

**AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT**

**PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION**

**2020/2021**

30 January 2020 

Senator the Hon Marise Payne  
Minister for Women  
PO Box 6100, Senate

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister Payne,

I enclose a proposal seeking Commonwealth funding for Women for Election Australia (WFEA). WFEA is a non-partisan, incorporated not-for-profit organisation with the aim of encouraging and equipping more women to run for public office at the local, state and federal level.

At WFEA we run programs and workshops in a non-partisan environment with the ultimate intention of increasing the number of women engaged in Australia’s political process and holding political office.

This month we received $47,500 funding from the NSW Government for our inaugural NSW Regional roadshow encouraging and equipping more women to run for local government elections in September 2020. (Please note this funding approval has not yet been made public). This is the first time the NSW Government has funded such a program and is a proof statement of their willingness to increase the diversity and number of women in our legislatures. It also demonstrates their confidence in our ability to deliver that increase.

In order to upscale the program to a national level, we are now seeking $380,000 from the Commonwealth. We have built an impressive collaboration of trainers and advocates who all bring unique expertise and resources to this endeavour.

The depth and scope of the proposed program is unique to Australia and aligns with current Government policy priorities around supporting more women into leadership positions and empowering women, whilst also strengthening women’s economic security including women’s workforce participation.

We are delighted to see the Federal Government has stated their desire to focus on increasing Parliamentary diversity and we believe Women for Election Australia’s objectives align closely and can provide a solution for achieving this outcome.

Best regards,

Licia Heath

CEO, Women for Election Australia

**WOMEN FOR ELECTION AUSTRALIA (WFEA)**

**PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**1. WHO ARE WE?**

**2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**3. CASE-STUDY: IRELAND**

**4. WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT WFEA**

**5. WFEA AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

**6. WFEA PROGRAMS**

**6.1 INSPIRE PROGRAM**

**6.2 EQUIP PROGRAM**

**6.3 MASTERCLASS SERIES**

**7. NEXT STEPS – FUNDING REQUIREMENTS**

**8. APPENDIX: ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE**

**1. Who are we?**

Women for Election Australia (WFEA) is a non-partisan, registered not-for-profit organization. We’re dedicated to strengthening democracy and community representation in Australia by increasing the number of women holding political office at the local, state and federal level and engaging more women in the political process.

**2. Executive summary**

Inequality in gender representation in politics is a global issue. As UN Secretary General Mr Ban Ki-Moon identified in 2011 “Gender equality must be treated as an explicit goal of democracy building, not as an add-on’’.

Entrenched gender inequality in politics has proven to be particularly difficult to address in Australia. Although Australia has one of the highest education rates of women in the world, this is not reflected in the proportion of women in Australia’s Federal Parliament, Cabinet or within the senior roles of Australia’s political parties.

Australia ranks 49th of 193 countries for female Parliamentary representation (only 30% of our MP's are women and that is skewed particularly to one political party).

The 45th Parliament began with just 13 women on government benches in the House of Representatives, compared to 63 men, 5 fewer women than when Tony Abbott took government in 2013.

There was also a severe lack of women in parliamentary leadership positions – no women presiding officers, no women leaders of the House (or Senate), three times more male than female party whips (3 out of 11, across both houses), and one in five committee chairs across both houses was a woman; and of the hundreds of parliamentary committee inquiries conducted in that time, only a handful were specifically related to gender equality.

There has been improvement in the 46th Parliament, with gender parity being achieved for the first time in the Australian Senate – a moment to be celebrated. Notwithstanding, there remains significant gender imbalance in the House of Representatives, our State Parliaments and in the majority of Local Government Councils.

There is a fundamental imperative to address the issue of gender representation across the entire political spectrum when 52% of the population is not equitably accounted for. WFEA seeks to address the issue of female participation in the political life of our nation.

