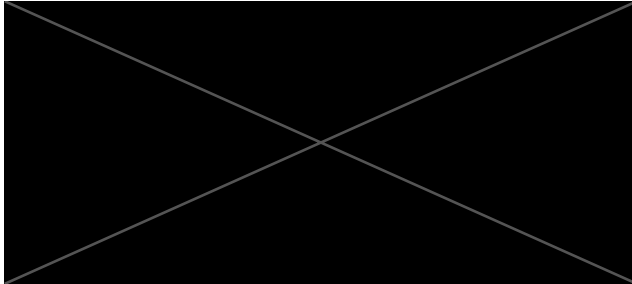




**Australian Government**  
**Department of Employment  
and Workplace Relations**

Your Ref  
Our Ref Lex 1781



**Freedom of Information – Internal Review Decision**

I refer to your email of 22 September 2025 requesting an internal review of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations' (the department's) decision dated 5 September 2025 (LEX 1650- 'the original decision') made under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act).

**My decision**

I am authorised to make internal review decisions under section 54C of the FOI Act. Consistent with the requirements of section 54C of the FOI Act, I have reviewed the original decision and made a fresh decision.

For the reasons set out below, I have decided to vary the original decision dated 5 September 2025 to refuse access to the document in full.

I have decided to grant access in part to the document on the basis of the international relations exemption, the personal privacy conditional exemption and irrelevant material.

The reasons for my decision are set out at **Attachment A**.

**You can ask for an external review of my decision**

You can find information about your rights of review under the FOI Act, as well as information about how to make a complaint at **Attachment B**.

Please note you will have 60 days to apply in writing for a review by the Information Commissioner.

**Further assistance**

An extract of relevant legislation is available at **Attachment C**.

If you have any questions, please email [foi@dewr.gov.au](mailto:foi@dewr.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

*Gabby*

Authorised Decision Maker  
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

22 October 2025

## REASONS FOR DECISION

### Background

1. On 3 July 2025, the department received your request for access to documents under the FOI Act for:

*“ the transcript of the briefing and discussion on the Care and Support Economy hosted by the Department of Employment and Workplace (DEWR) and the Department of Education on 18 September 2024.”*

2. On 14 July 2025, the department wrote to you to seek your agreement to a 14-day extension of time. On the same day you informed the department that you agreed to this extension.
3. On 15 July 2025, the department wrote to you and informed you that your request covers documents that contain third parties’ personal information and that the department was therefore required to consult with the affected third parties concerned. The department informed you that in accordance with section 15(6) of the FOI Act the period for processing your request was extended by 30 days.
4. In the same correspondence the department told you that it would treat the names of Commonwealth staff as irrelevant to the scope of your request under section 22 of the FOI Act, unless you told us otherwise.
5. On 5 September 2025, the original decision maker decided that 1 document consisting of 21 pages fell within the scope of your request. The original decision maker refused access to the documents in full on the basis that the personal privacy and operations of agencies conditional exemptions apply to the document under the FOI Act.
6. On 22 September 2025, the department received your request and reasons for internal review.
7. As you did not tell us that you wished to have the information referred to in paragraph 4 above included in the scope of your request, I have deleted this information as irrelevant material under section 22 of the FOI Act.

### What I took into account

8. In reaching my decision, I took the following material into account:
  - the original decision dated 5 September 2025
  - your correspondence dated 22 September 2025 seeking internal review of the department’s original decision and other correspondence with you
  - the document that falls within the scope of your request
  - consultation with the relevant third parties
  - consultations with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Department of Education
  - consultations with relevant departmental officers about the nature of the document and the operating environment and functions of the department
  - the FOI Act

- the guidelines issued by the Australian Information Commissioner under section 93A of the FOI Act (FOI Guidelines).

## **Reasons for decision**

### Section 33 of the FOI Act – Documents affecting international relations

9. Under section 33(a)(iii) of the FOI Act a document is exempt if its disclosure would, or could reasonably be expected to, cause damage to the international relations of the Commonwealth.
10. Paragraph 5.39 of the FOI Guidelines provides that the phrase ‘international relations’ has been interpreted as meaning the ability of the Australian Government to maintain good working relations with other governments and international organisations and to protect the flow of confidential information between them and that the exemption is not confined to relations at the formal diplomatic or ministerial level.
11. Paragraph 5.24 of the FOI Guidelines explains that ‘reasonably expected’ means there must be a ‘real’ and ‘substantial’ grounds for expecting damage to occur which can be supported by evidence or reasoning.
12. Paragraph 5.25 of the FOI Guidelines states that the expression ‘damage’ can include intangible damage, including inhibiting future negotiations between the Australian government and a foreign government, or the future flow of confidential information from a foreign government. In determining whether damage is likely to result from disclosure of the information in question, I have had regard to:
  - paragraph 5.26 of the FOI Guidelines which provides that it is relevant to consider whether the content of the document is already in the public domain
  - paragraph 5.28 of the FOI Guidelines which provides that a decision maker can have regard to the relationships between individuals representing respective governments and that a dispute between individuals may have sufficient ramifications to affect relations between governments
  - paragraph 5.24 of the FOI Guidelines which provides that trust and confidence are intangible aspects of international relations.
13. I have consulted with DFAT in relation to the application of this exemption. In response DFAT informed me that it supported the application of section 33(a)(iii) of the FOI Act to certain parts of the material.
14. Based on DFAT’s consultation response, the nature of the relevant material, the circumstances in which it was communicated, and the nature and extent of the relationship, I consider that its disclosure would or could reasonably be expected to cause damage to the international relations of the Commonwealth in the context of its relationships with foreign governments.
15. For the reasons set out above, I am satisfied that parts of the document are exempt under section 33(a)(iii) of the FOI Act. I have deleted the exempt material and released the remaining material to you in accordance with section 22.

