Achieving Gender Equality in Victoria:

A Submission to the Victorian Government

Prepared by organisations in the Grampians region of Victoria; working in partnership, committed to gender equality.

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This submission was developed collaboratively by Women's Health Grampians, Central Highlands Integrated Family Violence Committee and key organisations and committees working in the Grampians region of Victoria. We recognise that gender inequality is a significant issue impacting not only on the lives of women and men, boys and girls, but also the social capital and productivity of our communities and have a shared commitment to achieving gender equality. As leading organisations in the region, we are committed to working in partnership across a diversity of sectors including government, community, health, media and private business, to address the structural and cultural barriers to gender equality. The leadership of the Victorian government in addressing this issue is welcomed. The following organisations have endorsed this submission:

Contents

Executive Summary

This submission supports the Victorian government's efforts to address gender inequality in Victoria. It incorporates the views of several organisations in the Grampians region that share a common vision for an equal society in which women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all facets of life, including economic participation and decision-making, and where the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured.

This submission highlights how structural and cultural barriers perpetuate gender inequality in society broadly and how inequality is amplified and experienced in rural and regional contexts, focussing in particular on the Grampians region. While several factors are highlighted that contribute to gender inequality, it's negative and even devastating consequences are exemplified through poor health outcomes, poverty and violence against women. The submission also outlines how the intersection of gender with other forms of discrimination and disadvantage further compounds inequality, for example for women and girls from migrant and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds and those who live with disabilities.

The submission identifies four key principles that should underpin a gender equality strategy:
- The adoption of a gender transformative approach(See Appendix A)
- A long term timeframe for action with adequate funding that transcends the electoral cycle
- Robust and comprehensive data collection and accountability measures to inform evidence based decision making
- Collaboration and an holistic approach

We propose three key areas of focus for Victorian Government activities:
- The application of a whole of government approach, leading advocacy and action across all tiers of government.
- Strong public leadership
- A balanced, informed and appropriate rural and regional focus

It is our belief that gender inequality is a whole of government, whole of community issue and that a strategic and systematic approach is required in order to achieve sustainable and meaningful change. While leadership and policy messages should be consistent and unwavering, strategies and approaches to address gender inequality should be flexible and locally appropriate and responsive. We believe that for a strategy to have any chance of success, men and boys of all ages must be engaged, included and accountable for leading on this issue in an informed and genuine way.

We believe it is now time to move beyond multiple consultations on this and related issues towards taking real action. Significant progress has been in raising community awareness of the effects and impacts of gender inequality, most recently through the Family Violence Royal Commission. This is to be welcomed and applauded, and we see the Victorian Gender Equality Strategy providing leadership in taking really steps in delivering meaningful social change and providing tangible benefits and outcomes not just for Victorians but for all Australians and being showcased throughout the world.

Recommendations

The Victorian Government's Gender Equality Strategy should:

1. *Overarching Issues*
   - In terms of approaches and resourcing, include recognition that rurality compounds the negative impacts of gender inequality
   - Recognise that Intersectionality is a key component to improving gender equality and equality overall and should be considered when developing a comprehensive, inclusive and responsive strategic approach to gender equality.

2. *Underpinning Principles*
   - Be underpinned by a gender transformative approach that actively reshapes the structures and cultural norms that cause gender based inequality
   - Endeavour to include all political parties and be appropriately framed and adequately resourced to ensure a long term approach
   - Ensure that all data collected and disseminated should be gendered and gathered in a consistent and timely manner. Regional level data measuring systems level change should be made available
   - Support the collection of data relating to the experience of immigrant and refugee women and knowledge on effective culturally appropriate strategies to address inequality
   - Ensure that consultation processes are inclusive and facilitate input and influence from diverse groups across our population
   - Focus on all facets of life: economic, social, political and cultural

3. *Key Areas of Focus*
   - Ensure the public service is enabled to be perceived as a leader in workplace gender equality
   - Ensure that a gender analysis is applied across all areas of government policy and program development and gender responsive budgeting practices are introduced
   - Include initiatives relating to the achievement of gender equity via structural incentives such as legislation, regulation, accreditation and/or quotas. Accreditation models that support gender equity initiatives in workplaces should particularly be explored.
   - Should adopt the use of evidenced public awareness strategies to further progress public conversation, such as the use of influential leaders, male champions and placing strong value and profile on the role of the sex discrimination commissioner
   - Should ensure that government provides consistent leadership at the national level, utilising mechanisms such as COAG
   - Should include a balanced and appropriate rural and regional focus and consider leveraging existing regional collaborations and partnerships to embed principles, practices and leadership strategies
   - Provide for sufficient long term funding and resourcing should be provided to enable the delivery of evidenced systems based programs in a range of settings.

Section 1: Overarching Issues

There is no doubt that in Australia, despite some progress in specific areas, additional effort is required to close the gender equality gap. The barriers to equality go across multiple levels: structural, institutional, cultural and individual. In fact, gender inequality is so prevalent in the social norms of our society that it can be difficult to identify.
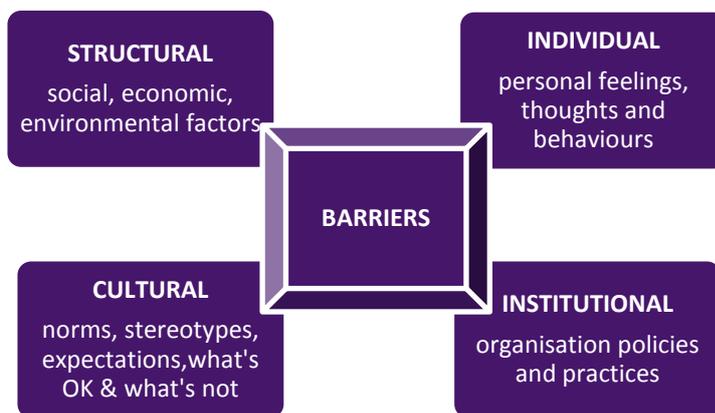
STRUCTURAL
social, economic, environmental factors

