

# VERIFIED VERSION

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into Budget Estimates 2017–18

Melbourne — 30 May 2017

#### Members

Mr Danny Pearson — Chair

Mr David Morris — Deputy Chair

Mr Steve Dimopoulos

Ms Fiona Patten

Ms Sue Pennicuik

Ms Harriet Shing

Mr Tim Smith

Ms Louise Staley

Ms Vicki Ward

#### Witnesses

Ms Fiona Richardson, Minister for Women,

Ms Tania Farha, Chief Executive Officer, and

Ms Sarah Gruner, Assistant Director, Office of Prevention and Women's Equality, Department of Premier and Cabinet.

**The CHAIR** — I declare open the public hearings for the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee inquiry into the 2017–18 budget estimates. All mobile telephones should now be turned to silent. I would like to welcome the Minister for Women, the Honourable Fiona Richardson, MP; Ms Tania Farha, Chief Executive Officer, Office of Prevention and Women's Equality; and Ms Sarah Gruner, Assistant Director, Office of Prevention and Women's Equality.

All evidence is taken by the committee under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act, attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. Comments made outside the hearing, including on social media, are not afforded such privilege. Witnesses will not be sworn but are requested to answer all questions succinctly, accurately and truthfully. Witnesses found to be giving false or misleading evidence may be in contempt of Parliament and subject to penalty. All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard and you will be provided with proof versions of the transcript for verification as soon as available. Verified transcripts, presentations and handouts will be placed on the committee's website as soon as possible. All written communication to witnesses must be provided via officers of the PAEC secretariat.

Members of the public gallery cannot participate in the committee's proceedings in any way, and cannot photograph, audio record or videorecord any part of these proceedings. Members of the media must remain focused only on the person speaking. Any filming and recording must cease immediately at the completion of the hearing.

I invite the witness to make a very brief opening statement of no more than 5 minutes. This will be followed by questions from the committee.

#### **Visual presentation.**

**Ms RICHARDSON** — Thank you very much. To have this opportunity is certainly a privilege. You will be likely to hear some overlap because of the intrinsic link between gender equality — —

**The CHAIR** — Sorry, Minister, could you just move the microphone maybe a bit closer to you so we can hear you.

**Ms RICHARDSON** — Yes. The focus of course in this year's budget was investing in keeping women and children safe. For many years it would be true to say that domestic violence barely rated a mention, and it always seemed to struggle in terms of investment. We are certainly turning that around. The record \$1.9 billion brings women's safety from the margins into the mainstream. To turn the tide on violence against women we have to change the attitudes and behaviours that enable women to be treated as second-class citizens. We have allocated \$50.8 million over four years to prevention initiatives to do just that. Promoting gender equality is crucial to achieving a meaningful long-term reduction in family violence. That is why we are also investing in our landmark Victorian first, which is the gender equality strategy.

It is true to say that Australia is not performing particularly well on gender equality. We are down — —

**Ms SHING** — You might need to speak right into the microphone as this — whatever the large machinery is — is going past the window, Minister, just so we can continue to hear you.

**Ms RICHARDSON** — No worries. We were actually at a record high 14 years ago, but we have slipped progressively ever since. By addressing gender inequality of course we do not just want to make our state safer; we also want to make it more profitable. Research by the Peterson institute into 21 000 firms from 91 countries showed that firms with at least 30 per cent of women in leadership positions were 15 per cent more profitable. What this shows is that when we invest in women and gender equality there is an economic and social benefit as well. That is why our government is leading the way to address the complex economic and social problems connected with that ongoing gender inequality.

So it is time to ask some of those intractable questions. In short, why do Victorian women earn an average of 87 cents less than men? Why do women undertake nearly twice as much unpaid work as men? Why is women's workforce participation 25 per cent lower than for men? And why do women retire with half the superannuation savings as their male colleagues? Until we actually address this inequality within our society, there is no way that we will reach our economic potential.

The Victorian gender equality strategy was developed after 12 months of consultation across the state. We met with thousands of women, and I personally travelled to a number of metropolitan and regional locations listening to women directly about what they wanted to see in a strategy such as this. It was actually launched during the Victoria against Violence campaign, and founding reforms which I am particularly pleased to see include legislating for a gender equality act, establishing a new agency dedicated to preventing violence against women, introducing gender-responsive budgeting and gender-ethical procurement, gender auditing within public sector workplaces, targets to lift women's representation in leadership positions and establishing a Ministerial Council on Women's Equality, among other things.