## Section 47F of the FOI Act – Personal privacy

16. The original decision maker found that the document contains personal information that is conditionally exempt under section 47F(1) of the FOI Act.
17. Section 47F(1) of the FOI Act relevantly provides that a document is conditionally exempt if disclosure would involve the unreasonable disclosure of personal information about any person.

### *Personal information*

18. Section 4 of the FOI Act provides that the term ‘personal information’ has the same meaning as in section 6 of the *Privacy Act 1988*, which is information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable whether:
  - a) the information or opinion is true or not, and
  - b) the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not.
19. In determining if the document contains ‘personal information I have had regard to paragraph 6.124 of the FOI Guidelines which provides that personal information:
  - is information about an identified individual or an individual who is reasonably identifiable
  - says something about a person
  - may be opinion
  - may be true or untrue
  - may or may not be recorded in material form.
20. I am satisfied that the document contains ‘personal information’. This is because the document contains information that ‘*says something*’ about identifiable third-party individuals as well as the speaker.

### *Disclosure of personal information would be unreasonable*

21. Paragraph 6.137 of the FOI Guidelines sets out the key factors to consider when determining whether disclosure would be unreasonable, being:
  - the author of the document is identifiable
  - the documents contain third parties’ information
  - release of the documents would cause stress on the third parties; and
  - no public purpose would be achieved through release.
22. In considering whether disclosure of the personal information in the document would involve an unreasonable disclosure of personal information I have had regard to the following factors:
  - some of the individuals to whom the personal information relates are not known to be associated with the matters dealt within the document
  - the individuals concerned have not consented to the release of their personal information
  - the FOI Act does not control or restrict any subsequent use or dissemination of information released under the FOI Act
  - the personal information is not available from publicly accessible sources
  - disclosure of the information would unreasonably impact on the privacy of the affected individuals

- the release of the document would likely cause stress to the affected individuals
- my view that no public purpose would be achieved through the disclosure of the personal information and it would not advance the public interest in government transparency and integrity.

23. Taking these matters into account and the third-party submissions, I consider that disclosure of the personal information contained in the document would be unreasonable.

24. I therefore find that parts of the document are conditionally exempt under section 47F(1) of the FOI Act.

#### Public interest test

25. Under subsection 11A(5) of the FOI Act, the department must give you access to conditionally exempt material unless in the circumstances it would be, on balance, contrary to the public interest to do so at the time of the decision.

26. I In accordance with section 11B of the FOI Act, I must consider the four public interest factors favouring access, including whether access to the document would do any of the following:

- promote the objects of the FOI Act
- inform debate on a matter of public importance
- promote effective oversight of public expenditure
- allow a person to access his or her own personal information.

27. When weighing the public interest for and against disclosure under section 11A(5) of the FOI Act, I have taken into account relevant factors in favour of disclosure. In particular, I have considered the limited extent to which disclosure of the personal information in the document would:

- inform debate on the care and support economy and gender equality
- promote the objects of the FOI Act.

28. I have also considered the relevant factors weighing against disclosure of the personal information in the document, including:

- it relates to aspects of the personal affairs of several individuals
- the information is not well known, wholly or partially, in the public domain
- the FOI Act does not control or restrict any subsequent use or dissemination of information released under the FOI Act
- the extent to which disclosure could reasonably be expected to prejudice the affected individuals' right to privacy
- release of the information would likely cause stress to the individuals concerned
- the third-party submissions objecting to the release of the personal information
- disclosure of the personal information would have little or no value in informing public debate.

29. Based on these factors, I have decided that, in this instance, the public interest in disclosing the information in the abovementioned documents is outweighed by the public interest against disclosure. I have not taken into account any of the irrelevant factors set out in section 11B(4) of the FOI Act in making this decision.

30. For the reasons set out above, I am satisfied that parts of the document are conditionally exempt under section 47F(1) of the FOI Act. I have deleted the conditionally exempt material and released the remaining material to you in accordance with section 22.

Section 22 of the FOI Act: access to edited copies with irrelevant and exempt matter deleted

31. I have decided that the document contains material that is irrelevant to your request. This material consists of the names of Commonwealth staff.

32. In accordance with section 22 of the FOI Act I have deleted the irrelevant material and have decided to release the remaining material to you.

**Conclusion**

33. I am satisfied that parts of the document are exempt under section 33(a)(iii) of the FOI Act and conditionally exempt under section 47F(1) of the FOI Act.

34. I have deleted the irrelevant, conditionally exempt and exempt material in the document and have released the remaining material to you in accordance with section 22 of the FOI Act.

## YOUR RIGHTS OF REVIEW

### Applying for an Information Commissioner review

If you do not agree with this FOI decision, you can apply for a review by the Information Commissioner.

You have **60 days** after receiving this FOI decision to apply in writing for a review by the Information Commissioner and there are no fees for applying.

You can submit your application by using the online [Information Commissioner Review Application form](#).

