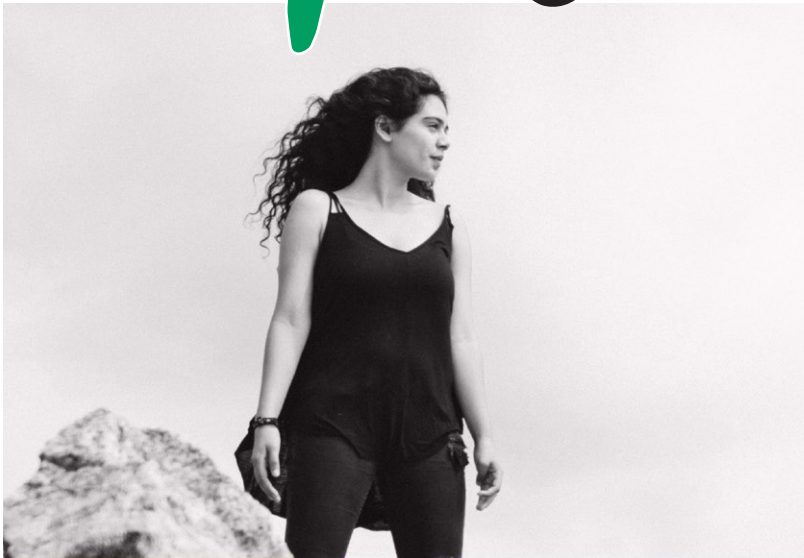




# YACTION

ISSUE 5 | OCTOBER 2018



## Welcome to the fourth edition of YAction!

YAction highlights YWCA Canberra's advocacy initiatives, the work of kindred organisations and the issues that are important to our members and local community.

### So whYAction?

Advocacy is at the heart of the work we do at YWCA Canberra, and with the vision of girls and women thriving, we are focused on creating change by engaging with diverse groups and providing leadership through evidence-based policy and research.

Our advocacy agenda is directly informed by the work that YWCA Canberra undertakes across the ACT, drawing on the experience and knowledge generated by our programs and services.

YAction aims to amplify the voices and achievements of gender equality activists and organisations, increasing awareness of critical issues and presenting opportunities for our members, friends and supporters to get involved.

Ultimately, we hope to strengthen a movement that works together to achieve gender equality in the ACT.

We encourage you to explore YWCA Canberra's flagship advocacy platform, Leading the Change: The Pathway to Gender Equality and reach out if you're interested in supporting our work.

### In this edition we:

- Explore older women's experiences of housing insecurity through our Hidden Women mini-documentary.
- Talk careers, politics and feminist policy with outgoing MP Gai Brodtmann.
- Ask you to have your say by contributing to our submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission Inquiry into sexual harassment.
- Take a look at the ACT 2018/19 Budget and ask when is 36 more places, not 36 more places?
- Provide an update on positive consent legislation and how you can be involved.

# HIDDEN WOMEN

## **HIDDEN WOMEN – EXPLORING OLDER WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES OF HOUSING INSECURITY**

To coincide with National Homelessness Week in August this year, YWCA Canberra launched a mini-documentary titled *Hidden Women* that explores the experiences of single, older women who are homeless or in insecure housing. Featuring some of our group housing clients, *Hidden Women* has put an everyday face to those women who are falling into housing stress.

Older women today make up the majority of people accessing local housing support services. Following a lifetime of conventional housing tenure and working lives characterised by wage and superannuation inequality and a disproportionate amount of time in unpaid caring roles, older women often find it hard to manage financially. Typically, this time of crisis coincides with relationships going awry, domestic violence forcing them to leave their homes or the death of a spouse.

YWCA Canberra has been active in advocating for older women’s housing insecurity to become a core policy priority for governments. Since the launch of our *Leading the Change* report, we have continued to call upon governments to invest in innovative housing solutions that cater for the needs of Canberrans in housing crisis, including older women. We also continue to call for a National Housing and Homelessness Strategy that includes gender responsive strategies that prevent older women from falling into homelessness in their retirement.

Our CEO Frances Crimmins elaborated upon this policy priority when addressing the

“For too long the absence and exclusion of women in positions of influence, leadership or authority – whether across government or business – has gone unaddressed or considered too niche to seriously correct...”

Local Government Professionals Australia annual conference in August this year. In sharing *Hidden Women* with the attendees, Frances was able to convey the principle of gender informed and responsive policy making. Stories like those explored in *Hidden Women* are the result of decades of women’s voices being unheard or dismissed at the

decision-making table.

