



Darebin City Council
ABN 75 815 980 522

2 December 2019

Parliament of Victoria
Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Darebin City Council Submission to the Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting

Darebin City Council (Council) welcomes the State Government's ambitions to lead the way in gender equality through 'sustained, enduring and measurable action' as enshrined in Safe and Strong: *A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy*.

This strategy recognises that efforts to address gender inequality, sexism and violence against women require structural reforms in a range of settings and systemic change through the integration of a gendered perspective in policies, programmes, projects and financial investment. The integration of a gendered perspective into budgetary processes provides the opportunity to translate these policy commitments into practice (Sharp and Broomhill 2013).

Darebin Council welcomes the opportunity to provide a short submission to the Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting. Council's submission considers the scope and opportunity for Gender Responsive Budgeting to impact local government budgetary processes and is based on our experience and expertise as a local government working to address gender inequity.

Council has a long-standing commitment to improving gender equality and preventing violence against women. This commitment is illustrated by Council's endorsed positions and strategies to increase women's participation, wellbeing and leadership in Darebin, and is articulated in the Gender Equity and Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan 2019-2023.

This submission acknowledges that the implementation of Gender Responsive Budgeting can take multiple forms and adopt various methodological frameworks. Council's submission will specifically provide comment and make recommendations on the opportunities for gender responsive budgeting to improve outcomes for the Victorian population, and its influence in the local government context.

In summary Council's submission makes the following recommendations:

1. The annual publication of an independent budget statement / report by the Victoria State Government should incorporate a detailed account of the impacts of mainstream expenditures (as well as taxation) from a gendered perspective.
2. Include unpaid care economy approaches for accommodating women's paid and unpaid activities.
3. Consider the development of tools and resources that can support local government to apply a gender lens to budget allocation, planning and processes.
4. Consider the inclusion of mandatory gender equity indicators in budgetary reporting for local government.
5. Support Local Government Victoria to incorporate a gender lens in their annual report on Council budgets.
6. Incorporate an intersectional understanding in the implementation of gender responsive budgeting.

Postal Address
PO Box 91
Preston VIC 3072
T 03 8470 8888
F 03 8470 8877
darebin.vic.gov.au



National Relay Service
relayservice.gov.au

If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service.



Speak your language
T 03 8470 8470

العربية

繁體中文
Ελληνικά

हिंदी

Italiano

Македонски

नेपाली

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ

Soomalii

Español

اردو

Tiếng Việt

Throughout this submission, women and the term violence against women will be used. This acknowledges that women represent enormous diversity across age, culture – including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures – ethnicity, race, socioeconomic and (im)migration status, geographic location, sexuality, dis/ability, and religion. Council acknowledges that efforts to address gender inequity must be inclusive of all women and girls, including women who identify as cisgender, transgender and intersex.

1. Gender Equality Budget Statement

Currently, the primary visible mechanism which applies a gender lens to State government budget processes is the Victorian State Government's Gender Equality Budget Statement, issued since 2017/18. This document lists initiatives that explicitly benefit women but does not provide a gender-based analysis of proposed policies and programs across the entire annual state budget. As a result, the current statement does not comprehensively analyse and interrogate how the State Government's budgetary decisions impact women.

At a minimum, details focusing on how the State Government's taxation and revenue policies, workplace policies, investments in health, housing, education and families impact women in Victoria should be incorporated into budgetary review and analysis processes. Such measures would provide greater transparency and accountability to State Government policy commitments while ensuring gender equality imperatives are not relegated to any one department or program area.

Recommendation 1: *The annual publication of an independent budget statement / report by the Victoria State Government should incorporate a detailed account of the impacts of mainstream expenditures (as well as taxation) from a gendered perspective.*

2. Recognition of the unpaid economy

Women are primarily responsible for unpaid work and caring responsibilities. In Australia, women spend, on average, 64% of their working week performing unpaid care work, which is approximately double that of men (WGEA 2016). The unequal distribution of unpaid care work between women and men represents an infringement of women's rights.

The more equal distribution of unpaid work and caring responsibilities is correlated with higher levels of gender equality on a population level and a reduction in the gender pay gap (Ferrant 2014). Redistribution of unpaid work and caring responsibilities between genders will only be achieved through the recognition of the crucial role of unpaid work on society's economic and social outcomes. Gender Responsive Budgeting is a key mechanism by which to enable this (Sharp and Broomhill 2013).

Recommendation 2: *The inclusion of the unpaid care economy approaches for accommodating women's paid and unpaid activities*

3. Opportunities for local government

Local government has been identified by Our Watch, VicHealth and the Victorian State government (Our Watch 2015; VicHealth 2012; State of Victoria 2016a) as a key stakeholder in the prevention of violence against women.

