

GENDER-RESPONSIVE POLICIES AND BUDGETS: Rhonda Sharp and Ray Broomhill

Introduction

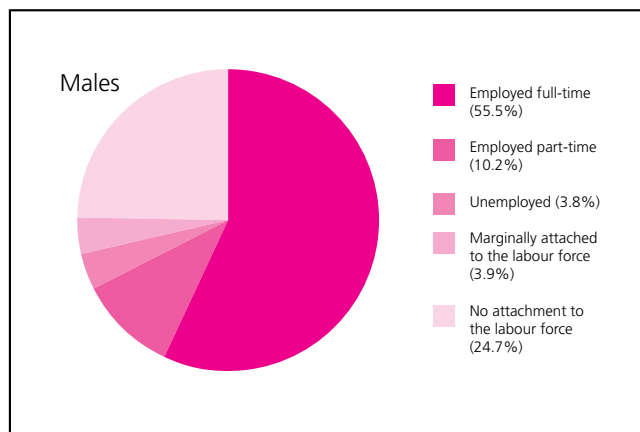
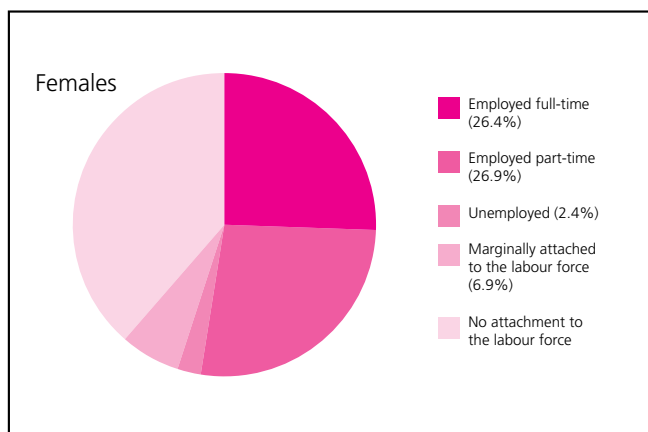
This update of the 2005 chapter 'Gender-responsive policy' in State of South Australia examines ways in which gender differences continue to exist in the paid and unpaid sectors of the South Australian economy and assesses progress made by the state government towards developing gender-inclusive policies. While very significant changes have occurred in both the state's economic and social structures over the past few decades, important gender differences still exist and need to be taken into account by policy makers. We will briefly review the degree to which the policy approach adopted by the Rann

government can be regarded as gender-responsive. We will also outline strategies by which the state government can better incorporate a gender-responsive approach into its policy making and budget processes.

Update of Key trends

The respective positions of women and men in both the paid and unpaid South Australian economic sectors continue to be significantly different. The following charts show profiles of men and women's relationships to the labour force in September 2005 (the latest available data for persons who are marginally attached or have no attachment to the labour force).

A profile of the relationship of South Australian women and men aged 15 years and over to the labour force - September 2005



Sources: ABS (2005) Persons Not In the Labour Force. Cat 6220.0 September 2005; and ABS (2006) Labour Force. Cat 6202.0 July 2006.

The differences revealed by this data about men's and women's relationships to the labour force include:

- *men's labour force participation rate (69.5%) remains higher than women's (54.8%);*
- *almost 50% of employed women work part-time compared to less than 20% of men;*

- *women's official unemployment rate (4.4% of the female labour force) is lower than men's (5.5%);*
- *almost twice as many women as men are defined as 'marginally attached' to the labour force, and a much larger number of women (38.3% of all females 15 years and over) have no attachment to the labour force compared to men (24.7%);*

However, some quite dramatic changes have been experienced by both men and women over the past two or three decades. In State of South Australia 2005 we identified several key changes that had occurred during that period in the gender profile of South Australia's labour force:

- *between 1978 and 2004 the male labour force participation rate in South Australia declined from 79.8% to 69.7% while the female participation rate grew from 44.4% to 53.6%;*
- *the percentage of all women aged 15 years and over in full-time employment has actually remained remarkably steady at around 25% over the entire period 1978-2004 – with virtually no growth over that time in the percentage of women occupying full-time jobs;*
- *the percentage of all women aged 15 years and over working on a part-time basis increased from 15.7% to 26.1% between 1978 and 2004.*

