

## Submission to Inquiry Economic Equity for Victorian Women

Thank you for the opportunity to offer a submission to the Victorian Government Inquiry into Economic Equity for Victorian Women, announced by the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance.<sup>1</sup>

The Victorian Government is to be commended for proactively addressing the issue of gender economic inequities especially in the wake of the pandemic's disproportionate impact on women. The Government is also to be applauded for the suite of significant long-term initiatives that it has embarked on to advance gender equality in the State, including the implementation of the Gender Equality Act, the establishment of the Gender Equality Commission in the Public Sector, and the adoption of Gender Responsive Budgeting within the operations of the Department of Treasury and Finance. All of these initiatives bring a much-needed gender lens to economic policymaking and service delivery, instil the principle of gender equity into the actions of government, and accelerate progress towards closing gender gaps in outcomes.

I offer this submission in response to the specific issues raised in the Inquiry's Terms of Reference. As sought by the Terms of Reference, this submission provides some research insights and evidence-based policy considerations that can contribute to the Victorian Government's policy package to steer Victoria towards an equitable economic recovery and address longstanding gender inequities in economic outcomes and opportunities more broadly. I offer my professional expertise as an academic economist specialising in gender equality in the workforce, with experience in public policy. This submission adds to the other research reports and policy analysis that I am pleased to have provided the Department.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/genderinquiry>

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## Evidence-based strategies to address gender inequities in workforce outcomes

Many of the issues under investigation in the Terms of Reference of this Inquiry centre on the underlying question of how to close gender gaps in workforce outcomes. Much of the research in this field traces these gender gaps back to the influence of biases and societal norms that are embedded in workplaces practices, business decision-making, institutional systems, and the culture that shapes our everyday behaviours in society. Closing gender gaps, and instilling economic equity on the basis of gender, inherently requires dismantling these biases and structures.

The evidence base in the field of gender inequality points towards several system-based interventions that can form part of the package of initiatives that can be promoted, incentivised or directly implemented by the Victorian Government.

### 1) Set up formal systems for gender gap auditing and reporting, supported by appropriate toolkits and resources

Organisations that regularly conduct gender pay gap audits, and systematically report on the outcomes of their gender gap audits, are more likely to see a narrowing of their gender pay gap. This finding came out of the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre's analysis of company-specific data that is collected by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA).<sup>2</sup>

Under the Workforce Gender Equality Act, all private sector companies with 100 or more employees are required to report to WGEA annually on a set of gender equality indicators, including a measurement of pay gaps, and whether the organisation has strategies in place to address gender inequities.<sup>3</sup> The WGEA dataset covers nearly 4.4 million employees, equivalent to at least 40 per cent of the Australian workforce.

WGEA have recently initiated processes for all State and Federal Governments to voluntarily participate in WGEA's gender gap reporting process.<sup>4</sup> This initiative constitutes a useful alignment of methodologies and data collection processes across both the public and private sectors, aiding in meaningful comparability and the sharing of insights on policy effectiveness. Organisations that fall outside of WGEA's reporting requirements, but are tendering for government contracts, may also be required to fulfil particular requirements to be compliant with the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012. Non-compliant organisations can be listed publicly.<sup>5</sup>

While WGEA requires companies to report on their gender pay gap and other gender inequality metrics, there are additional steps that companies can take beyond merely reporting on their data. The BCEC detected that undertaking a gender pay gap audit and establishing measures of accountability, such as a formal commitment by the company to report the outcomes of the audit to the company's Board or Executive, corresponds to a greater narrowing of gender gaps within an organisation. WGEA's requirements do not obligate companies to have these accountability measure in place, but asks them to report on whether or not they do. WGEA has found that the absence of these accountability measures can lead to what has described as an "action gap", where analytical insights are generated but not acted on.<sup>6</sup> BCEC's analysis of the WGEA data detected that companies that ceased to conduct a pay gap gender audit did not just stall, but regressed, on gender equality indicators. Institutionalising processes for gender gap analysis and accountability appear to provide the impetus for companies to convert their data collection efforts into action and ongoing progress.

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<sup>2</sup> Cassells, R. and Duncan, A. (2021) *Gender Equity Insights 2021: Making it a priority*, BCEC-WGEA Gender Equity Series, Issue no. 6 <[https://bcec.edu.au/assets/2021/03/BCEC-WGEA-Gender-Equity-Insights-2021\\_WEB.pdf](https://bcec.edu.au/assets/2021/03/BCEC-WGEA-Gender-Equity-Insights-2021_WEB.pdf)>

<sup>3</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency <<https://www.wgea.gov.au/about>>

<sup>4</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency <<https://www.wgea.gov.au/what-we-do/reporting>>

<sup>5</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency <<https://www.wgea.gov.au/what-we-do/compliance-reporting/non-compliant-list>>

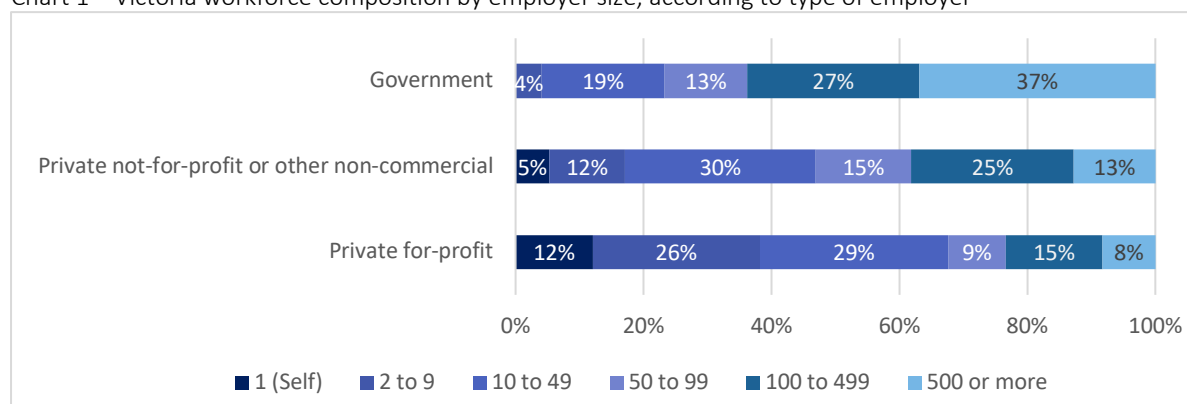
<sup>6</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency <<https://www.wgea.gov.au/newsroom/new-wgea-data-shows-employer-action-on-gender-equality-has-stalled>>

In Victoria, a set of gender gap reporting and auditing requirements have come into effect for all public sector organisations, under the Victorian Gender Equality Act.<sup>7</sup> From 2021, all entities with responsibility for delivering public services in Victoria are required to conduct a gender-based audit using a similar set of indicators that is prescribed by WGEA, and to submit this information to the Victorian Gender Equality Commission. Organisations are also required to construct their own Gender Equality Action Plan and report on the progress of their Plan to the Commission. Informed by evidenced-based insights, these processes are well designed to support organisations to take the practical steps that will progressively narrow gender gaps and promote gender equality within their internal practices. The Victorian Gender Equality Act will apply to approximately 11 per cent of the Victorian workforce.<sup>8</sup>

An important element that supports the effectiveness of the WGEA and Victorian Gender Equality Act reporting requirements is that they are accompanied by a comprehensive set of resources, including analytical toolkits and research-driven information, that equip organisations with the capacity to adequately undertake this analysis and use their insights constructively.

The Inquiry has scope to consider the organisations in Victoria fall outside of the scope of the WGEA and the Victorian Gender Equality Commission, and the extent to which they can be supported to engage in these gender equality practices. Specifically, private companies with fewer than 100 employees are exempt from WGEA reporting requirements, and private companies in Victoria that do not have responsibility for the provision of public services are exempt from the obligations of Victorian Gender Equality Act. To place this into context, around three-quarters of Victoria’s workforce are employed in the private sector. Of this private sector workforce, around 70 per cent work in a workplaces with fewer than 100 employees. This disaggregation of Victoria’s workforce is presented in Charts 1 and 2. Estimates of Victoria’s workforce composition indicate that around 46% of Victoria’s workforce fall out of scope of the formal requirements of the WGEA and Victorian Gender Equality Commission, owing to their private sector status and smaller workplace size.<sup>9</sup>

Chart 1 – Victoria workforce composition by employer size, according to type of employer



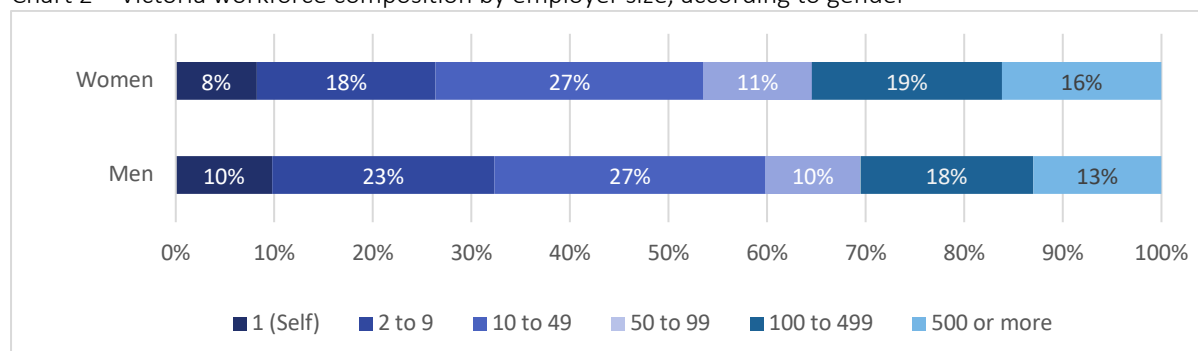
Source: Author’s calculation using the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey for 2019. Employer size is measured according to the number of employees in the workforce (from 1 to ‘500 or more’).

<sup>7</sup> Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, Victorian Government  
<https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/about-gender-equality-act-2020>

<sup>8</sup> Premier of Victoria (2020) ‘Breaking New Ground For Gender Equality In Victoria’, Media Release, 10 September 2020.  
<https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/breaking-new-ground-gender-equality-victoria>

<sup>9</sup> Author’s calculation using the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey for 2019.

