



WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTION PLAN

Imagine a world
without sexism
where women and
men, and girls and
boys, are free from
gender roles and
rules.

Imagine...

Imagine a world without sexism where women and men, and girls and boys, are free from gender roles and rules to relate respectfully, in all our diversity.

Imagine a world where any woman and girl can walk down any street, day or night, speak, blog, tweet, sing, dance, play, work, organise, socialise and go about her daily life without fear of harassment, abuse, ridicule, insult or assault.

Imagine a world where your skin colour didn't mark you out as "different", and your ethnic background was a point of interest rather than concern.

Imagine a world where caring and domestic work is valued and shared, and the welfare of the young, old, sick and disabled is everybody's concern.

Imagine a world where domestic violence is so abhorrent that every home is safe.

Imagine a world where women employed in a

traditionally "male" job are not seen as an exception, or a trailblazer, or a "tall poppy", and girls can say with complete confidence, "That is what I want to be when I grow up".

Imagine a world where parents on their way to work or classes, or just to have some time to themselves, drop their children off at an affordable child-care centre in their neighbourhood or workplace, happy in the knowledge that their children love going there, learn new things and are well fed and cared for.

Imagine a world where elderly and disabled women live independently and at home for as long as they wish because they have a guaranteed liveable income and there are plenty of community support workers to help with housework, health-care and transportation.

Imagine a world where there really is equal pay, so that no woman is forced by poverty into staying in a bad

relationship, being sexually exploited, not having the child she wants, or seeing her children go without food or new clothes.

Imagine a world where no woman is forced onto the streets, whether she has children or not, because plenty of public housing and temporary accommodation is available.

Imagine a world where every woman has a real choice about whether or not to have children, unconstrained by economic or social factors, and where safe, reliable contraception and abortion are freely available.

Imagine a world where women, in all their glorious diversity, love the bodies they were born with, and where women express their sexuality proudly, joyfully and without fear.

Imagine a world where people, not private profit, matter - where all people's basic needs are met and their hopes and dreams for a fulfilling life are valued.



Still overworked and underpaid

Whether they are in casual or part time precarious work, or single mothers on the 250,000-long public housing waiting list, or Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women in threatened remote communities, or older women with little or no superannuation, or migrant or refugee women brutalised in detention, life for most women is getting harder every day.

- Women still work in jobs that underpay and undervalue their work and make up the vast majority of workers with few conditions and little job security. In 2015, 70% of 825,000 unpaid primary carers (excluding parenting) were women.
- In 2015, the value of informal care provided by these primary carers was estimated at \$43.7 billion. Women still do most of the household work and care for children, and sick, disabled and elderly relatives.
- The official “gender pay gap” — the gap between the average weekly ordinary time earnings of women and men working full-time — has hovered around 18% since 2014, up from around 15% 10 years ago.
- Women hold 70% of all part-time jobs, but 493,800 women who are working part-time are “underemployed” — that is, they want more hours.
- The rate of underemployment for young women has increased markedly, and more significantly than for young men, since the Global Financial Crisis. The problem is compounded for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women because even the official rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unemployment (which does

not include people who are not actively seeking work) is three times that of the whole population.

- The hidden unemployment rate for women is estimated at 63% but peaks between 77-80% between the ages 25-44 years mainly due to the lack of access to, or the cost of, childcare.
- At the other end of the scale, the proportion of women working very long hours (50 or more per week) has doubled since 1985 and additional time is often unpaid.

Still trapped between financial dependence and poverty

- The welfare payments of a woman with dependent children will be cut if she partners with a man — whether or not she wants to be economically dependent on him and whether or not he can, or does, support her or her children.
- In 2015, 329 requests per day for assistance were turned away from homelessness services. The biggest single cause of homelessness (25%) is women and children fleeing domestic violence.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are the fastest growing prison sector. Over the past 10 years (2013 Australian Bureau of Statistics) the female prison population grew by 60% with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women approximately one third of the whole female prison population while only 2-3% of the Australian female population. This has continued: it is estimated that more than 1000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women will be in jail on June 30, 2016 (for the annual prison census).
- Most women in prison are there

because of “crimes” caused by poverty: the system fails to meet women’s needs and then punishes them.

