

# TRANSCRIPT

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting

Melbourne—Tuesday, 10 December 2019

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**WITNESS**

Ms Penelope McKay, Deputy Secretary, Corporate Services, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

**The CHAIR:** I declare the meeting reopened and welcome people to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting. If telephones have not already been, could they please be turned to silent. All evidence taken by this Committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. Therefore you are protected against any action for what you say here today, but if you go outside and repeat the same things, including on social media, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. You will be provided with a transcript for you to check from today's testimony. Verified transcripts, PowerPoint presentations and handouts will be placed on the Committee's website as soon as possible. We welcome any media who may be here covering today's Inquiry, but we remind you of the following guidelines: cameras must remain focused only on the person speaking; operators must not pan the public gallery, the Committee or witnesses; and filming and recording must cease immediately at the completion of the hearing. Broadcasting or recording of this hearing by anyone other than accredited media is not permitted. Thank you very much for joining us here today. We invite you to make a 10- to 15-minute presentation, and we will follow that with questions.

**Ms McKAY:** Thank you. My name is Penelope McKay. I am the Deputy Secretary for Corporate Services at the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions. I am here for Simon Phemister, who unfortunately could not be here as he is travelling overseas at the moment with the Minister.

I wanted to firstly thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today on the opportunities to ensure that public sector management contributes to gender equality. I want to begin by acknowledging the First Peoples and traditional owners of the land, the people of the Kulin nation, and pay my respect to elders past and present. I also want to acknowledge that today is the International Human Rights Day and the final of 16 days of activism for the prevention of gender-based violence, so it is a great day to be talking to you about these important issues.

What I thought I would do today is three things: firstly, just talk about the context and why gender responsive budgeting is important in the context of my department; secondly, I want to talk about my department and some of the initiatives that we have done in this space; and thirdly, I want to talk about the internal processes in my department and what we have done in terms of thinking about our employees and our internal corporate governance to ensure that we are reflecting gender responsive budgeting within our own department.

In terms of the context and the environment, we recognise that gender responsive budgeting matters because we know that there are significant disparities between men and women and gender-diverse people. The State Government has established the *Safe and Strong* strategy. This strategy sets the foundations for us thinking about these issues in the future. It also has a part that committed to the gender equality budget statements. My department is focused on creating more jobs for more people and thinking about economic development and making sure that everyone benefits from economic development.

In terms of the gender equality budget statements, the last statement looked at achieving economic security and looked at some of the issues around gender in relation to economic security. As highlighted in that report, we know that women are still earning an average of \$231 a week less than men, and while the female participation rate has gone up—in March 2019 the female participation rate was 60.8 per cent, up from 58.5 per cent in June, and unemployment is also low for women—we know that it is different for men and for women, and that was really highlighted in that report. That is an important foundational piece for my department, which looks at more jobs for more people and growing the Victorian economy for the benefit of all. We really welcome the strategy, the foundation, and we welcome the gender impact assessment tools that have been developed to assist our department in thinking through gender responsive budgeting.

In terms of my department, we started on 1 January this year. We employ about 2800 people at 55 locations across Victoria and 21 locations around the world. We support six Ministers and span 10 different portfolios across metropolitan, regional and international offices. So when we think about gender responsive budgeting we thought that we would talk to you about some of the things we have done in the various different portfolios

that my department represents. I wanted to just highlight some of the plethora of issues that we are undertaking in this space to give you a taste of where we are at in relation to thinking about responsive budgeting.

First of all, I wanted to talk about sport and recreation, where we have established the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation. This office was established in 2017, following the Victorian Government Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation. That report shed light on gender inequality in Victorian sport and recreation and highlighted some approaches that we could take going forward. Following the inquiry, the Change our Game initiative was launched, and that was designed to challenge gender stereotypes in sport and rec and help girls to become leaders in the industry as well as more active participants. We have had a range of initiatives that have been spelt out in previous budget papers as well as this one, including importantly \$1.5 million for workforce development programs as well as the \$21 million in the Female Friendly Facilities Fund that was established. So that is in sport and rec, where we are doing a wide range of initiatives from participation to leadership in the industry.

