

Media Release
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For Immediate Release

Australian Women to Address the United Nations

Seven Australian women are heading to New York next week to present their findings of a national consultation on women's rights and gender equality to the United Nations.

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) sets out 17 articles covering issues ranging from violence against women, to health and equality before the law. On 20 July, the United Nations will be reviewing Australia's implementation of CEDAW, as is required by the convention every four years.

In 2008, community organisations began a process of consultation across Australia to gain insight into how the community felt about the status of women's rights in Australia. Seventeen formal consultations brought together 385 women and NGOs representing thousands of Australians to discuss gender equality and human rights in Australia. Of major concern was violence against women which continues to affect 1 in 3 Australian women and challenges relating to accessing services including health, housing and education.

The findings of the consultations are presented in two NGO reports. Amongst other things, the *Australian NGO Report* commends the Government for its introduction of a paid parental leave scheme, and calls for the implementation, adequate resourcing and monitoring of a national plan of action to reduce violence against women. The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's NGO Report* commends the Government for the steps it has taken towards equality, including the national apology, however it also outlines that in many social and economic situations, major inequalities remain. Amongst other things, the Report calls on the Government to take immediate steps to establish a policy of consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that meets the benchmarks established in the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Leader of the Australian NGO Delegation, Dr Caroline Lambert stated: "We are proud to be taking the voices of all of the women we consulted with to the United Nations."

"We are committed to the recommendations in our reports, which include commendation of the work which has been done by Government and a range of actions to address the ongoing areas for development. Over the last four years some important steps have been made towards improving the rights of women in Australia, but we are a long way off from realising gender equality," she stated.

The delegation includes women who bring a variety of backgrounds, skills and experience, including women who can speak to issues affecting rural women, Aboriginal women, women with disability, lesbian woman, younger women, and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

For more information:

The NGO Reports can be downloaded from www.ywca.org.au

For more information on the CEDAW Review or to receive updates from the delegation, please contact:

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