Still subject to domestic and sexual violence

- Every 3 hours a woman is hospitalised with injuries (often very serious such as brain damage) from domestic violence. Each day police nationally deal with 657 domestic violence incidents.
- Research by VicHealth shows that domestic and family violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44 years.
- According to the Children’s Rights Report by the Australian Human Rights Commission, one in four children have witnessed an assault on their mother or stepmother.
- More than one woman per week is killed by violence: in 2014, 84 women were killed and in 2015, it was 79 women. Eighty per cent of these deaths were caused by domestic violence by a partner or former partner.
- In NSW, there are now only 14 refugees, down from 78 in 2014, which specialise in dealing with domestic violence.
- Approximately one-third of women in Australia will be sexually assaulted in their lifetimes, and 18% of those before age 16. Four out of five sexual assault victims are women.

Our right to choose still restricted

- Abortion is legal, with restrictions, in most states and territories. In NSW and Queensland it remains a

criminal offence. However, terminations remain costly and difficult to access for poor, rural and young women.

- IVF technologies are too costly for many women to use successfully. Single women and lesbian couples still face restrictions in accessing IVF and adopting children in most states and legal obstacles to exercising full rights as parents.

Still stereotyped, objectified, belittled and harassed

- Despite the formal rights that women have won through struggle, women and girls are increasingly stereotyped and female bodies are more brazenly sexualised in popular culture.
- Capitalist culture manufactures acceptance of the sexist idea that women’s bodies exist for the pleasure of men. This is reinforced by the corporate media and especially advertising targeted at young people.
- Research has linked sexist and sexualised depictions of women and girls in advertising, pornography and the corporate media to sexist attitudes, expectations and unsafe behaviour among young people.
- Sexual objectification of women’s bodies places enormous pressure on women of all ages to conform to restrictive standards of “beauty” and sexual behaviour.
- At any time, 68% of 15-year-old women are dieting.
- In 2015 in NSW, the hospitalisation of young women for self harm is the highest it has been for more than 20 years. In the 15 to 24 year-old group the increase is 37.8% between 2010-11 and 2013-14.

Women still earn less than men



\$ 1,325.10

\$ 1,602.80

Full-time average weekly earnings

Women in full time work earn \$277.70 less per week

=

17.3% wage gap

Women have less job

Part time workers



Women make up 69% of all part casual employees, but only 36%

GENDER EQUALITY – IT’S OVERDUE

So is our imagined world of justice and equality for women an impossible dream? We don’t think so.

Imagine if the \$88 million per day, allocated for military expenditure in 2015, was redirected to social services.

Imagine if the billions of dollars in private profits made each year by Australia’s biggest corporations was spent on public services and community education.

Imagine if workers and communities had the power to decide how to operate the industries and services they run.

Imagine if politicians were made accountable and could be recalled if they broke promises.

That would be a very different world for all and especially women.

Economic, social and political equality for women requires collective opposition to each and every attack on women’s rights — as workers, mothers, students, patients and welfare recipients.

Collective struggle by women and supportive men — not enlightened governments — has been the driving force behind some formal, although

limited, rights for women.

Today, those hard-won gains are constantly under attack. That means collective struggle in our workplaces, communities and on campuses is still needed to ensure that women’s ability to exercise these rights, regardless of their race, ethnicity, citizenship, religion or disability, are defended and extended.

Socialist Alliance campaigns for:

Equality and justice in the workplace

- Equal pay for work of equal or comparable value.
- Automatic wage indexation that corresponds to real cost-of-living increases.
- Increase the minimum wage to enough to support a family.
- Abolish the youth wage because it damages the wellbeing of young women, and especially that of young mothers and their children.
- Legislate and enforce programs in both the private and public sectors to encourage and assist more women to be trained and employed in non-traditional jobs.
- Twenty-four months’ parental leave fully paid by employer contributions to a publicly-managed scheme, the right to return to the same job and generous paid leave to allow

parents to take time off work to care for sick children and attend school activities.

- Better enforce anti-discrimination and affirmative action legislation to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, non-English speaking background and disabled women to be economically independent.
- Repeal laws that criminalise sex work. Reject attempts to legislate to criminalise the clients of sex workers (along the lines of the “Swedish model”). Full industrial rights for sex workers. End discrimination on the basis of occupation.

Independence and equality in family life

- Immediately increase all welfare pensions and benefits to at least match the national minimum wage and automatically index welfare payments to cover real cost of living increases.

