

# Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting

## Submission from Women's Health Victoria

29 November 2019

### About Women's Health Victoria

Women's Health Victoria (WHV) is a state-wide women's health promotion, advocacy and support service. WHV works collaboratively with women, health professionals, policy makers and community organisations to influence systems, policies and services to be more gender equitable to support better outcomes for women. As a statewide body, WHV works with the nine regional and two other state-wide services that make up the Victorian Women's Health Program. WHV is also a member of Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC), the Victorian peak body for gender equity, women's health and the prevention of violence against women.

### Introduction

This submission draws on WHV's specialist expertise in gender equity and women's health and aims to demonstrate the importance of a comprehensive approach to Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in achieving gender equality.

Gender equality is essential to improve women's health and prevent violence against women. Gender equality is also a matter of human rights and social justice. Women, men and non-binary people are entitled to full participation in social, economic and civic life and to live with dignity and freedom from gender-based fear and discrimination. Greater equality between women, men and non-binary people is a precondition for (and an indicator of) equitable, prosperous and healthy communities. Addressing gender inequality will lead to improved health outcomes and support increased productivity.

Drawing on international evidence and examples of best practice for GRB, this submission advocates for a comprehensive approach to GRB. Key to the submission is to highlight approaches that will be sustainable, accountable and contribute to the Victorian Government's goals for achieving gender equality.

A comprehensive approach to GRB aims to analyse and address the gendered impacts of budgeting, resourcing and policy decisions, and to inform budgeting and decision-making to better contribute to the advancement of gender equality.

A comprehensive approach to GRB should include a gendered analysis of existing resource allocation and needs, which then informs budget decisions to ensure resourcing is better targeted towards gender transformative policy and programs. Specific elements of a comprehensive approach are outlined below:

1. Mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout the budget cycle

2. Assessing the gender impact of output and asset investment, as well as savings and revenue initiatives
3. Using a gender analysis to inform decisions across all areas of policy and programming
4. Mainstreaming gender responsive budgeting across all policy portfolios, including but not limited to economic policy
5. Ensuring a gender transformative framework informs GRB processes
6. Ensuring an intersectional approach is applied to GRB processes
7. Aligning GRB with government gender equality goals
8. Embedding gender expertise, tools and resources across all departments, and in particular within the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF)
9. Monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the GRB approach
10. Incorporating external GRB expertise to promote accountability and transparency of a GRB process

WHV endorses the submission to this inquiry from Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC), including all eight recommendations.

WHV has provided a short, principle-based submission. Additional information and evidence can be provided to further support this submission on request.

## Rationale for Gender Responsive Budgeting

The (re-)introduction of GRB is included as a founding reform in Victoria's gender equality strategy, *Safe and Strong*. *Safe and Strong* explicitly commits to applying a gender perspective to policies, budgets and economic planning and defines GRB as a process that '*reviews and adapts budgetary processes and policies so that expenditures and revenues reflect gender differences and gender inequalities in income, assets, decision-making power, service needs and responsibilities for caring*'. In the strategy, the Victorian Government explicitly commits to '*progressively introduce gender impact analysis in policy, budgets and service delivery*.'

GRB plays a key role in achieving gender equality through providing a robust analysis of how policies and resourcing decisions that impact women, men and non-binary people. This provides decision makers with a gender analysis, supported by gender-disaggregated data, to ensure policies and resourcing are targeted to address inequalities and better contribute to gender equality.

GRB provides government decision-makers with:

- an increased understanding of gaps in programming targeting gender equality and the prevention of violence against women;
- clear evidence of how existing budgeting and resourcing across all policy portfolios impacts on Victorian men, women and non- binary people both positively and negatively;
- analysis to a more equal division of resources that promotes a gender equal Victoria; and

- analysis to support the resourcing of policies and programs that positively impact women and girls and contribute to Victoria's goals for achieving gender equality and preventing violence against women.<sup>1</sup>

For Victoria to achieve its gender equality goals as articulated in *Safe and Strong*, it is recommended that a comprehensive GRB process that considers gender inequalities across all aspects of Victorian life is embedded into Victoria's Government policy-making and budget processes. *Safe and Strong* acknowledges that 'countries with the highest rates of gender equality have established strong gender equality governance structures', highlighting the importance to embedding GRB processes across government systems. For the purpose of this submission, WHV has defined GRB as '*an application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. It means a gender-based assessment of budgets incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality*'<sup>2</sup>. Key to this definition is the focus on mainstreaming of a gendered perspective across all aspects of the budget process, and ensuring that GRB takes a whole of government approach so that it reaches all dimensions of gender inequality in Victorian life, including both portfolios where the association with gender is clear, such as family violence, and those that currently apply little gender analysis, such as housing and homelessness, urban planning, education, employment and industry policy, and environment. A comprehensive approach to GRB starts from the premise that no policy or budget decision is gender 'neutral'.