“For too long the absence and exclusion of women in positions of influence, leadership or authority – whether across government or business – has gone unaddressed or considered too niche to seriously correct,” Frances said.

The stories in *Hidden Women* reinforce how an absence of gender informed policy and equity in leadership at all levels of government can have devastating consequences for others. YWCA Canberra is grateful to our Betty Searle House residents for bravely sharing their stories. We are also grateful to Rowdy Digital for their sympathetic production of *Hidden Women* and to PwC Canberra for assisting with the launch. You can see the *Hidden Women* mini-documentary via the [YWCA Canberra website](#).

## FEMINISM AND POLITICS WITH GAI BRODTMANN MP

*After eight years as the federal representative for the seat of Canberra, Gai Brodtmann MP announced her resignation this August, citing a desire to spend more time with her family. We sat down with Gai shortly after her announcement, in a month that had been bruising for women in politics, where we discussed her career, her achievements, her advice to young women in politics and all things feminism.*

In a landscape that favours a select few, Gai isn't what might be called a typical politician. Her career in both the public service and private enterprise differentiates her from many of her peers and includes roles in watershed moments in recent history. Her public service work began at the Attorney General's Department, where she was part of the team who consulted with remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on the Keating Government's proposed amendments to the Racial Discrimination Act. The final legislation would go on to include the 18C amendment, which makes offending, insulting, humiliating or intimidating on the basis of race unlawful, an inclusion she remains a strict defender of to this day. Her career eventually took her to the Department of Foreign Affairs where she served on the Middle East Desk and contributed to the early implementation of the United Nation's 'oil for food' sanctions in Iraq. When the diplomatic relationship between Australia and Iran normalised in the 1990s, Gai had the privilege to be part of the first ministerial delegation to visit the country.

Like many who follow a career in the diplomatic service however, the constant upheaval of postings involved personal sacrifice and she eventually chose to return home and pursue a local career establishing her own small business consultancy. The public service calling never faded and it was a lingering desire to affect positive change in her community that saw Gai enter the race to contest the Canberra preselection in 2010. Driven by a sense of advocacy and service, she also brought a unique perspective to the Labor Party policy manifesto, with an early focus on struggling small business owners.

After getting a sense of Gai's trajectory into politics, we were eager to hear about how she came to achieve traction when talking about women's policy, particularly in the space of financial literacy



and endometriosis awareness. When asked if the ability to talk about endometriosis in such a masculine arena was proof of progress, she replied "you can't rely on the atmospheric, I had to create the space. Women in this place need to be bold, courageous and get out there and stop waiting for someone to say it's O.K."

Cross party collaboration, Gai believes, is a unique skill that women bring to parliament. She goes on to detail her collaboration with senators and members on a range of global security issues, including highlighting the importance of

gendered perspectives in humanitarian assistance, crisis management and conflict resolution.

Of course, it wouldn't be a feminist interview without a discussion of "a man is not a financial plan", Gai's policy motif on empowering women's financial literacy around their superannuation and savings.

**You can't rely on the atmospheric, I had to create the space. Women in this place need to be bold, courageous and get out there and stop waiting for someone to say it's O.K.**

For Gai, this realisation emerged when her working-class family was left with just \$30 in savings when her father walked out on her mother and sisters. Her mother (also from a single parent family) and sisters got by through the generosity of their friends, with her mother getting the first job she could. Her mother, she says, had no idea her husband had whittled the family savings away to nothing. It was clearly a formative moment in her life.

"It led me to realise that in order for women to lead fulfilling lives they need fertility control, they need an education to lead a bold life and they need financial literacy to lead an independent life".

This baptism of fire into the importance of financial literacy has shaped her work in parliament, where she has highlighted superannuation inequality and lamented the mindset of employees who were often oblivious to wage-theft. The oft repeated mantra of the working masses to 'set and forget' your superannuation infuriates Gai, who considers it an ongoing barrier to better financial literacy amongst working women.

Her frustration isn't unfounded. According to the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia, the average Australian woman retires with around half the super balance of her male peers, a perilous situation that is augmented as women typically live longer, resulting in financial stress and housing crisis in retirement (a reality explored in YWCA Canberra's *Hidden Women* documentary). Moved by the stories of Hidden Women and discussing the tsunami of structural wage inequality that is bearing down on Australian women, Gai notes, "it's more common than some here are prepared to recognise."