INDIVIDUAL
personal feelings, thoughts and behaviours

BARRIERS

CULTURAL
norms, stereotypes, expectations,what's OK & what's not

INSTITUTIONAL
organisation policies and practices

Figure 1 Adapted from: *Bridging the Gap, a health inequalities learning resource, NHS education for Scotland* viewed on *17 February 2016 from http://www.bridgingthegap.scot.nhs.uk/discrimination-and-barriers-to-equality/barriers-to-equality.aspx*

Structural barriers affect girls and women across the life course. This is apparent through limited access to certain streams of tertiary and further education and a lack of encouragement, processes or structures for women and girls to enrol in traditionally held male positions, areas of work, or male dominated courses. It is compounded by a lack of appropriate training on gender equity and equality issues embedded into tertiary course curricula. Inadequate access to childcare and reproductive health services limit women's choices regarding work, social/civic and economic participation and increase the inequality gap. Older women receive significantly less retirement payouts making them more dependent on the Age Pension and more likely to experience poverty in older age which limits their participation in community life.

Gender disparities are stark in the following areas:

Salaries

Average weekly earnings for Australian

Women $1,307.40

Men $1,591.60

Australian women have to work an extra 64 days a year to earn the same pay as men for doing the same work (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2015)

Carers

Women account for 92% of primary carers for children with disabilities, 70% of primary carers for parents and 52% of primary carers for partners (ABS, 2008)

However, it is the impact of **culture** and our gendered norms that compounds these structural inequalities. Gender norms refer to gender stereotypes and attitudes that construct masculinity, femininity and gender differences. Uneven caring responsibilities, for example, where caring is associated with femininity and an expectation that women should be the primary caregiver, compound unequal access to resources and economic participation. Likewise, where leadership is seen as masculine, women's access to leadership roles is limited. So while improving access to services, or access to superannuation, or improving workplace flexibility are important to improving gender equality, it is essential that a gender equality strategy focus very deeply, targeting **cultural level change.** This means addressing the very beliefs and attitudes that we, as a society, hold regarding what is normal for men and women (gendered norms) and the way we value work and civic participation. It is everyday sexism and discrimination in attitudes and language that perpetuate these gender inequalities.

1.1 Gender inequality in rural Victoria

Several of these issues are amplified as barriers for women in rural Victoria. Rural women face particular circumstances that can compound their disadvantage, discrimination and experiences of gender inequalities.

These include such challenges as:

- Poor or limited **access to services** including legal, transport, housing and healthcare (Wendt, et al., 2015)
- Reduced **employment** options (ABS, 2015)
- Limited access to and high cost of **childcare** options (Campo & Tayton, 2015)
- High costs of fuel, fresh food, utilities, dental and medical services (McLachlan, et al., 2013)
- **Conservative patriarchal values** perpetuating rigid gender stereotypes reinforced by long held traditions that see farming property ownership and inheritance passed through generations of sons
- Practices that make **financial independence** difficult, with women's finances sometimes tied to large assets (e.g., farming properties) that they cannot easily access or control independently (ALSWH, 2011; Campo & Tayton, 2015)
- Increased **risk of disaster** such as flood/bushfire, which has been linked to increased reliance on traditional gender roles and stereotypes (at times of crisis), and increased incidents of family and domestic violence (Parkinson & Zara, 2013)
- **Physical and social isolation** making access to technology, information and challenging gender inequality more difficult (Campo & Tayton, 2015)
- **Visibility and invisibility** – being known in smaller communities can make confidentiality tenuous. For women from CALD communities, this can be compounded through a lack of and by different looks and practices that make them highly visible (George & Harris, 2014)
- **Poor community understanding** of the prevalence of gender inequality and the outcomes that result for women, men and the community and the importance and nature of gender transformative behaviours.

1.2 Grampians Region

The Grampians region covers almost 49,000km² and has a population of 227,000. It includes areas of significant disadvantage and declining population. The western part of the region is large, sparsely populated and has limited public transport options and other services.

Victoria

Safe, reliable and affordable transport: Women experience above the state average transport limitations in 7 out of 10 Grampians Local Government Area's (LGA's) (Community Indicators Victoria, 2011).

Transport limitations reported	Grampians	Victoria
Males % adult population	17.6	19.4
Females % adult population	22.3	21.2

Educational attainment contributes to economic security, social cohesiveness and individual health and wellbeing. All but 2 of Metropolitan LGA's are above state average for women's educational attainment (year 12 or equivalent) whilst in the Grampians region only 2 LGA's reached the state average (ABS, 2011).
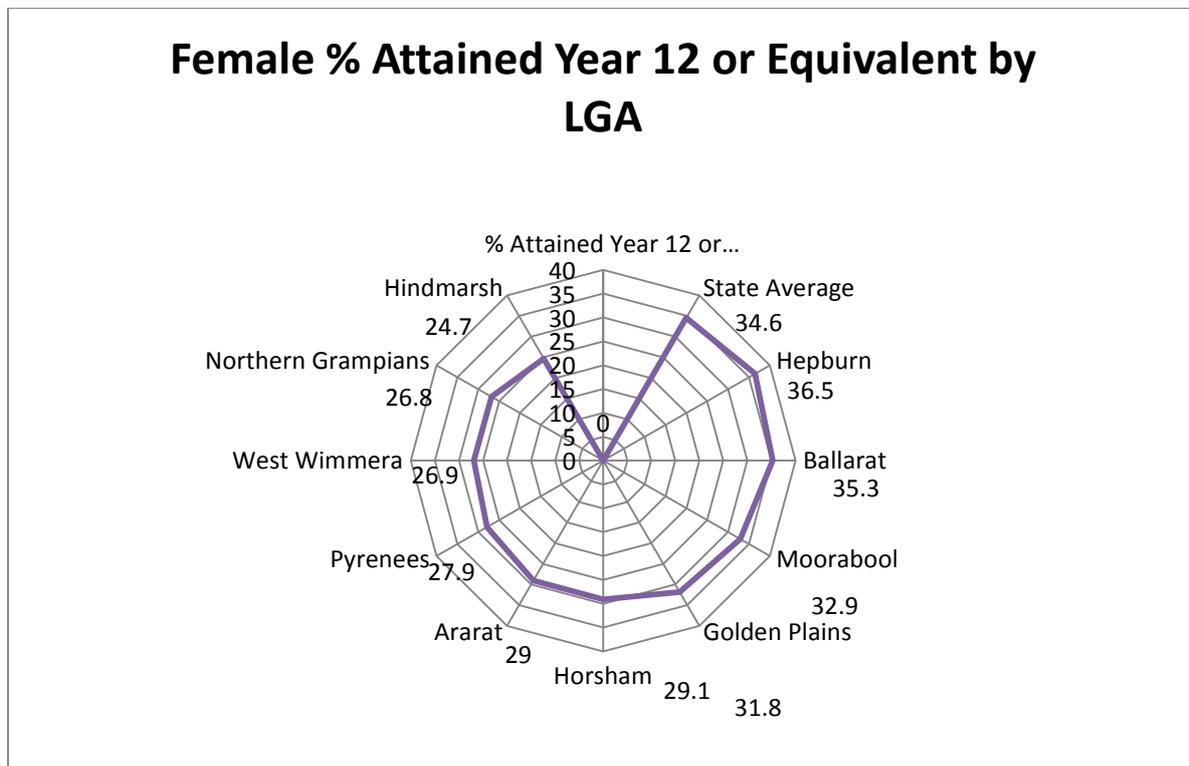
Employment: In every Grampians LGA women are more than 15% below the state average for full time work participation and 15% above the state average for part-time work participation (ABS, 2011).

