



VICTORIAN WOMEN'S TRUST

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Parliament of Victoria,
Spring Street
East Melbourne,
VIC 3002 Australia

2 December 2019

Dear Ms Blandthorn,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to this important inquiry into gender responsive budgeting in Victoria. Our intention in writing this letter is to endorse Gender Equity Victoria's (GEN VIC) submission to this inquiry as a member organisation and also outline briefly some of our own learning to supplement GEN VIC's submission.

We have been heartened by the Victorian Government's commitment in recent years to improving the status of Victorian women and girls in our community, starting with the Royal Commission into Family Violence, the development of the Victorian Government Gender Equality Strategy *Safe and Strong*, and recently, the introduction of the *Gender Equality Bill*.

Since its inception in 1985, the Victorian Women's Trust (VWT) has explored, and continues to explore a myriad of ways to assist the status of women and the quest for gender equity across many issues such as the superannuation and gender pay gaps; childcare; women's leadership; women's political representation; and many facets of women's health and wellbeing. Women's economic security does not stand alone as a concern of government in regard to women. Safety, the ability to lead a dignified life and opportunities to be a productive to participate in society are closely linked to gender equality, which is why addressing the gender inequalities in the Victorian economy and State Budget is so important.

Our organisation understands gender responsive budgeting as a government budget process which is informed by the lived experience and needs of women from initial setting of parameters, all the way through to impact and effect of government allocations every year. Gender responsive budgeting is a crucial opportunity to deliver better outcomes for women and non binary individuals into the future. With the right resources and policy commitment, an economic gender lens should result in expert tweaking of economic and fiscal policy to deliver tailored policy solutions for enduring financial inequities for women, non binary individuals and their children.

Should the PAEC require any additional information or consultation, the Victorian Women's Trust are more than happy to assist in any way we are able.

Regards,

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In considering the reintroduction of gender responsive budgeting there are three propositions that we would like the PAEC to embody in making their recommendations to this inquiry:

- One's solutions will only be as good as the analysis of the problem;
- If you can't see a problem, you cannot fix it; and
- If you won't see a problem, you won't be moved to any action.

In our view, two critical dimensions to getting gender responsive budgeting right in the first place, and upholding these propositions, is to acknowledge women's unpaid and care work, and to count it.

1. Unpaid care and mental health for women

The VWT have been working with Dr Lyndall Strazdins. Dr Strazdins is a Clinical Psychologist and Associate Professor (PhD Psychology, M Clinical Psych) at the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, the Australian National University. She is a recognised leader in the field of work, family and wellbeing, especially the role played by work time and the pressures and health challenges for families to combine work with caring, or for young adults to combine work with study. She leads the work and family component of the Federally funded Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, a study of 10,000 families, and has or currently serves as a scientific consultant to Government, including the ACT Health Promotion Branch, the Department of Veteran Affairs Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and the Defence forces and a consultant to the Paid Parental Leave Evaluation. She also collaborates with National NGO organisations regarding social policy for Australian families. In 2011 Strazdins was awarded an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship investigating time as a resource for health.

Her research focuses on contemporary predicaments of work and care and their health and equity consequences, viewing health as inter-linked within families. More recently she has been leading theory and evidence on time as a social determinant of health, viewing time as a resource, like money, which underpins inequality and is fundamental for peoples' capacity to be healthy.

VWT hosted Dr Strazdins for a policy intensive in late 2018 and she explained the disservice done to women when women are encouraged and expected to enter the labour market for economic reasons, but as their unpaid time is not counted (and is therefore invisible), their health is compromised due to the burden of counted formal work and unpaid and uncounted informal work and care:

"it comes back to this issue of care and time, because while it remains something we don't really want to think about, something we don't count, something we don't weigh in, then we can have this delusion that if women just kind of popped into the labour market, we'll be right."

VWT recommends PAEC read Huong Dinh, Lyndall Strazdins and Jennifer Welsh's, *Hour-glass ceilings: Work-hour thresholds, gendered health inequities*, Social Science & Medicine 176 (2017) which is attached along with this submission.