Real change in the participation of women in political life in Australia requires acknowledgment of the barriers to entry and the creation of training, mentoring and women’s political education programs to address those barriers. WFEA has created those programs and delivers them in a non-partisan environment. We require funding assistance of $380,000 to build organisational capacity to implement these programs across Australia.

**3. Case-study - Ireland**

Other countries have been more successful than Australia in gender mainstreaming in politics. For example, Women for Election Ireland (WFEI) has developed and tested programs which have substantially increased the participation of women in political life.

In 2012 WFEI, in conjunction with international experts, developed a comprehensive and targeted program to inspire and equip women to succeed in politics built on a vision of achieving a balanced participation of both women and men in public life.  The three-pronged program (Inspire, Equip and Masterclasses) respectively provide an introduction to political life focusing on campaigns, communications, and confidence; equips women with the practical tools and techniques to be a political candidate, and highlights the benefits of greater political participation from women.

Between 2012-2014, 600 women from Ireland and 17 other EU states participated in a Women for Election program.

In the 12 months prior to the 2019 elections (local and European), Women for Election Ireland provided focused training aiming to see a significant increase in the numbers of women running and elected to local councils. After nominations closed, 29% of those running for election were women and amongst those elected 24% were women. These were record numbers (and proportions) of candidates and councillors. Women for Election Ireland worked with more than half of the women elected in their May 2019 elections and helped improve the diversity of their politics by also working with migrant women, Traveller women, women with disabilities (see supplementary document for more details).

WFEA takes its inspiration and guiding principles from WFEI but has adapted the training programs for Australia’s unique political context.

**4. What you should know about Women for Election Australia**

#### We are non-partisan

WFEA is deliberately non-partisan and we believe this position is critical to the success of attracting women to our programs and demonstrating the benefits of collaboration. There is no other organisation offering the holistic package of support for grassroots candidates that WFEA does. The Labor party has had success with Emily’s list, and other parties have commissioned training for women on an ad-hoc basis in the past, without significant long-term impact. Other organisations, such as the Women’s Electoral Lobby, lobby parties for increased female representation but don’t provide training. Women for Election Australia supports, but does not duplicate, the work of these groups.

#### Our approach is evidence-based

Our approach is based on the best evidence and research from around the world. The 2003 Council of Europe Recommendation, supported by 47 European Governments, gave a comprehensive outline of supportive measures that were successful in increasing women’s representation in politics; including leadership training programs, women’s political networks and a ‘data bank’ of potential women candidates. In the US, organisations including the White House Project, SheShouldRun and EMILY’s List have helped elect thousands of women at local level and hundreds at national level through tailored training and support programs. In the UK, organisations such as 50:50 Parliament, the Parliament Project and Women2Win have had success lifting the number of progressive and conservative women running, and the number of women elected, across all levels of government.

#### The Women for Election model is proven to work.

#### With the assistance of WFEI, the face of Irish politics has substantially changed as cited above. Please see the supplementary document from WFEI for further information.

#### We know the Australian context

We have drawn on the experience and the fundamental mechanisms which have helped determine the success of WFEI programs but have modified the programs to reflect Australia’s unique political landscape. We draw on the expertise of Australian gender mainstreaming experts and training facilitators to create unique Australian evidence-based programs.

**5. WFEA Aims and Objectives**

Our guiding principal and number one focus is the greater participation of women in the Australian democratic and political process. We encourage, support and champion women to consider participating in the political life of our country by standing for office, working on a political campaign or just becoming better informed about Australia’s political system. Simply, our aim is to equip all women interested in taking part in political life with the knowledge and skills to feel confident in their ability to contribute in whatever way they choose.

Our **Vision** is for an Australia with balanced participation of both women and men in public life.

Our **Mission** is to inspire and equip women to succeed in politics.

Our **Focus** is on designing and delivering training programs which encourage and facilitate women to enter political life.

