



THE WOMEN'S MANIFESTO

**A BLUEPRINT FOR HOW TO GET EQUALITY
FOR WOMEN IN AUSTRALIA**

MARCH 2017



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First presented at the Australian Education Union (Victorian branch) International Women's Day dinner, Melbourne, 7 March 2017

This Women's Manifesto has been drafted by [Anne Summers](#) for International Women's Day 2017 as a gift to the women's movement. Anne wishes to acknowledge the AEU (Victorian branch) in supporting her work on this. The Manifesto is designed to assist in developing an organizing tool for us to achieve the full equality we have long

sought. Anyone who wishes to can work on this document by adding new topics or details to the issues already listed. We need specific policies, laws or programs to be laid out in the Worksheet at Appendix 2. We will advise how the various comments and additions are to be collated and the new, final Manifesto drawn up.

This document was designed by [Libby Blainey](#).

SUMMARY OF OUR DEMANDS

Ultimate:

THE FOUR BASIC PRINCIPLES OF WOMEN'S EQUALITY

What we want is very simple:

1. financial self-sufficiency
2. reproductive freedom
3. freedom from violence
4. the right to participate fully and equally in all areas of public life.

Everything we need and want in order to have full equality as women can be subsumed within these four basic principles.

Immediate:

EQUALITY GOALS BY 2022 – EQ22

By 2022 we intend to have the following four significant reforms, drawn from the principles above:

1. Legislated equal pay for all women in all jobs
2. Decriminalisation of abortion in New South Wales and Queensland
3. Specialist domestic violence courts in every state of Australia
4. Gender quotas dictating that women make up 50 per cent of all parliamentarians, all cabinets and other ministries and directors of all public company and government boards.



Women will not rest until we have what is rightfully ours: the full equality between the sexes that is known as feminism. We want, and are entitled, to enjoy the same rights, benefits and privileges that are accorded to men.

As individuals, and as a sex, it is our right. Our country will not thrive until we have equality.

This Women's Manifesto sets out what is needed to achieve full equality for women in Australia -- and a timetable for making that happen.

This Women's Manifesto lays out the four simple and achievable goals that will deliver us equality.

Achieving these goals will give us both personal equality and the means to participate fully and equally in our society.

For too long now, we have been promised equality but we are not there.

We still do not earn the same money as men, even when we do the same work. Abortion is still on the criminal statutes in two states and we are constantly on the defensive about our right to determine when, and if, we have children. We are subjected to widespread, and increasing, sexual and family violence. We are under-represented in the key decision-making organizations of our society. Our voices count for less.

It is time to end this.

It is no longer enough for us just to call ourselves feminists.

It is no longer enough for us just to list our grievances and to call for redress.

We need to be very specific about what we want and we have to make it happen.

And we have to do it now.

Although some of us will choose to work on different issues, if we are to succeed our work

must be part of a unified and comprehensive campaign.

We need a blueprint, we need a timeline and we need to organize.

This Women's Manifesto is intended to be a first step in that process.

It lays out what I contend are the four basic goals for women. These goals encapsulate every aspect of women's equality.

Once we achieve these, we will have achieved equality.

This Women's Manifesto also calls for the rapid implementation of four key demands, one from each of the basic goals. These will in themselves be significant achievements in that they will greatly improve women's lives and opportunities, but they will also be significant stepping-stones towards our ultimate goal of full equality between all women and men in Australia.

We want these in place by 2022 – five years from now.

The launch of this Women's Manifesto is designed to be the springboard for a collaborative process that will fully define and design our goals, provide a specific list of everything we want, and become an organizing tool for making these happen.

In other words, this is not *my* document. This is *our* document and you all need to become involved in bringing it to fruition.

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A society is judged by whether its women enjoy full equality.

"The extension of women's rights is the basic principle of all social progress," wrote Charles Fourier, the French utopian-socialist philosopher, and the man credited with inventing the word "feminism" (*feminisme*) in 1837. (The term was apparently first used in English in an English newspaper in 1894.)



