



# WOMEN@WORK

APRIL 2015

## PSA SHAPES ELECTION POLICY DEBATE

With the NSW election just days away, it is worth considering the policy positions of the major parties on women and women's issues.

### LIBERAL PARTY

Under the banner 'Keep NSW Working', the NSW Liberal policies have no specific focus on women or women's services. Their track record may however give an indication of their position.

In a recent article in the Sunday Telegraph, the State Government blamed women taking maternity leave for staffing shortages at the Department of Family and Community Services.

Since their election in 2011, the State Government have closed over 200 community organisations, including specialist women's refuges; abolished funding for local International Women's Day events; back flipped on specialised Domestic Violence Sergeants; cut funding to local courts making it harder to seek apprehended violence orders; and slashed Victims Compensation (available to women who have experienced domestic or sexual violence).

If re-elected, the Government has indicated that cuts will be made to women's health services.

In 2013, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) launched an inquiry into pregnancy and return to work discrimination.

The PSA surveyed members and made a submission to this Inquiry.

Read the PSA submission [HERE](#)

(<http://psa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Submission-Pregnancy-Return-to-Work-2014.pdf> See website)

The survey results were shocking: over 70% of respondents had experienced discrimination in the workplace while pregnant or after maternity leave (compared to 50% of women overall).

The response of the Government, as an employer, was stony silence.

View Liberal Party policies [HERE](#)

([https://nsw.liberal.org.au/#baird\\_plan](https://nsw.liberal.org.au/#baird_plan))

## AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY

The ALP have released a comprehensive suite of pre-election policies some of which specifically address women.

It is clear that the PSA have influenced the crafting of these policies as some draw heavily on recommendations made by the PSA in its submissions to various inquiries.

The ALP have pledged that, if elected, they will:

- **Reintroduce merit based appeals in the Industrial Relations Commission.** The GSE Act, despite touting the benefits of merit based selection and promotion, provides no avenue for merit based appeals.
- **Double domestic violence leave in the public sector to ten days per calendar year.**
- **Amend the Anti-Discrimination Act to provide a positive obligation for employers to accommodate requests for flexible working arrangements, and education for employers about their obligations in this area.** This position draws heavily on PSA recommendations to the HREOC inquiry into Pregnancy and Return to Work Discrimination.
- **Improve pay discrimination laws.** The pay gap has risen to 18.8% nationally and 16.5% in NSW under the current Government.
- **Introduce new sex discrimination protections for redundancy and temporary employees.**
- **Amend the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act to support sexual assault and domestic violence victims who wish to remain in the workforce and require leave or flexible working arrangements.**

## POLICIES ON WOMEN AND WOMEN'S SERVICES GENERALLY

- **Childcare and schools.** All new schools will be 'multi-purpose education precincts' that provide before and after school care.
- **Violence against women.** Recent figures reveal an epidemic of domestic violence and

sexual assault that costs \$4.5 billion a year in NSW alone. See January edition of Women@Work [HERE](#) for a summary.

(<http://psa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/W@W-January-2015-web.pdf>)

The ALP have pledged to invest \$10 million in women's refuges, establish new specialist courts for domestic violence, set up a Premier's Council for Women, strengthen penalties for breaches of AVOs, expand counselling services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, increase services for Indigenous communities and expand men's behaviour change programs.

- **Victims of crime.** Compensation will be increased to the amount previously available (\$50,000 – reduced to \$15,000 by the Coalition Government), thus boosting compensation to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.
- **Women's health.** Provision of \$50 million for specialist women's health centres plus a boost in funding for women's refuges and rural health and hospitals.
- **Public transport safety.** Return the number of transit security officers to previous levels. Under the Coalition, many of these staff have been redeployed to police fare evasion.

Read more [HERE](#)

([http://act.nswlabor.org.au/50\\_million\\_for\\_women\\_s\\_health\\_centres](http://act.nswlabor.org.au/50_million_for_women_s_health_centres))

## THE GREENS

The Greens also have a comprehensive, specific policy on women and women's issues that is broadly similar to the ALP.

However, the Greens focus more on Legislative Council seats, so the policy is about broad objectives as opposed to specific initiatives.

The Greens NSW will work towards: ensuring apprenticeships and training programs provide equal opportunities for women; equal opportunities for workers with family responsibilities; child care facilities in workplaces; encouraging flexible, secure working conditions; continuing education and training for women workers; ensuring maternity and paternity leave have equal status to encourage shared parenting; parental leave on full pay for up to twelve months; facilitate re-entry, without loss of

occupational status, of women who exit the workforce due to family responsibilities; award-restructuring to upgrade low-paid positions in female dominated areas; ensure women are represented in enterprise bargaining; improve women's superannuation and recognise women's unpaid contribution to the gross national product; promote the use of legal complaints procedures and processes in cases of discrimination; remove sexist language from laws; affirmative action to ensure equal opportunity in education and work; a statutory requirement for equitable representation of women on all boards and committees; affirmative action to ensure more women hold senior positions in public service departments.

## POLICIES ON WOMEN AND WOMEN'S SERVICES GENERALLY

The Greens policy position advocates: respect, safety, opportunity and self-determination; opportunities for full participation by all women in all areas; safety at home, in the community, and the workplace; equal representation in all decision-making bodies; reviewing laws on violence against women as well as developing further protection of victims and naming of perpetrators; education campaigns to change the way violence is viewed, including educating men that violence against women is a crime; establishing a national inquiry into sexual assault; expanding crisis services for women; making special provision for remote communities, including culturally appropriate services for indigenous women and women from culturally diverse backgrounds; ensuring access for women to safe, secure accommodation; increased funding of women's health centres; strengthening laws that prohibit the portrayal of women or children as objects of violence or sexual exploitation; adequately funding women's legal and social resource centres, including women's refuges.

Read the full Greens policy on women [HERE](#)

(<http://archive-nsw.greens.org.au/policies/women>)

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(<http://psa.asn.au/about-the-psa/annual-conference/>)

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