

TRANSCRIPT

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting

Melbourne—Tuesday, 10 December 2019

Members

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Mr Sam Hibbins

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WITNESSES

Ms Brigid Monagle, Deputy Secretary, Fairer Victoria, and

Ms Sarah Gruner, Director, Office for Women, Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet and paying my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. I would like to welcome our two guests to the hearing this morning. My name is Richard Riordan and I am acting as the Chair today, as Deputy Chair. Welcome to the public hearing of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting. All mobile telephones should now be turned to silent. All evidence taken by this Committee is protected by a 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 proof version of the transcript for you to check. Verified transcripts, PowerPoint presentations and handouts will be placed on the Committee's website as soon as possible. I now invite you to make a 10-minute opening statement to the Committee, which will be followed by questions from this Committee.

Ms MONAGLE: Thank you. We have got some slides to table; Sarah will do that and I will start. So thank you, Deputy Chair, and thank you all for the opportunity to present to you today. Being both the Department of Premier and Cabinet but more importantly having the Office for Women sitting within it, we take a lead role in a lot of the work that Government is leading in gender responsive budgeting, so I would like to start the presentation by describing that.

I think you will all remember that three years ago, in December 2016, the Victorian government released *Safe and Strong*, its gender equality strategy, and through this strategy the Government committed to placing a gender lens on policy, budgets and service delivery in three ways. The first way was by establishing gender budget statements, and that started from the 2017–18 budget. The second way was developing and piloting gender impact assessment tools in policy, service delivery and budget development. Then the third way, the Government also committed to enacting gender equality legislation to promote and improve gender equality across government functions.

Progress has been made in implementing each of these commitments, and while I will go through that in detail later in the presentation, just quickly, the Government has produced three gender equality budget statements, and these statements identify the budget initiatives that support women and work towards gender equality, and they have been completed from 2017–18 through to 2019–20. We have piloted gender impact assessments in three Victorian public sector departments, and we are currently piloting those assessments in local councils and public entities. The findings of these pilots will inform guidance materials for organisations that are required to complete gender impact assessments under the *Gender Equality Bill*, which was introduced into Parliament last month.

I just might, if I can, take you through some background on gender responsive budgeting from our perspective. If you turn to slide 2, I think, which has the title 'Background', as highlighted in your report on the 2019–20 budget estimates, gender responsive budgeting is essentially a tool to assess the impact of government budgets and other social and economic policies on gender equality. It provides a process for analysing the impacts of government decision-making and priority setting on gender equality. If you do not mind, I might call it GRB just to make this presentation a bit shorter.

GRB can reveal how apparently neutral government policies can increase or entrench gender inequality and can also help governments achieve gender equality goals. Budgets and policies informed by these principles can therefore be used as tools to achieve social and economic objectives. By understanding the differences in a budget's and a policy's impact on men, women and gender-diverse people, GRB has been demonstrated to improve systems of accountability for public spending and promote change in economic and social policies in a range of areas, including education, health, infrastructure and tax. It can also involve assessing how budgets meet the needs of other intersectional communities based on ethnicity, age, rurality, disability and sexuality.

If you just turn to the next slide, we have just highlighted a case study there for GRB and how it was used in Austria. Just quickly, Austria amended its constitution in 2009 to require gender budgeting, and it was fully implemented in 2013. A key outcome of this work has been to reform its tax income system to reduce the higher effective tax rate on secondary earners, with a view to reduce its gender pay gap. There are numerous other examples, which no doubt you are across, in Finland, Iceland, Sweden, Korea, but we can talk about that later rather than me run through that now.

If you just move on to the next slide, which just highlights the gender budget statements. What I will do now is just take you through the implementation of the three priorities that are outlined in the *Safe and Strong* gender equality strategy. As discussed, the Government has released three gender budget statements and the first one was in 17–18. What they do is highlight what components of the budget directly impact women. Just for example, some of the initiatives highlighted in the 19–20 statement include the three-year-old kinder expansion due to the impact that that will have on women's workforce participation, family violence services and the provision of tampons and pads in schools.

If you turn to slide 5 now, a key piece of work that the Office for Women has been leading is the work on gender impact analysis and the pilots. I think this is really critical in terms of gender responsive budgeting, because what gender impact analysis does is enable the analytical frameworks which people can use to identify the impacts that a policy or an investment will have on different genders.

