



VICTORIA POLICE

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee - Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting

Victoria Police submission

1. Introduction

Victoria Police welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's (the Committee) Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting. In this submission, Victoria Police addresses the following focus areas of the Committee's Inquiry:

- gender responsive budgeting initiatives and outcomes
- developments in gender responsive budgeting
- public reporting on activities
- national and international developments in gender responsive budgeting.

Victoria Police supports gender equality and makes an ongoing commitment to ensure that gender focused initiatives are consistently implemented across the organisation. Victoria Police believes that achieving gender equality is of critical importance and is determined to achieve gender equality by 2030, in line with the objectives and measures set out in the Victoria Police Outcome Monitoring Framework (Appendix A).

2. Victoria Police gender responsive budgeting initiatives and outcomes

Over the past six years, Victoria Police has introduced a substantial number of gender responsive budgeting initiatives that have produced significant outcomes for the organisation. These initiatives and outcomes are outlined below.

In 2014, Victoria Police engaged the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) to complete an independent review into sex discrimination and sexual harassment, including predatory behaviour within Victoria Police. VEOHRC conducted the review and published the findings in three phases. The first phase was published in 2015 and since then Victoria Police has been delivering a significant reform agenda, to respond to the findings from VEOHRC's Independent Review into Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment, including Predatory Behaviour in Victoria Police (the Review).¹

VEOHRC Review Response, Partnerships and Innovation Unit

Victoria Police responded to the Review by creating a stand-alone unit called VEOHRC

¹ Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, *Independent Review Into Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment, Including Predatory Behaviour in Victoria Police*, Audit and Review No 3 (2019).

Review Response, Partnerships and Innovation. The role of the unit is to coordinate and implement the recommendations of the Review. Victoria Police committed to significant practice and cultural reform in order to achieve gender equality and create safe, inclusive and respectful workplaces. This included budgeting for the development of numerous gender focused initiatives.

Taskforce Salus - a new specialist investigative unit in Victoria Police

In 2015, Victoria Police created a specialist investigative unit called Taskforce Salus that has responsibility for delivering improved capability and reducing harm arising from sexual harassment, sexual assault and predatory behaviours. Taskforce Salus is in place to investigate allegations of sexual harassment and sexual assault made against current or former Police, Protective Services Officers and Victoria Public Sector staff. Taskforce Salus has established a victim centric model and support for victims and witnesses. The operating models have drawn on best practice learning from women's support services and now includes two embedded welfare and support roles. This unit has delivered a more responsive and sensitive environment for women who are subject to or have witnessed sexual assault, sexual harassment or predatory behaviour. Access to the service is available to all Victoria Police employees, however, the majority of complaints and issues registered with the unit are related to women being impacted as victims or witnesses.

The Victoria Police Gender Equality and Inclusion Command

Victoria Police has committed to establish a Gender Equality and Inclusion Command to focus on providing ongoing services and support to ensure gender quality in the workplace. The Command, which commenced on 1 January 2020, is led by an Assistant Commissioner. The new Command will build organisational capability to achieve a clear set of outcomes as outlined and recommended in the Review. The Gender Equality and Inclusion Command will support Victoria Police to achieve gender equality by operating as a centre for excellence which delivers:

- Capability and leadership development. This will involve the provision of support to enhance capability and leadership development across Victoria Police and deliver place-based approaches aimed at improving gender equality.
- Cultural change and strategic engagement. This will involve the provision of support to build understanding and support for gender equality initiatives and outcomes in Victoria Police.
- Oversight and monitoring. This will involve measuring and reporting gender equality outcomes and the effectiveness of gender equality efforts in Victoria Police.

The key elements of this new work include:

- A gender explicit focus, in recognition of the recommendations made by VEOHRC in the Review, about the need to address the specific gendered drivers of workplace harm and gender inequality.

- A focus on a clear set of outcomes that measure the achievement of gender equality, rather than relying on recommendation acquittal as the key measure of success.
- A focus on workplaces as key sites for change, to ensure even implementation of reforms across Victoria and a proactive approach that is not solely reliant on central levers to motivate and drive change.
- Repositioning gender equality to improve how police serve the community, particularly for women and children experiencing family violence, sexual offences and child abuse. This recognises that gender equality not only improves the workplace for employees but is also fundamental to our ability to protect women and children.

