



Strategies for Change

Introduction

This document was developed through the process of planning and participation in the Forum on Ageism, *Rights, Roadblocks and Resilience*.

The strategies are consistent with the objectives of the Older Women's Network which include the following:

- Promotes the rights, dignity and wellbeing of older women.
- Advances the interests of older women through research, advocacy, lobbying and networking on issues affecting their lives.
- Vigorously resists all forms of discrimination, particularly that directed towards older women.
- Encourages mutual support and friendship between older women.
- Promotes healthy ageing activities, which include social, intellectual, physical and emotional factors.
- Recognises and uses older women's skills and capacities and encourages the development of these and other talents.

OWN NSW ENDORSES THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

General

It is often overlooked that ageing is experienced differently, according to gender. We call for an end to age discrimination, particularly as it affects older women, to be addressed as a matter of urgency at all levels of government.

We also call for social, health and economic research to routinely include older women as subjects and for data to be analysed by gender as well as age and other factors.

As we call for these matters to be progressed we wish to ensure that the concerns of all women are represented and their differences acknowledged, that service delivery is person centred and based on the special needs and considerations of older women.

Human rights for everyone, every day, everywhere – anything that erects an age bar is under review.



Please join us in calling for change in:

Health

Invited inclusion in health screening e.g., for breast and cervical cancer

Regular public health interventions, such as mammography and Pap smears, to continue **by invitation** to women 70 years and older (current end age 69) and to be made available free of charge.

Education of GPs and policy makers

General practitioners and health policy makers to be made aware that healthy older women are living longer and enjoying an extended period of potential sexual activity, with consequent exposure to risk of sexually transmitted diseases, and possible cervical cancer.

Noticeable inclusion in public health communications and advice

Older women to be made visible in images and included in texts of relevant public health publications, including those referring to breast and pelvic examination and sexually transmitted diseases.

Women's Health Centres to be available in all regions in each state.

The OWN Wellness centres to be recognised as providers of a unique holistic approach to the wellness and wellbeing of older women and adequately funded.

Housing

Affordable and Secure Housing

The needs of single older women for appropriate, gender specific, secure and safe housing at affordable rents to be met, by action at all levels of government, as a matter of urgency.

Crisis accommodation programs

Crisis accommodation programs responsive to the needs of single older women to be supplied, in response to increasing numbers of older women at risk of homelessness.

Single person low income permanent accommodation options

Provision of more low income housing options for single older women e.g., appropriate social housing, secondary dwellings (granny flats, divided houses), shared equity schemes to be taken up with governments at all levels.



The trialling of new generation gender specific boarding houses and support for the reform of boarding houses in NSW.

Employment

Access to work that is permanent, with fair and predictable pay, hours of work and conditions; quality skills training opportunities; and a safe and healthy work environment to be available to all workers, including older women.

The end to discrimination against older women in employment and recruiting practices and retraining opportunities for older women to be explored (69% of age discrimination complaints relate to employment).

Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexible work arrangements, available under the Fair Work Act, to be extended to carers and older workers.

Equal Pay

The gap between male and female rates of pay to be closed.

Workers' Compensation and Superannuation

Age discrimination against older workers in terms of workers' compensation and superannuation to be removed.

The superannuation scheme to be amended to include 'contributory credits' for time out of the paid workforce caring for others

Legislation strengthened

Current anti-discrimination legislation to be strengthened and penalties increased to reduce the likelihood of disguised discrimination against older women on the grounds of both age and gender.

Community education

Education to be provided to the community, employers and unions on the value of older workers, and of rights and responsibilities under anti-discrimination legislation, in particular employees' right to complain about age discrimination.



Financial security

A liveable social benefit

A means-tested, realistic, liveable social benefit to be available for older women. In particular, single older women require an adequate living.

Extend Work Bonus Scheme

The age at which the Age Pension Work Bonus Scheme cuts out, 76 years, to be extended. The amount age pensioners are permitted to earn without any pension loss to be increased

Advice and support to guard against financial exploitation

Access to independent financial and related legal advice and support to be made available and publicised to older women.

Education of current and future generations

Education of current youth and future generations to include financial planning and management as a foundation for later financial security.

Personal Safety

Security from violence

The ability of support services to identify violence against older women and to provide appropriate support and assistance to them, to be improved. Collaboration in supporting older women to be promoted across key agencies and staff.

Research into strategies

Empirical research to be government funded to improve strategies for the prevention of and response to violence experienced by older women, both from within and outside the family.

Education

Awareness raising campaigns to be presented to the community and to professional groups, e.g., GPs and community service workers, on the subject of violence against older women, and of strategies they and older women themselves can employ against it.



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Economics

An improved measure of progress inclusive of social wellbeing to be adopted, and production activities external to 'market forces' contributed to mostly by women over their life course, to be adopted by the Federal government.

The World Health Organisation calls for both age and gender to be taken into account to systematically eliminate inequities based on gender and age and their interaction with other factors such as race, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, socio-economic status and geographical locations. (WHO 2007:7)