



Our equal state

Victoria's gender equality strategy
and action plan 2023-2027

To receive this document in another format, email Office for Women <women.victoria@dffh.vic.gov.au>.

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This document may contain images of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

'Indigenous' or 'Koori/Koorie' is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

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Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Victoria's Aboriginal communities and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living culture. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live, work, learn and play, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We acknowledge the ongoing leadership role of the Aboriginal community in addressing and preventing family violence and violence against women. We join with First Peoples to end family violence from all communities, and work towards gender equality.

We recognise that self-determination is the vital guiding principle for all Victorian Government actions to address past injustices and to create a shared future based on Aboriginal sovereignty.

Treaty and Truth-telling in Victoria

We are deeply committed to Aboriginal self-determination and to supporting Victoria's Treaty and Truth-telling processes. We acknowledge that Treaty will have wide-ranging impacts for the way we work with Aboriginal Victorians. We seek to create respectful and collaborative partnerships and develop policies and programs that respect Aboriginal self-determination and align with Treaty objectives.

We acknowledge that Victoria's Treaty process will provide a framework for the transfer of decision-making power and resources to support self-determining Aboriginal communities to take control of matters that affect their lives. We commit to working proactively to support this work in line with the aspirations of Aboriginal Victorians.

We recognise the diversity of Aboriginal people living in Victoria. While the terms 'Koorie' or 'Koori' are often used to describe Aboriginal people of southeast Australia, we use 'Aboriginal' or 'First Nations' to include all people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who live in Victoria.

Recognition of victim survivors of family violence

We acknowledge the terrible impact of family violence on women, families and communities, and the strength and resilience of victim survivors, including children, who have experienced, or are currently experiencing, family violence.

We pay respects to those who did not survive and to their family members and friends. They remain at the forefront of our work.

Family violence services and support

If you have experienced violence or sexual assault and need immediate or ongoing help, contact 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) to talk to a counsellor from the national sexual assault and domestic violence hotline. For confidential support and information, contact Safe Steps' 24/7 family violence response line on 1800 015 188.

If you have concerns about your safety or that of someone else, please contact the police in your state or territory, or call Triple Zero (000) for emergency help.

Language statement

Language is important and can change over time. Words can have different meanings for different people.

We acknowledge that our approach to gender equality must always be trans and gender diverse inclusive. We celebrate the critical role of trans and gender diverse people in the fight for gender equality. A person's gender is their own concept of who they are and how they interact with other people. Many people understand their gender as being a man or woman. Some people understand their gender as a combination of these or neither. A person's gender may or may not exclusively correspond with their assigned sex at birth.

When we say women, that word always includes trans and gender diverse women and sisters.

Some data and research in this document is limited to the gender binary of men and women, in particular cisgendered and heterosexual men and women. It does not always account for the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) people. We acknowledge that there is more work to do to improve intersectional data collection and use across the Victorian Government.

The words 'our' and 'we' in this document refer to the Victorian Government.

Thank you

The Victorian Government thanks everyone in the community who shared their time, expertise and experiences with us to develop this gender equality strategy and action plan. Our work is deeply strengthened as a result of these contributions.



Foreword from the Victorian Government

When it comes to gender equality, Victoria leads the nation. We've taken great strides towards making the state fairer and more equal for all. We've invested in the things that matter to women and girls, and we're creating more opportunities for them than ever before.

Since 2016, our landmark gender equality reforms have been guided by *Safe and strong: a Victorian gender equality strategy*. *Safe and strong* laid the critical foundations to make Victoria a more equal place – for everyone. We used all our available levers – legislation, policy development, investment, budgeting and public sector employment – to drive gender equality. And we've worked collaboratively with communities and experts to pave the way for lasting change.

In 2020, we became the first jurisdiction in Australia to enshrine public sector gender equality laws through the Gender Equality Act 2020. The Act targets the drivers of gender inequalities, including the gender pay gap, gendered workplace segregation, under-representation in leadership roles, lack of workplace flexibility and sexual harassment.

Then, in 2021, we became the first state to introduce gender responsive budgeting. Every year, we analyse and consider the impact of investment decisions on women at every stage of the budget process. And we'll enshrine gender responsive budgeting in law, so it can keep guiding investment into the future.

Alongside these critical frameworks, we've made practical, targeted investments to directly address women's needs and work toward improving outcomes for them:

- Our nation leading Best Start, Best Life reforms will make childcare more accessible and affordable for Victorians, unlocking women's participation in the workforce.
- We're giving women's health the focus, funding and respect it deserves with a comprehensive package which includes new services, better research, significant investments – and a crucial inquiry into women's pain management.
- We're the first place in Australia to ensure every government school student has universal access to free pads and tampons – and next, we'll provide them at up to 700 public sites across the state from 2024.

These are solutions to problems that have often been overlooked, or misunderstood – and all of them were developed by women, for women. It shows the power and the potential of public policy made by people, for people. And initiatives like this can only come out of a Cabinet where women have a voice, and are properly represented. That's why we're proud to have reached gender parity in Cabinet in 2018, and continue to have a majority of women sitting in Cabinet today.

But when it comes to gender equality, we know there's always more to do – and we're not slowing down. It's an honour to present *Our equal state*, Victoria's gender equality strategy and first state gender equality action plan. Through *Our equal state*, we're building on our work to drive gender equality – and laying a path towards it for generations to come.

We need to ensure the girls of today are empowered to be the women of tomorrow regardless of the colour of their skin, religious beliefs or cultural upbringing.

We recognise that addressing gender inequality requires systemic and structural reform, and the Victorian Government is in a unique position to lead this work. But addressing the bias and discrimination embedded across society needs community-wide action. In other words, we can't go it alone: we need to work in partnership with the private and community sectors, media, sporting and volunteer groups, and all levels of government. Because gender equality is everyone's business, and we'll work to make sure it stays that way.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Andrews'.

The Hon. Daniel Andrews MP
Premier of Victoria



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Natalie Hutchins'.

The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP
Minister for Women



The Victorian Government Cabinet December 2022

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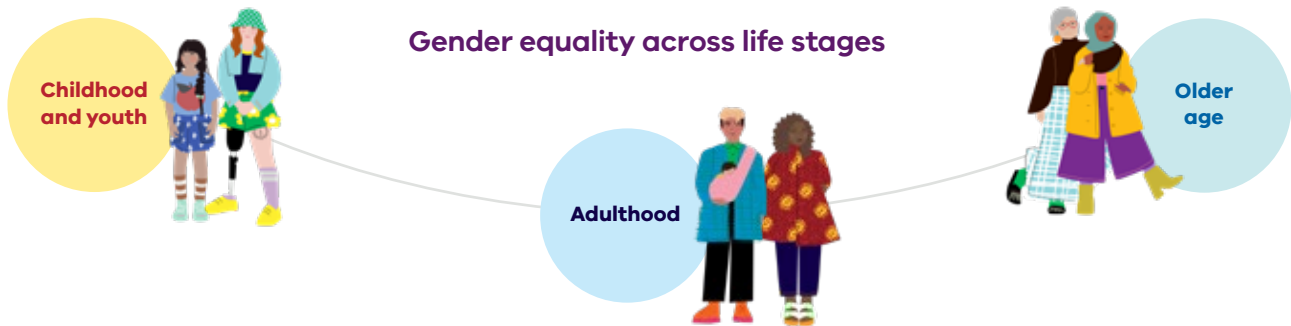
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Our equal state – at a glance

Our vision

All Victorians live in a safe and equal society, have access to equal power, resources and opportunities, and are treated with dignity, respect and fairness.



What we aim to achieve



Cultural change
Victoria is free from limiting gender norms and is an equal, fair and inclusive place for all genders.



Health and wellbeing
The health and wellbeing of Victorians is not limited by gender.



Economic equity
The economic rights and opportunities of Victorians are not limited by gender.



Safety and respect
All Victorians are safe and treated with respect.



The public sector as a leader
The Victorian Government leads by example and advances reforms for gender equality.

Guiding principles

We will focus on structural and cultural change.

We will centre inclusion, diversity and accessibility.

We support Aboriginal self-determination.

Gender equality is everyone's responsibility.



Actions

Our actions include new commitments, areas for future work, and successful programs and policies.

A life course approach to gender equality

Our equal state: Victoria's gender equality strategy and action plan 2023–2027 takes a life course approach to gender equality, focusing on:

- childhood and youth
- adulthood
- older age.

Gender and other intersecting inequalities start before birth and accumulate and grow over time changing the trajectory of people's lives. They also have long-term impacts over generations. Families and communities can experience intergenerational trauma, poverty and disadvantage.

Delivering the state gender equality action plan

Our equal state is Victoria's first state gender equality action plan (GEAP), as required under the *Gender Equality Act 2020* (the Act).¹

The Act is the first of its kind in Australia and it is recognised globally as leading workplace gender equality legislation. It's the strongest tool available to us to make meaningful change towards a gender equal Victoria, and beyond.

Victoria's GEAP is our framework for coordinated action to build the attitudinal, behavioural, structural and normative change required to improve gender equality. It is based on the principles set out in the Act:²

- All Victorians should live in a safe and equal society, have access to equal power, resources and opportunities and be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.

- Gender equality benefits all Victorians regardless of gender.
- Gender equality is a human right and precondition to social justice.
- Gender equality brings significant economic, social and health benefits for Victoria.
- Gender equality is a precondition for the prevention of family violence and other forms of violence against women and girls.
- Advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility across the Victorian community.
- All human beings, regardless of gender, should be free to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives without being limited by gender stereotypes, gender roles or prejudices.
- Gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience on the basis of Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes.
- Women have historically experienced discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of sex and gender.
- Special measures may be necessary to achieve gender equality.

We will track our progress towards gender equality in Victoria in line with the Act. We will report back to parliament every 2 years, using the outcomes framework in this strategy.

The *Baseline report – 2021 workplace gender audit data analysis*, published by the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, informs *Our equal state*. The *Baseline report* provides an overview of gender inequality in the Victorian public sector. It helps us understand the challenges and gaps and where to focus to improve gender equality.



This strategy will drive action across government

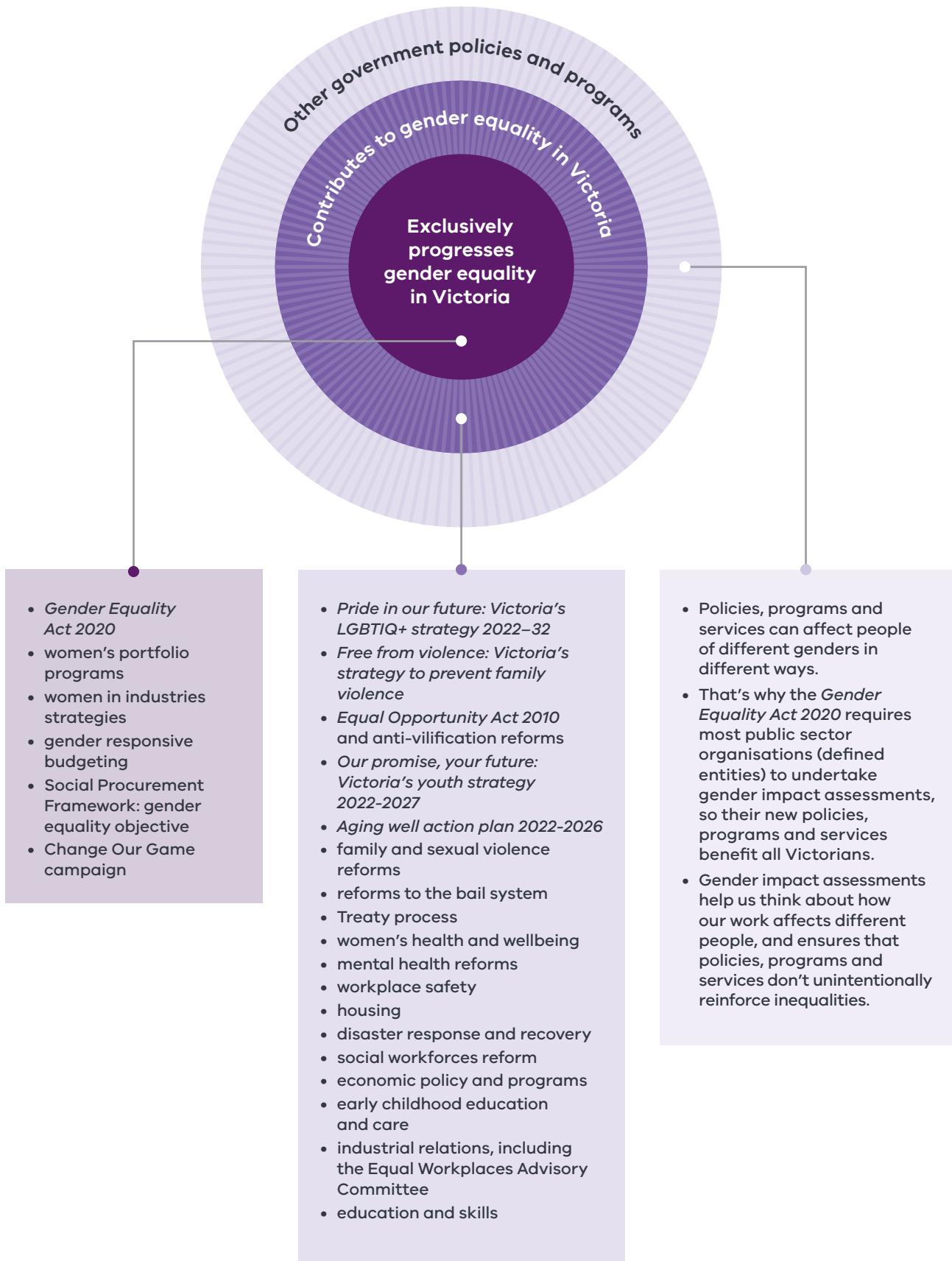
Government policies, programs and services affect people in different ways due to gender. *Our equal state* guides us to think about the lived experiences of women and gender diverse people in legislation, policies, programs and government spending.

