



Statement supporting verbal contribution to the work-care inquiry – 31 Oct hearing

Witnesses in Brisbane 31 October 2022

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1. Introduce Seroptimist International
2. SI position statements agreed globally (economic empowerment, covid 19 care roles)
3. Introducing what we do locally (Australia and Queensland) objectives & SDG 5.4
4. Scope and limitations of our verbal statement 31 October (framework and case studies)
5. Inquiry: address the 8 recommendations from the discussion paper
6. How to implement as a government for we the people/ we the women / we the future.
7. References. (*Care Economy, World Economic Forum, Australian Bureau Statistics, UN SDG tracker, misogyny definitions, Seroptimist International, APEC gender smart investing*)

Executive summary

Inquiry Recommendation	Seroptimist	contribution
1. data	Fully support	
2. value care	Broad support	
3. fair work act	Qualified	Unintended consequences – definitions
4. right to disconnect	Qualified	Double edged sword
5. productivity	Qualified	Flexibility duty & onus on worker for wellbeing
6. parental leave 26	Full support	
7. first nations	Full support	
8. childcare subsidy	Full support	



Introduction

Over a century ago Soroptimist International (SI) established a women's organisation that proliferated throughout the globe to educate, empower and enable. Our purpose is similar to Sustainable Development Goal SDG5 for gender equality. In 2022, after covid impacts on all humanitarian organisations, 5 federations include SI South East Asia Pacific (SEAP), SI Europe, SI Great Britain and Ireland, SI Americas, and SI Africa boasts 72,000 members in 121 countries. <https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/interactive-map/>

In our region, SEAP we have 129 active clubs with 2239 members. In Australia, every state has representation advocating for better lives for women and girls, reporting across all 17 United Nations SDGs. Our specific objectives are:

1. Education (SDG 4 and most other SDGs in some way)
2. Elimination of violence (SDGs 3,5,11,16)
3. Economic empowerment (SDGs 1,2,7,8,9)
4. Food security (SDGs 1,2,3,15)
5. Healthcare (SDGs 2,3,10,11)
6. Environmental sustainability/water and sanitation (SDGs 6,7,11,12,14,15)
7. Conflict resolution/peace promotion (SDGs 16,11)
8. Disaster relief, mitigation and resilience (SDGs 5,13,16)

SDG – Gender Equality Target 5.4: *Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate*

<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/>

SI position statements relevant to this inquiry

The most relevant policy statements for this inquiry are:

Economic Empowerment <https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/SI-WWS-Womens-economic-empowerment.pdf>

Soroptimist International urges governments to:

- ratify and implement the International Labour Organization's four key gender equality Conventions: the Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100), Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111), Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No. 156) and Maternity Protection Convention (No. 183);
- ensure equal representation in economic decision-making and the formation of financial policies;
- enact and enforce legislation to guarantee the rights of women and men to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value;
- set national employment policies which promote the harmonisation of work and family responsibilities for women whilst encouraging men to take on more domestic work;

Covid 19 extracts – Care Economy: https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/WWSSPP_COVID19_gender-inequality_final.docx.pdf

Secretary General : *“Everywhere, women are worse off than men, simply because they are women. Inequality and discrimination are the norm. Violence against women, including femicide, is at epidemic levels. Globally, women are still excluded from senior positions in governments and on corporate boards. Fewer than one in ten world leaders is a woman [...]The economic fallout of*



the pandemic is affecting those who work in the informal economy; small and medium-size businesses; and people with caring responsibilities, who are mainly women [...] Gender inequality harms everyone”

Where Soroptimist International Stands: These are the principles that Soroptimist International strongly supports and will advocate for on behalf of Women and Girls: • Ensure that future rebuilding of services is based through participation and collaboration on **protecting human rights and delivering an effective humanitarian response for all addressing the disproportionate and accumulative health and socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 on women**, Black and ethnic minority people, disabled people, older people, and others hit hardest by it. • Enabling women and girls to have a leadership voice in their communities, locally nationally and globally to build relevant and effective new services and improved structures.

The care economy pathway looks at reward, reduce and redistribute and recognise. (see appendix)

Locally

Our verbal statement follows contributions by phone interview **caring for the disabled and ageing**, national written, webinar and club contributions over past 3 years to disproportionate impact on women and girls, and alliance submissions on **care for children**, and how those systems impact our lives at work.

Ageing Australia: World Economic Forum: *The Baby Boomer generation presents a fiscal challenge. Australia has the third-highest life expectancy rate among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, and its federal government is the primary funder of retiree services including pensions.*

‘**Caring for the ageing**’ is in dire need of better structures, systems and family options – maybe similar to the reform in childcare over a decade ago. This matter is discussed in committees elsewhere but should dovetail with this review. **Families bear the brunt** of ageing populations until some tragic trigger allows government help in some form or another. Higher care is an expense to the ageing (sell home), family whose unpaid care (sometimes at a distance) is stretched beyond coping, and then special care may then be borne by the public purse. The family support for elderly and **disabled** is not recognised like childcare in our society. **Dementia** is even more complex.

https://www.apec.org/docs/default-source/publications/2022/3/unpaid-care-and-domestic-work-counting-the-costs/222_psu_unpaid-care-and-domestic-work.pdf?sfvrsn=cac93c7c_2

During the care economy speeches for Federal election in May and in following budget in October 2022, caring is being valued as a fundamental anchor for our wellbeing and our economy.

In the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of August 2021, the findings for South East Queensland are gender gap is mapped (highlighting **difference across capital cities**). Also refer to the appendix for more fine-grained mapping.

This indicates a continuing trend that indicates further **inequality in attitudes** (misogyny definition includes prejudice against women, take men at their word while dismissing or trivializing a woman with the same opinion).

