



**Convention on the Elimination
of all Forms of Discrimination
Against Women**

Distr.
GENERAL

CEDAW/C/SR.114
25 February 1988

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 114th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 23 February 1988, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. BERNARD

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Convention (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE
CONVENTION (continued)

Initial report of Australia (CEDAW/C/5/Add.40 and Amend.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Brooks (Australia) took a place at the Committee table.
2. Ms. BROOKS (Australia), introducing her country's initial report (CEDAW/C/5/Add.40), together with a supplementary report (CEDAW/C/5/Add.40/Amend.1) on changes that had occurred since the completion of the initial report 16 months earlier, said that the Convention had been especially important in Australia because its ratification in 1983 had given the country the constitutional foundation on which to base important legislation to counter discrimination against women. The Australian Constitution itself, while not embodying any discriminatory principles, did not include any specific reference to equal rights for men and women, although the possibility of including such a clause was under discussion.
3. Under Australia's federal system, measures to combat discrimination against women had been carried out in co-operation by the federal Government and state governments. Real progress had been made since 1983 regarding women's participation in the work force, the availability of child-care facilities, female/male income ratios, the number of women in executive positions in both the public and private sectors, the number of girls completing high school, and the percentage of women in higher education and in trade unions.
4. The two reports described in detail the many significant policies and services which had assisted such changes or enhanced women's economic independence. Those included the implementation of a National Policy for the Education of Women and Girls, the establishment of a Child Support Agency, new social security provisions increasing women's financial support and employment prospects, the establishment of a Women's Sports Unit, the launching of a national preventive health programme for women and a national public education campaign on domestic violence, the funding of community-based family planning organizations working with high risk and disadvantaged groups, and a government commitment to eliminate discriminatory retirement provisions.
5. On the other hand, discrimination against women persisted in some areas. Occupational segregation by sex continued, resulting in lower earnings for women, and women were still a minority in the Government and at senior levels of the Government bureaucracy. Public attitudes expecting women to still shoulder the main burden of child-rearing and housework also created personal and professional difficulties for them. The same conservative view took for granted women's unpaid contribution to the home and the national economy, and also tolerated domestic violence against women and children.

(Ms. Brooks, Australia)

6. Women in disadvantaged groups had special problems. Among these were immigrant women, women of non-English speaking background, disabled women and - the most disadvantaged of all - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The latter had far lower life expectancy rates than the norm, and four times the national average unemployment rate. The federal, state and territory governments had a range of special programmes directed to the needs of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, and federal funding for that group had more than doubled since the current Government had been elected in 1983. During 1985-1986, a special Task Force staffed by Aboriginal women had conducted a nation-wide Survey among Aboriginal women, who had identified their most urgent needs as being in the areas of education, health, housing, employment, information about programmes available to them, and the provision of services appropriate to their culture. That had led to the establishment of the Office of Aboriginal Women and other government structures and initiatives described in the supplementary report (pp.16-17).

7. Aboriginal and Islander health services had almost doubled between 1983 and 1987, with special emphasis being placed on preventive health measures, particularly through the Accelerated Community Infrastructure Programme (pp. 19-20 of the supplementary report). Another recent initiative was a government-supported Aboriginal Women's Birthing Centre in Central Australia that would enable "traditional" Aboriginal women to give birth under safe conditions while preserving their aboriginal identity and cultural practices in relation to pregnancy and childbirth.

8. The educational status of Aboriginals was also improving: since 1981, the numbers of those completing high school had doubled. The number of Aboriginal and Islander teachers had more than doubled since 1983, as had the number of Aboriginal and Islander students in institutions of higher learning, most of which had made provision for their special needs. The Community Development Employment Projects scheme had also been substantially extended to give emphasis to the needs of Aboriginal and Islander women wishing to re-enter the work force under federal child-care programmes.

9. The supplementary report (pp. 21-23) gave details of the Government's response to the special needs of immigrant women and women of non-English-speaking background in terms of their settlement and educational and health needs.

