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SSI Women and Girls Strategic Plan 2021-2023

March 2021



SSI's Women and Girls Strategic Plan targets all women employed and supported by SSI. The plan has a particular focus on women of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Newly arrived and CALD women make up a significant proportion of our constituency and SSI has expertise in representing multicultural communities.



SSI acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and Traditional Custodians of the lands where we live, learn and work. We pay respect to Elders past and present and recognise their continuous connection to Country.

From the CEO

It gives me great pleasure to introduce SSI's Women and Girls Strategic Plan for 2021-2023.

The SSI Group is an organisation that was founded by, employs, and supports, many women. Empowering women in our sphere of influence is something embedded in our mission and values.

Over the past 20 years, SSI has been an active voice for migrant and refugee women. This advocacy culminated in the inaugural National Multicultural Women's Conference, themed 'Influencing Change: Vision and Impact,' in 2016.

SSI is active at international and national forums, such as Harmony Alliance, Migrant and Refugee Women for Change and Rapporteur for Women to the UN High Commission of Refugees. SSI has also sponsored young women to attend Commission on the Status of Women conferences, created a gender equity position, and actively advocates against Domestic and Family Violence.

SSI as an organisation, not only advocates to provide a strong voice for the communities we support, but we also reflect inwards on our own practices and systems to identify areas of improvement.

I am proud of the three-year Women and Girls Strategic Plan we have developed. This plan affirms our progress to date and gives us a platform to aspire to as we continue to progress gender equity among our constituency.

I look forward to exciting new initiatives over the next three years that advance outcomes for women associated with SSI and that advance gender equity.

Violet Roumeliotis AM

Women and girls in all their diversity

SSI's Women and Girls Strategic Plan recognises the breadth of gender diversity; encompassing transgender women, people who identify as non-binary, and other diverse genders. The plan recognises that we all have intersectional layers of identity that impact how we experience the world.

SSI's internal committees, the Diversity and Inclusion Network and the Gender and Sexual Diversity Working Group, are proactively increasing awareness of gender diversity at SSI and working to ensure all our environments are inclusive for all staff, clients, and community members.



A snapshot of our research

Women in Australia do not achieve equitable outcomes in economic and financial terms, level of influence, access to public office and career pathways. The situation is even more dire for women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. For example, migrant women have the highest levels of unemployment in the country. Along with a glass ceiling, CALD women face a cultural glass ceiling that hinders their capacity to gain higher levels of personal, professional, and financial achievement.

Government and influential women's organisations have highlighted that economic empowerment and a stable secure income are the most important goals to work towards to advance outcomes for women. Addressing these two goals for our female staff, clients, and multicultural communities at large will contribute to their safety, career development, independence, and ability to make positive choices.

People have always been SSI's most important asset and the means through which we provide support to our diverse client base. Seventy per cent of our staff identify as female, so it is imperative that SSI invests in outcomes for women. For example, SSI has leave provisions for Domestic and Family Violence and has family friendly, flexible employment policies to support caregiving, a task which disproportionately falls to women.

Over the years, SSI has undertaken numerous initiatives to advance the position of newly arrived women and girls through our Humanitarian Settlement Program. This includes our Female Job Readiness Program, Dress For Success: interview skill

development program, Women's Refugee Health sessions and Everyday English & Digital Skills course. Additionally, our employment services currently offer a mentoring program for women seeking employment or professional progression in their field. Programs such as these enable women from refugee backgrounds to develop the skills, experience and network needed to gain economic empowerment and employment opportunities.

Round tables conducted in development of our plan highlighted that few SSI programs have a specific focus on the women running and participating in them.

Some of the main learnings from these round tables include: the importance of creating a safe, supportive environment where women feel they can have their voice heard, reflecting on perceptions of traditional occupational gender roles, and acknowledging that SSI must proactively encourage the development of women's careers.

Additionally, data from our employment programs highlighted that almost 70% of the women we have supported in their search for employment ended up in stereotypical female jobs, such as administration, caring professions, and retail (SSI Employment Programs, February 2019). This is primarily due to the guidelines these programs operate under, which preference any employment over career goals. An increased focus on outcomes for women driven by our plan would strengthen women's career prospects.

Furthermore, while SSI prides itself on our flexible work practices that support family friendly working conditions, we found

Our vision

For women employed or supported by SSI, in all their diversity, to fulfil their aspirations free from discrimination, oppression and injustice, and participate fully in society with dignity, safety and respect.

that the application of the policies across the organisation varies depending on the understanding of benefits by the direct supervisor. SSI also recognised that it has considerable staff talent for leadership, but that leadership development is not sufficiently focused on entry level management roles.