Chart 2 – Victoria workforce composition by employer size, according to gender



Source: Author’s calculation using the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey for 2019. Employer size is measured according to the number of employees in the workforce (from 1 to ‘500 or more’).

These current arrangements present an opportunity for the Victorian Government to consider a mechanism for private sector employers in Victoria with fewer than 100 employees, and potentially other community organisations beyond workplaces, to be supported to engage in these gender equality practices. This does not necessarily have to be on a mandatory basis, but could be incentivised on a voluntary basis, with a primary focus on broadening the accessibility of informational resources and toolkits for change to these organisations.

Supporting these organisations to engage in gender equality practices can entail identifying and addressing any costs or resourcing constraints that prohibits smaller sized firms from analysing their gender pay gap and implementing more equitable practices. In relation to organisation size, a recent analysis of gender gap reporting processes across multiple countries including Australia, conducted by the Global Institute for Women’s Leadership, highlighted the effectiveness of reporting requirements as a mechanism for closing gender gaps in pay and workforce outcomes, and prescribed that the threshold size for reporting obligations should be lowered to 50 employees so as to expand the share of the total workforce who benefit from these reporting requirements.<sup>10</sup> In addition to resourcing capabilities, the complexities of preserving analytical robustness when conducting disaggregated analyses and pay gap audits on small-sized datasets needs to be considered.

Expanding the scope of these gender equality practices is not necessarily about expanding legal obligations, but extending the availability and accessibility of the knowledge and information that these reporting agencies offer. Agencies such as WGEA and the Gender Equality Commission have already invested in developing evidence-based informational resources and practical guidance to support organisations to adopt more gender equitable practices. The Inquiry can consider ways to leverage these existing resources more fully by extending the scope of organisations who can benefit from them.

In addition to companies’ reporting obligations, WGEA provides incentives for organisations to implement practical steps to promote and achieve gender equality through the Employer of Choice accreditation scheme.<sup>11</sup> The scheme is well designed to recognise best practice gender equality policies in the corporate space. However, it is possible that the HR capacity and administrative resourcing required of companies to fulfil the accreditation process, or even the fee to participate in the EOC accreditation scheme, could be prohibitive for some smaller-sized enterprises. There is scope for the Inquiry to investigate the extent to which small and medium enterprises, and their employees, are impeded from engaging with these gender equality initiatives and resources.

In light of the many ways that the effect of gender can be compounded by the biases and barriers associated with sociodemographic characteristics, there is scope to improve the data collection mechanisms that would enable an intersectional lens to be applied to gender pay gap analysis. The importance of embedding an intersectional approach is promoted by the Victorian Gender Equality Commission. However, collecting information

<sup>10</sup> Global Institute for Women’s Leadership and Fawcett Society (2021) *Gender pay gap reporting: A comparative analysis*, King’s College London <<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/gjwl/research/gender-pay-gap-reporting-comparative-analysis>>

<sup>11</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency <<https://www.wgea.gov.au/what-we-do/employer-of-choice-for-gender-equality>>

disaggregated by sociodemographic characteristics brings additional resourcing requirements and other practical challenges for all organisations. The privacy and personal sensitivities surrounding the collection and analysis of data of this nature are among these challenges. There is scope for the Victorian Government to examine mechanisms to improve this data infrastructure, including by consulting with workplaces specifically on the difficulties of collating intersectional data. Investing in this data collection disaggregated by other sociodemographic characteristics in addition to gender would also be informative for the Victorian Government's adoption of Gender Responsive Budgeting, where the feasibility of using disaggregated or linked administrative datasets for these analytical purposes could be investigated.

The reporting requirements of WGEA and the Victorian Gender Equality Commission do not obligate that analyses of companies' gender gaps are published *publicly*. There is currently interest and debate as to whether this step would help to accelerate progress on gender equality. As an indication of the effects of mandated transparency in gender gap reporting, a longitudinal analysis of the impact of mandated transparency enacted by legislation in Denmark in 2006 found that the policy resulted in a narrowing of the gender pay gap among companies.<sup>12</sup> The analysis shows that this outcome arose due to a slowdown in the pace of men's wage growth. It resulted in an overall lower wage bill for the organisation, and without any reduction in productivity. The relative advantages and potential risks of adopting public reporting is an issue for further exploration and analysis for governing bodies.

## 2) Provide toolkits to de-bias organisational practices

Research from behavioural economics and organisational management highlights the many ways that organisations perpetuate gender biases and traditional gender norms in their everyday workplace practices. Examples include the subjective judgements, affinity biases and other forms of unconscious or implicit biases that can enter into workplace decisions in relation to pay, hiring, promotion, leadership appointments, and performance evaluation. It extends to decisions regarding the allocation of capital funding and the choice of which projects or entrepreneurs to financially back, leading to a concerning under-representation of female-led innovations and investment in ventures that would address women's needs.<sup>13</sup>

A growing body of research-based insights is available on the interventions that work to interrupt subjective biases and design environments where more objective, gender equitable workplace outcomes can be achieved. As an example, a collation of these evidence-based insights are available in the work of Professor Iris Bohnet, behavioural economist and member of the G7 Advisory Council on Gender Equality, in the publication 'What Works: Gender Equality By Design'.<sup>14</sup>

Government can play a role in the dissemination of well-informed guidance for organisations on how to equitably facilitate workplace practices that minimise the distortionary impact of unconscious bias. This is especially critical as organisations adopt longer-term working-from-home arrangements as the COVID-19 pandemic continues: while there is potential for flexible working arrangements to support women's workforce participation by facilitating a more manageable balance of work and caring responsibilities, there is also a risk that workers who are not present "in the office" will be marginalised and overlooked for career opportunities, and miss out on the benefits of networks and in-person connections. Drawing on insights from organisational psychology and management, it can be inferred that such biases will predominantly disadvantage women unless strategic interventions are put in place to ensure inclusion.<sup>15</sup> Awareness about these types of risks or threats to equality is

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<sup>12</sup> Bennedsen, M., Simintzi, E., Tsoutsoura, M. and Wolfenzon, D. (2019) Do firms response to gender pay gap transparency? NBER Working Paper No. 25435 <[https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w25435/w25435.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w25435/w25435.pdf)>

<sup>13</sup> Venture Capital and Entrepreneurship, Women and Public Policy Program, Harvard Kennedy School <<https://wapp.hks.harvard.edu/venture-capital-and-entrepreneurship>>

<sup>14</sup> Bohnet, I. (2016) *What Works: Gender Equality By Design*, Harvard University Press <[https://scholar.harvard.edu/iris\\_bohnet/what-works](https://scholar.harvard.edu/iris_bohnet/what-works)>

<sup>15</sup> Ibarra, H., Gillard, J. and Chamorro-Premuzic, T. (2020) Why WFH Isn't Necessarily Good for Women, *Harvard Business Review*, 16 July 2020.

an example of the type of information that needs to be disseminated to workplaces and business leaders, to ensure that organisations' responses to COVID-19 pandemic do not inadvertently jeopardise progress.

While much public resourcing on gender equality is channelled towards activities to improve women's individual capacity (for example, scholarships for women in STEM), organisation-level approaches can be more effective by addressing the systemic factors that give rise to inequality. Organisational-level approaches places the onus on institutions and organisations to realise their role and responsibility for curating a bias-free, genuinely meritocratic workplace, as opposed to placing the onus on women to absorb the costs of a biased system and attempt to modify their behaviours to fit in to this biased system. A knowledge on unconscious bias and gender norms also equips individual women – once they have succeeded in entering traditionally-male workplace and stepping into positions of influence and leadership – to work towards changing the institutional structure and culture that they part of, helping to further break down barriers for the next generation that follows them.

Overlapping with the action points expressed in item (2) above, the Victorian Government can play a role in propelling progress in 'de-biasing' organisations. This could be through informational awareness and support for capacity building, as well as through incentive and reward mechanisms such as accreditation systems and making grants or procurement opportunities contingent on an organisation demonstrating a research-driven approach to gender equality and the achievement of meaningful indicators of progress.

In addition to strategies to promote gender equality and de-bias practices *within* organisation, an important complementary dimension of organisations' contributions to gender equality and women's economic outcomes is via the way that organisations, businesses and funders choose to invest their capital and resources. Investment can take the form of direct investment of enterprises, such as through backing new venture capital projects, as well as their choices of how to invest their capital in existing companies, product development, technical and scientific investments, cultural and media products, and advertising platforms. It is well recognised that existing capital allocation decisions are biased in ways that disadvantage women and sideline investments that would deliver benefits and progress for women.<sup>16</sup> There is scope for the Victorian Government to help to systematically attain transparent information on which businesses, ventures and investments would contribute to gender equality and positively shifting gender norms – and those that simply perpetuate existing inequalities and traditional norms. This is part of a shift towards a value-driven, conscientious investing that governments can play a role in through information collation and leading by example. It is also likely that gender-aware and ethical investment criteria will become more prominent in the future as corporate social responsibility. There is scope for the Victorian Government to expand support for existing initiatives that promote and support the practice of 'gender lens' investing, which often operate in the not-for-profit, philanthropic space but offers a framework that could be upscaled and formalised by businesses more systematically.<sup>17</sup>

### 3) Dismantle gender norms for men and women

The pursuit of gender equality requires policy interventions that dismantle traditional gender norms surrounding the expected roles of men and women in society, which limit the opportunities of both women and men. These norms perpetuate disparities in economic outcomes, but also have repercussion for mental health and wellbeing of both men and women. There is solid evidence that allegiance to traditional gender norms is the common denominator and more powerful underlying factor that predicts violence against women.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Koning, R., Nanda, R., and Cao, R. (2021) One More Way the Startup World Hampers Women Entrepreneurs, Working Knowledge, Harvard Business School <<https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/one-more-way-the-startup-world-hampers-women-entrepreneurs>>

<sup>17</sup> An example is Australians Investing In Women (AIW).

<sup>18</sup> Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth (2015) *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, Our Watch. <<https://www.ourwatch.org.au/resource/change-the-story-a-shared-framework-for-the-primary-prevention-of-violence-against-women-and-their-children-in-australia>>

The pursuit of gender equality requires policy interventions that tackle both the under-representation of women in traditionally male-dominated roles, but also the under-representation of men in traditionally female-dominated roles, which generally receives much less policy attention. The workforce composition data presented in the Appendix Tables 1 to 7 shows the extent of this gender segregation in the Victorian economy. The issue of gender segregation and pay inequities in the workforce has been examined by the Australian Government Senate Inquiry 'Gender segregation in the workplace and its impact on women's economic equality', chaired by Senator Jenny McAllister in 2017.<sup>19</sup> Many of the policy considerations addressed in this Senate Inquiry are relevant to the issues under considering by this present Victorian Inquiry.