10. In addition to the measures outlined in the supplementary report (pp. 24-29), there were special provisions for disabled women under the Programme of Assistance for Sport and Recreation for Disabled People and the Disabled Apprentices Wage Subsidy Programme. Most Family Planning Association centres also employed staff to deal with the problems faced by disabled women.

11. To give substance to its commitment to the Convention, her Government had instituted a set of basic practical measures of a legal, administrative or strategic nature. The first of the legal measures had been the Sex Discrimination Act of 1984 (initial report, p. 12); all but two Australian states had enacted similar legislation of their own (supplementary report, pp. 31-32) and far-reaching and effective use had been made of such legislation in landmark cases.

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(Ms. Brooks, Australia)

12. Another highly significant piece of legislation had been the Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act of 1986 (supplementary report, pp. 36-37). The rape law reforms and domestic violence legislation adopted by individual states were also reviewed in the supplementary report (pp. 41-52).

13. In the administrative area, the fundamental principle applied by federal and state governments had been the need to integrate policies for women into the mainstream of all government policy-making. Both the initial report (pp. 14-19) and the supplementary report (pp. 1-6) detailed the high-level federal administrative machinery and parallel state government machinery set up to deal with women's issues. Relations with non-governmental women's organizations were conducted through consultative and advisory councils: the National Women's Consultative Council, the highest such body, represented national women's organizations at the federal level. The monitoring device for federal Government programmes and policies was the Women's Budget Statement, which assessed all Government policies and programmes as they affected women and identified objectives and mechanisms for improving government action to address women's needs.

14. Since laws and administrative structures were no more than tools until they were put to work, however, her Government had found that the most effective means of active policy-making was through targeted and integrated strategic programmes. The most far-reaching of such programmes - the National Agenda for Women (supplementary report, pp. 12-13) - was about to be launched by the federal Government. Details of that programme would be released the following week and members of the Committee would each receive a copy. Other, more specific, strategic plans included the National Strategy on Women and the Labour Force, the National Policy for the Education of Women and Girls, and national policies on women's health and the promotion of women in sport.

15. Australia had made two reservations in ratifying the Convention, one referring to paid maternity leave and the other to the exclusion of women from combat and combat-related duties. Her Government believed that States parties should be prepared to report on the progress made in areas concerning which they had entered reservations. She was pleased to be able to report that, in Australia, maternity leave provisions now applied to most of the jobs held by women, with paid leave for women employed in the federal and in some state governments and unpaid leave of up to 52 weeks for most women in the private sector. Australian maternity leave provisions gave women the right to return to the same position at the same level of pay, or to one comparable to it. Considerable progress had also been made in women's participation in the Defence Force, as described in the supplementary report (p. 72).

16. The importance of the Convention was recognized by both the Government and Australian women. The Government had taken care to inform Australian women and women's organizations about the Convention and the Committee, and non-governmental women's organizations had taken an active interest in preparations for her country's initial report. Australia was proud of the advances it had made since its ratification of the Convention. While not underestimating the tasks which

(Ms. Brooks, Australia)

remained, it was confident that the procedural measures instituted and the strategies currently under way provided the means and the model for continuing progress.

17. Ms. SINEGIORGIS said that the Australian report was one of the finest the Committee had ever received. It was more in the nature of a comprehensive study than a report, and the Government had put an enormous effort into its preparation, which should be emulated. The report provided full details and valuable statistics and was unusually candid in its recognition of the areas that needed improvement. Australia's commitment to enhancing the status of women could not be doubted.

18. Ms. CORTI also congratulated the Australian Government on its highly instructive report and on its complete openness regarding the situation of women at different levels of society and within different population groups.

19. Australia's reservations to the Convention regarding maternity leave had been surprising: it was difficult to understand how, given its otherwise excellent institutional system for women, Australia could not have succeeded in imposing universal paid maternity leave rather than allowing the private sector to make its own rules.

20. It appeared that Australia's federal system was the cause of certain disparities in the application of the provisions of the Convention; she wondered whether those disparities had been eliminated in for instance such areas as South Australia.