Women's Participation and leadership:
Local government participation provides a good example of an area where, while progress has been achieved, rurality appears to impact on women's engagement in leadership roles. In Victoria in 2012, 34% of councillors elected were female, the highest number to date. For the first time, every council had a female councillor. However out of 79 Victorian councils, 10 (13%) have only one female councillor and five of these councils (50%) are in the Grampians region. (VGLA, 2014).

While these indicators illustrate that gender inequality can be more pronounced in rural areas, outcomes known to be driven by gender inequality also highlight its negative impact in rural areas. The consequences are demonstrated in the following examples.

1.2.1 Violence against women

It is well documented that gender inequality is a key driver of violence against women (Our Watch, ANROWS, VicHealth, 2015) and that women living in regional, and even more so rural areas, are at an increased risk of family and domestic violence (George & Harris, 2014). Local data supports this. The Grampians region has particular areas of high risk when compared to state averages. In Ballarat, for example, the rate of family violence reported to police is 50% higher than the state rate, in Ararat it is 70% higher and in Horsham it is more than double the state rate (Crime Statistics Agency, 2015).

Rural women and children in the **Grampians region** are at an **increased risk** of family violence
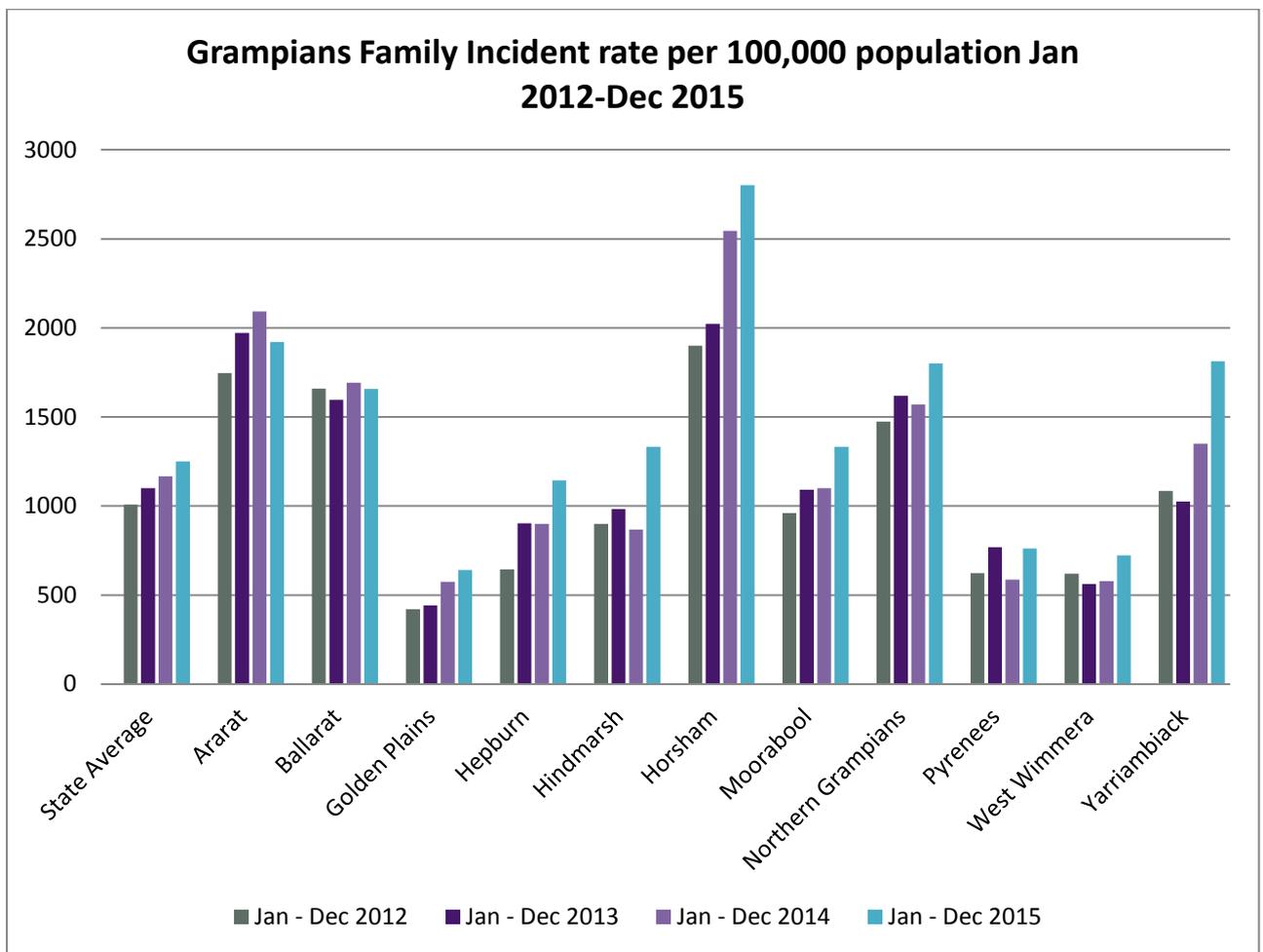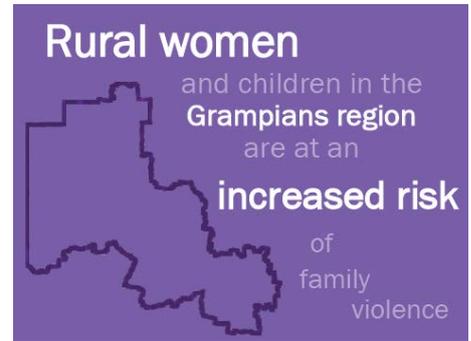
Family incident rate per 100,000 population January 2012 to December 2015, Crime Statistics Agency Vic