A similar view was expressed by another 19th century philosopher, the Englishman John Stuart Mill when he wrote, in *On the Subjection of Women* in 1869: “[T]he legal subordination of one sex to another – is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a system of perfect equality, admitting no power and privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.”

Yet more than a hundred years after Fourier's observation, no country in the world has yet achieved full gender equality.

In some parts of the world, the Nordic countries for instance, legal equality is close to being achieved. In other countries, such as Saudi Arabia where women are not even permitted to drive cars, women's equality is barely on the national radar.

Australia is somewhere in the middle of this spectrum, with equality supposedly legally enshrined but where income disparities, escalating violence and pervasive sexism and misogyny mean that women's experience of equality is still elusive.

Internationally, our gender equality ranking has plummeted in recent years.

We were ranked in 16th in the world by the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Index in 2006. By 2016 we had slipped to 46th place.

It is shocking to realise that we are in many ways going backwards.

We have to reverse the slide and resume going forward.

We women have been fighting for our right to be full members of society, able to determine our own destinies, for hundreds of years. We have had to fight for the right to vote, to have custody of our children, to own property (including being entitled to keep our wages), to be free from discrimination and free to carve out the lives we want.

We can argue that our fight began in 1792, when Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, the first modern tract in defence of women's rights, in which she argued that women should receive an education.

Or we could contend that it began in 1949 when Simone de Beauvoir published *The Second Sex*, widely regarded as the first text of modern feminism, the book which famously begins with the words: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”. She thus introduced us to the invaluable notion that “women”, were (and in many respects still are) socially constructed, reflecting the male view of what women should be, rather than being self-determined – and equal – people in our own right.

These are both key dates on the road to women's emancipation.

Other events, large and small, have also had a significant impact on the ability of women to shape their own lives.

For instance, the Parisian women who marched to Versailles during the French Revolution to demand women's suffrage.

Or the more than one million people who turned out in 1911 for the second-ever International Women's Day marches in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Denmark.

Or the heroics of the British suffragettes in the early 20th century.

We need to honour our own struggles here in Australia, and the women who led them: including Catherine Helen Spence, Louisa Lawson, Vida Goldstein, Jessie Street, Faith Bandler, Zelda D'Aprano, Sekai Holland, Joan Kirner and June Oscar.

For me it makes sense to date our struggle from 1972 and not 1901 when the vote at federal elections was awarded only to white women (Indigenous women had to wait until 1962).



1972 was the year of the election of the Whitlam government, the first government in Australian history to commit to equality for women. Never before had Australia had a federal government that had women's equality as one of its central priorities.

In its three short years, the Whitlam government intervened to help secure an industrial court judgement awarding women "equal pay for work of equal value"; removed taxes and tariffs from contraceptives thereby making them less expensive, and placed the Pill on the PBS; hired the first-ever women's advisor; introduced paid maternity leave for federal public servants; funded family planning clinics; appointed Elizabeth Evatt as deputy president of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission – the first woman to occupy such a position; introduced the Family Law Act that established no-fault divorce and the Family Court, which was intended to make family separations fair and non-traumatic and introduced anti-discrimination legislation. Unfortunately the Whitlam government was dismissed from office before these laws passed the parliament. During those years, the women's movement was active – and successful. We were able to obtain government support for the newly established Leichhardt Women's Health Centre, Elsie Women's Refuge and the Sydney Rape Crisis Centre. We campaigned for needed changes to laws on rape and sexual assault and domestic violence. Anti-discrimination laws were introduced in South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. Rape in marriage was outlawed in South Australia – a world first. But this initial spurt of activism and reform was not maintained.

Despite further important reforms during subsequent governments – mostly during the Hawke and Keating, Rudd and Gillard governments – in child care and paid parental leave, with the introduction of federal Sex Discrimination and Affirmative Action legislation and other employment

policy reforms, and a massive increase in the numbers of women holding public office, including – finally, in 2010 – Julia Gillard becoming Australia's first woman prime minister, our overall progress towards equality has stalled.

Equality delayed is equality denied.

The movement towards equality is inexorable – and, we like to think, inevitable.

But it will not happen without our fighting for it.

And that is what we need to do now.

We need to fight.

