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Cash to name women's Policy panel



Michaelia Cash: Will unveil the new Women's Advisory Panel next month

Newly-appointed Industry minister Michaelia Cash says the government is still committed to appointing a Women's Advisory Panel to help guide gender issues in the portfolio, despite more than a year having passed since the policy was first announced.

InnovationAus.com (<http://InnovationAus.com>) understands the panel members are to be formally named by Senator Cash next month, and would meet for the first time by the middle of the year.

The women's advisory panel would guide Commonwealth policy on gender diversity and equality issues in the science and innovation, and also offer independent advice on other matters in the portfolio.

The panel is to be made of women from the private sector, research institutions and government, along with some 'token blokes'. The panel would also review current government policies, and provide insight into future initiatives.

The policy was unveiled (2017/02/Sinodinos-unveils-womens-agenda) by former innovation minister Arthur Sinodinos in February last year at *InnovationAus.com* (<http://InnovationAus.com>)'s inaugural Women in VC (news/47/127/Women-in-VC-2018/) forum.

"I want a roundtable that's specifically for women, of women, by women which is auditing across government the programs that we have in place to do the things that we as government say we're trying to do," Senator Sinodinos said at the time.

"It's to keep us honest and to say, 'this is what's working and what isn't, and if you really want to help women then this is what you have to do'."

Senator Sinodinos had named gender equality and diversity outcomes as paramount priorities when he took over the portfolio, hoping to leave progress in these areas as his legacy.

But more than six months after the announcement, it was revealed that the Industry department was still looking for panel members, and that the group had yet to meet.

At that time, the government still said that panel would be named and have its first meeting by the end of last year.

"The department is working with the Minister's office to identify members and participants for the roundtable. The group will feature women and men with experience in various parts of the innovation ecosystem," a department spokesperson told *InnovationAus.com* (<http://InnovationAus.com>) in September.

"The members will be chosen from individuals who have demonstrated advocacy of female participation in industry, innovation and science, as well as self-nominated candidates."

Weeks later, Senator Sinodinos went on extended sick leave from Parliament, with Senator Cash and former assistant innovation minister Craig Laundry covering the portfolio.

Late last year, Senator Cash took on the new role of Minister for Jobs and Innovation as part of Malcolm Turnbull's cabinet reshuffle, taking over from Senator Sinodinos, who is continuing his battle with cancer.

InnovationAus.com (<http://InnovationAus.com>) understands the change in ministers and uncertainty has resulted in the women's advisory panel being delayed again, but is still a policy commitment from the new innovation minister that will be officially revealed in the coming weeks.