Given we were meeting in the week following the leadership spill and the day after Member for Chisolm Julia Banks MP spoke about bullying in her own party, we asked Gai about the future for young women in politics. The 2017 Plan International

survey of more than 2000 Australian girls aged 10-25 found only a negligible number of girls (0 - 5 per cent) had any desire to pursue a career in politics, largely due to perceptions in sexism. For these young women, politics is seen as something entrenched in archaic gender stereotypes and too-hard to fix mentalities. So how can women be motivated to see a life in politics as something worthwhile? Gai brings it back to what motivated her in the first place, public service; "there is nothing better than making a difference". She reinforces this by referencing the newly launched National Action Plan for Endometriosis, a campaign Gai was directly involved in lobbying for, and tells me that it has the potential to positively change the lives of around 700,000 women in Australia. While Question Time antics and leadership spills may get all the news headlines, it detracts from what you can really achieve in politics. For younger girls who walk into a meeting of the youth wing of one of Australia's major political parties, only to find there are no women there, the solution to their involvement and empowerment is organising; "other women are there, even if you can't see them. You need to bring them together and stop the endless 'chaperoning' of young women by young men who seek to control their involvement". Political engagement and empowerment amongst young women is an uphill though worthy battle that Gai remains deeply passionate about and wants to continue being involved in, beyond her time in Parliament.

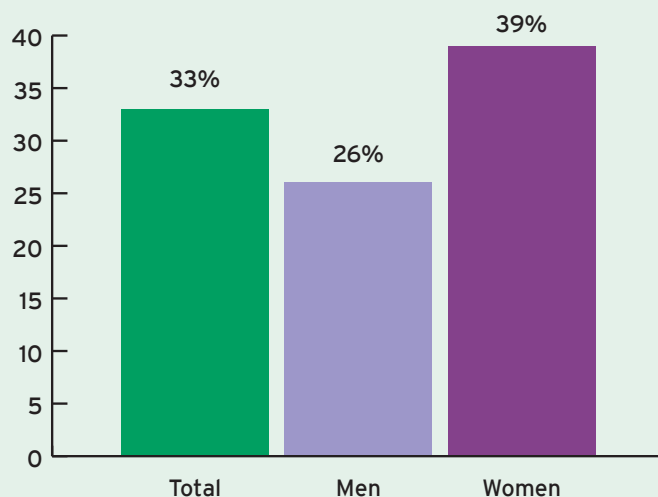
## BE PART OF YWCA CANBERRA'S SUBMISSION TO THE AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION INQUIRY INTO WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT.

The Australian Human Rights Commission recently launched the Commission's fourth national survey on sexual harassment in Australia's workplaces. The latest survey, which is by far the largest to date, surveyed more than 10,000 workers aged 15 to 65 across the country and paints a bleak picture of workplace behaviours.

### Here are some quick stats on the report's findings:

- **One in three workers** allege they were sexually harassed over the previous five years at their workplace, an increase on all previous surveys.
- **Young people** are more susceptible to workplace sexual harassment (45 per cent) than workers in all other age brackets.
- Workplace sexual harassment is **not unique to any one industry or sector** and the information, media and telecommunications industry recorded the highest rates of sexual harassment at 81 per cent, followed by the arts and recreation services (49 per cent).
- **Fewer than one in five people (17 per cent) made a formal complaint** about being sexually harassed in the workplace, and of those who did, almost one in five experienced **negative repercussions amongst colleagues**.

Figure 4: Prevalence of workplace sexual harassment by gender in the past five years.



Base: All respondents in the workplace in last five years (n=7,813; Men (n=3,932); Women (n=3,844)).

The message of the report is clear; workplace harassment continues to be an endemic problem in Australian workplaces, young people and women are most targeted and we cannot sit back and wait for the next generation to stamp out harassment.

The pervasive nature of sexual harassment in Australia's workplaces carries economic implications for the country. Being subjected to unmitigated, inappropriate sexual behaviour detrimentally affects individual health and economic wellbeing and stymies productivity gains that come from fully capitalising on the suite of skills available in any given workplace. If someone

is worrying about what will happen if they attend the Christmas function or if they cross paths with a perpetrator, they are not using their time or focus productively. Further to this, where someone feels that reporting their harassment will not stop the perpetrator, they are often left feeling disempowered and likely to eventually take their expertise elsewhere.