GRB is advocated for by a number of key international bodies including the International Labour Organisation, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations and the International Monetary Foundation. Almost half of OECD countries are engaging in GRB in some capacity.<sup>3</sup> International experience demonstrates that GRB can contribute to gender equality, specifically through providing an analysis of key policy and resourcing gaps and how gender-insensitive budgeting may inadvertently negatively impact women and girls by re-enforcing gender inequalities. For example, in South Africa, a gender budget analysis revealed that South African women were adversely affected by the negative outcomes of trade policy and implementation<sup>4</sup>. Identifying the adverse effects of gender insensitive policy can inform the development of policy that aims to contribute to positive outcomes for women.

In the 1980's, Australia was a leader in GRB, however, in more recent years, Australia's commitment to GRB has significantly declined.<sup>5</sup> Victoria is currently leading internationally in gender equality policy and practice; effective implementation of GRB will be a vital factor in ensuring Victoria achieves its

<sup>1</sup> Please refer to page 5 of GEN VIC's submission to this Inquiry for further analysis of ways in which a GRB process can be expected to contribute to policy and outcomes that increase gender equality.

<sup>2</sup> Council of Europe 2009, cited in: Downes R, Von Trapp L, Nicol S (2017) **Gender budgeting in OECD countries**. OECD Journal on Budgeting 16(3): 71-107

<sup>3</sup> Downes R, Von Trapp L, Nicol S (2017) **Gender budgeting in OECD countries**. OECD Journal on Budgeting 16(3): 71-107

<sup>4</sup> Bureau for Gender Equality **Overview of gender-responsive budget initiatives: a discussion paper for ILO staff on the relevance of gender-responsive budget initiatives in promoting gender equality in decent work country programmes**. International Labour Organisation, Geneva, p.24

<sup>5</sup> Refer to GEN VIC's Policy Submission Section 3, pg 8, **History of Gender Responsive Budgeting in Australia in for further information of the history of GRB within the Victorian context**.

gender equality and prevention of violence against women goals. In implementing GRB, the Victorian Government should be informed by international evidence-based practice and take a whole of government approach, framed by the gender equality objectives outlined in *Safe and Strong*.

## A comprehensive approach to Gender Responsive Budgeting

A comprehensive approach to GRB involves:

- Embedding GRB in government policy and budget processes so that it is sustained over time, regardless of any changes in government and government programming priorities.
- Capturing a whole of government perspective on budgeting to ensure all gender inequalities within Victorian life are captured and the analysis goes beyond funding women-specific programming.

Key elements and analysis of a comprehensive GRB process are detailed below:

### 1. Mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout the budget cycle

Mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout the whole budget process means ensuring gender is included at all stages of budget analysis and decision making to achieve gender equitable outcomes.

Policy and program decisions are integral to the budget process. This means that gender analysis is required from the point where budget bids are being developed in line agencies before they are submitted to DTF, through the central agency budget briefing process, Cabinet decision-making and final compilation of the budget and gender budget statement.

### 2. Using a gender analysis to inform decisions across all areas of policy and programming

Undertaking gender analysis across all areas of public financial administration is recognised internationally as an important approach for effective GRB.<sup>6</sup> Collection of gender disaggregated data across government is critical to enable effective analysis of how resourcing impacts men, women and non-binary people differently. WHV also supports recommendation 5 in GEN VIC's submission which advocates for all economic and fiscal data to be disaggregated to measure differential impacts of the Victorian Budget on women and gender diverse people.

Gender analysis is the first step in a mainstreaming approach and includes using gender-disaggregated data to:

- analyse the needs of men, women and non-binary people;
- analyse how current expenditure and revenue-raising is impacting gender equality both positively and negatively across all government portfolios;
- identify gendered barriers to accessing resources/services provided; and

<sup>6</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality (2017) **Gender budgeting**. European Institute for Gender Equality, Vilnius. p.7 Available from: [URL](#)

- analyse the extent to which the budget has contributed to achieving government gender equality goals and key gaps.