21. It was clear that the situation of Aboriginal women was still one of inequality. A United Nations study had found that the employment and remuneration rates for Aboriginal women in Australia were far lower than those for Aboriginal men. It would be useful to know whether the Australian Government had taken any steps to rectify that situation. In the case of immigrant women, many of whom were originally from southern Europe, she wished to know whether cultural and language differences obstructed their access to basic social services, including family planning services.

22. She asked whether the Equal Opportunity Act (p. 13), which was to replace the Sex Discrimination Act and other anti-discrimination legislation in South Australia, had been promulgated there. More detailed information about the nature and level of support which the Office of the Status of Women (p. 15) provided to the National Women's Consultative Council would be welcome. Finally, she wished to know whether handicapped children were enrolled in classes with normal children.

23. Ms. TALLAWI joined previous speakers in congratulating the Australian Government on its excellent report and the considerable effort it had made to improve the status of women. The enactment of the Sex Discrimination Act represented a success for both the Convention and the United Nations. She nevertheless feared that Australia's reservation to article 11 of the Convention contradicted the Act, since it appeared to confer Government approval on the private sector's practice of seldom providing paid maternity leave.

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(Ms. Tallawi)

24. The report's candour with regard to the status of Aboriginal women was impressive. She hoped that the study of Australia's Aboriginal population, dealing with the declining social and economic role of women, would be made available to the Committee.

25. She asked what role non-governmental organizations had played in the preparation of the report and invited the representative of Australia, as the head of the Office of the Status of Women, to explain how she co-ordinated the work of the numerous organizations and units that dealt with women's issues in Australia.

26. Ms. MONTENEGRO DE FLETCHER said that Australia's report was one of the most significant developments to have occurred since the United Nations had adopted the Convention. She welcomed particularly the Australian Government's efforts on behalf of the Aboriginal population, which had allowed that group to increase in size, a rare occurrence in countries with indigenous populations.

27. She wished to learn more about Australia's economic structure, as the information provided in the report was fairly general. Additional information about the representation of men and women in the labour force and the categorization of female employment, for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women, would also be welcome.

28. Ms. CARON joined previous speakers in commending the report and its introduction by the representative of Australia. Noting that the Australian Government had made some efforts to withdraw its reservations to the Convention, she asked whether it anticipated withdrawing them entirely in the future. She wished to know how the Australian Government interpreted the word "combat" in its reservation to article 11.1 (c) and how many women served in the upper echelons of the armed forces.

29. A recent newspaper article had discussed the question of women from the Philippines who came to Australia as brides: did the Australian Government consider that to be a problem? If so, she wished to know whether it and the Philippine Government were doing anything about that situation or helping the women in question.

30. Ms. PILATAXI DE ARENAS said that the unified manner in which Australia - a country with a complex federal structure - was implementing the Convention was remarkable. The fact that the Convention was being implemented in a manner untainted by any political partisanship was also quite impressive.

31. She shared the concern of other experts regarding Australia's reservations to article 11 and found the fact that several groups of women within Australian society were virtually segregated somewhat disturbing. While the report detailed the efforts of the Australian Government to improve the situation of immigrant and Aboriginal women; she wished to hear more about the results of those efforts.

32. The Australian Government was to be congratulated on the enactment of the Sex Discrimination Act; however, it was not entirely clear from the report whether the

(Ms. Pilataxi de Arenas)

mechanism provided under that law for seeking legal redress in cases of discrimination was the Human Rights Commission or a separate legal entity.

33. Ms. SOUMARE asked whether the "l'humanisation" effort that had been begun in hospitals to humanize health care would be extended to rural public health clinics.

34. Ms. UKEJE said she wished to associate herself with every word of praise uttered by previous speakers. The status of women in Australia was complicated by the existence of very disparate groups of women within Australian society, yet Australia had succeeded in setting in place an intricate machinery for implementing the Convention which extended to the grass-roots level. The Government's efforts to reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were to be commended.

35. Ms. GUAN Mingian commended the report for its strict adherence to the Committee's general guidelines. The report was also extremely objective, for it pointed out clearly that even an economically developed country could experience serious problems of discrimination against women.