Using data from the latest Census figures available (2001), we also identified a number of important changes underway within the structure of households:

- *the percentage of traditional couple households (with and without dependents) declined from 67% of all households in 1986 to 58% of households in 2001*
- *lone-person households rose by 69% in South Australia between 1986 and 2001;*
- *there was a 55% rise between 1986 and 2001 in households comprising a single parent with a dependent child or children – most of these (80%) are female headed households;*
- *accompanying the rise in diversity of household types and the decline in the male breadwinner model has been an increase in the proportion of lower income households and a polarisation of income levels and opportunities between richer and poorer households.*

Since our publication of this data in State of South Australia 2005, a number of further developments can be observed in these trends:

- *male participation rates have continued to decline slightly – from 69.7% in July 2004 to 69.1% in July 2006 (ABS 2006);*
- *female participation rates have continued to increase fairly significantly – from 53.5% in July 2004 to 55.7% in July 2006 (ABS 2006);*
- *there has been a net increase of 13,400 (or 8%) full-time jobs for women and in July 2006 26.9% of adult females were in full-time employment compared to 25.1% in July 2004 (ABS 2006);*
- *while there has also been a slight net increase (7,200 or 4%) in the number of part-time female jobs, the*

percentage of all adult women over 15 years working part-time has declined slightly from 26.1% in July 2004 to 25.7% in July 2006 (ABS 2006);

- *while net male employment has increased slightly (by 12,200 or 3%) over the past two years, the male labour force participation rate has continued to decline from 69.7% to 69.4% (ABS 2006);*
- *largely as a result of the above trends female earnings have slightly improved in relation to men's earnings in the past couple of years – as shown in the following table:*

Female earnings as a % of male earnings, South Australia 1993–2006

	Feb 1993	Feb 1998	Feb 2003	May 2006
Full-time adult ordinary earnings	87.4	87.6	88.4	89.6
Full-time adult total earnings	83.9	84.0	85.3	87.1
Total earnings	68.2	68.2	67.9	69.5

Source: ABS Cat. 6302.0 Average Weekly Earnings. States and Australia. May 2006.

New data on trends evident in household structure and the relationship between these trends and labour force experience will become available with the publication of the results of the 2006 Census over the next twelve months.

The Rann Government's Approach To Gender-policy Making And Budgets

In State of South Australia we argued that, after a promising beginning, the goal of gender equality was in danger of slipping off the policy agenda with the introduction in March 2004 of the Labor government's state strategic plan. We argued that the Strategic Plan's (SASP) proposed linkages between targets, policy development, programs and the budgets of agencies raises the potential for ensuring gender responsiveness, but at the same time the lack of necessary processes and strategies made such gender responsiveness problematic.

When the record of the Rann government over the past two years is analysed, a number of progressive gender inclusive measures can be identified. A wide-ranging review of the Office for Women, completed in 2005, recommended a number of reforms that echoed the proposed strategy outlined in our 2005 State of South Australia chapter (South Australian

Government 2005). In particular, as a result of this review, an online database of gender disaggregated indicators for policymakers was established in 2006 through a collaboration between the Premier's Council for Women, the Office for Women, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Australian Institute for Social Research at the University of Adelaide (Gender Indicators Online www.aisr.adelaide.edu.au/gio). Such a resource has an important role to play in analysing and monitoring gender differences and changes. Similarly, in 2005 a report was commissioned by the then Minister for the Status of Women Stephanie Key assessing the basis for a women's employment strategy. A gender equity board in the Department of Education and Children's Services has been established and a women's health action plan has been developed. Several other new initiatives also have been introduced including an indigenous women's and men's peak body to enable indigenous voices in policy development. A small gender analysis pilot project involving selective programs of three agencies is underway. A 2006 review of progress in the goals of the SA Strategic Plan has recommended that the next version of the SASP include gender (and aboriginal) disaggregated data in recognition that targets will only be achieved in many cases if strategies specifically address certain groups (South Australia Government 2006: 4).