We recognise that achieving gender equality needs action from all parts of government. This strategy outlines a strong agenda for long-term, systemic and structural reform – backed by practical investments – to change the way we make decisions and how we address bias and discrimination embedded in our society.

In Victoria, we have built a strong, linked system that will drive gender equality. Our work broadly falls into 3 categories:

- work that exclusively and directly delivers against this strategy and the Victorian gender equality outcomes framework
- work that is broader than gender equality that contributes to the Victorian gender equality outcomes framework
- all other policies, programs and services that have a direct and significant impact on the public and need a gender impact assessment, as per the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

Figure 1. Gender equality architecture in Victoria



Shaping the strategy

Many voices have influenced and improved this strategy

Community, sector and cross-government consultation inform *Our equal state*.

We received more than 450 contributions from individuals and organisations representing:

- the community and not-for-profit sectors
- the private sector
- unions
- universities and researchers
- Aboriginal women
- culturally diverse women
- LGBTIQ+ Victorians
- women with disability
- single mothers
- victim survivors of family and gendered violence.

We also undertook a statewide survey through Engage Victoria, which included:

- more than 1,000 unique visitors to the website
- 18 written submissions
- 29 survey responses.

We continue to deliver the Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women

Our equal state focuses our work as we continue to enact the recommendations of the *Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women*.

The independent inquiry panel delivered its landmark report to the Victorian Government in January 2022. It had 31 recommendations and 26 findings about workplace and economic inequity for women. Carol Schwartz AO chaired the expert panel, alongside Liberty Sanger OAM and James Fazzino.





Introduction





The journey so far

This strategy builds on the solid foundation set by *Safe and strong*.

Safe and strong set out a framework for enduring and sustained action over time. We achieved – and often, pushed well beyond – the founding reforms we announced in 2016. Since then, we have prioritised gender equality in government action and investment. We introduced new laws, fought for groundbreaking policy reform and led innovative programs. From family violence and sexual harassment reforms, to targeted economic support for women and workforce strategies, we've laid critical foundations to make Victoria a more equal place.

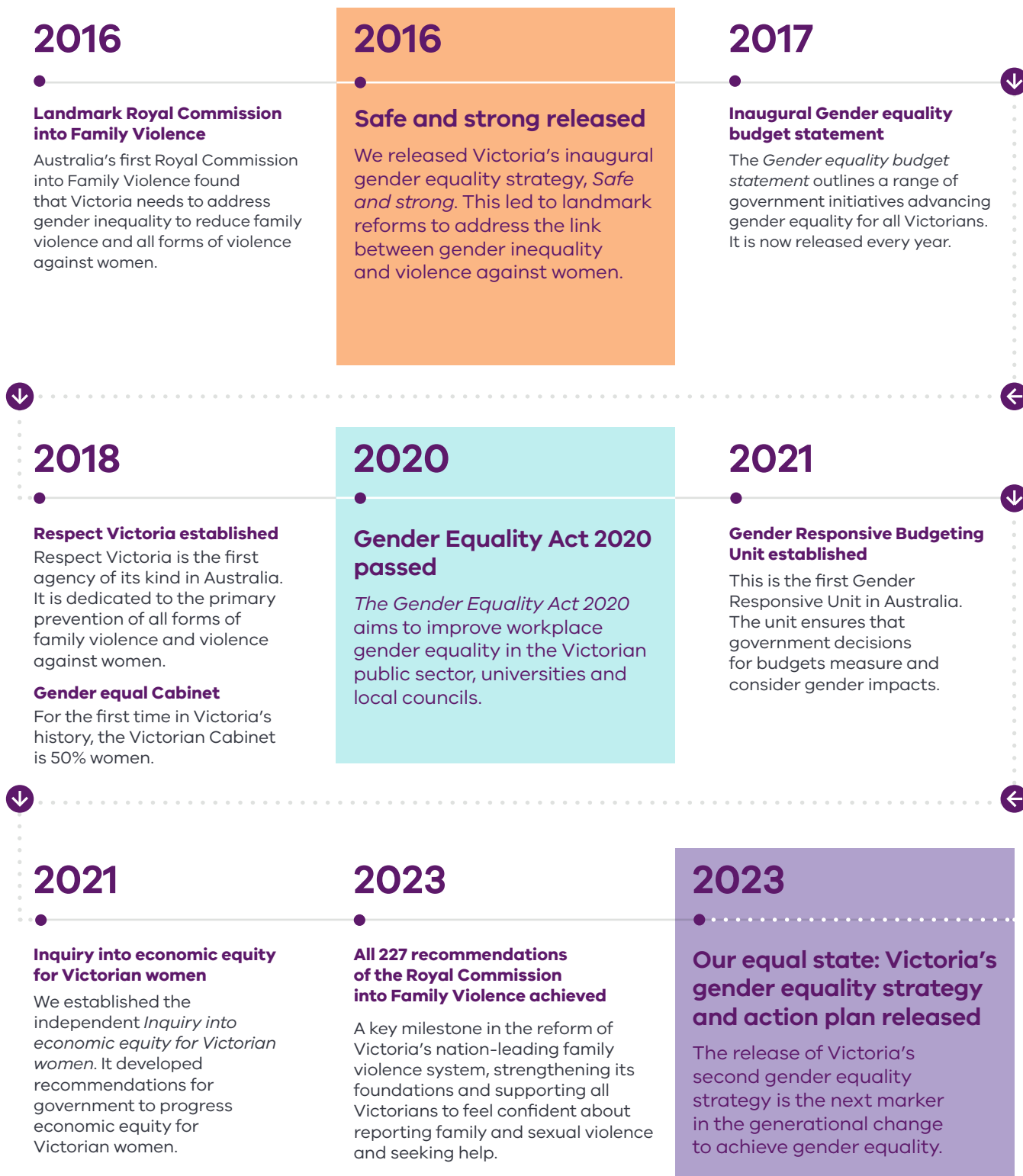
Safe and strong put gender equality at the centre of decision-making in the public sector. It laid the groundwork for building gender equality into Victoria's economy. It created tools for gender equality impact assessments for all policy and funding decisions. It also improved our knowledge and evidence base for gender equality measures, targets and outcomes.

Safe and strong supported local initiatives to drive gender equality in groups including migrant women, Aboriginal women, women in rural and remote areas, young women, older women and women with a disability.

The main achievements of *Safe and strong* were:

- passing the *Gender Equality Act 2020*
- creating the role of the Commissioner for Gender Equality in the Public Sector.

Figure 2. Timeline of gender equality reforms



Gender inequality affects us all

Gender equality is not a ‘women’s issue’.

The effects of gender inequality touch all parts of our community. Gender stereotypes have negative effects on people of all genders.

Women are worse off by almost every measure. Whether it’s the pay gap, time spent doing unpaid care, high rates of gendered violence, or not enough women in leadership and public spaces, it comes back to one thing. Gender inequality.

For gender diverse people, identifying, expressing and/or experiencing gender outside the traditional gender binary results in varied forms of discrimination, stigma and exclusion. This discrimination violates rights. It limits participation in society. It also leads to poorer health, economic and social outcomes for gender diverse Victorians.

For men and boys, pressure to conform to some stereotypes of masculinity can impact physical and emotional health. Such stereotypes include having to be tough, stoic, dominant and aggressive. Though girls and young women are more likely to suffer from mental health conditions, men are less likely to seek help for them.³

At work, gender stereotypes mean that men may feel less able to call-out outdated ideas or access flexible working policies and parental leave. In Australia, men are twice as likely as women to have flexible work requests denied.⁴

Rigid stereotypes of masculinity play a direct role in men’s violence against women and gender diverse people. We need to address harmful forms of masculinity to prevent gendered violence, as well as engage men and boys in gender equality.

A gender equal society benefits everyone. It makes our communities safer, healthier and more connected.

People experience gender inequality differently

Not everyone experiences gender inequality the same way. Gender inequality exists alongside other forms of disadvantage or discrimination based on identity. These include characteristics such as Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual characteristics, sexual orientation and other attributes.

Different parts of identity can expose people to many types of discrimination and marginalisation, and increase inequality and hardship.

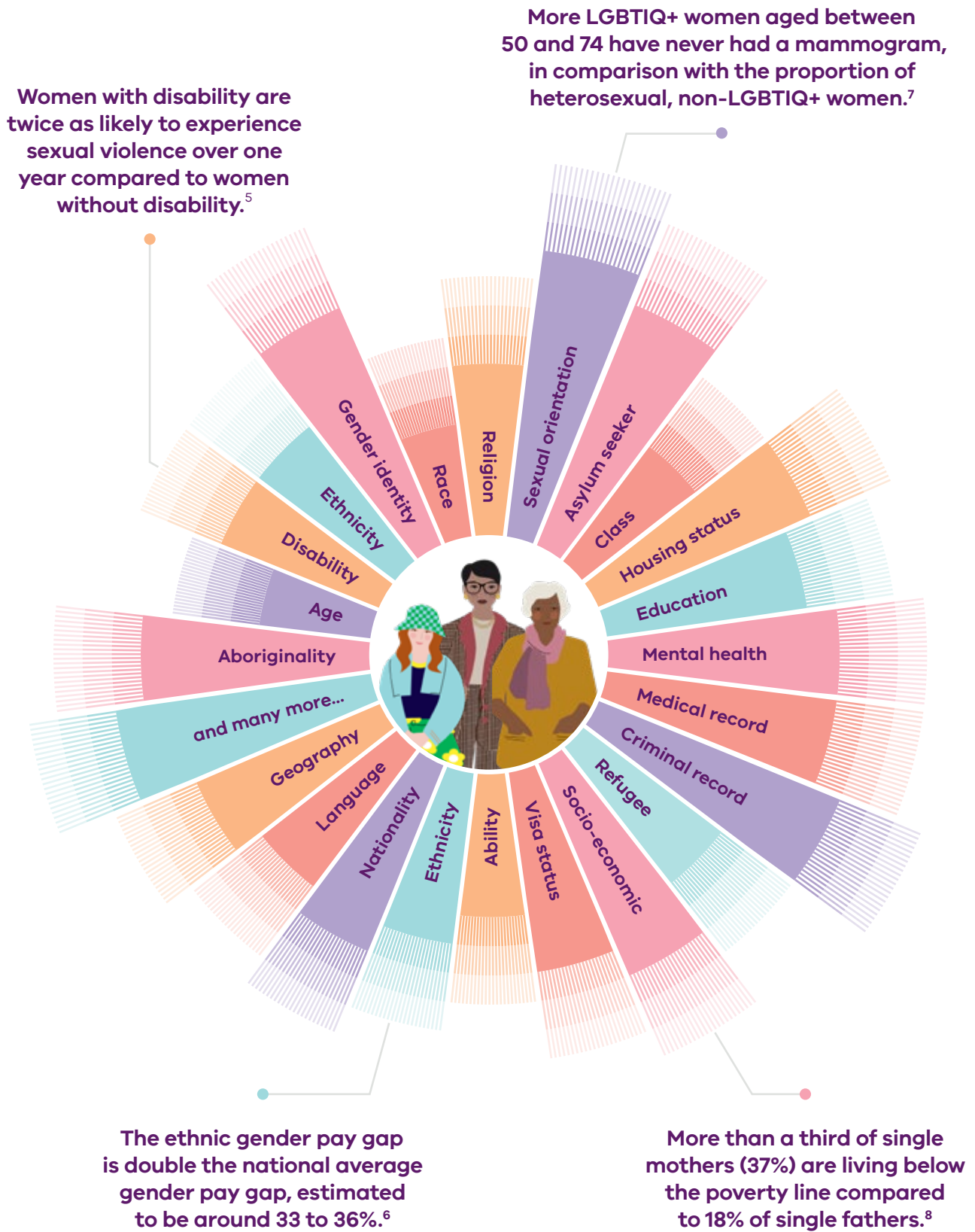
Our equal state takes an intersectional approach to gender equality. In our work, we must:

- understand compounding inequalities
- define and collect better data and evidence
- listen to and learn from the lived experience of women, men, gender diverse people, families and communities.

We recognise that there is more work to do.

‘A truly gender equitable transformation of our society must be intersectional and see the whole person’ – contributor via Engage Victoria

Figure 3. Intersectionality diagram



Explainer: what are gender norms and stereotypes?

Gender norms are society's expectations and beliefs about how men, women and gender diverse people should behave. They shape attitudes and behaviours about gender. Gender norms are different from personal beliefs and actions.

Gender norms can create a continuous cycle of gender stereotyping. They can change over time as attitudes and beliefs evolve. They exist on an individual, relationship, community and societal level.

Rigid gender stereotypes and norms limit us all. They shape mentalities and how we see our role in society.

Australian men are more traditional in their gender attitudes than the global average, with 30% of Australian men agreeing gender inequality doesn't really exist.⁹

28% of Australian men think women often make up or exaggerate claims of abuse or rape.¹⁰

In 2020-21, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission received 403 complaints related to workplace and everyday sexism, sexual harassment and gender discrimination. This includes:

- 38 on the basis of pregnancy
- 63 on parental status
- 176 on the basis of sex
- 102 on the basis of sexual harassment
- 24 on the basis of gender identity.¹¹

The 2023 National Community Attitudes Survey¹² showed that:

- 41% mistakenly believe that domestic violence is equally perpetrated by men and women
- an alarming proportion of Australians mistrust women's reports of violence, with 34% believing that it is common for women to use sexual assault accusations to get back at men
- 41% believe that many women mistake innocent remarks as sexist.



Gender inequality is a driver of violence against women

Gender inequality underlies family violence and violence against women. This violence continues to be a significant risk to the lives of Victorian women.