The following diagram and bar chart are from the APEC report



Figure 10. Holistic approach to addressing unpaid work

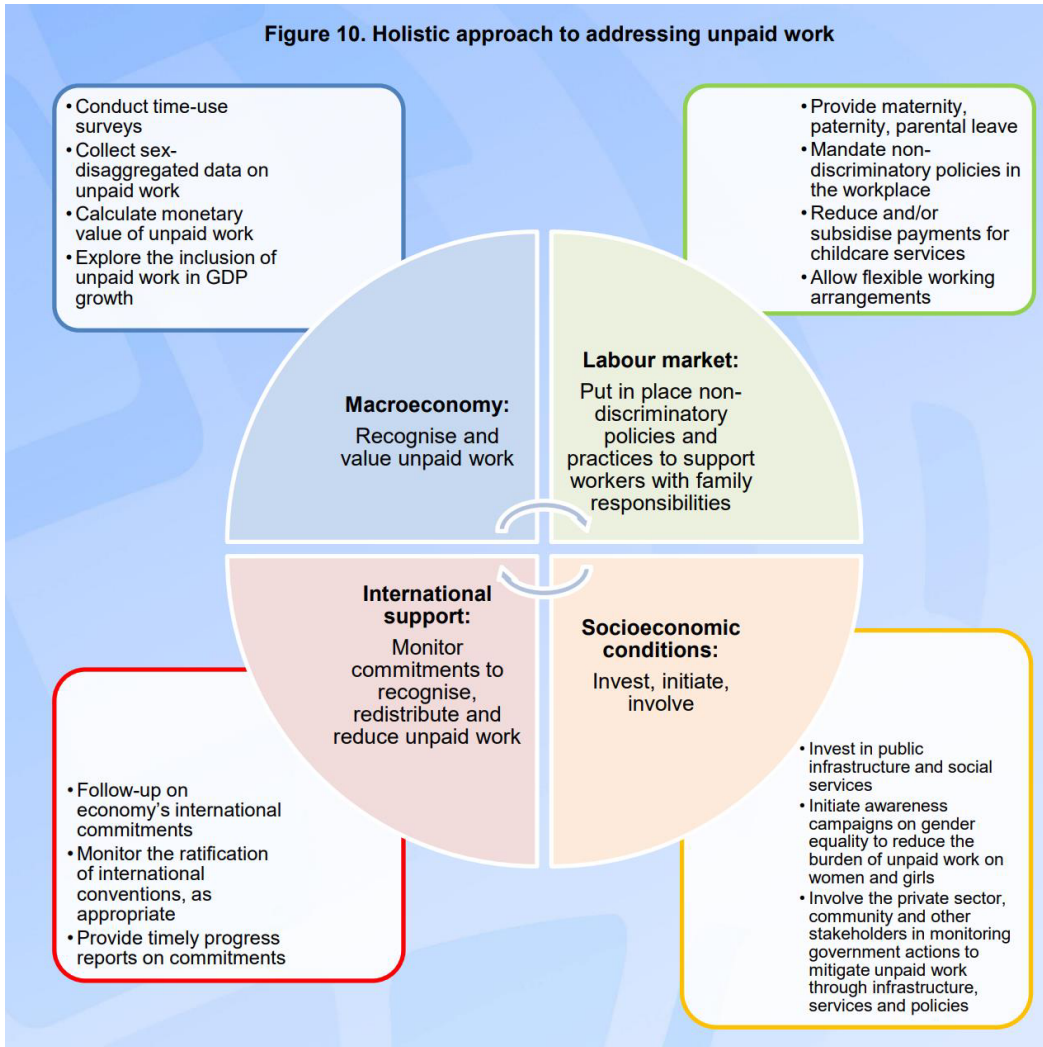
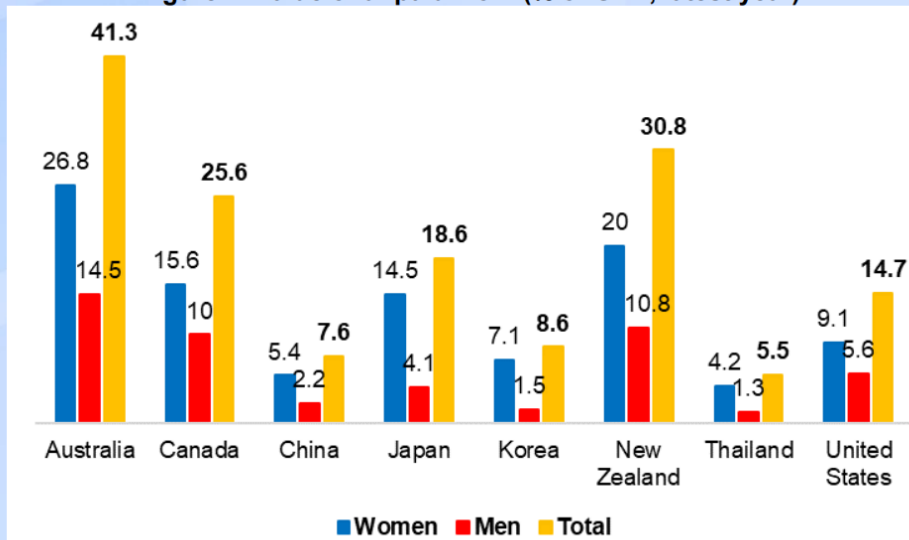


Figure 7. Value of unpaid work (% of GDP, latest year)



Source: ILO, "Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work" (Geneva: ILO, 2018).