In terms of policy action, parental leave for fathers is one of the key policies that supports women's employment outcomes through shifting gender norms surrounding parental caregiving within households, and specifically shifting parental involvement among fathers. Canada provides a case example and evidence of policy effectiveness that is instructive for Victoria, with the province of Québec implementing the Québec Parental Insurance Plan in 2006. The provision of five weeks of non-transferable parental leave to fathers, paid at 70% to 75% of wage replacement rate, had the effect of increasing fathers' contribution to unpaid household duties, as well as increasing women's labour force participation, and specifically in full-time employment.<sup>20</sup>

This shift in fathers' behaviour in parenthood was found to generate longer-term effects that can help sustain gender equality goals into the future. Québec's parental leave policy improved fathers' bonding with their children, challenging the traditional gender norm that constricts men from experiencing this important emotional dimension and caring role in their lives. Within households of heterosexual couples, parental leave for fathers has been shown to dismantle gender norms within the attitudes of the next generation of children.<sup>21</sup> These shifts can contribute to sustainable progress in gender equality over time across various aspects of society.

When putting this policy into practice, it is not sufficient to simply offer parental policy to men – the stigma and social penalties associated with contravening traditional norms stands in the way of men being able to make use of these policies. The Canadian experience attests to the tensions and negative stigma that fathers faced in their own workplaces when aspiring to make use of the parental leave on offer to them, reflective of the impedimentary influence of cultural norms.<sup>22</sup> Accompanying the provision of non-transferable parental leave for fathers, strategic investment is therefore also needed to shift cultural norms surrounding the expected roles of men in society, to make it more socially legitimate for men to take on these caring and parental roles.

While this analysis has been based on a heterosexual couple household, with the aim of improving fathers' involvement in childrearing and mothers' opportunity to engage in work outside of the home, policy entitlements should of course be articulated in a way that is fitting for same-sex couples and single parents. There is also scope to do more to promote men's uptake of care leave beyond parental leave.

A way to promote and legitimise parental leave uptake among men is to draw upon tools of behavioural science to design the policy as an 'opt-in' policy by default. This approach would mean that any father to has a child is

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<sup>19</sup> Senate Committee (2017) *Gender segregation in the workplace and its impact on women's economic equality*, Parliament of Australia

<[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Finance\\_and\\_Public\\_Administration/Gendersegregation](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Finance_and_Public_Administration/Gendersegregation)>

<sup>20</sup> Dunatchik, A. and Özcan, B. (2019) Reducing Mommy Penalties with Daddy Quotas, Working Paper No. CASE/213, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics; Patnaik, A. (2019) Reserving time for Daddy: The consequences of fathers' quotas, *Journal of Labor Economics*, 37(4): 1009-1059; Wray, D. (2020) Paternity Leave and Fathers' Responsibility: Evidence From a Natural Experiment in Canada, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(2): 534-549.

<sup>21</sup> Unterhofer, U. and Wrohlich, K. (2017) Fathers, Parental Leave and Gender Norms, IZA Discussion Paper No. 10712.

<sup>22</sup> Harvey, V. and Tremblay, D.G. (2020) Paternity leave in Québec: between social objectives and workplace challenges, *Community, Work and Family*, 23(3): 253-269.



automatically assigned their leave entitlement, and must take additional steps to 'opt out' of taking leave. The opt-in by design mechanism has proven to be a distinctive feature of policy uptake across a range of settings.<sup>23</sup>

Shifting societal norms – for the betterment of women, men and individuals of all genders – needs to also encompass investing in programs and strategies that encourage and reward men and boys to aspire to unpaid caring roles in their families and community, and vocations in the care sector in the paid workforce. Government has the opportunity to do much more in this space. Because the seeds of these gender norms are sown very early in life, government investment in these programs should span to educational programs. An example of an initiative designed to support men and boys to break free of the constrictive norms of traditional masculinity is the Men's Project, developed by the Jesuit Society in partnership with academic researcher Professor Michael Flood of QUT.<sup>24</sup>

While much focus is placed on supporting and empowering women to step into non-traditional roles, in my own assessment government policy has done comparatively very little to support men to do the same. This oversight will not only curtail the potential effectiveness of female-focused policies, it could actually trigger negative ramifications for women. For example, research shows that improvements in women's economic earnings above that of her male partner is linked to a higher risk of domestic violence and emotional abuse, because this undermines the male-breadwinner/female-care-giver norm. If initiatives aimed at supporting women's economic progress are to succeed, it is essential to also invest in initiatives that nurture a society that genuinely embraces and accepts successful women. We are far from that achieving that type of culture, and it is understandable that those in power perceive gender equality initiatives as a threat to the opportunities, status and authority personally afforded to them. Nurturing a society where men are encouraged to aspire to more than wealth, status and power will mean that women's economic progress is less of a threat, less likely to face retaliation and resistance, and more likely to be genuinely and sustainably achieved.

The potential for the government to take on a role in informing, influencing and incentivising gender-aware capital investment decisions, through the application of Gender Lens investing, also applies to identifying investments that meaningfully shift gender norms. Beyond simply achieving equality and diversity of representation which is often an initial target for gender equality programs, it is the process of shifting gender norms that will genuinely drive and sustain fundamental change.

#### 4) Embed educational insights and knowledge-building in package of policies

Policies that aim to incentivise, promote or mandate gender equality initiatives need to be accompanied by opportunities for people to build their own understanding of the existence, causes and consequences of gender bias, and for this understanding to be factually informed by the research. This equips people to build a genuine understanding of the rationale for these policies being implemented. Research shows the absence of a genuine belief that equality initiatives are warranted can lead to negative repercussions, including workers exerting lesser effort and commitment to their job when gender equality policies are implemented.<sup>25</sup> There is also an ongoing risk of resentment, retaliation or pushback against equality and diversity initiatives, that can stem from a perception that these initiatives jeopardise opportunities for the non-target cohort and threaten the value of tradition.<sup>26</sup> This can ultimately undermine the entire effectiveness of any attempts to initiate progress.

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<sup>23</sup> Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA) (2018) *Harnessing the power of defaults*, Governance Note, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Australian Government.

<<https://behaviouraleconomics.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/resources/harnessing-power-defaults.pdf>>

<sup>24</sup> The Men's Project and Flood, M. (2018) *The Man Box: A Study on Being a Young Man in Australia*, Jesuit Social Services, Melbourne. Also see <<https://jss.org.au/what-we-do/the-mens-project>>

<sup>25</sup> Ip, E., Leibbrandt A., and Vecchi, J. (2020) Do gender quotas damage hierarchical relationships? Complementary evidence from a representative survey and labor market experiments, *Journal of Management Science*, 66(2): 805-822.

<sup>26</sup> Anglim, J., Sojo, V., Ashford, L.J., Newman, A. and Marty, A. (2019) Predicting employee attitudes to workplace diversity from personality, values, and cognitive ability, *Journal of Research in Personality*, 83: 1-14.

Government investment in programs and mechanisms to collate, translate and disseminate research-based insights on gender bias in an educational, factual way to organisations and workplaces will enhance the likely effectiveness of the gender equality initiatives in which it is investing. This can be facilitated through informational resources and campaigns, including through educational bodies to reach younger generations and through public awareness campaigns. Tailoring the information to explain the way that gender bias is compounded by other forms of bias attached to sociodemographic characteristics and dimensions of personal identity is a critical part of this initiative too. In addition to the resources provided by agencies such as WGEA and the Victorian Gender Equality Agency to equip organisations, resources and ‘community of practice’ models have also been developed by VicHealth. In addition to a concerted focus on preventing violence against women, VicHealth’s work also has applicability to workforce practices, including breaking down gender stereotypes, using behavioural economics to address unconscious bias, and drawing upon psychological insights to understand resistance to gender equality initiatives and achieve more effective messaging.<sup>27</sup> There is scope for the Victorian Government to further invest in this stream of VicHealth’s work that has applicability to workplaces, or to at least ensure this knowledge base extends to Victorian workplaces who can benefit from it. The work of various other women’s health and advocacy community groups in Victoria, whose insights and initiatives are well informed by the lived experiences of women and communities, also contributes valuable insights towards this knowledge base.

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<sup>27</sup> VicHealth (2018) *(En)countering resistance: Strategies to respond to resistance to gender equality initiatives*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Victorian Government <<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/-/media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/PVAW/Encountering-Resistance-Gender-Equality.pdf>>

## *Addressing specific Terms of Reference items*

### Pay equity and relevant workplace barriers, and the value given to work performed in women-dominated industries and other sectors

A large body of research into gender pay gaps attests that a key factor for the overall earnings gap<sup>28</sup> between men and women is the gender segregated nature of segments of Australia's workforce, particularly with respect to terms of workers' industry and occupation of employment.

To inform the Inquiry and support the policy recommendations that follow, this submission presents a gender disaggregation of Victoria's workforce composition according to industry and occupation (reported in Appendix Tables).

