



# Chief Executive Women

Women leaders enabling women leaders

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Dear Ministers

## **SUBMISSION – FOREIGN POLICY WHITE PAPER**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide both broad-based consultation and public submissions in the development of the Australia's Government's Foreign Policy White Paper.

Chief Executive Women (CEW) is committed to advancing the economic status of women in Australia, and is driven by the purpose of "women leaders enabling women leaders". CEW offers a unique perspective, representing more than 420 of Australia's most senior women leaders from the corporate, public service, academic and not-for-profit sectors.

This submission addresses the contribution that the White Paper can make to deliver a foreign policy that accelerates global gender equality. While there is much change necessary to deliver gender equality in Australia, we believe Australians share the values of respect and inclusion for all, and that there is broad-based community support for equal opportunity and gender equality.

DFAT is to be commended on the [Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy](#), released in 2016. The priorities outlined in this strategy can place gender equality at the forefront of our international policy engagement. We encourage you to expand the influence of this strategy from the aid sphere into the broader foreign policy context. This will enable the new Foreign Policy White Paper to strengthen supporting gender frameworks and goals, any counteract any potential replacement or diminution.

In many quarters, we are already an acknowledged leader in this arena. Making this strategy a central plank of our foreign policy affords Australia the opportunity to be more explicit in our aspiration for global leadership.

Affording gender equality similar status to issues such as security, peace and economic stability, rather than relegating it to a secondary issue within the White Paper, will have great impact. We are encouraged by the existence of the Gender Equality Branch within DFAT, but submit that elevating this important function beyond the branch level should be considered.



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We also submit that Australia's gender leadership in our region – through the provision of Pacific leadership and participation programmes such as the *Pacific Leadership Programme*, *Young Women's Leadership Programme* and *Markets for Change programme* – should be supported and strengthened through the new Foreign Policy White Paper.

Gender equity is a global challenge requiring global solutions. The route to influence and impact is by encouraging the international community to impose norms on its members, for example through gender-specific fora such as the UN Commission for the Status of Women and APEC's Women and Economy Forum, and other multilateral fora such as G20 and ASEAN.

The G20 communique following the Brisbane meetings, for example, included a specific commitment to human capital, setting the goal to reduce the gap in participation rates between men and women by 25 per cent by 2025. This would bring more than 100 million women into the labour force, significantly increase global growth and reduce poverty and inequality. We submit that the Foreign Policy White Paper should explore how Australia can advocate action to ensure this commitment is delivered by 2025. Improved global growth and reduced inequality are key defences against the populism currently driven by genuine concerns of an uncertain future held by those who feel the impact of ageing population with increasing life expectancy, reduction in full time jobs from the impact of technology and increasing globalisation driven by digitisation.

We also believe that gender equity plays a crucial role in all aspects of policy engagement, as recognized by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, where gender equality is included as a specific goal (Goal 5), together with 'No Poverty' (Goal 1), 'Zero Hunger' (Goal 2), 'Decent Work and Economic Growth' (Goal 8), 'Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure' (Goal 9) and 'Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions' (Goal 16).

The commitments made in the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy to promote gender equality in the Department's own corporate and human resource policies and practices are an important vehicle to mainstream gender equality across foreign policymaking. We believe these policies are powerful in driving change, particularly when aligned with the commitments to transparency in progress to gender equality from our partners, such as those nations who receive Australian foreign aid. We believe strengthening these commitments – by requiring government entities and departments to report to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, and by restoring the women's budget statement evaluation and ABS surveys of hours worked outside the work place – would make a significant impact. At minimum, DFAT could follow these routines.



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In summary, we believe the Foreign Policy White Paper can accelerate global gender equality by:

- Extending the influence of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy 2016 from the aid sphere into the broader foreign policy context
- Affording gender equality similar status to issues such as security, peace and economic stability
- Emphasising Australia's gender leadership in our region through significant programs
- Advocating that commitments outlined in the G20 communique be delivered
- Advocating gender equality as central plank in any global climate change strategy
- Committing that DFAT follows, at a minimum, the corporate and human resource policies and practices outlined in the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

Yours sincerely

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President, Chief Executive Women



**Diane Smith-Gander**  
Immediate Past President Chief Executive Women