The actual strategy, as well as looking at what it needs to do across the board, has five key areas, including education and training; work and economic security; leadership; health and safety; sport and recreation; media and arts. To ensure that we do not lose sight of all we are actually trying to achieve, we will be guided by a strong outcomes framework. Moreover, we are particularly committed to setting targets because we know that targets work. In terms of what we are trying to do with paid boards I just want to touch on this in a bit of detail because what we saw as a consequence of those targets being set was a very successful initiative. We have also seen an expanded set of leadership programs that have risen.

We have got the Victorian Honour Roll of Women. We have also been able to do the alumni and ambassadors program, and I am pleased to say that this initiative, which commenced in 2001, is still going strong, with 607 women being recognised for their remarkable achievements across the state. We have also introduced the Joan Kirner emerging leaders program, which provides women aged 18 to 40 with leadership, training and mentoring opportunities. We were also very pleased to announce seed funding to assist in the establishment of a Her Place museum. We are piloting gender equality initiatives in grassroots sporting clubs in the public sector because we want to see Victoria be not just the sporting capital of the world but also Australian women's and men's sporting capital of the world. We want to see much more done to ensure that we achieve that outcome.

The other thing that we introduced this year was our gender budget statements to account for women's spend and the allocation of funding for women. Those are very important initiatives to ensure that we actually see progress in terms of investment for women.

Another key initiative is improving the number of women who make up representation on our boards, and also Aboriginal women, women who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and women with a disability. It is very important that we do not just see the same number of women being hired, or appointed I should say, in each of the opportunities that present themselves.

In terms of our plans for this financial year, we will have the creation of a new prevention agency among other initiatives that you can see listed on the slide.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Minister. We might just throw to Ms Patten.

**Ms PATTEN** — Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister. I have a great interest in this area, and I am trying to work out how we know whether these budget initiatives work. I do not seem to see any sort of targets within the budget. So things like \$6.2 million to drive female participation in sport, \$1.4 million to promote women's self-employment opportunities, \$4 million for female-friendly facilities programs for women's change rooms — that one I am assuming we could count. We could say, 'There were this many female change rooms, and at the end of 2018 there were this many'. I am just wondering if there is anywhere you can direct me in the budget or if you can tell me how we are going to assess and to measure the success of these programs and of this money being spent.

**Ms RICHARDSON** — One of the founding reforms that we thought was critically important in our gender equality strategy was the need to actually have clear and unambiguous targets because what we have seen in terms of strategies in the past is that strategies that look good on paper probably just end up gathering dust in time, and that is not what we want to see in terms of our strategic direction. So our plan is uniquely different to what has also been done around Australia. We have not been shy about saying, 'This is where we are now, and this is where we want to be'.

**Ms PATTEN** — So have you got a number that says, 'This is how many women participate in sport now, and we anticipate after spending \$6.2 million we will have this many women participating in sport'?

**Ms RICHARDSON** — Yes. One of the things that was actually abandoned in Australia — and we have brought it back — is gender-responsive budgeting, and this gives us an opportunity to actually look at what we are doing and whether it is actually having an impact on women because, for too long, we have in a sense been gender blind with respect to what we have been trying to achieve, and you do not know what you do not know, as the old saying goes. So this is an opportunity in a sense to pull gender — —

**Ms PATTEN** — So are we starting from zero? I mean, certainly I can see the notions of women participating in forums and on boards, but with your gender equality budget statement, I just wonder, where we say we promote women's self-employment opportunities and business skills, how do we assess whether that was successful? I cannot see a number to begin with and a number to finish with.

**Ms GRUNER** — Perhaps I can respond to that question, if that is all right. This is a microenterprise development program designed to build women's business skills and self-employment opportunities.

**Ms PATTEN** — I have only got a few minutes, so I would just like to know whether for all of those initiatives we have a starting point and an anticipated improvement point.

**Ms GRUNER** — What I can tell you is that this is modelled on best practice evidence internationally, which suggests that these programs have over 125 per cent return on investment, and we are intending to target 120 women to provide intensive support to get back into the workplace. This is for older women as well as women from migrant and refugee backgrounds who have far less employment prospects at times than others.

**Ms PATTEN** — Great, so that was 1.4 million to target 120 women — —

**Ms GRUNER** — Over three years.

**Ms PATTEN** — Over three years.

**Ms GRUNER** — That is right.

**Ms PATTEN** — That is a great target to have. Are there any others within the budget or that I could take on notice that you could provide for me?

