

2011

Mapping Australia's  
Philanthropic Investment in  
Women and Girls  
Executive Summary

WOMEN  
DONORS *investing*  
*in women & girls*

The Australian Centre for Philanthropy and  
Nonprofit Studies

Queensland University of Technology

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## Foreword

To what extent is gender considered within mainstream (ungendered) grantmaking in Australia? What is the current level of philanthropic investment in women and girls? Is any shift in the direction of philanthropic spend towards women and girls likely in the coming years?

These have all been burning questions for the Women Donors Network. The answers will not only help the network assess where it can do most good in the coming years, but will more importantly provide valuable data to the sector and continue a productive conversation about the ways in which we can best apply a gender lens to improve all community investments.

With this in mind, the Women Donors Network embarked on establishing Australia's first investigation in this area, and we partnered with the pre-eminent research body The Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies. We see this research as important and ground-breaking, as there is currently no such data in Australia. We know that in the USA, less than 8% of funding has been directed to programs that specifically invest in women and girls. We also know through global research that women and girls are still the most disadvantaged in society and that they are often either marginalised or invisible in mainstream program design and delivery.

Philanthropists seek to benefit humanity. When we give gifts, we mostly support mainstream projects that don't differentiate by gender, for example 'youth', 'the homeless', 'medical research' or 'the arts'. We may assume that these mainstream projects benefit the sexes equally, but sometimes they do not. Often, women and girls are overlooked because they lack the power, visibility or opportunity to voice their needs or opinions. As a result, mainstream projects can be less effective than they might otherwise be and philanthropic impact is lessened. Effective philanthropy understands the needs of women and men are different and that in order to treat them equally, their different circumstances must be addressed.

The Australian Women Donors Network thanks all who participated or who are taking the time to peruse and learn from this research and we stand ready to provide practical assistance where we can. We particularly thank our Principal Partners who continue to support our work – ANZ Private, ANZ Trustees, Trawalla Foundation and Pratt Foundation. Our hope is to report in a few years' time a very positive trend in considering gender in all giving decisions. It is a practice worth considering.

Julia Keady  
CEO, Australian Women Donors Network

### RESEARCH SUB-COMMITTEE

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## Facts in Brief

- Inaugural survey
- 100 responses – 41 individuals, 59 various foundation types
- Nearly 5,000 grants <sup>1</sup>(across all causes) totalling \$90m in 2009–2010
- Median grant distribution – \$28,740, Median grant number – 9
- Sample divided on whether they believe half of their grant funds reach women and girls
- Much variation in actual percentage of funds allocated to target women and girls
  - 3/4 of respondents give something specifically to women and girls
  - Most give less than 20% of their funds to women and girls
  - 1/3 give at least 40% to women and girls
- 615 (12% of all grants) went to organisations/projects specifically targeting women and girls
- 124 sample projects were detailed,
  - totalling \$3.5m
  - median grant size of \$10,000
  - commonly for education/employment, then health
  - commonly for children/young women, then mothers
  - mostly in Australia, then Asia
- 82% believe their grant recipients are inclusive enough of women
- Half of the respondents said they did not target women and girls because they were covered in general funding
- 10% said they couldn't find suitable projects for women and girls
- 32% plan to increase their funding to women and girls in the future
- 44% will maintain their current funding to women and girls

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<sup>1</sup> The givers in this project include individuals and formally structured foundations. Although terms such as funds and grants have clear crossover, where possible, the slightly broader terms 'funds and funding' are used in this report to emphasise the scope of activity, which in some cases goes beyond grants. While grants may be unrestricted, most frequently they relate to a specific project, set conditions and a competitive process.

## Executive summary

**What and why?** The Australian Women Donors Network (Women Donors) partnered the Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies (ACPNS) at QUT to conduct this research. No studies exist on the size or sources of philanthropic giving in Australia directed intentionally towards the needs of women and girls. The survey aims to fill this knowledge gap and create a baseline for understanding trends and views in this area. Because the survey treads some new ground, its findings raise questions as well as giving answers.

**Where else?** Comparable surveys exist (e.g. in the USA and Europe) but foundation giving in Australia is only just starting to build an evidence base to assist its work.

**How?** A 10-question survey was constructed, covering six facets:

1. Respondent demographics (type of giver/grantmaker);
2. Grantmaking amounts and grant numbers (overall and specifically to women and girls);
3. Sample projects that help women and girls (to give a flavour of common areas, geographic focus and grant size);
4. Opinions on inclusiveness of granting practice;
5. Reasons behind not granting to women and girls; and
6. Future giving intentions.

**Who?** Encouragingly, 100 people from across the philanthropy spectrum completed the survey, embracing 41 individual donors and other respondents from various foundation types. Given the population difference, this response compares well with the 145 respondents to the USA-based Foundation Center's 2009 European study (reported in 2011). The survey was designed for givers generally, not just those involved in giving to women and girls specifically. It is possible, though, that people with an interest in funding this area were more likely to participate. This potential oversampling may inflate the figures on funding women and girls to some degree. Also, because the population size of Australian philanthropists is unknown, no claims can be made that this information is generalizable to all Australian funders. Nonetheless, some patterns and themes emerge from the 100 responses.