A thorough gender analysis of the budget will highlight gaps and gendered impacts of existing funding and policy priorities, allowing resources to be targeted to gap areas or to increase funding in areas having a positive impact on gender equity.

There are many international examples of mainstreaming gender analysis throughout policy and budget processes across government. For example, the Canadian Government requires gender analysis of all policies, legislation and programs across government departments to understand gendered impacts to inform decision making<sup>7</sup>.

### **3. Assessing the gender impact of output and asset investment, as well as savings and revenue initiatives**

A comprehensive approach to gender responsive budgeting should cover all aspects of government income and expenditure, including both capital investment and funding for service delivery, as well as identifying and addressing the gender impacts of revenue measures such as taxes and levies, and savings and efficiency measures.

### **4. Mainstreaming gender responsive budgeting across all policy portfolios, including but not limited to economic policy**

A whole of government approach to GRB acknowledges that gender inequalities exist across all aspects of Victorian life. For Victoria to achieve its gender equality objectives, gender responsive budgeting needs to be undertaken across all aspects of public administration. A whole of government approach to GRB will both enable the identification of gaps in gender focused resourcing and ensure existing resourcing is not inadvertently reinforcing gender inequalities. A whole of government approach ensures women's issues are not siloed to a specific area of spending, but instead the positive and negative impacts of spending on men, women and non-binary people are considered across all initiatives.

### **5. Ensuring a gender transformative framework informs GRB processes**

A GRB process should be embedded within a gender transformative framework to ensure resources are allocated in a way that contributes to initiatives that actively transform the norms, practices and structures that reinforce gender inequality.

In practice there are three main approaches to gender equity; gender insensitive, gender sensitive and gender transformative. WHV defines these terms as:

**Gender insensitive:** A policy, program or service that ignores gender and therefore may incorporate biases in favour of one gender; males are usually the 'benchmark'. *An example might be funding a new sports stadium with insufficient female toilets and inadequate lighting at night.*

<sup>7</sup> Downes R, Von Trapp L, Nicol S (2017) **Gender budgeting in OECD countries**. *OECD Journal on Budgeting* 16(3): 71-107

**Gender sensitive:** An approach that takes gender into account, acknowledging the different expectations, pressures, inequalities and needs of males and females. *An example might be ensuring there is equal funding for sports involving high rates of participation by women.*

**Gender transformative:** Gender transformative policy and practice examines, challenges and ultimately transforms structures, norms and behaviours that reinforce gender inequality and strengthens those that support gender equality. *An example might be funding an initiative to increase female participation in sports traditionally dominated by men.*

For example, Sweden and Norway have introduced gender transformative measures into their paid parental leave schemes in order to encourage fathers to take a more active role in child-care and domestic labour. Both Norway and Sweden have paid parental leave schemes with high rates of income replacement and a non-transferable mandated 'daddy (or co-parent)' quota which increased the proportion of fathers taking parental leave from between 4-7% in 1990 up to 90% in 2008.<sup>8</sup> This initiative has transformed gender norms and practices by increasing the distribution of household chores and child-care more evenly, thereby shifting gender roles and allowing mothers greater employment opportunities.

## 6. Ensuring an intersectional approach is applied to GRB processes

*'Intersectionality is a way of seeing or analysing the dynamics of power and social inequality in our society'*.<sup>9</sup> Applying an intersectional analysis as part of a gender responsive budgeting process ensures that the impacts of other forms of inequality and disadvantage that intersect with gender inequality, such as racism, ableism and homophobia, are also considered. This will: ensure that any investment in universal programs achieves equitable outcomes among women; enable investment in targeted initiatives to improve outcomes and equity for disadvantaged groups of women; and ensure that the allocation of resources does not inadvertently increase disadvantage.

WHV recommends an intersectional framework be applied to Victoria's GRB process to ensure budgeting decisions address all intersecting factors that reinforce discrimination or disadvantage in addition to gender, including sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, religion, class, socioeconomic status, gender identity, ability and age.