YWCA Canberra believes that mitigating the harassment of women in the workplace is an issue of broader gender equality, as the exclusion of women from the economy carries very real consequences. As our CEO Frances Crimmins noted in a recent address to the Local Government Professionals Australia Congress, the absence of

women in decision making roles across government has had deleterious consequences.



**The pervasive nature of sexual harassment in Australia's workplaces carries economic implications for the country. Being subjected to unmitigated, inappropriate sexual behaviour detrimentally affects individual health and economic wellbeing and stymies productivity gains that come from fully capitalising on the suite of skills available in any given workplace.**



### How you can contribute to our submission

The Australian Human Rights Commission is calling for submissions to their National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian workplaces. Freedom from sexually motivated harassment and bullying in the workplace is fundamental for women's economic participation and progress. YWCA Canberra will be making a submission to the inquiry and we want to hear from you! In the coming weeks, we

will be inviting members to make an anonymous submission via a quick survey that asks you to share your workplace experiences as well as the adequacy of employer responses.

All responses will be anonymous, and participation is completely voluntary.

For more information on the Inquiry, head to <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/submissions-national-inquiry-sexual-harassment-australian-workplaces>

**Submissions are now open. The closing date for submissions is 31 January 2019.**

## LINGERING CONFUSION OVER HOUSING PLACES

In line with the recommendations outlined in our Leading the Change report, YWCA Canberra remains committed to seeing real, innovative solutions to addressing the unique housing needs of women experiencing housing stress and homelessness. We are therefore deeply concerned that funding allocated in the *ACT Budget 2018-2019* for housing services is not going to additional beds, despite the Budget papers indicating otherwise.

In his 2018-19 Budget Speech, ACT Chief Minister and Treasurer Andrew Barr MLA stated, "[w]ith this Budget, we are delivering 36 more

places for women seeking safe and secure accommodation through services like the Beryl and Doris Women's refuges, as well as for asylum seekers and migrants with uncertain immigration status."

When ACT Housing was pressed about the specifics of these 36 more places through the subsequent Estimates process however, the response did not appear to reflect the allocation in the Budget papers, or the Chief Minister's Budget address.

When prodded by members of the Estimates Committee, ACT Housing was unable to categorically respond, saying rather that the

funding would be for “intensive case management support, (...) that does not necessarily equate to beds”.

Initiatives to improve support services for people in housing crisis are valuable and essential for those who do not have shelter. However, where homelessness is a likely and imminent outcome for an individual or family, YWCA Canberra continues to recommend that safe shelter should be the first priority, from which case management and support services can flow.

Increasing the supply of crisis accommodation and innovative housing solutions, such as group homes for older women modelled off our own Betty Searle House, are fundamental to resolving housing stress in our city. These solutions need to be timely and available to individuals and families before they reach a point of crisis that forces them onto the street, into their cars or onto someone else’s couch.

Increasing the supply of crisis accommodation and innovative housing solutions, such as group homes for older women modelled off our own Lady Heydon House, are fundamental to resolving housing stress in our city. These solutions need to be timely and available to individuals and families before they reach a point of crisis that forces them onto the street, into their cars or onto someone else’s couch.

We call upon the ACT Government to invest in boosting the number of places available to women and families needing safe shelter in Canberra.

## BACK TO THE FUTURE – AN UPDATE ON THE POSITIVE DEFINITION OF CONSENT AND HOW MEMBERS CAN BE INVOLVED.

*In the last edition of YAction we discussed recent efforts to introduce a positive definition of consent into the Crimes Act 1900 (ACT) and spoke to the founder and director of End Rape on Campus about sexual assault and harassment at Australia’s universities.*

We are back to the future on both these important issues, however. In the twelve months since the *Changing the Course* report shone the spotlight on campus hazing and sexual assault, we are still yet to see consistent and tangible leadership from Australia’s universities. Universities Australia have released guidelines designed to help universities strengthen their support for students, however Sharna Bremner from End Rape on Campus believes the implementation of these recommendations has been inconsistent and lacks genuine involvement from student representatives.

End Rape on Campus also remains concerned by how universities will respond to the unique experiences of international students, who often must overcome language and cultural barriers, as well as fears about their visas when making complaints to universities.

Their complex circumstances are yet to be given comprehensive consideration by the guidelines or the universities. What is needed, according to Sharna, is a “holistic approach, one that is top-down and bottom up” and that encompasses positive legislative reforms as well as social reforms about how we teach young people and encourage positive behaviours.

