

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Inquiry into the 2023–24 Budget Estimates
13 June 2023

PORTFOLIO: WOMEN

Witnesses:

- The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP
- Ms. Peta McCammon
- Ms. Louise Perry
- Ms. Kate Berry

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

QUESTION 1

a) Provide information on Gender Pay Gap at Secretary level.

Ms Bev McARTHUR: Well, Minister, you have had years to fix this up. You have been in government for quite some time. Is there a gender pay gap at the secretary level?

Ms HUTCHINS: I might refer to my Secretary.

Ms McCAMMON: Thanks. I think that question would probably be best placed with DPC. I do not have in front of me secretary salaries.

Ms McARTHUR: Would you be able to take that on notice and let us know?

Ms McCAMMON: I am not sure I can take on notice a question for DPC, but we can –

Ms McARTHUR: Well, if you are talking about gender equality here and we have had a whole glossy slide show on the matter, surely you must know where your gender equality gaps are in the public service.

The CHAIR: Mrs McArthur, perhaps that is a question for question time. You may wish to put it to the minister.

Ms McARTHUR: Well, no, that is why we are here. The minister has been talking about the great job they are doing in solving the gender equality pay gap, but first of all we need to know that the government does this in the public service, so we first need to know: where are the gaps in the public service of the gender equality situation? And I would expect you would want to know, Minister and Secretary. I can appreciate you may not have the figures in front of you. I am very happy for you to go back and do the research.

The CHAIR: Apologies, Mrs McArthur, your time is up. We are going to go to –

Ms McARTHUR: Thank you. Can we get the research on notice?

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Ms McARTHUR: Thank you, Chair. I am going to Deputy Secretary Ms Perry. Can you tell us what the gender pay gap is at the deputy secretary level?

Ms PERRY: Thank you, Ms McArthur, for your question. I am sure you have seen that we have been scrambling to try to get the answer to your earlier question. I can tell you that the gender pay gap for VPS executives – so that would take in directors, executive directors and deputy secretaries – is 8.8 per cent.

Ms McARTHUR: Okay. And Secretary, can we go back to the secretary level gender pay gap?

Ms McCAMMON: We are still trying to get that.

Ms McARTHUR: Great.

Ms McCAMMON: We are trying, yes.

Ms McARTHUR: Well, just take it on notice. Thank you, Minister. That is all good, because obviously if we are suggesting out to the wider world that we need to solve the gender pay gap at executive level, we need to make sure that the public service is way ahead of everybody else, don't we, Minister?

Hearing Transcript, p. 4, 5-6

Name of Committee members asking question: Ms Bev McArthur

RESPONSE

Answer:

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* will improve the gender pay gap across the Victorian public sector by setting a clear framework for change with public accountability and transparency at its heart. Under the Gender Equality Act, Victorian public sector organisations, universities and local councils are required to take action to close their gender pay gaps. Organisations must regularly collect data on their pay gap, commit to action through their Gender Equality Action Plans, and publicly report on their pay gap progress every two years.

In September 2022 the Commission for Gender Equality released the Public Sector Gender Audit Baseline Report – the most comprehensive dataset on gender equality in the public sector to date. This report states that the gender pay gap for heads of Victorian Public Service departments and agencies was 20.5% as at 30 June 2021. (Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, *Baseline report – 2021 workplace gender audit analysis*, p47). The Baseline report also found there was no gender pay gap at the senior leadership level in the Victorian Public Service.

In 2021 and 2022, 293 organisations submitted their first Gender Equality Action Plans under the Gender Equality Act. Organisations committed to action to improve workplace gender equality, including by closing gender pay gaps. The Baseline report found that the overall gender pay gap for these organisations was 6.1% (Baseline report, p42). In February 2024, organisations will submit their first progress reports to the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, which must include an assessment of progress made in implementing Gender Equality Action Plans and progress in addressing pay inequity.

The Victorian Government is also promoting gender equality in the Victorian Public Service by increasing the representation of women executives. In 2016 as part of Safe and Strong, Victoria's first gender equality strategy, the Victorian government set a target to have 50% women appointed as Victorian Public Service executives. From July 2020 to June 2021, 56% of appointees to Victorian Public Service executive roles were women (Victorian Public Sector Commission, 2023).