

## United Nations Global Compact and BPW Australia



The UNGC is the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative and a call to companies and non-business **organisations** to align strategies and operations with universal principles on human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption, and take actions that advance societal goals.

### **Benefits of Participation in the UN Global Compact for members of BPW Australia**

BPW Australia organisation sustainability starts with our value system and a principled approach to achieving our aims and objectives. This means operating in ways that, at a minimum, meet fundamental responsibilities in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption.

Responsible non-government organisations enact the same values and principles wherever they have a presence, and know that good practices in one area do not offset harm in another. By incorporating the Global Compact principles into strategies, policies and procedures, and establishing a culture of integrity, BPW Australia are only upholding our basic responsibilities to people and planet, but also setting the stage for long-term success.

This will raise our profile enormously that over time we will see the UNGC platform and mandate as a potential to recruit speakers, attract members and engage with corporates for sponsorship.

The story of how BPW Australia became involved with the UNGC and the Global Compact Network Australia (GCNA) began in 2010 when Freda Miriklis, BPW International Vice President raised the issue with the Executive Officer of GCNA in New York could BPW Australia support the GCNA. BPW Australia couldn't be a signatory to the UNGC but we could be one of the first organisations to show our support of the UNGC and there were exciting plans a foot with working groups and activities proposed that we could become a part of. There were no other women's non-business groups at the time and BPW Australia needed to have first mover advantage and be involved in the initial stages of GCNA.

When Freda was in New York for their launch of WEPS and she became aware of how non-business groups could partner and work with the UNGC and how we could become signatories by preparing a letter of commitment to the Secretary General, United Nations.

### **The Journey of BPW Australia of becoming a Signatory to the UNGC**

As President of BPW Australia from 2007 to 2013 Marilyn Forsythe believed that the basic principle that underlined the work of BPW Australia was the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

The question occurred to Marilyn that although BPW Australia was not a business but we still supported the same values as a corporation and that 50% of our members was from the corporate sector. The challenge was that as a non-business organisation BPW Australia was not eligible to be a member of the UNGC. But the question was why not?

The BPW Australia Board supported that we should apply to the UNGC for membership. Marilyn wrote to United Nations Secretary General for consideration to become a signatory. Within a month the Secretary General responded and invited BPW Australia to be a

signatory of the UNGC. BPW Australia from that point became one of the first non-business organisations worldwide to be a signatory to the UNGC.

By becoming a signatory to the UNGC BPW Australia had a unique position among other non-business and non-government organisations in Australia that signified our total commitment to the rights of women aligned the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We are the only NGO permitted to display the UNGC logo on the front page of our website. One of requirements to remain a signatory for non-business organisations to submit Communication of Engagement (COE) to the United Nations within four years of becoming a signatory and our first report is due on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2015 and every two years thereafter.

As a result of being a non-business signatory of the UNGC, BPW Australia was eligible to become a member partner of the Global Compact Network Australia (GCNA) in 2011 and have participated and sponsored some the GCNA business forums in Australia.

### **BPW International Award to BPW Australia**

At the BPW International Congress held in Korea in 2014 BPW Australia was awarded second prize in the Power to Make a Difference Award 2011-2013 in the category EXCELLENT ADVOCACY FOR WOMEN. This award was achieved through the outstanding work by Marilyn Forsythe and Irene Ross enabling BPW Australia to become a signatory to the UN Global Compact and the commitment to the Ten Principles of the Global Compact and the United Nations Declaration of Independence.

### **The Un Global Compact's Ten Principals**

The UN Global Compact's Ten Principles are derived from: the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), the [International Labour Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#), the [Rio Declaration on Environment and Development](#), and the [United Nations Convention Against Corruption](#).

#### **Human Rights**

[Principle 1](#): Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and

[Principle 2](#): make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.

#### **Labour**

[Principle 3](#): Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;

[Principle 4](#): the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour;

[Principle 5](#): the effective abolition of child labour; and

[Principle 6](#): the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

#### **Environment**

[Principle 7](#): Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;

[Principle 8](#): undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and

[Principle 9](#): encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

## Anti-Corruption

[Principle 10](#): Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

### UN Global Compact Network Australia (GCNA)

In 2011 Global Compact Network Australia became incorporated - transitioning to a separate legal entity separate from the United Nations. A major focus was the continued funding of the UNGCNA from membership fees from the big end of town businesses and there was a substantial joining fee. BPW Australia met the criteria that an organisation that wants to apply for membership must first become a UN Global Compact Signatory. The GCNA Board accepted our membership for a much reduced fee of \$500 per annum.

The benefits of membership and belonging to the GCNA are for companies and NGOs are:

- By becoming a member companies can participate in the governance of GCNA- including nominating for elected positions of the Network such as Board
- Members of the GCNA will have access to information on global and local initiatives within the UNGC, which is coordinated by the National Contact Point/Secretariat.
- Access to regular events and forums run directly by the UNGCNA and in association and partnership with Member organisations and stakeholder groups
- These events and forums include exclusive involvement and participation in the three Issue Area Leadership Groups: Anti-Corruption, Human Rights and the Environment. Participation also includes the ability for members to play specific leadership roles within the member network for each of those three core Issue Areas
- Member only invitations to network events and forums held on behalf of the UNGC around the world including being a member of either the business or network delegation to the Annual Networks

Refer to <http://www.unglobalcompact.org.au/>

### BPW Australia's Participation in the ten UNGC Principles.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) **BPW Australia and our members** are an important and integral part of the UN Global Compact and its goal of embedding economies with universal principles and values. CSOs contribute much needed perspectives and expertise that can complement those of other participants and stakeholders.

Every two years BPW Australia must send a report to the United Nations on our activities in supporting the 10 principles of the Global Compact. If we do not submit the report then our membership will be deleted. To confirm that BPW Australia was engaging with the ten principles of the Global Compact in 2015 a survey was conducted for Clubs to match their activities to the ten principles of the UNGC. The surveys are attached.

### Contributors

Irene Ross	BPW Australia Global Compact Coordinator	2011 - 2016
Marilyn Forsythe	Past President BPW Australia	2007 – 2013
Freda Miriklis	Past BPW International President	2011 - 2014

Date: September 2015