In preparation for the implementation of the *Gender Equality Bill*, should it pass, several public entities and local councils are piloting this toolkit, and guidance for the pilot organisations on how to conduct gender impact assessments was provided in our submission. so you should have a copy but we also have copies if you would like one. The guide takes users through four steps to conducting a gender impact analysis, and as part of this it provides a few key but really simple questions that could be considered as a prompt. These questions include examples like: do you think everyone who accesses this policy, program or service has the same needs from it? Is there quantitative data on the number of women and men who are using or benefiting from the policy, program or service? So it is not really rocket science, but it is more a tool for prompting high-quality policy analysis from people to make sure that we are looking at all different facets of an impact of a policy.

A number of these pilots are ongoing and consideration of their outcomes will be concluded in the first quarter next year. We will also use them, as discussed, to inform guidance materials for the Bill implementation. I think it is important to say, too, that with those sorts of questions that are being asked through the pilot, some of the results that we are seeing, and we can talk through this later after the presentation, are quite minor but they actually have a really big impact on that policy. The prompting questions seem simple and again not rocket science, but they actually make a big difference in helping people through that analysis.

If we turn to the next page now, we have got the benefits of gender impact assessments, and there is a good summary there but I will just talk quickly through it. Firstly, these impact assessments can help increase participation by women. By doing strong quality analysis we can find what sorts of additional skills and experience can help women enhance their purchasing power through increased tax revenue and reduce demand for welfare assistance.

It can also obviously help services' policy programs be better targeted to community needs. For example, I think some of you would have seen the book recently—I think it is called *Invisible Women*—that has a range of evidence in there about really simple day-to-day tasks across government and outside of government that shows how women have not been considered in design. A few of the stats that it highlights there are women are more than 47 per cent more likely to be seriously injured in a car accident because crash test dummies have not been designed to women's proportions; also, we still do not have seatbelts that suit pregnant women. So just simple questions about medical research or how policies are implemented can have profound impact on the day-to-day lives of women, and obviously I think close in the public discourse at the moment is around how we design our streets to be more safe at night for women, or safe during the day for women as well, so, just for example, women can exercise and feel safe at night.

But I think it is also really important to say that gender impact assessment is not just about women's equality. It is actually about equality for all people, and it could be that by doing this proper analysis you find out how

migrant communities, LGBTI communities, Aboriginal, women with a disability, men can all access services better. It does not need just to be used for the female gender.

I might just turn then to slide 7, which goes through the *Gender Equality Bill* which was recently introduced to Parliament. This is a key part of setting up the framework or the foundations to promulgate gender impact assessment across public entities. The Bill proposes to cover the Victorian public sector as well as councils and universities with 50 or more employees. This means approximately 90 per cent of Victorian public sector employees and 11 per cent of the Victorian workforce will be covered by this Bill. The Bill aims to identify and eliminate the systemic drivers of gender inequality within the public sector workforce and in the wider Victorian community. Under the Bill organisations are required to develop plans and implement measures to promote workplace gender equality and publicly report on progress against key indicators such as equal pay, recruitment and promotion, and workplace gender composition. But most relevant to this Inquiry, it will require those entities to conduct gender impact assessments by considering the gendered impact of certain policies, programs and services. Under the Bill the defined entities will be required to conduct the gender impact assessment when developing or reviewing any policy, program or service that has a direct or significant impact on the public. Organisations will be required to submit progress reports every two years outlining, among other matters, which policies, programs or services were subject to a gender impact assessment and what actions were taken in response; for example, to address the gender inequalities identified. Obviously we would be measuring the impact of that work through our outcomes framework, which we can talk you through later if you are interested in that as well.

The final slide talks about what the international evidence says is required to get the best out of gender responsive budgeting, because I think the evidence would show if it is just a tick a box on a budget submission, you are not actually achieving the best quality analysis you can get through this approach. It needs to be underpinned by the gender impact assessment, which we have discussed. It needs effective implementation support, so, tools and guidance such as a document. We have had materials on how to undertake the GIA. Evidence is really critical, so we really need that disaggregated data around gender in terms of use of policies and programs but also the impacts and their outcome. It is really important to embed the individual experiences of gender but also compounded by age, disability, rurality, religion, Aboriginality and all the other different components to a person. Effective gender responsive budgeting requires leadership and accountability, and to ensure effective accountability international best practice suggests that all levels of government should commit to the implementation of GRB. Implementation is more effective when GRB initiatives are supported by an overarching gender plan or strategy. Also, its implementation is more effective when a step-by-step staged approach is taken rather than a one hit.