- Looking at industry, Victoria's most female-concentrated industries of employment are Healthcare and Social Assistance (79% female) and Education and Training (71% female) (Appendix Table 1). Combined, these industries generate just over one-third of all jobs held by women in Victoria (Appendix Table 2). Retail Trade and Accommodation and Food Services, while being relatively more gender-balanced in composition, are also large employers of women.
- Victoria's most male-concentrated industries are Mining (92% male), Construction (88% male), Transport, Postal and Warehousing (81% male), Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services (77% male) and Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry (72% male). Combined, these industries account for almost one-third of Victorian men's jobs in total.
- Looking at occupation, the Community and Personal Services sector and the Clerical and Administrative sector are the occupations with the highest female concentrations (Appendix Table 3). Together these occupational categories account for just over one-third of jobs among Victorian women (Appendix Table 4).
- With respect to the issue of pay equity, gender patterns in industry and occupation of employment contribute to overall gender gap in earnings when combined with the fact that several of the industries that are large employers of women, such as Retail Trade and Accommodation and Food Services, sit at the lower end of the earnings spectrum (Appendix Table 5). However, a gender disaggregation of full-time weekly earnings by industry attests that gender gaps in earnings exist within all industries, even industries that are female-concentrated such as Healthcare and Social Assistance. WGEA has reported that progress in narrowing gender gaps in pay has been slowed down in some of the most in female-dominated industries, of Healthcare and Social Assistance and Education and Training.
- Gender gaps in earnings also tend to be largest in the industries that are on average more highly paid. This includes industries that are relatively gender balanced in composition such as Financial and Insurance Services. This indicates that gender gaps in earnings are in part driven by the extremely high earnings of men in the most lucrative industries.
- These figures only include workers who are employed full-time, effectively omitting almost half of the female workforce who are employed part-time. To include part-time workers into the pay gap comparisons, average hourly pay rates have been calculated using data on workers' weekly wage and salary and their hours of work. This has been disaggregated according to industry and occupation of employment (Appendix Tables 6 and 7). Gender differences in average hourly pay rates are denoted where they are statistically significant.

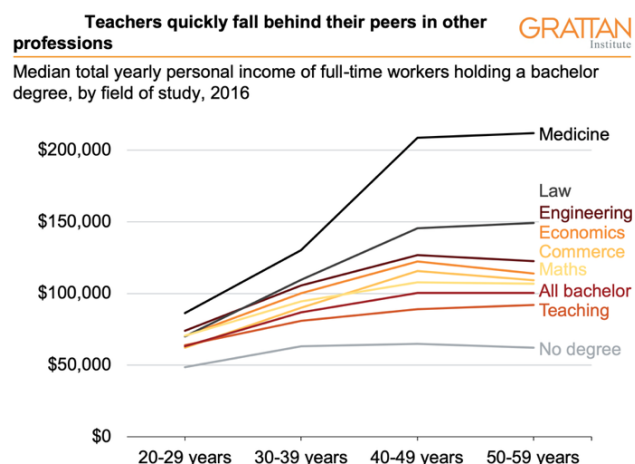
The low average pay of some female-dominated sectors is in part attributed to their relatively flat pay gradient, where earnings do not rise significantly in commensuration with a worker's accumulated years of experience, skill

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<sup>28</sup> Based on the latest data available, the average weekly ordinary-time earnings for full-time workers in Victoria in May 2021 were \$1837 for men and \$1613 for women, equivalent to a gender earnings gap of 12.2%. When including non-ordinary hours such as overtime rates, the gap widens to 14.3%. When expanded further to include part-time workers, the overall weekly earning gap widens further to 30.8%, reflective of women's higher rate of part-time employment (ABS Average Weekly Earnings, Australia. Cat. No. 6302.0). The gender gap in earnings has been calculated using data from Table 12B, Average Weekly Earnings, Victoria, Seasonally Adjusted data series.

or longevity of service, in the same way that many other higher-paying sectors are characterised by an upwards pay trajectory. This is illustrated in the Grattan Institute’s report analysing the earnings of teachers over their working lives, in comparison to other professions that also require a university degree (Chart 2).<sup>29</sup> This presents an opportunity for the Inquiry to focus on mechanisms for formalising workers’ career trajectories in these sectors and better recognising, via remuneration, the value of the skills and specialist knowledge that is accumulated over their years of service.

Chart 3 – Annual personal income of full-time workers with Bachelor degree, according to field of employment



Source: Reproduced from Nolan, J. and Sonnemann, J. (2019) ‘Three charts on teachers’ pay in Australia’, Grattan Institute <<https://grattan.edu.au/news/three-charts-on-teachers-pay-in-australia/>>

The low pay rate of female-concentrated sectors can also be understood as an under-valuation of jobs that involve the delivery of care and other human services that align with the domain of women prescribed by the ‘male-breadwinner and female-caregiver’ model of society. The pandemic has highlighted the society-wide value of these traditionally female professions, which is not fully reflected in the wage rates paid to these individual workers. In economic terms, the inadequacy of existing wage setting mechanisms to accurately capture the true value of these workers’ output to the economy, and overall functioning of society, is akin to a ‘market failure’ associated with a positive externality. When the positive value that a product or service generates for society is not factored into its market price (in this case, when the social value of care work is not factored into the wage rate of workers), the market mechanism will generate an insufficient level of output. In the case of the delivery of care and human services, this market failure is manifested in a shortfall in skilled workers relative to society’s needs. This is being observed with reported shortages of workers in these care sectors, as highlighted by the recent Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety which flagged acute concerns about shortages of nurses, allied health workers, personal care workers and aged care specialists such as workers with specialist expertise in dementia.<sup>30</sup> In the education sector, this shortfall can also take the form of teachers teaching subjects outside of their subject knowledge (that is, teaching ‘out-of-field’) and shortages of education specialists such as experts to assist students with learning difficulties and additional needs.<sup>31</sup>

An impediment to the achievement of gender pay equity via the current industrial relations tribunal system stems from the way that equal pay cases have arrived at their determinations by relying on a direct comparison between a female-dominated and male-dominated occupation. To put forward the case that a low-paid female-

<sup>29</sup> Goss, P. and Sonnemann, J. (2019) Attracting high achievers to teaching, Grattan Institute <<https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/921-Attracting-high-achievers-to-teaching.pdf>>

<sup>30</sup> Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety <<https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/final-report>>

<sup>31</sup> Weldon, P. R. (2016) Out-of-field teaching in Australian secondary schools. Policy Insights, no. 6), Australian Council for Educational Research <<https://research.acer.edu.au/policyinsights/6/>>; Prince, G. and O’Connor, M. (2018) Crunching the numbers on out-of-field teaching in maths, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute <<https://amsi.org.au/media/AMSI-Occasional-Paper-Out-of-Field-Maths-Teaching.pdf>>

concentrated occupation should be paid more than their current rate, the industrial relations tribunal system has evolved in a way that requires a comparably skilled, but higher-paid, male occupation to be identified (a “male comparator”). The case needs to be proven that the (relatively lower-paid) female-dominated occupation and (relatively higher-paid) male-dominated occupation require the level or same complexity of skills to perform their job, meaning that any differential in pay rates is attributed to a gender-based discrepancy that therefore constitutes an inequity. The success rate of equal pay cases that have been awarded on this rationale has proven to be extremely low. This points towards a need to address the fundamental undervaluation of traditionally women’s work through other means.

There is scope for the Victorian Government to investigate the extent to which the current Federal and State industrial relations tribunal processes contribute to the undervaluation of work traditionally undertaken by women, and the ways in which these settings could be reformed to address these systemic inequities. The state industrial relations systems of New South Wales and Queensland have made advances in pay equity by recognising the gender biases embedded in the precedent determinations of the Federal industrial relations system, and adopting a broader range of indicators to identify the undervaluation of work based on gender without depending on the logic of identifying a directly comparable male occupation. These advances in these state jurisdictions resulted from government-initiated inquiries and reviews which led to the development of equal remuneration principles.<sup>32</sup>

Conducting an accurate valuation of work traditionally undertaken by women is an important step towards achieving equitable pay, but has been encumbered by the conventional approaches on how to measure economic output and productivity. The ‘outputs’ of care work and provision of human-oriented services – such as healthcare and social assistance, childcare, aged care, community services, mental health services, disability care, and teaching and learning – are generally not easily quantified in the conventional way that statisticians measure the production of inanimate, physical goods that are retailed in the economy. The value of the provision of care and human services is not only less tangible, but extends far beyond the benefits accruing to the individual, and beyond the present time period. This value includes the economic gains of building a healthy, skilled population who will contribute of productive capacity of the workforce now and in the future. The provision of human services that build an individual’s earning capacity and financial self-sufficiency contributes towards alleviating demand on government welfare.

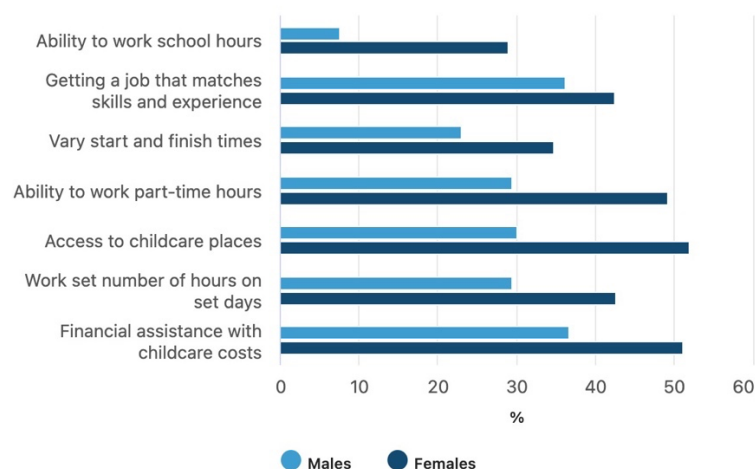
The provision of care services is also a critical enabler of the labour force participation of women who have unpaid care responsibilities. The provision of formal care services permits these workers to allocate their time and capabilities towards paid workforce participation and make more productive use of their skills which benefits the economy overall. Shortfalls in access to childcare places and prohibitive childcare costs have been identified as the most common barriers to workforce participation for Australian women (Chart 4).

There is scope for these widespread societal and economic benefits to be more fully acknowledged, quantified and rewarded in the wage determination process of these professions. Governments have a role in wage determination processes that goes beyond their role as an employer. Governments also represent the interests of wider community – the third party, in addition to the employer and employee, that stands to benefit from the positive societal externalities that the care and education sectors generate. It is in society’s interests for these workers to be paid commensurately to the value that they provide society, or otherwise we risk deficiencies in the quantity, accessibility, and quality of these essential services .

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<sup>32</sup> An informative account of the historical progression of pay equity in Federal and State systems can be found in: Smith, M. and Whitehouse, G. (2020) Wage-setting and gender pay equality in Australia: Advances, retreats and future prospects, *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 62(4): 533–559; Layton, R., Smith, M. and Stewart, A. (2013) Equal Remuneration under the Fair Work Act 2009, Report commissioned by the Fair Work Commission Pay Equity Unit <<https://www.fwc.gov.au/about-us/news-and-events/equal-remuneration-report-published>>

Chart 4 – Incentives to join or increase participation in the labour force, by gender



Source: ABS Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation Australia, 2018-19.