**Ms GRUNER** — What I would say is that the gender equality strategy is underpinned by an outcomes framework, and this is an outcomes framework which clearly sets out our indicators, and we are in the process of developing key measures.

**Ms PATTEN** — Could I receive that on notice?

**Ms FARHA** — Yes, sure.

**Ms GRUNER** — Yes, absolutely.

**Ms SHING** — Firstly, thank you for all of the work that you do in relation to the key areas of focus. This is an area where for many, many years people have been trying to lift the number of women in senior positions, management positions and around boardrooms. We know from the Scandinavian examples in the early to mid-2000s that quotas do actually work in that space, and in fact we are seeing significant progress and return on that investment from a Victorian perspective. Minister and staff, thank you very much for leading this charge.

Gender pay equity is one thing where again we have a lot of work to do. I think the answer to the question, 'Are we there yet?', will only be realised once we do not have a shortfall in the amount that women earn — and I think it is about 87 cents in the dollar for what male counterparts earn. Sectors are overly feminised, and we saw that in the social and community services sector which receive less than their public sector counterparts. What work is going into achieving greater equity — whether it is pay equity or more generally in the workplace — under your portfolio, Minister, as part of being more proactive, closing that gap and providing women with better opportunities in the context of the presentation on the budget papers?

**Ms RICHARDSON** — Minister Hutchins is doing some very important work around the Equal Workplaces Advisory Committee and it will specifically look at the kinds of strategies that we need to put in place to change

outcomes for women. In our portfolio we are having a look at the things that we can do at DPC and also at DEDJTR to see what we can do to address gender inequality and gaps in pay. We have seen some really good work. In fact, they have been modelled in terms of DEDJTR and what they are trying to do, and that is the kind of work that we want to see lifted ongoing within the sector, but it would be true to say that there is a great deal more work to be done. The public service is often obviously leading in terms of what it is trying to achieve, but there are some stand-outs — I have got to say — in the private sector as well. BHP announced that it would change the number of women on its boards and within senior management positions and the like, and they were to achieve that by 2024 with a target of 50 per cent. Now, they have not done that out of the goodness of their hearts. They have done that because they have recognised that it will make a difference in terms of their profitability.

**Ms SHING** — How do we make sure that for the private sector, corporate social responsibility is something that does not just include gender pay equity in particular as a cause du jour and in fact remains something that corporates can recognise as an area where they can become more profitable when they are more inclusive and they are more equitable?

**Ms RICHARDSON** — Yes, there is so much work to be done in this space, but most particularly I find that when you speak to corporates in particular about what the benefits of gender quality are, you get a very positive response. They look at it in an entirely different way, and by virtue of doing that you will see significant changes in the way that they employ people.

**Ms SHING** — And that engagement is ongoing?

**Ms RICHARDSON** — Yes.

**Ms STALEY** — Minister, I refer to the gender equality budget statement that was included in the budget pack. It says that there is \$98.4 million for kindergarten initiatives that will help improve educational outcomes for girls. This morning we asked Minister Mikakos about this, because it was about kindergartens, and she knew nothing about this initiative and she said it was not her program.

**The CHAIR** — I do not think that is right, Ms Staley.

**Ms STALEY** — So I ask you: could you explain what these kindergartens initiatives that will improve educational outcomes for girls are?

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — Chair, just on a point of order, to correct the record, the minister did not say she knew nothing about it, she said the relevant minister is the Minister for Women, and that is what she said.

**Mr T. SMITH** — On the point of order, Chair, she said, 'It is not my program'.

**Ms STALEY** — So as the relevant minister that Minister Mikakos named, could you please explain what the kindergarten initiatives are that will improve educational outcomes for girls with a spend of \$98.4 million?

**Ms RICHARDSON** — Yes, sure. When the Victorian budget paper included for the first time a budget information paper and a statement, it did so knowing that this would be something that would have to be developed and worked on and that it was not the end of the story with respect to women. So, for example, there are a range of other initiatives that are not included in the gender impact statement. There are some that were not included that should have been included.

The actual work that gets done in this space is, in a sense, the initial flyover in terms of what we are trying to do in terms of gender-responsive budgeting. It is not the end of the story in terms of what we are trying to see achieved, and to that end I guess what I want to do is to highlight with you those initiatives that actually do fall under my portfolio responsibility.