### Complaints to the Information Commissioner

You may complain to the Information Commissioner about action taken by an agency in the performance of functions, or the exercise of powers, under the FOI Act.

A complaint to the Information Commissioner must be made in writing and it is recommended that it be submitted through the online [FOI Complaint form](#).

If you are unable to use the online form you can submit your complaint to the Information Commissioner either by:

Email: [foidr@oaic.gov.au](mailto:foidr@oaic.gov.au)

Post: Director of FOI Dispute Resolution  
GPO Box 5288  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

## RELEVANT LEGISLATION

### 11A Access to documents on request

- (5) The agency or Minister must give the person access to the document if it is conditionally exempt at a particular time unless (in the circumstances) access to the document at that time would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest.

Note 1: Division 3 of Part IV provides for when a document is conditionally exempt.

Note 2: A conditionally exempt document is an exempt document if access to the document would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest (see section 31B (exempt documents for the purposes of Part IV)).

Note 3: Section 11B deals with when it is contrary to the public interest to give a person access to the document.

### 22 Access to edited copies with exempt or irrelevant matter deleted

#### *Scope*

- (1) This section applies if:
- (a) an agency or Minister decides:
    - (i) to refuse to give access to an exempt document; or
    - (ii) that to give access to a document would disclose information that would reasonably be regarded as irrelevant to the request for access; and
  - (b) it is possible for the agency or Minister to prepare a copy (an **edited copy**) of the document, modified by deletions, ensuring that:
    - (i) access to the edited copy would be required to be given under section 11A (access to documents on request); and
    - (ii) the edited copy would not disclose any information that would reasonably be regarded as irrelevant to the request; and
  - (c) it is reasonably practicable for the agency or Minister to prepare the edited copy, having regard to:
    - (i) the nature and extent of the modification; and
    - (ii) the resources available to modify the document; and
  - (d) it is not apparent (from the request or from consultation with the applicant) that the applicant would decline access to the edited copy.

### 33 Documents affecting national security, defence or international relations

A document is an exempt document if disclosure of the document under this Act:

- (a) would, or could reasonably be expected to, cause damage to:
  - (i) ...
  - (iii) the international relations of the Commonwealth; or

### 47F Public interest conditional exemptions—personal privacy

#### *General rule*

- (1) A document is conditionally exempt if its disclosure under this Act would involve the unreasonable disclosure of personal information about any person (including a deceased person).

- (2) In determining whether the disclosure of the document would involve the unreasonable disclosure of personal information, an agency or Minister must have regard to the following matters:
- (a) the extent to which the information is well known;
  - (b) whether the person to whom the information relates is known to be (or to have been) associated with the matters dealt with in the document;
  - (c) the availability of the information from publicly accessible sources;
  - (d) any other matters that the agency or Minister considers relevant.

Department of Education  
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

## **Fireside Chat with Stephanie Campbell**

Wednesday, 18 September 2024

### **PRESENTED BY:**

### **MC:**

s 22(1)

### **ATTENDEES:**

Stephanie Campbell

s 22(1)

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*[Opening visual of slide with text saying 'Australian Government with Crest (logo)', 'Department of Education', 'Department of Employment and Workplace Relations', 'Gender Equity Network', 'Fireside Chat with Stephanie Campbell', 'Australia's Ambassador for Gender Equality', 'Wednesday 18 September']*

*[The visuals during this webinar are of the presenter and panellists seated on stage]*

s 22(1)

Good morning everybody and welcome to this fireside chat. Before I begin I would just like to acknowledge that we are on the land of the Ngunnawal people. So, pay my respects to Elders past and present, acknowledge traditional owners and communities and families that are connected to this country. Acknowledging also that those of you who are watching the webinar are probably coming in from country all around the nation, so, acknowledging traditional owners, communities, families connected with all of those countries across this great country. And acknowledge 65,000 years of continuing connection, sovereignty, custodianship and care of country and community and in particular thinking about our discussion today, gender rights and equality in First Nation communities across the country.

So, I'm actually a little bit excited because we have the amazing Stephanie Campbell, Ambassador for Gender Equality joining us this morning. And so, Stephanie AM I should say – always important to remember the letters next to the name – served as head of Australia's Bilateral Aid Programs with Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Tuvalu and head of Australia's Pacific Regional Programs, senior roles with Care Australia and the Oil Search Foundation, founding Director on the Femili PNG Board which provides services to survivors of family and sexual violence, and PNG City Pharmacy Limited Board. And also chair of the Southern Highlands Provincial Health Authority Board, the third largest province in PNG. Masters of Philosophy from Cambridge University in international relations, Bachelors degree from the University of California, and currently undertaking a Masters of Social Work at the University of Melbourne. And also, I thought amazingly a volunteer at palliative care at Clare Holland House Hospice as well as a wildlife carer and rescue for the ACT Wildlife. So, I'd love to chat to you a bit about that too.

But before we jump into the questions I did also just want to really thank s 22(1) and s 22(1) who are the co-chairs of the Gender Equity Network. Thank you so much for organising this. And we've also got s 22(1) our Gender Equity Champion from the Department of Education who will be closing us out this morning as well. And what's also really exciting for us is that this is a joint Department of Education, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations event.