The economic payoffs generated by the public provision of care services can be quantified by economic modelling. Estimates of the overall economic impacts of expanding the government provision of care services, to a level that would meet current shortfalls in availability, is found to generate an increase in GDP by activating higher hours of paid work among unpaid carers, translating into higher disposable income and therefore spending in the economy.<sup>33</sup> This stimulatory effect flows back to the government budget via the increase in revenue collected through income tax, business taxes and sales taxes, meaning that means that the initial outlay from the government budget largely pays for itself. The recurrent expenditure associated with this investment is matched by a future stream of recurrent benefits.

Despite this investment having the potential to boost a state’s economic activity, the challenge for state jurisdictions is that a portion of these recurrent benefits technically flow to the Australian Government in the form of personal income tax and GST revenue. State governments will need to urge cooperation from the Australian Government to recognise the positive revenue and GDP implications of investments in the public provision of care services, including the future cost savings for the Australian Government’s welfare system.

In government policy proposals that focus on improving the standards, quality, accessibility and availability of care services (such as in childcare and aged care), priority tends to be placed on increasing the number and delivery of places, but with lesser focus on investing in and adequately remunerating the workforce that deliver these services to the public. This was evidence in recent Budget documents. In addition to supporting the pipeline of suitably qualified workers needed to sustain these workforce and their quality of service provision, the pressure point that is commonly cited by governments is costs. That is, how should these workers’ higher wages be funded? This is where it is essential to more fully understand and recognise the society-wide benefits that these care workers generate, and how this compares to how much they are personally remunerated. There is always potential for total government expenditure to be reapportioned towards the investments that deliver greater economic benefit in terms of lifting women’s workforce participation rates, and to implement taxes or levies on the industries, businesses and outputs that have proven to be the largest beneficiaries of government expenditure and investment allocations in the past.

In terms of shifting approaches, there is scope here to more concertedly acknowledge childcare workers, early career educators, aged care workers and mental health workers, who are employed by the government, as “public

<sup>33</sup> Dixon, J. (2021) Simulations of increased government expenditure in the care sectors, Appendix A, Independent modelling published by National Foundation for Australian Women, Gender Lens on the Budget 2020-2021 <<https://nfaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Appendix-A.pdf>>

servants". That is, to recognise that they are delivering a service to the public, in a similar way that police officers, paramedics, army officers and all other government department employees contribute towards the public good. Despite falling into this category, often nurses and teachers are also not typically thought of as serving the public. Defining these workers in this way strengthens the rationale for the increased allocation of taxpayers' funding towards their wages and salaries, and potentially lifts the status of these professions in the eyes of the wider public, which is a characteristic of more progressive countries in the gender equality space.<sup>34</sup>

In acknowledging the recurrent benefits emanating from investment in care services and social infrastructure (including healthcare, social housing, aged care, mental health services, disability care, social assistance services, and education training), the institutional and incentive architecture that influences governments' priorities and investment decisions needs to be fully understood. It is possible that the way in which credit rating agencies determine their assessments are having the effect of elevating certain investment types over others, in a way that works against gender equality goals. Potentially, current systems of valuation might be leading to a prioritisation of projects that have traditionally been relied on for delivering immediate and quantifiable payoffs, and take the form of tangible assets (such as physical infrastructure). By comparison, identifying the payoffs and value of investments in services, such as childcare, are more complex, less visible, and are likely to be perceived as harder to "capture" or store, as opposed to a fixed asset. This makes analytical task of quantifying these benefits all the more important.

#### *Opportunities for the Victorian Government*

- Undertake a review of the State Industrial Relations tribunal system to identify impediments to the accurate valuation of work traditionally undertaken by women and avenues for the adoption of the equal remuneration principles that supplant a requirement to identify a male comparator in equal pay cases.
- In wage bargaining processes for the female-concentrated professions in healthcare and social assistance and education and training, focus on wage rates at the mid-to-upper end of workers' career trajectory, and the expectation that wages reflect their higher level of accumulated skills, experience and value.
- As part of the above, invest in a quantifiable assessment of the society-wide value of the work traditionally undertaken by women, including care services, that highlights the public service contribution of these professions. This analysis can be used to inform future wage determination processes, and more clearly discern potential gender biases that have been institutionalised in the industrial relations system and potentially in credit rating processes.

#### Frontline roles in health care and social assistance, local government; accommodation and food services, retail, the arts, and community and support services sectors, and relevant other sectors

There is strong justification for the expanded and tailored provision of mental health services and other professional support for the frontline workers who have experienced intensified work pressures throughout the pandemic, including in the female-concentrated healthcare and social assistance industry and the community and support services sector. These investments are critical for minimising the risks of psychological burnout and attrition among these workers, and to ensure these professions continue to attract a pipeline of future workers. Pressures on the workforce sustainability of these sectors have been intensified by restrictions on labour mobility arising from international border closures. Professional career support may also take the form of assisting affected workers to temporarily pivot into other roles within their industry, to assist them in managing the trauma of working in frontline roles throughout the pandemic. Flexibility in the type of support offered, to match the needs of the individual worker, would be valuable.

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<sup>34</sup> Country note on Finland, Results from TALIS 2018, OECD  
<[https://www.oecd.org/education/talis/TALIS2018\\_CN\\_FIN\\_Vol\\_II.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/talis/TALIS2018_CN_FIN_Vol_II.pdf)>

The provision of ‘wellbeing leave’, in addition to existing paid leave employment entitlements, is another form of support that can be considered for adoption in these high-pressure sectors, as an investment in workers’ mental health and guarding against the risk of burnout and attrition. Several institutions in Victoria, including universities that were left out of JobKeeper assistance, have provided this form of support to their staff, and it has also been implemented internationally.<sup>35</sup> This can also be encouraged across all sectors of the workforce as an investment of the mental health of the community more generally. Government and business investment in this type of support for workers helps to alleviate the toll and pressures on the mental health services down the track.

There is also a case for hazard pay to be provided to workers in these high-pressured, high-risk sectors, in recognition of the additional health and safety dangers that the COVID-19 pandemic has produced and will continue to impose. Internationally, there are examples of local and state jurisdictions providing in hazard pay to frontline and first respondents in the form of legislated increases in pay rates, stipends or one-off payments.<sup>36</sup> Subsidies or tax concessions, such as rebates on council rates or long-term concessions for state and local government services such as parking and public transport, could also be used as mechanisms to deliver these pecuniary benefits to these cohorts.

A sector that has been impacted by pandemic and is particularly relevant for women’s employment opportunities is the education and training sector. Tertiary education, encompassing university and vocational education and training, have experienced heightened job uncertainty with significant declines in international student demand, large scale job redundancies across some institutions, and an intensification in workload demands with the conversion to online teaching. Notwithstanding volatility in employment numbers across the pandemic, in May 2021, women’s employment numbers in Victoria’s Tertiary Education and Adult and Community Education sectors were lower than pre-pandemic levels, while men’s employment levels in both of these sectors were slightly higher.<sup>37</sup> Job losses in this knowledge-based sector constitute a concerning loss in Victoria’s human capital and educational capacity. There is a potential role here for the State Government to drive dedicated programs to assist displaced tertiary education and other knowledge workers, to steer them towards other important opportunities where needs have been heightened by the pandemic, such as school education and tutoring services, community programs, financial advisory services, or consultancy services to assist businesses in difficulty.

Female-concentrated sectors that have absorbed the employment losses and business closures arising from the pandemic – accommodation and food services, retail, arts and recreation – can be supported as part of the government’s economic recovery support. A focus on business dynamism, innovation, and adaptation needs to be incentivised and supported (economists call this process “creative destruction” and recognise it is a healthy characteristic of a resilient economy). For some businesses, the focus will need to be on *resilience*: supporting businesses to invest in adaptations that will make their operations more financially viable in the pandemic environment over the longer-term. For other businesses with less viability to withstand the loss in consumer demand and the ongoing volatility of the pandemic, the focus will need to be placed on *reinvention*: supporting business owners and their staff to steer their resources and skills towards new and evolving opportunities that will provide stronger economic stability and resiliency over the long-term. This is about supporting businesses and their staff to repurpose their skills, capital, resources and experience in adaptive and more prosperous ways and we a rejuvenated sense of purpose. This could be implemented through the provision of financial subsidies for businesses to invest in new business plans, access consultancy services, and connect with other businesses for collaborative opportunities. Small-sized businesses, businesses with minimal digital infrastructure, and workers

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<sup>35</sup> ‘Nike Is Closing Its Corporate Offices, Giving Workers A Week Off To ‘Prioritize Mental Health’, Forbes  
<<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2021/08/30/nike-is-closing-its-corporate-offices-giving-workers-a-week-off-to-prioritize-mental-health/?sh=18bb30115734>>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.ems1.com/coronavirus-covid-19/articles/local-governments-providing-hazard-pay-stipends-for-first-responders-Oe7UtlA42phouiP4/>

<sup>37</sup> Author’s calculations using data from ABS Labour Force, Detailed, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.001 Table EQ06 - Employed persons by Industry group of main job (ANZSIC), Sex, State and Territory.



with low digital literacy, may be a priority cohort for this form of support. Providing support for businesses and workers to manage the psychological impositions of this type of change, such as through support for counselling, can be a part of this policy package.

Informed by industry-specific impacts arising from the pandemic, example of adaptive innovations could include:

- Supporting displaced workers in hospitality, arts and recreation and other displaced industries to transfer their people skills to opportunities in healthcare, social assistance industries and other human services, where job opportunities are forecast to be stronger and in higher need over the longer term. This can be further supported by the government recognising the critical value of the care sector, contributing to improving the pay rates and working conditions of these sectors, and prioritising the need for a strong pipeline of workers with the appropriate qualifications and attributes to service the diverse care needs of the population.
- Connecting displaced workers from the hospitality, retail, arts and recreation industries with not-for-profit organisations and community service providers whose services are in high demand, enabling these workers to continue to apply their skills in socially purposeful ways and injecting fresh skillsets and innovative potential into these organisations.
- Supporting businesses, entrepreneurs and workers in hospitality, tourism and creative industries to invest in digital technologies to connect to international markets. This could involve converting their products from events that can only be experienced 'in person' into products or digital experiences that can be exported to international and interstate customers, tapping into the markets that would be directing their consumption dollars to these Victorian markets if they could.