**Ms STALEY** — So, Minister, are you saying that that \$98.4 million that Minister Mikakos said was not hers is not yours either? Are you responsible for the \$98.4 million for kindergarten initiatives that will help improve educational outcomes for girls?

**Ms RICHARDSON** — No, I am not.

**Ms STALEY** — Minister, in reference to this gender equality budget statement, it funds \$1.7 million to re-establish the Rural Women's Network, \$4 million to establish the female-friendly facilities program in sport, \$6.2 million to drive female participation in sport and \$5.9 million for the gender equality programs that you have already discussed, and they are the only initiatives listed in the budget pack for women. Could you explain how that is the total allocation for women's funding, excluding family violence funding?

**Ms RICHARDSON** — Clearly there are more programs that are being delivered for women. So, for example, I can think off the top of my head in the health space there are quite a number of initiatives that are programs specifically designed for women. There is one, for example, for breast cancer health exclusively for women. What I would urge you to consider when having a look at these kinds of initiatives is that they are designed to draw out the sorts of investments that are being made. This is not something that has been done in Victoria before, but it is something that we need to do more completely and on an ongoing basis.

**Ms STALEY** — Thank you, Minister. I understand. I mean, you just said they are designed to draw out the sorts of investments being made, yet when I asked you about the kindergarten initiatives, they have not been drawn out yet — that is the point I am making. It does not seem to be clear what it is you are trying to achieve by putting programs in a document like this that nobody seems to be taking responsibility for and we can find no information about. Did you write this document? Did your department write this document?

**Ms RICHARDSON** — No, the document was put together by DTF, as it should be. Maybe if I can go back and explain a little bit about gender-responsive budgeting. It is actually designed to really drill down into those initiatives that are making an impact for women and those initiatives that clearly are not. What we have seen for generations in fact is that the kinds of investments that have been put in place have favoured one sex over another. So what we are trying to do in working in this way is look at how we can in a sense draw attention and focus on that particular historical — —

**Ms STALEY** — Minister, I have no problem with that at all. What I am trying to find out particularly is, are there actually programs worth \$98.4 million to improve educational outcomes for girls in kindergartens or are there not? Do those programs exist for girls as detailed in this document?

**Ms RICHARDSON** — Well, clearly they do exist.

**Ms STALEY** — Specifically for girls.

**Ms SHING** — To improve educational outcomes for girls.

**Ms STALEY** — What are they, Minister?

**Ms RICHARDSON** — Well, clearly these programs do exist. In terms of how they have been described or put in place in the budget, I cannot speak to that because it is actually Minister Mikakos who is responsible for those particular programs. But I guess what may help in terms of getting clarification on all this is I can certainly speak to those programs that I am directly responsible for, but for those programs that Minister Mikakos is directly responsible perhaps it would be useful to get some sort of analysis of that for you.

**Ms STALEY** — Last year you conducted an equality roadshow. How many towns and areas did you visit?

**Ms RICHARDSON** — Crikey.

**Ms STALEY** — I can take that on notice. That is — —

**Ms RICHARDSON** — Yes, somebody told me. It was some extraordinary amount of kilometres that we did. It certainly turned into a bit of a blur in terms of what town I was in and where.

**Ms STALEY** — I will just flick a couple more on the same topic that are quite specific, and if we could have them on notice. What was the total cost to hold the roadshow and how many people attended the sessions that you held — an average for each and a total per event? As I say, on notice is fine.

**Ms GRUNER** — We can probably answer part of that now. So we had 21 consultations that extended across rural and regional areas as well as metropolitan Melbourne. We had over 1200 individuals attend in total, and they varied from smaller focus groups to large forums that had over 150 people in attendance.

**Ms STALEY** — Thank you. This is a different topic. How many participants will be involved in the Victorian government leadership program?

**Ms RICHARDSON** — We can have a look at that because it just depends on the program amount. So if you do not mind, we will have a look at that to get the details to you.

**The CHAIR** — Order! I would like to thank the witnesses for their attendance: the Minister for Women, the Honourable Fiona Richardson MP, Ms Farha and Ms Gruner. The committee will follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing. The response to answering the questions in full should be provided in writing within 10 working days of the committee's request. I believe that Ms Pennicuik may have some questions on notice that she has provided to the secretariat. Minister, I hope you have a restful night and you recover. Well done.

**Committee adjourned.**