



Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting

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Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand is a community services organisation established to address the critical, contemporary issues facing women, girls and families. We work to advance equity and social justice, and to support our communities to thrive. We aspire for all women, girls and families to be safe, well, strong and connected.

A central part of our purpose is to challenge the systems that entrench poverty, disadvantage and gender inequality; our Women's Research, Advocacy and Policy Centre does this through a range of research, policy development and advocacy activities. Good Shepherd plays a critical role in Victoria, and nationally, by providing crucial support services to women and children, such as family violence support and integrated family services, financial counselling and financial capability building. We are also Australia's leading provider of microfinance products, including the No Interest Loans Scheme (or NILS) and the LaunchME program, which last year helped support financial inclusion for 20,000 low-income women.

Victorian progress in advancing gender equity

We have been following the Victorian Government's active work in improving gender equality in a range of ways, and wanted to highlight a few. We applaud the Government's work to change attitudes to prevent family violence and violence against women, at the same time as committing funding to expand the workforce that supports victim survivors¹.

GSANZ recognises the important work that has taken place to establish Victoria's Gender Equality Baseline Report (2019) which provides set of measures against which progress towards gender equality outcomes will be monitored².

We also acknowledge the work the Government is doing to encourage employers to establish gender equality in the workplace. GSANZ has recently launched the first place-based Financial Inclusion Action Plan (FIAP) in Geelong, and through that process we have seen the Government's

¹ State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) (2016) Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy. Access at [file:///C:/Users/maggie.mildenhall/Downloads/Safe-and-Strong-Victorian Gender Equality Strategy%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/maggie.mildenhall/Downloads/Safe-and-Strong-Victorian%20Gender%20Equality%20Strategy%20(1).pdf)

² State of Victoria (2019) Gender Equality Baseline Report. Accessed at <https://www.content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-12/319%20DPC%20Gender%20Equality%20Baseline%20Report%202019%20web%207.pdf>

leadership in action with the City of Greater Geelong's Gender Equity Framework³. It is through guidelines such as Local Government Victoria: Best Practice Guide for Gender Equality in Local Government (2018)⁴ and legislation such as the Gender Equality Bill (introduced to Parliament in November 2019)⁵, that the Victorian Government can continue to show leadership and create real change.

We also acknowledge achievements such as an increase in the representation of women in Cabinet, as public sector executives and on paid government boards, and practical responses such as free pads and tampons in all government schools⁶.

GSANZ works with some of the most vulnerable members of the Victorian community, so we are pleased to see the Government's recognition of the intersectionality in gender equality. The inclusion of six priority areas, namely: Aboriginal women, women with a disability, CALD women, women from low socioeconomic backgrounds, LGBTQI communities and the impact of gender at different stages of life (age), is a vital aspect of this work.

Gender-responsive budgeting

Gender-responsive budgeting is an acknowledgement that gender continues to be a primary predictor of disadvantage and divergent policy impacts. Australia has historically been a global leader in acknowledging this, and was the first nation to introduce a federal Women's Budget in 1985, a document that was produced for 30 years.

While a women's budget can be an important aspect of a gender-responsive budget (GRB), to be effective GRB should incorporate the entire life cycle of the budgeting and implementation process. GRB moves beyond setting aside funds for 'women's issues' and takes a more holistic look at how government policy and expenditure differentially impacts on citizens, with an acknowledgement that historically these processes favoured men. Table 1 is adapted from Oxfam Great Britain's Guide to Gender Responsive Budgeting (2018),⁷ and provides a guideline for the types of activities and inputs that are required across the budget lifecycle.

³ The City of Greater Geelong (2019) Ba-gurrk: A gender equity framework for the Greater Geelong region. Accessed at <https://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8d6ab9a70541377-ba-gurrkgenderequityframework2019electronic.pdf>

⁴ The State of Victoria (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning) (2018) Best practice guide for gender equity in local government. Accessed at https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0030/329277/Gender-Equity-in-Local-Government-Best-Practice-Guide.pdf

⁵ Gender Equality Bill (2019). Accessed at http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/PubPDocs.nsf/ee665e366dcb6cb0ca256da400837f6b/34511265071055e4ca2584be001620ab!OpenDocument

⁶ The State of Victoria (Department of Treasury and Finance) (2019) Gender Equality Budget Statement: Victorian Budget 19/20. Accessed at <https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/budgetfiles201920.budget.vic.gov.au/2019-20+State+Budget+-+Gender+Equality+Budget+Statement.pdf>

⁷ Stephenson, M. (2018). A Guide to Gender-Responsive Budgeting. Oxfam Great Britain. Access at <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620429/gt-guide-gender-responsive-budgeting-280218-en.pdf;jsessionid=452805C4122A3CE5301A09C13CBEB500?sequence=13>

Another important way to improve gender-responsive budgeting is to have more diverse representation in government. It is encouraging to see that the 2018 elections raised the number of women to 53, or 41.4 per cent, a significant increase from 2006, when there were 38 women (29.7 per cent of the total). Increasing female representation appears to impact on the types of issues that Parliaments debate.⁸⁹

Taken as a whole, women's lives are shaped differently to men's and this includes their working lives. Important differences include:

- More caring duties, particularly as the primary parent for infants and young children
- More household duties
- More experiences of domestic and family violence, sexual harassment and violence, and discrimination.

These differences have repercussions on a wide range of outcomes for women, including:

- Women have higher rates of low-paid, part-time, casual employment.
- Women have lower rates of Superannuation.
- Women have times in their lives when they are much more likely to be dependent on income support.
- Women are disproportionately impacted by the tax and transfer system, and this includes the need to access child support.
- Women are increasingly at risk of homelessness.