Restorative Engagement and Redress Scheme

Victoria Police has established a restorative justice program for all victims and survivors of workplace harm. The Restorative Engagement and Redress Scheme (RERS) commenced on 12 December 2019. The restorative engagement component to RERS will commence on 1 July 2020. The scheme has been established to allow victims/survivors to discuss their experiences and the harm those experiences have caused with those who are responsible. All of the parties agree on a course of action to heal the harm and financial redress may be provided. Restorative justice processes can promote healing, empower victims/survivors and provide a powerful opportunity for listening, accountability and learning.

The RERS scheme is open to all employees including Victorian Public Servants, Protective Services Officers and Police Custody Officers. A RERS Welfare Committee has been established as an interagency forum to ensure consistent support messaging and pathways. Communication materials have also been developed in relation to the scheme. The RERS is independent of Victoria Police and is operating as a standalone business unit within the Department of Justice and Community Safety.

One Link to support the health and wellbeing of Victoria Police employees

Victoria Police offers a range of services to support the health and wellbeing of employees. A new initiative called Onelink has been implemented to provide a confidential service to all current and former employees who are impacted by workplace harm. The initiative is in place to empower those personally impacted to make a decision that best suits their circumstances. Onelink is a centralised referral point providing advice, support and guidance to current and former employees impacted by all inappropriate and workplace harm related behaviours including: bullying, discrimination, harassment and workplace conflict. Onelink also provides advice to workplace supervisors and managers who have received information about a workplace harm matter. This advice and support will improve the organisations capability in managing and resolving workplace harm matters and improving the triage, internal support and reporting pathways. Onelink was created for all employees, however, there is a direct impact for women through creation of a centralised advice, support and referral pathway that assists with issues most frequently experienced by female employees at Victoria Police.

The Gender Impact Analysis tool

The Capability Department within Victoria Police is currently implementing a Gender Impact Analysis tool to align internal policies with the principles outlined in the Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan. The Gender Impact Analysis tool was developed in partnership with the Victorian Government as part of a pilot project led by the Office for Women. The tool will support Victoria Police to apply a gendered analysis to new policies and ensure gender

equality principles are embedded in policy changes. The tool will help to develop policies which strengthen women's economic security through workforce participation and support the movement of women into leadership positions.

An improved pregnancy policy to benefit pregnant employees

Since 2017, Victoria Police has undertaken significant work to support pregnant employees. In early 2018, Victoria Police amended the pregnancy policy to give stronger decision-making power to female employees about any changes to their regular duties during pregnancy. Decisions about such alternate duties are now based on advice from the employee's medical practitioner, in consultation with the employee, rather than unilaterally by their manager. Victoria Police also produced a detailed guide for the employee's doctor, to assist them in assessing any risks associated with the employee's regular duties. These changes provide agency to female employees to determine how they will work during their pregnancy. These are positive changes that have potential to contribute to a more supportive process for pregnant employees.

The parental leave backfill program

In July 2018, Victoria Police implemented the parental leave backfill program to help manage parental leave absences and break down the stigma associated with pregnancy, parental leave and care. The first phase of the roll out consisted of 103 police officers and seven PSOs positions deployed from June 2018 to cover primary carer leave positions. There were 45 backfill positions in country Victoria, 29 positions in specialist departments, 29 police officer positions in metropolitan Melbourne and seven positions in the Transit Safety Division.² The second phase of the rollout consisted of a further 105 police officer resources that were deployed from May 2019. There were seven positions in specialist departments and 98 positions in metropolitan Melbourne. A reserve pool of 11 police officers were also brought forward from year three and four of the program as part of the second phase rollout.

To accompany the program, detailed guidance was provided to managers to support the allocation of backfill positions. The parental leave backfill scheme has helped with the management of parental leave absences and some police members have reported more positive pregnancy and parental leave experiences.³ A significant portion of female employees are currently accessing the parental leave backfill program.

As of 13 January 2020, all 219 positions were allocated and 122 were subsequently reallocated when the member returned to work. This supported other members to utilise the parental leave entitlements. The program received \$103,350,500 in output funding and \$8,705,000 of asset funding for a four-year period.

Victoria Police's work in improving our understanding of family violence and gender

The Victorian Government produced a plan titled *Ending Family Violence – 10-year plan for change* that aims to prevent and respond to family violence. Victoria Police has also developed the *Policing Harm, Upholding the Right: Victoria Police strategy for Family Violence, Sexual Offences and Child Abuse 2018-2023*. The strategy aligns with the Victorian Government plan and acknowledges that these crimes come from deeply gendered social and political issues that are grounded in intersectional and structural inequalities and imbalances of power.

