

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Inquiry into the 2025-26 Budget Estimates
5 June 2025

PORTFOLIO: WOMEN

Witnesses:

- The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP
- Peta McCammon
- Kate Berry

QUESTIONs ON NOTICE

QUESTION 1

How will you measure the effectiveness of the Safe Workplaces for Women Initiative?

Name of Committee member asking question: Jade Benham MP

Excerpt from transcript, pp. 3-4:

Jade BENHAM: With regard to the 'Gender Equality Budget Statement' and the safe workplaces for women, how much has been allocated in this year's budget for that initiative?

Natalie HUTCHINS: I was proud to announce \$5.5 million in March this year that was from previous budgets. That program has only just been launched in conjunction with our partners across the state, including VCCI, Trades Hall and a coalition of legal centres who are providing a working women's centre service, predominantly funded through the Commonwealth, but it will be extended into rural and regional areas through our support. That funding only got released and announced this year. We will be looking forward to how we continue to support the work as it rolls out into the future.

Jade BENHAM: Have you got any KPIs or measurement metrics to understand its effectiveness? How is that going to be measured?

Kate BERRY: As part of this process all of our funded providers will be required to assess their impact and have very strong KPIs and metrics as part of the contract going forward. In the case of Trades Hall and VCCI we will be doing yearly reviews and considering additional funding or ongoing funding beyond two years once we have a look at those outcomes, in accordance with the KPIs.

Jade BENHAM: Thank you. So further funding is based on outcomes?

Natalie HUTCHINS: There is an agreement that is in place with these organisations. When you say KPIs, I say outcomes.

Jade BENHAM: Yes, I am happy to take that. If we can just get the KPIs supplied on notice, that would be great.

Natalie HUTCHINS: I do not think we refer to them as KPIs, is my point. We talk about outcomes. We want X amount of people delivered training, we want X amount of worksites to be addressed, we want a range of sectors to be covered. Those are the outcomes we are looking for.

Jade BENHAM: But it has been spoken about in terms of KPIs. Even earlier we have mentioned KPIs. So there are specific KPIs. If I can get what they are on notice, that would be great.

Natalie HUTCHINS: We can give you what expected outcomes are from it. We do not refer to them as KPIs.

Jade BENHAM: Okay. Can I get those on notice, please?

Natalie HUTCHINS: Yes.

RESPONSE

Answer:

The *Safe Workplaces for Women Initiative* (SWWI) takes a three-stream approach to prevent and respond to gendered workplace harms, such as harassment, discrimination, pay disputes and unfair dismissal.

The initiative is designed to support women and gender diverse people to navigate every stage of a gendered workplace issue, from primary prevention and education, to improving access to in-depth legal services where these are required. It will also drive systemic change by building employer understanding of their responsibility to prevent and respond to gendered workplace issues.

The SWWI seeks to achieve three overarching outcomes:

- Women and gender diverse people understand their rights at work and can access the support they need related to gendered workplace issues.
- Small-to-medium sized businesses understand employer obligations and responsibilities to prevent and manage gendered issues in their organisations.
- Legal outreach services are more accessible in rural and regional areas.

The effectiveness of delivering the initiative will be considered against the following key principles:

- The ability of funded programs to tailor and improve access and understanding of existing knowledge and resources.
- To support clear referral pathways.
- Focussing efforts and outreach on people and industries at greatest risk of gendered workplace harm and/or facing complex barriers to accessing appropriate support.

Contracts between funded organisations and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing specify delivery milestones, outputs and outcomes so the effectiveness of funded activities can be monitored. The contracts are commercial-in-confidence.

QUESTION 2

Which programs in the Women's Portfolio are specifically targeted to women in multicultural communities, and what is their total funding?

Name of Committee member asking question: Aiv Puglielli MLC

Excerpt from transcript, pp. 5-6:

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you, Chair. Good morning. I have just been looking at budget paper 3, page 124, the department output summary. Minister, can I ask: of the programs which fall under your portfolio, what programs are specifically targeted to women in multicultural communities? And could you tell me what the total funding allocation to these programs is as budget output?

Natalie HUTCHINS: I do have budget outcomes but not broken down into multicultural, but that is something we could provide, because there is the women of colour program. There are a number of programs that we do provide. I probably do not have them neatly in order. But Peta, do you want to –

Peta McCAMMON: Yes. We are happy to see what we can provide. As the minister says, we might have some specific line items, but also there are a number of other commitments in the strategy that would cover multicultural communities. We are happy to take that on notice and see what we can provide.

RESPONSE

Answer:

The Allan Labor Government is proud of our nation-leading work elevating and empowering women. We know, however, that inequality is felt differently by different women including those from multicultural backgrounds.

The 2025-26 State Budget includes \$15.9 million in total output funding for the Women's Portfolio. Every funded initiative has been designed and delivered with a recognition of how gender inequality can be compounded for women who experience intersecting forms of discrimination or disadvantage based on other personal attributes, such as race, language, immigration status, disability or sexuality.

The \$23 million *Free Pads and Tampons in Public Places Program*, which supports women's access to period products in places across the state like hospitals, public libraries, cultural institutions and shopping centres and aims to reduce cost-of-living pressures and stigma about periods. Machines have been designed to ensure women whose first language isn't English can access products via simple, intuitive design and imagery.

Women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities are more likely to work in industries with a greater risk of gendered workplace harm and are more likely to face complex barriers to accessing appropriate support. The *Safe Workplaces for Women Initiative* will work to reach women who speak English as an additional language or who are new to Australia, to ensure they understand their workplace rights and can access support in addressing gendered workplace issues through culturally sensitive education and legal supports.

As part of \$1.8 million allocated to women's leadership and recognition programs in the 2024-25 State Budget, this year we are delivering the *Women of Colour Executive Leadership Program* for the third time. This program, designed by and for women of colour and delivered by Women of Colour Australia, will support up to 20 women of colour participants from a range of sectors to advance in, or to, executive leadership roles by supporting them to navigate distinct leadership challenges they face because of racial and gendered barriers. It complements other leadership programs, such as the ECHO program, which has been designed by and is led by First Nations women and works with First Nations women to build their leadership skills in a culturally safe way.

A key opportunity in 2025-26 is the Women Deliver Global Conference, which will be hosted in Melbourne in April 2026. We will welcome 6,500 gender equality advocates from around 170 countries, bringing together advocates, and leaders to drive progress on issues that matter most to women and girls. Victoria's multicultural women's organisations will play an important role in shaping these conversations, showcasing our leading work to advance gender equality and advising on future priorities. Victoria is working with Women Deliver and the Federal Government to increase the opportunities for women from the Pacific region to attend and to lead the agenda in order to ensure that they share in the benefits that will come from the conference.

Women