There are a number of opportunities that Victoria could explore over the next few years in terms of GRB, which are listed on that slide. But I would just like to conclude by talking about that we would consider that the foundations for effective gender responsive budgeting have been put in place through the gender impact assessments and then also looking at where the Bill is going. But then there is also a whole suite of work that we need to do to make sure that they are as effective as possible, and one of those key pieces of work will obviously be the findings of this Inquiry as well.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Thank you, Brigid. I guess we will go in no particular order through the members with questions. I guess I will start with a question. Thank you for your presentation. The question I have—and you did clarify it a bit through the process that gender budgeting is not just about women but if it is done well, it benefits everybody I guess—is in light of the growing social trend of not necessarily identifying a gender, what consequences or what effect does that have on effective gender budgeting if increasingly people do not wish to identify as a gender or the way they see themselves?

Ms GRUNER: I think importantly when we look at gender responsive budgeting, it actually does look at men, women and gender-diverse people and it absolutely takes into account all individuals across our communities. What gender responsive budgeting does is it encourages us to think about how we think about delivering the best possible outcomes and the best possible access to our services and programs. It really is just good sense in terms of how we develop policy and how we go about service design, so it starts to engage us in this thinking about who will actually benefit. Who will it impact? Will some groups benefit more so than others? If some policies are actually skewed to some areas in our community, they are likely to, I suppose, not

benefit a whole group of others, including those who might not nominate a gender. So it is very much about inclusive policy development, inclusive service design that is more likely to benefit all as opposed to a single gender.

Ms RICHARDS: Thank you very much. It is fascinating evidence that you have provided. I am interested in finding out a little bit more about the gender audit pilot program and what the outcomes have been and how that has gone. Can you just unpack that a little bit?

Ms GRUNER: To date we have gone through a number of different phases in terms of the gender impact analysis pilot. Our first phase was in terms of engaging with a consultant to do a very, very detailed literature review on what is best practice in terms of gender impact analysis, not only in terms of how you roll it out but in terms of those critical enabling factors. That led us to this toolkit that I understand each of you have received as an attachment to our submission, and we have been going through a piloting process associated with that toolkit. Our first process was to engage with three Victorian government agencies, so Victoria Police, the Department of Health and Human Services, and DPC, with a number of areas in those agencies engaged to actually test the toolkit itself in terms of just how feasible was it to actually implement this lens into existing policy practice, because we do not want to overburden people but we should be embedding it into everything we do in terms of policy and service design to improve outcomes.

What we found as a result of those very initial pilots was, firstly, people thought it was absolutely feasible to be integrating it into their policy thinking. Secondly, the toolkit itself helped to build knowledge and awareness of the benefits of gender impact assessment, and thirdly, it built competence and capacity in those areas. We are now moving into a wider trial in preparation for the *Gender Equality Bill*, so we have engaged with local councils and public entities and they are trialling the process of gender impact assessment in a whole range of different areas. Leisure services are one. They are also looking at maternal and child health in other cases as a basis to see, 'Is this something that will fundamentally work?'. These pilots are early. I expect we will have the outcomes of those in March next year, which will then inform where we head with the Bill. There will need to be other sorts of supporting materials et cetera, and we will need to learn from that experience in terms of making this work and providing the foundations for GRB.

Ms RICHARDS: Terrific. Thank you.

Ms STITT: I was just interested in the quality of the data that you are working with and whether you think that it is going to be able to be measured so we can track how we are going and also building up some expertise so that we are not relying on consultants to drive this process?

Ms GRUNER: Are you talking about data in terms of access to gender disaggregated data?

Ms STITT: Yes.

Ms GRUNER: All right. I would probably point you to a couple of things that we have been doing recently in that area. Victoria is about to publish its first-ever gender equality baseline report. So this report actually sets out how we are performing as a state in a whole range of areas from health and wellbeing to sport et cetera in terms of gender equality, and what we have found is about 50 per cent of that data is Victorian. So the health and wellbeing survey, data from sport and recreation and data around women's leadership in the VPS are all readily available. There is also really good Australian data that we can use as a proxy through the census and through other sorts of places, so over time we will build Victoria's capacity in terms of gender disaggregated data, but at the moment we have enough to get started.

Ms STITT: I did want to ask about the *Gender Equality Bill*. You did mention it in your presentation, but how do you think this is going to be a vehicle for driving this policy more broadly across the government and the community?