Another portfolio that my department covers is Creative Victoria. There are a range of initiatives that are being done in the arts area. I thought that I would focus on Film Victoria, which has given support to a wide range of gender diversity programs. Interestingly, because my department looks at jobs as well as creativity, we think a lot about jobs in the creative sector. One of the emerging areas is around the games industry. That is an area that has traditionally been very male dominated. So Film Victoria has made an investment in women in leadership and also looked at supporting women and non-binary games practitioners who are seeking to advance their careers and leadership in the games industry through an initiative called the Girl Geek Academy Games Career Incubator—sorry, it is a mouthful. It is an incubator that was announced in March of this year, and it is really designed to support girls and women who are wanting to make a career in the games industry. That shows the intersection between creative jobs as well as looking at a women focus in that area.

Our portfolios also cover trade, and we are really proud of the support that we have given to women across a range of initiatives to help them to link their businesses to the world economy in support of Victoria's prosperity. To give you an example of the investment that we have made and the impact that it has had, the proportion of women-led businesses involved in Victoria's trade programs has nearly doubled from 13 per cent in 2014 to 25 per cent in 2018–19. This has been a result of a range of initiatives that have been invested in to support women in trade, including a trade mission that occurred in April 2018 where Global Victoria organised the inaugural all-women trade mission to China that was led by the Minister for Women, the Honourable Natalie Hutchins, and delivered in conjunction with the Office of Prevention and Women's Equality. Fourteen Victorian businesses participated in that trade mission to Beijing, and it was an example of where we tried to link up with other departments and have a global focus to increase participation in women in the economy and connecting globally.

There have been a range of other initiatives that Victoria has invested in in that space, including that Victoria was the first state to introduce a women's category for the Governor of Victoria Export Awards. We have made sure in our Hamer scholarships, which are focused on language and cultural immersion, that we have got a high participation rate. In fact 51 per cent of the recipients have been female, and we have really thought about how we can connect women in those international activities as well as in our domestic economy.

Another area that our department covers, another portfolio, is Agriculture Victoria. One of the key investments in that area has been the Victorian Rural Women's Network, which provides information, networking opportunities, professional development events and a leadership and mentoring program. This was funded at \$1.7 million over four years in the 17–18 budget, with an additional half a million over three years in 19–20 for a leadership and mentoring program. As part of that we also particularly look at women in science and technology, and Agriculture Victoria has a women in STEM program that aims to improve the inclusion and attraction and equality of women in that industry.

My department also covers the jobs innovation business engagement areas, and in that we have made a number of investments to make sure women are fully participating in the economy. One of the initiatives that I would like to highlight is the Digital Innovation Festival, which is an initiative that is delivered over two weeks across the state that is designed to promote gender diversity by profiling women in technology, and it supports a number of events. One of the areas of inquiry that you are looking at today is what impact this has, and we do try and measure not just the gender responsive budgeting but also what the impact of the initiative has been. It

is sometimes difficult to get data on the direct impact of an initiative, but we use a range of measures. To give you an example, one of the things we looked is the social media presence following that Digital Innovation Festival. We looked at the Twitter social media, which achieved a media presence of 45 per cent female engagement, which well outperforms the industry female participation rate of 28 per cent. So we are looking at how we can really attract women into those kinds of networks and festivals that we support.

Another portfolio we cover is Small Business Victoria, and we have a number of programs that are deliberately designed to help communities that find it more difficult in entering the small business economy. So we deliver small business workshops to migrant and asylum seeker women. It is embedded through the Brotherhood of St Laurence's Stepping Stones program, and it deliberately targets women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In 2019, 72 workshop sessions have already been delivered and we have got five more that are planned for the remainder of the year. So that is an example of many different initiatives we have got in the small business space to promote women.