1.2.2 Poor access to reproductive services

Women are disproportionately affected by the consequences of poor access to fertility control and unplanned pregnancy, are particularly vulnerable to social norms of early school leaving and early child bearing, and have traditionally had poor political access to decisions regarding public resources. A 2015 mapping report by WHG found that women in the Grampians have limited options regarding unplanned pregnancy, and significantly less local access than their metropolitan counterparts. This includes poor access to emergency contraception, options counselling and abortion. Across the Grampians region birth rates are higher than the state average. As in all rural areas, the rate of births for females aged 15-19 years in the Grampians is consistently higher than the rate across the state. Motherhood, without resources to support caring arrangements, can perpetuate inequality with reduced access to education and employment opportunities and increased risk of poverty. The consequences of continuing an unwanted pregnancy because of poor access to services tends to disproportionately impact on women, with long term consequences that perpetuate inequality.

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Recommendation 1

The Vic Gender Equality Strategy must include recognition in terms of approaches and resourcing that rurality compounds the negative impacts of gender inequality

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1.3 Intersectionality

> Addressing the impact of intersectionality is crucial to improving gender equality and equality more broadly.
> To focus only on gender is to miss the important goal of all women experiencing equality.

For many women, the impact of gender inequality is compounded by the way that gender-based discrimination interacts with other experiences of inequality. This interaction, in which one form of inequality impacts on another, termed **'intersectionality',** refers to social and structural inequalities, such as class, race, sexuality, disability and residency status. Essentially this means that many women are subjected to multiple, simultaneous forms of discrimination or oppression, including violence, the impact of which can be exacerbated by the challenges of living in rural and regional areas. This is illustrated in the following examples:

Aboriginal women: The multiple layers of discrimination that Aboriginal women experience on the basis of race and gender is compounded by rurality. Indigenous women are 35 times more likely to be hospitalised to family violence than non-Aboriginal women and are almost 10 times more likely to die from assault than non-Aboriginal women. While there is no specific data aboriginal status and local family violence statistics, some areas have higher population rates. In the Grampians 6 out of 11 LGA's have a higher than state population of Aboriginal women with Hindmarsh at 1.7% (8th highest LGA in Victoria) (ABS, 2011).

Culturally and linguistically diverse: Women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds living in non-urban communities face further barriers. Frequently they do not have access to the education and employment opportunities that are offered to males and are isolated through lack of traditional support networks such as extended family and cultural networks. They experience barriers to accessing services due to a lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity among service providers, language barriers, cultural isolation, xenophobic attitudes and fears about residency/visas (IWDVS, 2006; Wendt, et al., 2015).

Disabilities: Women with disabilities are doubly disadvantaged and isolated in regional, rural and remote locations with limited access to transportation and specialist services (Wendt, et al., 2015) In the Grampians region women and girls with disabilities are twice as likely to experience violence as those without. (Parlimentary Library, 2014).

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Recommendation 2:

Intersectionality should be considered when developing a comprehensive, inclusive and responsive strategic approach to gender equality.

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Section 2: Underpinning Principles

Strategies and actions to address cultural and structural barriers must be underpinned by a series of key principles and critical elements. This includes the explicit articulation of the key elements underpinning gender necessary to appropriately understand, contextualise, guide and shape the Gender Strategy. These sit across all levels – individual, family, community and society/ social constructs and structures and include:

- the needs and interests of women and men
- access to and control of resources
- the division of labour:
  - ➢ production
  - ➢ reproduction

In developing a Gender Strategy, the needs and interests of women, men and diverse genders must be considered along with their ability to access, or use, appropriate resources. Men must be engaged in leadership on gender equality issues with appropriate accountability mechanisms in place – this is a whole of community issue affecting all genders.

Having 'control' means having the ability to determine who gets to use a resource and the division of labour refers to the allocation of particular tasks to a particular gender. As human beings, we typically give our labour to:

- Production: producing goods and services for selling with the expectation of receiving an income.
- Reproduction: this is more than having children; reproductive work includes household activities, for example, housekeeping and getting household supplies, caring for children, the elderly and others.

Women typically do most of the reproduction tasks, which, because they are unpaid, are seen as having less value, so what women do is undervalued resulting in the following 'chain':

  - ➢ women get fewer resources and benefits to perform these tasks…….**so**

    - ➢ hierarchies are created based on gender relations (the ways in which a culture or society prescribes rights, roles, responsibilities, and identities of women and men in relation to one another)……. **so**

      - ➢ the relationship between men and women becomes a power relationship resulting in gender subordination with men usually in a position of 'power over', and therefore control over women, and women in a position of subordination to men.

Gender inequality is the outcome of this chain.

