

# Victorian Government's Gender Equality Strategy Consultation Paper

March 2016

## Introduction

### Our understanding of gender inequality

*“Gender inequality is a social condition characterised by unequal value afforded to men and women and an unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunity between them. It results from, or has historical roots in, laws or policies formally constraining the rights and opportunities of women.”* (OurWatch, 2015)

Progress has been made towards achieving equality between women and men in Victoria since the introduction of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic), supported by the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic), the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth), the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic) and the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*. Women appear to have all the same legal rights as men yet in very important ways women still do not have the same opportunities and experience significant inequality and disadvantage, particularly over the course of a lifetime.

Women still have limited choice when it comes to paid work, often because of their family and caring responsibilities. When women do work, they are typically paid less than men for work of equal or comparable value. This leads to women having less than half the superannuation that men receive when they retire. We also know that women are more likely to experience poverty than men and be far more reliant on the Age Pension.

Gender inequality costs us all. It costs women and men, their families, our communities and the Victorian economy.

Continuing gender inequality also threatens women’s basic right to feel safe and respected at work, in public, in places of study and, especially, at home. It is a disturbing reality that many Victorian women and girls experience harassment and violence during their lives.

### Key messages from City of Melbourne

The City of Melbourne firmly believes gender equality in Victoria can be achieved through:

- destabilising the current gender social norms and investing in new paradigms that promote equal and respectful relationships between men and women
- addressing everyday sexism
- achieving significant and sustainable increases in women in leadership
- increasing education and employment opportunities for women
- eliminating violence against women and their children.

Addressing these areas will also significantly improve women’s health and wellbeing.

Involving men in the development and implementation of gender equality policy and practice is critical to sustainable social, cultural and systemic change. Men should be engaged as allies, champions of change, active bystanders, role models and as carers. Gender equality is everyone’s business.

Achieving gender equality requires significant systemic and cultural change. This can only be possible if the Victorian Government commits to a long term plan (minimum ten years) and puts in place short and long term targets for women in leadership which are measured and reported on annually. It is imperative that this plan has visible leadership from people in positions of influence such as the Victorian Premier.

In developing the Victorian Gender Equality Strategy, careful consideration needs to be given to how gender and gender equality is defined. It is important that the strategy is inclusive of the needs of other identities (GLBTI) and non-heterosexual families/relationships to ensure all people are afforded the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society.

# CITY OF MELBOURNE SUBMISSION

We want a society where the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men, regardless of their gender identity, are equally valued and favoured.

The City of Melbourne has already identified significant opportunities for advancing gender equality in our municipality. Through our [We Need to Talk: Preventing Violence Against Women Strategy 2013-2016](#) we have delivered a number of activities aimed at addressing gender inequality in our workplace, in the community and at home, these have included:

1. Undertaking an independent gender audit of our existing workplace policies and procedures.
2. Developing new workplace policies, procedures and resources, including:
  - a. Gender Equity Policy and Gender Equity Audit Tool (for the organisation and its branches)
  - b. Preventing Violence Against Women Policy
  - c. Bystander Policy and Procedure and fact sheets
  - d. Responding to Family Violence Policy and Procedure.
3. Developing an organisational training program which covers topics such as:
  - a. Preventing violence against women: An overview
  - b. Responding to family violence at the City of Melbourne
  - c. Gender analysis and auditing
  - d. Unconscious bias
  - e. Bystander action in the workplace.
4. Undertaking gender and safety audits of a number of City of Melbourne facilities.
5. Incorporating a gender equity statement within our tenders and contracts.
6. Funding the delivery of respectful relationship education program in a number of local secondary schools.
7. Funding the delivery of Baby Makes Three program targeting new parents through our Maternal and Child Health Services.
8. Developing an information sheet on how to make a formal complaint against sexist and discriminatory advertising and media.

The City of Melbourne, through our CEO, is involved in the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's Male Champions of Change program. Key findings from the Male Champions of Change consultation identified five priority themes and actions: visible leadership, measurement and accountability, everyday sexism, flexible work, and; prevention of violence against women. Actions on these themes will be implemented in our workplace in 2016-17.