Interim Report Recommendations and SI Response

Recommendation & Suggested SI response

Recommendation 1

6.12 The committee recommends that, as a matter of priority, the Australian Government include new questions in the Census and/or new regular surveys of a representative group of workers to determine the extent, nature and effects of the interaction of work and care responsibilities across Australia. This data collection project should survey workers every five years with the aim of:

- analysing the extent and nature of the interaction of work and care responsibilities across Australia, with consideration of particular subgroups including (but not limited to): o age; o gender; o type of care; o extent of workforce participation.
- generating data to allow extensive analysis of the work and care system, and how it affects outcomes for working carers.

Full support of the recommendation 1.

Acknowledging and recognising data about the interaction of work and care responsibilities is at the forefront of valuing the role, primarily for women in the workforce.

- This requires allocating resources and funding to conduct **time-use surveys** to determine time spent on the various categories of unpaid work prevailing in households (e.g., housework, caregiving and voluntary services) and, at the same time, calculate their monetary equivalent.
- Time-use surveys must be designed to provide **gender-disaggregated data** which could be used to inform a gender inclusive policy.

Recommendation 2

6.20 The committee recommends that the Australian Government develop an analysis of care work classifications and wage structures to systematically address underpayments and lift wages in the care sector. Such an analysis should: □ consider the variability and value of work across the care sector; □ establish the interrelationships across care types; and □ recognise the inherent value of care work.

Broad support of the recommendation 2.

An analysis of care work classifications and wage structures can highlight issues of undervaluing (and underpaying) of care occupations and care work, mostly performed by women.

- Low-wages that are typical of care work and many care workers are women and that **gender-based biases** remain in our society. Examination of care work classifications and wage structures must highlight similarities and differences in comparison with similar care economies (like UK, US, and Canada). See OECD benchmarking
- Australia **cannot continue to financially undervalue** highly feminised work in **care industries** and various sectors (health and allied care, community care, aged care, disability care, early childhood care, respite care, pastoral care, etc).
- To Julia Gillard, this might be **systemic** misogyny. (see definitions in appendix)
- Generally, employers perceive occupational and work classifications as standards for skills required and a statement of responsibilities expected of workers. Job descriptions have been a **one-way instrument** to attract prospective employees. On the other hand,



employees see wage structures and employment conditions as a primary motivating factor to engage in the workforce.

- We note that the year 2021 is considered as the year of the **great resignation**, where people quit their jobs at historic rates. This means that the purpose of a job description has changed significantly, employers need to take these new trends into account to **avoid losing good talent**.
- Valuing care work must match both employer and workforce demands right skills, right jobs, right conditions, and right remuneration. This is an **opportune time** to ensure care work classifications and structures respond appropriately.

Recommendation 3

6.35 The committee recommends that the Australian Government amend the Fair Work Act 2009, including section 65 of that Act, to: ☐ make the right to request flexible work available to all workers and to remove the stigma attached to its use when confined to carers; ☐ replace the 'reasonable business grounds' provision at section 65(5) under which employers can refuse a flexible working arrangement, with refusal only on the grounds of 'unjustifiable hardship'; ☐ introduce a positive duty on employers to reasonably accommodate flexible working arrangements. ☐ require consultation with workers about flexibility requests; and ☐ revise sections 738 and 739 of the Act to introduce a process of appeal to the Fair Work Commission, for decisions made by

Qualified support to the recommendation 3.

Any amendments to the Fair Work Act must consider current government reforms to the workplace and industrial relations system.

- **Conflicting** legislation may do **more harm than good**, specifically to women who are in low-skilled jobs, or in casual or temporary work arrangements. Any additional processes to engage with employers about flexible working arrangements should not put these women in more **precarious positions** in their workplaces. This is important with the proposed amendments **Workplace Relations Bill** introduced this week.
- Introducing a process of appeal must clarify and provide **operational definitions** for 'flexibility' 'unjustifiable hardship' and 'reasonable business grounds.' These terms can mean **differently for various workplace stakeholders**, but most meanings are skewed to mean employers' **operational convenience**.
- Amendments must also provide for a **mechanism of support and advocacy for women** in vulnerable and precarious situations to access **umpire or independent panels** established for this purpose.

Recommendation 4

6.45 The committee recommends that the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations investigate legislative reforms to the Fair Work Act 2009 and any other associated workplace laws, to enact a '**right to disconnect**' from work. This right should:☐ enable and support productive work from home and flexibility of work;☐ protect the right of workers to disconnect from their job outside of contracted hours and to enforce this right with their employer;☐ place a **positive duty on employers** to reasonably accommodate the right wherever possible; and ☐ allow employees to appeal to the Fair Work Commission where the right is not being enacted by employers.



Qualified support to the recommendation 4.

Workplace relations system reforms must redefine **workplace productivity** that captures and values the well-being and care responsibilities [of the workforce, primarily women] in the equation. Valued people drive productivity. Any future reforms must integrate an **employer education strategy** that highlights this key message to **demonstrate a duty of care**.

- We live and work in a technology dynamic world as **employers embrace digitisation**, digital technology, and digital transformation: fast-paced and rapid.
- The diversity of work activities and choices may offer women in the labour force to access and use technology – where they **want to work or what type of work** they want to do.
- Australian employers from **globalised** industries (supply chain and logistics, transport, aviation, manufacturing, food processing, pharmaceutical, etc) have been **providing personal digital technology equipment** to their workforce and have been **demanding 24/7** connection their management systems, wherever they are. This may have significant adverse health impacts, with strange **biorhythms**.
- Occupational and job descriptions highlight this connectivity provision primarily aimed at **'workforce productivity'**. The situation makes many women vulnerable and their capacity to engage with employers about their **'right to disconnect'** **face a power imbalance**, hinder their career progression, and negatively impact on their **well-being and care** responsibilities.
- Having a job is generally empowering for women in the labour force. However, the constant struggle to integrate care responsibilities makes it **burdensome** if our workplace systems and **structures are not supportive**.
- For example, at the moment in Queensland **remote call centre workers must be on the computer** – logged in and active – for all working hours except 15 minutes for morning and afternoon teas and the mandatory 30 minutes lunch break. Breaching that may trigger dismissal.
- The **onus** for wellbeing at work is **transferred from the employer to the worker** and this defeats any workplace legislation.

