

**GOVERNMENT OF VICTORIA GENDER EQUALITY
CONSULTATION PAPER**

**SUBMISSION by THE
UNION OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN
(VICTORIAN SECTION)**

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The UAW (Vic) recommends:

1. That the State Government require that every policy proposal before it should be subject to a gender analysis and an accompanying gender impact statement setting out benefits and possible harms to women.
2. That the State Government develop an overarching gender policy framework designed to redress gender inequality in housing , in the workplace, in sport and in housing, and in health.
3. That the State Government make improving the safety of women a high priority and to this end implement without delay all recommendations stemming from the forthcoming Report of the Royal Commission into Family Violence .
4. That the State Government prioritise housing affordability for women, particularly single older women, as another key initiative in improving women’s safety and therefore equality. Housing affordability is also a critical issue for women who are forced from their home to seek refuge because of violence by their partners.
5. That the State Government as a major employer assume a leadership role in providing a workplace which promotes gender equality and pay equity. Public sector workplace policies such as domestic violence leave, providing and encouraging fathers to take longer parental leave and to assume more responsibility for care of children will promote cultural change and greater equality for women and should be implemented by this Government. Specific programs to support women in leadership positions should be developed. These initiatives will have a flow-on effect to private sector employers.
6. That State Government support and develop programs for schools to raise awareness of gender inequality in Australia and how gender inequality is linked to domestic violence and poverty. The UAW supports the Safe Schools program wholeheartedly.
7. That the State Government increase targeted funding for women in sport at the school and community level to increase participation in sport by women.
8. That the State Government provide increased financial support for women to participate in the proposed women’s AFL games in Victoria.

THE UNION OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN (Vic)

The Union of Australian Women (UAW) is a national organisation formed in 1950 to work for the status and wellbeing of women in a peaceful and environmentally safe world. We have been leaders in a wide variety of campaigns focusing on human rights and social justice. We support diversity and oppose all forms of discrimination. We urge Federal and State Governments to meet Australia's obligations under United Nations Conventions.

UAW Victoria was also established in 1950 and has the same aims and objectives as the national UAW.

GENDER INEQUALITY -A NATIONAL ISSUE?

The Union of Australian Women of Victoria (UAW Victoria) welcomes the initiative of the Victorian Government in establishing the Gender Equality Consultation and congratulates the Victorian Government for providing much needed leadership in this area. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the consultation process.

The problem of gender inequity is well-documented and is still well entrenched even in the 21st century in Australian society. Although much progress has been made, much more needs to be done. According to the Australian Human Rights Commission:

- ***Australian women are over-represented as part-time workers in low-paid industries—and in insecure work and continue to be under-represented in leadership roles in the private and public sectors***
- ***A quarter of women were sexually harassed in the workplace between 2007 and 2012 The harasser was most likely to be a co-worker (52 per cent) and the most common forms of sexual harassment included sexually suggestive comments/jokes (55 per cent), intrusive questions about private life or appearance (50 per cent) and inappropriate staring or leering (31 per cent)***
- ***In 2014, one in two (49 per cent) mothers reported experiencing discrimination in the workplace at some point during pregnancy, parental leave or on return to work, and one in five (18 per cent) mothers indicated that they were made redundant, restructured, dismissed, or that their contract was not renewed because of their pregnancy, when they requested or took parental leave, or when they returned to work***
- ***Mothers spend twice as many hours (8 hours and 33 minutes) each week looking after children under 15, compared to fathers (3 hours and 55 minutes).***
- ***In 2009-2010, average superannuation payouts for women were just over half (57%) those of men. Average retirement payouts in 2009-10 were of the order of \$198,000 for men and only \$112,600 for women—As a result, women are more likely to experience poverty in their retirement years and be far more reliant on the Age Pension.***
- ***One in three Australian women aged 15 years and over has experienced physical violence and nearly one in five has experienced sexual assault. It is***

estimated that violence against women and children will cost the Australian economy \$15.6 billion per year by 2021-2022 unless decisive action is taken to prevent it

- ***More than smoking or obesity, domestic and family violence is the leading preventable cause of death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44 years***

The Australian Government must provide a policy framework at the national level by which such inequality is addressed through gendered approaches to taxation, superannuation and improved retirement incomes for women. These matters require a Federal approach; however, there are also significant measures which can be taken at State Level to reduce inequality for women.

Pay inequity in Australia in 2016 is still significant- currently there is a 24 per cent differential based on full-time total remuneration. According to a Gender Pay Gap report recently commissioned by the ACTU, the pay gap has widened over recent years rather than narrowed. As ACTU President Ged Kearney commented the problem is urgent: *Sixty per cent of women aged 65–69 have no super at all, and almost 40 per cent of single women will retire into poverty. This is a real indictment I think on our society today, the reality of women's working life is that they simply will not generate the same level of retirement savings as men simply by working," Ms Kearney said. We've got to really address this issue. Many women will retire in poverty unless we take some very firm steps to address this.*"

As Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) director Libby Lyons has noted: *women made up nearly half the workforce, but were lacking in key management positions. "In Australia, women are highly educated and make up nearly half the workforce, however just 27.4 per cent of key management personnel and 15.4 per cent of CEOs are women," she told the ABC. Ms Lyons said women were much more likely to work part-time than men, yet there were few opportunities to progress to management roles while working part-time. She said employers needed to offer more flexibility so women, and men, could meet their caring responsibilities while still progressing at work Most importantly, we need real commitment to gender equality as a critical business issue at the highest levels of Australian organisations," Ms Lyons said. (ABC January, 2016)*

This need for “real commitment” applies to State Government as well as the business sector.

