



Media Release

Women leaders to converge on Canberra

09 May 2014: There has never been a more important time to support Australian women to become leaders.

YWCA of Canberra Executive Director Frances Crimmins says there is a disturbing lack of women at the top echelons of Australian business and political life.

“Current research shows that women are significantly under-represented at senior levels in most industries.

“We’re told there is no gender inequality in Australia. But the pay equity gap is still sitting at 17 per cent. In addition, women hold only 9.2 per cent of key management positions in the top 500 publicly-listed companies in Australia. And only 29 per cent of our Federal Parliament representatives are women.”

Next Tuesday, 13 May, Canberra will play host to more than 150 women intent on being the future leaders of Australia.

As part of an innovative, evidence-based women’s leadership program, the *She Leads Conference* will see some of Australia’s most accomplished women sharing their knowledge with emerging leaders from the corporate, government and not-for-profit sectors at Hotel Realm in Canberra.

Keynote speaker for the event is well-known author, journalist and pioneering feminist, Dr Anne Summers AO. Dr Summer’s topic for her address is ‘Why Women Should...’

“We’ve been educated that leadership, historically, is a space for men. We want to provide a safe space for women to explore their own leadership identity. We would like women to recognise that their values and life experience will inform their decisions as a leader and influence their leadership style,” Ms Crimmins said.

“Quite often we see that men are promoted based on their leadership potential, whereas women are judged based on their experience,” she added.

Ms Crimmins said the Conference will be a safe space for women to share their personal stories and experiences, as well as engage in discussions with established women leaders.

“The YWCA’s leadership pathway is transformative, intergenerational, and authentic.

“We recognise that leaders need resilience, emotional intelligence, an understanding of their values, and an ability to maintain them under pressure.”

Panellists* include Khadija Gbla, Casey Keed, Lauren Anderson and Virginia Haussegger, among many others. (*Bios follow)

An initiative of the YWCA of Canberra, the *She Leads Conference* is part of a broader initiative, which includes a year-long Diploma of Management tailored specifically to women.

Ms Crimmins said that while the focus of the program is to develop young women's leadership potential, the Conference and Diploma will engage women from across the age spectrum.

A handful of last minute tickets for the *She Leads Conference* are available to be purchased at www.ywca-canberra.org.au and plenary sessions will be live streamed at youtube.com/YWCACanberra.

Enrolment forms for the 2014 *She Leads Diploma of Management* can be found at <http://www.ywca-canberra.org.au/about-the-she-leads-diploma>.

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Available for interview: Frances Crimmins, Virginia Haussegger, Carmel McGregor, Helen Conway, Yolanda Vega and Khadija Gbla. Photos of speakers available on request.

Media contact: Joanna Allebone 0450 962 842

About the YWCA of Canberra: The YWCA of Canberra is a feminist, not-for-profit organisation that has been providing community services and representing women's issues in the Canberra community since its establishment in 1929. The YWCA of Canberra employs more than 350 staff across the ACT, and delivers 30 quality programs in children's services, community development, housing, youth services, women's leadership, advocacy, and training. Represented in 122 countries, the YWCA has a global reach of 25 million women and girls. As part of this international movement, the YWCA of Canberra works for a world where reconciliation, justice, peace, health, human dignity, freedom and care for the environment are promoted and sustained through women's leadership. For more information visit: www.ywca-canberra.org.au

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***BIOS OF SPEAKERS AND PANELLISTS**

Dr Anne Summers AO is a best-selling author, journalist and thought-leader with a long career in politics, the media, business and the non-government sector in Australia, Europe and the United States. She is author of several books. Her latest book *The Misogyny Factor* was published in May 2013. She writes regularly for a number of Australian newspapers including the Sydney Morning Herald. She is the editor and publisher of *Anne Summers Reports* and hosts *Anne Summers Conversations*.

Carmel McGregor is the Deputy Secretary Defence People in the Department of Defence. Carmel has also been the Deputy Australian Public Service Commissioner and a Deputy Secretary in the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. She was a member of the Advisory Group on Reform of Australian Government Administration and authored a review into Pathways for Australian Public Service Women in Defence. She was the inaugural Public Policy winner of the AFR/Westpac 100 Women of Influence in 2012. She is an Adjunct Professor Public Governance at University of Canberra. Carmel received the Public Service Medal in 2013 Australia Day Honours.