The **right to disconnect** is a worker's (wellbeing) right,
and in future maybe a human right
worthy of placement in an
Australian Bill of Rights

Recommendation 5

6.54 The committee recommends that the Australian Government amend the *Fair Work Act 2009* to provide improved rostering rights for employees, and in particular working carers, by:

- ensuring employers implement rostering practices that are **predictable, stable and focused** on fixed shift scheduling (for example, fixed times and days); and
- amending section 145A of the Act to require employers genuinely consider employee views about the impact of proposed roster changes, and take the views of the employee, including **working carers**, into consideration when **changing rosters** and other work arrangements.



Qualified support to the recommendation 5.

Flexibility and rostering rights are interrelated concepts in workplaces. Working women's access to these workplace processes must be **clear, easy to navigate, and subject to appeal** if unreasonable.

Flexibility and rostering rights must be seen as positive workplace engagement strategies by employers that **provide motivation** for workplace **productivity** and individual **well-being**. Therefore, it is expected that workplace is a safe environment where individuals need to be strong and confident enough to "give and take".

Any amendments to the Fair Work Act 2009 must also consider current or planned workplace and industrial relations reforms of the Government so that they **do not add confusion**, especially for women in precarious employment who have care responsibilities.

Story:

R is 57 years old and still working fulltime so she can pay her bills/ mortgage.
She has ailing parents living in the next street, and
a daughter K who has returned home as a single working (PT) mother of two young children.

R is in the sandwich generation:
this is what families do everywhere.
Her situation is that needs to coordinate interesting breakfasts, elder care, childcare and prep drop off, before she can consider public transport to commute to work in the city.
Coordinating afternoons can be just as exciting logistically on a good day.

Then there is a need to be available for doctors' appointments, covid and infectious frights at childcare (hand foot and mouth), my aged care assessments (previously postponed without notice) and more.

Both R and K love their work, and are motivated but there is limited flexibility.

The strain means their homelife is reflecting badly on the perception of ongoing willingness to participate in the workforce or with foreseeable career promotion.
The housing crisis is exacerbating issues for independence.

This too shall pass – in a few years – but what is the cost.

Recommendation 6

6.65 The committee recommends the Australian Government amend, as soon as is practicable, the Paid Parental Leave Act 2010 to legislate for a paid parental leave period of 26 weeks.

Full support to the recommendation 6

SI notes that the Government is progressing actions to introduce paid parental leave of 26 weeks, and argued in the federal budget. This allows sharing of parental responsibilities and strengthens long-term relationships between new parents, baby, and work.



Recommendation 7

6.80 The committee recommends that in the upcoming 2022-23 Budget, the Australian Government commits to long-term increases in funding to First Nations community-controlled Early Childhood Education and Care, with a particular focus on regional, remote and some urban areas.

Full support to the recommendation 7.

SI acknowledges that the nature and type of early childhood education and care required by First Nations people and their communities-in-place must be appropriate, relevant and responsive. Long-term funding commitment from the Government is very much welcomed.

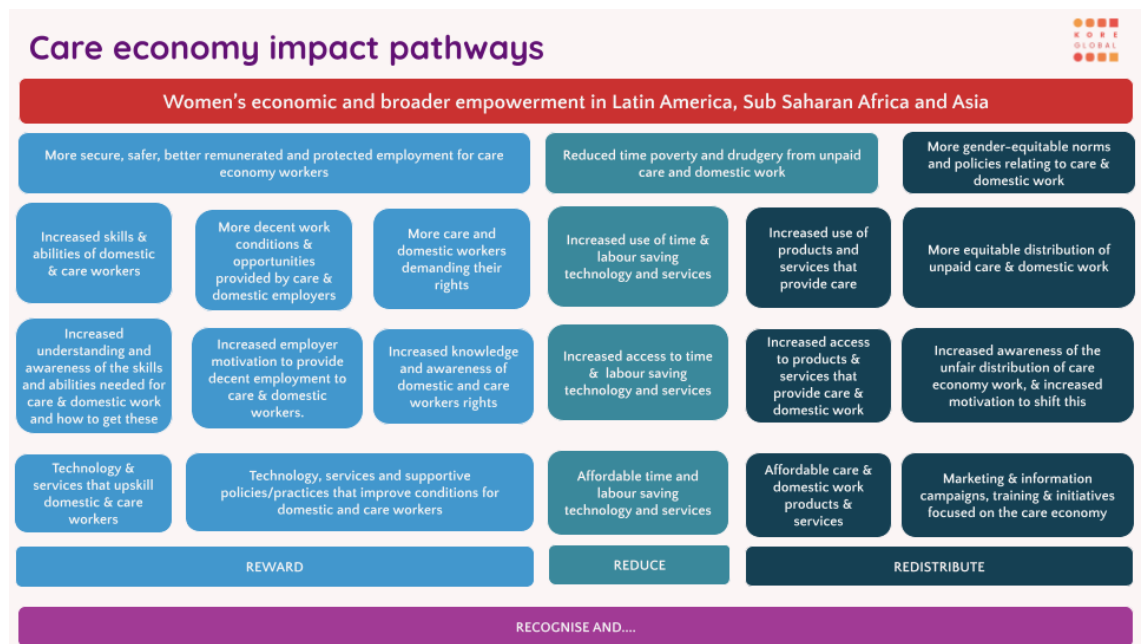
Recommendation 8

6.88 The committee recommends that the Australian Government amend the relevant Social Policy and Family Assistance Laws to ensure that First Nations people are not required to meet the requirements of the activity test in order to receive subsidised childcare.