The clear articulation of the above elements provides the platform for underpinning the Strategy by the following four key principles:

1. adopting a gender transformative approach
2. long term timeframe with adequate funding (therefore also bi-partisan)
3. measurement and accountability (to inform evidence based decisions)
4. collaboration and an holistic approach

2.1 Adopting a gender transformative approach

Gender transformative means actively addressing
the causes of gender-based inequality.
It is not just about trying to fit women into a world shaped to fit men, but reshaping
the structural fabric, rules, practices and norms to fit both women and men.

Despite the profound impacts of gender inequality over the life course, government policy and programs have tended to take a 'gender-blind' approach, assuming that women's experiences are the same as men's, and that equality is about ensuring differences are NOT recognised. As a result, strategies, interventions and services across government departments have not been developed using a gendered lens, and opportunities to improve outcomes for women and girls have been missed, reinforcing gender inequality.

The crucial element required to improve gender equality is to have an overt commitment to gender transformative policy, planning and programs. 'For instance, a policy that seeks to promote women into leadership roles but does not look at how the workforce systems support women in terms working arrangements that support work/life balance, return to work policies and so on, is flawed. However, it is equally flawed if it does not consider how to encourage male employees to utilise these same policies. It is important to not just create policy, but address the cultural and social expectations associated with policy implementation. While a workplace may have paid parental leave for both men and women, if the culture is such that taking it means you are perceived as not being ambitious, or committed to the job, it will fail to improve gender equality. Gender transformative policy should be front and centre in this debate. (See Appendix A for more information on gender transformative policy.)

> ### Recommendation 3
> The gender equality strategy must be underpinned by a gender transformative approach that actively reshapes the structures and cultural norms that cause gender based inequality

2.2 Long term timeframe with adequate funding

It is crucial that the strategy and associated interventions are based on a timeframe that acknowledges the level of cultural change required. This is long term work. It is equally important that the strategy be resourced adequately to enable success. In line with both of these fundamental requirements, a bi-partisan commitment to the strategy should be sought.

> ### Recommendation 4
> The Strategy should be bipartisan and be appropriately framed and adequately resourced
> to ensure a long term approach

2.3 Data: For Planning, Measurement and Accountability

The collection, availability and use of gendered data, must be a priority. Not just to inform planning and evidence based decisions but to measure success, with ongoing accountability to targets.

Sex-disaggregated data is any data that has been defined by biological sex, female or male or gender diverse. Sex-disaggregated data therefore can present information separately for women and men, girls and boys to reflect the different roles and general conditions of women and men in all areas of society. Collecting data at this basic level then allows for more complex analysis of gender and the interplay between other diversifying factors and informs evidence based decision making and planning.

The inclusion of sex-disaggregated data is however only one part to the solution. Firstly sex-disaggregated data needs to be consistently collected. Commonly, as gender is seen to be an equal factor in many areas of public planning, it is not always collected. In fact, in the past, at times policies affecting women are based solely on data about men. Targets should be set and monitored to ensure the government remains accountable, and ongoing monitoring continues to inform future success. Clear, leading indicators such as the National Community Attitudes Survey (NCAS), measuring community attitudes around violence against women should be continued.

Regional services also need better access to data that can support the use of resources and assist in monitoring the impact of work at the systems level. The NCAS, for example, could be modified to collect enough data to also provide regional level data. This level of data is important to be able to measure whether indeed community attitudes in each region are changing.

Data and knowledge about the particular challenges for immigrant and refugee women is scant and inconclusive, both generally and in rural and regional areas in particular. Many studies are conducted in English or European languages (in which immigrant women may not have proficiency), and surveys often report that immigrant and refugee women are under-represented (Wendt, et al., 2015; The ASPIRE Project).

Recommendation 5

All data collected and disseminated should be gendered and gathered in a consistent and timely manner. Regional level data measuring systems level change should be made available

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Recommendation 6

Data relating to the experience of immigrant and refugee women and knowledge on effective culturally appropriate strategies to address inequality should be supported

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2.4 Collaboration and an holistic approach

A gender equality strategy impacts on everyone across personal and professional spheres and learning and experiences that relate across all facets of life should be reflected in the strategy. A collaborative approach in terms of consultation and development, along with implementation is required. Consultations should recognise that women have not had sufficient opportunities to be heard and contribute to policy development. Likewise, women and men from diverse and minority backgrounds should be given a voice. It is important that the processes associated with the strategy reflect the commitment to gender equality.

The strategy must be holistic and avoid small piecemeal improvements in only a few areas that will not be sufficient to truly impact on equality overall.

Recommendation 7

Consultation processes should be inclusive and facilitate input and influence from diverse groups across our population

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Recommendation 8

The Strategy should focus on all facets of life, economic, social, political and cultural

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Section 3: Key areas of Focus

There are 3 key areas where the Victorian Government should focus activities:
1.   Applying a whole of government approach
2.   Providing public leadership
3.   Ensuring an appropriate rural and regional focus

3.1 Applying a whole of government approach

A whole of government approach implies focussing effort across all government departments but, as the key leader and administrator of the Victorian Gender Equality Strategy, government must be seen as an organisation and workforce in itself. In order to lead effectively, the focus must be internal as well as external. Accordingly, the scope of the gender strategy should:

- be across all government policy and program development, internally and externally
- be embedded into service delivery models and approaches
- contain indicators to measure outcomes and gaps (rather than limited to outputs) and include built- in mechanisms for sex disaggregated monitoring and evaluation activities that are able to contribute to, align with, or that make use of, existing global gender gap and equality indexes.

Recommendation 9

The Strategy should ensure the public service is enabled to be perceived as a leader in workplace gender equality

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3.1.1   External – the work of government

Much like the concept of *Health in All Policies,* where a health lens is applied to all policies across all areas of government, policies, programs and budgets should be required to apply a gender analyses. This should include the use of sex disaggregated data (see above), gender impact assessments and gender audits.