Our Watch's *Change the story* points to 4 gendered drivers of violence:

- condoning of violence against women
- men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life
- rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity
- male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.¹³

Many other forms of inequality influence violence against women. These include racism, ableism, ageism, heteronormativity, cissexism, transphobia and class discrimination. Aboriginal women experience disproportionate risks due to the ongoing impacts of colonisation. Rigid gender norms, cisnormativity and heteronormativity are major factors in the abuse and violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ people. This includes both in their families of origin and in society more generally.¹⁴

Following the Royal Commission into Family Violence in 2016, we announced an ambitious plan: 10 years to rebuild Victoria's family violence system. Eight years since the Royal Commission, we have achieved all 227 recommendations and have invested more than \$3.7 billion to prevent and respond to family violence.

Yet, there is much more work to do to keep people safe, hold people to account and stop violence before it starts. Ending this violence requires generational change, and we remain unwavering in our resolve.

Free from violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women aligns with and strengthens *Our equal state*. This includes a range of primary prevention initiatives to end violence before it happens by addressing the attitudes, values and behaviours that condone it. Promoting gender equality is a shared outcome for *Our equal state* and *Free from violence*.

Dhelk Dja is the key Aboriginal-led Victorian agreement that commits the signatories to work together and be accountable for ensuring that Aboriginal people, families and communities are stronger, safer, thriving and living free from family violence. Signatories include Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal services and government. The *Dhelk Dja* Partnership Forum will continue to lead Aboriginal-led prevention as a priority and champion this work with Aboriginal communities.

Gender equality requires sustained, transformative and generational change

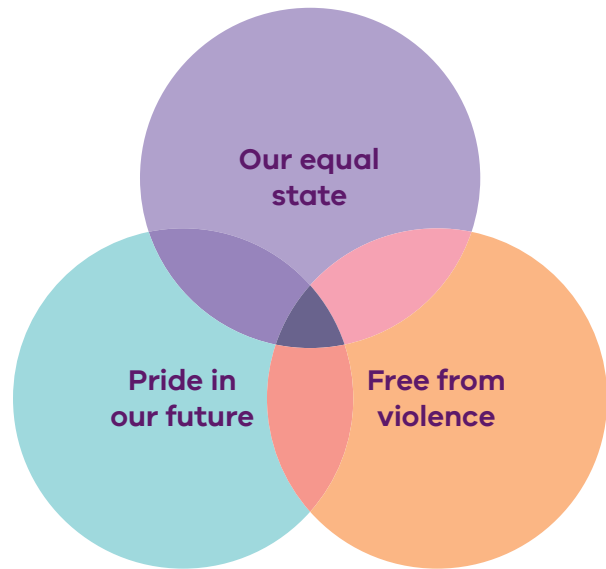
Women and gender diverse people have historically experienced discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of sex and gender.¹⁵ *Our equal state* has a strong focus on improving outcomes for Victorian women, girls and gender diverse people.

Work to address gender inequality has tended to focus on building the capability of individuals without addressing unequal and discriminatory systems. This strategy aims to change that. It addresses gender discrimination and biases that affect all Victorians .

Importantly, this strategy aligns with Victoria’s first whole-of-government LGBTIQ+ strategy. *Pride in our future: Victoria’s LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022–32* is the vision and plan to drive equality and inclusion for Victoria’s LGBTIQ+ communities.

This strategy is not intended to replace *Pride in our future*. The strategies work together for greater equality for all Victorians.

Figure 4. Strategies *Our equal state* works closely with to drive gender equality





Childhood and youth

Our early years are the most important for learning and establishing the foundations for future wellbeing. It is also a time of significant change for young people – both physically and emotionally.

It is vital that all young Victorians' experiences and opportunities are not limited by their gender. This includes in education, jobs and career pathways, community, recreation – including online spaces – and health and wellbeing.



We must challenge gender norms and biases

Gender norms, expectations and stereotypes have a profound impact on children and young people. We create and reinforce gender norms early in life through our families, communities, institutions, education and traditional and social media. Gender norms are also reinforced by advertising that shapes children's social, educational and leisure choices.

Australia's labour market is highly segregated by gender. Entrenched stereotypes about 'male' and 'female' careers influence students from a young age. For example, girls in Australia have lower science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) participation rates and lower STEM aspirations in school compared with boys. Women are often less likely to work in or study STEM after school.¹⁶ This is also reflected in low rates of women in trades and technical roles. In a similar way, boys have lower participation rates in subjects such as textiles and food technology. Men are also less represented in jobs related to caring.

This strategy will develop and put in place an approach to address gender bias in careers education and pathways options for girls and gender diverse students by delivering the Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms.

We will also address gender bias in the workforce through training pathways. To achieve this, we will:

- further explore ways to embed gender equality across the VET and training sector
- bridge the gender gap with the Victorian Skills Plan
- remove financial barriers to training for women through Free TAFE.



The gender pay gap starts with pocket money. Boys receive more pocket money on average than girls.¹⁷

Only 22% of young women aged 18 to 24 are considered financially literate compared to 42% of young men the same age.¹⁸

We are working with traditionally 'male' industries to remove barriers to attract and recruit young women and girls to these jobs. This includes through strategies to support, upskill and mentor women in the energy and manufacturing sectors.

Children are more likely to have primary carers who are women and see women do more unpaid work at home. This means we pass gender norms down to the next generation. We've heard from many men that they want more support to be the best fathers they can be. We will invest \$2 million for the creation of more fathers' groups across the state, providing more opportunities for fathers to feel supported and connected in a peer-to-peer setting.

Improving sexual, reproductive and mental health outcomes for young Victorians

Childhood and adolescence are times of significant change and development. Adjusting to the physical and emotional changes of puberty can be challenging. Stigma and social pressure to hide any sign of menstruation can stop girls and young women from talking about their experiences, playing sport or seeking support and advice.

We will continue to provide free pads and tampons in government schools. This will make it easier for students to manage their menstrual health, and allow them to fully engage in their education. We will also provide free pads and tampons in public spaces and investigate strategies to further destigmatise periods.

We will improve access to healthcare for young Victorians by establishing 9 new sexual and reproductive health hubs. This will expand the network to 20 hubs across the state.

Mental health conditions often emerge in adolescence. Around 75% of diagnosable mental illnesses first emerge before the age of 25.¹⁹ Young women experience poor mental health at almost double the rates of young men. The risk of distress and mental health conditions can increase for young people who are same-sex attracted or questioning their sexuality or gender.

This strategy will deliver a funding package to expand access to vital mental health and support services for gender diverse Victorians.



Almost 50% of girls drop out of sport by the age of 17.²¹



Body image is in the top 4 concerns for young Australians, with 30% concerned about their body image.²² Up to 80% of young teenage girls report a fear of becoming 'fat'.²³

Compared to the general population, LGBTIQ+ young people are at higher risk of major depression, generalised anxiety disorder, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.²⁴

Young Victorians have suffered a surge of eating disorders, a statistic that is sadly replicated worldwide. Eating disorders are the third most common chronic illness in young women and have the highest mortality rate of all psychiatric illnesses. This includes increased risk of suicide.²⁰

This strategy will support young Victorians with emerging mental health conditions to recover and live happy, healthy lives.

We are building Victoria's mental health system from the ground up with a strong gender lens through our unprecedented investment following the findings of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. This means we are thinking critically about how our policies, programs and services meet the different needs of women, men and gender diverse people so we can develop solutions that benefit everyone.

This is a collective effort. We are engaging the sector as we achieve the recommendations, including with services, not-for-profit organisations, the workforce and people with lived experience of mental health conditions.

Case study: helping schools promote positive menstrual health

Free pads and tampons are available in every government school in Victoria – because being able to access period products shouldn't be a barrier to students getting the most out of their education.

Victoria is the first state or territory in Australia to ensure every government school student has access to free period products. The \$36.2 million initiative began in Term 3 in 2019 and we installed dispensing machines in every school by the end of Term 2, 2020.

A lack of easy access to pads and tampons can affect students participating in sports and everyday school activities. Students may not be able to concentrate in class, feel comfortable or confident doing physical activity or they may miss school altogether. By making pads and tampons available and free at school, we are one step closer to educational equality.

Schools have an important role to promote positive culture around menstrual health and build supportive environments. The initiative aims to reduce the stigma of periods and make school a more inclusive place where students can focus on their studies.

We will continue to normalise periods and provide cost-of-living relief through our \$23 million package to provide free pads and tampons at up to 700 public locations across the state. They will be available in public hospitals, courts, TAFEs, public libraries, staffed train stations, and major cultural institutions like the State Library and Melbourne Museum in 2024.





We will keep supporting schools and early childhood settings to promote and model respectful attitudes and behaviours through the Respectful Relationships initiative.

Young people deserve to be free from gendered violence

Many people witness gendered violence in their own families. Many also experience it in their own relationships.

Young women and gender diverse people are increasingly experiencing harassment and abuse in online spaces. Young women are more likely to witness online racism or hateful comments towards particular cultural or religious groups, receive unwanted comments about their appearance and be told not to speak or have an opinion.^{25 26}

We will keep supporting schools and early childhood settings to promote and model respectful attitudes and behaviours through the Respectful Relationships initiative.

Respectful Relationships teaches our children how to build healthy relationships, resilience and confidence. Taking a whole-school approach works to embed a culture of respect and equality across an entire school community, from our classrooms to staffrooms, sporting fields, fetes and social events. This approach improves students' academic outcomes, mental health, classroom behaviour and relationships with teachers.

We will also build on *Free from violence* to deliver programs for young people to prevent gendered violence, including education about affirmative consent.

We have changed the way we deal with sexual violence in Victoria. The *Justice Legislation Amendment (Sexual Offences and Other Matters) Act 2022* includes amendments that will adopt an affirmative consent model and provide better protections for victim survivors of sexual offences. This will shift the scrutiny from victim survivors onto their perpetrators. The model will make it

clear that everyone has a responsibility to get consent before engaging in sexual activity.

The *Justice Legislation Amendment (Sexual Offences and Other Matters) Act 2022* also includes stronger laws to target image-based sexual abuse. This includes taking intimate videos of someone without their consent and distributing, or threatening to distribute, intimate images, including deepfake porn.

Young women (18 to 34 years) experience much higher rates of physical and sexual violence than women in older age groups.²⁷

Young women (18 to 29 years) with disability are at twice the risk of sexual violence than young women without disability.²⁸

Trans, non-binary and gender diverse young people experience high rates of gendered violence online and in public.

37%

In Australia, gendered and family violence remains a leading cause of homelessness for girls and young women. People under the age of 25 make up 37% of all people experiencing homelessness.²⁹

Case study: engaging boys and young men to prevent gendered violence

Rigid attachments to stereotypes of masculinity – such as aggression, dominance, control or hypersexuality – influence gendered violence. When we think of aggression and disrespect towards women as just being ‘one of the boys’, we are more likely to excuse violence towards women.

In 2023, we are supporting Jesuit Social Services to deliver an early intervention program with boys and young men aged 12 to 25 who are at risk of using violence against women.

The program will:

- support conversations that challenge harmful masculinities
- promote more flexible ideas about what it means to be a man
- build the capacity of key workforces that engage with boys and young men to support them to live respectful, accountable and fulfilling lives.

We are funding this program through the National Partnership on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses. It is also a key program under *Free from violence*.



It can be hard to be what you can't see

Women's contributions and achievements are underrepresented in the public domain. This perpetuates gender stereotypes and norms that put women in silent or support roles, or excludes them altogether. A lack of gender diverse role models can also reinforce stereotypical gender norms for children and young people. This makes gender equality more difficult for the next generation.

Through this strategy, we will promote women's contributions and achievements in public. The Victorian Women's Public Art Program was only the start. We want to see Victorians of all genders represented in street names and public places. We want to ensure that we recognise a diverse range of people in public programs, such as the Victorian Honour Roll of Women and the Change Our Game Ambassador Program. It is important that we represent women and gender diverse people from multicultural and multifaith communities, of all ages, regional and rural locations, LGBTIQ+ communities, Aboriginal backgrounds and those with disability.



Only 11 of the 582 statues in Melbourne depict real, named women. There are more statues of animals than named women.^{30 31}



Case study: remembering Stella Young

Stella Young was a comedian, journalist and disability rights advocate. A statue honouring her is one of 6 artworks funded by our \$1 million Victorian Women's Public Art Program.

Remembering Stella Young is a life-size bronze statue in her hometown of Stawell. The statue aims to continue Stella's legacy to educate and challenge the community on perceptions of disability, and to strive for 'a world where disability is not the exception, but the norm'.

A collective of 4 artists with lived experience of disability brought the piece to life in the Northern Grampians Shire. Artists Sarah Barton, Fayen D'Evie, Jillian Pearce and Janice Florence, together with local sculptor Danny Fraser, collaborated with Stella's parents Lynne and Greg Young, consulting on everything from the design, the location and interactive elements.

Accessibility and inclusivity are at the heart of its design. The statue sits on a circular slab at ground level and includes interactive elements such as motion-activated sensors that give audio descriptions of the statue, a braille plaque and QR codes so visitors can access online videos and audio components.



The Victorian Women's Public Art Program makes women's achievements more visible. The program places them on the public record, and celebrates and supports women artists, the arts and creative sectors.

Creating a permanent record of the excellence and leadership of Victorian women shows future generations of women and girls what is possible.



Adulthood

By adulthood, gender inequalities are clear in almost every aspect of our lives.

Our equal state seeks to address gendered barriers so Victorians can reach their full potential at home, work and in the community.



Victorian women and gender diverse people deserve full access to appropriate and empowering healthcare

Gender is a core determinant of health. Women and gender diverse people often face barriers to accessing health services that relate to cost, distance, culturally appropriate practice and the services that are available. Aboriginal women experience these barriers more, as do women living with a disability, migrant and multicultural women, women in regional and rural areas, and LGBTIQ+ communities. Many people also do not get the care they need because some services lack cultural safety, sensitivity and responsiveness.

We will deliver a comprehensive package that ensures all women and gender diverse people can access the dedicated health services they need – no matter where they live or how much they earn. Victoria has always been a leader in providing safe, supportive and judgment-free healthcare, putting patients and their needs at the centre of every medical decision. But we know there’s more work to do.