These documents and the current reform agenda recognise that women and children comprise

² Ibid 174.

³ Ibid 174-175.

the overwhelming majority of victims of family violence. They have also enhanced Victoria Police's understanding and response to violence against women and children and the provision of services to all victims.

An understanding of the gendered nature of these crimes underpins all the work that Victoria Police is undertaking. Victoria Police is reforming our service delivery and developing and providing career-long education and training across the organisation to ensure police responses are informed by a strong understanding of family violence dynamics.

Gender focused outcomes achieved by Victoria Police

Since 2015, Victoria Police has achieved the following outcomes as a result of gender focused initiatives.

- A significant increase in the number of women undertaking senior leadership roles. This includes increases in female participation at the ranks of constable (+1.2 per cent), sergeant (+3.9 per cent), senior sergeant (+5.4 per cent), superintendent (+7.5 per cent) and inspector (+21.8 per cent).⁴ During the period between December 2015 and August 2018, women comprised 40 per cent of all new Command appointments.⁵ A Command is a senior level appointment within the Victoria Police organisational structure.
- A significant increase in the number of women working flexible hours and undertaking flexible work arrangements, including working from home days. In 2018, 37.9 per cent of female police members accessed flexible work arrangements, compared to 27.2 per cent in 2017.⁶
- A record in the number of both male and female employees who have received online education about gender discrimination and harassment. Currently, 19,000 employees or 92 per cent of the workforce has completed the online modules which educate the workforce about gender equality.
- An increase in the proportion of female PSO recruits.⁷
- A 1.9 per cent reduction in the gender pay gap from 9.5 per cent in 2016 to 7.6 per cent in 2018.⁸
- Increased support for flexible work arrangements - 61 per cent of female police and 69 per cent of female PSO said their manager had supported their access to flexible work 'a lot' or 'a great deal'.⁹
- A change in the number of female police members applying for promotions. From 2016-2018, men and women were equally likely to apply for promotions within the organisation.¹⁰
- A change in the number of police members applying for transfers. From 2016-18 male and female police members were equally likely to apply for transfers and women were more likely to be successful.¹¹ During this period, 18.9 per cent of women who applied for a

⁴ Ibid 14.

⁵ Ibid 270.

⁶ Ibid 271.

⁷ Ibid 270.

⁸ Ibid 10.

⁹ Ibid 11.

¹⁰ Ibid 14.

¹¹ Ibid 273.

transfer were successful.¹²

- Significantly reduced timeframes for resolving workplace complaints.
- A significant increase in female Victorian Public Sector employees. By 2018, 68.9 per cent of the Victorian Public Sector employees at Victoria Police were female.¹³

3. Developments in gender responsive budgeting at Victoria Police

To support Victoria Police on its journey to achieving gender equality, VEOHRC developed an outcome monitoring framework (Appendix A) against which Victoria Police can measure its progress.¹⁴ The framework is a robust monitoring and evaluation tool that has enabled the assessment of the current state of gender equality within Victoria Police and set a baseline for ongoing work aimed at achieving gender equality by 2030. The outcome monitoring framework sets out 10 key areas of focus that are essential for achieving gender equality in Victoria Police by 2030. VEOHRC selected the 10 areas in the framework based on their: expertise in equal opportunity and human rights laws; experience in improving workplace equality and understanding of Victoria Police.

4. Implications of gender responsive budgeting for Victoria Police

Victoria Police has recognised an opportunity to improve reporting and data collection by disaggregating gendered workforce data. The continued use of gendered disaggregated data will drive improved: gender budgeting initiatives; workforce understanding of gendered drivers to workplace harm and gender specific issues. Disaggregated data will assist Victoria Police to deliver an improved and gender specific capability that will assist with early intervention and reduce the occurrence of gendered issues. A lack of disaggregated data can affect the development of interventions and prevention mechanisms for gendered harm. Aggregated data also limits the ability to see intersections in other areas of harm, such as mental and physical health, and prevents a suite of workplace issues from being fully understood and addressed.

5. Victoria Police and public reporting

VEOHRC has identified that a key factor to Victoria Police successfully achieving gender equality outcomes is the organisation's openness to being publicly accountable and transparent about the treatment of women in the organisation. Consequently, in the final phase of the Review, VEOHRC recommended that Victoria Police continues to report publicly on the progress of achieving gender equality outcomes. The VEOHRC recommendation is in line with the Victorian Government's Gender Equality Bill 2019 currently before parliament, which requires public sector agencies to publicly report on their progress towards achieving gender equality outcomes.