We have to have a watertight plan, with specific goals, and a timeline.

And we need to do it together. A fragmented movement will not win.

This is why we need to collaborate on this Women's Manifesto, make it our own, then get behind it and make it happen.

We women have tasted freedom. We will not be satisfied until all of us – no matter what our age, our colour, our ethnic or religious origin, our sexual preference or our ability – are able to lead the lives we choose, free from discrimination and repression.

We enjoy the freedoms most of us currently have: the ability to go to school, to have a job, to earn an income, to choose our life's partner, to move freely in the world. But we want all women to have those freedoms, and we want to remove the remaining legal, social and cultural barriers that still prevent any of us from doing all the things we are capable of and willing to do.

THE FOUR BASIC PRINCIPLES OF WOMEN'S EQUALITY

What we want is very simple:

1. financial self-sufficiency
2. reproductive freedom
3. freedom from violence



4. the right of women to participate fully and equally in all areas of public life.

Everything we need and want in order to have full equality as women can be subsumed within these four basic principles.

Here is how:

1. FINANCIAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Have enough money, or the means to earn it, to not have to rely on anyone else to survive and thrive.

To be financially self-sufficient and therefore not dependent on a husband or other person to provide the basics of life (or to have the option of leaving a relationship that isn't working) girls need **education** that is equal to boys. They must not just learn to read and write and do math but they must study science, computing, coding and all other subjects that are needed to equip people for today's rapidly changing, digital-dependent world. This education should last for twelve years, ensuring girls leave school with the skills needed for further education or for their chosen job or career.

Girls and young women must then have the same opportunities as boys and young men to enter **post-school education** at university or technical college. They must be free to study any and all subjects and be encouraged to test themselves and branch out from areas that traditionally have attracted more women than men. If they wish, women should be able to pursue **post-graduate education** and be able to combine that with having a family if that is their choice.

Women need to have the same **employment** opportunities as men, including **full-time** employment, with **equal pay** and conditions.

Women must receive **equal pay** and equal opportunities for promotion, for training opportunities and other benefits of the place of employment.

Women must be free from **sexual harassment** and **pregnancy discrimination**.

Childcare must be available, flexible, affordable and shared between all parents.

Women must have the right to keep their jobs while pregnant and get **paid parental leave** when they take time off from their jobs to have the baby.

Women must receive **superannuation**, including while on paid parental leave, and if necessary receive top-ups from either government or employers during their working life to ensure they have adequate **retirement incomes**.

2. REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

The ability to determine when and if to have children

Women must be able to access effective and affordable **contraception** backed up by safe, legal and affordable **abortion**.

Women must have access to **health services**, including screening and care for female-specific conditions such as breast, ovarian and cervical cancer, and other services needed to ensure sexual health.

Women must be able to secure **pre- and post natal care** for their maternal health and that of their baby.

3. FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE

Our bodies and our minds must be our own

Women must be safe from **rape** and other forms of **sexual assault** and must have the right to be believed and their complaint taken seriously if they suffer an attack.

Women must have access to **laws** that adequately address all crimes of violence and **legal services** that enable them to seek advice and legal redress if they chose.



Women must be free from **domestic and family violence** of all kinds: physical, psychological, financial and any other type of controlling and domineering behaviour on the part of a family member or intimate partner.

Where needed, women must have ready access to **emergency crisis services including women's refuges** in order to be safe from violence or other threats.

4. EQUAL REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE:

We should be part of all decision-making in our society

Women should participate fully in all areas of our society's public and economic life.

Women must be represented fully and fairly at every level of **government** including the **public service**, in the **companies** that make up our economy, the **not-for-profit sector**, **arts organizations**, **trade unions**, the **military** and the **churches**.

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This is a deceptively simple agenda. Every single aspect of it requires laws, policies, programs or other elements to make each goal realizable.

We need all these to be spelled out in the Worksheet in Appendix Two of this document.

This is where you will have input.

I hope this Women's Manifesto becomes a focus for discussions, for workshopping and for action. It needs expert input, from those who know the law and the policies, those who have experience in the field and from anyone who has a view on how we can turn these four goals into a blueprint for equality.

