



6th March 2021

Support for vulnerable working women in the Northern Territory under threat

As Australia recovers and rebuilds from the impact of COVID 19 and government focuses on fiscal priorities , critical social impact organisations now face an uncertain future.

The Northern Territory Working Women’s Centre (NTWWC), which remained strong and responsive to the needs of the community throughout COVID 19; offering full client services remotely and staying abreast of new and changing legislation such as job keeper in order to guide clients and small business struggling during the pandemic, is now facing closure. In December 2020, NTWWC received word their Federal Community Engagement Grant application for a further 4 years funding was unsuccessful. This represented two thirds of their funding which ceased on 31 December 2020. With a temporary lifeline provided by NT Government, the centre now has the sustainability of the organisation in jeopardy.

Established in 1994 , the NT Working Women’s Centre is a community based non-profit organisation with a purpose to advocate for better working conditions for women and to empower women to exercise their right to fair, equitable and safe workplaces .With offices in Darwin and Alice Springs, NTWWC provides free and confidential advice to women about work-related matters.

“Without further funding, the NTWWC will not be able to continue to deliver much needed specialist services to women in the NT, and to some of the most vulnerable women in Australia.” Nicki Petrou, NTWWC Director, said.

“Women in the NT would be left questioning why their interests and rights are not considered important enough for the ongoing investment in a local specialist and free service, especially at a time when rebuilding the economy and women’s workforce participation is especially critical. Our work is not done. We have not yet made workplaces safe and fair for all women.” Nicki said

Since the beginning of the COVID 19 crisis, BPW Australia (the Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women) joined the many organisations committed to gender equity with calls on Federal and State Governments to ensure actions include a gender lens on pandemic response and recovery.

“Women clearly need to support each other, as our government is choosing not to- much as in the Great Depression. In the 1930’s, Women's Aid Committees were the activators of relief for women, in most countries worldwide. Women were not covered by most of the government make-work schemes, which then as now, relied on 'shovel-ready', manual labour and trade type jobs. 90 years later, have we not moved on to a greater understanding of how all occupations add to the health of our economy?” Jacqueline Graham, BPW Australia President said.

“For over 70 years, BPW Australia has supported, encouraged and educated women and girls by succeeding in our lobbying efforts to influence local and national governments to address women’s issues . Our BPW Darwin club is one of the largest in Regional Australia, the work of NTWWC highlights the necessary support & assistance women in NT need with respect to workplace rights/issues including remaining responsive during COVID.” Jacqueline said.

NTWWC saw an increase in the number of clients who contacted its service due to their employment or entitlements being affected by COVID from 119 in the short months this data was collected to 30 June 2020 to 364 for the final 6 months of the year until 31 December. To help and find out more , go to www.ntwwc.com.au or contact NTWWC on admin@ntwwc.com.au.



About BPW Australia

BPW Australia is a community of women working to end gender inequity. Our members share an interest in the issues that affect working women in Australia and around the world today. BPW’s membership includes employers and employees who work across many sectors including corporate, small business, professions, trades, non-profit and government. BPW Australia is affiliated to BPW International, which has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and has expert and experienced representatives accredited to most United Nations agencies.

BPW Australia recommends actions in line with UN Global Compact Sustainable Development Goal 5: To Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls

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