The final couple of portfolios I wanted to mention were we also cover precincts and suburbs, and we look at regional partnerships as well as metropolitan partnerships. Through those partnerships, working with Government, it has been very informative as an input into the decision-making process. There are a number of ways that can occur. Five of the six metropolitan partnerships have a female chair, and all of the partnerships have an appropriate and satisfactory representation of gender. Those partnerships are also networked with their community and representing women's issues and talking to Government about some of those issues. Some of those representations have been really important through that Government decision-making process, including in relation to the \$82 million that was provided for women and girls in sport in the 2018–19 budget, as well as thinking at the local government level what needs to be done more locally to support women—and they played a real role in that process as well.

We also have regional partnerships, and those regional partnerships similarly have an appropriate and satisfactory level of women's participation on those partnerships and are also influencing how we think about rural women and what impact the government policies and funding initiatives have on rural women as well as, more broadly, the rural and regional portfolio.

So that is a brief overview of the things that we are doing as we face our clients and the Victorian people that we serve. We are also, like every other department, a fairly significant employer of people and spender of government money, so we think about our social procurement policies and ensuring that we are aligning with DTF policies—and I know DTF spoke with you earlier today about the social procurement framework. We also think about our employees and making sure we have got appropriate gender diversity at all levels throughout the department and that we are supporting women appropriately. Within our department we have embarked on a number of initiatives to make sure that there is gender equality. We have the Gender Equality Network for Everyone, which is a staff-led movement or support group for women. We have a member of our executive board that champions that group, and that group has had a number of meetings already with the Secretary of our department. We also have done a gender pay audit to ensure that we are moving towards our goal of gender pay equity, and we have also established a gender equity and inclusion framework and kicked off our first initiative under that, which is a gender equity program which is looking at how we can support women in our department in leadership, as well as data collection to ensure we have got transparency in gender-related equity issues.

An important part of that too, obviously, is ensuring that women in our department are treated appropriately. We looked very carefully at the People Matter survey response results and also participated in the recent VAGO audit of sexual harassment to ensure that we are responding appropriately. We are particularly focused on a zero-tolerance policy, making it very clear that all our leaders talk to our staff about zero tolerance of sexual harassment and making sure that we have education that is available and that is appropriate not only for potential alleged victims of sexual harassment but also for bystanders as well as offenders. We also look at the reporting that sits alongside that, making sure that there is a culture where people feel they can speak up about sexual harassment.

In conclusion, we are a broad department with many locations and covering 10 different ministerial portfolios. What I have tried to do today is set out how the Government's strategy, *Safe and Strong*, is a foundation for our work, how we have used the reporting to try and think carefully about the decision-making processes, the

initiatives that we have got that specifically target gender responsive issues and what evidence we have, where we have it, to look at what the outcome has been of our investment in those initiatives. We look forward to talking more with other departments and colleagues as we seek to make gender responsive budgeting part of our business as usual in the budget process.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you so much for that presentation. We will open up to questions.

**Mr RIORDAN:** Thank you, Chair. I am going to be ever so slightly controversial—not really. My question is: we have heard quite a few presentations today and departments have been very keen to tell us what they are doing at departmental level to meet the various goals and objectives of gender equity budgeting, but I have not heard a lot about the human element of what we are trying to achieve, and ultimately it has got to be about happier people, more contented people, more functional lives and lifestyles. A couple of us were talking at lunchtime. There is a human element where people do want to take time out from work and do want to pursue other things. Sometimes not everybody wants to measure their success by how many hours they have achieved at work but perhaps want to take time out for family, caring, all sorts of reasons, but then they want to be able to come back into the workforce. We have heard a lot about what we do for people in the workforce, but we have not heard anything, and I guess I have held this question for you at the department of jobs—I am not hearing about what we are doing to support people who make those choices in life to be out of the workforce for a period but then want to come back when their life circumstances have changed and they feel more comfortable about being fully engaged in work. Can you tell us anything about the gender budgeting policies or tools that exist that can support people outside of the workplace to come back and maintain a career again?