36. The enactment of the Sex Discrimination Act and the establishment at the federal and state levels of machinery for monitoring questions relating to women were impressive developments. Australia's commitment to women's advancement was further underscored by the fact that responsibility for women's affairs ultimately lay with the Prime Minister. Still another positive measure had been the publication by the Office of the Status of Women (p. 34) of guidelines to combat the stereotyped portrayal of women in the mass media.

37. Ms. OESER praised the comprehensiveness of the Australian report, which described the de facto situation of women in that country, a rare occurrence in reports by States parties. Moreover, the Australian Government had endeavoured to explain the origin of obstacles that continued to prevent women from achieving full equality.

38. She endorsed the remarks made by Ms. Guan Mingian with regard to the portrayal of women in the media and commended the programmes established to promote Aboriginal women. The elimination of "masculine" language (p. 143) was a novel approach to the drafting of legislation and should have a direct impact on women's every day life.

39. Like many countries, Australia interpreted the Convention as setting standards that could be put into practice only with the enactment of specific legislation. However, the report indicated that the Convention was to be implemented by the Commonwealth, state and territory authorities "having regard to their respective constitutional powers". It would be useful to know what might happen if federal and state authorities disagreed on the implementation of a specific provision.

40. She asked how many Australians were non-English speakers and sought clarification of the statement in the second paragraph of part II of the report (p. 22) that "discrimination may be indirect".

41. Ms. FORDE echoed the praise of previous speakers. Coming from a Caribbean country, she took a special interest in developments in the Australian legal system, which had the same origins as that of her own country and occasionally provided Caribbean countries with models for legislative reform. She found the Women's Budget Statement for 1987-1988, which had been supplied by the Australian delegation, to be useful in gaining a fuller picture of the Government's efforts on women's behalf.

42. Generally speaking, the establishment of separate agencies to deal with individual groups within a country's population implied that those groups would receive different treatment. However, the Office of Aboriginal Women appeared to serve a vital purpose in Australia.

43. Ms. AKAMATSU noted that numerous administrative bodies had been created in Australia to deal with women's issues. She was particularly interested in learning more about the structure and functioning of the women's units which had been established in all government departments (supplementary report, p. 2). She wondered whether they had any official relationship to the Office of the Status of Women. As for the Office itself, she wished to know whether it had undergone any changes since the adoption of the Convention and how effectively it functioned as a co-ordinator.

44. Ms. NOVIKOVA commented that the report's inclusion of findings from public opinion polls and social research projects was extremely helpful; she also welcomed the mass of information and detail, including specific examples and case studies, which the report provided. She had been very impressed to learn that Australia maintained a roster of female candidates for government employment; the Committee had not, she believed, heard of such an arrangement before. She wondered, however, in what directions the Australian Government now considered it most important to advance, and what significant obstacles it perceived to the improvement of women's status.

45. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU commented on the evident trouble which the Australian Government had taken to give the Committee a clear idea of efforts to improve the status of women in Australia. She had been particularly impressed by the information on efforts to assist disabled women, a subject which had not been dealt with by other countries in their reports. Clearly, the campaign to ensure women's equality in Australia was more difficult than she had previously assumed, once again showing the importance of an active and dynamic women's movement even in a country where women had long had the vote. She maintained, however, that women's organizations should not chiefly be concerned with providing services, for that was the function of government; she would therefore welcome more information on the role actually played by the women's movement in Australia.

46. She noted some anxiety in Australia to make amends for the previous lack of constitutional protection for women's equality by enacting a large number of regulations and laws. The effect of the new regulations and laws had been to establish admirable machinery, but she wondered whether the Constitution itself was to be amended to incorporate the principle of women's equality.

(Ms. Laiou-Antoniou)

47. A certain spirit of conservatism seemed to be hindering progress in a number of areas, such as women's right to abortion; she wondered whether that impression was correct. She noted that the report provided no evidence of support by women's organizations for the right to abortion. She would be interested in hearing the Australian representative's reaction on that point.