We welcome the opportunity to work closely with the Victorian Government and other stakeholders on advancing gender equality in Victoria.

## Question one

### How should Government partner with the community, corporate sector, non-profit sector and other stakeholders to advance gender equality?

The City of Melbourne believes the role of government is to set standards and develop pathways to facilitate gender equality in the community, corporate sector, not for profit sector and educational institutions. This could include:

- Identifying and promoting appropriate gender equitable role models and social norms for men and women, boys and girls.
- Funding programs that aim to address the inequalities that exist within key settings such as at work, home and sport.
- Establishing strategic and collaborative partnerships.
- Promoting good/best practice within the public sector but also with elected representatives.
- Implementing policy and legislative change where required.
- Connecting gender equality across different but related policy agendas, such as preventing violence against women, to gain maximum impact.
- Ensuring board compositions include 50 per cent women.
- Setting measures to demonstrate change.
- Setting measures to ensure accountability.
- Growing women's participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and employment.
- Utilising State significant projects and initiatives, in particular major infrastructure projects, to drive better gender equality outcomes in leadership, employment and education.

#### Recommendation 1.

**The Victorian Government establish formal partnerships with the community, corporate sector, not for profit sector and educational institutions to lead the development and commitment to a set of standards and the pathways to achieve gender equality.**

## Question two

### How do we address the pay and superannuation gap for women in Victoria?

The current 17.9 per cent pay and 19.3 per cent superannuation gap for women can be addressed by providing more opportunities for women to access better-paying jobs and to progress into management roles.

An often overlooked cause of the pay gap is pay secrecy. Pay secrecy is the practice of prohibiting employees from sharing pay information. Through pay secrecy, employers control pay information and prevent employees from discussing their pay rate with colleagues. Pay secrecy allows conscious or unconscious bias and stereotyping when making pay allocation decisions. Unequal access to information makes it difficult for women to detect when they are underpaid.

Reducing the pay and superannuation gap for women can be achieved by:

- Legislating income including superannuation payments to be paid during periods of leave for caring, with either children, elders or other family members.
- Encouraging shared parental leave/ carers leave.
- Mainstreaming flexible work opportunities.
- Educating companies on the importance of providing flexible work options.
- Educating "working" partners to fund "caring" partner's superannuation (provide a tax incentive to benefit this).
- Introducing legislation for equal pay rates between men and women carrying out the same role.
- Examining systemic advantage in organisations (i.e. the systems that inadvertently advantage men and disadvantage women such as opportunity for overtime or travel as part of career progression).
- Having publicly listed companies and potentially public sector organisations advertise their salary rates as they do their share prices.

- Encouraging publicly listed companies to have gender targets particularly for leadership and non traditional career areas such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).
- Developing a recruitment appeals process that is transparent and easier to navigate. So that if a decision looks to be unfairly made organisations will be held accountable.
- Offering mentoring and sponsorship for women on how to approach and get the most out of their careers including how to negotiate their pay level.
- Making organisations with low representation of women or women in leadership roles more attractive and suitable workplaces for women.
- Breaking down barriers in gender dominated professions e.g. child care, aged care, caring professions, construction workers, engineering service sectors, retail and hospitality by making them more family friendly and places women want to be.
- Requiring large and small organisations to conduct regular gender pay audits and analysis and continue development and promotion of tools developed by Workplace Gender Equality Agency to support the analysis.

## **Recommendation two**

**The Victorian Government advocate to the Australian Government for legislation which addresses equal pay for equal work and compulsory superannuation payment during periods of leave for caring (i.e. children, elderly parents and other family members).**

## **Recommendation three**

**The Victorian Government lead in establishing transparency in government and business work practices relating to gender targets, pay levels, allocation of tasks and work flexibility.**

## **Question three**

### **What is the role of men in a gender equality strategy?**

Involving men in gender equality policy and practice is critical to sustainable social, cultural and systemic change.