**Ms McKAY:** Yes. Can I just clarify: are you talking about coming back into the public service and us as employers?

**Mr RIORDAN:** Yes, so if you have had employees that for whatever reason want to take time out but really have enjoyed their job, obviously have a lot of skill sets. We have maternity leave and have these things that are relatively short term, but we are perhaps talking about people that might take 10 years of their life out, which can be detrimental to advancing careers, but they do then want to come back at some point. You know, we are all living longer and that sort of thing. Are there programs, initiatives, are there new concepts or ideas that we can continue to support those people to keep their skills up, make them feel still connected to the workplace or other things?

**Ms McKAY:** I guess we think about that in two ways. We think about that internally within our department as an employer, and because we are the jobs department we also think about the Victorian economy and what we are doing to help women who might have had a break from their career get back into their career and to participate in the economy outside of the Victorian public service. In terms of that latter focus on connecting people who want to get a job, we have the Jobs Victoria program which does assist people to find a job, and while the majority of that focus is on people who are leavers from education who are looking to get into the workforce for the first time or people who perhaps might be migrants who are coming to Victoria and are looking to get into the Victorian workforce for the first time, we do also look at employees who are wanting to get back into the workforce. A recent case was conveyed to me. There was a gentleman who was retired and he wanted to get back—it was a gentleman unfortunately in this case—into the workforce, so the Jobs Victoria program was able to assist him to get back into the workforce after a fairly significant break. We do have those programs that are focused on women as well who are wanting to get in, not just for the first time or who are coming to Victoria for the first time but might be wanting to get in after a career break, so they can be assisted through the Jobs Victoria program, which focuses on employees as well as employers and connecting them.

**Mr RIORDAN:** I guess I was perhaps thinking more of programs or initiatives that take, for example, someone that might be in their early 30s and they feel that they want to take 10 years out to look after an elderly parent or something or all sorts of reasons—children, elderly parent or anything. They might actually be more structured programs. It might be that you can go on a locum list, so that when annual leave and other leaves pop-up, ‘Would you be interested in doing short stints of work?’, or when staff training programs are available you might put those out to people that have shown an interest in coming back into the workplace—things like that, sort of more proactive, ongoing, so when people sort of register that they are stepping out of the workforce for a while they can still have their finger on the pulse if you like.

**Ms McKAY:** I think that entry or re-entry—those elements are a part of the Jobs Victoria program. We also think about that a lot within our own department, so we have flexible work arrangements to support—I know it is not quite answering your question—women who are currently in the workplace and are wanting to step down the amount of hours or days that they are working and give them flexibility around that. When they return after a period of leave, if they are still with us, we also have programs to help them step back up, with a lot of flexibility. Really the starting point is that all roles are flexible. There are roles where following a discussion it is not possible to make them flexible, but the starting point is how can we make it flexible to fit in with those needs that the employee might have if they are stepping up or stepping away from work. I guess where there has been a significant break, it has to be through some kind of re-entry program. But the targets that we have set certainly help us think about that, because when we are looking at targets, particularly more senior and leadership roles, in order to attract best possible candidates we need to be thinking flexibly and fairly about how we are attracting people into those roles, perhaps after a career break as well.

**Ms STITT:** Just thinking about gender responsive budgeting, are there some opportunities that might come to your department in terms of particular cohorts of unemployed or underemployed in our community that you think will benefit from a gender lens over employment programs? I am thinking of things like older women who might have been displaced out of industries that they have been in looking to be re-employed or women coming back into the workforce from child rearing.

**Ms McKAY:** When we think about employment, we do think about it by industry and by region and by cohort, and we think about the intersections that that can have. While we in Victoria have strong employment rates, when you go below that you can see there are pockets of disadvantage that are often geographic, which often pertains to the industry that might have been predominant in that geographic area. It is also very much cohort based, so we look at an overlay of industry, geography and cohort to identify very specifically the people that we need to target. That sort of analysis does really flush out where there are older women—to the previous question—who are looking for employment and we need specifically tailored programs. That is what we do focus on a lot, because our department is focusing on growing jobs through focusing on either the region or the industry that is a specific target. Then through our JobsBank program we also do focus on cohorts of people, as part of the Jobs Victoria program, who are particularly disadvantaged or particularly in need of government intervention to assist linking an employee up with a potential employer so that they can get a good match for their jobs with a very specific cohort target. There are different streams within Jobs Victoria who look at that issue.