Victoria Police considers that full transparency and public reporting, ensures accountability and an ongoing commitment to achieving gender equality outcomes. Victoria Police believes that statewide agreed reporting metrics and common datasets would allow for ongoing assessment of work programs being developed to deliver gender equality.

6. National and international developments in gender responsive budgeting

The Queensland Police Service has introduced a variety of initiatives aimed at creating a fair and positive workplace for all employees. In particular, the Queensland Police Service has

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid 9.

¹⁴ Ibid 322.

introduced funding support for the establishment of a Professional Development scheme. This scheme is open and accessibility to all employees of the ranks of Inspector and above and allows for a capped refund of money linked to the professional development of employees. The model, in part, recognises the lack of flexible work options linked to many police development courses and allows for women to select family friendly development options to suit their work arrangements.

At a federal level, the *Women in Law Enforcement Strategy* (WILES) has been established to deliver a mentoring program to encourage women to pursue careers and senior positions in Australian law enforcement and regulatory services. Participation in WILES is open to suitably qualified individuals from the Criminal Justice Law Enforcement Forum member agencies.

Internationally, the United Kingdom supports a National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) which brings together police forces in the United Kingdom to help coordinate reform in policing. The NPCC has a number of sub-committees including the NPCC Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Committee which exists to improve and support police forces in the 'valuing of difference' in the regions they serve across the country. The *NPCC Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy 2018-2025* delivers a national reference point for gender equality initiatives in policing that allows for improved benchmarking and shared resources. Examples of outcomes around gender responsive budgeting through the NPCC include health: support and advice for women experiencing menopause and ongoing development of operational equipment such as ballistic vests.

7. Conclusion

Victoria Police is committed to undertaking ongoing work to achieve gender equality across the organisation by 2030. Victoria Police will continue to develop and implement gender responsive budgeting initiatives and improve gender equality.

Victoria Police kindly requests ongoing consultation during the development of the gender responsive budgeting report and is happy to assist with any further questions.

Appendix A

VICTORIA POLICE IN 2030					
Leadership drives a culture of inclusion and respect		✓	Pregnant employees, and parents and carers are supported		✓
The voices of women are elevated across the organisation		✓	Promotion and progression processes are fair and accessible to all employees		✓
The values of safety, respect and inclusion drive employee behaviour		✓	Workplace harm is addressed consistently and confidentially, and responses put the victim at the centre		✓
Women are paid and represented equally across all ranks and roles		✓	The complaints and discipline systems are fair, timely, accessible and victim-centric		✓
All employees are supported to work flexibly		✓	Data collection and reporting drive accountability and continuous improvement		✓
LEADERSHIP 	WOMEN'S VOICES 	VALUES 	REPRESENTATION AND EQUAL PAY 	FLEXIBILITY 	
Senior leaders continuously champion and are accountable for achieving organisational gender equality	Women are represented in the strategic leadership of gender equality reforms	Increased employee recognition of the problem of gender inequality and the need for reform	Increased representation of women across the workforce	Increased uptake of flexible work for women and men	
Senior leaders are held to account for their behaviours and the culture of their workplaces	Women's perspectives and experiences are elevated across the organisation	Employees behave respectfully to one another	Equal pay and superannuation for all employees	Increased positive attitudes to, and support for, flexible work	
PREGNANT EMPLOYEES, AND PARENTS AND CARERS 	PROMOTION AND PROGRESSION 	SAFETY AND VICTIM-CENTRICITY 	COMPLAINTS AND DISCIPLINE 	DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING 	
Pregnant employees are supported and no employee experiences pregnancy discrimination	Women have increased access to professional development and training	Creation of a best-practice redress and restorative engagement scheme for victims/survivors	Increased timeliness and consistency of responses to workplace harm	Increase in regular data collection, analysis and reporting with clear lines of accountability	
Parenting and caring responsibilities are not barriers to progression and promotion	Selection processes are fair and impartial, and mechanisms exist to address and reduce bias	Decreased rates of harm across the organisation and greater victim-centricity in responses to harm	Increased employee trust in the complaints and disciplinary systems and perceptions that they are robust and fair outcomes	Increase in data analysis supported by processes to address risks and issues	
	Women have increased access to higher duties and at-level assignment opportunities	Increased safety and respect for all recruits		Increase in the measurement of internal and external accountability against key metrics	