for Women. The Unit will:

- ◆ Provide a central point of reference within NSW government on issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women;
- ◆ Promote consistency in policy affecting the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in NSW; and
- ◆ Provide a mechanism for coordination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's initiatives, including those managed through the Department for Women.

The Unit will concentrate on improving the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Among the issues it will address are social justice; the cultural, community and spiritual well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their communities; leadership; criminal justice; violence (including sexual assault); and young people's affairs (including child protection). These issues are also addressed in the NSW Government Action Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women.

Addressing the needs of those most in need of support and assistance

Justice Elizabeth Evatt said in relation to CEDAW:

Ultimately we have to be judged not by our highest ambitions and achievements, but by our ability to raise from the lowest level those whose needs are greatest. That is the way I would like Australia, and every other country, to be judged in the United Nations.'

The NSW Government will continue to address the needs of women who are most in need of support and assistance including:

- ◆ Women caring for children or relatives who need special help;
- ◆ Women subjected to violence and abuse;
- ◆ Women in remote areas facing hard times;
- ◆ Families struggling to make ends meet;
- ◆ New parents in need of help and advice; and
- ◆ Women facing difficulties as a result of language or cultural difference.

Our international commitments

The Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women is a statement signed by most countries, upholding and promoting the basic human rights of women. In ratifying it in 1983, the Australian Government accepted the obligation to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

The Beijing Platform for Action sets out strategic objectives for achieving the CEDAW commitments. It identifies barriers to achieving equality, and actions for governments, non-government organisations, and private sector enterprises, working in partnerships in civil society. The Beijing Platform for Action Strategic Objectives were further endorsed by the United Nations in New York in 2000.

Through the Action Plan for Women the NSW Government demonstrates its commitment to using these international instruments for the advancement of women's human rights to address the barriers to women's full participation in society.

Developing and reporting on the Action Plan

The Action Plan 2002–2004 outlines the NSW Government's commitments, priorities and initiatives for women. The Department for Women has collected information from a wide range of Government agencies about their activities and commitments through the annual Audit of NSW Government Achievements for Women. This information is used to produce the 2002–2004 Action Plan and report on achievements during 2000–2002. The Action Plan provides an overview of progress and developments in the key areas of families and communities, violence and safety, work, access to justice and equality before the law, power, decision-making and leadership, education and training and health.

The focus of the Action Plan is initiatives specifically designed to meet women's needs, and/or of particular interest and benefit to women. The Plan also considers the ways in which

Government agencies take account of women in delivering their core services. There is a huge range of these: to keep the Action Plan user friendly not all policies and activities that benefit women could be documented here.

Some highlights reported in the 2002–2004 Action Plan include:

- ◆ The *NSW Strategic Framework to Advance the Health of Women*, which is the first document of its kind in Australia. The framework advances principles for women's health policy and practice that: use a gendered approach to health; collaborate with others to address the social factors that determine health; advance research on women's health experience; apply a health outcomes approach.
- ◆ The *Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program* which seeks to empower women experiencing domestic violence to use the legal system. It funds 34 court support schemes at 47 court locations in NSW. The schemes provides direct assistance to 20,000 women a year seeking Apprehended Violence Orders, along with other support, legal representation, information and appropriate referrals.
- ◆ *Behind the Label: the NSW Clothing Outwork Strategy*, a \$4 million, three year campaign, backed by legislation – the Industrial Relations (Ethical Clothing Trades) Act 2001.
- ◆ The *Indigenous Justice Strategy 2001–2004*, to address concern about the high numbers of Aboriginal women in custody. The Department has conducted a research project into the needs of indigenous women in custody that aims to improve policy and services to indigenous women inmates and will also improve understanding of why indigenous women are over-represented in gaol.

- ◆ A short training course called *Women in Decision-Making, Boards and Committees*, which aims to provide rural women with information, skills and confidence to assist them with preparation for election or appointment to boards and committees.
- ◆ The *Girls and IT Project*, which sought to identify factors contributing to girls low uptake of IT subjects. The project conducted an in-depth exploration of issues affecting participation in IT subjects and the subject selection process in two secondary schools in Western Sydney.
- ◆ The *Women's Gateway*, a one-stop internet portal servicing the information needs of women in NSW which attracted over 50,000 users in its first year.

While included in this Action Plan, initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island women, for women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and for women in rural and regional NSW have also been published as separate booklets.

Partnerships

The Action Plan is based on many partnerships: between government agencies, with private sector enterprises and organisations, with non-government organisations including peak and other women's organisations, other community organisations, service providers, trade unions, and with universities and other specialist research organisations. These partnerships harness resources needed for important initiatives while building new relationships and understandings that further strengthen capacity for creative and practical problem-solving in the community.

The partnership approach recognises that many community and private sector organisations have substantial expertise and resources and want to work to improve the position of women. These partnerships are important in developing sustainable and productive communities with the capacity to support and care for children, older people and people with disabilities.

The partnership approach builds on the whole-of-government partnerships used for delivering the significant achievements of the Carr Government's first Action Plan for Women. Achieving equity for women requires leadership and management in coordinated strategies across a range of agencies. It requires government agencies to acknowledge their overlapping responsibilities and to address issues from the point of view of the women using their services.

Women's policy structures and processes

The Department for Women was established by the Carr Government in 1995 and is Australia's only women's agency with full departmental status, reporting directly to the Minister for Women. It provides advice and assistance to Government agencies and other organisations on women's policy and related matters. It is the key agency for developing, coordinating and reporting on policies, programs and services for NSW women. The Department for Women's vision is to achieve justice and equity for the women of NSW in all aspects of their lives, including economic and social opportunities. It aims to achieve this vision through innovative and inclusive programs and community and cross-agency partnerships and strategies such as:

- ◆ economic, social, cultural and environmental development

- ◆ prevention of violence
- ◆ leadership development
- ◆ community strengthening
- ◆ planning and information services
- ◆ mentoring and knowledge management
- ◆ consultation and training
- ◆ research, debate and skills development
- ◆ policy agendas within communities of interest

The Department's branches comprise:

- ◆ Policy and Research;
- ◆ Communications, Information and Planning
- ◆ Strategic Alliances

The development of the Aboriginal Women's Business Unit will complement these existing units.

The NSW Government has created strong and effective structures and processes within government to ensure women's needs are recognised in policy making and service delivery. Specialist units both provide specific services for women and provide advice on ensuring women's interests are addressed in mainstream services and policies, in industrial relations, education and training, health, sport and recreation, agriculture, corrective services, crime prevention and law enforcement, state and regional development, and community services.

A chart of these agencies and contact details is included in Appendices 4 and 5.

The Premier's Council for Women promotes women's interests especially through its important roles in providing independent advice to the Premier on women's concerns and in community consultations.

The Department for Women has led the way in many areas including pay equity, discrimination against women consumers, participation and leadership, and improving women's access to information. Priorities for the next year include developing strategic frameworks for the Department's work with young

women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, as well as extending opportunities for women in the areas of leadership and information technologies. The Department will also work to consolidate and enhance its strategies in the areas of work and economic issues and violence and safety.

¹ National Women's Consultative Committee consultation on Australia's second progress report to the CEDAW Committee, 7 June 1991.