These examples illustrate some of the gaps we have identified while developing our Women and Girls Strategic Plan. Through strategic initiatives in the coming three years, we hope to narrow these gaps and progress gender equity among SSI's constituency.

Our goals

- Advance and protect the rights of women and girls.
- Drive change towards equal choice, prosperity, and economic empowerment.

Our Women and Girls Strategic Plan's goals are broken down into five strategic pillars:

- Economic empowerment
- Leadership
- Learning and growth
- Health and wellbeing
- Safety and security
- Advocacy and public policy.

These goals align with SSI's Social Impact Framework.

All initiatives developed out of this vision will have a measurable impact for individuals or represent a piece of advocacy that will advance gender equality. For example, increasing the capability of women community leaders to respond to Domestic and Family Violence will assist women experiencing violence to seek support and access services. Research focused on refugee women will increase our understanding of their sense of belonging and inform the approach to take to supporting them in their settlement.

After three years, we will evaluate the plan's impact and identify future goals.

Developing our plan

SSI embarked on developing a Women's Strategic Plan in recognition that when women do better, their families and wider communities do better too. Empowering women is an important goal for clients, staff, and multicultural communities.

We consulted with women from across the organisation to hear what our staff, communities, and clients, want and need from us as an organisation.

Through this process, we identified that with an increased focus on wellbeing, leadership and empowerment, SSI can further support our cohort of talented women to grow professionally, achieve greater outcomes for themselves and their families, and have greater client impact.



SSI's Women and Girls Strategic Plan is designed to target all women employed and supported by SSI. The plan has a particular focus on women of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Newly arrived and CALD women make up a significant proportion of our constituency and SSI has expertise in representing multicultural communities.

After three years, we will measure the impact of the plan and identify future goals.

Performance against our vision statement will be measured by the specific actions identified in individual program work plans and a set of common goals that are aligned with our five pillars, which all projects and the overarching organisation report against.

This includes resulting from the plan, program and initiative participation rates, the external research that informed the development of the plan, the plan's social impact, and the value participants found in each of the implemented projects.

Each targeted project or initiative will have a corresponding work plan that states its goals and activities.

Additionally, all SSI programs will go through the process of selecting a specific priority area to focus on in improving the outcomes for women and girls. This will ensure the overarching organisational plan is integrated into all SSI program areas and core functions. An annual review of these plans will then identify progress and necessary amendments.

The success of initiatives stemming from the plan will also be measured against women and girls' specific elements of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

A cross organisational implementation committee will monitor outcomes against the Women and Girls Strategic Plan and corresponding initiatives. Each SSI program will be represented, and the committee will be chaired by an Executive member. The committee will report twice a year to SSI's Executive on its progress and achievements.

SSI Women and Girls Strategic Plan 2021-2023

Vision

Women, in all their diversity, fulfill aspirations free from discrimination, oppression, injustice with dignity, safety and respect so they can participate fully in society

Goal

Advance and protect the rights of women and girls, drive change towards equal choice, prosperity, and economic empowerment

Strategic Pillars and Initiatives

Economic Empowerment

Examine and advance employment outcomes.

Implement aspirational career planning.

Develop financial literacy.

Leadership, Learning, Growth

Deliver leadership programs.

Provide opportunities to act up and partake in secondments and job swaps.

Create a cultural shift that encourages women to grow.

Health and Wellbeing

Review the application of flexible and family friendly policies.

Consider the wellbeing of women and their opportunity to thrive women in programs.

Challenge gender inequality and its effects.

Safety and Security

Implement SSI's DFV framework.

Map the needs of SSI's international target groups.

Map safety and security needs, including harassment and bullying policies.

Advocacy, Public Policy

Develop SSI's social policy for women.

Play an active role in international gender forums.

Develop a gender advocacy plan for the international context.

Enablers

The SSI Social Impact Framework, program specific plans and projects, reference group to monitor progress and the SSI brand.

Value Statement

Commitment to cultural respect, gender equity, and intersectional feminism. Protection of human rights and Sustainable Development Goals

*For this plan, the term women encompass girls, transgender and non-binary/gender diverse people within the sphere of influence of SSI.

We're SSI.
We stand for a world in which everyone
has access to equal opportunity.
We are driven by equality, empathy,
and celebration of every individual.
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