So, questions can be fed through on the system. s 22(1) is there. s 22(1) is there. What we wanted to kind of particularly focus on was the care economy, healthcare and social assistance industry given both Departments are pretty focused on it. By way of context, it's projected to make the largest contribution to employment growth over the next te- year period. It's one of the largest employing industries and yet what we know is it's got the lowest wages historically, although that is improving, and also historically I think something like from Jobs and Skills Australia 77% of the workforce identifies as female.

So, I guess we're keen to ask some questions about that and then I also was keen to get into some of your other work and in particular how as a set of Departments working on policy and service delivery design we think about intersectionality as well. But probably just first wanted to throw to you and just give us a sense of from the Ambassador's perspective where your focus and priorities are, how you're kind of thinking about the work that's happening domestically and then how that links up internationally.

**Stephanie Campbell:**

Great. Well thank you. And I'm just so delighted to be here. Also just pay my respects to the Ngunnawal people and my deep respects to their Elders past and present, and any First Nations person in the room today, I also acknowledge you.

So as Ambassador for Gender Equality I'm Australia's lead international advocate for gender equality but my role is very much derived from the strong focus on gender equality domestically, from our new and fantastic strategy Working for Women and also what I try to do is engage on all of those issues domestically and take that with me overseas. And I can tell you there is so much interest in what we're doing here and Australia is very much internationally seen as progressive in this space, particularly what we're doing with gender responsive budgeting, what we are doing in terms of the care economy, getting more women involved back in the economy, addressing things like childcare, what we're doing in the space of violence against women, whilst it's pretty tricky for us at the moment. I mean it is a crisis. What we're doing in terms of both prevention and response is recognised internationally as well as some of the gains we've made in things like women peace and security. So, I can talk about any and all of that.

I work at a multilateral level, regional level and bilateral level. I am tasked by both Minister Gallagher and Minister Wong. My Minister is Minister Wong. So in doing that I spend a lot of time overseas and in doing that it's really enabled me to connect dots across many different areas.

Let me just step back and define what we mean by gender equality because I think that's really important and it's often confused I think and particularly now with a pretty tricky environment. And I'm happy to talk now or later about some of the key and critical issues around pushback that we're seeing internationally and here in Australia. But gender equality is really a pretty simple concept and it basically means that every single person has every single opportunity to meet their full potential regardless of their gender. And I think a lot of people kind of think it's mainly focused on women and girls and to some extent it is because what it's about is lifting barriers so that people can meet their full potential. And we do know when we look across many different sectors and areas women and girls will often face greater barriers than men and boys and we'll look at that in the context of care in a moment.

But not always. So let's take mental health for example. We know that around the world – and for the same social norms we'll probably talk about later in the context of care – these social norms that real men don't cry, man up, don't be such a sissy. We know because of that men have a lot

greater challenges in terms of seeking help than women and we also know in many countries the prevalence of suicide for men and the risk of suicide for men is greater than women. What's happening to our young men particularly around the ages from 16 to 28 there's some really distressing things happening there in terms of creating barriers. And again, we can talk more about that in the context of pushback. So, I think it's just really important to say when you have gender equality, when everyone can meet their full potential then it's better for everyone. It's better for every single person. Our economy's better, our families and children are growing up in healthier environments, the access to quality services is better, we address climate change more effectively etcetera, etcetera. So, my role is really engaging on these issues in a very practical way that brings forward the benefits of lifting barriers for every single person.

s 22(1)

I want to talk about the pushback piece and I've got a couple of questions here too. But in your travels and in your work are there particular jurisdictions that actually really stand out in this space?

**Stephanie Campbell:**

I mean that's a really interesting question and again I'll go back to Australia's doing well in this space. We might feel the frustration here but what we have been progressing particularly over the last few years has been pretty spectacular and there's a lot of interest in what we're doing. Some of the European, particularly the Nordic countries – Iceland is always pointed out as one that's very progressive in this space. Canada is doing some really interesting things. It's interesting to see how a number of Latin American countries are really stepping up. So, I've been to Mexico, Chile recently and looking at what's called a feminist foreign policy. Again, we can talk about that in terms of the context of Australia. But they are starting to really push forward on the international stage and trying to address some of these issues within their own countries, although some of the challenges are quite extraordinary for women as well compared to maybe what we're experiencing here.

So there's different countries at different paces and I think – again we'll talk about pushback in a moment – but what I do find as I travel around the world is that in every single country I've been to – and I'm actually off to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, UAE next month so it will be interesting to think about this from that perspective. But in every country I've been to the majority of people that I engage with in Government, in private sector, in civil society get why this is important. And

we do see pushback at different levels but I do derive a lot of hope in the fact that there's so many different kind of countries with you might say different cultural issues around these topics. And when you get into the LGBTQI+ space it can be a little bit trickier at times but I think there's a baseline there that you can build from and that does give me hope.

s 22(1)

And so I've got a couple of questions. And actually I have to admit I don't know some of the acronyms in this question so you probably will. So, this person says:

*Q: Thank you for attending our Department Ambassador. Considering the role women play in Australia's care and support economy chronically undervalued and underpaid it's crucial women are supported by CEDAW.*

What's the full acronym on that?