Ms MONAGLE: I think it would be fair to say that, as I discussed, it sets the foundations in terms of requirements and also establishes a public sector gender equality commissioner, who will have a key role in supporting organisations, education and also monitoring and performing compliance with organisations about meeting the requirements of the Bill. So should an entity that is now required to do a gender impact assessment on key policy and programs that affect the Victorian population be struggling, that commissioner will have a

key role in supporting that organisation to configure themselves or work amongst themselves to develop that report. We really want that role and the support provided to be supportive, because for some organisations it is going to be a completely new activity. For other organisations it will not be a new activity, but in terms of meeting some of the gender impact assessments it will be more tricky given the nature of their industry or where they work. So it will be absolutely supportive through the public sector gender equality commissioner. Then after they do their report—is it once every two years?

Ms GRUNER: Yes.

Ms MONAGLE: They will provide an update on how they are tracking against the requirements. If it does seem that they are struggling, more support could be provided, and there are compliance requirements at the end, but it would be a very slow, steady and supportive approach.

Ms STITT: Just in relation to the gender pay gap and the stubborn nature of it particularly in feminised industries—I mean in some ways it is a lot easier to measure how we are doing at a leadership level across the public sector but in some of those industries in the community, the public sector, the community sector and the private sector, where the gender pay gap is so stark—how is this going to help tackle that problem?

Ms GRUNER: What I would say is that gender responsive budgeting, if it is rolled out fully, has a number of different levers that it can pull that can assist. So there are some options that could be considered. I am not espousing that this is definitely the way to go; I am saying they are options that could be considered. What gender responsive budgeting can do is actually look at the impacts firstly in terms of unpaid work, because obviously that is one of the contributors to lower workforce participation and one of the contributors to women being in insecure work. You can ensure you can start to think about: well, what do women need to actually support them in the workplace in terms of access to public services, such as better access to transport might be one option or other options of more flexible employment. It could start to consider the impacts of women actually earning less, as we said, because women do not actually benefit from the same sort of income tax cuts. It could start to consider things around that women actually have incomes that are lower over a lifetime and therefore they are more likely to have an impact when government services are cut because they cannot access the private alternatives. It will also consider that women accumulate lower levels of wealth over time, so they do not actually benefit from business tax cuts.

It will also take on board all of those other sorts of policy issues in terms of thinking about how do we improve outcomes for women over time which can support addressing issues of occupational segregation and I suppose fundamentally support women to actually step into higher paid occupations that can be dominated by men. Some of these are initiatives that we are already doing which sit aside in terms of the gender responsive budgeting work. For instance, the government has got a women in construction strategy. We are working quite extensively in terms of women's leadership at all levels. We are working in terms of encouraging women to develop their skills to create new business opportunities for themselves. Each of these are quite different from supporting women in leadership. They are about creating a pipeline of women at all levels and across all industries over time.

Ms VALLENCE: Thanks for your presentation, and I have got a couple of questions. You are undertaking the assessment toolkit, the gender impact assessment toolkit, across a number of public sector agencies so far. If you could let us know how many people are involved in that and the costs that you have seen on that so far and also, as you will then transition into, or the expectation is that there will be gender impact assessments for all policies and programs, is it for all policies and programs, and if so, what is the estimated cost for public sector agencies to be able to do that in terms of the assessment? And what is your anticipation in relation to that for each of the two-year reporting cycle that they need to do? Three questions in one.

Ms GRUNER: What we might do is we might talk firstly about how, broadly, the gender impact assessment pilots have gone, if that is all right. As we indicated when we first spoke, at the moment the gender impact assessment pilots have been across three government agencies in around six to eight different portfolio areas of responsibility. In terms of going out to local councils, there are currently 10 local councils engaged and they are each doing one to two policy areas, and eight public entities are also engaged and they are also doing one to two policy areas in that regard.

Ms MONAGLE: So that is the first part.

Ms GRUNER: That is the first part of the question.

Ms VALLENCE: No, it is not at all; the question was around the cost.

Ms MONAGLE: The cost, sorry. I thought you asked for numbers.

Ms GRUNER: I thought you asked for numbers first; apologies.

Ms MONAGLE: So in terms of the cost of the gender impact assessment, we might have to take that one on notice.

Ms GRUNER: I think we will have to take that on notice.

