



# CSW61 Report Back

National Women's Alliances  
26 April 2017

Roselynn Anderson welcomed attendees and acknowledged the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation.

## Update on Australia's Human Rights Treaty Reporting Cycles

Helen Dalley-Fisher updated attendees on current Treaty reporting processes.

- The National Association of Community Legal Centres and Kingsford Legal Centre are leading the process of developing shadow reports to sit alongside the Government and Australian Human Rights Commission reports on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. ERA is coordinating the gender sections on both reports, working alongside a whole range of organisations across a number of areas.
- The draft ICESCR Shadow Report is open for endorsement (closing COB 28 April).

## Government CSW61 Delegation Panel Report

Helen: This panel has been running for 5 years and is a useful process for active contact between the sector and government throughout the year and preparatory work for when we're on the ground at the UN.

*Amanda McIntyre, Office for Women:*

- Office for Women has three teams (1) Economic Security, (2) Women's Safety and implementation of the National Plan and (3) International Engagement.
- 4 staff sit in the International Engagement team, so there is a not a huge resource effort sitting behind this work.
- OfW's CSW work is organised in terms of:
  - Civil society engagement – putting on Side Events that showcase Australia, engaging civil society through the NGO reps and the submission process. We need to get smarter about the submission process and particularly the use of technology in that process to make it less cumbersome for civil society. We should be curating this together. Creating platforms that mean physical presence isn't necessary for communication between civil society and government. Real time commentary on the text during negotiations is the ultimate goal.
  - Preparatory work
  - On the ground work
- Spoke at 6 events over the two weeks across a range of different topics. Particularly engaged and interested in

perspective from Nordic countries. Received feedback that the Australia pay data is the best in the world.

- Regarding negotiations: it took 107 hours to negotiate the 102 paragraphs.

*Sian Phillips, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*

- The amendments to working methods which placed the Ministerial segment in the first 3-4 days allowed for greater buy into the CSW process from Ministers. CSW61 saw more Ministers than ever before attending. The conversations that happened early on at CSW provided us with an advocacy platform for negotiations in week two.
- DFAT priorities:
  - The Human Rights Council was a key priority for DFAT. The issues we were transacting at CSW relate to the campaign. Australia was one of the lead countries working for Indigenous Women's empowerment to be a focus. There are references in both the Preambular and Operational components of the text. In two years' time when we review the document, we can review those commitments where in the past that has been ad hoc.
  - Secondly, women's economic empowerment was broadly our priority across the negotiations. We were looking for gender equality to be mainstreamed across economic outcomes. The zero draft contained one reference to goal 5, but some of the critical importance for women's economic empowerment lies in the other goals. We wanted to see that mainstreaming.

- Closing gender data gaps was another priority. There are some good outcomes from the gender expert panels on data, with particular reference to the Individual Deprivation Measure which we showcased in one panel.

- Agreed Conclusions:

- It's a mixed bag.
- There are really important wins, for example the language on Indigenous women's economic empowerment. The trinity of economic empowerment, rights and independence is there. There are hard-fought for wins such as decent work and rights to and at work. Language on occupational segregation and equal pay is promising.
- While we pushed for stronger language on SOGIE (sexual orientation, gender identity and expression), we weren't able to get there. We were able to get references to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, an adequate platform to build from.
- There are losses with the language on National Human Rights Institutions language contained to the chapeau. UN Women has also conducted analysis on the treatment of CSOs in the Conclusions in relation to previous years. We consider CSW60 to be the high water mark on sexual and reproductive health and rights in recent years and this threshold wasn't met.

- Negotiations Process:

- There was an absence of rights-based language in the zero draft which then blew out to over 70 pages in the compilation. The facilitation of CSW negotiation was not able to bring that back to a consolidated document. A consensus document is

always about the art of the possible, but what was possible this year was very different to what was possible at CSW60.

*Beth Shaw, NGO Delegate on Government Delegation*

- There was a mismatch between expectation and reality of the role of NGO delegates, had thought there would be more 'argy bargy' and bursting through the door to save the day!
- There is alignment across civil society and government in some key areas and it was good to see Australian leadership in those priority areas such as NHRIs and SRHR.
- My sense is that civil society voices were heard in the rapid response and submission processes. We developed good systems for this feedback.
- In the early stages, the most useful feedback we get from CSOs was on themes, issues and principles. As we went on through the process of negotiations, clear and specific feedback on language and redlines is what was needed. Being able to point to previously agreed language and sending mark up text was most useful.
- The facilitation of the Conclusions was not ideal, resulting in negotiation of key issues at the last minute. There was compromise where there could have been different outcomes with more negotiation.
- We need to strengthen and sharpen our networks so we can be more effective. Some of the most meaningful activity at CSW was the structured engagement with CSO delegates from the Asia-Pacific.