Reproductive system conditions and issues can be barriers to good sexual and reproductive health, and general health and wellbeing. Such issues include menstruation, fertility, polycystic ovary syndrome, endometriosis, pelvic pain, contraception and sexually transmissible infections. Menopause has a big impact on the lives of women. This is because of stigma, lack of research and information, and lack of adequate and appropriate health care.

We recognise these are specialist areas that need expert attention. This strategy has significant actions to achieve this, including:

- to establish women’s health clinics
- a Women’s Health Research Institute
- the expansion of services for endometriosis and sexual and reproductive health care.

Systemic and unconscious biases mean women’s pain is often not taken seriously or treated properly. This leads to delays in diagnosis and care. Women report more severe levels of pain, more often and for longer durations. Despite this, women receive less treatment for pain than men. Diseases that mainly affect women and that have different symptoms to men do not receive the same levels of study or treatment. They are also often misdiagnosed or undiagnosed. For example, heart attack symptoms in women are less recognised than in men. We are establishing an inquiry into women’s pain management to examine these systemic issues and find solutions.

Healthcare service workers also need training to ensure they are safe, inclusive and affirming for gender diverse communities. Through *Our equal state*, we will support 200 community and mental health service providers to become Rainbow Tick accredited to ensure safer and more inclusive care for LGBTIQ+ Victorians.

Almost 1 in 5 women experience a mental health condition during pregnancy.³²

7 years

Approximately 200,000 women in Victoria suffer from endometriosis.³³ On average, it takes 7 years from the beginning of symptoms to receiving a diagnosis. This leaves women suffering pain that significantly affects their lives and choices.³⁴

Case study: giving women's health the focus and funding it deserves

We are working to deliver a comprehensive package to reform and expand women's health services across the state.

We will create 20 new women's health clinics to give women access to specialist multidisciplinary assessment and treatment for conditions such as endometriosis and pelvic pain. A new mobile women's health clinic will also visit remote parts of the state, and we are working with Aboriginal health organisations to deliver an extra dedicated Aboriginal-led women's health clinic.

We will add 9 new locations to our network of women's sexual and reproductive health hubs. This will give more women access to closer to home services and advice on contraception, pregnancy termination, and sexual health testing and treatment.

We will increase the number of surgeries for endometriosis and associated conditions, with an estimated 10,800 extra laparoscopies over the next 4 years. We are providing \$2 million for scholarships to upskill the workforce with 100 more women's healthcare specialists.

Working in partnership with the Australian Government, we will invest \$5 million to support the creation of a Women's Health Research Institute. This will help address the gender gap in medical research, where conditions unique to women don't get enough funding and women aren't meaningfully included in clinical trials.

We will also undertake an inquiry into women's pain management, to examine systemic issues and find solutions. A panel of experts will chair the inquiry. They will review data and information and hear directly from women from different backgrounds on their experience accessing treatment.

Planning is under way on each phase of these reforms, and we will continue to work with the health sector and community, making sure Victorian women get the highest quality care.



We will continue to strive to end gendered violence

Gender inequality drives violence against women. Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence – the first of its kind in Australia – found that gender inequality must be addressed to reduce family violence and all forms of violence against women.

Women and gender diverse people are less safe than men in shared and public spaces. Street-based harassment and assault is largely experienced by women and gender diverse people. Many women and gender diverse people worry about harassment and assault during transport journeys, especially at night.

Women and gender diverse people are much more likely to have experienced sexual harassment at work. Yet, it is underreported and perpetrators are rarely identified.

Some groups of women are disproportionately targets of gendered violence. This includes women with a disability, from multicultural and multifaith communities, and Aboriginal women.

Gendered violence can have long-term and serious negative impacts on victim survivors. These include:

- worse physical and mental health
- loss of or limited employment
- loss of housing
- less financial security
- isolation
- less social support
- loss of life.

On average, one woman a week is murdered by her current or former partner.³⁵



Violence in intimate relationships adds more to the disease burden for women aged 18 to 44 years than any other risk factor. Even more than smoking and alcohol use.³⁶

60%

More than 60% of Victorian women have experienced some type of gendered violence and have felt at risk at work.³⁷

This strategy challenges the attitudes, behaviours, cultures and systems that drive gendered violence. We will work to improve the safety of public transport and public spaces, and design them with the needs of women and gender diverse people in mind.

We will continue to work to prevent and better respond to sexual harassment at work. We will do this by working to restrict the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) for workplace sexual harassment cases in Victoria. The *Gender Equality Act 2020* and recommendations of the Ministerial Taskforce on Sexual Harassment will inform this work.

Aboriginal women reported experiencing gendered violence at twice the rate of non-Aboriginal women.³⁸

Aboriginal women are 32 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence. Aboriginal women are also 11 times more likely to die from assault, compared to non-Aboriginal women.³⁹

We will ensure workplaces treat sexual harassment as an occupational health and safety (OHS) issue. We will also increase WorkSafe's capacity to take a lead role in preventing, and responding to, workplace sexual harassment (including through its existing OHS enforcement functions). This strategy will deliver the WorkWell Respect Fund and the WorkWell Respect Network. They will support employers to prevent work-related gendered violence, including sexual harassment in Victorian workplaces. We will also continue to enact Respect and Equality in TAFE to strengthen the TAFE network's approach to gender equality and preventing gender-based violence.

This strategy challenges the attitudes, behaviours, cultures and systems that drive gendered violence. We will continue to deliver *Free from violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women*. We will also continue to show leadership and advocate for collective action at a national level through the Australian Government's *National plan to end violence against women and children*.



Case study: Respect Starts With A Conversation

Gender inequality enables the underlying conditions for violence against women and family violence to occur. Public campaigns can help encourage cultural change by raising awareness about the effects of gender inequality and challenging harmful attitudes and behaviours. Behaviour change campaigns are also a key action of *Free from violence*.

We supported Respect Victoria to create Respect Starts With A Conversation. It is a suite of videos that encourage people to reflect on what respect means to them, and to take action to promote respectful behaviours in their own lives and communities.

The videos feature everyday Victorians and aim to help Victorians understand how rigid gender stereotypes and dominant types of masculinity exist across homes, communities and workplaces.

Kobe and Mufaro’s video encourages viewers to reflect on their personal attitudes towards gender and relationships, and to promote respectful behaviour in their own lives. They speak about what it means to be a man, the role that respect plays in relationships and how breaking down unhelpful stereotypes about gender benefits both men and women.

‘The power of speaking up has way more impact than not saying anything.’ — Kobe

‘And so, as we are redefining what it is to be masculine and having vulnerability as an option, the way that it’s impacted relationships with others is they’ve felt so much closer with the people around them.’ — Mufaro

The campaign has also appeared in cinemas, online and on billboards and radio across Victoria. Choosing to lead with respect in our relationships, workplaces, schools, universities and homes can ultimately prevent family violence and violence against women. Calling out discriminatory or disrespectful behaviour starts with every one of us.



Sharing and valuing care

Outdated stereotypes about the roles of men and women mean women do almost twice as much unpaid care work as men.⁴⁰ This includes looking after children, elderly parents and people with disability or long-term health conditions. This care work is so important to our society but is often undervalued and unrecognised. Women shoulder the financial burden, as well as associated health and wellbeing impacts.

In heterosexual couples where both partners have similar hours of paid work, there is still a large gap in unpaid work hours. This affects financial security and independence. In the long term it leads to lower lifetime earnings and superannuation for women. While more men now stay at home as primary carers for their children than ever before, women are still mostly responsible for caring for children.

We will work to remove barriers which prevent women taking part in the workforce, including rebalancing the load of unpaid work and care. We will also promote and work to increase the value placed on care in our society.

We will invest \$14 billion in the Best Start, Best Life reforms over the next decade to save families money and support women to return to work. The childcare system has been set up to work against working families – particularly mothers – who face barriers by the lack of affordable care options.

We will advocate to the Australian Government on the adequacy of carer payments and payment of superannuation on government-funded parental leave. We are also addressing this in our public sector workforce through extending superannuation payments on paid parental leave to 52 weeks for teachers in Victorian public schools – our largest public sector workforce – and introducing a target to double the number of men taking available paid parental leave in the Victorian public sector to work towards rebalancing the gendered uptake of caring entitlements.

13.4%

Victoria's gender pay gap is currently 13.4%.⁴¹ In Australia, the gender pay gap increases as workers age. It is 30.2% for employees aged 45 to 54 and reaches 31.9% for employees aged 55 to 64.⁴²



The ethnic gender pay gap is double the national average gender pay gap, estimated to be around 33 to 36%.⁴³

Women can experience motherhood penalty, with earnings falling by an average of 55% in the first 5 years of parenthood.⁴⁴

Through the Outside School Hours Care Establishment Grants Initiative, we are supporting more than 400 schools in Victoria to provide outside hours school care services. The aim is to reduce barriers to women taking part in the workforce, so parents and carers can get back into the workforce, study or training. This program provides schools with funding to establish new services or expand existing ones to help them meet demand for their outside school hours care service. Special schools and those in remote locations will receive more funding if needed.

Case study: Best Start, Best Life

Our Best Start, Best Life reforms will invest \$14 billion over the next decade to make kindergarten programs more accessible and affordable.

Evidence shows that 2 years of quality early childhood education has more impact than one year and can lift children’s learning outcomes. The skills developed in early childhood also contribute to broader and longer-term outcomes. These include better employment prospects, health and wellbeing, and more positive social outcomes.


Families in Victoria will have access to 15 hours of funded, teacher-led 3-year-old kindergarten by 2029, and by 2032, 4-year-old kindergarten will transition to ‘Pre-prep’ – increasing to a universal, 30-hour-a-week program of play-based learning. We are establishing 50 Victorian Government-owned, affordable early learning centres in areas that need more childcare.

As well as improving children’s lives, quality teacher-led kindergarten programs will improve parent and carer participation in the workforce. This will have significant socio-economic benefits for families and children. It will also improve women’s economic independence and security, because the primary carer role is still carried out more by women than men in Victoria.



Independent analysis from Deloitte shows Best Start, Best Life will support between 9,100 and 14,200 extra primary carers to take part in the labour force by 2032–33, and increase total hours worked by primary carers by between 8 and 11%.⁴⁵

With 94% of primary carers being women, this increase will overwhelmingly benefit female-dominated sectors that are all currently facing skills shortages like education, health services and hospitality.



As well as improving children's lives, quality, teacher-led kindergarten programs will improve parent and carer participation in the workforce. This will have significant socio-economic benefits for families and children.

Making our workplaces safe and equal

Victoria's Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women found that women are over-represented in the care and community sector, driven by gender norms around the kinds of work women and men should perform.

Pay in the care and community sector is low and is not equal with the value it creates socially and economically. Low pay in this sector is also driven by the assumption that caring is innate rather than a learnt skill. The care and community sectors have high rates of insecure, casual and part-time work.

In contrast, men are over-represented in industries with better job security and pay. These include construction, transport and mining. Structural barriers – including gender bias and discrimination, sexism and sexual harassment, and inflexible work arrangements that don't accommodate care responsibilities – discourage women from training and working in these sectors. Lack of access to paid parental leave makes this worse.



There are many women from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds in insecure and low-paid work. They make up a significant amount of Australia's direct care workforce, including nurses, allied health workers, and personal and community care workers.⁴⁶

Women with disability are less likely to be in paid employment. They also receive lower incomes than men with disability and women without disability.⁴⁷

Discrimination on the basis of sex and gender identity, as well as race, age, disability, religion and sexual orientation all intersect to limit equality in the workforce. This affects a person's financial security, health and wellbeing. Women with a disability also face major barriers due to bias, discrimination, a lack of accessible workplaces and access to reasonable adjustments.

Through *Our equal state*, we will:

- identify and reduce structural barriers to the labour market
- reduce gender segregation and harmful work practices that affect Victorians of all genders
- get more women into safe and meaningful jobs in the construction, transport, energy and manufacturing industries
- get more men into our care industries
- support all groups of women falling through the cracks of our systems by investing directly in economic security programs that help women locked out of work
- explore ways to improve public sector gender equality through public sector industrial relations negotiations.

Supporting women and gender diverse Victorians to reach their leadership potential in workplaces and the community

Women and gender diverse people are under-represented in all levels of leadership in Victoria.

The main reasons for this are:

- the challenges of balancing work and care responsibilities
- a lack of flexibility in senior positions
- unsafe and unwelcoming workplace cultures.

Barriers to leadership positions are harder for some women, who face discrimination because of attributes such as race, gender identity, sexual orientation and disability.

Parental leave and part-time work negatively affect women’s opportunities to work in management roles or get promoted. In contrast, men’s career prospects are largely unaffected by the birth of a child. In fact, it can often improve due to stereotypes around fathers as breadwinners.⁴⁸

Gender norms – including caring responsibilities – affect recruitment and promotion across all sectors. This happens from gendered language and imagery in job advertisements, to unconscious and conscious bias in decisions about shortlists, interviews, hiring, salary and promotion. Stereotyping affects women’s career opportunities and progression, including ideas that women are not capable of being leaders.

We have made significant gains in women’s leadership in the public sector. Women represent more than 50% of members on government boards and courts. When we announced this target in 2015, women made up only 35.6% of government board positions. Now, this strategy

will work to increase the diversity of women appointed to public boards, ensuring they reflect the diversity of the Victorian community.

We know there is much more to do, and this strategy will:

- address the main structural and cultural barriers affecting women and gender diverse people’s leadership
- explore how to deal with the challenges of balancing work and care responsibilities
- explore ways to improve the lack of flexibility in senior positions
- work towards more safe and welcoming workplace cultures
- continue to design and deliver programs to support women and gender diverse people from varied backgrounds and experiences gain leadership positions.