**Ms STITT:** Okay. Just a follow-up question then; I asked this of another department that has been before us today. What are you doing as a department to make sure that your senior management and below understand that the *Gender Equality Bill* is coming down the track and these are policies that we are going to have to implement and change the culture around how we might look at expenditure and programs in the future?

**Ms McKAY:** One of the things that we have done in our department is think about what outcomes we are trying to achieve and really focus on those outcomes. We do that internally by looking regularly at our data and statistics around gender issues within our department and we also do it externally by looking at the economic targets that we are particularly looking at around employment by those areas that I was talking about before. By regularly looking at those outcomes that we are trying to achieve, we are then setting a process where we can think of how that filters down in terms of all the projects and proposals and budget spend to make sure that we are investing in the right areas to achieve those outcomes. That is the cultural bedrock that we are looking at in the department to make sure we have got a holistic approach to achieving these outcomes. Obviously we are working with Treasury as well to make sure that when we put forward our budget bids we have done all of the appropriate steps and used the toolkit as part of that budget process, but the budget process is for the new spend and we also want to make sure that our existing investment is appropriate as well.

**Ms RICHARDS:** Thanks for your evidence this afternoon. I am interested particularly in your role across government, and just pulling out a couple of key points you made in the submission, I am pleased to hear that you have such an increase in women in trade. Twenty-five per cent still is extraordinarily low. I was particularly exercised around how we are getting some of our refugee and asylum seeker people involved in small business, and I am very interested and engaged in the issues around the social procurement framework. Working across those three particular areas of interest, how are you ensuring that gender responsive budgeting

will be able to provide the best economic benefit for those particular three cohorts: women in trade; CALD women, but especially refugee and asylum seeker people who are gender diverse; and making sure that that benefit from the social procurement framework gets to where it needs to get to or where it has been designed to have the greatest impact? What levers does gender responsive budgeting provide in those three areas?

**Ms McKAY:** I guess to start off the question talking about our whole-of-government impact—

**Ms RICHARDS:** And the way you work across so that they are not operating in silos.

**Ms McKAY:** I did not highlight in those other initiatives I could have spoken to—a lot of the initiatives that we are involved with are ones that work across a number of departments, because when you look at women's participation rate in the workforce we know that in order to improve it we need to work with DHHS to think about women's role as carers; we need to work with Education to think about how women are tracking through the education system, so we do work a lot with other departments to achieve some of those initiatives. For example, JobsBank, which is an employment program that looks particularly at very disadvantaged people and connecting them to employers, we work very closely with DHHS to make sure those people have appropriate supports around them, because women in those situations often have complex and multiple needs. There is no point in having a provider who is going to place them with an employer if we have not already done that homework work with DHHS to make sure they have the right support functions around them. So we work very closely with DHHS and then also work with the potential employers to make sure that we can get a match between the person and the job that is available.

The JobsBank program is a really good example of where we have worked across governments. We had initial involvement very much with DPC to make sure we have the right policies; we worked very closely with DHHS and other departments—Education and Training as well as Justice—to work through an inter-departmental committee to make sure that when we designed that program it was truly collaborative because it is a difficult issue. You cannot address that problem with just one department.

That is an example of where in the design phase we have been working really well with other departments. My department does, as we have spoken about before—because it has got a very wide range and because it is looking at jobs, there are many functions we do where we are acting almost like a central agency and having to bring different programs together to achieve results for people with a really broad focus on what the outcome is that we are trying to achieve. One of the things we think about a lot is how we measure the investment and how we measure what it would have been had we not made the investment, so if we do not invest in someone having a job, then it has an on-flowing cost to Justice or to other forms of Victorian Government social assistance, so one of the ways we try and work with other departments is thinking about a holistic approach to a person and their role in the economy and thinking about a whole cost, not just, 'How much did this employment program cost?'. That is one of the ways that we work with other departments to build coalition and alignment of the purpose that we are trying to achieve.