Gender equality cannot be achieved unless men and boys are convinced of the importance of equal opportunities for women and girls. This education needs to occur as part of a child's upbringing and reinforced in the educational setting, in the community and the workplace.

Men in their working and personal lives can lead by example as:

1. Champions of change - leaders in positions of power and influence, forming a high profile coalition aiming to increase gender equality in organisations and the community.
2. Allies and active bystanders – challenging sexism, sex discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace, at home and in the community.
3. Role models to other men and boys - sensitising men particularly in male-dominated institutions, industries and associations regarding their roles and responsibilities in the promotion of gender equality and the full enjoyment of all human rights by women.
4. Carers – sharing parental and caring duties, taking up parental/ carers leave and workplace flexibility to support their partner's career.

## **Recommendation four**

**The Victorian Government through its established partnerships with community, corporate and not for profit sectors and educational institutions, detail expectations of men's roles in supporting the move to gender equality.**

## Question four

### What needs to be done to promote women's health and wellbeing?

More needs to be done to address the social determinants of women's health and wellbeing. This includes improving women's access to economic resources, freedom from discrimination and violence, and social connectedness.

#### 1. Improving women's economic and civic participation:

- Increase women's capacity to participate in and influence the decisions that affect their lives through equal representation on boards that make decisions on their health, education and employment.
- Increase women's access to and participation in the workforce and economy by promoting and mainstreaming workplace flexibility.
- Increase women's participation in education, employment, and entrepreneurship through targeted funding, promotion, and sponsorship.
- Facilitate time for personal well-being by creating health and wellbeing programs and spaces in workplaces, for example. meditation rooms and coaching.
- Promote the financial cost of poor health and wellbeing and its impact on the economy to support the business case.

#### 2. Eliminating discrimination and violence:

- Improve safety and reduce or prevent violence against women in the home, workplace and in the community by developing media campaigns that raise awareness of the underlying causes of this violence.
- Fund the development of women's safety and relationship tools and APPs, for example. University of Melbourne's [iDECIDE: About my relationship](#) to enable women to carry out a self assessment of their safety and identify appropriate support services.
- Address sexist and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours in the workplace and in the community by developing public awareness campaigns and training programs to help raise awareness of:
  - a) the conscious and unconscious biases and discrimination that occurs in the workplace and in the community, and
  - b) its impact on workplace productivity, family and personal relationships and the community.

#### 3. Reducing social isolation:

- Establish on line and face to face support and social groups for women by women.
- Promote the range of local and statewide services available for women through the development of a statewide information hub or portal.
- Ensure culturally and linguistically diverse and disadvantaged women are provided with opportunities for connecting with others in their local community and feel welcome and included in mainstream services, community facilities and events.
- Increase women's access to and participation in community, cultural and recreational activities by providing such activities free or low cost, ensure they are held locally and on times and days which are suited to working and non-working women, and offer free childcare and or entertainment for children.

### Recommendation five

**The Victorian Government address the social determinants of women's health and wellbeing by improving women's access to economic and civic participation, eliminating discrimination and violence and reducing social isolation.**



## Question five

### What are the most urgent areas of gender inequality that Victoria should tackle first?

The City of Melbourne believes the Victorian Government should prioritise the following areas and issues:

1. Boost education and employment opportunities for women:
  - Closing the 17.9 per cent pay gap and the 19.3 per cent superannuation gap (refer to response to Question 2 on page 2).
  - Increase women's access to and participation in leadership roles by addressing conscious and unconscious bias in the workplace and recruiting champions of change.
  - Provide scholarships for women including careers advice in schools, career mapping, understanding of career progression, expectations.
2. Challenge the current cultural and social norms:
  - Destabilise the current social norms about gender and invest in new paradigms that promote equal and respectful relationships between men and women.
  - Apply gender equality modeling in early learning settings and in schools.
  - Adopt [Gender transformative policy and practice](#) in everything that we do or talk about.
3. Address everyday sexism:
  - Make everyday sexism unacceptable in every workplace by putting in place gender equality policy and practice and provide training to staff on [bystander action](#).
  - Provide education in schools about the effects of sexism and the importance of respectful relationships.
  - Prevent sexism and discrimination in media and advertising through the implementation and strict enforcement of broadcasting and advertising standards. All advertisements need to be approved by the relevant authority before they are allowed to be posted, broadcasted etc.
  - Improve the definition of what constitutes sexism, objectification and discrimination.
  - Ban the objectification of women in advertising, social media, video games, movies and pornography.
4. Eliminate violence against women and their children:
  - End family violence and its causes through primary prevention, improved interventions, support and education. Also refer to the upcoming findings from the [Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence](#).
  - Ensure high profile sporting role models whose behavior is sexist and or violent towards women, regardless of whether they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs or are in a public or private setting, are not pitied, glorified or excused for their poor behaviour by their peers, the media and community. Media and sporting clubs are well positioned to lead a zero tolerance approach.

## Recommendation six

**The Victorian Government develop strategies to increase education and employment opportunities for women, challenge the current cultural and social norms, address everyday sexism, and eliminate violence against women and their children.**

## Question six

### How do we ensure we meet our objectives over the long term?

The City of Melbourne believes the following measures would assist in meeting long term objectives:

- Visible leadership on the issue from people in positions of influence (i.e. Premier).
- Allocate appropriate funding and resources (10 year plan).
- Establish short and long term targets.
- Utilise the [World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index](#) to develop gender equality indicators which are measured over time. Potential indicators could include:
  - violence against women
  - women's access to and control over assets
  - women's political empowerment and voice at a local level

- time spent in unpaid domestic and care work
- workforce participation and workplace flexibility.
- Set targets annually for each indicator and build improvement methods to keep on track.
- Develop and utilise sex disaggregated data to measure differences within and between genders.
- Review literature from Scandinavian examples; case studies that demonstrate benefits of change, gender mainstreaming of services in Sweden, Vienna.

## **Recommendation seven**

**The Victorian Government establishes and monitors key performance indicators and reports on progress to community annually.**

## **Question seven**

### **How can we improve childcare access?**

Childcare in Victoria needs to be more affordable, accessible and of a high quality. It also needs to meet the needs of families now and into the future. This could include working with the Australian Government to:

- Increase the availability of child care for parents who work late at night and on weekends by providing at least one 24 hour child care in every municipality.
- Build child care into workplaces and other community settings.
- Provide better subsidies for low income households.
- Provide childcare at schools and universities.
- Provide flexible work options for both men and women to facilitate the sharing of caring duties.
- Improve choice, quality and reduce waiting time for care.
- Encourage workplaces to individually or collectively provide childcare arrangements for their workers.
- Provide guaranteed spots in childcare for vulnerable children and families and the unemployed returning to work.

## **Recommendation eight**

**The Victorian Government work with the Australian Government to improve choice, quality and reduce waiting time for child care.**

## **Recommendation nine**

**The Victorian Government work with the Australian Government to ensure vulnerable children and families and unemployed families returning to work are provided guaranteed spots in child care.**

## **Question eight**

### **How do we encourage women and girls to take up leadership roles?**

Encouragement for women and girls to take up leadership roles requires the Victorian Government and workplaces to invest in:

1. Education and training program to build skills, capability and confidence:
  - Women's sponsorships programs
  - Mentoring programs
  - Buddy programs
  - Leadership programs.
2. Support systems in the workplace
  - Workplaces need to provide appropriate supports systems and structures such as child care, work flexibility, self-care facilities, transparent and collaborative career mapping and family support such as after school programs.
  - Create short term trial opportunities to build confidence, such as internal transfers and secondments.



## 3. Role models

- Promote a variety of female leaders so girls have a variety of leadership styles and pathways to aspire to and emulate.
- Promote female role models early in life.
- Dismantle female stereotypes related to women's and girl's appearance and temperament through valuing women's and girl's competence, effort and spirit.