Dianne van Meegen is the Principal of Directions for Change. Her work with individuals is focused on a range of personal effectiveness techniques and capabilities, including leadership effectiveness, building emotional intelligence, presence, resilience, confidence and developing facilitation, presentation and representational skills.

Suzi Skinner is a social researcher, leadership practitioner and Managing Director of Roar People, Selftalk PTY Limited – a boutique consultancy in Sydney. Suzi works with organisations to transform leadership, accelerate change towards more inclusive workplaces and enhance employee engagement and results. Suzi is a Harnisch Scholar and her research, titled “Understanding the Importance of Professional Identity and Gender in Developing Leaders”, was awarded first prize at Harvard University’s Institute of Coaching Annual Conference in 2012.

Virginia Haussegger is an award-winning journalist, author and social commentator. With more than 20 years in news broadcasting, her work has taken her around the globe – from the Middle East, Iraq, Europe, Afghanistan and Washington - reporting for Australia’s leading current affairs programs on Channel 9, the 7 Network and the ABC. Virginia currently presents ABC TV News in Canberra, and hosts a variety of broadcast discussion events and panel forums. Virginia is a Board member of the National Committee of UN Women Australia, and patron of Save The Children, ACT, in addition to a busy portfolio of community and charity engagements.

Helen Conway is the Director of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. The Agency is an Australian Government statutory agency charged with promoting and improving gender equality in Australian workplaces. Prior to joining the Agency, Helen spent about thirty years in the private sector. Helen has established a track record in the equal opportunity sphere focussing in particular on initiatives in support of women. She spent ten years on the NSW Equal Opportunity Tribunal including three years as its Senior Judicial Member.

Casey Keed is a young Young Wiradjuri who at sixteen years old started her own dance school, Dance Beyond Barriers. Tackling challenging issues including suicide, bullying, depression and homelessness, the group raises awareness and offers new perspectives and solutions. In 2010 Casey was named the ACT NAIDOC Young Person of the Year. She is also the Indigenous Ambassador for National Youth Week, and was State Finalist Young Australian of the Year, ACT, in 2013.

Lauren Anderson is a highly skilled public speaker and workshop facilitator, who has delivered keynotes in Europe, United States, South America and Australia for organisations such as SXSW Interactive, Fast Company, GigaOm, UNEP Future of Sustainable Lifestyles and Entrepreneurship, CPA Australia and the Brightest Young Minds Summit.

Lauren curates a bi-weekly 'Collaborative Entrepreneurs' column getting inside hot ventures from Airbnb to TaskRabbit. Her work has been covered by Fast Company, Big Issue UK, Shareable.net, The Age Australia, and ABC Radio Australia.

Dr Caroline Lambert has been involved in a range of community organisations over a 25-year period, including the Women's Rights Action Network Australia, IWRAW Asia Pacific, Amnesty International, Women's Housing Limited, the National Foundation for Australian Women, the Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture and Arts Access Victoria.

She is the co-author of *Critical Chatter: Women and Human Rights Activism in South East Asia* and co-edited *Global Issues, Women and Justice*.

Yolanda Vega is CEO at the Australian Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Yolanda has owned several small businesses and was appointed to the Federal Government Small Business Advisory Committee in 2012. In her role as CEO, Yolanda has initiated changes to Federal policy, as well as the Productivity Commission Inquiry into childcare thanks to an outstanding and provocative advertising campaign which received national media attention.

Julie McKay has held the position of Executive Director at UN Women Australia (formerly UNIFEM Australia) since March 2007. She is a National Campaign Manager for the White Ribbon Campaign. Julie was the Australian Institute of Management's Young Manager of the Year in 2010 and was named Telstra Young Business Woman of the Year (ACT) in 2011. She sits on the Steering Committee of the Australian Institute of Management ACT, the UN Association of Australia and the YWCA of Canberra. In 2012, Julie was also appointed to the Australian Defence Force Gender Advisory Board.