

Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting

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Organisation Name: Australian Women Donors Network

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YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

2 December, 2019

Gender Responsive Budgeting Secretariat
Parliament of Victoria
Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002
Phone: 03 8682 2867

Dear Members of the Inquiry,

On behalf of the Australian Women Donors Network I'd like to thank you for examining the critical issue of gender responsive budgeting and for the opportunity to make a submission. We know that in the absence of a gender lens, philanthropic funding does not equitably benefit women and girls. While data on Australian giving is limited, the U.S metrics in the recent report from the Women's Philanthropy Institute on support for organisations serving women and girls is very instructive. Given the size of government funding it is even more critical that budget decisions are made through gender lens so we warmly welcome this Inquiry.

Introduction

This submission is made by the Australian Women Donors Network, a national organisation that works to engage with private philanthropy and corporate giving to increase the flow of funding to organisations and projects that support women and girls and deliver greater gender equality. We advocate for greater investment in women and girls and provide education and resources to support a gender lens across philanthropy for all social issues. For more information on the Australian Women Donors Network please visit our website www.womendonors.org.au and review the attached resources.

Our submission is concerned with the distribution of State Government grants, and in particular the need for these grants to be distributed in a way that considers the particular needs of women and girls. We support a gender lens across all areas of government budgeting however the focus of this submission is on Victorian State Government and Local Government grants.

Background

Despite significant progress in gender equality among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, gender gaps currently persist in education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life opportunities and outcomes. These persistent gaps highlight the reality that, while we are making progress, there is still a long way to go to reach gender equality, and, in some areas, we are going

backwards (OECD, 2019).

We are proud that both the Federal Government and the Victorian State Government in Australia implemented gender responsive budgeting in the 1980's, making Australia the first country in the world to consider gender in the national budget. Since 2018, 17 OECD countries including Mexico, Chile, Korea, Italy have introduced gender budgeting with France and Turkey planning to introduce it shortly (OECD, 2019).

The current Victorian State Government has made a significant and commendable commitment to combat Domestic Violence with its Family Violence Rolling Action Plan 2017-2020 and we would like to see this government continue to lead the way in the push towards gender equality by further deepening and broadening the way gender is considered in the budget.

Gender Responsive Budgeting

Gender Responsive Budgeting is one of the focus areas for UN Women and, as they state on their website: "Gender-responsive budgeting is not about creating separate budgets for women, or solely increasing spending on women's programs. Rather, gender-responsive budgeting seeks to ensure that the collection and allocation of public resources is carried out in ways that are effective and contribute to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment" (UN Women, 2019)

The need for gender responsive budgeting is clear, as funding decisions made without a gender lens underserve women and girls, and this counts as much for state and federal budgets as it does private and corporate philanthropy – which is our area of expertise (Capek, M.E.S., Mead, M 2006).

The results of research conducted by Coleman (2002) demonstrate that the design of societal structures inherently masculine and most areas of decision making are affected by the male default and unconscious bias that favours men at the expense of women. While not necessarily deliberately designed in this way, for historical and social reasons our systems and processes are inadvertently set up to privilege the needs of men.

Evidence has shown that the distribution of philanthropic contributions in corporate settings is often based on the personal values of managers and decision makers rather than being informed by an objective analysis of social needs (Werbel and Carter 2002). Without a strategy that explicitly deals with gender and other unconscious biases, government budgetary decisions and grant-making has the potential to be influenced by the same gender bias and unconscious biases as any other grant- making organisation.

Deepening Gender Responsive Budgeting through grant making.

The first step to addressing a problem like this is to measure it. We have been successful in recent years in engaging with both SmartyGrants and Blackbaud, who produce and maintain grant making software, to include or commit to including questions around gender as standard in their applications and recommend that the State Government implement similar measures.

We believe that how decisions are made about distributing these grants, including which organisations are funded and who those organisations are planning to support, needs to be made public and the relevant data disaggregated by gender.

There are broadly five parts of the grant making process that could be hiding gender bias:

1. Granting Purpose: What is the grant for? Who is it designed to primarily benefit?
2. Grant Advertising: in terms of the language used as well as where and how they are advertised.
3. The application form and process itself - how hard/easy is it to fill out, how long is it, what kinds of questions are asked and how are they asked.
4. The decision-making process: Who makes the decision? Are there criteria? What are they? Is there a policy for how these decisions are made? Who wrote the policy? Has it been evaluated for gender bias?
5. The impact evaluation process needs to report on outcomes by gender or can imply that women were equally served even where this is not the case..

Recommendations:

That the State Government:

1. implements a gender lens across all budgeting and grant-making processes.
2. establishes a central reporting system for state government grant-making across all departments to include specific measures capturing whether the grant will primarily benefit men and boys, women and girls or all genders.
3. determines whether there are hidden gender biases in established grant-making processes, i.e. the way grants are advertised, where they are advertised, the language used and the way the application forms are designed.
4. ensures decision makers are made aware of the potential for unconscious bias in grant-making and ensures policies be put in place, and training provided, to mitigate this risk.
5. advocates for other government bodies to adopt this approach: already leading in many areas, we believe that the Victorian State Government is well placed to champion this deepening of Gender Responsive Budgeting and respectfully request that they advocate to other State Governments and our National Government to follow suit.

We also refer to articles linked below from the Economist and from Business Insider which strongly endorse the need to adopt gender budgeting.

References:

- Capek, M.E.S., Mead, M 2006 'Effective philanthropy: organisational success through deep diversity and gender equality', The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts.
- Coleman, G 2002, 'Gender, power and post-structuralism in corporate citizenship: a personal perspective on theory and change', The Journal of Corporate Citizenship, pp. 17-21.
- OECD.org. (2019). Oecd.org. [online] Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/gender/Gender-Budgeting-in-OECD-countries.pdf> [Accessed 27 Nov. 2019].
- OECD.org. (2019). Gender budgeting - OECD. [online] Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/gov/budgeting/gender-budgeting.htm> [Accessed 27 Nov. 2019].
- unwomen.org.au. (2019). UNWomen. [online] Available at: <https://unwomen.org.au/our-work/focus-areas/what-is-gender-responsive-budgeting/> [Accessed 27 Nov. 2019].
- Whiteman, R. 2019, "Let's balance the books on gender", Public Finance, , no. 1, pp. 42.
Check this for the recommendations: https://www.unisa.edu.au/siteassets/episerver-6-files/global/eass/hri/grb_papers_australia_comm-sec-updf_final-copy-.pdf
- A sample of other relevant references:
<https://www.economist.com/leaders/2017/02/23/why-governments-should-introduce-gender-budgeting>
<https://www.businessinsider.com.au/economic-policy-ignores-women-basic-theories-men-gender-bias-2019-11?r=US&IR=T>
<https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-07/Ending-Family-Violence-10-Year-Plan.pdf>
<https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/institutes/womens-philanthropy-institute/newest-report/index.html>

END OF SUBMISSION BY THE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN DONORS NETWORK

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:

I would strongly recommend the work of the 5050 Foundation attached to Canberra University which has a wealth of research around inequality affecting women and girls and the economics of ensuring budgets and government grants are made through a gender lens.

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