### **Recommendation ten**

**The Victorian Government, workplaces and educational institutions invest in education and training programs to build women's skills, capability and confidence; establishment of support systems in the workplace; and provide connections with positive role models.**

### **Question nine**

**How do we get women to participate in non-traditional careers, in particular STEM?**

Encouragement for more women to participate in non-traditional careers should include:

- Establish employment equity targets.
- Address sexism in male dominated workplaces.
- Provide appropriate support systems and structures including child care, work flexibility and special/carer leave provisions.
- Ensure women have access to appropriate facilities and safety equipment in the workplace.
- Make available buddy and mentoring programs.
- Proactive and targeted funding for women to participate in university courses.
- Ensure careers cultures change so women can fully participate.
- Encourage industry to work with schools to get more girls involved and interested.
- Improve careers advice in schools.
- Identify and promote female champions in STEM fields.

### **Recommendation eleven**

**The Victorian Government, through its partnerships with the corporate and not for profit sectors and educational institutions, develop a plan to establish employment equity targets in non-traditional careers. This should also apply to encouraging men in non-traditional careers.**

### **Question ten**

**How should we celebrate and recognise women's achievements?**

Women should be recognised, rewarded and celebrated in the same way as men. To achieve this, the Australian and Victorian Government should consider the following:

- Ensure women are equally represented and recognised in all major awards for Business / Entrepreneurs, Arts, Media, Technology, Science, Sports (e.g. Melbourne Awards, Australian of the year awards etc).
- Ensure women are represented in public art and monuments.
- Ensure women's sports events are afforded the same media coverage, sponsorship and pay as men.
- Ensure female entrepreneurs, musicians, sports stars, artists and scientists achievements etc are equally represented in school curriculum.

This can be facilitated through continued investment in bodies such as the Victorian Women's Trust, Queen Victoria Women's Centre and Victorian Women's Heritage Centre which aim to integrate and celebrate women's distinctive contribution to the culture and history of Victoria.

## **Recommendation twelve**

**The Victorian Government continue to invest in bodies such as the Victorian Women's Trust, Queen Victoria Women's Centre and Victorian Women's Heritage Centre to ensure the equal representation of women in school curricula, major awards, public art and monuments, and sporting events.**

## **Question eleven**

**What strategies do we need to ease the strain of balancing work and caring responsibilities?**

Balancing the demands of work and family life is a challenge for many Victorians, particularly parents with young children or for those who are caring for an elderly relative or friend.

Organisations that help employees achieve this balance are not only more attractive to potential employees, but find it easier to retain quality people especially following parental leave.

Importantly, the benefits of designing and building a family friendly workplace is felt overall through increased productivity and staff morale, an improvement in staff retention and reductions in absenteeism.

Government and businesses can effectively ease the strain of balancing work and caring responsibilities by:

- Encouraging workplaces to develop family friendly workplace care programs and services including care for new parents, care for kids, care for teens and care for seniors.
- Ensuring all staff, at all levels, for any reason have access to flexible working arrangements (e.g. work from home, working different times etc).
- Making child care more affordable, accessible and of high quality this could include child care being offered within workplaces, child care being available 24 hours, child care spots guaranteed for vulnerable children and families and those unemployed returning to work .
- Providing greater subsidies for elder care. Providing reasonable income for those balancing work including topping up superannuation income during periods of caring.
- Government and workplaces to make provisions for caring roles to be effectively shared between sexes.
- Encouraging businesses to become a breast feeding friendly accredited workplace by the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

## **Recommendation thirteen**

**The Victorian Government support workplaces to develop family friendly workplace care programs and services through the development of policies, guidelines and tools.**

## **Recommendation fourteen**

**The Victorian Government work with the Australian Government to increase subsidies for elder care.**

## Question twelve

### What is the role of business in addressing gender equality?

Businesses and workplaces are seen as an important setting for prevention work that seeks to promote a culture of respect, non-violence and gender equality.