*Kate Jenkins, Sex Discrimination Commissioner*

- My objectives for CSW were to:
  - advocate on issues around economic security and Indigenous women's economic empowerment;
  - build the bridge between civil society and Government;
  - advance and advocate for independent participation of NHRIs at CSW.
  - develop networks to learn and share across countries.
- Satisfied I achieved these objectives, but expect with the experience built this year to do even better next year.
- The advocacy on NHRIs at CSW as a fight to hold ground, a lot of work went in (recognising Pip Dargan) but there was no advancement. We know intimately at AHRC what NHRIs can achieve. There is untapped power in participation and engagement of NHRIs. Was able to meet with NHRI Commissioners from Afghanistan, Philippines, Morocco, New Zealand and the UK. Connecting with parts of the world where the challenges for NHRIs are greater was valuable.
- The connection to the Asia-Pacific through the Asia-Pacific Civil Society forum was one of the highlights and a very valuable process.
- Was also part of the advocacy for a spot on the Human Rights Council.
- Found great value in the bilaterals and multilaterals.
- It was a huge privilege to work with Jahna Cedar, Beth Shaw and Leann Wilson.

*Jahna Cedar, NGO Delegate on Government Delegation*

- We were able to bring the voice of CSOs outside of the room into the room through the daily debriefs, the Whatsapp group and other such mechanisms. Need to further explore processes of live feedback, even if it is through google docs.
- Learning about the lack of Indigenous women's participation in political parties around the world and what opportunities there are to advance this issue and other Indigenous women's economic empowerment issues, there is a lot that is shared at CSW that we can bring to our communities.
- There was an incident where the negotiation room was shifted to a place without access for temporary pass holders meaning civil society delegates weren't able to hold space outside negotiations at one point.
- There was a stage at which we didn't think we'd achieve Agreed Conclusions, consensus was really tricky with a number of issues including recognition of the NHRIs.

*Leann Wilson, NGO Delegate on Government Delegation*

- It is an honour and a privilege to sit with government during the negotiations and represent civil society. Having three of us meant we were able to bring diverse skillsets and knowledge to the table.
- The negotiations can be an emotional time and environment. Achieving recognition of Indigenous women on the world stage and being able to see what we've progressed collectively is incredible.
- While we're there collectively as women, there is a sense of Indigenous and *other* women. There can be a feeling of being on the fringes and looking in. I'm keen to shape these conversations about what brings us together. The

opportunities at CSW to speak on this were fantastic and saw Indigenous women approach me and embrace what I had to say and contribute on this and the language I was using. There is language we use internationally that doesn't necessarily fit with language of First Nations People and there is a big question and task on bringing that language closer together. The conclusions I've drawn from these conversations is that we need to spend more time together to increase that shared space and understanding going forward. There are opportunities for Australia to lead in this space to make sure that our processes are more inclusive and centre Indigenous people. Jahna and I will continue to work with government in this area to model some innovations.

- There are also opportunities to do more work in the pre-departure sessions, particularly in assisting non-Indigenous people to prepare for this work, based on our observations and reflections.
- Pay respects to Penny Morton and the Government officials in the room with us who work hard, walking the floors to get these agreements over the line. Getting the agreement on the Indigenous paragraph was a culmination of work inside and outside the room. Looking forward to seeing where this takes us.

## General Discussion, Questions and Answers

### Civil Society Engagement:

#### *Shrinking Space*

- **Attacks on civil society at CSW61** range from the impact of the travel bans to the selection of civil society representatives on the US delegation. The travel ban saw low representation from countries where women don't have high representation in Government and policy and CSW should be a space to amplify those voices.
- **Potential gaps in not having representatives on Government delegations from NGO organisations.** Making connections with CS delegates on other government delegations and other international networks needs to happen earlier and more effectively.

#### *Expanding Space*

- **We need to leverage technology** more effectively to facilitate broader and greater contributions and feedback from civil society.
- **We need to showcase the CSO representatives on Government delegations model** and build an international advocacy strategy on this. We need to demonstrate far and wide how effectively this builds a whole infrastructure for NGO participation.