Article 2

48. Ms. CORTI asked the Australian representative to comment on the fact that the age at which men could retire and draw a pension in Australia was not the same as for women (initial report, p. 26). She also requested clarification of the statement that "gender-neutral drafting" was to be used in the future legislation of some Australian states (p. 37).

49. Ms. WADSTEIN said it appeared that, under the Sex Discrimination Act, a woman could obtain a court order requiring a prospective employer who had unlawfully denied her a job to hire her; she wondered whether that was indeed the case, or whether the court would simply award damages. She also asked for illustrations and examples of what the report referred to as "indirect discrimination" (p. 23).

50. Ms. ESCOBAR applauded the report for its quality and detail. She asked whether any cases had been brought under the Sex Discrimination Act, whether any figures were available on the subject, and what the public reaction had been.

51. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked whether the wording "so far as is possible" in section 3 (b) of the Federal Sex Discrimination Act (p. 25) was designed to permit exceptions to the ban on discrimination, as in the case of single-sex schools. If so, she thought that the Act might profitably be modified, for in its present form it allowed considerable latitude for possibly undesirable exceptions.

Article 4

52. Ms. PILATAXI DE ARENAS asked what difficulties had been encountered in effecting the legal and social changes necessary to promote the position of women in Australian society, especially in the area of employment, and what action was being taken to promote the notion of equal pay for women.

53. Ms. WADSTEIN congratulated the Australian Government on its recognition of the need for temporary special measures to improve women's standing on the labour market, and asked for details of the proposal to extend affirmative action to the private sector.

54. The government discussion paper, Affirmative Action for Women (p. 30) indicated that affirmative action should not mean that women would be given preference over better qualified men, or that quotas would be imposed. She wondered whether it would in fact be unlawful to appoint or promote a woman over a better qualified man. She asked for details of the Public Service Reform

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Act (p. 32), and wondered whether the Government had any sanctions it could apply to enforce compliance with the Act if naming the company or institution concerned in Parliament proved insufficient.

55. Ms. ESCOBAR asked what the outcome of the Government's 1984 pilot programme of affirmative action (p. 31) had been.

Article 5

56. Ms. CORTI commended the media guidelines presented in the publication "Fair Exposure" (p. 34). She believed that eliminating sexist language was a very important part of the process of changing cultural and social attitudes. She noted the discussion of possible ways of paying housewives for the work they did, and wondered what the Australian Government actually intended to do. She wondered why the public service entitlement to paternity leave (p. 38) had been withdrawn, how much use had been made of the benefit while it was in effect, and what the attitude of Australian men had been towards it.

57. Ms. MONTENEGRO DE FLETCHER asked whether the guidelines presented in "Fair Exposure" were mandatory for the mass media or were simply government recommendations. She wondered also whether the guidelines were consistent with government policy on Aborigines and the preservation of Aboriginal culture.

58. Ms. GUAN Mingqian asked how the public had reacted to proposals of "income splitting" for married couples for tax purposes (p. 37), and what the impact of such proposals had been. She noted that public servants could now take up to 66 weeks' leave without pay upon the birth of a baby (p.38); how far was that benefit actually used? How many fathers took such "parental leave"?

59. Ms. ESCOBAR asked how far the Australian Government was prepared to adhere to a policy of multiculturalism in the case of a culture which embodied serious distinctions between the status of men and women.

60. Ms. FORDE asked how many women actually sought court injunctions to protect themselves from domestic violence, and whether there were any plans to "socialize" men, making them aware that the rape of an Aboriginal woman was criminal and holding them responsible for any children conceived as a result of such rape.

61. It appeared that abortion services were available in Australia, but not systematically so: were they made freely available to rape victims and did the latter take advantage of them?

62. She wondered to what extent the recommendations of the Task Force on Aboriginal Women had been implemented, whether there were any proposals to recognize the customary laws of the Aboriginal people and, if so, to what extent those laws protected the rights of Aboriginal women.

63. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked whether the state governments of Victoria and New South Wales were now using gender-neutral terms in drafting their legislation and, if so, to what effect.