Full support to the recommendation 8.

SI welcomes this recommendation and acknowledges that activity tests provide undue stress and anxiety to First Nations people accessing the labour market.

How to?



Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this inquiry.





Hansard transcript

DAVIS, Dr Donnell, Director and Programme Convenor, Soroptimist International South East Asia Pacific MYLES, Ms Luz Bernadette, advocate Soroptimist International South East Asia Pacific Brisbane Club [10:10]

CHAIR: Welcome. I understand information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses and evidence has been provided to you. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear? Dr Davis: My role is the director, one of few directors, for South East Asia Pacific—a new company after 100 years of history.

CHAIR: Thank you. Would you like to make a short opening statement before we ask you some questions? Dr Davis: Yes, please. Our role is to be the feminist lens on what happens, not just in Australia but in our region, which is 13 countries. We have an obligation to be really savage so we shall try to be that. We are also a voice for the voiceless. We're a grassroots organisation. We have 129 clubs and 2,339 members at the moment—as of last week. We need to take the voices of our grassroots clubs up do to something fairly useful. That's our role in advocacy. But it has got plenty of names: programme—the language that we use across the 13 countries. We also advocate for single mums, and for people who care for the ageing and people with dementia. This is why we wanted to focus on that part, because child care has been a very big part of your other submissions. We wanted to fill in some of the gaps. In Australia we have an obligation to honour the international standards and the international policies that we have—I should really refer to those. In our paper we've also benchmarked against the OECD and against Asia Pacific and that's a brand new report in Asia-Pacific. We need to look at these international things and turn them into something cultural here at home. Some of our stats in the report are also Brisbane based and the capital cities—they're in the appendix, capital cities but specifically in Brisbane. The highlighted ones are Brisbane because you're having this hearing here in Brisbane.

How we approach this—we wanted to absolutely focus on your interim report and look at those. We fully support your first area on data. On value of care, we have a broad support but we have some disclaimers there and clarifications there. With the Fair Work Act there are some areas that may have some unintended consequences, and we need some better definitions. We'll talk about that. In the section on recommendation 4 'the right to disconnect' we're urging that. There's a bit of a double-edge sword—it's a benefit, but it could be a big red flag for human rights and basic rights for women. In recommendation 5 we have a qualified support. In that area we worry about flexibility and the duty of care. When you look at this the onus is on the women or the workers for their own wellbeing, so they have to be confident in that area. We provide real storytelling, real examples, about that. We fully support parental leave. The 26 weeks just got a blessing so we're very pleased about that. We fully support the recommendations on First Nations and the child care subsidy.

How we approach this—I'll be as quick as I can. We wanted to talk about the international bits that we represent. We have to be your voice in the UN. We're one of the few ECOSOC accredited special people to do that, so we need to honour both ways on that. We are also your voice for SDG 5.4, and I'll read that, if you're not used to the Sustainable Development Goals.

CHAIR: We are. Dr Davis: You are? Okay, fair enough. It's starts: 'Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work', and there's another paragraph. Today, we want to look at our position statements on economic empowerment, and that's where we've got these international rules that we've ratified: the Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100), the discrimination convention No. 111



for employment and occupation, the workers with family responsibilities and the maternity protections conventions. And there's a little bit more in there. The second area we want to talk about is the care economy, as defined after COVID-19, because it's a much-changed landscape from a few years ago to now. In our submission, we've looked at models to assess and evaluate your policy framework, and at the end we've actually got how to do it with the four Rs. That sounds like sucking eggs, but, for us, we need to be that prescriptive when we're being a voice on behalf of you elsewhere and on behalf of us. You all have a copy of this? Okay. That was the introductory statement—

CHAIR: I don't know if we do have a copy of that. If you could leave us one, that would be great. Dr Davis: So what do you have? CHAIR: I have notes on your submission. Dr Davis: There's a protocol for who signs off on these, but I guess it's going to be me.

Senator O'NEILL: Has it been submitted to the secretariat yet? Dr Davis: Yes. Senator O'NEILL: But it wasn't submitted a long time ago—it's a recent submission? Dr Davis: Yes. CHAIR: We'll make sure we all get it—don't worry.

Dr Davis: We've been going for 100 years, and we had to reform and restructure in May this year. So that's why you've got me and Luz, but that's not necessarily a bad thing! Luz, would you like to do your introduction?

Ms Myles: I'm not a great speaker, because I've got expressive dysphasia. I will focus on the key recommendations that have been provided in the interim report. I'll read my notes as I go. For recommendation No.1 about acknowledging and recognising data, the interaction of work and care responsibilities is at the forefront of valuing the role in the workforce performed primarily by women, because they are the ones we are representing today. We're volunteer based and we're an advocacy organisation. We don't have paid staff. When we talk about data, we need to consider intersectionality and attributes of intersectionality in the equation, and put that in a meta-analysis. In recommendation No. 2, looking at care work classifications and wage structures, we can highlight some of the issues about underpaying workers and undervaluing the work. The care occupations and care work are mostly performed by women. We know that. When we talk about the care economy, we're talking about 3 different approaches: care work done at home, which is invisible and unpaid, and we're also talking about work done outside the home, which is done by people who are in care work and are care professionals—disability care, child care and all the other contexts of that occupation. Low wages are typical of care work, and many care workers are women. Gender based biases remain in our society. The examination of care work and the classification and wage structures must highlight similarities and differences in comparison with similar care economies, like the UK, the US and Canada. We have provided some references to the OECD benchmarking. Dr Davis: And Asia-Pacific—the new report. Third is the expected traditional female role of any caring.