However these changes, while important, still fall well short of a coherent gender responsive strategy by the Rann government. The lack of a 'whole of government' framework which is discussed below is a crucial limitation. Also, the efforts to date have been slow in their implementation. For example, key recommendations of the Report of the Women's Employment Strategy have not been implemented and a pilot gender budget project has stalled in the face of budgetary cutbacks and the delayed delivery of the 2006 budget. Furthermore, although there were only three specifically gender disaggregated targets in the SA Strategic Plan, the review of SASP concluded that while there had been limited progress these targets were unlikely to be achieved in the Plan's time frame (South Australian Government 2006: 69-70). Finally, the Rann government's controversial decision to replace it's highly effective former Minister for the Status of Women inevitably means that the progress that has been made towards a gender responsive policy and funding approach is likely to be slowed in the short term as the incoming Minister will need time to become acquainted with the issues and to develop and implement her agenda for change.

A New Approach For Pursuing Equity Through A Reconstructed Gender Budget Initiative

A strategy that is increasingly adopted worldwide for

integrating gender issues into government planning, policies, programs, reporting and budgets is a gender-responsive budget initiative. It is also what Labor's pre-election women's policy promised, but has not yet implemented. Adopting gender-responsive budget initiatives that link gender impacts to budgetary policy can be conceived as a strategy for 'mainstreaming' gender into economic policy (Sharp 2003:3). Traditionally, gender mainstreaming strategies pursued by governments worldwide have focused on gender analyses of social policies and programs but have avoided following this through with a strategy to change economic policy and resource allocations at the micro and macro economic levels. Moreover, the results of two decades of rhetoric of 'gender mainstreaming' within both Liberal and Labor South Australian government administrations indicates that the mainstreaming agenda has been subverted. In reality, gender mainstreaming has been associated with practices within government that make gender issues invisible through a failure to assess potential and actual gender impacts of their policies and to 'follow the money'. Mainstreaming can only happen by systematically integrating gender into the planning, policy development, programs and budgets of all agencies as well as into the macro policy level of government. It requires continual and systematic action on the part of government and is not code for eradicating women- or men-specific programs. In the past there has been a tendency by government to leave it to the discretion of agencies to decide whether gender issues are analysed, resourced and reported against gender-disaggregated objectives and targets throughout all their activities. This has not worked.

As a new starting point, a gender-sensitive policy and budget initiative for South Australia would entail:

- *the development of a visionary government policy statement of gender equality goals and a timeframe for their attainment in South Australia;*
- *the development of guidelines by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet for the implementation of gender-responsive policies and budgets and processes for ensuring their implementation;*
- *the provision of models of gender-responsive policies and budgets (for example within existing and future policy reviews);*
- *the establishment of gender targets and indicators within all objectives of the SA strategic plan and in the state's budget and a system of monitoring and reporting these for both Cabinet and the public;*
- *the identification of those elements of gender-sensitive budget models internationally that would progress the state's gender equality objectives and be world class in its design and achievements (such elements might include performance budgeting models and strategies for accounting for the unpaid economy);*

- *the development and implementation of processes for the systematic analysis of the gender impacts of federal policies in South Australia, particularly childcare, child protection, domestic violence, aboriginal policies, refugee policies and rural adjustment and development policies;*
- *an innovative program of capacity building and training in gender-sensitive analysis and in strategies for achieving gender-responsive policy and budget outcomes.*

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Conclusion

We have argued that gender differences and inequalities, and their intersection with class, location, age, race and other socioeconomic characteristics, matter for developing policies and budgets that are equitable, efficient and effective. We have used examples of women's and men's labour market activities and the unpaid division of labour in the household to illustrate quantitatively the existence and extent of gender differences and inequalities and some of the complexities these pose for policy makers. Of course, a more comprehensive analysis of gender differences and inequalities across all government portfolios (health, education, transport, economic development, energy) will be necessary to properly inform policy and budgets. Furthermore, such analyses need to go beyond using quantitative data to include qualitative research and policy discourses.

In posing a series of strategies for moving forward the gender reform agenda in South Australia we emphasise that making government budgets, and the policies they fund, gender responsive requires a new and integrated approach to the policy, planning and budget processes. An understanding of, and accounting for, gender needs to become part of the everyday life of these processes of governance in South Australia.

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