Additionally, when gender is overlaid with other identities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, CALDN, experiencing a disability, experiencing poor mental or physical health, having reduced educational attainment, and/or identifying as LGBTIQ+, their trajectory across the lifecycle tends to be poorer. This is not due to individual failings per se but rather the absence of appropriate and supportive policies and structures.

As a result, women's experience of the world needs to be considered when formulating policies and budgets, or assessing them for their effectiveness. This goes beyond "women's policies" and instead takes a holistic look at the system within which women are attempting to thrive and seeks to remove barriers.

⁸ When France instituted the French Parity Law in 2001, which encouraged political parties to make 50% of their candidates women; this increased female representation from 10% in 2000 to nearly 39% in 2017. Utilising a text analysis of legal amendments, Quentin Lippmann found that women are much more likely to propose amendments pertaining to gender equality and childhood, while men are more likely to propose amendments pertaining to defence and international relations. See Lippmann, Q. (2019). Do Parliamentary quotas influence legislation? Lessons from France. Power to Persuade, 10 April 2019. Access at <http://www.powertopersuade.org.au/blog/do-parliamentary-quotas-influence-legislation-lessons-from-france/10/4/2019-1?rq=france>

⁹ A review of research found that increasing female representation in Parliament led to a diversified legislative agenda, particularly regarding women and other vulnerable groups. O'Brien, D. Z. & Piscopo, J. M. (2018). The Impact of Women in Parliament. The Palgrave Handbook of Women's Political Rights, pp. 53-72. Access at https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/978-1-137-59074-9_4

We have been managing the Women's Policy Action Tank¹⁰ for the last 4 years, which places a gender lens on a wide range of policy. Authored by academics and subject matter experts, we have covered the main concerns often considered to be "women's issues," such as domestic and family violence, child care provision, issues pertaining to single parenting, and the gender pay gap. But we have also covered a suite of policies that are often considered to be gender neutral, including such things as mental health, heart disease, public transportation, income support, ageing, unemployment, casual labour, the criminal justice system, the aid budget, workplace promotions, housing, offshore detention, Welfare to Work policies, the Cashless Debit card, couch surfing, work hours, and Parliamentary representation. What this growing body of work indicates is that policy is not designed with women's specific needs in mind. When we have published pieces from the perspective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, recently-arrived women, or women with a disability, it is clear that their everyday experience of policy is seldom if ever considered.

Good Shepherd are not budget experts, but we do have some specific suggestions for how a gender frame could be better incorporated into the budgeting cycle.

Necessary inputs include:

- A human rights framework
- Gender-disaggregated data
- Time use survey (or similar) results
- Input from feminist policy experts (e.g., Good Shepherd, NFAW and ERA Australia)
- Input and advice from experts on gender-responsive budgeting (e.g., Miranda Stewart, Helen Hodgson, Janine Dixon, Per Capita, Grattan)
- Input from a citizen panel (lived experience). Panellists will need proper support, training and remuneration. They could be recruited through social service agencies with the aim of diversity.
- A particular focus on those at the margins, whose voices are often muted in the policy debate.

The key activity that must inform decisions pre-budget and determine effectiveness post-budget is to assess the impacts using a gender lens; are there differences in how a policy 'lands' for men and women? Such analyses must use gender-disaggregated data, keeping in mind the diverse ways that women's roles as carers and their over-representation in experiences of intimate partner violence and abuse profoundly impact their experience of the world. This should be conducted by the government but also, importantly, others who can access the data and conduct an independent analysis. These findings can then be used to improve processes going forward.

¹⁰ You can read more about the Women's Policy Action Tank here:

<http://www.powertopersuade.org.au/womenspolicy> And read all of our gender analysis pieces here:

<http://www.powertopersuade.org.au/womens-policy-action-tank-blog-posts>

Table 1: Activities and inputs associated with the budget cycle when implementing gender-responsive budgeting practices

Budget cycle	Preliminary activities	Inputs	Follow-up activities
Income projections	Assess & mitigate gendered impacts of revenue-raising policies, including taxation, user fees and charges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human rights framework Gender-disaggregated data Time use survey (or similar) results 	Analyse budgetary impacts for both revenue-raising and expenditure for effectiveness in promoting gender equity.
Prepare departmental spending proposals	Incorporate a human rights and intersectional lens. Analyse needs & priorities of women and men, girls & boys.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Input from feminist policy experts (e.g., GSANZ, NFAW, ERA Australia) 	Track identified outcomes and indicators. Publish results publicly for improved accountability.
Cabinet agrees overall budget	Conduct a gender-impact analysis of spending proposals by department. Cumulative impact assessment of comprehensive budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create, train and consult a citizen panel (lived experience) 	Cut all data by gender and publicly share so that impacts can be measured.
Parliament debates & agrees overall budget	Review of gender impact of the budget by a specialised Parliamentary committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Input from experts on GRB (e.g., Miranda Stewart, Helen Hodgson, Janine Dixon, Per Capita, Grattan) 	Invite input from experts, civil society, and lived experience panel to analyse and interpret budget outcomes.
Funds released to departments	Ensure funding to departments matches budget allocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Particular attention to the experiences of those at the margins 	Ensure lessons learned are incorporated into the next round of budgeting.
Budget enacted by departments	Publish gender responsive outcomes and indicators to enable monitoring		
Audit of budget spending & revenue raising	Review departmental spending to ensure it is in line with budget proposals. Audit of accounts.		
Monitoring outcomes	Assess if budget has met objectives for gender equality.		