## Key findings

**Total grants.** In the 2009–2010 financial year, respondents gave **nearly 5,000 grants representing more than \$90 million** across all causes, ranging in size from very small (\$150) to very large (\$16 million). As a **median**, respondents were giving **nine grants of \$28,740** (i.e. half the respondents were lower and half were higher than these figures).

**Grants to women and girls.** Respondents were equally divided on whether their grants reach women and girls. Nominating a percentage was hard for some, most commonly they said because either their funding or their record of it is not gender specific. A small number of respondents felt quite strongly that to allocate by one gender would be discriminatory.

Some **615 grants made by respondents specifically targeted women and girls (12%)**. This included grants made by five respondents who allocate funding exclusively to women and girls (however, it is important to note that one giving source provided 202 of these grants). More than half of respondents allocated 0–20% of their grants specifically to women and **almost one-third gave at least 40% of their funds specifically to these areas**. A total of 23 respondents did not allocate any funds to women and girls.

Respondents who did target women and girls articulated their **most common reason** for doing so as recognising how **the benefits of supporting women flowed through to their families and entire communities**. The **most common reason respondents did not target women and girls** was a perception that **both are covered in general funding**.

**Sample projects snapshot** More than half of the respondents took the time to give examples of projects benefiting women and girls. Among the **124 sample projects described, girls and young women were most commonly cited as special target groups, followed by mothers**. **Education and employment** were the **most common areas of focus**, followed by health. **Health** received the **largest amount of funding**. **Medical research** had the **highest average gift size** (almost \$180,000).

The majority of money invested to benefit women and girls was **allocated in Australia**. The **average grant size locally was also more than four times greater than that spent internationally**. Of the funds spent internationally, **Asia** received the **greatest amount and largest average gift size**.

The **greatest number** of the projects based in Australia were in **Victoria**; however, the **most money went to Queensland**. **Western Australia** had the **highest average gift size**; however, this finding reflects the small number of grants and the impact of one large gift on the overall average gift size. When comparing cause areas geographically, education and health were the most popular cause areas both in Australia and internationally, as a proportion of all projects.

**Future grants to women and girls.** Notably, **76% of respondents said they were likely to maintain or increase their current level of investment in women and girls**. No-one said they were going to decrease their investment. Interestingly, those who gave at least one grant specifically toward women and girls in the past financial year were more likely to *increase* their targeted funding, compared to those who did not grant specifically to women and girls, who were more likely to *review* their current investment.

**Some key issues raised by this research.** Some respondents in this study were clearly in quest of a **case and rationale for devoting more time to gender balance** in their grantmaking and would consider more initiatives in this area if the **tools to make it easy and economic** were readily available. This progress would need to include **ways to better identify and record giving that benefits women and girls**. For some, the issue was not a lack of knowledge of gender-lensed approaches but rather a **lack of suitable projects**, and they called for **more promotion and access** to appropriate granting opportunities. For others, **giving to women and girls was seen as a one-sided view of gender sensitivity** and this attitude again points to the need for a balanced and well-circulated case as the basis for a strategic sector conversation.

**The Australian Women Donors Network** ([www.womendonors.org.au](http://www.womendonors.org.au))

We are an education-focussed non-profit organisation that advocates for gender-sensitive practice within the social investment and grant-making sector. We also advocate for a greater investment in women and girls. Both strategies are proven models for creating more effective social investments and outcomes, which ultimately create a more equitable society for all. Established in 2009, our growing network consists of social investors and grantmakers who value these principles and practices, as well as supporters from government, corporate and community sectors. We support and participate in the shift in global consciousness that recognises the importance of allowing women and men to equally create and contribute to positive social change within their communities. We believe that by acknowledging the socially constructed differences between women/girls and men/boys, and using gender analysis as a tool for intelligent inquiry, all projects and social investments can lead to more effective outcomes.

Our vision is a world where women and girls are seen, heard and valued. Our mission is to:

- Direct attention to the economic and social disadvantage of women and girls, both in Australia and globally;
- Highlight the crucial role of women and girls in building stronger economies, families and communities;
- Integrate a practice of gender inquiry into philanthropy so that it addresses the unique circumstances and specific needs of women and girls; and
- Encourage the funding of projects that invest specifically in women and girls.

**The Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies** ([www.bus.qut.edu.au/research/cpns/](http://www.bus.qut.edu.au/research/cpns/))

The Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies (ACPNS) is part of the QUT Business School, internationally recognised for its high-quality teaching and research. ACPNS brings together academics and research students with expertise in philanthropy, non-profit organisations and the social economy. It produces research and offers teaching that helps bring change to the sector and the community.