
International Women's Year

Submission 1818, 'International Women's Year'	167
Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Expenditures on Submission 1818	171
Decision 3796 on Submission 1818	173

1975 marked International Women's Year, or, in the sexist words of one newspaper, 'The year of the bird'. In 1974 Cabinet had approved \$2 million for IWY activities. The aim of the IWY program was ambitious: to change public attitudes towards women in Australian society. The Prime Minister took responsibility for the International Women's Year program and a National Advisory Committee provided recommendations on grants. A further \$1.3 million was provided in 1975. Some members of Cabinet pointed out that this expenditure was being held up as an example of unnecessary government spending [A5915, 1818, Ad Hoc Committee report]. Melbourne's *The Age* newspaper ran the headline, '\$2 Million for the Sheilas: Surprisingly It's Not a Joke'.

The Government provided grants for projects that promoted attitudinal change and encouraged women's creativity. Elizabeth Reid, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Women's Affairs, argued that the grants should not be used to fund programs, such as refuges and health centres, that were properly the responsibility of other government agencies, a stand criticised by some in the women's movement. In Submission 1818, the Prime Minister requested \$2.5 million for funding conferences; assistance to individuals, community groups and government agencies; and a community awareness program.

Elizabeth Reid and Margaret Whitlam attended the United Nations World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico at which Australia was praised for its progressive reforms in areas such as equal pay and family law. The Government hosted a national conference on 'Women and Politics' in Canberra in September. The conference featured demonstrations by Indigenous women critical of their lack of representation, Labor women bearing placards attacking Whitlam over the Government's policy on East Timor, and some attendees dressed in men's suits in response to invitations stipulating 'lounge suits'. The media, already critical of Reid, had a field day. In the fallout, the proposed seminar on women and the media was cancelled and Reid resigned, disillusioned at a decision by John Menadue to shift her influential position within the Office of the Prime Minister to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. She had been criticised by the media and conservatives – and sometimes by the women's movement – since her appointment in 1973.

CONFIDENTIAL

2.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this submission is to seek Cabinet's agreement to an appropriation of \$2.5 million for 1975/76 for special activities relating to the objectives of International Women's Year.

2. This expenditure will, for the most part, be incurred during the period 1 July 1975 to 31 March 1976 and mainly in the first half of the financial year, for the Australian National Advisory Committee for International Women's Year is to submit to me on 31 March 1976 its report on the Year's activities and recommendations for the future.

BACKGROUND

3. At its 27th Session in 1972, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 1975 as International Women's Year. As an earnest of the Government's determination to make International Women's Year a milestone in the improvement of the status of women in Australia, I announced on 11 September 1974 the appointment of the Australian National Advisory Committee for International Women's Year whose task is to advise the Government in the determination of themes and in the formulation of a national program for the Year. An appropriation of \$2 million was approved by Cabinet for special activities related to the Year. (Cabinet Decision No. 2581 of 23 August 1974).

4. The framework for the activities of the Year was set out in a report of the National Advisory Committee "International Women's Year: Priorities and Considerations" tabled in Parliament on 4 December 1974. Within this framework the Committee was to seek and encourage activities such as:

- (i) the continued establishment of a network of community centres to respond to women's problems and encourage their activities
- (ii) sponsoring of research projects
- (iii) undertaking an educative program - e.g. a community awareness program aimed at children, women and men.
- (iv) convening workshops, seminars, conferences and discussion groups
- (v) festivals/cultural activities focussing on women
- (vi) International participation and liaison with other Governments.

5. Activities in all these areas have been pursued so far through

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

3.

(i) Encouraging Community Participation

In the six months to June 1975 over \$1 million has been committed to groups and individuals for a wide range of activities in the areas of education, migrant women, women's shelters, prevention of violence to children, women's health, women in government, in history, creativity, the city and in country areas.

(ii) Stimulating Activities by Departments

Through inter-departmental machinery the National Advisory Committee and its Secretariat has stimulated a number of activities and has committed funds for some projects e.g. conferences conducted by the Institute of Criminology on women as victims of crime and participation of women in the legal system, by Department of Health on women's health and by the Curriculum Development Centre in the field of education.

In addition the Committee has co-ordinated the activities of departments and agencies - Children's Commission, Hospital and Health Services Commission and the Australian Legal Aid Office - to help establish the Hunter Valley Working Women's Centre as an on-going activity; it is hoped that centres similar to the Newcastle working women's centre will be established throughout Australia.

(iii) Direct Action

As well as encouraging activities by non-government organisations and increasing the awareness of governmental institutions to the needs of women, the Committee through its Secretariat has initiated and is co-ordinating research and specifically directed publicity e.g. earlier in the Year a promotional campaign was mounted to draw attention to International Women's Year by focussing on International Women's Day (March 8).

PROGRAM FOR REMAINDER OF YEAR

6. The Committee's program for the remainder of the Year will entail an expenditure of \$2.5 million as follows:

Financial Assistance	\$1.0 million
Conferences	\$0.75 million
Community Awareness Program	\$0.3 million
Administrative	\$0.45 million
TOTAL:	\$2.5 million

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

(i) Financial Assistance

During the first half of 1975 more than \$1 million has been incurred for financial assistance to individuals, community groups and to Government Departments and agencies for special activities. On the basis of submissions (some 500 approximating \$7 million) still under consideration it is expected that a minimum of a further \$1 million will be required for financial assistance in the second half of the year.