I hope that this Women's Manifesto will be picked up unions, by women's groups and by anyone who wants to help shape our future. For instance, the AEU might decide

to focus on the education section under the first principle (financial self-sufficiency), and work on a blueprint that contains all the laws, policies and other mechanisms needed to achieve full equality in education. Other groups might select a topic under the third principle (freedom from violence) or even decide to work on several topics from different principles.

I hope we can plan a way to come together, via a conference or other mechanism, to produce the blueprint for which this is the draft.

Let's make it happen.

EQ22 - THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN

But we also have a set of immediate demands.

Let's call it EQ22.

Our immediate demands are drawn from the four principles – one from each – and they represent progress in achieving that principle as well as laying down markers for the full equality that will result from implementing the Women's Manifesto in its entirety.

In five years, in 2022, it will be 50 years since the election of the Whitlam government, and a fitting deadline for our demands.

By 2022 we intend to have the following four significant reforms:

1. Legislated equal pay for all women in all jobs
2. Decriminalisation of abortion in New South Wales and Queensland
3. Specialist domestic violence courts in every state of Australia
4. Gender quotas dictating that women make up 50 per cent of all parliamentarians, all cabinets and other ministries and directors of all public company and government boards.



Let me spell these out a little:

1. LEGISLATED EQUAL PAY

It is unconscionable that in 2017 Australian women still earn on average 20 per cent less than men. In some jobs, the gender pay gap is even greater. We can no longer tolerate this basic injustice.

As Mary Gaudron, the first woman to sit on the High Court of Australia, famously said in 1979: 'Equal pay was "won" in 1969 and again in 1972 and yet again in 1974.

It is 43 years since we first 'won' equal pay. It is 37 years since Mary Gaudron pointed out that we still did not have it. And we still don't have it. If anything the pay gap has widened over the past four decades.

We need federal legislation mandating equal pay for all women in all jobs.

2. DECRIMINALISATION OF ABORTION IN NEW SOUTH WALES AND QUEENSLAND

We cannot return to the dark days of women risking criminal prosecution for having abortions. Every other Australian state and territory has decriminalised abortion. It is time for New South Wales and Queensland to do so as well.

3. SPECIALIST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURTS IN EVERY STATE

This is already happening in Queensland as a result of recommendations made by the Task Force on Domestic and Family Violence headed by Quentin Bryce in 2014-15. Such specialist courts can provide expert handling of domestic violence cases, as well as shining a spotlight on the extent and severity of such violence across Australia.

4. GENDER QUOTAS DICTATING WOMEN MAKE UP 50 PER CENT OF ALL PARLIAMENTARIANS, CABINET AND OTHER MINISTERS, AND DIRECTORS OF PUBLIC COMPANIES AND GOVERNMENT BOARDS

It is clear that increased representation of women in all decisions-making organizations of our society is not going to happen organically. If so, it would already have happened. We need affirmative action in the form of quotas to ensure that the best talent available leads these organizations – and that means including the group that makes up 50 per cent of the population.

We have five years to make this happen. Starting today.

Further copies of this Manifesto can be found at www.annesummers.com.au



APPENDIX ONE

OUR INTERNATIONAL STATUS

How we rank internationally

Where does Australia rank in the global gender index of countries compiled each year by the World Economic Forum?

In October 2016 – the date of the [latest report](#) – Australia ranked **number 46** out of 144 countries. The world's top ten countries in 2016 were: Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Rwanda, Ireland, Philippines, Slovenia, New Zealand, Nicaragua.

In **2011** we were **number 23**, in **2013** we were **24**.

In 2006 Australia was ranked **number 15** yet by 2008 we had fallen to number 21 and have continued to slide ever since: number 25 in 2012, number 36 in 2015 and now our lowest ranking ever: number 46.

Why does Australia rank so low?

It's mostly to do with our labour force participation and lack of women in political leadership. Although Australia ranks highly – equal number 1 – for our educational attainment, we fall far behind comparable countries when it comes to women's participation in the labour market, especially in full-time jobs, and in women's remuneration. We are also marked down for having so few women in federal cabinet.