Women are under represented in leadership positions. Culturally diverse women even more so. Only 5.7% of culturally diverse women were board directors in 2022.⁴⁹



In the Victorian public sector, women make up 66% of the workforce, but only 46% of leadership roles. There is a very small number of people of self-described gender in senior leadership positions.⁵⁰

Case study: Joan Kirner Emerging Leaders Program

The Joan Kirner Emerging Leaders Program supports young and emerging women leaders to navigate their career pathway and realise their leadership potential.

Participants take part in interactive workshops, collaborative group work, structured networking and mentoring activities. They also hear from guest speakers that are shifting perceptions of young women in leadership.

The program also supports participants to critically examine the structural, cultural and organisational barriers in their workplaces, and delivers a toolkit of resources to help them approach and overcome these barriers. During 2022 and 2023, 79 women will take part in the program.

Amelia Laughlan works as Games Investment Manager at Screen Australia and took part in the second round of the program that focused on women working in male-dominated industries.

Amelia reflects that, 'the program was excellent in that it helped me feel validated as an emerging leader in my field. I am able to approach my work with more grace and confidence thanks to the program.'

Through the program, Amelia said she 'loved getting to meet a cross-section of exceptional women working in fields as diverse as law, disability advocacy, education, social work and engineering. Getting to know these women has emboldened me to feel more confident in myself as a leader'. The presentation training was particularly beneficial for Amelia: 'working with my fellow women to become self-possessed, confident speakers was moving and memorable.'

Other participants have said that the program helped them feel more confident to take up space, celebrate their own achievements and manage themselves effectively.



A focus on equality for Aboriginal women

While Victorian Aboriginal communities continue to lead with strength and resilience, we cannot underestimate the impact of and the need to remedy ongoing transgenerational trauma, systemic racism and the impacts of colonisation, dispossession and removal of families and Country.

Victoria is the first jurisdiction in Australia to action all 3 elements of the Uluru Statement from the Heart: Voice. Treaty. Truth.

The Yoorrook Justice Commission is investigating historical and ongoing injustices committed against Aboriginal Victorians since colonisation, across all areas of social, political and economic life. This will include a report into injustices against First Peoples in the criminal justice and child protection systems.

We will consider and respond to the findings and recommendations of the commission, and incorporate them into the delivery of this strategy.

We will deliver the *Yuma Yirramboi strategy* to achieve economic parity for Aboriginal Victorians within our lifetime, and deliver a range of targeted programs to improve the economic security of Aboriginal women. Through the Big Housing Build, we will deliver new social housing for Aboriginal women affected by housing insecurity and homelessness and who may have complex needs and experiences, including family violence. We will work with Aboriginal health organisations to

deliver a new dedicated Aboriginal-led women's health clinic to provide tailored support for Aboriginal women.

We recognise that there is significant work to do to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system.

We are working to reduce justice supervision rates by 2031. This goal exceeds the Closing the Gap targets that aim to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people under adult and youth justice supervision by 15% and 30% respectively by 2031. Work is under way through *Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja: Victorian Aboriginal justice agreement – phase 4* to improve outcomes for First Peoples who interact with the justice system.

We are supporting the expansion of existing Aboriginal early interventions initiatives. This includes funding for initiatives to address offending and improve outcomes for over-represented groups of people in contact with the justice system, such the Women and Mentoring Program, matching women with mentors.

We will continue to listen to and be led by Aboriginal women, families and communities.

Case study: empowering Aboriginal women in business



In recognition of the extra barriers Aboriginal women face to economic security, we are proud to fund Ngarrimili’s Empowering First Nations Women in Business Program.

Ngarrimili nurtures Aboriginal businesses, creatives and entrepreneurs through tailored and culturally informed support at all stages.

The program supports 40 Aboriginal women, including those who have experienced domestic or family violence, are living with a disability, are in out-of-home care or have experience with the justice system, with a particular focus on mothers and caregivers. Through the program, women receive personalised one-on-one support and attend workshops based on their needs. The program goes beyond business topics and includes social, emotional, health and wellbeing support, and embeds culture and connection. Entrepreneurs Stacey and Ruby participated in the program. Stacey has a sustainable apparel business, while Ruby’s jewellery

business promotes safe spaces and domestic violence awareness among women.

With support from Ngarrimili, Stacey and Ruby have opened a store together at the Queen Victoria Market. They received support in marketing, accounting and bookkeeping, business planning and strategy, and lease negotiations. The store is the first of its kind at the market. It will provide opportunities for them to employ other Aboriginal women and support their businesses by stocking their products in the store.

With the Empowering First Nations Women in Business Program, many other women like Stacey and Ruby have received the support and skills they need to establish and grow their business.



Older age

The effect of gender inequality builds through younger years and adulthood and affects older women the most.⁵¹ Gender inequality grows and intersects with ageism, which older women experience at a higher rate than older men. While there is progress towards gender equality in Victoria, older women are the least likely to benefit.

This is where we see a lifetime of inequalities lead to the alarming rate of older women experiencing homelessness, and the significant gap in lifetime earnings and superannuation.

Our equal state complements the *Ageing well action plan 2022–2026*, the Victorian Government’s framework to support Victorians to age well by continuing to take part in their community, and age safely at home – in the community or in aged care.



Services and care that enable healthy and empowered ageing for women and gender diverse people

Health conditions affect women more as they age. Gender bias against women in healthcare is well-documented. This bias causes delayed diagnoses and poorer health outcomes for women in all stages of life. This is the case for common chronic conditions experienced by older women, such as dementia or diabetes.⁵² Menopause can continue to have a big impact on the health of older women.

Older women from migrant and refugee backgrounds experience greater health inequalities. This is due to a lack of culturally responsive services, inadequate use of interpreters and social isolation.⁵³ Due to the continued trauma of colonisation, and systemic racism and discrimination, Aboriginal women also experience more health disparities.⁵⁴ This can be worse for members of Stolen Generations.

We will continue to advocate for an 'ageing well lens' on all government services and programs, and consider all Victorians. Age-friendly and culturally responsive health and social services are essential to healthy ageing. We will work to increase opportunities for older women and gender diverse people to access them. Through the *Ageing well action plan*, we consider ways to address loneliness and isolation and support improved social connections, which are important for older women and gender diverse people and are associated with living longer. We will complement this with a Pride in Ageing pilot to address the needs of ageing LGBTIQ+ Victorians.

As more services are delivered through a digital-first model, the 'digital divide' has also increased among older people – already the most digitally excluded group. This has exacerbated vulnerabilities for older women and gender diverse people, including social exclusion and the risk of undiagnosed health conditions. It is worse still for people with lower levels of English and digital literacy, especially for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.⁵⁵ Through this strategy, we will explore new ways to increase digital literacy among older women, in particular for those from multicultural communities and those who experience a disability.

6.3%

Older women are less likely to play sport. For Victorian women aged over 65, 6.3% take part in sport activities 3 times a week. For men aged over 65 in Victoria, it is 17.2%.⁵⁶


More LGBTIQ+ women aged between 50 and 74 have never had a mammogram, in comparison with the proportion of heterosexual, non-LGBTIQ+ women.⁵⁷

Case study: recognising the achievements of senior women

The Victorian Senior of the Year Awards are our chance to celebrate the many senior Victorians who share their skills, experience, time and energy with our state. For more than 25 years, the Victorian Senior of the Year Awards have recognised the volunteer work and community contributions of older Victorians, including the significant achievements of older women.

In 2022, Aunty Daphne Milward received one of the COTA Senior Achiever Awards for her leadership and advocacy for Aboriginal Victorians. For more than 55 years, Aunty Daphne has shared her wisdom, kindness and breadth of experiences with people of all ages to build cultural understanding and awareness.

Aunty Daphne is committed to sharing her expertise in community development as an active and energetic Elder with Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place. She works with the community and school groups, exhibits art, and runs a range of arts projects and workshops. Aunty Daphne has also supported a range of programs with the Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service, including education courses about elder abuse, craft workshops and healing and respite camps for women and children. She embodies the principles of ageing well and living life to the full.



We will address economic inequality for women and gender diverse people across the life course to ensure they are secure in older age.

Ensuring economic and housing security

Ageism is one of the most prevalent forms of prejudice in Australia. In the workplace, older women are more likely than older men to be unfairly thought of as having outdated skills, being too slow to learn new things or as being someone who would do an unsatisfactory job.⁵⁸ Older women may also experience discrimination due to their appearance or for experiencing menopause.⁵⁹

On average, women live longer than men but tend to have fewer assets. Factors contributing to lower economic security later in life include the gender pay gap, historic gender roles, the increased likelihood of women taking career breaks and women working part-time to do unpaid care.⁶⁰ Women tend to retire earlier than men, often due to reasons like menopause and caring for older parents and grandchildren, and do so with much less superannuation.⁶¹ The effect of economic inequality means that more than a third of single women live in poverty by the age of 60, despite decades of work.⁶²

Through *Our equal state*, we will keep delivering tailored support for women facing barriers to employment through Jobs Victoria's employment services.

We will also address economic inequality for women and gender diverse people across the life course to ensure they are secure in older age. This includes:

- providing tailored support for long-term jobseekers and those facing barriers to employment
- promoting equal pay and secure employment, including a new target to halve the gender pay gap in the Victorian public sector within 5 years
- sharing unpaid work and care better, including through the Best Start, Best Life early childhood reforms to reduce barriers and increase women's workforce participation
- advocacy to the Australian Government on reforms to superannuation, social security and paid parental leave.



Women make up a large and growing proportion of people experiencing homelessness. Housing insecurity and homelessness more greatly affect Aboriginal women, migrant women, women who are escaping family violence and women who have served in the Australian Defence Force.⁶³

Older trans people can experience a range of housing-related challenges, including accessing retirement and aged care housing. A lack of training, knowledge and acceptance by staff in aged, group or retirement housing can be a barrier to safe housing, as can other tenants.

This strategy will address housing inequality through our investments in the Big Housing Build. Groups expected to benefit include older women, victim survivors of family violence and LGBTIQ+ Victorians.



Near retirement age, the gender superannuation gap is between 22% and 35%.⁶⁴

-\$136,000

Australian women on a median income will earn \$136,000 less in superannuation over their working lives than their male counterparts.⁶⁵

Across her lifetime, an average woman with children will earn \$2 million less than an average man with children.⁶⁶

Single older women aged 55 and over are overrepresented in the most asset poor in Australia. This negatively affects retirement and healthy ageing.⁶⁷

Older women without children are the fastest growing group of people experiencing poverty, with 38.7% living below the poverty line.⁶⁸

Case study: supporting women into secure housing and employment

The Big Housing Build is the biggest investment in social and affordable housing in Victoria – and Australia. We will deliver more than 12,000 new homes, including:

- 9,300 new social housing properties to help Victorians in greatest need
- a further 2,900 new affordable rental homes.

We are providing social housing residents with wrap-around employment, health and wellbeing supports.

Mirella is a 61-year-old resident in social housing. She experienced underemployment for a year and felt uncertain about her future. Despite extensive experience in the government sector, she experienced negative assumptions from prospective employers around her age and disability, which stopped her from getting her foot in the door.

Mirella received a referral to the Social Housing Employment Program (SHEP) as a participant of Uniting's Disability Employment Service. SHEP is a jobs creation program we fund that offers training, skills development and job placement for social housing residents.

Mirella was matched with an employment coach who helped establish her goals and explored opportunities for her to access extra qualifications. Within a month, she started a role as a part-time administration officer at a community service organisation. She received help at every step of the journey, including with post-placement support and training modules.

Since she started this role, Mirella's confidence has grown and her team say she is a true asset. A year on, Mirella has gained full-time work as a case worker at a local council.

Thanks to SHEP, Mirella couldn't be happier about the impact her new job has had on her life.

Ending gendered violence and elder abuse

Older Victorians can be vulnerable to abuse due to social isolation and having to depend on family members. Elder abuse can be physical, sexual, financial or psychological. For some older women and gender diverse people, this can follow a lifelong pattern of family violence. Sexism, racism and ageism intersect and compound one another and increase the likelihood and severity of abuse. Multicultural, multifaith and Aboriginal seniors face an increased risk of elder abuse.⁶⁹

Elder abuse is most often perpetrated by adult children or relatives of older people. It takes the form of financial, emotional and physical abuse, and neglect. Older people can face stigma, isolation, less personal agency and other barriers when seeking support or thinking about disclosing abuse.

LGBTIQ+ older people are subject to these forms of abuse, and can also experience abuse related to their sexuality or gender. This can make them feel pressured to hide their sexuality to access services.⁷⁰ Elder abuse experienced by gender diverse people from LGBTIQ+ communities is rarely reported.

Many older people talk about 'becoming invisible' as they age.⁷¹ For older women, this can include feeling forgotten or overlooked in efforts to end gendered violence.⁷² They can face more barriers to disclosure and seeking help. Sexual assault of older women often goes ignored and is under-reported. The physical effects can be severe and result in an increased need for health services, and poorer health and life expectancy.⁷³

Through this strategy, we will continue to support primary prevention programs (under *Free from violence* and *Ageing well*) tailored for older people. This includes programs that:

- encourage positive attitudes to ageing
- challenge systemic forms of discrimination and marginalisation
- work to prevent and respond to the unique causes of elder abuse in Victoria.



Most calls made to Senior Rights Victoria in 2020 were from women (72% compared with 28% from men). The calls mostly concerned psychological abuse (63%) or financial abuse (62%).⁷⁴



Leading the way in the public sector

Government is in a unique position to lead by example and promote gender equality in Victoria.





Using the Gender Equality Act 2020 as our strongest lever for change

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* is a powerful tool available to embed gender equality across our state. The Act requires the Victorian public sector, local councils and universities to:

- take positive action towards gender equality
- regularly collect and report data on gender equality in workplaces by completing workplace gender audits
- use that data to develop and implement strategies and measures to progress gender equality in their workplace
- publicly report on their progress
- promote gender equality in policies, programs and services that impact the public by completing gender impact assessments
- consider how gender inequality may be made worse by other forms of disadvantage.