The role of local government is also enshrined in Recommendation 94 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, which articulates that all Councils are mandated to report on "the measures they propose to take to reduce family violence and respond to the needs of victims" in their municipal public health and wellbeing plans (State of Victoria 2016b).

Local government has the unique role of engaging with communities and individuals throughout the lifespan and across a range of settings, including public spaces, arts, leisure, recreation and maternal and child health.

It is expected that the Gender Equality Bill, due to pass through parliament in 2020, will provide further legislative frameworks that impose new obligations on the Victorian public to plan, implement strategies and report on gender equality in the workplace and promote gender equality across the wider community. Council welcomes the legislative reforms that the Gender Equality Act is expected to bring.

Local government's expenditure is significant. Darebin City Council's 2019/20 budgetary spend can be summarised below:

- Ongoing delivery of services to the Darebin community funded by a budget of \$184.9 million. Continued investment in property assets (\$26.0 million) and infrastructure assets (\$18.5 million) primarily for renewal works. This includes land improvements (\$4.5 million), buildings (\$19.1 million), building improvements (\$2.4 million), roads (\$4.3 million); bridges (\$2.2 million); footpaths and bicycle paths (\$5.3 million); drainage (\$2.1 million); recreational, leisure and community facilities (\$0.1 million); and parks, open space and streetscapes (\$4.5 million).
- While Council is committed to embedding gender equity across its organisation, no mechanisms exist to comprehensively analyse how our budgetary expenditure and allocations may impact the community differently based on gender and other factors. However, due to the significant expenditure of local government, there is scope to apply a gender lens to budget allocation on a local government level.
- Council's Gender Equity and Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan 2019-2023 articulates Council's commitment to *Apply a gender lens to Council's annual budgeting process* (DCC 2019). This is in recognition of the vital role of gender responsive budgeting in fully mainstreaming a gender perspective into a local government context. It also aligns with and takes inspiration from Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy. However, the capacity for local government to undertake Gender Responsive Budgeting is limited. There is an absence of tools relative to policy, service delivery and budget development that support a gender impact analysis on a local government level.

Recommendation 3: *Develop tools and resources to support local government to apply a gender lens to budget allocation, planning and processes.*

Recommendation 4: *Consider the inclusion of mandatory gender equity indicators in budgetary reporting for local government.*

The introduction of gender impact analysis tools is most effective when accompanied with reporting requirements. This enables transparency and accountability on all levels. Consideration into how a gender responsive budgeting approach may translate into mandatory reporting requirements for local government is imperative. For example, gender equity indicators may be incorporated into a Strategic Resource Plan, which local government entities are mandated to prepare every four years.

Recommendation 5: *Support Local Government Victoria to incorporate a gender lens in their annual report on Council budgets*

In addition, the release by 'Local Government Victoria,' an agency within the Victorian Government's Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, of the annual Report on Council Budgets may provide further scope to incorporate a gender lens / impact statement on a state-wide level.

4. Intersectional Application of Gender Responsive Budgeting

All efforts to improve gender equity and prevent violence against women cannot be considered in isolation from other factors which reinforce disadvantage and discrimination against women. Gender responsive budgeting must therefore consider how people can experience compounding impacts of discrimination and poverty, power and privilege or both. Analysis of budgets must consider whether the most disadvantaged women are being considered.

Recommendation 6: *Incorporate an intersectional understanding in the implementation of gender responsive budgeting.*

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide a submission into this inquiry. We would like to commend the State Government for their ongoing commitment to promoting the full and equal participation of Victorian women.

Should you wish to discuss this submission or require further information, please contact Council's Gender Equity Officer 

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Susan Rennie
Mayor, Darebin City Council

References

Darebin City Council 2019, *Gender Equity and Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan 2019 – 2023*, Melbourne: DCC

Ferrant, G., Pesando, L.M. and Nowacka, K., 2014. Unpaid Care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes. Issues paper.

Sharp, R. and Broomhill, R., 2013. *A case study of gender-responsive budgeting in Australia* (p. 3). London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

State of Victoria, 2016a. *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy*. Melbourne: Victorian Government.

State of Victoria 2016b. *Royal Commission into Family Violence: Report and recommendations, Parl Paper No 132 (2014-16)*. Melbourne: Victorian Government.

VicHealth 2004, *The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence*. Melbourne: VicHealth.

Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) 2016, *Unpaid care work and the labour market*. [online] Canberra: Commonwealth Government of Australia. Available at: <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/australian-unpaid-care-work-and-the-labour-market.pdf> (Accessed November 2019).