**Stephanie Campbell:**

So, the Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

s 22(1)

*Q: In light of the UN special Rapporteur's critique of Australia's CEDAW implementation has the Government sought clarification or engaged in dialogue to understand and address her concerns?*

**Stephanie Campbell:**

Yeah. So that's pretty tricky. I mean we're very lucky to have Natasha Stott Despoja representing us as well. There's been some tricky issues which has come out in the press on the special Rapporteur who's taken a fairly difficult position on transgender rights in a way that doesn't conform with our views on that. And those concerns have been raised within the Committee itself and we are directly engaging through various different mechanisms. But I do know that that is on Natasha's agenda and something that she takes very seriously and is taking forward.

s 33(a)(iii)

s 33(a)(iii)

s 22(1)

And you talked about pushback. And I'd be just interested in how you're seeing that manifest or where your points of most concern are in terms of how that's manifesting and then even what that means in the context of our domestic policy. But I'm going to add – that's a two barrel question but I'm actually going to add another question from the audience. And you touched on this before.

*Q: Men have shorter life expectancies, higher suicide rates, are more likely to go to prison, less likely to go to university, account for the majority of the homeless, the majority of those suffering from drug and alcohol abuse and the majority of workplace deaths and injuries. And also traffic injuries as well I'd add to that. And receive harsher prison sentences for the same crime. I'm not sure about that data point. But are these issues important for gender equality?*

**Stephanie Campbell:**

s 33(a)(iii)

s 33(a)(iii)

s 33(a)(iii)

One of the tools that they're all using at the moment in a really interesting way is surrogacy where they're bringing forward the whole idea that surrogacy is anti-women's rights and it's just wrong for women to be surrogates. Whereas the feminist side is very divided on that. Some are very supportive and some aren't. So, they're actually picking that up, that whole string of surrogacy, not for the issue itself but to be divisive within the community which is supporting gender equality. So, there's all sorts of those tactics.

And then that's further taken up to the international level and multilateral level where we're seeing international agreements that are being undermined as we're trying to negotiate things from climate change to humanitarian to food security to those agreements which look at gender equality, for example coming out of the Commission on the Status of Women where these groups are now coalescing at the state level, s 33(a)(iii) with these non-state actors to really drive and undermine gender equality. So getting rid of words like gender diversity and inclusion, abortion, sexual and reproductive health rights from international agreements which give us protection.

So, two other things start to really feed into that and reinforce that pushback movement which is now happening globally. One is through targeted abuse to mainly women, LGBTQI and others that might hold certain values-based positions where you're seeing them disproportionately targeted with online violence, so tech facilitated gender based violence. And what's happening there is this is not only a massive human rights issue –s 33(a)(iii)

So because of that experience I had so many women come and tell me their stories, women politicians, women in media, and I heard women who had fake nude photos circulated of them and went home and one woman her husband knocked her tooth out because of what he saw online, other women who have gone to bed for ten days at a time after these onslaughts, other women who've had to take their children out of country and put them into mental health hospitals because of what's happened to their kids at school, another woman whose mother's shop was burned to the ground because of what was happening to her in politics.

So, what's happening, it's a human rights issue but it's also used by these authoritarian regimes and as part of pushback to really push women out of public spaces. And we are now actively starting to see that happen where women just either can't put up with it anymore – so you saw what happened in New Zealand with Jacinda Adern or you look at women leaders who just disproportionately cop it – or even if they want to stay they're not being re-elected because of all the disinformation about them which men aren't getting so they're not trusted to be re-elected or stay in public spaces more generally. So that's deeply worrying in terms of democracy but that's feeding into pushback because these populous authoritarian governments are these family values and women at home. It's being used to really undermine women in public spaces.

And then the last bit which brings the final question is what's happening as part of this pushback is the fact that we are seeing young men terribly disaffected. So that list that you read out, some of the data I'd question. I think with homelessness in many cases women are up there as well. But by and large there's this sense that we've been so focused on women and men are now missing out. s 47F(1)

. As I travel around it's like we need to start focusing on men. When you look at the full picture there's still much more we need to do in terms of removing barriers for women when you look at care, the care burden, when you look at violence against women, when you look at some of the specific health issues etcetera. But when you look at it in these kind of siloed approaches it can generate its own pushback.

And there was a really interesting study that was done in the States by a chap named Gary Barker recently – he's with the Equimundo Foundation and he does a lot of work for the UN and what not. But they did this study in the States. It's been replicated by Kings College London, something similar. We've looked at our statistics here. But it found that young men – I think it was between about the age of 16 and 28 – 33% of them had never been in a meaningful relationship. Around the same number were not leaving their homes on a week by week basis. Two thirds of them felt that they were misunderstood, no one understood them. 50% said their online lives were more satisfying than their offline lives and 60% of them were watching hard core porn regularly if not daily.

s 47F(1)

So that again is being used to feed into this pushback. So across the board it's deeply worrying. We're seeing that there's no country in the world that's escaping it. And it's also worryingly re-shifting norms back to what in the past – if I was walking down [0:23:58] and someone came up to me and started saying 'You're a horrible, terrible person. You should die. You're a witch. You're a sorceress, F, F, F, F' they would be arrested. But the space in which I or we work, socialise, learn, communicate, play, the internet space, it's free game. And it can go viral to within [0:24:24]. Maybe ten people see it. Viral and six million people see it. So it's starting to shift to well that's okay and when that kind of becomes okay then other things become okay. That level of violence becomes acceptable.

So I think it's deeply worrying in terms of some of these norm shifts that we have to think through as well as undermining democracy. And my goodness. We can talk about why but there's so

many reasons why we need women in public spaces if we're going to solve –s 47F(1)

And by extension if you were the only one at the table, no matter what the table is, trying to define safety for 100% of the population you're only going to get 50%.