**Ms RICHARDS:** I just have one very quick follow-up question, just about that interdepartmental committee—what level are the people who participate on that committee?

**Ms McKAY:** Executive director level for that one. I was involved in that one, so yes.

**Ms RICHARDS:** Great. I am interested in that. That is important.

**Ms McKAY:** It is chaired by a deputy secretary.

**Ms RICHARDS:** Right, okay. Great, thank you.

**Ms McKAY:** A pleasure.

**Ms VALLENCE:** Thank you for appearing today. You referred earlier to the gender equality strategy and you have been using—what was it? Is it 'safer, stronger'?

**Ms McKAY:** *Safe and Strong.*

**Ms VALLENCE:** *Safe and Strong*, sorry. And how that has been informing the work through your department and the work that you have been doing and the policies and programs and your investment in various initiatives already so far in the last couple of years that you have taken us through. I guess my question is that given you have mentioned all of this and that that work is already being looked at through a gender lens, it is informing how you seek investment and what initiatives you pursue—and you went through the various ones: trade, agriculture, small business and so forth—if in your agency you are already doing this work, you are already utilising this in the programs and initiatives that you pursue, what do you see the need for a new law introducing a new Bill? What do you see is the need for having a new law and how that might make any change to what you are already doing?

**Ms McKAY:** I guess when there are major and complex change processes underway, there is often a suite of armoury or tools that you use in bringing about change. Sometimes it is setting aspirational goals and a vision that people can relate to, sometimes it is setting policies and processes, sometimes it is reporting on it or setting minimum standards. I sort of see the landscape as being one where there are a number of different processes and frameworks and tools in place that are intended to do different things, and so it is about thinking about what you are trying to achieve and is there a need for that piece of the jigsaw puzzle to be part of the landscape of what we are trying to achieve to bring about change that is really integral in terms of the culture of Victoria, the way we are going to treat it, how we budget and education. It infiltrates every aspect of life, so you need an array of things that you are going to commit to do to bring about that cultural change.

**Ms VALLENCE:** The reason I ask that question is that today from a departmental level you and the previous departments that have come before us to give evidence have all been talking about gender responsive budgeting, that they are already actively working through that, they have already been implementing programs and applying this conceptually in the way that they are trying to look at culture, the programs that they want to institute, the investment that is needed. It is already happening. So what do you think the proposed new Bill—what extra measures is that going to impact for you and how is that going to make any different change to what you are already doing? Given that you have just described, particularly through your initial presentation to us, that you are already doing the work, what obligations do you think will be on your department that this new Bill will bring that are different to what you are doing already?

**Ms McKAY:** As I understand it, the Bill is looking particularly in enshrining some principles—

**Ms VALLENCE:** Sorry, I did not hear you.

**Ms McKAY:** Sorry—enshrining principles of gender equality in legislation. It is looking at establishing a general duty for entities and requiring departments or defined entities to develop and implement a gender equality action plan, looking at having an agenda impact assessment, progress reports every two years. I could go on, but I am sure you have already been presented. So I guess—

**Ms VALLENCE:** So that is not what you have already been doing?

**Ms McKAY:** I guess it is a systemic sort of framework to say, ‘There’s a lot of stuff that’s been going on. Here’s an particular framework or way of putting it’. Ultimately it is an issue for the government and the Parliament as to that framework—

**Ms VALLENCE:** No, but I am interested, because I think that is something that I have asked before, to a previous department—if we are bringing in a new Bill, why? If you are already doing the work, is this something—do you feel that the work that you have been doing, which you were talking about as a lot of positives, there have been a lot of positives that you see that you have been putting forward to us, that there is a gap, that there is a need for some new framework or enshrining these things in law?

**Ms McKAY:** I guess it is about what Government wants and what Parliament decide they are trying to achieve and whether or not this fits the bill for that goal.

**Ms VALLENCE:** I guess another question I have is: you mentioned earlier in your presentation around the initiatives you have been putting forward so far that it is difficult to get data on the success of the initiative and—please correct me if I am wrong if I misheard it—you said that you put details on social media about the initiatives; is that right?