Ms VALLENCE: Right. Okay, so if you take that on notice in terms of how much it has cost to run that pilot so far. But of course, you know, and the public sector being in the purview of the government and obviously it is a budget item in and of itself, so I would have imagined that there would be some level of cost estimation into how the public sector would be needing to resource this from a headcount perspective and productive hours. So what is that cost estimate and how will that impact the budget?

Ms MONAGLE: I think the gender impact assessment should be part of anyone who is doing an analysis of a policy or a program in that it is basically good policy advice or analysis, so it should not actually be too much of an impost in terms of time or cost. Having said that, though, we are absolutely aware that departments and public entities will require support to implement and go through that, and that is still under active consideration.

Ms VALLENCE: Okay. I mean, I agree. I would imagine, and certainly in my corporate life, you are always thinking about anything—how it impacts all aspects of whatever you are doing, so I would have hoped that actually our public sector agencies and our Government's ministerial departments and so forth were thinking about everyone for a few years past and not actually needing this to be able to do it. It is probably a shame that we need this.

Ms MONAGLE: And I think it is fair to say—sorry to interrupt you—that there is of course some great work going on in terms of this analysis and has been for years as well, but this is around putting a framework and a requirement and a discourse around it.

Ms VALLENCE: That is right. Like I say, it would be good to know that agencies do this anyway, but if they are going to need some help along the way and there is going to be a framework and a compliance regime, that costs. So really that is my question, what that will cost—what you anticipate. And it would be remiss, I think, in terms of seeking to implement this Bill or seeking to go through this program and require this of public sector agencies to work towards a framework and do assessments and also progress compliance reports to not have anticipated what that will cost in terms of resources. So that is the question that I am asking.

Ms GRUNER: What we would say is while there is a cost, the benefit will substantially outweigh the cost. I mean if we look at workforce participation—

Ms VALLENCE: I am not necessarily arguing—

Ms GRUNER: and we close that gap, that will be an 11 per cent increase to GDP, and if we also close the productivity gap for women that is a 20 per cent increase to GDP, so some small initial investment could have substantial economic benefits in the longer term.

Ms VALLENCE: I am not necessarily arguing that point. You know, you have to invest dollars to build a road and that benefits people down the track because they can get to work faster. That is a very simplistic kind of scenario. So I am not disputing that point, but I think it is incumbent upon—one of my passions is understanding what impact it will be in the short-term for the taxpayer, so that is why I am asking this question. I would really respectfully request an answer.

Ms MONAGLE: Absolutely. Sorry. That is under active consideration at the moment and we are unable to say, but we can obviously take the first part in terms of the cost of the gender impact analysis pilots on notice for you.

Ms VALLENCE: Yes, and also the estimation of what it would bear on for agencies going down the track on notice?

Ms MONAGLE: Once that is finalised, yes.

Ms VALLENCE: On notice, yes. In terms of the gender equality commissioner, would that be a new agency, and how are you envisaging that to—would that be a separate line in the budget, and what is the estimation of the running of that commissioner and—

Ms MONAGLE: In terms of cost?

Ms VALLENCE: Yes.

Ms MONAGLE: Again, under active consideration, which we can take on notice for you. But in terms of how it would be structured, it is in the Bill as a separate statutory authority. Is that right?

Ms GRUNER: It will be a separate commissioner role, who will sit probably as part of a department but independent from that department with a reporting line to the Minister.

Ms VALLENCE: Okay. Yes, so if we could get it, because this is not to dispute any outcomes that this is aimed to achieve; it is more because I think it is important for all of us to know how much anything costs—whatever we are doing—so that we know that we are going to be able to effectively expedite what this Bill is aiming to achieve. I think in your report—sorry, guys, I am taking up time—about the commissioner it referred to the commissioner revealing compliance to the framework—

Ms GRUNER: That is right.

Ms VALLENCE: Can you take us through a little bit about what powers the commissioner would have and how that would manifest?

Ms GRUNER: Sure. In relation to gender impact assessment, the commissioner would have potentially a range of different powers. As we mentioned, one of the critical things that will be required of all organisations is they will need to report two-yearly in terms of the work they are doing in terms of gender impact assessment, in terms of the work they have done and in terms of looking at new policies that have a significant outward-focusing public impact. They will need to report on those two-yearly in terms of how they have actually considered the gender impact and how they might have modified policies or programs as a result. The commissioner will obviously have a power where those organisations do not firstly submit a report in that regard, which talks about the impact in terms of gender impact analysis over time. That will be its first option. I suppose when an organisation consistently fails to do things like submit that report or potentially their gender impact assessment is insufficient, they will have an opportunity firstly to work with that agency in a facilitative way, to give them support and guidance as to how they can improve their gender impact analysis skills and capabilities to ensure that programs and policies are looked at through a stronger gender impact analysis lens going forward and the outcomes we expect to see are actually achieved for gender equality. There could be successive opportunities for further support and guidance, as well as repercussions where there is not successive improvement over time in gender impact analysis conducted by that agency.