THE ROLE OF STATE GOVERNMENT IN ADDRESSING GENDER EQUALITY

There is much which the government can achieve at a State level through implementing a gender policy framework designed to redress gender inequality in the community, in the workplace, sport and in housing, and in other areas such as health, including mental health.

As a starting point, every policy proposal before State Government should be subject to a gender analysis and a gender impact statement setting out benefits and possible harms to

women must accompany policy proposals. All State Government policy should be subjected, during the developmental phase, to a thorough analysis of the gender impact and outcomes of the policy. Gender budgeting which includes gender impact analysis of all fiscal and economic policies must become mainstream. The aim of gender analysis is to redress inequalities. Gender analysis is a tool that can be applied to any policy or program. It provides a framework that can be used in any organisation to identify how a policy or program may impact on men and women.

Gender analysis assists with the development of actions to ensure that both women and men benefit from an activity, event or policy. It is broad enough to capture large scale impacts, and sensitive enough to pick up on how particular community members, such as single mothers or older women, may be affected. The impact on Indigenous women can also be measured.

Gender analysis of policy has been successfully applied in Australia in the past by Government. The Victorian State Government should reinstate policy gender analysis and apply the process with vigour if real change is to be effected in inequality.

WOMEN'S SAFETY AND HOUSING SECURITY

The outcome of the Victorian Government Royal Commission into Domestic Violence is eagerly awaited. The establishment of the Royal Commission indicated the Victorian Government's commitment to women's safety. The UAW urges the Victorian State Government to implement each recommendation of the Royal Commission into Domestic Violence when the final report is released. The impact upon women's health and safety of the current levels of domestic violence is at a disastrous level.

The UAW urges the Government to prioritise housing affordability as a key initiative in improving women's safety and therefore equality. Housing affordability is a critical issue for women who leave their home to seek refuge. Increased capacity in refuges for short term crisis accommodation is another critical need which can be addressed by State government.

Sustaining and maintaining rental and mortgage payments has been shown to be a major issue for women staying home after violence. Women are hit hardest by unaffordable housing due to gender wage and superannuation gaps. Women are the primary users of housing and homelessness services. Access to safe, affordable and appropriate housing is critical to improving women's safety and increasing women's workforce participation.

Improving and strengthening housing affordability services and infrastructure is critical to a gender equal society.

INITIATIVES BY STATE GOVERNMENT TO INCREASE EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE AND COMMUNITY

Economic independence is a primary driver of equality for women. Gender equity in pay is still far from being achieved. Many women retire into poverty without superannuation.

The State Government as a major employer has an opportunity (and an obligation) to take a leadership role in providing a workplace which promotes gender equality and pay equity through its policies such as:

- Domestic violence leave provision across all agencies
- Providing an accepting environment for both males and females to share the responsibility of child care in shared parental leave arrangements which are not only allowed but which are actively fostered to promote cultural change. The image of women as sole carers for children has an impact upon women's advancement at work. Many men fear that assuming caring roles will impact upon their own career prospects adversely. It should be possible through policy and practice to change these attitudes at least within the State public service and more broadly thereafter.. According to the Australian Human Rights Commission's Supporting Working Parents Report, *1 in 4 fathers who took paternity leave reported experiencing discrimination for taking as little as 2 weeks of paternity leave.* There needs to be a cultural shift in organisations to change the current view that males are the primary breadwinner and women are the child-carers and that flexible working hours/parental leave are only for mothers. Policies which encourage males to take parental leave for longer periods, such as in Sweden, will encourage equality in child care increase workforce participation. *(in Sweden 16 months of leave are available to either parent with three months for fathers only-if not taken this leave is lost)*
- Ensuring that equal opportunity policies in recruitment are actually practiced and that efforts are made to overcome systemic gender bias in recruitment and promotion.
- Examination of all term contracts and casual work on a gender basis to ensure that women are not being discriminated against in terms of secure work with the State Government. Women often predominate in casual work and this promotes inequality.
- Opposing sexual harassment in the workplace as totally unacceptable and that every agency have robust policies in place to manage complaints and encourage the complainants to come forward in safety.
- Supporting more women into leadership positions within the public service, through mentoring programs and other initiatives. The UAW congratulates the Government's

recently announced intention that 50% of government and agency Board members are to be female as a forward step in this area.

Leadership in the areas above by State Government will flow on to the private sector due to the pressures of competitive recruitment. Eventually all women will benefit.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROGRAMS TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY IN STATE FUNDED SCHOOLS

Many Australians still cling to stereotypes of male/female relations which place women in a secondary role and these beliefs underlies gender inequality. Underpinning all cultural change is education. Programs such as Safe Schools are to be highly commended.

Similar emphasis needs to be given to programs designed to raise awareness of gender inequality in Australia and how gender inequality is linked to domestic violence.

It should be mandatory for all government schools to conduct classes aimed at raising awareness of the rights of others to be treated with respect regardless of gender, sexuality, race or religion.

Bullying and harassment need to be considered totally unacceptable. In every aspect of school life, emphasis upon the equality of women should be part of the fabric of the curriculum.

EQUALITY FOR WOMEN IN SPORT

An ABS survey of 2006 showed that in Australia more women (2.6 million) played sport than males (2.1 million) and more citizens played netball (387, 500) than Australian Rules (249,800).

The most popular sports for males and females were, in order, aerobics, netball, tennis and soccer. This is not reflected in media coverage of sport, where women's sport rarely features, or in the rates of payment for our top sportswomen. Young sportswomen should be rewarded financially in the same manner as male sporting idols rather than their current second rate treatment.

The rise of women's AFL football is a welcome new initiative to be promoted by the AFL in Victoria. Young women players should be supported financially by the State Government in the initial stages to enable their participation.

The greater participation in sport by women at a school and community level should be encouraged through targeted funding from the State Government.

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