#### *Opportunities for the Victorian Government*

- Consider the provision of hazard pay and paid wellbeing leave to the professions that have experienced intensified workload pressures and heightened occupational health and safety risks during the pandemic, noting that many of these professions are female-concentrated.
- Support Victorian businesses and workers who face ongoing economic uncertainty due to the pandemic to specifically invest in either 'Resiliency' or 'Reinvention' business plans. Instead of compensation payments that effectively suspend current economic activity but without the guarantee that consumer demand will be revitalised in a sustainable way, financial grants can be provided for these specific, more sustainable purposes.

#### Blocks to workforce participation, including unemployment and underemployment

It is insightful that the Inquiry has identified these important labour market metrics to gauge the strength of women's economic security and employment opportunities. Women's workforce participation rates, unemployment and under-employment have proven to be shock absorbers of the volatility caused by the pandemic.<sup>38</sup> Women were much more likely than men to be moving out and in to the workforce throughout the pandemic, strongly tied to the demands of unpaid care and home-schooling.

Women's capacity to participate in the workforce can be promoted by:

- **Supporting and investing in programs that target women who are returning to the paid workforce after a period of absence.** Women in these circumstances often report that their suitability, capabilities and credentials are diminished and dismissed by prospective employers, creating unfair setbacks. Furthermore, the skills and capabilities that they acquire through their parental and community roles (for example, through their contributions to volunteer initiatives) are not often recognised as valuable. Women can internalise these

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<sup>38</sup> The impact of the pandemic on Victorian women's employment numbers, labour force participation rate, unemployment rate and under-employment rate have been well documented and can continue to be tracked using data from the ABS Labour Force, Australia, Detailed.

setbacks in a way that erodes their self-esteem and motivation, and steers them towards accepting roles that are below their credentials. The Australian Government 'Career Revive' pilot program is an example of a type of program that equips businesses to attract and retain women who are returning to work. This includes the provision of a comprehensive set of resources to guide organisations. It would be in the interests of this Inquiry to investigate the uptake of this program among Victorian women, the effectiveness of the program in achieving its goals, and the potential for the Victorian Government to build on this program. Another example of an innovative program that private companies have embarked on from grassroots levels to support women's return to the workforce is the Encoreship program.<sup>39</sup> My own assessment of the Encoreship program, based on my interaction with women who have participated in it, is that it well designed to flexibly respond to the real hurdles that women returning to the workforce have faced. These features including providing default opportunities for upskilling, recognising the broad applicability and transferability of women's previous experiences, and offering opportunities for job-sharing and part-time appointments without diminishing the importance and status of these roles.

- **Improving the affordability, accessibility, flexibility of childcare, outside-hours kinder, extra-curricula school activities, and other care services for children and dependents – especially targeted at women who work non-standard hours, are single parents or sole carers, are unemployed and in search for work, and women seeking to increase from part-time to full-time hours (who face the most prohibitive Effective Marginal Tax Rates.)** However, expansions in the availability of these care services must be accompanied by expansions in the resourcing of these care sectors, including investing in a pipeline of suitably-qualified workers, so that the additional demand on the sector can be accommodated and without the risks of a deterioration in quality of care or an exacerbation of shortages in places. While there is a strong case for the provision of free or heavily subsidised childcare in particular, as a specific means of reducing impediments to women's workforce participation, such a service can only be equitable and adequately provided with an intensive investment on the supply side. This encompasses expansions in resources, suitably qualified staff that can meet the needs of all children, accessibility and availability of places in all locations, and flexibility of access to accommodate the varying needs of parents and families. Without intense investment on the supply side, international experiences indicate that government commitment to provide free or universal childcare could result in an erosion of quality and even potential legalities if not all children can be assured of a place.<sup>40</sup> The provision of free or heavily subsidised childcare, that cannot simultaneously deliver on quality and access, could still result in the segmented markets, where a private market emerges in response to willingness of some families to pay for better access. Improving the availability and affordability of childcare requires a long-term roadmap, identifying the policy levers that are within scope of State and Local Governments and can innovate beyond these, in the form of additional subsidies, grants and resource investments.
- **Promoting a more even sharing of unpaid care and domestic work between men and women within the household, across all stages of the life course but especially on the arrival of a new child.** Achieving such a significant change requires dismantling the deep-seated, pervasive influence of the traditional male-breadwinner/female-caregiver template of roles that still infuses many dimensions of society. A key policy lever that has proven to shift the dial on this front is the provision of a non-transferable paid parental leave for fathers, provided at a rate and duration that is financially attractive for men to take up (compared to the two weeks at minimum wage rate currently available to new fathers under the Australian Government's Dad and Partner Pay scheme). Shifting norms can entail removing notions of a 'primary' and 'secondary' carer, and to instead offer the default option of 'shared caregivers'. The Victorian Public Service has made

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<sup>39</sup> An example is the Encoreship Program which supports women through work placements, upskilling and retraining opportunities, the removal of skill requirements that could be attained on the job, and the flexibility of job-sharing for candidates seeking part-time or flexible hours.

<sup>40</sup> 'Germany rules parents with no day care options can sue cities for lost earnings' <<https://www.dw.com/en/germany-rules-parents-with-no-day-care-options-can-sue-cities-for-lost-earnings/a-36102866>>

progressive improvements with its parental leave provisions, though there is scope to continue to improve to exemplify best practice.

- **Expanding provision of safe, affordable, accessible social housing women in vulnerable circumstances, matched with wraparound services to support these women into secure employment.** The Victorian Government's expanded investment in social housing provides a significant and valuable investment. To empower the women who are dependent on social housing, and provide stepping stones for them to regain financial independence, the policies and programs focused on supporting women's return to work can be particularly tailored and offered to women residing in social housing.

Women's unemployment can be addressed by:

- **Encouraging a broad recognition of the transferability of skill and workforce experience across different industries and occupations, by prospective employers.** This will support displaced women who are compelled to shift into other industries and occupations for new employment opportunities.
- **Incentives and support for displaced workers to engage in reskilling, retraining and skills accreditation to improve their prospects of employment in high-growth areas.** This needs to be accompanied by data-driven labour market information so that displaced workers can identify the areas with genuine job prospects. Fast-tracking process for reskilling displaced workers, and provided targeted guidance to women to ensure that they are fully aware of their eligibility for reskilling and employment opportunities, can expedite these transitions and minimise the risks of skill erosion and the scarring effects of unemployment.
- **Incentivise the hiring of new staff as a means of targeting workers who have found themselves unemployed and encouraging the movement of workers into better employment opportunities.** Federal Government support, such as the JobKeeper scheme, tended to prioritise the retention of existing staff, which was important at the time. Now, fostering a culture of change and dynamism is critical for a healthy and resilient economy.
- **Promote flexible employment arrangements, including working-from-home, flexible hours and job-sharing arrangements, accompanied by guidance for organisation on how to ensure inclusion among these flexible employees.** Job-sharing does not need to be confined to low intensity jobs, but can also apply to senior and executive roles. It delivers a more diverse set of skills and ideas to the role, as well as the opportunity for the two workers to learn from each other through mutual mentorship. It provides temporal flexibility for women with caring responsibilities. However, there is a risk that any of these flexible arrangements may unintentionally disadvantage women by still affording implicit advantages to workers who are present and 'in person' on the work site, owing to the nature of unconscious biases. To support equity among organisations that are adopting working-from-home as an ongoing working arrangement, the government can play a role in guiding organisations on best practice policies and their legal responsibilities to facilitate equitable, inclusive work practices in this new operating environment. Given that women will be over-represented among the employees that opt for working-from-home and flexible arrangements, it is vital for gender equity outcomes that business culture evolves in a way where working-from-home employees are not disadvantaged through unconscious biases. This can be facilitated by ensuring businesses are equipped with research-backed information on strategies to avert this.

Under-employment refers to a situation where workers have a job but not as many hours of work that they need or would prefer to have. Monitoring the under-employment rate is an important gauge for identifying instances where women's skills and capabilities are not being fully utilised in the labour market. Given the unpredictable business conditions facing many employers, as the Victorian economy straddles recovery with ongoing outbreaks and lockdowns, it is understandable that employers will have an incentive to keep their staff "on the books", even if they cannot provide them any or many hours, as a way of ensuring they have staff available for when business activity picks up again. These dynamics, which result in under-employment, were in some respects incentivised through the Australian Government JobKeeper scheme that encouraged employees to sustain their relationship with their employer, even if the future viability of the business was weak or uncertain.

Women's relatively higher under-employment rate compared to men is, in part, a reflection of the non-standard employment arrangements that typify many of the industries that women are concentrated in, such as retail trade, accommodation and food services, where hours of work vary and largely depend on customer demand. Although it is often asserted that women are over-represented among casual employment, the rates casual employment between men and women are not as large as might be imagined: around 23 per cent of women in the Victorian workforce are employed on a casual basis, only slightly higher than men's rate of casual employment at around 20 per cent.<sup>41</sup> Differences in job security and precariousness more closely arise from differences in the *type* of casual job that men and women tend to be employed in. For example, women tend to be customer-oriented services roles than men. These were more vulnerable to pandemic restrictions and more conducive to being outsourced to digital via online shopping orders – compare the experiences of casual wait staff (predominately female) to that of delivery drivers (predominately male).

Women's under-employment rates is largely a function of broader economic conditions, but can also be addressed by many of the policies described above including by improving job matching process and supporting women to transfer their skills into more secure job opportunities.

### Skill development and access to promotional opportunities; work insecurity and rates of casualisation in women dominated industries and other sectors

To address gender equality in workforce outcomes, the government's job plans need to target not just women's employment numbers, but the *quality* of women's employment opportunities. A distinctive difference in men and women's workforce experiences is that men tend to accelerate up the career ladder more quickly than women do. This is even observed at junior levels where differences cannot necessarily be attributed to the interruptions of having children.

Australian women already possess strong skill sets and on average are more highly educated than men. There is also evidence that women, on average, are more likely than men to possess the personal traits that are conducive to higher workplace performance, such as conscientiousness. The impediment is that women's skills and attributes are unduly dismissed, valued less than men, or considered obsolete if women do have a career interruption. The under-valuation of women's capacity is compounded with the tendency for the skills, experiences and traits to be over-valued relative to their demonstrated worth.