So we have to have women at the table. And you can extrapolate that to look at climate change or how we address climate change and women peace and security and conflict, food security. Any of these really sticky problems that we're dealing with, if we don't have a diversity in thinking – and that's where your intersectionality also comes in – we're not going to get it right and we're going to fail on some of the major significant problems that the world is facing. So we have to have women at the table and we're at risk of going backwards in that space.

s 22(1)

And when we think about intersectionality, and what I'm really conscious of is essentially two white women sitting up here talking about feminism and gender equity, how do we do that well to build in not only just other voices but also the experience of the overlapping inequities?

**Stephanie Campbell:**

So, I think first of all it's back to unconscious bias but also not being aware. I'll give you another example. s 33(a)(iii)

s 33(a)(iii)

So I think it's just being aware that our lived experience, our perspective, whether we're a white male, we have certain privileges that we've grown up with, we're females from a privileged background, there's certain things we're going to see that other people aren't going to see, and that's why we have to ensure that we have that diversity at every table and why it's important if we're going to represent society as a whole. And on those issues don't do things to people without them being there as part of the decision making.

So, I was looking at NDIS the other -s 47F(1)

And I was looking at disproportionately how our First Nations people experience disability and there was no one in senior kind of positions at NDIS that was First Nations. I was like how can this be? So, we still have this real blind space where thinking with good intentions will capture that and we don't. And by not doing that I can tell you we can unintentionally do so much harm. And again, I can give you examples of my own experience how we've done that badly, making things worse for women and not better because we're white women coming in to make decisions for people. s 47F(1)

s 22(1)

And so, we've got a question here and it's really touched on some of the things you've talked about.

Q: *Do you have any advice on how to best communicate Australia's experiences and values in multilateral processes including in discussions with countries with other views?*

And it's reflecting on the person who's asking the question's own experience in terms of different multilateral international forums that we engage with as a Department. And I guess what I'm interested in too is advice you have on that but also in that context of say how you then localise say with your PNG experience the very sort of localised set of challenges.

**Stephanie Campbell:**

Thank you. And it's a good question and I have to say it's not always comfortable or easy.

s 33(a)(iii)

long way of saying in every single engagement, no matter if it's at the multilateral level, if I'm going country to country, I try to do my homework and find out somewhere in here we're going to share a value or a concern.

So, when I'm in the Pacific I know that's often dealing with climate change. And so, then I'm going to do my homework on the really, really practical ways in which I'm going to engage to say can we start talking here why it's important to have women at the table. So, I'll give you an example of how I did that recently. s 33(a)(iii)

So, we were finally working with some of the women's groups in the community and we finally convinced these guys 'Let's bring some of the women leaders to the table. I know you don't normally do it but let's do it'. So, they did and these women leaders came forward and they said 'What about our young men? They have no education. They have no sports facilities. They have no access to employment. They have no hope. They're angry. They're disempowered. Can we just try to resort all this energy into something positive and they might not want to fight so much?'

The women brought their lived experience as mothers to the table. And guess what? They're still fighting but it actually helped. It got better.

### s 33(a)(iii)

, and they were having these negotiations and I said, 'How about some women at the table?' And they said 'Yeah. This is for men'. And I said, 'Let me just tell you this experience in Hela'. 'Oh. That makes sense. I get that. That makes sense'. And they brought women to the table. Because it was not we want women at the table because we're ticking a box or we're going to try to push a woman here because you want a woman. It's always finding how is this going to help you get your job done? What's the practical – and again gender equality is the right thing to do. It absolutely is and we should have it just because it's the right thing to do. But it's the smart thing to do and if you can bring the smart thing to do to the table with the evidence – another big one is the economy. People are worried about the economy. We can bring Australia's own experience to the table of what this has meant to our economy in terms of \$120 billion a year to our economy, if you look at Sam Woolston's work last year, if we have gender equality in the workplace.

### s 33(a)(iii)

s 22(1)

So, I have a question here about the intersection of gender and socioeconomic status. And so I wanted to ask you a little – and it probably goes somewhat to what you were saying about finding that point of shared commonality or common interest. In terms of the intersection with poverty what is that discussion on the international stage at the moment between in some instances the

correlation between say poverty and gender inequity but also how do we make sure that – I'm just interested in your thoughts on that.

**Stephanie Campbell:**

So, first of all, the poverty. There are many more women who are living in extreme poverty than men. It's significantly higher. I don't know the exact number off the top of my head but it's significantly higher. And after COVID we saw many, many more women fall into poverty. And if we stay on the same trajectory sadly that we're on now not one single country in this world is on track to meet STG5. And again, part of that was COVID really set us back. Part of that is pushback. Part of that is these threats like climate change, conflict. There's more women now living in conflict zones or more conflicts even since the second World War. So, it's all of these kind of issues mean that we're not on a positive track to look at addressing poverty more generally and particularly women living in poverty.

s 33(a)(iii)

So again, there is a direct correlation. If we tackle gender equality we're necessarily going to tackle in a positive way poverty and we have to then work to lifting all of those barriers. I mean food security is another really interesting one. If women and men had the same access to productive resources, land, money, capacity, fertiliser, all those things that men do, we would see the food insecurity gaps close by something like 20%. I mean it's huge. And it makes sense.

s 22(1)

And so I want to bring you somewhat closer to home in terms of the APS and a question I have around sort of overcoming barriers within the SES. But just keeping you abroad for a bit. We're all working with – if I think about my work one of our areas of focus is how do we attract more women apprentices into what are traditionally male-dominated trades. When we think about the healthcare challenge part of the solution is about how do you bring more gender diversity into that workforce and that will help with some of the issues around say pay etcetera and also demand for that workforce. Where are you seeing that work in terms of again from best practice in other jurisdictions or reflections on how do we increase the diversity and the mix within traditionally gendered workforces whether that's male or female?