**Ms McKAY:** Sometimes it can be difficult to measure the causal impact of the initiative and how it impacts on something like participation rate in the labour force, so we looked at Twitter as social media to see how engaged women were.

**Ms VALLENCE:** So was there any money behind what you put on social media?

**Ms McKAY:** No, we were monitoring social media to see what percentage of the social media engagement was women, so that was not something we put money into.

**Ms VALLENCE:** Okay. And it was only on Twitter?

**Ms McKAY:** I believe so, yes. And we had the innovation forum that was held over two weeks and then we were looking at how we could measure the impact of that summit and how we could look at if it had had an impact on women, so we looked at how many women were participating in the social media around it.

**Ms VALLENCE:** I am just asking because I would imagine, from my experience of being from an outer-suburban and country area—it is only anecdotal evidence—that the further you go out the less they are involved in a platform like Twitter. So I am just asking from that perspective. The only other thing, which is quite different, is around the department of jobs and the engagement of women in the workforce and their financial independence. To what extent do you think some of the programs that you have been looking at in the last little while have been helping women's economic independence? Also, through the lens of violence against women, it can often be manifested through economics and financial matters—you know, violence towards women can often be through economic measures—so if you could just take us through what has been occurring in that space recently.

**Ms McKAY:** One of the things that our department has been really clear on from day one is that we are thinking about developing the economy and also thinking about ensuring that it is for the benefit of all—so thinking about people who are under more financial stress than other areas and other cohorts and thinking about how we can be more inclusive in terms of the economy. As part of that we are thinking about the role that jobs and financial security play across a whole range of wellbeing factors, including in relation to family violence, so making sure that we are talking with the other departments, so as the economic department along with DELWP and Transport, but thinking of ourselves in terms of how we talk with Education and Training as well as Justice and Health and Human Services around the role that financial security in having a job plays in a person's wellbeing across a broad range of indicators.

We have a deputy secretary in our department with a group called Inclusion, and that group works across all of the different groups in our department as well as working with other departments to think about those issues and the interfaces between economic and social indicators that we would typically use to measure what impact our programs are having.

**Ms VALLENCE:** Because often domestic violence is not necessarily the physical violence; it also can be violence through control over things.

**Ms McKAY:** Psychological control through financial—

**Ms VALLENCE:** Yes, control over someone's accounts or their money or the way they are spending it or whatever. So I was really interested from that perspective and in terms of the jobs portfolio and engaging women in the workforce or giving them advice about financial independence through any programs or initiatives. I am just wondering if there has been anything on that or what you are doing to assist women to understand what it is, because often people think of family violence as the physical form and sometimes they are not necessarily alive to the fact that it might be something that is done through finance levers. So is there anything that you are looking at in that? It is not a trick question. It is just that I am genuinely wondering if there is anything.

**Ms McKAY:** We do have a number of programs, and some of them are very specific but are really targeted. I have got a long list. For example, there was a small business workshop series to Muslim women based in the Latrobe Valley, where we did six workshops in 2019 to assist those women. It is just one example, but I guess what it gets at, and some of the other questions too, is that we are dealing often with women we are trying to

target but we might also be trying to target another group, whether that is women with a disability or women who have been subjected to domestic violence. So it is thinking in a very sophisticated way about the actual cohort that you are trying to target a jobs program to and making sure that you have got the right target group and you have got a support program that thinks of that person as a holistic individual. So you are not just thinking of how we can help her get a job but you are thinking of the other barriers or what have been the barriers to enabling her to have a job in the first place. So to do that we have had to really think about how we interact with the social parts of government and not just think of ourselves as an economic department but really think through those issues.

**The CHAIR:** We are almost out of time. Thank you very much for coming along today and giving your evidence. You will, as I indicated, be provided with a transcript to be verified, and then that will be made available on the website obviously, as per usual. We thank you for your time and contribution.

**Ms McKAY:** Thank you.

**Witness withdrew.**