2. Time-use surveys

New Zealand economist Marilyn Waring's work on the importance of "time-use surveys" in elucidating gendered inequalities due to their omission from state economic budgets and thinking compliments Lyndall Strazdin's work on gendered time inequalities and their connection to health. Marilyn Waring explains what can be gained from time use surveys in her most recent book *Still Counting: Wellbeing, Women's Work and Policy-making*:

“Time-use data provides a measure of the interdependence of the activities of household members, and the ways in which paid work, caring work, housework, community work, waiting for work, leisure and time spent on personal care are interrelated. This is vital for understanding how the impact of increased paid work by women leads to growth in market activity to replace formerly unpaid activity in the home, or how the devolution of government care services to the ‘community’ creates an increase in unpaid activity by invisible workers. When a recession hits or there is a cut in government spending, the unpaid workers step up, adding to their loads [leading to poor mental health outcomes, as showed by Lyndall Strazdin’s work]. Without time-use surveys evidence to this effect is lost...The basic time-use data is, however, fundamental for the challenges confronting public policy and indeed the public purse...”ⁱⁱ

In *Still Counting: Wellbeing, Women’s Work and Policy-making*, Marilyn also gives an example of the important data that can be uncovered through time use surveys:

“I remember a time-use survey...in the UK uncovering that over 10,000 children under twelve who were caring for adults for more than 40 hours a week. The magnitude of this capability issue has led the UK to continue collecting this data.”

Without time-use surveys, these important data sets around work and care (and not only for women) are never measured, remaining invisible. Further, “time-use surveys are vital for all decision makers who have a commitment to intergenerational equity.”ⁱⁱⁱ

3. VWT’s work with La Trobe university

Since January of this year, VWT has been working with two La Trobe university academics to develop survey questions attempting to capture the depth and breadth of baby boomer women’s unpaid work and care work in Australia. Despite media images of leisure-driven retirees “living it up” and spending their children’s inheritance, many baby boomer women will face financial security in old age. One in three will retire with no superannuation according to the Senate Inquiry into Economic Security for Women in Retirement (2015). Compared with men, boomer women are disadvantaged by their histories of discontinuous employment, unpaid work, and care-giving. Many must balance intergenerational care of spouses, adult children, elderly parents and grandchildren with employment, voluntary work, and the social responsibilities of “successful” ageing. We are expecting that this survey will go live in 2020.

The VWT is happy to provide any extra detail about this survey to PAEC.

4. Endorsement of GEN VIC’s submission

As a member of Gender Equity Victoria, the Victorian Women’s Trust supports in full the recommendations put forward by GEN VIC in *their Back on Track: Gender Responsive Budgeting Submission*. These recommendations are as follows:

- Recommendation 1:** That the Victorian Government adopt global best practice in the establishment, implementation and resourcing of gender responsive budgeting in the State of Victoria.
- Recommendation 2:** That gender responsive budgeting be aligned to the Victorian Gender Equality Strategy and the forthcoming Victorian Gender Equality Act.
- Recommendation 3:** That the Office for Women be protected from further machinery of government changes, to enable whole of government oversight of gender equity and gender responsive budgeting.

Recommendation 4: That the Department of Treasury & Finance publish annual data on the gender make up of the department, including the representation of women on the boards of its agencies, affiliates and entities.

Recommendation 5: That the Department of Treasury and Finance establish a specialist gender economics unit to plan, implement and evaluate gender responsive budgeting, to be supported by the Office of Women’s Equality. The gender economics unit should:

- a. be structured, as other Treasury units are, to withstand changes of government.
- b. ensure all economic and fiscal data is collected in a disaggregated way to measure the differential impacts of the Victorian Budget on women and gender diverse people.
- c. lead whole-of-government gender analysis across the budget cycle, working closely with the Office of Women, to develop Gender Equality Budget Statements, with high level analysis of the impact of annual budget decisions, outputs and asset investments on Victorian women and gender diverse people.

Recommendation 6: That Department of Treasury & Finance’s Resource Management Framework be updated to include accountability for gender responsive budgeting.

Recommendation 7: That the Treasury Annual Report include a quality performance measure related to gender equality and gender responsive budgeting in its Revenue Management and Administrative Services to Government

Recommendation 8. That the Department of Treasury & Finance support the establishment of a Gender Equality Budget Group, bringing together civil society organisations, gender economic experts within government and the academy to inform the development of gender responsive budgeting in Victoria, including greater transparency, accountability and analysis. 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. An outline of the expenditure required to establish a Gender Equality Budget Group is at Appendix C of this report

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Endnotes:

ⁱ Strazdins, L 2018, *Summer Intensive Transcript*, VWT, 4.

ⁱⁱ Waring M 2018, *Still Counting: Wellbeing, Women's Work and Policy-making*, Bridget Williams Books Limited, Wellington, 99-101.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 110.