Women for Election Australia provides tailored training programs aimed at increasing the number of women actively participating in all levels of political life by:

* Demystifying the process of Australia’s political system.
* Encouraging women to see the connection between community activism and a political career.
* Motivating women to consider their role as active citizens in their local community.
* Emphasising the importance of women supporting other women in a political career.
* Ensuring political parties have competent female candidates putting themselves forward for selection.

**6. WFEA Programs**

WFEA recognises that increasing the number of women successfully participating in our political system is a challenge that does not have a “simple fix”. As such our approach reflects the complex nature of the political systems, the specific needs of women, an understanding of cultural challenges and the levels of interest and ability of women in participating in the political system.

Recognising our overall strategic goals and objectives, we focus the delivery of our programs in non-election years with the intention of building capacity amongst women in the community. Each program targets women at different points of their own political career always aiming to take them the “next step on their political journey”.

Through our programs we address the reasons for women’s under-representation - the ‘5 Cs’:

* **Confidence**: women are less likely to go forward for selection
* **Cash**: women have less access to resources than men
* **Candidate** selection procedures: the processes by which political parties select candidates can pose a significant obstacle to women’s political participation
* **Culture**: a gendered culture is prevalent even within left-wing parties
* **Childcare**: women are more likely to have this responsibility.

Working closely with the WFEA CEO, the WFEA Board and a team of specialist trainers and drawing upon the experience of WFEI we have designed three bespoke training programs: Inspire, Equip and a Masterclass Series.

***THE PROGRAMS***

***6.1 INSPIRE***

The ‘INSPIRE’ program is a one-day program delivered by national experts, designed to provide an introduction to political life for interested women.

This program is designed to demystify entrance into politics, and to give each participant the tools and direction that they need to take their next step on their political journey.

Current and retired female elected representatives, from across all parties, speak of the highlights and challenges they’ve encountered in their own political career, how they overcame them and what they’ve been able to achieve for their constituents and community.

#### What is covered in the program?

* How do Local, State and Federal Governments work in Australia?
* Who can be a politician?
* How do people stand for election in Local, State and Federal Governments in Australia?
* What support and training is provided to Local government Councillors and State and Federal Members of Parliament?

###### Campaigns

* De-mystify political campaigning
* Outline different kinds of political campaigns and build awareness of the different skills and tools required (e.g. winning pre-selection vs. winning at election)
* Provide overview of key elements required to design, build and deliver a robust election campaign
* What rules govern registration of candidates and campaigning
* Provide some basic planning tools for participants in starting to plan a campaign
* Leave participants with a sense of what to do next to get started

Communications

* De-mystify the media
* Provide participants with clarity about how to access the media and appropriate level of media for their campaign
* Provide an introduction to the basic media tools candidates will need for their campaign (press release, key messages for interview, social media, soundbites etc.)
* Provide basic rules for message development and interview preparation
* Provide a framework for participants in developing their campaign communications plan
* Leave participants with a sense of what to do next to get started

###### Confidence

* Identify the nature of the confidence barrier and how it affects women in political life
* Explore the elements of women’s leadership and connect them to participants’ personal experiences
* Connect participants with experienced political actors to learn from their individual experiences in building confidence and resilience
* Provide participants with some practical tools for planning, prioritising and personal decision-making, which will facilitate their political life
* Provide participants with some basic tools for building and strengthening their personal resilience
* Leave participants with a sense that running for political office is something that they can do

#### Who should participate in the ‘INSPIRE’ program?

The ‘INSPIRE’ program is relevant for:

* Women who have an interest in becoming more politically involved – as a candidate, campaigner or campaign manager – and who may consider putting themselves forward for election in the future
* Women with leadership potential outside of politics – in business, trade unions, or the community and voluntary sector – who seek to influence politics or may consider politics as a future avenue in their career

***6.2. EQUIP***

EQUIP is Australia’s first political campaign non-partisan workshop day. It is designed to provide in-depth, practical training for female candidates and female campaign managers in advance of local/State and Federal elections in a cross-party environment. Whether currently elected or running for election for the first time, EQUIP is designed to provide the skills and grounding necessary to contest an election campaign. Over an intense day, leading political strategists, communications experts, party organizational people and campaign gurus are brought together by Women for Election Australia to share their experience and expertise with participants.