Ms VALLENCE: What sort of repercussions?

Ms GRUNER: Well, there could be an undertaking that could be taken against that particular agency, but we would not expect that that would occur. Our expectation is we will work within a very facilitative framework. The first option is to provide education and support, build skills, build capability and that it would not actually ever come to that. The degree of support will be there to ensure there is capability to actually perform the gender impact assessment as set out under the Bill.

Ms VALLENCE: And finally, to undertake a compliance review on the two-year reports, have the criteria been developed so far, and if so, what are they?

Ms GRUNER: Look, in terms of gender impact analysis, the criteria are around, firstly: have you done a gender impact analysis of any significant public facing programs with an impact on the community? They will then need to be: has it been done in line with the regulations that we specify as associated with the Bill?

Ms VALLENCE: But having done it, they would have needed to know what the criteria were. So are there criteria?

Ms GRUNER: Well, the criteria will be clearly—so there will be tools and guidelines. This is the first in our set of tools and guidelines, which specifies what a good practice gender impact analysis looks like and the steps that organisations should actually be taking in order to demonstrate progress in this regard.

Mr RICHARDSON: There is a worrying trend in the Victorian Public Service around sexual harassment: 300 000 people in the public service; 21 400, according to the Auditor-General, have experienced sexual harassment, yet only 630 people have come forward and complained. Do we think the gender responsive budgeting will lead to a culture change in some of the horrific issues that we have seen in the public service?

Ms MONAGLE: I think in terms of setting the groundwork any sort of inclusive expectation of analysis around the experience of women or gender-diverse—or men—in the workforce is really important in terms of making sure that it is an inclusive workforce that is able to recognise the specific incidence of sexual harassment and the repercussions and the fear of reporting or the barriers to reporting in that. So I think this again sets up a foundation that creates a more inclusive workplace where those sorts of things are considered and more actively required to be considered as well. That is gender responsive budgeting. There are other initiatives obviously that are happening.

Mr RICHARDSON: And I take you to that because the budgeting element is a huge impact on productivity, a huge impact on the mental health and wellbeing of individuals subjected to such offences—criminality in the departments—and despite all the best resources and inductions and training manuals, we still have 3 per cent of people feeling comfortable coming forward and making a complaint. So how are, I guess, the *Gender Equality Bill* and then also gender responsive budgeting looking at the ways to support whistleblowers and those coming forward and protecting them within the public service?

Ms MONAGLE: Do you want to talk about the Bill?

Ms GRUNER: I can probably talk to the full range of initiatives we are looking at the moment in terms of addressing sexual harassment. In terms of the *Gender Equality Bill*, firstly, there is a requirement that organisations actually report on the prevalence and incidence of sexual harassment within their organisations, and then their gender equality action plan, which they will submit every four years, will include a requirement to develop strategies to actually address those. As part of the commissioner's role there will be an expectation of seeing measurable progress over time in terms of those indicators so that there is an improvement in terms of the experience of men, women and gender-diverse people in terms of sexual harassment over time.

There is broader work that we are also doing in this regard. We have been working very closely with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission to look at what is called Raise It!, a conversation starter toolkit around sexual harassment. What this does is it steps away from simple training and goes to how do we actually create an inclusive workplace that actually encourages people to call out poor behaviour, encourages active bystanders and also makes it safe for people of all genders. So this is something that is based on an evidence-based approach that VEOHRC has developed with and for DPC over quite some time, and that has been piloted in a number of organisations with some good success so far.

The other work we are doing is probably around the primary prevention agenda. What we recognise is that sexual harassment is actually a form of family violence or violence against women, so we are really keen to actually address it through that primary prevention lens. So we have been working quite closely with VicHealth around a bystander toolkit, which again has been piloted across a series of universities, which again looks at what are the effective interventions to enable bystanders to actually call out sexual harassment. Again, our

pilots of that toolkit show a stronger understanding of, I suppose, what sexual harassment is and its impacts as well as a stronger tendency to call out behaviours when they are seen.