For example the government has been undertaking a review of its Palliative Care policy. While 'dying at home' may be highly valued by the community, the impact of care in the home, which primarily impacts on women, should be analysed. Strategies to support 'dying at home' should be developed that also seek to ensure gender inequalities are not perpetuated. Focusing only at the 'accessing work' end will not, on its own, close the gender gap.

Similarly in planning for new or refurbishing infrastructure, a gender audit applied to building and construction activities would help identify barriers to female participation.

Unless gender impact assessments are applied to all policy development, gains in one area will only mean losses in another. Such processes are vital to a holistic approach, where gender equality is considered across all policy and portfolio areas including health, economics, infrastructure, education, and so on. To ignore gender in the design of policies, programs and structures (assumed to be gender neutral) actually reinforces and perpetuates norms and attitudes that reinforce gender inequality (WHO, 2015).
Best practice approaches to inclusive policy planning and development, in line with a transformative approach, take the following considerations into account:
1.   Have we used sex-disaggregated data to reflect the different needs and experiences of women and men?
2.   Have we consulted with women, including women from diverse groups?

3. Does our policy challenge gender stereotypes and inequities that create different opportunities and outcomes for women and men
4. Does the policy have a gender equity statement and gender responsive budget allowing for long term accountability and change?

Budget decision making and prioritising should be gender responsive in all tiers of government. As Rhonda Sharp points out 'Many gender equality initiatives are never implemented because they do not form part of the budgetary decision making processes of government' (Sharp & Broomhill, 2013). Gender responsive budgeting allows for long term, sustainable and transparent allocation of funds to support gender transformative policy. Gender responsive budgeting can be supported by a gender budget statement released at the same time or shortly after the budget outlining the impact of the annual budget on gender equality. (Sharp & Broomhill, 2013). Alarmingly, although the practice for thirty years for state and federal governments was to release a Women's Budget Statement as one element of the Budget Papers, this practice ceased in 2014 without explanation (NFWA, 2014). This submission supports gender responsive budgeting to enable and secure gender transformative policy.

Likewise, to ensure meaningful adoption of a gender transformative approach, adequate education for policy makers at all levels of government should be provided.
See Appendix B *Belgian Case Study*

Recommendation 10

A gender analysis should be applied across all areas of government policy and program development and gender responsive budgeting practices be introduced

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3.1.2 External – using tools of governance

There is no doubt that increasing incentives and regulation and introducing targets and quotas to support social change measures would positively complement and reinforce gender equality initiatives. Providing incentives for gendered programs and budgeting is a key step towards shifting from complacency to action. These should straddle both the public and private domain.

This could take the form of requiring workplaces to be accredited in gender equity or including requirements from workplaces under their Occupational Health and Safety Program. The proposed use of regulation, targets or quotas in regards to gender equality in public sector bodies is welcomed and should be extended. Regulation to shift the media's use of images to ensure they are more supportive of gender equality; valuing men and women equally and demonstrating respectful attitudes to both genders, would also support shifts in attitudes about women, and gender equality.

Increasing the representation of women in leadership positions will help challenge and shift workplace cultures and provide women with a greater capacity to participate in the development and implementation of legislation, policies and services that affect the lives of everyone. Women's voices and perspectives need to be sought and respected in order to ensure that policy, planning and decision-making best reflects the diversity of the community. Without processes that are specifically designed to increase women's involvement in decision-making, women will continue to be excluded from leadership positions in the community, government and business sectors.

> **Recommendation 11**
>
> The Strategy should include initiatives relating to the achievement of gender equity via structural incentives such as legislation, regulation, accreditation and/or quotas. Accreditation models that support gender equity initiatives in workplaces should particularly be explored.

3.2 Providing public leadership

3.2.1 Supporting public conversation/community awareness raising

Public conversation is a crucial element in facilitating the social change required to achieve gender equality. In recent years in Victoria, public debate on issues related to gender equality, including violence against women and family violence, diversity and discrimination has increased community awareness dramatically on the relevance of gender equality and the pervasiveness of gender inequality. Some of the drivers for this attention include government initiatives such as the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence, the appointment of Rosie Batty as 2015 Australian of the Year, and highlighting of the need for and value of gender equality by national and state leaders.

Recent evaluation data from the Women's Health Grampians Act@Work program highlighted the influence of high profile leaders in generating meaningful conversations in workplaces. These leaders include sporting, business and media identities (See Appendix C, *Act@Work Evaluation Summary*).

Evidence indicates the strong impact and value of men's role as champions of gender equality and their influence particularly on other men (see http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/projects/male-champions-change).

Community awareness raising should focus on the fact that not only is equality a fundamental human right but gender equality brings value and benefit for men and for the whole community. Stereotypes and expectations of men must also be challenged. For example, men's ambition should not be negated if they take parental leave or choose flexible working hours, nor should men be considered 'less masculine' by not conforming to male gender stereotypes and ideals around physique, sexual prowess, being the family provider and protector, interest in certain sports and so on. This narrative around equality also obviously links strongly to approaches to LGBTI inclusivity.

> **Recommendation 12**
>
> The strategy should adopt the use of evidenced public awareness strategies to further progress public conversation, such as the use of influential leaders, male champions and placing strong value and profile on the role of the sex discrimination commissioner

3.2.2 Advocacy at the National level

The Victorian government has a critical role to play in terms of national advocacy on gender equality with the Federal Government including speaking into the COAG Agenda. The opportunity exists for Victoria to continue to lead the way in terms of developing courageous and innovative strategies and setting strong precedents for work in this area, not just at a national but also at an international level.

The development of robust data analysis and indicators by Victoria would allow Australia to become subject to international comparison and to demonstrate progress in this area.

> **Recommendation 13**
>
> The strategy should ensure that government provides consistent leadership at the national level, utilising mechanisms such as COAG

3.3 Ensuring an appropriate rural and regional focus

As discussed in Section 1, rural women are at an increased disadvantage in the context of gender equality. It is crucial that resources be targeted accordingly to rural areas.

3.3.1 Supporting 'whole of community' and local approaches

It is important to acknowledge that rural communities already work together on many issues, but especially social issues. This approach is based on the premise that gender equality is a shared societal responsibility and in order to be effective and meaningful must be multi-level, multi-sectoral and integrated.