#### *Advocacy and Progressing Outcomes*

- **We need to engage earlier across civil society to determine CSW approach and strategy.** How are we using our international networks? Where are the red lights and road blocks in the way of progress? Who are the relevant stakeholders and how are we mapping and influencing them?
- **How can we have strengths-based conversations?** We need to go from our issue to a strengths-based approach. Deficit conversations do not allow us to advance.

#### *Indigenous Participation –Nothing About Us Without Us*

- **We need to grasp opportunities in the lead up to CSW** particularly with the pre-departure briefing to develop protocols on Indigenous engagement at CSW and ensure Indigenous women are leading.

### Questions and Answers:

#### **Q. How is Office for Women implementing CSW commitments?**

A. OfW reiterated OfW's priorities, including economic empowerment which is very much a focus this year and includes work around collecting pay gap data. OfW aims to strength communication with Alliances and sector on priorities so that civil society can focus advocacy.

#### **Q. What is the process of selection for NGO delegate and how much do the National Women's Alliance endorsements play a role in this?**

A. The NGO selection process is two stage with DFAT and OFW making a decision and then the final stage of selection sitting with the Minister. OfW can influence half but not the whole process.

#### **Q. Regarding a reference to disability data in one session, DFAT mentioned that there was no disability data since 1993 but there have been two surveys in Australia since then?**

A. That was in reference to the global data.

#### **Q. There was a reference to Australia providing funding to the UN Stats Commission for the development of survey disability standards, can we get more information on this?**

A. Question was taken on notice.

### *Where to next?*

- Ensure the CSO reps on the Government delegation are involved in the June National Women's Alliances CSW webinar.
- Work with government on the submissions deadline and improve the timeline on this.
- Develop a workshop on bridging Indigenous and First Nations language and the CSW language.



## NGO Engagement in CSW61 Panel

### What is something you learnt or picked up at CSW from one parallel event?

Sarah Burr: Was struck by an event on the role of judges in South and Central American in creating change.

Hannah Woodward: I heard a change in the language on violence against women. Other member states are picking up the importance of preventative approaches.

Mel Fernandez: Working on language with the Women's Rights Caucus as an international network was really powerful. It meant I didn't need all of the answers and could connect with experts across the world. Diversity, strength and history comes from these networks.

Shirley Randell gave a presentation for distribution noting wide spread of attendees, many union and labour organisations not previously represented, as well as absence of attendees as a result of visa policy changes. Highlighted the role of the Asia Pacific Forum.

### What would your advice be to new delegates?

Melanie Fernandez: We need to build much more a lead in to CSW for first timers, if we get better at that, being a first timer at CSW would be easier.

Sarah Burr: Rural young people need additional support in preparing for CSW, being in both a foreign country and city environment, it is a double culture shock.

Susan Hutchinson: Working out the structures of CSW is complex. Be strategic before you go and work out what you want to get to first. If it's networking, focus on that. If it's language, that's a different experience.

Harpreet Dhillon: I felt shy at first. If you know your focus it's easier. You also have to know your limits. You can't do everything you will want to do. Self care is huge and needs attention.

Beth Shaw: We underestimate how hard it is to get into language work. Hannah Woodward has some good advice on how WAGGGS trains up young people on this and it's something we should to expand. We need to build capacity on language before we go. Buddying up with someone who has been before. Get a balance of activities and perspectives. We need to understand people who disagree with us and regions with different experiences.

Roselynn: Can we work with OfW to provide an induction kit / process / document? Visual as well as on paper. Coordinated by long term attendees.

Pauline Woodbridge: Change of date to move away from IWD has changed the mood of CSW.

Janice BPW: Practical things such as group negotiations for airfare rates, hotel rooms at better prices. Let's work out which international networks we have. Would be useful if Aust govt could do more to get non-govt delegates into the bi lateral sessions.

### **Shrinking CSO space**

Beth Shaw: We should develop an information sheet on how the Aust NGO delegate system works try to normalise this practice and combat shrinking space.

Sarah Burr: The Govt NGO reps provided a conduit for us which was hugely valuable especially for background to issues and language eg: sex and repro rights. Government negotiators aren't necessarily experts on all the subjects. In the Youth Foun, Aust CSOs were really important in speaking up on process and safe spaces. Young Australian women created useful and productive

spaces which lead to better outcomes at the Youth Forum. The Youth Forum is something that needs our continued attention.

Hannah Woodward: Getting young women on Govt delegations is essential.

Helen Dalley-Fisher: Would more than one year on govt delegation be useful? One previous delegate stays on for an additional year?

