**Committee**: Commission on the Status of Women

**Topics**: Women and Sustainability,

Elimination of Gender-Based Violence,

Women in Education and Employment

**Country/Delegation from** Australia

**Represented by** Sariena Luy - Earl Haig Secondary School

**TOPIC 1: Women and Sustainability**

With Australia being a westernized and developed country, the greatest section with concern under the topic of “Women in Sustainability” deals with menstruation. There is an ongoing taboo and self-proclaimed epidemic that deals with the fear of embracing how a female uterus/vagina works. Menstruation possesses a high amount of cultural power that is not discussed in Australia; women are not open to it, and hide the natural cycle by generally treating it in secret. Although Australian attitudes towards menstruation have changed immensely over the past century, there is still a sense of shame in the modern country. This is especially a problem for homeless women who face no access to sanitary products. 44% of homeless people are women, with limited resources to aid them in providing the sanitary items. Struggling women are resorting to using absolutely anything to manage their periods such as newspaper or rolled up toilet paper because many cannot bear the thought of spending all they have on the expensive and taxed health-related items. The reluctance to be more open about the influence of the menstruation on women, needs to be dissolved so that women no longer live in the stigma that their natural cycle is something to be ashamed of, especially since it can easily lead to health risks when suffered alone (ex: excessive cramping, toxic shock, general period pains).

**TOPIC 2: Elimination of Gender-Based Violence**

In regards to gender-based violence, the developed country extends into primarily struggling with rape and domestic violence. With female infanticide being legal, and free will with marriages, the main issues occur in relation to marital (or generally relationships) assault thus leading into dowry-related violence. It is recognized as a serious and widespread conflict in Australia that impact individuals and communities enormously. Statistics in Australia include: on average, at least one woman a week is killed by a (former) partner, one in three Australians has experienced physical violence since the age of 15, one in four will experience physical or sexual violence, and the list continues. Women with disabilities have become the most vulnerable to the form of violence, as the mistreatment dominantly comes from males. The Australian Government is working with overall Pacific Governments and organizations to address violence against women by providing the necessary services. They have also opened a national plan to do so as well. On November 25th, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women launches until December 10th, to initiate the “16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence” campaign that is marked by United Nations.

**TOPIC 3: Women in Education and Employment**

Despite Australian women continuing to have the highest access and participation rates in the world for education, the gender gap (primarily within health, life outcomes, and work wages) is so poor that the country struggles to make top twenty of most equitable countries. 90% of women between the ages of 20-24 complete their year 12 qualifications, in comparison to the 86% of men who do. However, women comprise of only 46% of the working force of Australia (37% are full time and 72% are part-time). The overall workplace participation rate for women is 59% with men at 70%.

Moreover, women receive 16% less of full-time average weekly ordinary earnings, and continue to not be represented highly in leadership roles (ex: 14% are in chair positions). In 1984, the Sex Discrimination Act implemented that discriminating someone based on his or her gender, sexuality, marital status, or family responsibilities is illegal. The “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” has significantly influenced in changing community attitudes and helping to advance gender equality in Australia. Although Australia has progressed in regards to providing more opportunities to work for women, the policymakers understand that there is still a long way to go. Women continue to experience inequality and discrimination which can conflict the choices available to them.

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