Long standing partnerships form the basis of how communities work together. Local and regional knowledge is essential in ensuring successful community led approaches based on universal principles which are tailored to specific areas and populations. These should build on pre-existing networks and communities of interest and engage local leaders and influencers from a range of sectors, including community, health, education, business, sport and agriculture, essentially engaging mainstream partners. For example, existing successful multi-sectoral platforms, such as Children and Youth Area Partnerships could be additionally resourced to support implementation of gender transformative strategies.

Funding for local and state-wide organisations and committees that advocate for change regarding gender equality and seek community partnerships to create change is essential. This includes Women's Health Services, Community Health, Family Violence response services, Family Violence Committees etc. Women's Health Services have particular expertise in gender equality and should be supported in their central role of supporting all others.

Supporting local government to lead in gender equality, not just as a community leader, but also as a significant employer and as the key organisation responsible for local infrastructure, economic and community development is a key cornerstone to gender equality in rural areas. Local councils should be

supported with additional resources and the coordination of centralised evidence –based frameworks and tools, alongside the provision of incentives to meet targets.

Current resourcing for advocacy and change agents is inadequate. Increased funding and the model of funding provision should reflect the level of change required and the long term nature of this type of change. A long term program of funding to support evidence informed, settings based, systems level programs to be delivered at local and regional levels is required.

Recommendation 14
The strategy should include a balanced and appropriate rural and regional focus and consider leveraging existing regional collaborations and partnerships to embed principles, practices and leadership strategies

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Recommendation 15
Sufficient long term funding and resourcing should be provided to enable the delivery of evidenced systems based programs in a range of settings

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Appendix A

Apply a gender transformative approach to Policy

There are many factors that need to be included in order for a policy to be viewed as transformative. These factors are however not likely to impact a policy fully unless a solid foundation is laid down from the onset. These foundations include an appropriate level of gender knowledge focussed around a social determinants of health approach (Rooney, 2014). The foundation of diversity, not only between genders but within genders is also crucial to this approach.

A gender transformative approach is the end goal on a continuum:

1. Gender unequal: Gender inequalities are reinforced through unbalanced norms, roles or relations of men and women in policy. This leads to one gender having more rights and opportunities than the other.
2. Gender blind: When policy ignores gendered differences reinforcing gender-based discrimination. The differences in opportunities and the allocation of resources are ignored.
3. Gender sensitive: Policy that indicates gender awareness (e.g. sex-disaggregated data) with no specific actions taken.
4. Gender specific: Policy where men's and women's roles, norms and responsibilities and these differences are taken into account with specific actions.
5. Gender transformative: Actively addresses the causes of gender-based inequality. This type of policy will promote gender equality whilst fostering progressive changes in power relationships between men and women (World Health Organization, 2011a)

Gender transformative policy shouldn't be an unattainable feat that requires an unsustainable effort on the part of a few organisations. It's just good policy, for the communities that policy governs and for *everyone* in that community (Rooney, 2014). It takes time, but the policy changes achieved, not only affect a large proportion of the population but show long term sustainability (Greene & Levack, 2010). Without analysing the representations of gender in policy, many issues will continue to go unaddressed for both men and women.

Appendix B

Case Study: Summary of the Belgian model

In 2007, the federal government of Belgium introduced a law (the Law of 12 January 2007, known as the 'mainstreaming law') that made gender mainstreaming a legal requirement for all parts of the Belgian government (ministers and administrators) and established an infrastructure to support its implementation.

At a political level, the law requires that:
* at the beginning of each term, the government sets strategic objectives in line with the Beijing Platform of Action (United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995), which articulate how it will integrate gender into all policies, measures and actions it takes;
* each Minister states in her/his annual policy statement the actions she/he will take to contribute to the government's objectives;
* each Minister integrates gender into all policies, measures and actions in her/his portfolio;
* each Minister oversees the implementation of the government's strategic objectives in management plans, public contracts and strategic planning at the administrative level within her/his portfolio;
* each budget includes a gender statement identifying, for each department, the initiatives that aim to achieve gender equality and how gender is taken into account in individual budget measures (gender responsive budgeting);
* the government tables two evaluation reports in parliament (the first halfway through the term of parliament, the second at the end of the term).

At an administrative level, the law requires that:
* gender analysis is integrated into departmental management plans and strategic planning, driven by the chief executive;
* gender indicators are designed to measure the integration of gender and the achievement of the strategic objectives;
* data/statistics which are produced, collected and mandated are sex-disaggregated;
* each administration prepares a contribution to the budget gender statement;
* gender equality is taken into account when awarding contracts and grants.

The law also provides for the establishment of an 'interdepartmental coordination group' responsible for the application of the law, composed of representatives of each minister and each department, and requires the preparation of a 'gender test' for each legislative or regulatory project.

Appendix C

Act@Work Evaluation Summary

Act@Work was developed by Women's Health Grampians (WHG) in partnership with Child and Family Services (CAFS) Ballarat, WRISC Family Violence Support and the City of Ballarat, and funded by the Victorian State Government Department of Justice and Regulation from 2012-2015. The results of an independent evaluation of the program were published in 2015. The program is still available to organisations wanting to Act@Work.

Act@Work is an organisation-wide cultural-change program which enables workplaces to respond to violence against women while also addressing the underlying causes: the beliefs and attitudes that support gender inequality, sexism and discrimination.

The program aims to:		
1. Increase *knowledge* of sexism, discrimination and violence against women	2. Increase *awareness* of the impacts of these behaviours and the costs of not taking action	3. Develop *skills* for individuals, and *workplace capacity,* to take action to intervene safely and effectively.

It has two core components:

1. **An organisation-wide strategy to support sustainable changes in the workplace**
Engaging management in the program
Appointing an internal Action Group to develop and implement an action plan to lead change.

Policy review
Leadership training
Organisational needs assessment
Internal and external communications
Induction program
Environmental audit

2. **Training for staff on bystander action and community responsibility**
Training covers the drivers of violence against women and how we can each take action.