Article 6

64. Ms. CORTI asked for details of the domestic violence community education campaign (supplementary report, p. 45) to which the federal Government had committed \$1.6 million in 1987. She also asked whether a women's organization would be entitled to institute proceedings in the event of rape.

65. Ms. WADSTEIN, remarking on the considerable amount of public attention now being devoted to domestic violence, asked whether there were plans to provide any additional resources to meet the extra demand that that attention was likely to generate.

66. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked whether shelters for battered women in Australia were invariably Government-supported, or whether they could be run by women's organizations; what services they offered; and whether migrant and Aboriginal women used the same shelters or had their own separate facilities.

67. Ms. ESCOBAR said that legislation in Queensland referred to "a person known or suspected of being a prostitute" (initial report, p. 43). In that connection, she wished to know whether the concept "suspected of being a prostitute" led to legal or judicial abuses. She asked whether special programmes existed for the children of prostitutes.

Article 7

68. Ms. CORTI noted that the National Labour Women's Organization (p. 51) was an integral part of the Australian Labour Party, and asked whether women had been integrated in the Party or whether some women's commission or organization still existed. She asked whether there was a system of quotas in political parties, and also whether the Australian Government was planning to enact measures to enable women employed in the civil service to advance in their careers. In some countries, observer commissions had been appointed to ensure that women were appointed to the posts they deserved.

69. She commended the Australian report as the first report to refer to women's participation in trade unions. There was also a broad spectrum of women's and feminist organizations, and she wished to know the current attitude of feminist organizations in Australia towards women's institutions. Lastly, how much co-operation was there between the Australian Government and women's organizations and other independent political organizations?

70. Ms. GUAN Mingqian asked whether the Australian Government was taking measures to increase the proportion of women serving in Parliament and other government bodies, she also requested statistics on women's participation in "anti-feminist" women's groups (p. 59), as well as information regarding the influence of such groups.

71. Ms. CARON asked what measures had been taken to ensure that the National Women's Advisory Council (p. 15) obtained the necessary funding without sacrificing its independent status.

72. Ms. ESCOBAR said that, according to the report, the one limited electoral area in which an element of indirect discrimination against women still survived was in "those few local elections" where eligibility to vote was restricted to ratepayers (p.48). That seemed to violate the Constitution and she wondered what measures were being taken to end that practice. She also wished to know whether there were any provisions which gave women access to leadership posts in trade unions.

73. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked whether government programmes aimed at promoting women to senior levels of the Public Service had been implemented. She also wished to know the percentage of women judges on civil and criminal courts of the first instance. Finally, she requested more information on the Register of Women (supplementary report, p. 56). If the Register was aimed at appointing women to policy-making positions, she wondered how it was possible to avoid the influence of political parties and other interference.

Article 8

74. Ms. AKAMATSU requested additional information on the appointment of women to senior executive positions (p. 59) and asked whether the Senior Executive Service level included the posts of Ambassador and Minister. She also requested more information on the creation of an "effective system of increasing the representation of women on Australian delegations to international conferences, etc.", which had been identified as a priority for 1987-1988.

75. Ms. PILATAXI DE ARENAS noted that, although the Government was making efforts to change the way in which teachers were trained in order to eliminate discrimination in education, the institutions which trained teachers were autonomous and could not be influenced by the State. She asked why the drop-out rate for schoolchildren under the age of 13 was always higher among girls. How did young women who had dropped out of school before the age of 13 fit into social and economic life? The report seemed to contain inconsistent information on female illiteracy, and she requested clarification in that regard.

76. Ms. FORDE asked whether adult education programmes were available to Aboriginal women and whether such programmes took account of the particular problems of such women, which included geographical isolation and the absence of the necessary support systems, such as child-care facilities.

77. Ms. CARON said that the Government's reintroduction of fees for tertiary education might disadvantage middle-aged women wishing to return to school. Was the Government planning to change that situation?

78. Ms. WADSTEIN said that the Government should follow up its class-room studies which had indicated that both boys and teachers perceived girls as receiving a disproportionate share of the teacher's attention (initial report, p. 78), and that

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more information on that subject should be included in future reports. The Commonwealth and State Women's Advisers in Education (p. 79) had expressed the view that the school curriculum largely equated male experience with human experience. That was an important observation, since that attitude also persisted in other spheres of life, notably employment.