To address cultural and systemic inequality in the workplace, businesses should consider:

- Demonstrating visible leadership and commitment to gender equality. It is important for gender equality to be driven from the top.
- Undertaking gender equity audits including accessing any existing gender pay gap and women in leadership roles.
- Putting in place formal strategies, policies and services to support employees with family, caring and breastfeeding responsibilities.
- Putting in place a gender equality policy and action plan (revised every three to five years).
- Building gender equality practices and behavioural expectations into codes of conduct and actively manage performance.
- Establishing an internal gender equality committee with board representation.
- Developing gender-responsive policies that encourage affirmative action and the participation of women in leadership.
- Ensuring transparency of remuneration of the board, CEO, management executive.
- Ensuring workplace Enterprise Bargaining Agreements have a family violence clause.
- Addressing conscious and unconscious bias when employing staff, promoting and rewarding staff, and allocating tasks and projects.
- Encouraging big businesses to share their experiences in small business forums.
- Developing gender equality toolkits for smaller business created by or distributed through member-based organisations like Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry to assist on how they can get involved.
- Establishing clear product labeling requirements, for example, Fair Trade labelling, for organisations which actively support gender equality.

## Recommendation fifteen

**The Victorian Government lead by example in developing its own gender equality workplace policy and practices.**

## Recommendation sixteen

**The Victorian Government support businesses to develop gender equality workplace policy and practices.**

## Question thirteen

### What are the barriers to creating more flexible workplaces?

There are a number of barriers to creating flexible workplaces, these include:

1. Work systems
  - costs associated with developing policies that involve payments such as child care subsidies and parental leave, investigating and implementing a new work life balance policy system, training costs associated with changing processes or culture, and cost of equipment and mobile devices to facilitate working from home.
2. Nature of work
  - not adjusted to work flexibility, some positions may be less amenable to work flexibility as they require a person/s to be physically present and interacting with clients/customers.
3. Service hours
  - may need to be adjusted to allow people to work after hours or on weekends when they can.

4. Attitudes of colleagues, managers, CEOs, boards, clients / customers
  - perceived loss of productivity and concerns about abuse of policies, difficulty with supervision, treating employees equally, fear of negative career consequences, fear of negative reaction from clients or customers, the culture that if you are not at work you are not working, managers still having full time expectations on those who work part time, staff and managers not applying for flexibility for fear of it being rejected or perceived as not being committed to their work, and gendered expectations of caring.

Many of these issues can be addressed through strong leadership and commitment from senior management, consultation and engagement with staff and managers as to the needs of each party, and government leadership and resources such as guidelines and toolkits to guide the development and implementation of new workplace policies and practices.

#### **Recommendation seventeen**

**The Victorian Government develop resources such as guidelines and toolkits to assist businesses to develop work flexibility policy and practices.**

#### **Question fourteen**

**How do we address inequality among the most diverse and disadvantaged groups of women?**

The City of Melbourne recognises that some women experience more disadvantage and discrimination than others, these include older women, women with a disability, women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds, newly arrived and refugee women, Indigenous women, women with different sexualities and sexual identities, girls in state care, women and girls living in remote or rural areas, women experiencing homelessness and or family violence.

To address inequality amongst these diverse and disadvantaged women, they need to be provided with timely, safe and free or low cost access to:

- education and training to develop skills including language and computer skills
- technology such as computers and mobile phones, to facilitate communication with local services, family, friends and special interest groups
- information on their legal rights and responsibilities, and the availability of legal aid
- mainstream and specialist health and welfare services and programs that meet their individual and cultural needs
- sponsorship and workforce development programs.

It is also critical that the enforcement of discrimination legislation is improved to ensure these women are not further victimised or disadvantaged.

#### **Recommendation eighteen**

**The Victorian Government put in place strategies to ensure all women have equitable opportunities to participate in employment.**

#### **Recommendation nineteen**

**The Victorian Government develop a media campaign to encourage women to report all discriminatory behavior and ensure they are supported in legal proceedings.**

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