#### What is covered in the program?

At EQUIP, each woman develops a clear election strategy and plan for the forthcoming election and practices and receives feedback on core campaign skills in a workshop environment, including:

* Campaign Planning and management for either Local, State or Federal elections
* Budgeting and Fundraising
* Canvassing and successful lobbying
* Engaging with the community, dynamic public speaking and media skills
* Legal duties and responsibilities of Public Officials
* Effective participation in, and chairing, meetings
* Managing difficult people
* Personal wellbeing and resilience

This program is highly practical and aims to ensure that participants leave equipped with the key tools and techniques to prepare for an election campaign to be the most effective candidate they can be.

#### Who should participate in the EQUIP program?

EQUIP is relevant to:

* Women who have an immediate interest in becoming more politically involved – as a campaigner, candidate or campaign manager – and who may consider putting themselves forward for election in the future
* Women with leadership potential outside of politics – in business, trade unions, or the community and voluntary sector – who seek to influence politics or may consider politics as a future avenue in their career.

#### 6.3. MASTERCLASS SERIES

Academic research has highlighted the benefits of early political participation for women. Our MASTERCLASS series aims to provide information about the political process in accessible two hour sessions to engage women early in their political journey or who cannot attend a full day workshop.

The MASTERCLASS series provides a wide-ranging selection of ‘bite-sized’ two hour topics focused on core-skills development and allowing attendees to select their masterclass based on their level of experience.

#### What is covered in the program?

Each masterclass will focus on a particular topic, including:

* The pre-selection process; policy production; political economics 101; ‘Meet the politician’ events; social media skills and safety; Australian political structures, etc.
* Highlight the potential and benefits of further political participation
* Create a non-partisan environment that encourages and supports women to contest leadership positions
* Support a diverse range of women leaders to realise their leadership ambitions

#### Who should participate in the MASTERCLASS series?

* Women at the start of their political journey who cannot commit to a full day workshop
* Women who are currently influencing the political process in business, trade unions, or the community and voluntary sector.
* Young women in the community interested in understanding the political process and in discovering the first steps towards deeper involvement in their communities and in political life.
* Women who already have some knowledge of the political process who are looking to supplement that knowledge with specific topics

**7. NEXT STEPS – FUNDING REQUIREMENTS**

We believe that enriching the diversity in Australian politics will lead to more robust decision-making, helping to create a fairer, more inclusive and dynamic country, better equipped to tackle whatever challenges us as a nation in the future. WFEA is looking to establish its first national program in 2020 and we are actively seeking funding to assist us in getting underway.

In order to deliver on our vision and mission, WFEA needs to build organisational capacity in the coming year via seeking seed funding from the federal government as follows:

Staffing and infrastructure costs $130,000

Delivery of Regional and Metro programs $250,000

(travel, venue hire and logistics, event promotion, ticket scholarships, admin support)

WFEA aims to become self-funding after 3 years through participant contributions and membership.

**APPENDIX 1. ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE AND ADVISORY COUNCIL**

#### ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE

Women for Election Australia is an incorporated not-for-profit, non-partisan organisation. Our vision is of balanced participation of women and men in public life. Our mission is to inspire and equip women to succeed in public life.

**Founder/Chair** Jennifer Morris

**Deputy Chair** Brynnie Goodwill

**Co Secretary** Erin McMullen

**Treasurer** Philip Busfield

**Non Executive Directors**

Kat Henaway

Coleen McKinnon

Andrew Butler

Kriti Colless

Jo Gordon

**CEO** Licia Heath

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North Parramatta NSW 2151

**Bankers** Westpac