

## Young Women's Roundtable

Saturday 21 May 2016

What does it mean to you to be economically independent?





- As a woman you have to think about what job you'll choose – e.g. not choosing a job in which you wouldn't be able to work part-time if you had kids
- We are being told at school women have 5-6 career changes and men have 12-15 – why are we being told in school that we will have limited options and not the same careers as men?

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*I'm only 15 and already I know that my choices will be ruled by me being a woman...*

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- We are still considered the weaker sex
- There should be systematic support to support my choice if I choose to be a mother and have a job at the same time
- Masculinised work place are an issue, you have to be masculine to succeed but then you get punished for that – masculine is the norm and being female is deviant
- The workplace is still designed for men – you are expected to work such long hours and this only works for people with no kids

## Youth

- Youth is also a particular disadvantage e.g. people can be demeaning, calling you 'darl' or 'sweetheart' → questioning your ability to do your job because you look young
- *'I'm a journalist and I'm treated in a patronising way because I look young'*
- *'I'm a lawyer and I'm always mistaken for the client because I am a **young** woman'*

## Intersection of disadvantage

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*We encounter multiple disadvantages that limit our choices – gender and race, gender and disability...  
People see my skin before they see my gender*

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- There is a double impact
- *'I have two things that are barriers'*
- *'Heads of departments haven't figured out how to get us in - i.e. people with disability, so it's doubly hard e.g. being a young woman with a disability... my disability is seen first as the barrier so I haven't felt gender discrimination yet, just discrimination due to my disability'*

## Community/ Family/ Intergenerational

- *'Trying to become economically independent might not be supported in my community because it's seen as moving away from the family'*
- What older family members expect of you does not allow you to be independent
- A young woman's choices aren't always respected. If we say we don't want kids we get told 'you'll change your mind when you get older'
- There are different expectations for boys and girls, particularly around supporting a family
- Different cultures have different expectations of their children

## Relationship

- It's considered emasculating for men to be supported by a woman so it's the woman who has to give up work or reduce their hours when a couple have a baby instead of the man
- We get demoralised: equality seems so hard to achieve so we end up being willing to accept less

## Key challenges and what would make a difference:

### Women & Work

- There are lots of gendered assumptions about women and work
- We need the same opportunities and options as men → we need structural change
- Gender pay gap
- Junior rates are exploitative
- Discrimination around culture, disability, race
- We need real choices e.g. around whether to stay home or return to work after having kids
- We need better conditions to support women's life choices e.g. better leave policies, family-friendly policies
- We need inspirational role models
- It's hard to get experience in order to get a job
- There is a lack of choice in hours



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*Gender differences in the workplace are colouring  
how I imagine my future*

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- Young people are getting underpaid and don't realise it
- Lack of voice: worried about speaking up e.g. a 'he said, she said' situation – young women get labelled as troublemakers if they speak up
- Sexual harassment of women at work is still a big thing
- I wouldn't take it up because I would be scared as a young woman

- Predators know young women are vulnerable – that they will not speak up
- Preference for hiring attractive women
- Commodification and sexualisation to sell a product

## Housing

- Current housing options for young people:
  - Living at home/with family
  - Boarding house e.g. for international students
  - Crisis accommodation – refuges
  - Share houses
  - Homelessness
  - Residential care (out of home care)
  - Couch surfing
  - Community housing – social housing and transitional housing

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*Most of the options available to young people are unstable...*

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- Issues around transitioning to more stable housing e.g. affordability issues around transitioning to private rental or home ownership
- Students provide an unending supply of tenants so landlords don't have to maintain properties as there'll always be someone else willing to take it so you can't complain much

## Financial Literacy

- There needs to be understanding of the experience of women by other groups and financial literacy should be tailored to fit this, tailored to gender
- Knowledge of specific problems faced by women e.g. re superannuation

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*As young women we see a small glimpse of finance  
but it's so little, such basic education*

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- Young mothers have a very different set of financial concerns to young women without kids
- Big existing focus on saving, not much beyond that
- We need education on deeper, more complex issues and with a gender angle
- Financial literacy is important for avoiding/escaping domestic violence and for avoiding homelessness
- A key mechanism for financial literacy is education – through high school, mothers groups, homeless shelters

## Super

- If you're young and supporting yourself, you can't afford to contribute to super
- Young women need knowledge around selecting a super fund

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*We need to be taught about super in school,  
especially about the benefits of super later on in life*

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- We need to get the ball rolling on super from a young age
- Young people are really susceptible to get tricked out of your super and employers will take advantage of that, we are vulnerable and need to be treated fairly

## How do we create pathways for young women?

- In person forums
- Engage more regional and rural women
- Tap into young women not with groups/ in nominated roles
- How do we engage young men?
- Roundtable members think about how they can engage other young women
- What tools/ support would you need to do this?

## What's next and how do you want to be involved?

- **Taking action**
- **Receiving information/ building knowledge**
- **Driving next steps**
- **Internships/ work experience**

### Issues:

- Women and work
- Empowerment
- Financial literacy
- Super
- Housing and homelessness
- Workplace rights
- Mental health – barrier to economic empowerment
- Regional and rural women's experience
- Access to info for CALD and low socio-economic background women
- Gender and violence
- Sexuality
- Young mothers
- Sexualisation
- Engaging men