In 2023, all Victorian public sector organisations with obligations under the Act have completed workplace gender audits and developed gender equality action plans (GEAPs). This means almost 300 organisations, approximately 12% of the Victorian workforce,⁷⁵ have a plan with key strategies and measures they will undertake to improve gender equality in their workplace. These organisations need to make progress against 7 key indicators. For example, closing their gender pay gap, ensuring policies support all workers balance caring responsibilities and striving for equal representation in leadership.

We will keep working with public sector organisations to fulfil the need for gender impact assessments on all policies, programs and services that have a direct and significant impact on the public. The Act also requires us to think about how other types of disadvantage can make gender inequality worse. We will factor this in when developing new initiatives to address gender inequality.

Case study: fairer access for women and girls in community sport

Women and girls not getting fair access to the local football oval or basketball court will become a relic of the past thanks to Australia's first *Fair access policy roadmap*. The roadmap launched in Victoria in 2022, following extensive consultation with local government and the sport and recreation sector.

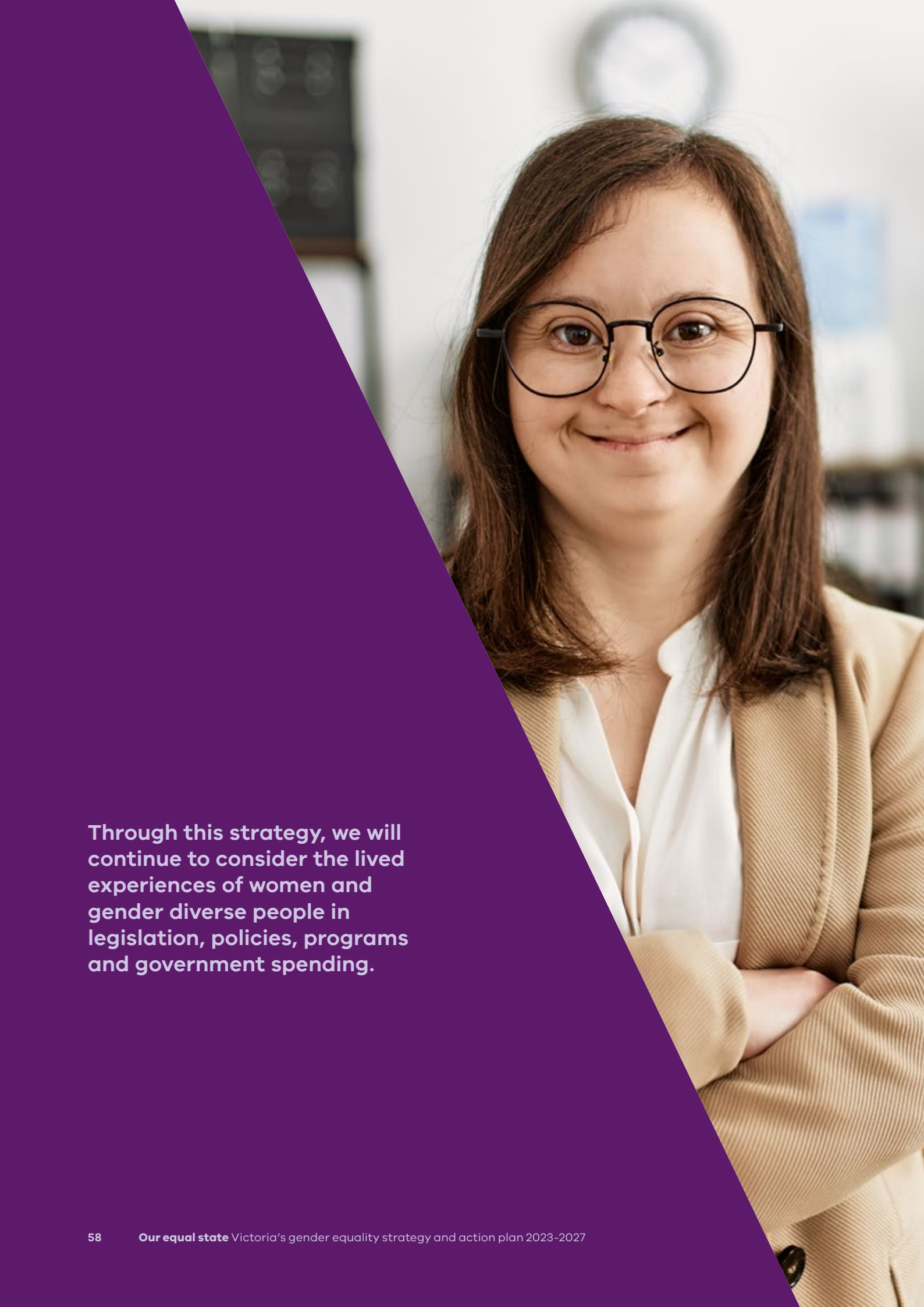
The Office for Women in Sport and Recreation leads the roadmap, in partnership with Sport and Recreation Victoria and VicHealth. The roadmap requires local councils to have policies or practices that ensure women and girls receive fair and equitable access to publicly-owned community sports infrastructure, such as change rooms, ovals and courts.

With support from the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, the roadmap connects the obligations of local government authorities under the *Gender Equality Act 2020* with the eligibility for funding for community sports infrastructure from 1 July 2024.



In doing so, we will achieve meaningful and sustained progress towards gender equality, including in the use of community assets and in health outcomes.

The roadmap is part of the Victorian Government's \$18.8 million package designed to level the playing field for women and girls in sport.



Through this strategy, we will continue to consider the lived experiences of women and gender diverse people in legislation, policies, programs and government spending.

Factoring gender inequality and other discrimination into government decision-making and spending

Government policies, programs and services affect people in different ways due to gender. There are still gender gaps in many areas. These include:

- health and wellbeing
- pay
- workforce participation
- care responsibilities
- leadership
- representation
- experiences of gendered violence.

Through this strategy, we will continue to consider the lived experiences of women and gender diverse people in legislation, policies, programs and government spending.

Victoria is the first Australian state to implement gender responsive budgeting. We are proud to join other leading international jurisdictions using gender responsive budgeting to deliver real-life benefits.

Gender responsive budgeting tools have been trialled or adopted by nearly half of all OECD countries, including 5 of the 7 largest economies in the world: Canada, France, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom.

Not only has gender responsive budgeting helped to make governments' expenditure more transparent and accountable, it has also enabled governments to adapt policies and investment to better address gender inequity.

In Austria, it has enabled landmark tax system reform to provide greater incentives for women to participate in the workforce. In Mexico, it has led to investment in programs for health conditions more likely to affect women, which aims to increase women's life expectancy.

Victoria will continue to draw on international evidence to strengthen gender responsive budgeting practices and ensure fairer outcomes for every Victorian. The next step is to secure this approach in law, so it remains a part of Victorian budgets for generations to come.

We will also improve our data to better understand how gender-based discrimination intersects with other social attributes. Better data collection and use in line with the principles of Aboriginal data sovereignty is a priority in this strategy. It will enable us to build a thorough evidence base and develop appropriate, inclusive and effective policies.

Explainer: what is a gender impact assessment?

Under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, defined entities must conduct a gender impact assessment (GIA) on any new policies, programs and services that have a direct and significant impact on the public, or those up for review.

GIAs are important planning tools that help us to think about how our policies, programs and services might meet the different needs of women, men and gender diverse people so we can develop solutions that benefit everyone.

Applying a gender lens to policy helps us to think from different perspectives and identify gendered impacts that may not be obvious to everyone. When we design something that will apply to everyone in the same way, this may seem fair – but it may have an unfair effect on particular groups of people, including people of different genders.

Without considering the perspectives of people of different genders, we risk contributing to existing inequalities – or worse, creating new ones.

For example, a local council is developing a new community space.

Alan is developing the project plan and thinks they should build the community space close to a popular freeway exit for ease of access and next to an existing skate park. Alan thinks the space should include a park with a playground, a community garden, a market zone for local vendors to hire stalls, some parking spaces, and some male, female and accessible bathrooms.

Alan is very proud of the space he has designed and invites his co-workers to have a look.

Bea notices that the proposed location of the community space is far from public transport options. She also notices that the park and market garden area don't seem to have much lighting, or any emergency call buttons or phone boxes to call security officers. Cal notices that the space does not have any 'all gender' bathrooms. And Dejan notices that there are no baby change facilities in the male bathrooms and no pram access to the market zone.

Alan planned the space with the benefit of his experience, knowledge and reality (that is, his lens). His colleagues noticed other issues and opportunities for the community space because they have different lenses.

People of different genders may have different experiences due to other aspects of their identity, such as their cultural and religious background, age or disability. By including these lenses too, we can add more layers and perspectives to design.

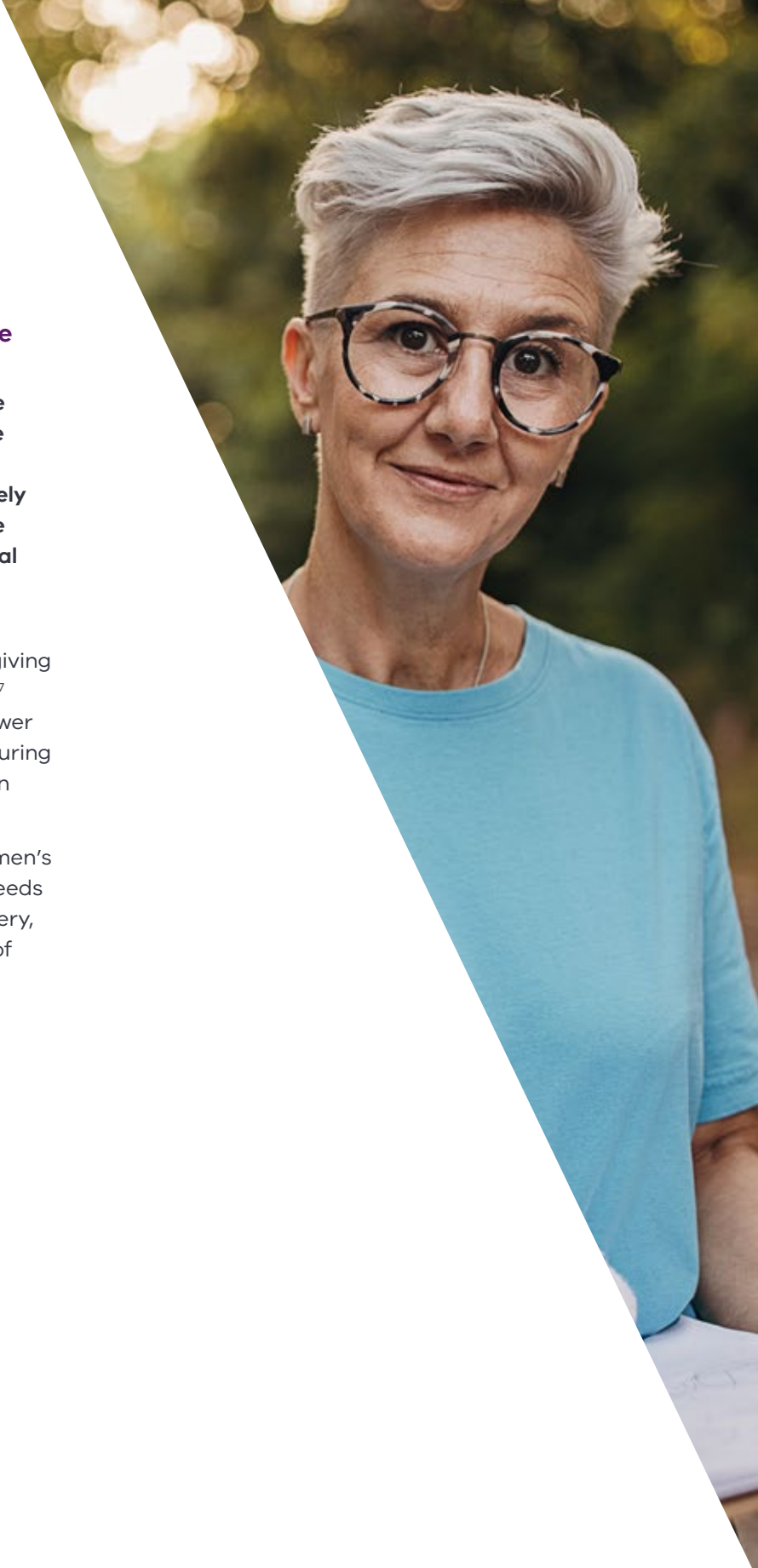
Like Alan, we each have our own unique lens. This is why it is important to undertake a GIA – to make sure we look at a policy, program or service through different lenses, including the lenses of men, women and gender diverse people, as well as the lenses of people with different experiences of advantage and disadvantage, privilege and discrimination.

The need to spotlight gender in climate and disaster work

The impacts of climate and disaster work are gendered. Evidence shows women have more of the emotional and psychological burden during and after disasters. They are more likely to prioritise the care of others at the expense of their own physical health, social and mental wellbeing.⁷⁶

Women are more often expected to sacrifice their paid work to take on more unpaid caregiving for vulnerable family members and children.⁷⁷ This means that women may recover at a slower rate than men from major economic losses during disasters. Gendered violence also increases in the aftermath of disasters.

Through *Our equal state*, we will consider women's and gender diverse people's expertise and needs in preparing for disaster, response and recovery, particularly given Australia's increasing risk of natural disasters.



Case study: funding to women in flood-affected areas

Following the devastating 2022 floods, we are supporting 4 women’s health services to provide tailored and targeted support to women who are most affected.

A total of \$1.2 million is being provided to Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health, GenWest, Women’s Health Loddon Mallee and Women’s Health Goulburn North East – organisations that have all played a critical role in supporting women through disasters.

Funding is enabling activities and projects that:

- bring women together to reconnect and support their emotional and social wellbeing
- offer training for women and organisations that support women in disaster response and recovery
- connect women affected by floods to local supports and services.

As part of this, we are funding research on the needs of migrant and refugee women affected by disasters. This research will inform a best practice guide for service providers.