Ms Myles: Australia cannot continue to financially undervalue highly feminised work in care industries and various sectors like health, community care work, aged care, disability, pastoral care and many others. Like Julia Gillard said, this might be a systemic misogyny, and you might want to talk about that a little bit.

Dr Davis: When we say what causes this feminised workforce, it may have been ingrained for centuries as misogyny, meaning not enough respect for women. There are three definitions for 'misogyny', and, generally, the gentlest way of explaining it is as prejudice against women, taking men at their word while dismissing or trivialising a woman with the same opinion and then there's a



whole lot that are uglier. When it comes to this systemic thing, our labour systems for centuries have probably continued that. It's now time, especially after hearing how feminised the workforce is and how difficult it would be to keep a man in a childcare role, that, yes, we stepped up. When we look at Finland, Sweden and some of those places, of course we can learn a lot from that. But we can also learn a lot from Indigenous cultures not just in Australia but elsewhere. Everybody in the family and everybody in that community has a care role, and they're expected to do it whether it's paid or not. Generally, we could learn a lot from that, and I'm especially learning a lot from our other 13 countries. But also—

CHAIR: I'm just going to open up to questions when you're ready. I'd like to ask a couple of questions, and then I may go to the deputy chair. I understand from the notes that I have from material you've provided that you have some expertise and some interest around migrant workers in particular. Is that the case? Ms Myles: Not necessarily. The care economy is highly feminised—we know that—but it's also racialized. We know, anecdotally, in Australia, most of the work is done by women in the care industry and in care occupations. You can actually look at the hierarchy and see that migrant women, women from a non-English speaking background or Indigenous women do the nursing assistance, disability care and support work. It's because that's the only job they can get. Most of these women have very, very high qualifications from their own country, but, when they migrated to Australia, it wasn't recognised. The process of recognition of our skills and qualifications is still very, very vague, and not enough people are able to get there because it's also expensive.

CHAIR: So recognition of prior qualifications is an important issue, as is access to decent conditions in the areas where they're concentrated. Are there any other specific recommendations you'd like us to consider in relation to migrant workers in the care sector?

Ms Myles: Yes, occupational hierarchies. We heard this morning about how it's very specific to access the work, but who is working? We need to recognise that the conditions that people are working under in providing care work will reflect the conditions or quality of care they provide to people, so that's very important. In relation to women—not necessarily migrant women because you can be a migrant but not necessarily have attributes that are discriminated against—there are attitudes about women and what they can do in the country, and there are attitudes at home because, as I said, the household perpetrates a culture of the work they do outside. Some cultures actually have a very different perception and understanding of how women are and that they live with us, so that's very difficult to address. Dr Davis: Some of it is a language issue, and that's why we were very careful about definitions about productivity, because productivity to a worker might mean something totally different to the productivity of the employer. So, this employer-employee relationship is based on the confidence to negotiate. The thing is, we do have migrant women working in these areas who may not have that confidence and may not understand the language, especially legal language, which we're making in this process. So we need to be very cognisant. They're probably not getting appropriate training, and if they are it might be in gobbledegook or buzzwords, so we need to make sure that we're using very simple English in the way that we do that and that we aren't just taking the consequences of these decisions lightly. That's one of the big barriers for migrant women, too.

Senator O'NEILL: In light of having just received your submission, I've had a quick scan through it, and perhaps the committee might have more questions on notice after having had a look at it, because there are some quite interesting bits in there in terms of the international data. In the interests of time, I've read carefully your response to our first recommendation. You mentioned



data, and we are very concerned about data. Given the breadth of the Sorooptimist spread, across Australia, one of the key ways that we pick up data is through our big census; what would be the things that would need to be embedded to capture the things that you believe are important for work and care, going forward, if we were able to get new questions on the census? I think it's being designed as we speak. Dr Davis: I think that would be brilliant, and that's the only way we can have responsible information. However, the fortnightly household income systems that have been running for some time now define and map vulnerability in a much, much better and socially appropriate way. The thing is that vulnerability is broken down into proper datasets, and it is not necessarily as skewed as some of the bland questions that we get. It wasn't until the ABS data came out just recently that we knew the types of problems that we had just here in Brisbane. We'd been using five-year-old information. When it comes to meta-analysis, our job is to cherry-pick the data across all sorts of credible sources, to make sense of it and then to turn it into actions for what we can do at grassroots level, what we can do at region or state level, what we can do as Australia and then what we can do with our 13 countries and still be fair and equitable— not, 'Let's just stick to Australia because it's easy.' It's really important. The beauty of doing the Asia-Pacific stuff is that we can learn what these other countries, and poor countries, have to do to make things equitable for their women. Some of them are leading. They can show us the way. That data is not just our internal data and **stuff** from the ABS. It's not fluffy. It's really important stuff. But we need the fine-grained data that the other independent credible sources provide us, and then we can actually overlay them and have a much better way of tackling issues and pinpointing specific areas where policy can be applied and really make magic.

Senator O'NEILL: Can I ask one final question: is there a jurisdiction of best practice that you would point the committee to, based on the research that you've done so far?