**Stephanie Campbell:**

So again, it's hard. I mean again compared to the rest of the world Australia is doing some really interesting things including in terms of legislation and Government contracting and the work that WGEA's done that's now leading to procurement. So I think we're really doing some fantastic things that others are interested in. s 33(a)(iii)

And it starts from when we get pregnant, when children are born. We start treating even subconsciously little girls different from little boys. There's research to say that we hold little girls closer, we jiggle little boys more. When they get to the playground he falls off and hurts himself. 'Man up. Don't be such a little baby. Get back up there'. Little girls are 'Come here. Don't get dirty. Let's brush you off'. They get into school. Little girls, 'You need to play nicely. Take care. Don't do that. Don't be so bossy'. Men, 'He's just being a little boy'. Little girls are sugar and spice and everything nice and all of that right. So we're socialising little girls to be nice, to be well behaved, to take care and not to take risks. Little boys fall off the play gym they get pushed back on.

They get into school and little boys start to take more risks in things like maths. If they fail at the little math problem then they try again. Little girls are socialised not to take so many risks. You get into high school and it's the girls that are babysitting, the boys that are – and so then we get into the workforce. And let me give you an example. You have a leader. Let's call him Bob. And

you have a leader. Let's call her Sue. Bob can be aggressive, he closes deals, he leans in, he can be a bit feisty. Sue, she's nice, she's caring. She takes care of everyone. Sometimes she gets a bit frustrated, has a little cry, moves on. So, we kind of trust Bob, we trust Sue. So, let's just change that around and let's just say Sue, she's aggressive, she leans in, she closes deals, she can be a bit scary. Bob, he's kind, he's loving, he takes care, sometimes he cries. Don't trust Bob. Don't trust Sue. It's like when you get in an elevator and if everyone was turned facing the wall you'd be uncomfortable right. It's a social norm. You face this way in an elevator. It's the same thing.

We are socialised consciously and unconsciously from tiny little babies that women take care and men take charge. Women play with dolls and boys play with trucks and guns and what not. So, you get into the workforce and we still expect when you get into TVET the girls are going to go do the nursing and the childcare and the boys are going to go do the construction. You get into the workforce, we want our men to take charge and our women to take care. And until we start really shaking up and being aware and tackling, they're just norms, they're not right. I mean how many women in this room – how many of you have been told you're just a little too aggressive? Whereas men don't hear that. They don't get that. How many women when a job comes up you feel like you need to tick every box. Women maybe tick 30%. There's all that stuff. So, it's something that has to start at every single level to be aware of that and then just start to normalise.

And so I was in Mongolia a few weeks ago and I went to a TVET school there where it was 50% girls, 50% boys. The girls were doing construction. And it was just completely normal. I was speaking to the boys. They didn't have any problem with it. It was just the girls, this is what they want to do. They wanted to go be X, Y and Z. So, it's just normalising it, socialising it. I think we need to do a lot better on the other side where men are still judged if they want to be a nurse or a teacher. I see this in my own field where we have women Ambassadors for example overseas and they take their husbands who stay home with the kids and the husbands feel so judged. 'You're home with the kids. Don't you miss work?' Not feeling kind of part of the community. Where no one would ever question that with a woman. We're still doing that. And I think it's also just getting the information out there. I mean there's been some great work and studies that say when men are involved with the children in those care roles from very early on their mental health is so much better but their children do so much better. And they grow up in a much better space in terms of they tend to be healthier mentally, healthier physically and they tend to once they get

into their adult lives to have more productive careers. There's research that shows when men are involved in that really positive way early on it's just such a positive contribution.

So it's trying to normalise all of that, that every single person should be able to reach their full potential in whatever they want to do without society judging them. And I think we have to remember where we judge women and want them to be in those care roles, when men – and it's my Bob example – when Bob steps into that care role he's judged. So, it's freeing all of that up so that we're just shaking those norms in every single thing that we do. And until we do that we're not going to have gender equality.

s 22(1)

Because I've got quite a few questions here about the prevalence of mental health for people who identify as male. I feel like you've somewhat answered that in the context of it's sort of if we can lift everything we can tackle that too. Just before I jump to that SES question, any last comments around this prevalence of mental health challenges for men, how you see this intersecting with gender equality more broadly?

**Stephanie Campbell:**

So again, I think it's back to those social norms. So, men don't seek help as much and that's a normative thing. Man up. Don't be such a sissy. Real men don't cry. We instil that in our boys from very early on. They don't talk about their emotions. Girls and women are much better at that because we're socialised. That's a positive thing in terms of for women in terms of those norms and a negative thing for men. And again it goes back to gender equality is about everything.