Sarah Burr: Yes – this year Beth, Leann & Jahna worked really hard but had to learn the system, which limits their capacity.

Hannah Woodward: NGO delegates need to perform two roles – communication with NGOs and participation in the negotiations.

Harpreet Dhillon: Lack of diverse voices especially on disability, rural and CALD needs to be considered by both Govt and NGOs when putting delegations together.

Melanie Fernandez: important to keep pressure re both NGO space and NHRI.

Discussion around the unprecedented attacked on civil society at CSW with the negotiation room changes, resulting in temporary pass holders having to leave the UN building whole negotiations took place. Being able to conduct corridor advocacy sends both a message and is useful for communicating directly with delegates.

### **Language**

*What should we be afraid of in the agreed conclusions?* Discussion

- The Holy See, Middle East and some countries within the Africa Group have lots of influence.
- Observations from progressive women's rights activists were that the negotiations were lacking in technical expertise and this is reflected in the Conclusions.

- The Priority Theme was the Changing World of Work, but the Conclusions miss some key issues here including the share economy, casualisation and flexibility leading to erosion of rights.
- The language on work/life balance is framed around work/family balance which means we have to be aware of how the 'family' CSW agenda of the Holy See et al manifests in these Agreed Conclusions in these areas.
- It's an inconsistent document because it's a consensus document. There are policy incoherences across areas, for example, gender responsive budgeting is recognised but language on tax systems not disadvantaging women was negotiated out.
- Theme was economic empowerment but we weren't having discussion around empowerment. Had to push to not limit to health, education and other enablers and push it out to rights in workplaces etc.
- There's good language about feminisation of poverty but lost language about living wage.
- Sovereignty and language on respecting national policy space create 'outs.' Migrant worker's convention taken out. Language around equal pay 'equal work or work of equal value' lots of wiggle room there.
- Weak and narrow sex and repro rights language and SOGIE, once again, negotiated out in final hours. The fact that it is consistently traded out is something to rethink for our advocacy. Regarding SRHR, UN Women is working and in talks to progress this.
- The operational paragraphs all start with weak directions and there are imprecise and vague commitments that aren't firm enough.
- The operational paragraph on Indigenous women's economic empowerment is a great achievement and need to ensure that focus and progress on this isn't lost or wound back. Leadership language needs strengthening.
- There are problems on work/family language for rural women who are in family business.



## CSW61 and Beyond: Next Steps

### #ProsecuteDontPerpetrate

Susan Hutchinson from Prosecute; Don't Perpetrate provided an update on the campaign.

You can get involved here:

<https://prosecutedontperpetrate.com/>

**Where are we best served to put our resources, as women's organisations, as a movement in relation to the international sector? Is it CSW? Is CSW a process we want to continue to engage in? What do we get out of CSW? *Discussion***

- It is true that people are disillusioned and challenged by the regressive environment of CSW. Working on the language can feel like holding onto a rug that is slipping out from under you.
- It is not a useful space when activists are restricted from travel to the US and can't participate and then those with privilege actively boycott it.
- It's important to be working within this system as well as working outside of it.
- What is the impact, utility and validity of the AC? We need an assessment of the impact of the Agreed Conclusions on changing policy and igniting action domestically and globally.

- There's utility in being with 5000 people in the first week and 2000 in the second and being surrounded by that intensity, conviction and passion. We make connections that we continue to build on.
- If we're not there, how much power does it give the gentlemen in suits, the people who will advocate against women's rights?
- It's an opportunity to hold our own government to account on the commitments that wouldn't otherwise get airtime in Australia. For example, the statements from our government on Indigenous women's empowerment, need to be contextualised domestically. They provide a great opportunity to mount an advocacy campaign, and make the progressive conversations and commitments from CSW more public.
- Our participation on the ground at CSW is good but we need to improve on our implementation and monitoring of Conclusions.
- *There was support from meeting attendees for a continued CSW focus and support for a measured approach to using the Agreed Conclusions.*

## **Issues, priorities and work going forward**

- *Indigenous language and CSW*
- *Advocacy to Promote NGO Delegates on Government Delegations*
- *NGO Delegates on the Australian Government Delegation*
- *Government Submission Process and Real Time Feedback Technology*

- *Sharpening our International and Local Networks and Building a Sustainable NGO Movement at CSW*
- *Implementation and Monitoring of CSW Agreed Conclusions*
- *Language Training and Developing Positions for CSW62*

### *Indigenous language at CSW*

- As identified by Leann Wilson, there is work to be done in bridging Indigenous language and CSW language. There has been some work here in previous CSWs in relation to expanding the meaning of family at CSW to recognise Indigenous kinship.
- We need to support the work that is building in this area and develop a webinar workshop on this topic to develop a resource for the pre-departure briefing.