Ms Myles: There's the ASEAN Comprehensive Framework on Care Economy, or ACFCE. They've done work with the five countries involved and focusing on population and sectors through care work. This was actually adopted at the 38th and 39th ASEAN Summits last year. They're focusing on redefining care as an investment rather than an expenditure and recognising the long-term returns, including in employment, and the fiscal benefits of care that outweigh the costs. It's about improving the reputation of care work, care workers and the care system and providing incentives and promoting care careers that create gender equity or equality.

Senator O'NEILL: But is there one jurisdiction, do you think, that's doing better than others in that regard? Dr Davis: You mean in the Asia-Pacific? Senator O'NEILL: Yes. Dr Davis: Well, yes, there have been major changes, like in Thailand—Thailand's a bit of a mixed bag, but some of the initiatives that they're coming up with—and definitely Singapore. It's the countries where we have women in leadership, by the way, and when we come to the OECD and the Scandinavian countries it's also those countries that have young women in charge, who actually listen and are mentored by older women.

Senator O'NEILL: Some of them dance, apparently! Dr Davis: With beer in their hands!

CHAIR: Senator Stewart, do you have any questions for these witnesses? Senator STEWART: Senator O'Neill covered the question that I had, so thank you.

Senator ASKEW: I just wanted to clarify: during your introductory comments you were talking about the further definitions of terms, so I'm assuming that's within the Fair Work Act. Could you elaborate on what you were talking about, which words and so on you wanted to have definitions for? Dr



Davis: Some are in there and some are not. In your interim statement, you talked about flexibility. Senator ASKEW: What's the concern that you have with this? I just wanted to understand the concept of where you're coming from. Dr Davis: It sounds wonderful, but it also sounds like the onus is on the person to look after their own wellbeing, not on the employer to be mindful of the impacts. As we talked about casual labour, 'Oh, can you come in?' They might be filling in three positions, not just one fill-in position. This flexibility, while it sounds wonderful, might not necessarily be wonderful, unless that employee is strong enough to so, 'No, I can give you this and this,' or, 'No, can you ask me next week?' or 'I can only cover these shifts.' That's the one, and the one I was really particular about was the right to disconnect. But you have done the homework for the others.

Ms Myles: The right to disconnect is well and truly a great concept, but similarly the issue is about how empowered women are in the workplace. Some workplaces are good and some are worse. We have a range of industries where women work, not just in the care professions, and they are varied. Women's occupations within globalised industries are often in industries like supply chain and logistics, aviation and manufacturing or tourism and hospitality. At the moment there are many employers, especially if they're based in Singapore but they have workers in Australia, and so the employee has to navigate time zones, navigate requirements and get work or job orders by digital technology. I'm just finding the numbers. Dr Davis: They do midnight Zooms too. Ms Myles: Yes, there's no time limit. It doesn't matter whether it's a weekend, there are no holidays in this globalised industry. Women need to manage themselves to navigate this, to empower themselves to ask for the right to disconnect.

Senator ASKEW: So that's your concern with this term? Ms Myles: Yes. Senator ASKEW: It's actually the fact that you might be having to doing Zooms during the night and things like that, or is it contact by technology? Dr Davis: The thing is that wellbeing and mental health are dependent on how much sleep you get. If you don't have nanna naps in the daytime, you don't get to do your 2 am or your 5 am or your midnight gigs. However, when we're talking about the care economy, we need to realise about aged care and when you've got dementia in your family. That care may be unpaid and it may be paid through other means, but you've still got those silly hours. In fact, night-time is horrible when you've got ageing people and dementia. We haven't really talked about how you look after the mental health of carers or the discipline to say no. Well, you can't say no in some cases when it's not negotiable. When it comes to 'unjustifiable hardship', I think we need to put in some examples. When it comes to 'unreasonable business grounds', it's when you continually being asked to step up and there are conflicts. Then it comes back to how many conflicting pieces of legislation. If we're going to bring the Fair Work Act forward, we have to make sure it doesn't conflict with the principles or the delivery. This comes back to the grassroots people, asking the people who were doing it; not necessarily us, but definitely the voiceless people who are so busy that they don't have time to do this, maybe just a phone interview. Of course, we're very particular about the right to disconnect because of post COVID. The thing is, sometimes mental health caring is caring on the phone, and that could be very strange hours.

CHAIR: Thank you so much for your submission, which we would like to formally receive and publish on our website with your permission. Dr Davis: Yes. We can give you more if you wish. If you have follow-up questions, we would be happy to follow through.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for that offer. Thanks for appearing here today. We appreciate the information you've given the committee in your responses to our questions. Thank you