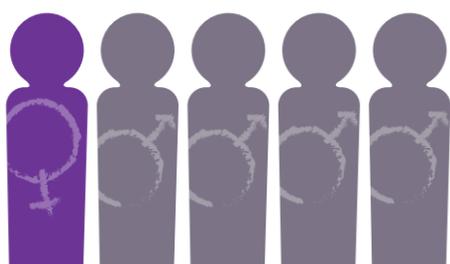
- Increase government support to provide financial security to all children regardless of a biological parents’ income or willingness to help with the cost of raising a child.
- Reinstate a generous parenting payment / pension, to be payable until children have finished school. Reinstate cost-of-living indexation and allowances and reduce the rate of payment reductions when the recipient earns a wage.
- End social security payment assessments based on relationship status, so that everyone has access to an independent income whether they are partnered or living alone.
- Abolish the “welfare to work” provisions, which unfairly penalise supporting parents, disabled people and the long-term unemployed.
- Abolish all “mutual obligation” requirements and the “breach”

system, which particularly adversely affect all women on benefits and precarious casual workers, many of whom are women.

- Remove the requirement for people with disabilities and illnesses to undergo repeated reviews of their eligibility for benefits.
- Lower the age of the independence test for allowances from 25 to 16 years, end youth wage rates and scrap the “earn or learn” policy.
- A massive emergency boost to funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-based health and children’s services, including for training more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander paediatric and other health professionals.
- No forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families or communities.
- End the Northern Territory

security than men

Full time workers



Part-time employees and 55% of full-time employees

Workplace statistics at a glance, February 2016, www.wgea.gov.au

Women do more unpaid work than men



38 hours



20 hours

Average time spent doing unpaid work
Including household work and childcare

Unpaid work done by women is equivalent to:

31%
of GDP

Data sources: ABS, 4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, March 2009., and Fact sheet: Measures of Unpaid Work, www.abs.gov.au

intervention and strengthen community-controlled initiatives to address violence and abuse, establish safe houses and properly resource Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's centres and legal services.

- Repeal the racist Native Title Act and renegotiate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land rights as part of a constitutionally entrenched treaty, binding on federal and state governments.
- Ensure all Australian government legislation is in line with the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the rulings of the UN Commission on Human Rights.
- Massively expand government funding for community/employee-controlled, good quality, free early childhood education and care services in communities and schools, and oblige big employers to fund such services in large workplaces. These services must include after-hours, vacation and occasional care.
- Abolish all taxation measures that penalise families in which both partners have to work to survive.
- Expand affordable, good quality secure public and cooperative housing so that child-raising can take place in a stable environment. Ensure that all women, including elderly and other women who wish to live alone or independently, have

accommodation security.

- Implement rent control laws in the private rental market.
- Full social, legal and industrial recognition of same-sex and gender variant relationships, including equal marriage and civil union rights.
- Equal rights for same-sex couples to adopt or foster children and access free, safe reproductive technologies.
- Enforce anti-discrimination legislation to protect lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, people living with HIV and trans and intersex people. Remove the exemptions from anti-discrimination legislation for religious organisations, private schools, the insurance industry, the taxation system and superannuation.

Women's control over their own bodies

- Remove abortion from all the criminal and civil statutes in all states and territories and make abortion available safely, free of charge and on demand through the public health-care system in rural, regional and urban areas.
- Fully fund family planning services to make reproductive health support, advice and resources available to all women.
- Make safe, reliable contraceptives freely available to both women and men; authorise all doctors to prescribe Mifepristone (RU486) and make the "morning after" pill available

free of charge.

- Enforce the law against sterilisation without a woman's consent.
- Remove discrimination based on age, sexual preference or marital status for access to reproductive technologies. All women, including women in prison and other institutions, to be able to access reproductive health care, including contraception and abortion.
- Restore Medicare bulk-billing, and massively increase funding to public hospitals and community health services, particularly in remote communities.
- Provide free menstrual/sanitary products as a public health service and free medication/treatments to deal with painful menstruation.
- Improve availability of woman-centred pregnancy care, including state funding and insurance for community-based midwifery and birth centres.
- Give all women access to free, safe reproductive technologies, including IVF, and the right to adopt or foster children, regardless of relationship status or sexual preference.

An end to sexual violence and exploitation

- Establish comprehensive education programs for high-school students about safe, consensual sex. This includes education on healthy sexual

relationships, as well as sex and gender diversity.

- Strengthen and strictly enforce laws against sexual harassment.
- Restore and increase funding for women's services to ensure ready access to health centres, rape crisis centres, women's refuges and counselling, education, training and employment services for all women and their dependents.
- A community education campaign in the corporate media, schools and all other public institutions to promote positive, non-stereotyped, anti-sexist images of women in all areas of social activity.
- Recognise that sex workers should have the right to refuse or withdraw consent for any sex act or client.
- Prosecute Australians who profit from any form of slavery, in any industry, including the sex industry, and give full protection and rights to the victims of slavery in Australia. No deportations of trafficking victims.
- End the big-business media monopoly that peddles sexism and racism. Increase funding for public and community-controlled media.

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