Mr RICHARDSON: I appreciate the bystander, but we are going critically to leadership here. Having done work on the IBAC Committee previously around whistleblower protections, we have the overwhelming majority of people who are subjected to sexual harassment not feeling safe or feeling that repercussions will be taken within their job if they do not report. How will that change in terms of management and leadership with the bystander, and is it informed in the gender responsive budgeting to better resource and better support the ability of people to come forward with sexual harassment complaints but also then be protected in their work?

Ms MONAGLE: In terms of the budgeting question, I think what gender responsive budgeting, from our point of view, provides is better information for decision-makers. This will provide information potentially on the impacts of policies or programs. That can either be at a budget level or it can be at a more micro level within a department or within an organisation about the effects of those decisions, and then the analysis that comes out of that provides that to leadership and then provides the ability for leadership to be held accountable on certain metrics around that through the analysis. But essentially, at its heart, this is about providing better information for decision-makers and then a tool to be able to hold them accountable. So I think in that range it absolutely does.

One of the things that Sarah was talking about in terms of the *Gender Equality Bill* is that one of the things that they may, as part of a plan, talk about is that reporting rate. The public sector commissioner could make an assessment that based on your breakdown of women and men ‘We would expect a reporting rate of such’ and enable the gender equality commissioner to say, ‘Well, you’re 3 per cent. It should be 20 per cent’, or, ‘It should be 50 per cent. What is actually going on?’ and ask those questions of the organisation. And that also enables the public to ask those questions of the organisation about, ‘Why is your reporting rate so low?’, as well. So it can hold them accountable in that way. But obviously this is not a panacea in terms of those issues, and it is about setting up the expectations and the guidance that really provides the firm groundwork for that sort of approach to improve those reporting rates—either increase them, as a good sign, or decrease them as well, as a good sign.

Mr RICHARDSON: So will that then be, I guess, a source of analysis for the Bill? Obviously the second part in your slide is amazing in that space around holding departments to account, but will that be an audit going forward of the ability to increase that protection on people? One in 14 is a substantial part—21 000—and yet only 630, if you take a 3 per cent—I think this can be the real driving force to really change the culture in our public service. Is that how you see the role of the Bill, but also gender responsive budgeting, looking at that lost productivity and the impact on the mental health and wellbeing of those individuals?

Ms MONAGLE: I would say yes but broader as well. I think, as we have talked about, this is an analytical tool that improves information available to all leaders, and I think it is really important. But it could absolutely impact potentially on those issues that you raise. But also through improving gender equality actions through the community and participation rates you are therefore improving and strengthening women’s power at work, which will then potentially have an impact on sexual harassment rates. But, as I said, this is not a solution to everything, and it is more about the frameworks that it puts in place for leaders.

Mr MAAS: Just very quickly, before we finish, part of the remit of the Committee is to look at GRB within departments but across departments as well. Would you be able to inform the Committee what sort of work is taking place to coordinate across other departments with GRB?

Ms GRUNER: Okay. So, first and foremost, DPC worked very closely with DTF in terms of developing the guidelines and frameworks to develop the first set of gender equality budget statements. So that involved us looking together at how we would assess whether something was in scope for those gender equality budget statements. Secondly, we have been working with as many departments as possible in terms of those gender impact analysis pilots. So, as we indicated before, that has started with DHHS, DPC and Victoria Police. And, thirdly, we are working with departments, and it will probably be more so next year in terms of the preparation required around the *Gender Equality Bill*. That will encompass the entire Victorian public sector and also universities and local councils, so it will be a very inclusive process to support those entities overall to implement gender impact analysis in the context of the Bill.

Mr MAAS: Is there any benchmarking that occurs between the departments on progress as to that?

Ms GRUNER: At this point we would say in terms of gender impact analysis in particular things are very early. We are at the point of really understanding are these the right tools to use, are these the right tools to actually shed a light on whether the policy, service et cetera is promoting the best possible outcomes for our community. Benchmarks in that regard will be very simple: is there a capacity to actually use the tools, is there a capacity to actually understand them and is confidence and capability growing over time? Early findings are suggesting yes.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: With that, our time has expired. Thank you, Ms Monagle and Ms Gruner. We appreciate your time. We thank all the witnesses who have given evidence to the Committee today. Hansard will make available the transcript. Thank you for your time

Witnesses withdrew.