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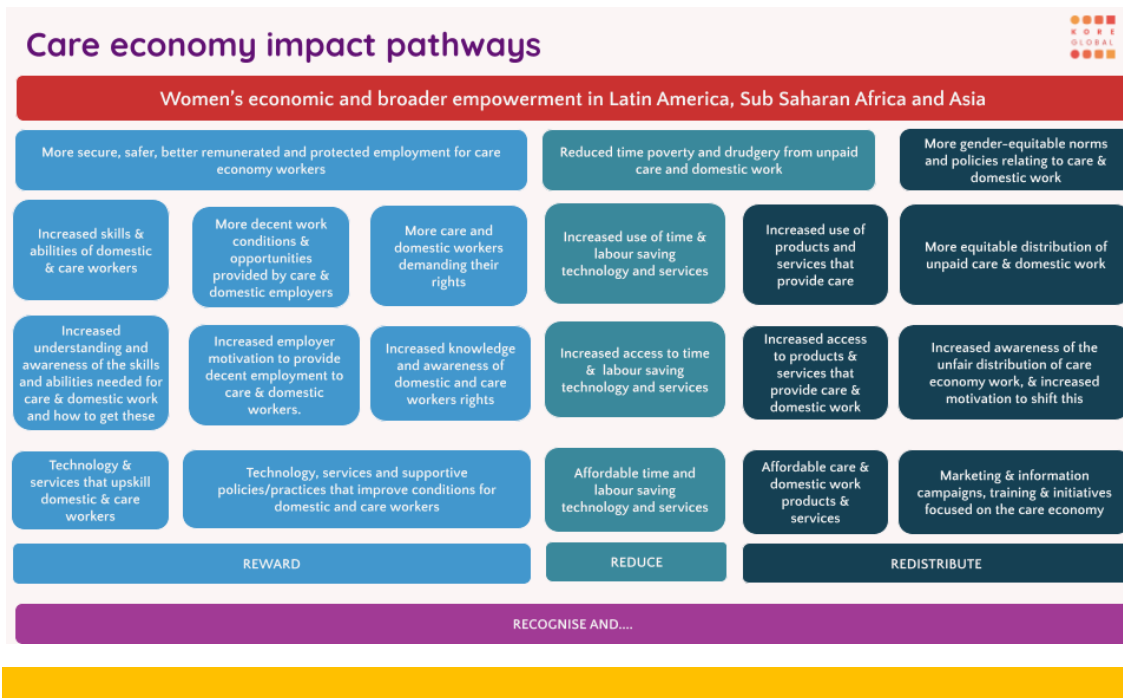
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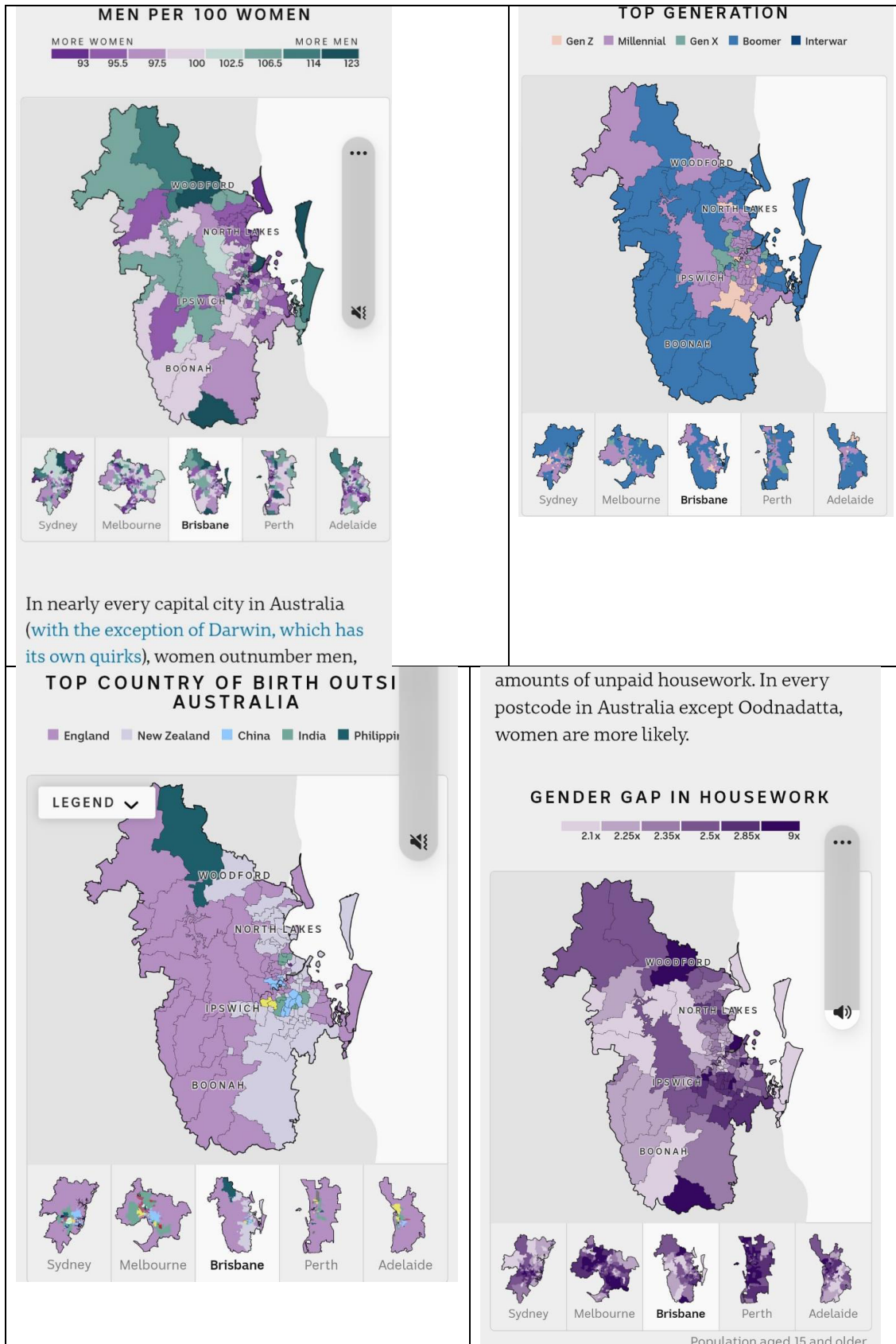


Appendix



Misogyny

- hatred of, contempt for, or **prejudice against women**.
- It can be blatant, like violence against women, or it can be less obvious, like subtly perpetuating inequality between men and women. Someone with misogynistic beliefs, for example, might **take men at their word while dismissing or trivializing a woman with the same opinion**.
- male chauvinist



In nearly every capital city in Australia (with the exception of Darwin, which has its own quirks), women outnumber men,

amounts of unpaid housework. In every postcode in Australia except Oodnadatta, women are more likely.



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