### *Advocacy to Promote NGO Delegates on Government Delegations*

- Need to be strategic about this –there are some member states where we could be opening space for regressive organisations (think Heritage Foundation and C-FAM on the US delegation).
- We need to look to the work of the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions on NHRI advocacy at CSW which involves mapping countries with NHRIS, getting in touch with relevant stakeholders in those countries and coming to an agreement on a language position.
- In developing an advocacy resource on this issue we will need to map the member states who do and don't have NGO representatives and use our international networks to engage with their respective governments on the issue.

- Other advocacy and campaign ideas to progress this include embassy visits, social media (*ie “where are your NGO delegates @embassy”*) and a parallel and/or side event at CSW62.

#### *NGO Delegates on Government Delegation*

- We need to convey our support to the government on the increased number of NGO delegates for CSW61 and welcome further increases (eg to 4 delegates) and explore the need for diverse representation, recognising that marginalisations can be exacerbated by and at CSW.
- Support stronger processes of handover between previous NGO delegates to CSW to ensure knowledge exchange.

#### *Government Submission Process and Real Time Feedback Technology*

- Support for the government’s development and implementation of real time feedback technology for CSW language while flagging that this should be in addition to existing submission and feedback processes and not in replacement.

#### *Language Training and Developing Positions for CSW62*

- We can prepare language positions prior well in advance of the government submission process. This work can also include social media and advocacy sheets (quick guide) on these positions.
- Preparation of our own Agreed Conclusions beforehand will be a useful advocacy tool. We can follow a similar process

to DFAT’s where we settle our CSW62 positions and begin the process of approaching countries where you know the position, you’re not sure of the position and finally where you know they don’t agree. The next National Women’s Alliances International Engagement Forum will need to focus on language positions for CSW62 and the need to have a negotiating position on all identified key areas. Traditionally this forum has taken place in October, but something in August to hasten these timelines. Work on language could happen online in advance of August.

- There is a need to develop a how to language guide for new and existing delegates to CSW. Engaging in CSW language is a very specific almost niche skillset that needs to be made more accessible. A kit could also take the form of, or include a video on CSW featuring people who have attended CSW. This could be achieved through the development of a kit and a webinar on human rights and CSW language. A CSW language 101 webinar is proposed to be held in July.
- A language mentoring process would also be valuable where CSW alumni and CSW delegates looking to expand knowledge in this area are paired up.
- Look to develop kits/tools on Bringing the CSW Agreed Conclusions Home (a project for 17/18) and Participating in CSW from Home (a project for 18/19).

#### *Sharpening our International and Local Networks and building a Sustainable NGO Movement at CSW*

- We need to map our international and regional networks well in advance of CSW and use this in our language advocacy for CSW and in the promotion of the NGO delegates on government delegations model.

### *Implementation of CSW61*

- We need to go into CSW already knowing what our strategy is afterwards. How do we develop a structure for monitoring and implementation? Knowing what it is we want to do with the Conclusions, developing a structure for that? How can we use existing mechanisms for domestic implementation of international agreements to hold the government to account? For example, should we be bringing in Agreed Conclusions language into treaty shadow reporting processes? There's a risk that the Treaty Reporting processes are too high level for the detail of CSW Agreed Conclusions.
- How can we develop a post-CSW strategy? Seeing as AC can be weak, need to use the AC as a springboard for our own advocacy. Is there value in developing a guide to the Agreed Conclusions and the statements made by Australia at CSW tying them in with domestic advocacy with greater emphasis on holding our government to account? Next National Women's Alliances International Forum should aim to progress work in this area.
- Need to use the Government CSW Report Launch in June as an avenue/site
- The Human Rights Council bid and possible membership should present opportunities to cement government processes of monitoring and accountability of CSW.
- Implementation can only work with communication and increased and broader knowledge of CSW, increasing knowledge of both the National Women's Alliances and the CSW is a big challenge and must be part of this.

- Drawing the links between the CSW Agreed Conclusions and the SDGs is also critical to implementation and monitoring. Work is underway within the Alliances to map our own advocacy against relevant SDG goals, targets and indicators which could bring in CSW and the High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment.