Broadly, promoting an awareness about the existence and impacts of gender biases, and equipping organisations with the practical knowledge to identify and tackle these implicit and systemic biases, would be a powerful way to drive meaningful and long-lasting change in Victorian workplaces. There is scope for the Victorian Government to design a program that supports and incentivises all workplaces in the private sector to develop a genuine understanding about the influence of gender biases, making use of the resources being developed by the Victoria Gender Equality Commission to empower them with evidence-based knowledge of how to tackle these biases. Research-driven resources are available through the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA). Research shows that developing an authentic understanding about the existence of gender biases is an essential ingredient for workplace equality interventions to be effective. This Inquiry can investigate ways for these resources to be made available to private sector companies and broader community organisations that fall outside of the obligations of the Workplace Gender Equality Act and the Victorian Public Sector Gender Equality Act (that is, private companies with fewer than 100 employees). It is not just so much about businesses fulfilling reporting requirement, but about defining meaningful gender equality targets to aim for, and incentivising well-informed action.

Looking specifically at strategies to improve women's promotional opportunities, existing evidence of strategies that have worked effectively to improve women's representation among senior and executive levels point

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<sup>41</sup> Author's calculations for Victoria using HILDA Survey 2019.

towards the effectiveness of setting specific targets in the gender composition of these roles. The ASX200 30% Club is an example of a targeted approach that successfully steered women's representation in executive roles towards this 30% figure. More ambitious targets can be set that more accurately reflect the composition of the population, namely 50% female, or a ratio of 40:40:20 (40% male, 40% female, and 20% non-binary or any gender).<sup>42</sup> There is scope for the Victorian Government to play a role in recognising and rewarding organisations that achieve these targets, to incentivise and normalise this workforce dynamic. However, such targets need to be matched by a strategic plan to support women's progression towards these senior roles. Steps to strategically de-bias existing systems of recruitment, promotion and evaluation processes within organisations (as outlined at the start of this submission) will contribute towards providing women with stronger, and more equitable, opportunities for promotions. An example could be businesses deliberately broadening the potential traditional career pathways, or fields of specialities and background experience that are expected of candidates, when making executive appointments. The focus needs to be placed on equipping and incentivising organisations to improve their systems and processes, rather than place the onus on women and imply women are responsible for these outcomes due to their own deficiencies.

There is scope for the Victorian Government to invest in and financially support programs that specifically target women's re-entry to the paid workforce and have proven their success. These are often grassroots, small-scale interventions that are initiated by organisations. Successful models can be identified and rolled out to other organisations. An example is The Encoreship Program developed a coalition of female-owned enterprises.<sup>43</sup>

Improving opportunities for women in the workplace also requires equipping workplaces to review and reconfigure their existing workplace practices and cultures to identify ways that they unintentionally promote masculinised behaviours which implicitly sideline and disadvantage women. A stark example is the culture of endorsing and rewarding overtime hours – a practice that has been explicitly linked to the persistence of the gender pay gap and impinges upon workers' capacity to balance work and caring responsibilities.<sup>44</sup> More broadly, research shows that workplace cultures that elevate competitive pay structures (such as bonuses), pay flexibility (necessitating individual negotiation), overtime hours (as a marker of dominance and endurance) and conformity to default core hours (aversion to temporal flexibility) are less conducive to gender equality, and are in fact characteristics associated with hyper-masculinised workplace cultures and a higher incidence of harassment, burnout and toxic leadership behaviour. Interventions to address this type of workplace culture, as a means of promoting gender equality, includes strategically investing in a culture of psychological safety, which has benefits not just for gender equality, but for mental health, productivity and performance, and equality and inclusion for all cohorts more broadly.<sup>45</sup>

There is scope for the Victorian Government to design an incentive and reward structure to promote the adoption of these healthier and more responsible work practices among Victorian businesses, including potentially through tenders and procurement policies, grant eligibility, formal recognition of best practice (akin to WGEA's Employer of Choice accreditation scheme), and leading by example in its own public service.

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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.globalwomen.org.nz/diverse-boards/what-is-404020/>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.mamamia.com.au/alpha-h-encoreship/>

<sup>44</sup> Berdahl, J.L., Cooper, M., Glick, P., Livingston, R.W., and Williams, J.C. (2018) Work as a Masculinity Contest, *Journal of Social Issues*, 4(3): 422-448; Biasi, B. and Sarsons, H. (2020) Flexible Wages, Bargaining, and the Gender Gap, NBER Working Paper No. 2789, National Bureau of Economic Research; Goldin, C. (2014) A Grand Gender Convergence: Its Last Chapter, *American Economic Review*, 104 (4): 1091-1119. See Footnote 25 which reports that Victoria's gender gap in earnings widens further when overtime rates are included.

<sup>45</sup> Delizonna, L. (2017) High-Performing Teams Need Psychological Safety. Here's How to Create It, *Harvard Business Review*, 24 August 2017.

## Impact of intersecting and compounding forms of discrimination and disadvantage, including women who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, LGBTIQ+, culturally and linguistically diverse, single mothers, older women, younger women, women with disability, women experiencing family violence, and women from rural and regional areas

Across all of the equity concerns and policy proposals examined by the Inquiry, an intersectional lens needs to be applied to appreciate the experiences and circumstances of women in these cohorts, and to ensure that the proposed policy responses put forward by the Inquiry will deliver equitable, inclusive and effective outcomes for all Victorian women. Women from under-represented, marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds experience more acute workforce biases and barriers. As identified in the Inquiry's Terms of Reference, this includes Australia's First Nations women, women living with a disability, migrant and refugee women, women from under-represented cultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, single mothers, women who identify as LGBTIQ+, women of older age (the fastest growing cohort of the population who are at risk of homelessness), younger women (who have experienced a disproportionately higher share of job losses and fall in post-secondary education enrolments during the pandemic), women from geographically remote locations, and women from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Women who have experienced, or are experiencing, domestic and family violence, and women who are dependent on or on the wait list on social housing, must also be recognised as a priority cohort.

Research on policy initiatives to improving outcomes for women who are under-represented in the workforce points towards the effectiveness of well-designed mentoring programs that connect participants with role models whom they can trust and identify with, and the creation of a diversity taskforce or manager with responsibility for embedding accountability and transparency into an organisation's goals and performance targets. The provision of carefully designed, research-driven, educative information to workplaces would be valuable for enhancing broader awareness about intersectional biases, address possible misconceptions, and nurture an understanding that addressing intersectional biases requires a collective response and should not be an onus that is placed solely on individuals or marginalised communities to solve.

As with the issue of gender equality generally, many initiatives that strive to improve the representation of under-represented cohorts of the workforce tend to focus on improving the capabilities, opportunities, aspirations of the individual, such as through the offering of scholarships or dedicated placements through targets and quotas.<sup>46</sup> However, there is little use in ushering in more women from under-represented backgrounds if the workplace culture does not offer them an equitable opportunity to flourish, to be heard and respected, and to experience a sense of inclusion and belonging, once they are there. This spotlights the need for promoting broader cultural change and awareness within workplaces, organisations and the wider community, including through the conviction and commitment of leaders. Building representation of minority cohorts at a critical mass – as opposed to token individual appointments – will assist with the broader cultural change.

In terms of broader initiatives to support women's workforce participation, entrepreneurship and upskilling opportunities, the community groups that represent the interests of these cohorts of women, or provide dedicated support services to them, are well equipped to identify the specific challenges and needs of these cohorts of women and provide insights on what's needed in terms of practical policy responses. Often the initiatives that emerge at grassroots prove to be the best innovations to address these challenges, and can be replicated or upscaled with government assistance. Holding direct consultations with these groups will be an informative source of input for the Inquiry.

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<sup>46</sup> Dobbin, F. and Kalev, A. (2016) Why diversity programs fail, and what works better, *Harvard Business Review*.

## Redress the systemic disadvantage for women highlighted by the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on economic equity for women in Victoria, which may include: targeted industry/sector approaches; retraining and reskilling support for women; support for small business and self-employment for women

To support workers and business owners in the sectors of the economy that have been hardest hit by the pandemic, my own assessment as an economist is that we are now at the stage of the pandemic where a longer-term, more innovative and adaptive approach is needed to support these workers to sustainably pivot into more secure and resilient economic opportunities, rather than attempt to artificially keep these businesses afloat in their current form, such as through government compensation. Our economy needs to come to terms with the fact that a significant portion of our export-services market (encompassing tourism, travel, arts and entertainment, international education, corporate hospitality) has been siphoned off due to international border closures and is unlikely to fully rebound to pre-pandemic levels for several years due to several factors: shifts in business and consumer behaviour with conversion to digital or online delivery; the slowdown in population growth and dispersion to regional areas; the suppressed economic circumstances of many of Australia's trading partners; and the precautionary containment measures that will need to be retained for many years even when the vaccination rates permit international borders to reopen again.

A longer-term economic recovery and resiliency plan is required, encompassing:

- Supporting businesses to strategically invest in either a 'Resiliency' or 'Reinvention' business plan – as outlined earlier in this submission. Government can facilitate this by providing data-driven information to displaced workers and business owners, to equip them identify high-need, high-growth sectors of the Victorian economy and assess their own business viability. This provision of such information assists businesses to potentially repurpose their existing resources, skills and experience towards more promising and secure economic opportunities.
- Supporting existing businesses that aim to continue operation to reconfigure their operations to be permanently resilient to COVID-19 safety precautions and operate financially viably under the ongoing uncertainty and volatility that will still be a feature of a 'living with COVID' world. This may include physically refitting their premises, including improving ventilation systems, permanently redesigning traffic flows, and setting up permanent structures for safe social distancing. Subsidising trades and construction sectors to support these resiliency-building plans would be a more socially beneficial form of government subsidy, rather than subsidising private residential construction and home renovations.

It is acknowledged that embarking on such changes can be a confronting process not just financially, but emotionally and psychologically, for those workers and business owners who find themselves in these uncertain and unsteady economic predicaments. It is understandable that optimism bias – the hope that "life as normal" will return as quickly as possible – may inhibit people from considering alternative opportunities. The provision of appropriate psychological guidance could be a consideration for the Inquiry. Ideally, the industries and businesses that have been suppressed by the pandemic will eventually be revived and thrive again, when the full scope of the market is open up and restored. When we reach that point, these businesses and industries will have proven their flexibility and adaptability to adopt to new opportunities when they present themselves.