Our actions

Our actions include new commitments, areas for future work and successful programs and policies.



Our actions to create a gender equal state have 5 focus areas



Cultural change
Victoria is free from limiting gender norms and is an equal, fair and inclusive place for all genders.



Health and wellbeing
The health and wellbeing of Victorians is not limited by gender.



Economic equity
The economic rights and opportunities of Victorians are not limited by gender.



Safety and respect
All Victorians are safe and treated with respect.



The public sector as a leader
The Victorian Government leads by example and advances reforms for gender equality.



Cultural change

No.

Action

1 Geographic Names Victoria will work with naming authorities, including local government, to increase the commemoration of women in place naming, by setting a level of 70% of new requests for commemorative naming of new roads, placenames and landmarks to be achieved within the lifetime of the Strategy.

2 Implement diversity benchmarks in contracting to ensure leadership and recognition programs funded by the Women’s portfolio are inclusive of women and gender diverse people from across the Victorian community, including Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, LGBTIQ+ communities, women from multicultural backgrounds and women from regional and rural communities.

Supports *Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women* recommendation 13

3 Develop and implement an approach to address gender bias in careers education and pathways options in the implementation of the Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms. This will include more explicitly addressing gender bias through:

- career initiatives that support student decision-making and school career planning
- addressing barriers to girls’ participation in STEM education, and barriers to boys’ participation in the care industries.

No.	Action
4	Maintain gender parity on Victorian boards and courts and increase the diversity of women on boards.
5	Deliver the gender equity in local government target made in Victoria’s first gender equality strategy, <i>Safe and strong</i> , by achieving 50% women mayors and councillors by 2025.
6	Explore ways to support Victorian early childhood education and care services as the sector expands by investing in educators and teachers. Responds to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 7
7	Explore further ways to embed a gender equality focus across the VET–TAFE system to improve outcomes for women in vocational education and training, including strategies to increase the proportion of women in sectors that traditionally have lower female representation. Responds to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 17
8	Investigate strategies to increase the number of men in sectors that traditionally have lower male representation, including social services, education and health services. Supports <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 23
9	Explore ways to address age-based discrimination and ableism for women and gender diverse people, especially in the workplace.
10	Support the shEqual project to reduce sexism and the objectification of women and gender inequality in advertising.
11	Advocate to the Australian Government to increase regulation of advertising in Australia to reduce the use and impact of harmful depictions of women and gender nonconforming people.
12	Support inclusive recognition of women in Victoria through targeted programs, including the Victorian Honour Roll of Women.
13	Support women from diverse backgrounds and gender diverse people to take on leadership roles and be represented in decision-making spaces through targeted programs.
14	Support men to take on more caring roles by investing \$2 million in grants to create new and support existing fathers’ groups across the state, with funding distributed through local councils.
15	Deliver a grassroots grant program for gender equality in 2023 to support and empower Victorian women and celebrate contributions to their communities.



Health and wellbeing

No.	Action
16	Deliver the best mental health and wellbeing outcomes for women and gender diverse people by building gender impact assessments into the design process for all new mental health services and initiatives resulting from the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System.
17	<p>Expand gender sensitive mental health services and end sexual and gender-based violence in bed-based settings by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring all new mental health inpatient facilities are designed and built with the necessary scale and infrastructure to enable gender-based separation in all bedrooms and bathrooms • reviewing and retrofitting existing inpatient facilities to achieve gender-based separation where possible • ensuring all mental health inpatient facilities meet the minimum standards for gender safety set out in the Chief Psychiatrist’s Guidelines.
18	Deliver and evaluate acute women’s mental health beds.
19	Require all Victorian Government-funded health and medical research to include proactive and routine consideration of sex, gender and gender diversity at all stages.
20	Provide free period products in public places by installing up to 1,500 pad and tampon machines at up to 700 public sites including public hospitals, courts, TAFEs, public libraries, train stations and major cultural institutions like the State Library of Victoria and the Melbourne Museum.
21	Investigate strategies and innovative ideas to destigmatise periods alongside the provision of free pads and tampons.
22	Continue to deliver free period products in Victorian government schools, helping to address barriers to participation in education for menstruating students.
23	Support the establishment of a Women’s Health Research Institute.
24	Establish 20 women’s health clinics across Victoria, as well as a dedicated Aboriginal-led women’s health clinic, a mobile women’s health clinic and extra funding to support workforce expansion for the health sector.
25	Establish an inquiry into women’s pain management.
26	Expand the number of surgeries for endometriosis.
27	Establish support groups and mental health programs to support women experiencing menopause.

Our actions

No.	Action
28	Support 200 community and mental health service providers to become Rainbow Tick accredited to ensure better care for LGBTIQ+ Victorians and make sure they are safe and included.
29	Deliver a Pride in Ageing pilot to address the needs of ageing LGBTIQ+ Victorians.
30	Explore opportunities to leverage healthcare advances driven by the pandemic to improve the health of older women and gender diverse people, and their ability to protect themselves (<i>Ageing well action plan 2022–2026</i>) using an intersectional lens.
31	Explore ways to address loneliness and isolation for older women and carers.
32	Deliver tailored support for people with an eating disorder, including to continue and expand the delivery of the Enhanced Integrated Specialist Model at 6 metropolitan health services (Alfred, Austin, Eastern, Melbourne, Monash and Royal Children’s) and 4 regional health services (Barwon, Bendigo, Grampians and La Trobe), and through implementation of the <i>Victorian eating disorders strategy</i> .
33	Continue to level the playing field for all women and girls in sport and active recreation, including in the suitability and access to infrastructure, leadership, participation and in closing the visibility gap through the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation, the Change Our Game initiative and other related programs.
34	Implement the <i>Victorian women’s sexual and reproductive health plan 2022–2030</i> to ensure Victorian women, girls and gender diverse people have excellent sexual and reproductive health outcomes, including by creating and expanding existing and new services.
35	Support trans and gender diverse Victorians through the Trans and Gender Diverse in Community Health program, which delivers peer navigation support through multidisciplinary clinics and training for health practitioners.
36	Deliver the \$900,000 funding package to expand access to vital mental health and support services for trans and gender diverse Victorians.
37	Create safe spaces for LGBTIQ+ young people to access mental health and wellbeing services in regional Victoria.
38	Deliver statewide LGBTIQ+ inclusion training and resources.



Economic equity

No.	Action
39	Use quotas to reach gender balance for the Year 9 intake of the 2 co-educational Victorian selective entry high schools, if not achieved through current interventions.
40	<p>Improve the availability and appropriateness of outside of school hours care for children with disability.</p> <p>Responds to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 8</p>
41	<p>Deliver a Fair Jobs Code for the social and community services sector to improve job security and conditions for the majority-women community services workforces.</p> <p>Responds in part to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 24</p>
42	Increase the number of flexible work opportunities for school leaders.
43	Re-engage women with teaching qualifications in the schools workforce.
44	<p>Explore the role of the Victorian Government to improve job security and conditions, consistent with the <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 24 for majority-women social services.</p> <p>Responds to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 24</p>
45	Explore new ways to support leadership roles and representation for women from diverse backgrounds and gender diverse people in the private sector.
46	<p>Undertake research on the fair economic value* of care and community work, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploring ways to deliver the fair economic value of care and community work through improved pay and conditions • exploring better ways of capturing the economic value of care and community work in state economic data • exploring options to track the delivery of the fair economic value of care and community work • taking practical steps to deliver fair economic value and public accountability. <p>Responds in part to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 23</p> <p>* 'Fair economic value' describes work that is appropriately valued for its economic contribution, including direct and indirect economic benefits.</p>
47	<p>Explore ways to improve gender equality through public sector industrial relations negotiations, such as through updated leave and superannuation provisions, and the promotion of policies that seek to balance the share of caring responsibilities.</p> <p>Supports <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 4</p>

No.	Action
48	<p>Explore innovative ways to improve working arrangements in the Victorian Public Service and reduce the gendered impacts of unpaid care, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore more flexible ways of working • increasing job sharing opportunities in shift and frontline roles that are women-dominated • improving the job security of women in the public sector.
49	<p>Explore ways to advocate to the Australian Government to improve investment in and stewardship of early childhood education and care to further outcomes for women’s participation in the workforce.</p> <p>Responds to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 5</p>
50	<p>Explore ways to address challenges faced by women-owned businesses, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research on women’s representations in Victorian small businesses • ways to expand the suite of initiatives that support women-owned businesses and women entrepreneurs to start up or to scale up • co-designed programs for Aboriginal women in business and considering needs of women in regional and rural Victoria. <p>Responds to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendations 26, 27 and 28</p>
51	<p>Explore opportunities to leverage the existing skills and experiences of migrant and refugee women, including reviewing how overseas qualifications can be better recognised and matched to job vacancies in the Victorian labour market, and the role of training and skills in supplementing foundation skills and English as an additional language.</p>
52	<p>Advocate for immediate reforms to the Australian Government’s Child Care Subsidy (CCS) to improve access to early childhood education and remove barriers to workforce participation for families experiencing economic hardship, including newly arrived refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. Reforms include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • removing the Activity Test • a review of eligibility and administration of the subsidy that unduly impacts children and families experiencing vulnerability.
53	<p>Investigate innovative ways to increase the digital literacy of older women, in particular from multicultural communities and women with disability, giving consideration to accessibility and affordability.</p>
54	<p>Identify options to strengthen the Social Procurement Framework’s aim of women’s equality and safety to ensure it supports the goals, principles and indicators of the <i>Gender Equality Act 2020</i>, including through a broader strategic review of the Social Procurement Framework.</p> <p>Responds to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 21</p>

No.	Action
55	<p>Continue to roll out trades opportunities for Victorian young women through innovative programs, such as the Apprenticeship Innovation Fund, creating career pathways for woman apprentices in male-dominated trades.</p> <p>Supports in part <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 18</p>
56	<p>Build an online Life Skills Toolkit for young people, with a particular focus on building financial literacy of young women to have the skills and confidence to become independent.</p>
57	<p>Develop and implement women in manufacturing and women in energy industry strategies to support gender equality and address barriers to attracting, recruiting and retaining women in majority-men industries.</p> <p>Responds to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 19</p>
58	<p>Develop and implement a new <i>Women in construction strategy 2023–2031</i> to continue to drive progress on gender equality in the construction industry, including consideration of raising employment targets in the Building equality policy.</p> <p>Responds to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 20</p>
59	<p>Better support for women in the transport sector and encourage workplaces to be inclusive and adaptive through the <i>Women in transport strategy</i>.</p>
60	<p>Provide the Victorian Sick Pay Guarantee for casual and contract workers in priority occupations, recognising that due to lack of access to paid sick and carers leave many insecure workers have to choose between a day’s pay or their health, and that many workers most at risk are women.</p>
61	<p>Deliver the Big Housing Build Aboriginal target of 10% net of all new social housing, with a focus on housing allocations for Aboriginal women affected by homelessness and who may be affected by family violence, or who are returning to the community after exiting prison.</p>
62	<p>Increase access to finance for women founders and early-stage start-ups through continued delivery of the Alice Anderson Fund.</p>
63	<p>Provide tailored support for jobseekers who are long-term unemployed, including women facing barriers to employment through Jobs Victoria’s employment services.</p>
64	<p>Deliver the <i>Yuma Yirramboi strategy</i> with a vision to achieve economic parity for Aboriginal Victorians within our lifetime, including increasing economic opportunities available to Aboriginal women.</p>
65	<p>Deliver the Rural Women’s Leadership and Mentoring Programs to address barriers for women seeking leadership opportunities in agriculture.</p>

No.	Action
66	Build over 12,000 new social and affordable homes, allocating 1,000 homes for victim survivors of family violence and increase the supply of accessible social housing for people with disability.
67	Implement the Homes Victoria <i>Gender equity plan 2023–25</i> to leverage the Victorian Government’s significant investment in the Big Housing Build to address gender inequality.
68	Deliver the Pride in Place initiative (Homes Victoria) for older LGBTIQ+ Victorians, and support LGBTIQ+ Victorians of all ages experiencing or at risk of homelessness to secure housing in a safe and respectful way.
69	<p>Continue to advocate to the Australian Government and Fair Work Commission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for fair pay and conditions for care and community sector workforces to deliver the fair economic value of the work • to address the pay gap in superannuation • to further reform paid parental leave, such as through consideration of reform options including paying superannuation on the Australian Government’s Paid Parental Leave (PPL) Scheme and introducing a more generous ‘use it or lose it’ non-transferrable portion of PPL for fathers and partners. <p>Responds to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendations 23 and 25</p>
70	Continue to advocate to the Australian Government for further improvements to social security system that better support women, including increasing social security payments to carers, who are overwhelmingly women.
71	Deliver support services and programs to strengthen employment opportunities for women leaving custody to reconnect with their families and access housing.
72	<p>Deliver the \$14 billion Best Start, Best Life reforms that aim to reduce the cost of access to early childhood education and care and lessen one of the biggest barriers to women’s workforce participation, including the following key reforms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivering Free Kinder for all Victorian 3 and 4-year-old children at participating services in both standalone (sessional) services and long day care (childcare) settings • 4-Year-Old Kindergarten transitioning to Pre-Prep, increasing to a universal 30-hour a week program of play-based learning available to every 4-year-old child in Victoria • establishing 50 Victorian government-owned and affordable early learning centres in areas with the greatest need, making it easier for families to access education and care. <p>Supports <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 6</p>

Our actions

No.	Action
73	Deliver the Outside Schools Hours Care Establishment Grants Initiative with \$81.7 million to support more than 400 schools across Victoria to provide outside hours school care services to reduce barriers to women's workforce participation, ensuring parents and carers get back into the workforce, study or training. Supports <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 8
74	Support early childhood education service providers to be culturally safe and inclusive for children and families who are newly arrived or from a refugee background, making it easier for parents to return to work and study.