APPENDIX TWO

MAKING AUSTRALIA EQUAL

Worksheet on Australian women's equality

Note: This section is a work-in-progress and it is where you come in. There are many blanks needing to be filled in. It needs input from those with specialized knowledge in each area.

You may want to add topics: e.g. **sex-work** (under employment in Principle 1) or **revenge porn** (under violence against women in Principle 3) or women in politics (in Principle 4). Every topic or issue can be accommodated within one of the four principles.

The ultimate goal is for this section to be transformed into a Manifesto containing *detailed, specific demands* of precisely what we need in order to achieve equality.

1. FINANCIAL SELF-DETERMINATION

Goal: EQUAL EDUCATION

Current status:

- women and girls can access education at all levels
- more women graduate from universities than men, including in faculties such as law
- women do not participate equally in many subjects that have good career prospects, for example: science (including veterinary science), technology, engineering, mathematics and computing science

Still needed: give specific examples of laws, policies, programs that are needed in education

Goal: EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Current status:

Still needed:

Goal: EQUAL PAY

Current status:

- The gender pay gap is 17.1 per cent in 2017. It is even higher at 23.1 per cent if just full-time employment is taken into account.

Still needed:

Goal: EQUAL RETIREMENT INCOME

Current status:

- The average superannuation balance at the time of retirement in December 2015 was \$292,500 for men and only \$138,150 for women

Still needed:

2. CONTROL OF OUR BODIES

Goal: REPRODUCTIVE CONTROL

Current status:

- Contraception
 - Abortion
- NSW and Qld still criminalise abortion
---Medicare rebate?

Still needed:

Goal: SPECIALIST WOMEN'S HEALTH

Current status:

- Pap smears - are they free?
- Mammograms – check status of what is free
- Other issues?

Still needed:

Goal: MATERNAL WELFARE

Current status:

---Issues?

Still needed:



3. FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE

Goal: DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE LAWS

Current status:

---Enforcement of laws

Still needed:

Goal : SEXUAL ASSAULT LAWS

Current status:

---Need expert input here

Still needed:

Goal: CRISIS SUPPORT

Current status:

---Funding of women's refuges by federal and some state governments in doubt

---Funding of community legal centres

Still needed:

Goal: FAMILY LAW

Current status:

---Family Court reform

---Legal aid

Still needed:

4. EQUAL REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE

Goal: EQUAL REPRESENTATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT, STATE AND FEDERAL PARLIAMENTS

Current progress:

Federal and state parliaments http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Quick_Guides/PartyGender

Local government: no current figures available. However the Australian Local Government Women's Association has a goal of 50/50 representation: <http://www.algwa.net.au/manager/resources/test/5050vision.pdf>

Still needed:

Goal: EQUAL REPRESENTATION IN CABINETS, MINISTRIES AND OTHER EXECUTIVE BODIES

Current progress:

Still needed:

Goal: EQUAL REPRESENTATION ON ALL CORPORATE, GOVERNMENT, NOT FOR PROFIT, CHURCH AND TRADE UNION BOARDS OR SIMILAR GOVERNING BODIES

Current progress:

Still needed:

Goal: NEED TO OUTLINE SPECIFIC GOALS FOR THE MILITARY, THE COURTS AND OTHER KEY INSTITUTIONS



APPENDIX THREE

YOUR PERSONAL EQUALITY

A toolkit to help you assess how equal you are

How equal are you?

1. FINANCIAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY

1. Can you attend school?
2. Can you go onto higher education e.g. TAFE or university?
3. Can you study any subject you choose?
4. Do you have the same postgraduate opportunities as male students?
5. As a student, do you have an income that is sufficient to live on? Or do you need part-time employment as well?
6. Can you work in paid employment? (note: for those who have completed their studies)
7. Do you have a job?
part-time?
full-time?
8. Are you satisfied with you job and the hours?
9. Can you get any job for which you are qualified?
10. Do you get the same pay as men doing the same job?
11. Do you get the same non-wage entitlements as men, e.g. penalty rates, overtime, bonuses, other "perks"?
12. Is the money you get from your job enough to support yourself (and any dependants)?
13. Are you in a superannuation scheme?
14. Does your superannuation account balance equal that of a man in a similar occupation? https://www.australiansuper.com/~media/Files/FactSheets/160307-Women_and_Super%20Industry.ashx
15. Do you have your own bank account?
16. Do you have you own credit card?
17. Do you have enough savings to be able to set yourself up with housing if you need/want to?
18. Do you have access to a bank loan or other credit if you need it?
19. If you have been sexually harassed at work, is there a procedure for making a complaint?
20. If you have made a sexual harassment complaint, was it taken seriously?
21. If you were pregnant while working, were you treated the same as before by your colleagues and superiors?
22. Did you get paid parental leave? For how long?
23. Could you return to work after you had your baby?
24. Were you able to get suitable childcare?
25. Was/is this childcare affordable?
26. Did/do the hours of the childcare provision fit the hours at your job?

And on the home front:

27. If you are married or living in a relationship, does your partner share the housework?
28. If yes, does he/she share it equally with you?
29. If no, have you discussed with him/her about sharing the work?
30. If you have a children or children, does your partner share in the care of that child?
31. Is that care shared equally?
32. Did one of you have to reduce your working hours when you had the baby?
33. Did you have a discussion about who should take time off/reduce working hours? Or was it assumed it would be you?



34. Do you feel able to discuss these issues freely with your partner?
35. Did you think it necessary to discuss these issues before you began your relationship? Before you had children?

2. CONTROL OF MY BODY

Am I able to access what I need for my health and can I decide when and if I have children?

1. Can you get, and afford, the contraceptives you need?
2. If you needed one, would you be able to access, and afford, an abortion?
3. Have you ever had a baby you did not plan and did not want?
4. If you have ever had an STD, were you able to get proper treatment?
5. Do you have regular Pap smears? are they free?
6. Do you have regular Mammograms? are they free?
7. Do you have regular check-ups with a gynaecologist or women's health centre?

3. FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE

Do you suffer from any form of violence at present?

1. Have you ever been sexually assaulted?
2. Have you ever been raped?
by someone you knew?
by a stranger?
3. Did you report your rape to the police?
did it go to trial?
did you testify?
was your attacker convicted?
4. Did you seek help from a rape counselling service or a telephone helpline?
5. Have you ever suffered physical violence from an intimate partner?

6. Have you ever suffered physical violence from a family member?
7. Have you ever suffered psychological or other forms of intimidation by an intimate partner?
8. Have you ever suffered psychological or other forms of intimidation by a family member?
9. Have you had to leave your home as a result of domestic violence?
10. Who helped you when you had to leave home?
a women's refuge?
friends?
a doctor or other medical practitioner?
the police?
your family?
other?
11. Does your place of work have a paid domestic violence leave policy?
12. Have you lost work/study time as a result of domestic violence?
13. Have you ever suffered any form of violence by a stranger?
14. Have you been sexually harassed?
at school?
at TAFE/university?
at work?
15. Did you lodge a formal complaint about your sexual harassment?
was it acted upon?
were you satisfied with the outcome?



APPENDIX FOUR

OTHER WOMEN'S MANIFESTOS

1. Manifesto. Australian Women's Peace Army 1916

Compiled in Melbourne by women's rights and peace campaigner Vida Goldstein as an organizing tool to urge women to oppose the 1916 referendum to bring in conscription.

<https://www.marxists.org/history/australia/1916/woman-manifesto.htm>

2. 'Manifesto of the 343 sluts' 1971

Written by feminist author Simone de Beauvoir and signed by such leading French women as Catherine Deneuve, Delphine Seyrig, Agnes Varda and 339 others, these women declared they had abortions and thus offered themselves up for prosecution as French law then made abortion a criminal offence. Some of the women who signed, including de Beauvoir herself, had never actually had an abortion.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20160611012314/https://manifesto343.wordpress.com/>

3. The women's manifesto for Ghana 2004

Created by feminists in Ghana, this document was intended to be, and still is, a 'roadmap' for equality for the women of Ghana, designed to influence and guide government policy.

<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/ghana/02983.pdf>