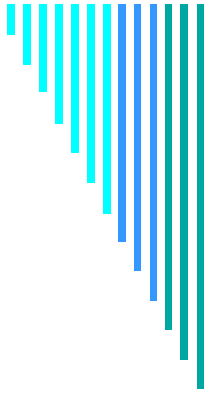


# WOMEN & WORK

A snapshot of work arrangements  
affecting women in the workplace

NSW Premier's Council for  
Women  
December, 2006

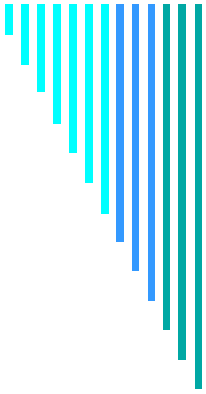


# INTRODUCTION

This report provides a ‘snapshot’ of the consultation about current workplace arrangements for low-paid and/or non-unionised women undertaken by the Premier’s Council for Women in late November and early December 2006.

It presents the views of participants in terms of changes in workplace arrangements they have recently experienced and the effect that is having on them and their families.

The Report has extracted the key messages from the consultation in order to identify emerging issues.



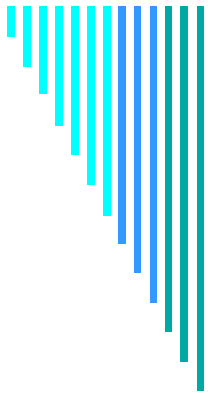
# CONSULTATION

## □ Purpose of Consultation

To advise the Minister and the Premier of any issues affecting women and their families arising from changes to their work arrangements.

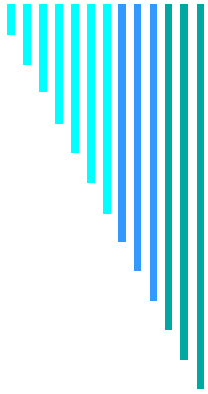
## □ Process

- Focus group discussions with women from a diversity of backgrounds in low-paid and/or non-unionised jobs
- Standard questions for all groups
- Participant questionnaire



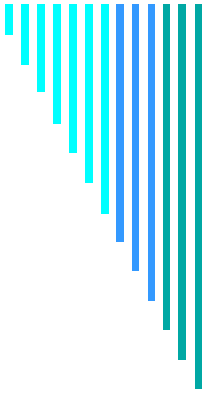
# PARTICIPANTS

- **Focus groups** were held with:
  - Arabic speaking women
  - Chinese speaking women
  - Older women
  - Single mothers
  - Vietnamese women
  - Young women
  
- 82% of participants were employed and 18% unemployed
- Of those employed 51% had permanent employment and 49% temporary employment
- 19% of permanent positions were part-time positions
- More than half the participants had children in either pre-school, school or still studying/training
- 22% of all participants had additional caring responsibilities e.g. elderly parents



# KEY ISSUES

1. **Changes in work arrangements that women would welcome**
  - Greater job stability and security so that families can plan for their future
  - Access to permanent jobs so they can qualify for bank loans
  - Certainty in work hours to meet family and caring responsibilities and to attend English classes
  - Enough flexibility for managing family issues
  - Reduction in 'casualisation' of the workforce
  - Family friendly policies enacted
  
2. **Things that stop women from changing jobs**
  - Age - difficult for older women to find employment
  - Lack of public transport
  - Changes to the Industrial Relations and AWA agreements
  - Lack of access to English language classes



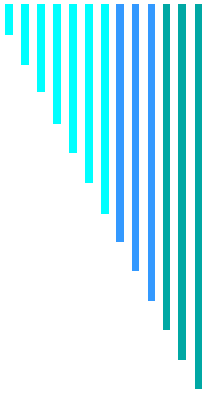
# KEY ISSUES

## 3. Changes occurring in the workplace

- ❑ Less overtime and fewer casual hours available
- ❑ No longer paid overtime
- ❑ Employers have gained flexibility at the same time as the workers have lost it
- ❑ Employers manipulate hours worked
- ❑ Reduced number of employees for same amount of work and less pay for working harder
- ❑ New contracts offer far fewer hours per week and extra hours available only at short notice. Double shifts do not necessarily bring extra pay per hour
- ❑ Shifts are no longer regular which impacts on managing the family.
- ❑ Increased usage of late and early shifts creates difficulties for those reliant on public transport.

## 4. Barriers to finding suitable employment

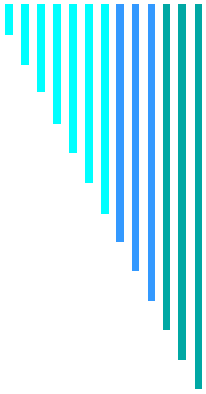
- ❑ Poor language and life skills
- ❑ Poor education
- ❑ Low skill levels
- ❑ Lack of adequate public transport, particularly for shift workers
- ❑ High cost and low availability of child care
- ❑ No after hours care for children 11+ & no long day care for 7+



# EMERGING ISSUES

Despite the diversity of the participants there was a strongly shared view on three emerging workplace issues which they believe will have a significant impact on women.

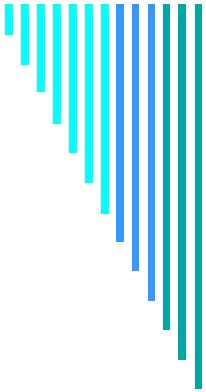
It is noteworthy that many of the women consulted were not clear about changes to the legislation governing the Australian work place and they did not distinguish between actions by the State or Federal governments.



# EMERGING ISSUES

## 1 Comment on the introduction of welfare to work provisions

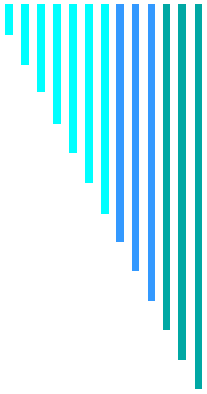
- “ We will be shunted into any job anywhere at any pay level for any shift”.
- “ Welfare to work will penalise women and take actual cash off them in return for demeaning vouchers..... We want to work but we do not believe that welfare to work will help us achieve this”.
- “Employers won’t have real jobs for 15 hours a week. Because they generally pay these by cash-in-hand, workers will not be deemed to have fulfilled the Welfare to Work requirements.”



# EMERGING ISSUES

## 2 Discrimination against older women

- There is no commitment on the part of employers to ‘modernise’ the skills of older workers in spite of the shortage of skills.
- Increasing expectation that older women can be fulltime carers for grandchildren and other dependent family members as women workers deal with the daily uncertainty in arrangements in the workplace resulting from the recently imposed flexibility of the workplace.
- Older women will not be able to commit to social, charitable and educational activity in their own lives as they will have to be prepared to take on responsibilities in response to a family member’s change in shift work.



# EMERGING ISSUES

## 3 Caring responsibilities

- availability of affordable child care and after school/long day care
- Appropriate out of school care for children from 11 – 16 years
- Increasing necessity for women to care for ageing parents
- A reduction in women's availability for providing voluntary care and services in the community.