(ii) Conferences

The Australian Government is to host two major conferences in the second half of International Women's Year:

(a) United Nations Inter-regional Seminar - Women, the Media and the Arts: The Communication of Attitudes - As part of its participation in United Nations activities for International Women's Year, the Government agreed to host a United Nations inter-regional seminar to be held in Sydney from 26 November to 10 December 1975. The seminar will be organised in conjunction with the United Nations Secretariat by the National Advisory Committee and the Department of the Media. As the host country most expenses must be met by the Australian Government which will be expected to provide a level of facilities (e.g. translation and interpretation) appropriate to a major international conference. The estimated cost of this Conference is \$500,000.

(b) National Conference of Women and Politics - There is to be a national conference on Women and Politics to be held in Canberra from 31 August to 6 September. The theme of the conference is two-fold:

(i) to discuss past and present participation by women in political activities at all levels and

(ii) to bring about a greater understanding of the means by which women can participate in the making of political decisions and the difficulties that confront them in so doing.

Some 600 Australian women are expected to participate. Additionally a number of women from overseas countries who, through their elected or appointed positions, have contributed to political change, or women who have brought about significant social or political achievements from outside government, will be invited to attend. The arrangements provide for financial assistance to Australian participants to ensure that no group of Australian women, e.g. Aborigines, migrant workers, trade unionists, etc. are prevented from attending. The cost of the Conference is estimated at \$250,000.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

5.

(iii) Community Awareness Program

The major problem hampering the full participation of women in the society is community attitudes and prejudices; this requires a re-education of the community. Whilst all the activities so far undertaken and proposed have this underlying aim, there is a need for a specifically directed campaign. The necessary basic research survey has been carried out and the campaign will highlight the problems facing women and encourage more enlightened attitudes in the community. The cost of the campaign, which is intended to maximise the impact of other projects, is estimated at \$300,000.

(iv) Administrative Expenses

Administrative expenses during 1974/75 are expected to be \$325,000. The catalyst task of the National Advisory Committee and the expanded program intended for the remainder of 1975 will call for an increase in administrative costs. For 1975/76 these are estimated at \$450,000.

7. We, as a Government, are on public record as being determined to remove or at least reduce all legal, social, educational and economic discrimination against women. Indeed more than with any previous Australian Government, great strides have been taken under our administration to improve the opportunities for women in Australia. International Women's Year has presented us with the opportunity to focus on women in our society, to consolidate improvements already achieved and to enable Australia to become once again a pacesetter for the rest of the world in advancing basic human rights.

Recommendation

8. I recommend that Cabinet approve an amount of \$2.5 million to be appropriated to the Department of the Special Minister of State for expenditure on activities relating to the objectives of International Women's Year.

E.G. WHITLAM

Canberra
13 June 1975

CONFIDENTIAL

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Expenditures on Submission 1818
[A5915, 1818]

¹¹
CONFIDENTIAL Budget Reference No. 59-

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON BUDGET EXPENDITURES

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR
(SUBMISSION NO. 1818)

PRIME MINISTER

SYNOPSIS

An appropriation of \$2.5 million is sought for a continuation of special activities related to the objectives of International Women's Year. (The last Budget provided \$2.0 million for expenditure in 1974-75 on special activities for the Year; the estimated expenditure from this provision is \$1.4 million (grants \$1.1 million, administrative expenses \$0.3 million).)

AD HOC COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

That an amount of \$1.3 million be approved for 1975-76.

CONFIDENTIAL

Decision No. 3705 (Ad Hoc)
Attachment

CONFIDENTIAL

B9-8

2.

COSTS AND OPTIONS

	1975-76 \$m	Difference \$m
Minister's proposal	2.5	Nil
Option 1	1.3	1.2

COMMENTS

1. Spending on this program, including on conferences, seminars, "workshops" and festivals, has come under criticism as an example of unnecessary Government spending. Such criticism may in part reflect lack of sympathy with the aims of International Women's Year but it should not be entirely dismissed on that ground. This is the second year of spending on International Women's Year and it does not seem essential at this stage for new commitments to be entered into.

2. The National Advisory Committee estimates that commitments already entered into will cost \$1.3 million in 1975-76. This is made up of \$0.45 million to cover administrative expenses for nine months (about 85 per cent higher than the rate in 1974-75), \$0.08 million for grants approved in 1974-75 but not paid, \$0.50 million for hosting the United Nations Inter-Regional Seminar on Women, the Media and the Arts and \$0.25 million for a National Conference on Women and Politics. OPTION 1 would provide funds for these commitments but would not provide for further new initiatives associated with the Year except to the extent that there was some scaling down in committed activities (which does seem feasible to some extent in relation to the two proposed conferences).

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

Copy No. 34

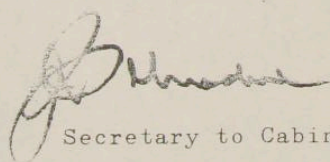
C A B I N E T M I N U T E

Canberra, 23 July 1975

Decision No. 3796

Submission No. 1818 - International Women's Year

The Cabinet agreed that an amount of \$1.3 million be appropriated to the Department of the Special Minister of State for expenditure on activities relating to the objectives of International Women's Year.



Secretary to Cabinet

CONFIDENTIAL