I think as we tackle all of these things and lifting barriers we have to be super mindful of all of our language. So, what's happening at the moment, men are feeling blamed, they're feeling they're part of a problem not part of a solution. They're feeling pushed out. Like the statistics coming out of the States they don't feel that they're understood. s 47F(1)

And so I think we have to understand that. And it's the language that we use, how we engage on these issues. It has to be

done in a way – and I was at something the other day where it was a very prominent speaker – and I won't mention it because she's a friend but she's a very well-known person – but she made this joke about men and it wasn't very nice but everyone laughed. You can get away with that. If you made the same joke about women you'd be – so we have to just really, really, really be mindful. Language matters, the way in which we engage on these issues matters.

And I take that forward with me internationally. I mean a lot of countries I mentioned before have come up with a feminist foreign policy. My advice to our Minister was I don't think we should use the F word. Not because I don't believe in all the principles of a feminist foreign policy. I'm a feminist myself. But when you start using that word it closes doors. It doesn't open them. Our foreign policy is a feminist approach, more feminist than those who have a feminist foreign policy. We are doing that in a really considered way. But let's not call it that. Let's just practice those principles which are all about understanding power dynamics, ensuring that we're taking intersectional approaches, ensuring that we're taking really trauma informed approaches in what we do, lifting those burdens etcetera. Let's look at those issues across everything we do but let's just be careful with our labels. So that language is important.

s 22(1)

My last question is – thank you everybody. There are so many great questions here. Some really meaty ones actually kind of really getting into the existential around – which I have tried to distil but thank you everyone. It's very exciting to see that much engagement. My last question really is very practical, which is what practical examples would you suggest for both Departments to remove gendered barriers to career progression particularly at the SES levels?

**Stephanie Campbell:**

I like this question. I was involved way back when it was with AusAID and I was in the SES but we had very few women in the SES and we were getting women up to EL2 level and they were just dropping off. So, I was asked to do a review and I did. And some of it was the care issue but actually that wasn't the main issue. The main issue was that the SES was very blokey. You'd go to the Monday meetings and we were talking about sport. It was the work hours were crazy. If you went off to get your kids it was you were judged. It just made it a really uninviting space for women to join. The sexual harassment and what not. This was a long time ago.

So, we started tackling some of those issues and AusAID and DFAT have merged now. But I think we've done that pretty well now. So, we came up in 2014 I think it was with a specific

strategy, because I think the number of women who were heads of mission were about 30% at the time, our SES was about 30%. So, we started at a pretty low base. So, we had a strategy which really targeted women in leadership, looked at the care issues and how people could use their time more effectively, working from home etcetera which COVID's really helped. But we did other things. So, we started to address those kind of barriers. We started to really address sexual harassment, all of that. And sexual harassment, we can talk about that if you want separately because a whole other line on that.

So we started to look at all these issues that were barriers and had this strategy and these targets. But we also noticed that all the rooms were named after men. All the pictures on the wall were men. So we started to change all that. So now half of our rooms are named after women, we have all the women Ambassadors on the walls. So, you walk in and you see women and you see men. You can't be what you can't see. So, we started to address it in those sorts of ways as well. And now we have I think 54% in the SES are women. s 47F(1)

This is normal. And when it's normal you just – so I think having strategies, having targets, holding yourself accountable, really important. But making sure it's balanced. Because I've also seen with 90% women and 10% men. They have the opposite problem. So it's about making sure you're constantly looking at those balances because you need all of that perspective. And then it's also if you take your foot off the pedal you will go backwards. You will go backwards.

s 47F(1)

. And again, you think progress is not linear and I think we have to remember that every single day. It's not linear. It's a continual fight. And that's in our space as well.

s 22(1)

And that's a perfect end. Because I was going to ask you about sustainment and you've pretty much answered in the sense of that it isn't linear. I'm going to throw over to s 22(1) to close us out.

**Stephanie Campbell:**

s 47F(1)

s 22(1)

Thank you so much. I'm looking forward to going to look at some coffee after this as a coffee addict myself. I'm s 22(1) I'm a First Assistant Secretary in the Department of Education and I have the privilege of being the Department's Gender Equity Champion. I'm here on behalf of Secretary s 22(1) who can't make it today. Unfortunately, he's travelling. I'd like to thank s 22(1) and Stephanie for joining us to have this discussion today and for sharing their insights. It's been a great pleasure to hear from you Stephanie about the international context of gender equity, the economic benefits of participation, and I think also it's been wonderful to hear about the experiences of women in public spaces. And it's a great reminder that while we've come a long way there is still more to be done in this area.

The discussion about having women at the table really highlights the important work that both the Department of Education and the Department of Employment does. Education and employment is so central to access to these tables. And I want to thank the Gender Equity Network from the Department of Education and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations for coming together to organise the event today and for bringing Stephanie here. It's really something I love to see as champion, both agencies working together to create a workplace that's more inclusive of people regardless of their gender, gender identity or gender expression.

So, thank you so much for those in the room and for those online for your participation today. And thank you once again to Stephanie for sharing your insights and s 22(1) for doing a wonderful job as host. So, thank you so much. Join me in thanking them.

(Applause)

*[Closing visual of slide with text saying, 'Australian Government with Crest (logo)', 'Department of Education', 'Department of Employment and Workplace Relations', 'Gender Equity Network', 'Fireside Chat with Stephanie Campbell', 'Australia's Ambassador for Gender Equality', 'Wednesday 18 September']*

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