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Victorian Local Learning and Employment Networks (VicLLENs)

**Submission to the Victorian Parliament's Public Accounts & Estimates Committee
Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting**

VicLLENs support in full the recommendations put forward by Gender Equity Victoria in their *Back on Track: Gender Responsive Budgeting Submission* (recommendations below).

VicLLENs is particularly interested in how Government can apply a gender lens to education budgets, including grants it releases to improve careers education and pathways in schools. A recent LLEN youth led-internship *How Work Works: getting young women into trades* (attached), confirmed what other research has shown, that the education system contributes to a life long process of young people 'editing out' career options on the basis of gender.¹

Australia has a gender pay gap. It exists partly because men work in higher paid, occupations and jobs to women, including in the high paying (and in high-demand) trades of electrotechnology, telecommunications, construction, commerce and engineering. Few women take up these trades, and that has changed little over the past 20 years. Victoria also has significant skills shortages in these occupations – they make up 11 of the top 20 occupational labour shortages – and jobs in these areas are growing. Skills shortages put a hand brake on our recovery and on regional growth.

Some young women are very well suited to the higher paid, male dominated trades, but arrive at the point of making the choice full of doubt and lacking confidence. Our research confirms what has been established in other research – girls go through a process of 'editing out' options about what they think they can be from an early age. It starts before school with messages about "girls don't do ...", and continues with negative messages about "university being the best pathway", "trades are wasting your potential" and "women are not strong enough".

Teachers and careers advisors need the backing of education policy to be able to actively encourage young women to step away from the academic stream, consider trades, and learn what advice, support, role models and opportunities are available. Coming into their guidance roles without experiencing a full range of employment pathways limits their capacity to accurately represent trades to their students and identify young women who are suited to this work early in their decision making.

Many of the tradies we interviewed took a female dominated pathway first, before having the confidence to try their trade. This means young women can start out towards the higher incomes 7 to 10 years behind their male counterparts.

Focusing Government expenditure on providing training opportunities, such as apprenticeships earmarked for young women, are unfortunately unlikely to work. To be able to make that choice, young women need more contact with female tradies earlier in school ("you can't be what you can't see"), and more opportunities to try out and explore options to find out what suits them and develop their confidence ("get on the tools").

¹ *How Work Works: getting young women into trades. Youth-led research into what schools can do to help young women consider higher paying (male dominated) trades* was produced by NCLLEN, CRLLEN, CCLLEN, Goldfields LLEN with Tradewomen Australia, under the LLENs initiative Youth Take Over, sponsored by Kirkland Lake Gold.



This requires a gendered lens to be put over government expenditure to ensure we:

1. Challenge gender stereotypes in primary school
2. Upskill secondary school leadership, careers advisors, and teachers so they can advise on vocational opportunities
3. Fund a secondary careers education model that gets trades on young women's radars
4. Develop experiences to get young women "on the tools" so they can feel more confident in their decisions

Supporting young women to get to their best job, and addressing our skills shortages and gender pay gap along the way, will ensure we have an innovative and thriving Victorian economy into the future.

VicLLENs therefore supports the recommendations of Gender Equity Victoria to institutionalise gender responsive budgeting in the Victorian Government, and in particular the formation of a gender economics unit that can monitor the gender equity pay gap and the other barriers facing young people getting to their best job.

It supports the need to institutionalise gender responsive government in an economic unit of DTF as per these recommendations:

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.

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.