For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women report experiencing violence at 3.1 the rates of non-Indigenous women and the impacts are often more complex.<sup>10</sup> Applying an intersectional gender lens would mean identifying measures that address this disadvantage, such as increasing

<sup>8</sup> Moss P (ed.) **International review of leave policies and related research** (2013). International Network on Leave Policies and Research, London. p.36; Duvander A-Z, Haas L (2013) Sweden: introducing the Network. International Network on Leave Policies and Research, London, pp. 5-6; Hedlin S (2014) **Why Swedish men take so much paternity leave**, *The Economist* (Jul 23). Available from: [URL](#)

<sup>9</sup> Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (2017) **Intersectionality matters: a guide to engaging immigrant and refugee communities to prevent violence against women**. MCWH, Collingwood, Vic. p. 5. Available from: [URL](#)

<sup>10</sup> Our Watch (2018) **Changing the picture: a national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children**. Our Watch, Melbourne, p. 6. Available from: [URL](#)

funding for Aboriginal-community controlled organisations that support Aboriginal women experiencing violence.

### **7. Aligning GRB with government gender equality goals**

International guidance indicates that GRB processes are most effective when they are aligned with existing gender equality objectives.<sup>11</sup> To meet the commitments outlined in *Safe and Strong* and the Gender Equality Bill recently introduced into the Victorian Parliament, Victoria needs a GRB process that mainstreams a gender perspective across the whole of government budgeting process.

### **8. Embedding gender expertise, tools and resources across all departments, and particularly within DTF**

Consistent with emerging best practice for GRB, gender budgeting expertise should be embedded across Victorian Government departments and agencies, and particularly within DTF. Embedding gendered expertise within all government agencies including DTF will ensure the GRB process is sustained over time.

This includes:

- Ensuring gender budgeting/economics expertise is embedded across all government agencies to inform the development of budget submissions;
- Establishing a dedicated unit within DTF to lead whole-of-government gender analysis across the budget cycle, working closely with the Office for Women in DPC;
- Collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated data to better understand the needs of men, women and non-binary people and support the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the GRB process;
- Drawing on external gender expertise – for example, within the women’s health sector – to build the internal capacity of government agencies, including DTF;
- Developing, implementing and evaluating effective tools to support gender impact analysis and build gender expertise within government agencies including DTF – supported by external gender experts; and
- Applying a gender lens to existing DTF policies and frameworks, such as the Resource Management Framework (see GEN VIC Recommendation 6).

There are a number of existing tools that have been implemented internationally to embed GRB within government. For example, Austria has a comprehensive framework to ensure a gender perspective is included within budgeting and their budget authority has developed guidelines and a process for gender budgeting across government.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality (2017) **Gender budgeting**. European Institute for Gender Equality, Vilnius. p.6 Available from: [URL](#)

<sup>12</sup> International Monetary Fund. Fiscal Affairs Department (2017) **Gender Budgeting in G7 Countries**. IMF, Washington. p.33. Available from: [URL](#)

## 9. Monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the GRB approach

International evidence highlights the importance of monitoring and evaluation throughout a GRB process. This includes monitoring of process itself, to ensure accountability and transparency, as well as external evaluation of the effectiveness of the selected GRB approach in improving gender equity. The evaluation should be linked to the outcomes framework in *Safe and Strong* and draw on gender-disaggregated data. An independent evaluation is recommended to enhance accountability to the broader community.

## 10. Incorporate external GRB expertise to promote accountability and transparency

WHV supports GEN VIC's recommendation for the establishment of Gender Equality Budget Group (Recommendation 8), bringing together civil society organisations, gender economic experts within government and the academy to inform the development of gender responsive budgeting in Victoria. This group may also assist in the evaluation and monitoring of the project, by independently assessing the effectiveness of the GRB approach on gender equity in the State.

## Recommendations

WHV recommends that Victoria's gender responsive budgeting process:

1. Mainstream a gender perspective throughout the budget cycle
2. Use a gender analysis to inform decisions across all areas of policy and programming
3. Assess the gender impact of output and asset investment, as well as savings and revenue initiatives
4. Mainstream gender responsive budgeting across all policy portfolios, including but not limited to economic policy
5. Ensure a gender transformative framework informs GRB processes
6. Ensure an intersectional approach is applied to GRB processes
7. Align GRB with government gender equality goals (see also GEN VIC Recommendation 2)
8. Embed gender expertise, tools and resources across all departments, and particularly within the Department of Treasury and Finance (see also GEN VIC Recommendation 5)
9. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the GRB approach
10. Incorporate external GRB expertise to promote accountability and transparency of a GRB process (see also GEN VIC Recommendation 8)

WHV supports all 8 recommendations outlined in GEN VIC's submission.