

Proposing Economy: Australia

APEC Gender Equality Structural Reform Voluntary Principles and Recommendations to Advance Women's Economic Empowerment

In the spirit of APEC's *Putrajaya Vision 2040* and the *Aotearoa Plan of Action*, supporting implementation of the *Enhanced APEC Agenda for Structural Reform* and the *La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth*, and to further advance the *Joint Statement of APEC Ministers Responsible for Women and Ministers Responsible for Trade* and the recommendations of the 2020 APEC Economic Policy Report on Structural Reform and Women's Empowerment, APEC economies reaffirm that gender equality and the economic empowerment of women of diverse backgrounds, including Indigenous women as appropriate, women in poverty, women with disabilities, older women and women living in remote and rural areas, are among the key elements to improving wellbeing, and achieving strong, sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

We reiterate the critical roles that women play in driving quality economic growth and productivity and the key role structural reforms play in advancing gender equality. We strive for women's economic empowerment, and the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in educational systems, and women in the world of work, including leadership and decision-making positions, by targeting systemic barriers that disproportionately affect women's economic empowerment.

We recognise the importance of inclusive and effective economic policies, regulations and programs, both in their design and delivery, and of the collection and use of disaggregated data, including sex-disaggregated data, to identify existing barriers and inform effective responses to support women's full and equal participation and leadership in all aspects of economic life, including by facilitating their transition to the formal and global economy.

These voluntary principles and recommendations, developed through the Economic Committee and Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy, acknowledge APEC's ongoing efforts and synthesise and reaffirm key priorities to support women's economic empowerment, providing a voluntary and non-binding initiative for further action and collaboration. They serve as a tool for promoting women's economic empowerment in line with and complementary to the APEC Leaders' commitment to the *La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth*, the latter being a key strategic document guiding APEC in achieving gender equality.

APEC economies are encouraged to advance women's economic empowerment including through the following gender equality structural reform voluntary principles and recommendations:

Women's education, training and skills development

- countering of stereotypes in education, training and skills development
- access to quality education, skills development, training and lifelong learning opportunities, including in STEM fields, emerging industries and sectors most impacted by innovation, digital and sustainability transitions
- access to digital infrastructure, technologies, literacy opportunities, skills training and digital trade/commerce, to encourage women's participation in the digital economy and innovation and to bridge the gender digital divide

- access to capacity-building activities and opportunities for women's economic empowerment

Women's access to capital, assets and markets

- narrowing the gap in economic development, raising living standards and reducing poverty
- access to targeted and quality financial resources, including credit, savings, insurance, digital financial products, pension systems, supported by consumer protection measures, as well as access to financial literacy programs, with an emphasis on digital financial education, including to support women-owned and women-led MSMEs
- ability to independently open, access and manage financial products and services, including a bank account
- ability to independently register, own and operate a business/private enterprise, including in order to access global value chains and expand into international markets
- ability to independently own, control and access land and other property/assets
- right to inheritance

Women's labor force participation

- access to fair and equal job opportunities for men and women across all employment sectors
- access to decent work and equal pay for equal work or work of equal value
- access to inclusive workplaces with policies that support flexibility and work-life balance and equal opportunities for women to return to employment, stay in their career and advance to leadership positions
- access to affordable healthcare services, as well as a safe and healthy working environment
- access to social protection, particularly in case of retirement, unemployment, sickness, disability, old age, and other incapacity to work
- access to family benefits, such as paid parental and carer leave, and support to affordable, inclusive, flexible and high-quality care services, including early learning and childcare

Women's economic participation and leadership

- prevention of discrimination and stereotypes that limit women's economic participation and advancement to decision-making roles
- prevention of violence, abuse and harassment, including online bullying and technology-facilitated gender-based violence, that limit women's economic participation

Members are encouraged to continue to share good practices and to carry out APEC capacity building activities in relevant fora in support of these gender equality structural reform voluntary principles and recommendations.