



Pacific Women's Professional Business Network Inc Submission to the CALD Women's Economic Opportunities Consultation

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Background: The Women's Economic Opportunities Review (WEOR) conducted by NSW Treasury aims to enhance women's economic security and participation over the next 5-10 years. The review identifies barriers to women's economic involvement and suggests reforms to address these challenges. The CALD women consultation seeks insights into issues affecting culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women's workforce access.

Analysis of Pacific Women in NSW

The state of Pacific women in New South Wales (NSW) presents a complex picture influenced by demographic shifts, age distribution, and educational participation. However, data scarcity poses a significant challenge in fully understanding their situation. The Pacific Women's Business Network (PWPBN) is taking steps to bridge this gap by compiling a comprehensive Pacific Women in NSW Situation analysis.

Demographic Insights: As of 2016, Pacific people comprised approximately 1.3% of the Australian population. This relatively small proportion is projected to increase to 3% in the coming decades, according to research from the College of Asia & Pacific (2014) and Ravulo. Notably, there has been a substantial 30.8% rise in the number of individuals with Pacific Islander ancestry since 2011. This indicates a growing community presence.

Gender Distribution and Age Profiles: Interestingly, the data reveals that within the Pacific Islander community, there are more women than men. This gender distribution could have implications for social dynamics and opportunities within the community. Moreover, age distribution statistics shed light on the demographic composition. A significant portion, approximately 39.0%, of the Pacific population in NSW is aged 19 years and under, indicating a relatively young community. Additionally, 37.8% fall within the 20 to 44 years age group.

Educational Participation Challenges: One of the concerning trends highlighted is the educational participation challenges faced by the Pacific population. A notable 72.7% of Pacific individuals are not engaged in any form of studying. This statistic underlines a potential gap in educational attainment, which can impact future economic prospects and social mobility within the community.

Data Scarcity and PWPBN's Initiative: It's important to note that despite these insights, there remains a substantial data scarcity around Pacific women's specific circumstances in NSW. This deficiency in data restricts a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities they face. Recognizing this gap, the Pacific Women's Business Network (PWPBN) is taking a proactive approach by compiling a Pacific Women in NSW Situation analysis. It is vital to note, that the analysis of Pacific Women in NSW highlights demographic shifts, gender distribution, age profiles, and

educational participation trends within the Pacific Islander community. However, due to limited data availability, a holistic understanding of Pacific women's circumstances remains elusive.

Issues Identified:

1. Western Perception and Lack of Understanding: A significant issue is the disconnect between Western perceptions and Pacific cultural practices. This leads to miscommunication and missed opportunities. Negative stereotypes, such as considering Pacific people as lazy or solely inclined towards sports, hinder educational attainment and workforce participation.

Recommendation: Develop awareness campaigns and programs that emphasize cultural understanding, involve parents and communities in education, and provide culturally appropriate resources. Focus on Pacific-specific services and programs for early education, and support primary and high school students in accessing education.

2. Lack of Quality Education and Affordability: Pacific people have lower educational attainment, reducing their access to leadership roles and higher-paid jobs. Lack of awareness about alternative pathways to higher education and training also contributes to these challenges.

Recommendation: Provide comprehensive educational support to Pacific families, particularly in high school and early college years. Establish programs that guide Pacific youth towards higher education and training opportunities, including financial aid options.

3. Informal Economy and Empowerment: Many Pacific women work in the informal sector due to its flexibility. However, this sector lacks adequate support, mentorship, and access to resources, which can hinder growth and networking opportunities.

Recommendation: Strengthen support for Pacific women in the informal sector by offering mentorship, access to finance, and guidance on formal processes like business registration and tax compliance. Empowerment should extend beyond income to decision-making within families and communities.

4. Data Gap and Utilizing Pacific Methodologies: A lack of research and data on Pacific women in NSW impedes targeted policy-making. Additionally, incorporating Pacific methodologies is crucial for effective communication and rapport building.

Recommendation: Conduct comprehensive research to gather data on Pacific women's education, economic participation, and leadership. Utilize Pacific methodologies to improve engagement with the community and inform policy strategies.

5. Sustainability of Initiatives: Previous initiatives, like the Youth Partnership with Pacific Communities (YPPC), have demonstrated effectiveness but faced challenges with sustainability due to staff turnover and restructuring.

Recommendation: Establish dedicated and funded teams to support ongoing initiatives that target CALD women's economic empowerment. Ensure that culturally competent staff members are retained to sustain the effectiveness of these programs.

The Women's Economic Opportunities Review (WEOR) conducted by NSW Treasury aims to enhance women's economic security and participation, identifying barriers and suggesting reforms. Within this context, the analysis of Pacific Women in NSW reveals a complex landscape influenced by demographic changes and educational challenges. Despite insights into gender distribution, age profiles, and educational participation, data scarcity hinders a comprehensive understanding of Pacific women's circumstances. To address this, the Pacific Women's Business Network (PWPBN) is compiling a comprehensive Pacific Women in NSW Situation analysis, aiming to fill the information void and accurately address the challenges faced by Pacific women. Additional suggestions center on elevating cultural awareness, delivering robust educational assistance, nurturing empowerment, bridging information gaps, and securing the longevity of initiatives. Enacting these proposals holds the potential to cultivate enhanced economic prospects and increased involvement for Pacific women in New South Wales.