79. Ms. OESER said that one of the problems of the Australian educational system was that teacher training institutions could not be required by the Government to promote non-sexist education. That situation hindered progress in eliminating discriminatory education. What were the attitudes of teachers currently employed in the educational system and would the introduction of a new article on equal rights into the Constitution do anything to change the policies of institutions responsible for teacher training?

80. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked whether there were any private or foreign universities in Australia. She also inquired about the current Government's attitude towards single-sex schools and asked why the Government could not require teacher training institutions to promote non-sexist education.

Article 11

81. Ms. AKAMATSU said that, if Australian women encountered problems associated with working the "double shift" at home and at the factory (p. 105), there was reason to doubt the effectiveness of protective legislation for women in Australia. When Japan had revised its labour standards law, there had been a great deal of protest. Had that also been the case in Australia?

82. Ms. OESER asked what proportion child-care costs represented of the income of a family or of a working woman, and whether there were any plans to lighten the burden of such costs.

83. Ms. WADSTEIN commended the Australian Government's protective legislation for women. The problem of the double work-load could be solved if men shared more fully in housework and child care. She asked whether the federal approach to protective legislation differed from the state approach, since some states still prohibited women from certain occupations, such as serving liquor or working in underground mines. She commended the Government's efforts to increase the overall number of women apprentices. If the reason cited by employers for not employing women apprentices - namely, inadequate facilities (p. 97) - was acceptable under the Sex Discrimination Act, she doubted whether such legislation was meeting the needs of women. She wished to know the Government's position on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. Why had trade unions considered it necessary to test that principle in the courts? Lastly, she asked why the Government had dropped its Community Employment Programme. Had the Programme been unsuccessful, or had it been replaced by something else?

84. Ms. UKEJE asked whether Australia's reservation under article 11.2 (b) represented an indirect approach to population control.

85. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU expressed regret that the labour market was still highly segregated in Australia and that a large percentage of women were part-time workers. Aboriginal and migrant women suffered the greatest discrimination. She wished to know in what fields migrant women worked and what their position was on the labour market as compared with that of Australian women. The report had not provided statistics on the ratio of unemployed women to unemployed men and she requested statistics in that regard.

86. She wondered what effect the average unpaid maternity leave of 52 weeks had on the pension system for workers. What was the Government's position on unpaid maternity leave? Was maternity leave unpaid because the Government did not consider maternity to be a social function? Lastly, she noted that the Government's family financial assistance package provided for the "doubling of the mother's guardian's allowance" and that all payments were indexed, "with the majority being payable to the mother" (supplementary report, p. 80). Such practices seemed to perpetuate the notion of different sex roles, and she wished to know whether the Government had any intention of altering that situation.

Article 12

87. Ms. CORTI asked whether the Government was planning to unify its policies on family planning, contraception and abortion. While Australia had been one of the first countries to enact legislation on artificial insemination and reproductive technology, that area seemed still to be controlled by men. She inquired whether women and women's organizations were consulted on such matters, in particular on the issue of prenatal sex determination.

88. Ms. CARON asked what action the Government was taking to lower the infant mortality rate among Aboriginals, and whether sufficient resources were being made available for that purpose. She inquired whether there were specific programmes to help women suffering from various disabilities to gain access to senior civil service and diplomatic posts.

89. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU wished to know the Government's position on abortion and on the introduction of sex education into the curriculum of the Australian school system.

Article 13

90. Ms. CARON wished to know the size of government allocations for the promotion of women's participation in sport.

91. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU said that, according to the report, family allowances were normally paid directly to the mother and, for many mothers who were not in the paid labour force, family allowance might be their only direct source of income (initial report, p. 127). In her opinion, that perpetuated the notion that women bore primary responsibility for child-rearing and the family.

Article 15

92. Ms. SAYOGYO endorsed the statements made concerning the introduction of gender-neutral wording in the drafting of legislation.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.