Safety and respect

No.	Action
75	Undertake a gender impact assessment on the Victoria Planning Provisions and guidelines to create places designed with the needs of women and girls in mind.
76	Continue work to restrict the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) for workplace sexual harassment cases in Victoria. Responds in part to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 9
77	Improve the safety and the perceptions of safety of women and girls during their end-to-end transport journeys through the delivery of a number of initiatives.
78	Explore ways to use Victorian Government licensing and regulation to improve workplace safety and reduce gendered violence in different types of businesses.
79	Explore ways to better support women experiencing economic hardship due to family violence, including economic abuse, using an intersectional lens. Responds to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 31
80	Explore options to introduce a standalone non-fatal strangulation offence, to address this serious and insidious form of offending that occurs particularly in the context of family violence.
81	Support schools and early childhood settings to promote and model respect, positive attitudes and behaviours through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuing to support all Victorian government schools and participating Catholic and independent schools to implement and embed Respectful Relationships • embedding consent education in all Victorian government schools • continuing to deliver Respectful Relationships professional learning to early childhood educators in Victorian Government-funded kindergarten programs.
82	Strengthen anti-vilification laws to provide greater protection for Victorians of all genders, including through working with agencies such as the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.
83	Continue to deliver the Safe Schools program, which helps Victorian schools foster a safe environment that is inclusive of LGBTIQ+ students.
84	Provide gender-responsive programs and interventions for girls and young women in the youth justice system that recognise their complex needs and significant trauma histories, including abuse, family violence, self-harm and higher rates of mental illness (<i>Youth justice strategic plan 2020–2030</i>).

No.	Action
85	Implement the <i>Free from violence: second action plan 2022–2025</i> to ensure Victorian women are safe and free from violence by investing in community-led gender equality and primary prevention projects across the state, from sports clubs to TAFEs, to local government and women’s health services.
86	Continue to support implementation of an affirmative consent model in the <i>Crimes Act 1958</i> to better protect victim survivors of sexual offences, putting greater focus on the actions of the accused than just the actions of the victim survivor.
87	Reform bail laws to address the disproportionate impacts current bail settings have on women, including Aboriginal women.
88	Enact legislation and deliver targeted programs to support and protect those involved in the sex work industry.
89	Work with the Australian Government and states and territories to address recommendations of the Respect@Work report as outlined in the Government response to the Ministerial Taskforce on Workplace Sexual Harassment.
90	Implement the government’s response to recommendations of the Ministerial Taskforce on Workplace Sexual Harassment to prevent and better respond to sexual harassment at work. Supports <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 9
91	Deliver the WorkWell Respect Fund and the WorkWell Respect Network to support employers to prevent work-related gendered violence including sexual harassment in Victorian workplaces.
92	Support initiatives to address elder abuse, with a particular focus on older women who are significantly more at risk than men.
93	Continue implementing Respect and Equality in TAFE to strengthen the TAFE network’s approach to prevention of gender-based violence and gender equality.



Public sector as a leader

No.	Action
94	Halve the gender pay gap in the Victorian public sector within 5 years through the implementation of the <i>Gender Equality Act 2020</i> . According to the <i>Baseline report</i> the median base salary pay gap was 6.1% and median total remuneration pay gap was 8.1% in organisations covered under the Act.
95	Reach gender parity in CEO roles in each portfolio in the Victorian public sector within 5 years.
96	Reach gender parity in senior leadership positions in each portfolio across the Victorian public sector within 5 years.
97	Double the number of men taking available paid parental leave in the Victorian public sector within 5 years in order to work towards rebalancing the gendered uptake of caring entitlements. Supports <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 4
98	Develop a refreshed gender equality outcomes framework to measure impact and progress towards gender equality.
99	Establish an advisory group to support the implementation of <i>Our equal state</i> .
100	Ensure the Victorian Government’s response to the Final Report into the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide applies a gender lens.
101	Develop actions to address the gendered impacts of disasters, as well as disaster preparedness, response and recovery.
102	Explore ways to improve gender equality outcomes in the community and not-for-profit sectors through funding guidelines for Victorian Government grant funding and service agreements.
103	Explore ways to improve the collection, quality and use of gender-disaggregated and intersectional data across the Victorian public sector. Data captured should include experiences of discrimination and caring responsibilities, as per recommendation 29b of the <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> . It should also include supporting defined entities under the <i>Gender Equality Act 2020</i> to report on gender pay gaps for women from diverse backgrounds and social groups. Responds to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendations 16, 23 and 29
104	Explore opportunities to strengthen gender equitable policies for Victorian Government engagement with professional services organisations. Responds to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 22

No.	Action
105	Explore embedding gender design principles in public space development.
106	Embed gender responsive budgeting in legislation to secure the practice across public sector entities. Responds to <i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women</i> recommendation 15
107	Continue to implement the recommendations of the <i>PAEC inquiry into gender responsive budgeting</i> , as agreed in the Victorian Government’s response.
108	Provide training, education and resources to help defined entities conduct gender impact assessments. Where appropriate, this will be in line with training on gender responsive budgeting.
109	Publish the annual <i>Gender equality budget statement</i> as part of the State Budget and continue enhancements to incorporate further information such as data and analysis of the impact of gender responsive budgeting.
110	Contribute to the Council of Federal Financial Relation’s work in advocating for women’s economic opportunities at a multijurisdictional level for women’s economic participation, with an initial focus on gender responsive budgeting, gender responsive procurement and women’s workforce participation and gender wage gaps.

Explainer: Public sector workforce targets

This strategy will strengthen gender equality in Victoria’s public sector workforce, driving important changes across the state. These actions apply at the state level, not at the public sector organisation level. While they are not legislated, we will track our progress

as part of reporting for this strategy. Future targets and quotas prescribed by regulations under the *Gender Equality Act 2020* are separate from this strategy. They will factor in further data and research, as well as stakeholder consultation.



Measuring our impact

Gender equality outcomes framework

The gender equality outcomes framework (the outcomes framework) is a tool that helps us track the impact of our work and our progress towards gender equality over time.

It translates our vision for gender equality into a set of measurable domains, outcomes, indicators and measures. As it matures, the outcomes framework will provide valuable insights to report back to the community.



The **domains** in the outcomes framework describe our aims for cultural, attitudinal, behavioural and structural change, and the **outcomes** describe what success looks like for Victorians. They are intentionally ambitious and inspirational.

We will finalise the outcomes framework in consultation with stakeholders. This includes developing:

- short, medium and long-term **indicators** and **measures** that describe what needs to change to achieve our vision and assess whether we are making progress
- information on how to apply the outcomes framework.

During this process, we may refine the proposed set of domains and outcomes.

This outcomes framework builds on the work in *Safe and strong* and *Victoria's gender equality baseline report*. As gender equality reform continues to evolve and mature, some aspects of the former outcomes framework are still relevant. We have updated others.

Where possible, the outcomes framework will align and integrate with related measurement tools to report on gender equality progress. It will also align with other Victorian Government outcomes frameworks and strategic plans.

How we will know if we're achieving gender equality

Measuring success requires us to be specific about what success looks like, what needs to change to get there and how we will know if we are getting there. The outcomes framework will guide this work over the next 4 years.

We will prepare a progress report of this gender equality strategy and action plan after 2 years to assess progress on an aggregated statewide basis. The progress report will be in line with the *Gender Equality Act 2020* and tabled in parliament. It will consider the progress of this strategy and the performance and progress of defined entities under the Act in relation to:⁷⁸

- their gender equality action plans
- gender equality targets and gender equality quotas.

The outcomes framework will also support gender responsive budgeting and the Act, and unify the work of all government departments and agencies towards a common goal.

As we report and track progress, we aim to improve the evidence base of what works to enhance gender equality through research, monitoring, evaluation and learning. We aim to uphold principles of transparency, accessibility and accountability and keep all stakeholders and the wider Victorian community engaged in this important work.

Figure 5. Gender equality outcomes framework

Our vision

All Victorians live in a safe and equal society, have access to equal power, resources and opportunities, and are treated with dignity, respect and fairness.

	Domains	Outcomes
	<p>1. Cultural change: Victoria is free from limiting gender norms and is an equal, fair, and inclusive place for all genders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victorians do not hold attitudes of gender inequality and discrimination • Victorian communities model and promote a commitment to gender equality
	<p>2. Health and wellbeing: The health and wellbeing of Victorians is not limited by gender</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victorians of all genders have equal opportunity to achieve good physical, mental, reproductive, and sexual health • Health services are effective, gender-responsive, and person-centred
	<p>3. Economic equity: The economic rights and opportunities of Victorians are not limited by gender</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victorians of all genders are rewarded and recognised equitably for their contributions • Participation in education, training, and employment is inclusive and equitable for all genders • Victorians of all genders have equitable access to economic and material security
	<p>4. Safety and respect: All Victorians are safe and treated with respect</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victorians are free from gendered abuse, violence, and harassment • Victorians experience and practice respectful relationships
	<p>5. The public sector as a leader: The Victorian Government leads by example and advances reform for gender equality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and decision-making considers and accounts for its impact on people of different genders • The public sector exemplifies best practice in workplace intersectional gender equality

Framework for progress

As part of our requirements under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, the domain 'The public sector as a leader' serves as the framework for progress on gender equality in public sector workplaces and policies, programs and services, as well as for progress against all domains of the strategy.

It includes workplace gender equality indicators of:

- gender composition of all levels of the workforce
- gender composition of governing bodies
- equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce, irrespective of gender
- sexual harassment in the workplace
- recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace
- availability and utilisation of terms, conditions, and practices relating to: family violence leave; flexible working arrangements; and working arrangements supporting employees with family or caring responsibilities
- gendered segregation within the workplace.

It also includes:

- consideration of gender equality in policies, programs and services
- focus on gender equality in Victorian Government budgeting.

These indicators are reflective of key drivers and influences on progress towards gender equality in the public sector.



Glossary

Term	Definition
cisgender	A cis (pronounced 'sis', short for cisgender) person is someone whose gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth – someone who isn't trans or gender diverse.
cissexism	Prejudice or discrimination against transgender people.
gender	Part of how you understand who you are and how you interact with other people. Many people understand their gender as being a man or woman. Some people understand their gender as a combination of these, or neither. A person's gender and their expression of their gender can be shown in different ways, such as through behaviour or physical appearance.
gender diverse	An umbrella term for a range of genders expressed in different ways. Gender diverse people use many terms to describe themselves. Language in this area is dynamic. Particularly among young people who are more likely to describe themselves as non-binary.
gender equality	<p>The state in which access to rights or opportunities is unaffected by gender. Gender equality is when people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities.</p> <p>The <i>Gender Equality Act 2020</i> defines gender equality as equality of rights, opportunities, responsibilities and outcomes between persons of different genders.</p> <p>Equality does not mean that women, men, people with intersex variations, and trans and gender diverse people will become the same. Rather, their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on their gender.</p>
<i>Gender Equality Act 2020</i>	The <i>Gender Equality Act 2020</i> (the Act) applies to around 300 Victorian public sector organisations, including universities and local councils. The Act requires these organisations to take positive and transparent action towards achieving workplace gender equality, and promote gender equality in the policies, programs and services they deliver to the public. The Act means Victoria has useful tools in place to plan, measure and track progress towards gender equality.
gender equity	<p>In this strategy, gender equality and gender equity are used interchangeably but we acknowledge they are distinct terms.</p> <p>Gender equity recognises that we should identify and address the differences in gender-related needs and power in a way that fixes any imbalances.</p>

Term	Definition
gender mainstreaming	Gender mainstreaming remains widely accepted as the most practical means to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women. It moves gender equality and the empowerment of women and gender diverse people from the margins to the mainstream of decision-making. It integrates gender perspectives of all people into all policies, programs, functions and structures of an institution.
gender norms and structures	We can think of gender norms as common beliefs about how men, women and gender diverse people should behave (or how they should be). Gender norms tend to exaggerate small or perceived differences between men and women into stereotypes that are thought to represent all men and women.
gender stereotypes	Simplistic generalisations about gender attributes, differences and roles.
intersectionality	<p>The concept of intersectional disadvantage or discrimination is sometimes called 'intersectionality'. It explains how people may experience overlapping forms of discrimination or disadvantage based on attributes such as Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion and sexual orientation.</p> <p>Intersectionality recognises that the causes of disadvantage or discrimination do not exist independently. Instead, they intersect and overlap with gender inequality, making effects worse while also raising barriers to support.</p>
LGBTIQ+	Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer and others on the spectrum of gender.
multicultural community	Refers broadly to the vast number of diverse cultural and ethnic groups in Victoria.
multifaith community	Refers to the diverse faith groups in Victoria.
non-binary and genderqueer	Umbrella terms for gender identities that are not only male or female.

Term	Definition
outcomes framework	Gender equality outcomes framework.
people with intersex variations	An umbrella term for people born with natural variations to sex characteristics. This includes physical features relating to sex such as genitalia and other sexual and reproductive parts of a person's anatomy. It might also refer to a person's chromosomes, hormones and secondary physical features emerging as a result of puberty.
Safe and strong	<i>Safe and strong: a Victorian gender equality strategy</i> was Victoria's first gender equality strategy, released in 2016.
sistergirl and brotherboy	Aboriginal communities use these terms to describe transgender people and their relationships as a way of validating and strengthening their gender identities and relationships. Non-trans but nonconforming Aboriginal people may also use these terms. For example, both lesbian and heterosexual Aboriginal women may refer to themselves as 'sistergirls', 'sisters' or 'tiddas', which is an Aboriginal English term for the word 'sisters'. Gay Aboriginal men may also refer to themselves as sisters.
State GEAP	State gender equality action plan.
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics.
the inquiry	<i>Inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women.</i>
the roadmap	<i>Fair access policy roadmap.</i>
the strategy	This document, <i>Our equal state: Victoria's gender equality strategy and action plan 2023–2027</i> , also referred to as <i>Our equal state</i> .
transgender (trans) person	A person whose gender does not align with the one assigned at birth. Not all trans people use this term to describe themselves.

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