



## **Feminist Legal Clinic Inc.**

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UN Women  
By email

31 March 2025

Dear UN Women

### **Input for CSW Revitalization Project**

Feminist Legal Clinic Inc. is community legal service based in Sydney focused on advancing the human rights of women and girls. We are a grass roots service operated entirely by volunteers. Our membership includes a large contingent of lesbian women who are actively marginalised by the Australian legal system and society generally. We welcome the opportunity to make this submission but due to our very limited resources it will necessarily be brief.

We had wanted to attend CSW in person but our lack of funding and resources made this impossible this year. So instead we planned to attend CSW events virtually and with some difficulty we registered for this purpose. However, there seemed endless hurdles to overcome and ultimately we still did not receive a link to attend the main events. Combined with our ongoing casework commitments here in Sydney and the time differential, our attendance at CSW was necessarily limited. Even the NGO side event at which we did present (having been invited by the Coalition of Activist Lesbians) was impacted by technical difficulties and we found the Whova system to be anything but intuitive to navigate.

However, while these impediments to access were without doubt significant, the ideological bias of UN Women against feminist groups such as our own was an even greater obstacle. We are horrified that UN Women sends out communications openly slandering those who do not agree that sex can be changed and who disagree with the agenda being actively promoted by ILGA and others at the expense of women's rights.

Women, such as ourselves, who understand that sex is a biological reality and cannot be changed, are not "anti-rights" or "hateful" as suggested by UN Women. Nor are we aligned with right wing, conservative or religious movements. To suggest this is at best ill-informed and at worst malicious. Attempts to silence the voices of marginalised women in this manner runs counter to the very purpose of UN Women.

We were very disturbed to hear that the Special Rapporteur for Violence against Women and Girls, Reem Alsalem, having encountered unforeseen problems with her ESTA visa, was denied the opportunity to deliver her speech at the CSW opening ceremony online, nor send a recorded statement, nor have someone read it on her behalf.

We hold the work of Ms Alsalem in high esteem and are grateful for her courageous, independent and honest voice. Ms Alsalem has been subjected to unfair criticism and personal attacks for opposing the exploitative and abusive reality of prostitution and reporting on the negative impacts of gender identity ideology on the human rights of women and girls. The failure to accommodate her requirements reflects extremely poorly on the integrity of UN Women as the CSW secretariat.

Organisations recently leading the campaign against Reem Alsalem, including Women Deliver, are supported by powerful funders including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation and George Soros's Foundation to Promote Open Society. These foundations play a leading role in advancing a 'sex work' narrative that legitimises prostitution as well as promoting a trans rights agenda that infringes on the sex-based rights of women. We note these same foundations are also the main private funders of UN Women.

We recommend that in any 'revitalisation' process, that UN Women closely scrutinise the conflicts of interest that arise from accepting funding from groups that are supporting campaigns in direct conflict with human rights obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ('CEDAW'). We appreciate that UN Women is no doubt desperately under-resourced, but accepting these sources of funding negate its entire purpose for existing. UN Women must not be recruited to work actively against the protection and advancement of women's sex-based rights.

Yours faithfully



Anna Kerr  
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*Organization in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council  
(ECOSOC) since 2023.*