...for change to be real, it must be comprehensive and encompass legislative reforms as well as structural changes that build gender equality into everyday life.

YWCA Canberra agrees that for change to be real, it must be comprehensive and encompass legislative reforms as well as structural changes that build gender equality into everyday life.

For this reason, we continue to support the proposal to amend

the Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill 2018 to include a definition of positive consent. We believe this reform would set a benchmark of appropriate sexual behaviour, meet the key objectives of sexual

assault law and bring the ACT in line with all other states and territories on this issue.

The ACT Legislative Assembly has moved the proposed consent amendment back to the Justice and Community Safety Committee which has established a public enquiry into its provision in the *Crimes Act 1900 (ACT)*. In September we made a [submission](#) to the inquiry and presented evidence to the Committee's public hearings reinforcing

our position. To reinforce the importance of this legislative change, we are asking members to share their support for #yestoconsent via social media. You are also invited to write to your local member of the ACT Legislative Assembly, asking them to get on board for gender equality and say #yestoconsent.

You can find information on your local member, as well as a template letter via our [website](#).



## EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Don't miss **For Purpose's** upcoming workshop, [Social media for Social Change](#). On Monday 22 October, this one-day workshop explores how to make the most out of the opportunities social media offers for purpose organisations to tell your story, reach interested and passionate audiences, and engage supporters.

**Indigenous Business Month** (October) celebrates the strength and diversity of Indigenous Businesses. Join Murawin for a special [ACT Tiddas in Business Luncheon](#) to mark the occasion - Wednesday 24 October 2018 12 - 2:00 pm.

**Nominations are now open** for the [YWCA Canberra Board Traineeship Program](#) - Trainees will be announced at YWCA Canberra AGM - Monday 29 October, 5:45pm for a 6pm start.

Nominations are being sought for membership of the **2019-2020 ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Women**. Nominations close on 19 October 2018. To find out more please visit the [website](#), email [women@act.gov.au](mailto:women@act.gov.au), or phone 6205 1075.

**Safer Families Grants** - Financial assistance for people leaving domestic violence - Financial grants of up to \$2,000 are available to help cover the cost related to establish a new and safe home for you and your children. If you think you may be eligible, please contact DVCS on 6280 0900 to discuss a referral.

**Nominations are now open** for the [2018 ACT Violence Prevention awards](#). To find out more information regarding this opportunity email [women@act.gov.au](mailto:women@act.gov.au). Nominations close on 15 October 2018.

**Sponsor a ticket** for the [YWCA Canberra LGBTQIA+ Allies Prom](#) for young people across Canberra aged 12-25 who identify as LGBTQIA+ and their allies to attend for free. This event will be held at the Ainslie Football Club on Thursday 8 November, and is strictly drug and alcohol free.

Don't miss a night of fun as we celebrate a year of achievements at the **She Meets End of Year Members' event** scheduled for 29 November at Treehouse Bar. Tickets are limited.

**LGBTQIA+ & ALLIES Prom**

THURSDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 2018 | ARRIVALS FROM 6:30PM - 10:00PM  
RSVP'S CLOSE TUESDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2018  
AINSLIE FOOTBALL CLUB, 52 WAKEFIELD AVE, AINSLIE ACT 2602

THIS YEAR'S THEME IS  
**~WONDERLAND~**

HEAD TO [YWCA-CANBERRA.ORG.AU](http://YWCA-CANBERRA.ORG.AU) FOR MORE INFORMATION OR  
CONTACT CIARA DUGGAN P: 6294 4633 | E: [CIARA.DUGGAN@YWCA-CANBERRA.ORG.AU](mailto:CIARA.DUGGAN@YWCA-CANBERRA.ORG.AU)

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

**GOLD PARTNERS**

**PARTICIPATION PARTNER**

AGA a gender+ agenda | AIDS ACTION COUNCIL | ACT Government | LGBTQIA+

### CONTACT

HELEN MACHALIAS

Director of Communication, Advocacy and Fundraising Team

Email: [helen.machalias@ywca-canberra.org.au](mailto:helen.machalias@ywca-canberra.org.au)



[Facebook.com/YWCACanberra](https://www.facebook.com/YWCACanberra)



[@YWCACanberra](https://twitter.com/YWCACanberra)



[au.linkedin.com/company/ywca-of-canberra](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ywca-of-canberra)



[@ywacanberra](https://www.instagram.com/ywacanberra)

[www.ywca-canberra.org.au](http://www.ywca-canberra.org.au)