



Submission to the Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting, Public Accounts and Estimates, Parliament of Victoria

Gender Budget Analysis is critical to delivering gender equality in Victoria

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is a tool that can create change and assist the Victorian Government in its goal to create gender equality in this State. It is well known that women and gender diverse people experience different outcomes from economic policies due to structural inequalities. The impact of policies on all genders can be assessed before they are implemented to ensure there are no inherent inequities.

The Victorian Government is congratulated on raising awareness of the current inequality of women and gender diverse people in this State and undertaking a process to directly address the fact that without action, equality will not be achieved for more than 100 years. The link between gender inequality and the lack of respect for women underlying the high levels of violence against women and girls is now widely recognised. A key outcome of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence was the development of the State's first Gender Equality Strategy, *Safe and Equal*. The vision of *Safe and Equal* can only be realised by Government taking the needs of all genders into account through a full implementation of GRB. Without doing so, policies may have unintended consequences and will fail to meet the needs of women and gender diverse people.

GRB was initiated in Australia in 1984 and the historic context of its initiation and subsequent uptake by more than 90 countries will be recorded by other submissions. It is our contention that the drop in Australia's ranking in the World Economic Forum's Gender Equality Index from a high of 15 to as low as 48 is in part due to the lack of accountability and transparency afforded by the GRB process. The need for investment in GRB and an annual transparent report in a whole of government assessment of its policy impact of women and gender diverse people is imperative to achieving gender equality in Victoria.

Gender Responsive Budgeting will improve the outcomes Victorians

Despite progress in some areas of gender equality which is being led in many aspects by the Victorian Government, women will not reach parity with men without the specific intervention that GRB provides. Gender roles and norms throughout the world structure the opportunities for all sexes, and this means that policies impact differently on women and men. It does not mean there should be a specific budget for women, rather it's an analysis of how all policies affect all sexes and how they meet the needs of different groups depending on their income, age, ethnicity, cultural background and urban or rural/regional location.

GRB assesses inequalities in the paid economy, encompasses unpaid work such as caring, volunteering and domestic work, acknowledges that income is not shared equally in all households and the differing ability people to participate in decision making processes. The Victorian Government is leading in the country in addressing family violence, the inequality of women and girls who experience violence can also be assessed by GRB.

Women continue to be under-represented in public life and consequently policy, including economic policy, may not take the needs of women into account nor give them the priority required to address the current inequities.

The Victorian Government can lead by example

In leading the way with public sector reporting and application of GRB processes, there is also a case for providing both the example to follow, and the tools required, for local government, private sector and non-government organisations to apply the gender impact analysis on their own policies and budgets. To encourage that outcome, resources should be allocated to establishing a gender equality budget group similar to that in the UK, that trains and encourages non-Government organisations to implement their own versions of gender impact analysis in their decision-making processes. There is a need to build capacity across the community in order to attain gender equality in all its settings, not only within government.

The assessment of the impact of policy decisions and budget expenditure should encompass the following principles

- The long-term impact over a lifetime in addition to the immediate impact which is often the focus
- The impact on individuals, as well as the household
- Account for the unpaid economy
- Intersection with differences of ethnicity, income, disability, rural/regional etc with a focus on the least advantaged
- Quantify and report the gender differences

There is now the opportunity to establish Victoria as world leaders in GRB and gender equality by adopting best practice in the implementation of fully analysed economic and social policy development. This will take investment in expertise to deliver and independently monitor progress. This process should be aligned with the Gender Equality Strategy and the Gender Equality Act currently before the Parliament. In order to protect this investment and not allow subsequent loss of expertise and benefits on long term best practice budgetary processes, GRB should be protected from changes by future governments by legislation.

We thank the members of PAEC for the opportunity to raise the importance of gender responsive budgeting across governments at all levels and with the broader community of private sector, not-for-profits and community-based organisations in achieving equality for all Victorians.



EMILY'S List Australia is a financial, political and personal support network for progressive Labor women candidates. It is the only network of its kind in Australian politics. EMILY is an acronym which stands for *Early Money Is Like Yeast* – it makes the dough rise. Early campaign money is often vital for a candidate heading into an election.

EMILY'S List Australia is an independent, national organisation with volunteer action groups in each State and Territory. Through memberships, fundraising events and merchandise sales, we raise money to allocate to endorsed candidates to kick-start their campaigns, support them with mentoring and assist their campaigning with training.

VALUES

CHOICE We believe women must have control over their own bodies and choices in their lives. Reproductive freedom empowers women and men to choose if, when and how to begin the important journey into parenthood, without fear of discrimination, coercion or violence. Women have the right to accessible, affordable, safe and legal termination services.

EQUAL PAY We believe society needs to increase the value it places on the work of women – both in the paid workforce and in the home. We believe in challenging long held perceptions of the inferiority of "women's work", particularly in the provision of care to vulnerable people in our society like children, young people, the disabled and elderly.

We believe the difference in the nature and way women work, including time out for caring, should not lead to significantly lower wages or superannuation for women.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE We believe work-life balance is crucial to women, men and families. For women and men to achieve fulfilment professionally and personally, they need affordable, quality, flexible childcare for their children.

EQUITY We strongly believe in the right of every woman to enjoy equal rights and privileges before the law, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. This is because equality is a fundamental human right that should be enjoyed by all.

DIVERSITY We believe democracy is enhanced through the diversity of people participating in it. More women in parliament, on corporate boards and in our courts lead to greater diversity of views and therefore better public policy outcomes. Women are a diverse group and considering the needs of all kinds of women is essential.

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Contact: Maree Overall, CEO

EMILY'S List Australia

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