Understand unconscious bias
Challenge sexism

REACH

Overall the project's reach was both broad and deep:

- 8 • Workplaces
- 700 • Employees in workplaces have completed training
- 2000+ • Employees to be reached in work places still completing the program
- 2700+ • Estimated families and households touched by the work-based program

36 newspaper articles were published in local media and

12 interviews on local radio

Two news reports on local television

30+ local organisations partnered in some aspect of the program

300+ local leaders attended the Leading Change events

IMPACT

Impact was measured at the organisational level via pre and post surveys. Results showed substantial shifts in employees' understanding of workplace and social behaviours that contribute to a culture of inequality and violence against women after completing the program. (Please refer table below.) For example, there was an overall shift of 17% for participants *believing that telling of sexist jokes was 'never ok'* in social settings (46% or participants post program vs only 29% pre-program) and 14% believing it is never ok in workplace settings (43% pre-program vs 57% post-program).

Results also showed the program was successful in raising people's awareness and skilling them to respond to sexism. For example, there was an increase of 20% in the number of employees surveyed who *believed they would say or do something to show they didn't approve if told a sexist joke* (61% post program vs only 41% pre-program).

"What I previously thought was harmless has a larger effect than I previously thought"

Act@Work participant

There were also significant shifts in the role and employee awareness of the role, of workplace policies in shaping acceptable workplace behaviours. For example, there was an increase of 19% for participants who recognised their workplace had policies to educate and inform employees about acceptable behaviours (48% pre-program vs 67% post) (Note: many changes to policies would have occurred *as a result* of this program). Importantly, while only 34% of participants were 'very confident' that their workplace would take action if made aware they had treated a women unfairly prior to completing the program, this rose to 45% after the program.

Question	Pre Program	Post Program	Shift
% of participants survey who thought telling of sexist jokes was 'never ok' in **social settings**	29%	46%	17%
% of participants surveyed who thought telling of sexist jokes was 'never ok' in **work settings**	43%	57%	14%
% of participants surveyed who believed they would say or do something to show they didn't approve if told a sexist joke	41%	61%	20%
% of participants surveyed aware of policies and practices in place to educate or inform employees about what is acceptable behaviour towards women	48%	67%	19%
% of participants surveyed who were 'very confident' that their workplace would take action if made aware they had treated a woman unfairly	34%	45%	11%

Table 1. A snapshot of data from the evaluation report

KEY FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS

Partnership approach – broad engagement across local community ensured it was locally owned; locally relevant had a high profile

Significant features related to the success of the OVERALL PROJECT

Focus on leadership and people with influence – ensured the project's resources were targeted where they could have maximum impact and contributed to the high profile

Development of Act@Work brand and merchandise – the contemporary and catchy title, together with a specific logo and workplace merchandise, all contributed to the high profile in the region

Active communication strategy – utilising local media assisted to raise the profile of the program while also delivering key messages about prevention to the wider community

Comprehensive evaluation strategy and the participatory action learning model – extensive evaluation ensured the impact of the project could be measured to contribute to the evidence base for similar projects and the action methodology ensured the evaluation was responsive over the 3 year period.

Significant features in the DESIGN of the workplace model

Design based on **evidence and a Theoretical framework**

Whole- of-organisation approach - targeting the intervention where organisational culture can be consciously managed – by leadership expectations, internal communications and appropriate policies

Engaging organisations where they were at - an Organisational Needs Assessment ensured key messages and program material could be tailored to be most relevant

Action group, appointed internally by the workplace, allowed for increased ownership, ensured workplace relevance and provided a platform to improve ongoing sustainability of outcomes

Staff training and a bystander approach -focusing on everyday beliefs and attitudes and the cultural context in which violence occurs; sexism and discrimination; understanding of the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes and unconscious bias and increasing skills in challenging these behaviours

Style of staff training appropriate for the content – the training was gender transformative and delivered via an invitational style by a mixed gender team demonstrating respectful leadership and co-facilitation

Providing high quality **tools and resources for workplaces to use** including posters, fact sheets, infographics, animation video, induction video, checklists and audit tools

Key success factors in the IMPLEMENTATION of the workplace model

While composite data showed overall positive shifts, the evaluation showed mixed results regarding the impact of the program at the organisational level when comparing workplaces. **The key features attributed to this variation in success are:**

The extent to which **leadership were actively engaged in the program**

The extent to which the **Action group involved the 'right' people** - employees with access to resources (executive/managers) and people willing to take on the role of being an internal 'champion'

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

It is recommended that projects seeking to have maximum local reach and impact should:

1. Use a partnership approach (with different levels of involvement available to suit different organisations)
2. Focus on leaders and people with influence (provide events that will attract leaders, and target interventions at leaders)
3. Develop a brand to support the development of an identity and reputation
4. Be active in local media
5. Ensure an evaluation strategy is comprehensive to capture results and flexible to be responsive to changes as they occur.

Recommendation 2:

It is recommended that workplace-based programs include the following features:

1. Be whole-of- organisation focused
2. Recognise different organisations will start from different positions – and tailor program to the specific organisation
3. Use an internal Action group to drive the program – specifically for their workplace
4. Ensure staff training is included and that it focuses on a bystander approach
5. Ensure the style of training is appropriate to the content
6. Provide high quality tools and resources for workplaces to use

Recommendation 3:

It is recommended that projects seeking to have maximum change at the organisational level:

1. Invest significant time and resources with the Executive leadership team, especially the CEO, to ensure they understand what is required from them for the program to be successful, and ensure they are committed before proceeding; and
2. Clearly outline the requirements of members of the Action Group and discuss openly the importance of access to resources and decision making for the organisation and of publicly championing the messages and activities that are part of the program.

Recommendation 4:

It is recommended that ongoing sustainability of the project be given additional consideration at the project design phase, regardless of the outlook at the commencement of the project.

whG women's health GRAMPIANS

For more information about the Act@Work program contact Women's Health Grampians
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