

# Outcomes of the Adviser Training Project

## **The rationale for the NCWA 2006 Adviser Training Project**

The project will deliver sustainable outcomes by strengthening the capacity of the organization to negotiate advice and responses to government, and to report on its work across a range of issues. By the end of the project NCWA plans to be able to work with new and existing advisers more effectively by adopting the communication conventions and techniques of contemporary professional practice. If the funding application is unsuccessful NCWA will continue with the reform proposed, albeit at a much slower pace, and will as a consequence be compromised in its capacity to deliver advice especially to government at every level

NCWA organises policy advice through a system of Standing Committees. This provides a system of volunteer advisers operating nationally and in the States and Territories. Advisers are chosen because of their background or special interest in the area of a given Standing Committee. They constitute a significant pro bono resource for NCWA and for the wider community. Training of new advisers involves helping them to understand policy context, the business of evaluating information, writing reports and helping NCWA and its constituent councils to make timely and effective submissions relating to the status and well being of women and children in Australia. At present there are certain structural weaknesses in the adviser system that are largely attributable to the infrequency of face-to-face contact between advisers and co-ordinators in the various standing committees, located as they are across the various states and territories.

## **How the ATP evolved**

The Adviser Training Project has had its genesis in reports from key informants – co-ordinators of NCWA Standing Committees, and new recruits to the ranks of NCWA advisers - that the existing paper based system is not working as well as could be. The self-paced, on-line learning system to be put in place during the term of this project will include feed an opportunity for participants to comment on any problems experienced and also on what worked well. The information derived from this part of the project will be used to shape the Training Day program to be held in October 2006.

## **Longer term impact of the project for NCWA**

The NCWA Advisor Training Project has two elements that address the need for the project outcomes to be sustainable beyond the funding period

1. The advisers/co-coordinators who have agreed to participate in the training involved – both on-line and through a face-to-face meeting - will help to evolve a more effective system of work and learn to be able to apply these skills in the future, and
2. By facilitating a new way of reporting on policy work between NCWA and the Standing Committees/ advisers, there will be fresh and sustainable opportunity for members of NCWA, and the wider community, to be aware of policy development and to feed into the process. Through the new web site interface NCWA will have fresh sources of information and much more immediate feed-back on its proposals.

NCWA believes that this new arrangement will continue to bear fruit beyond the funding period because

- the progress of the Adviser Training Project & its outcomes will be posted on the new web-site; and will be down-loadable for further publication,
- the new system for Adviser/coordinator work that evolves in the course of the project will have the commitment of the participants in the Adviser Training process; and
- the new web-site itself will have sufficient dynamism to create the potential for further development for NCWA with consultation networks and research sponsorships.

### **A model for widening participation of women in the public policy process**

The NCWA 2006-7 Adviser Training Project has the capacity to reach an international audience as a model of how to encourage wide participation by women in policy process, especially as it will be the subject of a report to the Congress of the International Council of Women to be held in Kyiv, Ukraine in September 2006.

#### **Summary**

The Adviser Training Day and the public launch of the website is designed at a time when women from across Australia and from overseas will be gathering for the Triennial Conference of National Council of Women of Australia. NCWA expects that Dr Anamah Tan of Singapore, President of the International Council of Women, and a member of the UN Commission on Status of Women will launch the website, and be available for a media campaign linked to the project. Thus the project is likely to generate considerable overseas as well as local interest.

The self-paced, on-line learning system to be put in place during the term of this project will include ample opportunity for participants to comment on any problems experienced and also on what worked well. The information derived from this part of the project will be used to shape the Training Day program to be held in October 2006. Focus group work will be an important part of the Training Day and this in turn will enable the project manager and steering committee to make adjustments to the training package and other aspects of the web-site. Participants in the Training Day will complete an evaluation sheet on the day. The web-site design will enable posting of material such as the content of reports from the Standing Committee, decisions from the Triennial Conference in October 2006 and action flowing from these decisions. All advisers/co-ordinators will be surveyed during the final stage of the project as to their use of the web-site, the materials supplied, and any recommendations.

The NCWA Board and the constituent councils thus have an opportunity to consider whether the project has delivered the outcomes sought.

It is intended that visitors to the new NCWA website will also be able to comment on what they find and this too will contribute to the organizations ability to evaluate the success of this project.