Women are more likely to be beneficiaries of these resiliency and reinvention investments, given their over-representation among the jobs most vulnerable to these disruptions.

## Measures to support the workforce participation of women with caring responsibilities and to encourage women's domestic partners and men to take on a greater share of these responsibilities

Expanding the provision of paid parental leave for fathers – and making it non-transferable in a use-it-or-lose-it entitlement – has been demonstrated to improve the full-time workforce participation rates of mothers and improve the sharing of unpaid work within the households. The province of Quebec in Canada provides a comparable case study for the Victorian Government to look towards.

It is well established that the affordability, accessibility and flexibility of formal and informal care services are important determinants of women's labour supply, as the provision of care services frees up women to allocate their time to paid work and a more productive use of their skills and capabilities. This has been largely been analysed in the context of the provision of childcare, but also applies to the provision outside-hours kinder and school care, disability care, aged care, and care services for people with mental health conditions and challenges. Quebec's suite of policy responses to support more gender equitable outcomes in society also encompassed improving the affordability of childcare services, resulting in an increase in childcare usage. Evaluation studies of the impacts of Quebec's policies detected that increased resourcing and quality assurance processes was also needed to ensure that standard of care could be upheld under a larger demand placed on the system. This points towards the need for any policy initiatives to expand publicly-provided places in care services to be matched by investments in the relevant care workers and resourcing, including administrative support.

More fundamentally, improving opportunities for women in the workforce requires a cultural shift or evolution in societal norms regarding the roles of men and women in society. As noted elsewhere in this submission, an essential, but overlooked, part of gender equality policies is strategic investment in initiatives that dismantle traditional stereotypes and cultivate healthy ideals of masculinity for men and boys. This not only applies in workplace contexts, but across all domains of society including community, sports, media and popular culture.

A specific cohort of women who have become even more vulnerable during the pandemic are new mothers. For many new mothers, it is the support of their family members – including their own mother – that enables new mothers to manage this time of their life and, especially through the provision of grandparental care, to return to work. The capacity for grandparents and other family members to provide this support has been impeded by international and interstate border closures, placing migrant women especially at risk. These factors are potentially exacerbating the pressures experienced by new mothers and their partners, and heightening the risks of post-natal depression or other mental health conditions, and impeding their capacity to sustain their connection to the workforce.

## Adequacy of existing legal and regulatory frameworks and policy settings to address workplace and economic equality from all tiers of government

This may include regard to: access to parental leave and early childhood education and care; workplace education and training; any implications for state investment and revenue, including requirements for additional Commonwealth funding; regulation in other Australian jurisdictions and in other countries, including how other jurisdictions provide for equal pay for work of equal or comparable value; and the ability of any Victorian regulatory arrangements to operate effectively in the absence of a national approach

It is well established that the impact of Effective Marginal Tax Rates (EMTRs) can financially prohibit second-income earners from increasing their days of paid work, having the effect of suppressing women's full-time employment and financial independence.<sup>47</sup> While these settings largely fall within the domain of the Australian Government, through the determination of eligibility and taper rates for Family Tax B, personal income tax and

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<sup>47</sup> Stewart, M. (Ed.) (2017) *Tax, Social Policy and Gender: Rethinking equality and efficiency*, ANU Press; Wood, D., Griffiths, K., and Emslie, O. (2020) *Cheaper childcare: A practical plan to boost female workforce participation*, Grattan Institute.



childcare subsidies, there is scope for State Governments to collectively initiate and press for national level reform on these important policy levers, and consider opportunities for collaborative Federal/State national plans and funding partnerships. Victoria is not alone among the jurisdictions in striving for better gender equity in economic outcomes, and consolidating partnerships with other state jurisdictions who share an understanding of these policy barriers could prove to be an impetus for change.

As mentioned elsewhere in the submission, instructive lessons to be gleaned from NSW and Queensland Industrial Relations tribunal reforms, on how equal pay cases can be addressed through equitable remuneration principles, and without the need for a male comparator to be identified. This was achieved through dedicated reviews of these jurisdictions' industrial relations tribunal systems.

When it comes to regulatory considerations, Canada's experience in the deterioration of childcare quality under the pressures of higher demand, points towards the risks of expanding childcare places without being able to ensure quality standards, especially in the private sector. This highlights the value of public sector delivery as well as the importance of mechanisms for ensuring quality compliance in private sector delivery. The same risks apply to all care services.

## Data tables

Table 1: Gender composition of industry, Victoria (2019)

Industry	Female share of industry	Male share of industry	Total
Health Care and Social Assistance	78.5%	21.5%	100%
Education and Training	71.2%	28.8%	100%
Retail Trade	57.5%	42.5%	100%
Accommodation and Food Services	55.2%	44.8%	100%
Administrative and Support Services	54.4%	45.6%	100%
Financial and Insurance Services	50.8%	49.2%	100%
Public Administration and Safety	50.7%	49.3%	100%
Arts and Recreation Services	49.8%	50.2%	100%
Other Services	46.4%	53.6%	100%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	42.5%	57.5%	100%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	41.8%	58.2%	100%
Wholesale Trade	34.3%	65.7%	100%
Information Media and Telecommunications	33.6%	66.4%	100%
Manufacturing	31.6%	68.4%	100%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	27.7%	72.3%	100%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	22.7%	77.3%	100%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	18.9%	81.1%	100%
Construction	12.1%	87.9%	100%
Mining	7.7%	92.3%	100%

Source: Author's calculations using data from ABS Labour Force, Detailed, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.001 Table EQ06 - Employed persons by Industry group of main job (ANZSIC), Sex, State and Territory. Data for November 2019 is used to reflect pre-pandemic labour market conditions. Industries are listed in order of female share.

Table 2: Industry contribution to total employment by gender, Victoria (2019)

Industry	Industry's share of total female employment	Industry's share of total male employment
Health Care and Social Assistance	22.5%	5.5%
Education and Training	13.1%	4.7%
Retail Trade	12.3%	8.1%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	8.2%	10.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	7.1%	5.2%
Manufacturing	5.9%	11.3%
Public Administration and Safety	5.5%	4.8%
Financial and Insurance Services	4.2%	3.6%
Administrative and Support Services	4.1%	3.1%
Other Services	3.4%	3.5%
Construction	2.5%	16.3%
Arts and Recreation Services	2.2%	2.0%
Wholesale Trade	2.2%	3.7%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	2.2%	8.3%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	1.4%	1.8%
Information Media and Telecommunications	1.4%	2.4%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	1.3%	3.1%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	0.6%	2.0%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Author's calculations using data from ABS Labour Force, Detailed, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.001 Table EQ06 - Employed persons by Industry group of main job (ANZSIC), Sex, State and Territory. Data for November 2019 is used to reflect pre-pandemic labour market conditions. Industries are listed in order of share of total female employment.

Table 3: Gender composition of occupation, Victoria (2019)

Occupation	Female share of occupation	Male share of occupation	Total
Community and Personal Service Workers	73.0%	27.0%	100%
Clerical and Administrative Workers	71.4%	28.6%	100%
Sales Workers	62.8%	37.2%	100%
Professionals	54.9%	45.1%	100%
Managers	36.7%	63.3%	100%
Labourers	33.2%	66.8%	100%
Technicians and Trades Workers	15.9%	84.1%	100%
Machinery Operators and Drivers	12.7%	87.3%	100%

Source: Author's calculations using data from ABS Labour Force, Detailed, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.001 - EQ08 - Employed persons by Occupation unit group of main job (ANZSCO), Sex, State and Territory. Data for November 2019 is used to reflect pre-pandemic labour market conditions. Occupations are listed in order of female share.

Table 4: Occupation contribution to total employment by gender, Victoria (2019)

Occupation	Occupation's share of total female employment	Occupation's share of total male employment
Professionals	30.8%	22.7%
Clerical and Administrative Workers	19.5%	7.0%
Community and Personal Service Workers	15.5%	5.1%
Sales Workers	11.5%	6.1%
Managers	9.9%	15.3%
Labourers	6.5%	11.7%
Technicians and Trades Workers	4.6%	22.0%
Machinery Operators and Drivers	1.6%	10.0%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Author's calculations using data from ABS Labour Force, Detailed, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.001 - EQ08 - Employed persons by Occupation unit group of main job (ANZSCO), Sex, State and Territory. Data for November 2019 is used to reflect pre-pandemic labour market conditions. Occupations are listed in order of female share of total employment.

Table 5: Average weekly ordinary-time earnings of full-time workers by industry, Australia (2019)

	All workers	Women	Men	Gender earnings gap
Mining	\$2,616.90	\$2,301.70	\$2,668.30	13.7%
Information Media and Telecommunications	\$1,990.30	\$1,757.10	\$2,121.20	17.2%
Financial and Insurance Services	\$1,963.20	\$1,694.40	\$2,177.30	22.2%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	\$1,895.10	\$1,609.80	\$2,067.40	22.1%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	\$1,893.10	\$1,731.60	\$1,940.10	10.7%
Education and Training	\$1,796.70	\$1,714.90	\$1,948.40	12.0%
Public Administration and Safety	\$1,756.10	\$1,696.70	\$1,798.60	5.7%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	\$1,649.90	\$1,435.50	\$1,706.80	15.9%
Construction	\$1,645.50	\$1,388.60	\$1,683.40	17.5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$1,590.00	\$1,465.90	\$1,885.50	22.3%
Wholesale Trade	\$1,571.40	\$1,386.20	\$1,653.70	16.2%
Administrative and Support Services	\$1,554.00	\$1,392.00	\$1,664.50	16.4%
Arts and Recreation Services	\$1,525.20	\$1,392.50	\$1,629.00	14.5%
Manufacturing	\$1,469.00	\$1,349.30	\$1,504.30	10.3%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	\$1,461.30	\$1,296.00	\$1,584.90	18.2%
Other Services	\$1,276.00	\$1,241.50	\$1,294.50	4.1%
Retail Trade	\$1,249.30	\$1,181.20	\$1,291.00	8.5%
Accommodation and Food Services	\$1,179.20	\$1,120.50	\$1,220.20	8.2%
All industries	\$1,658.40	\$1,508.30	\$1,750.80	13.9%

Source: ABS Average Weekly Earnings, Australia. Cat.no. 6302.0. Data for November 2019 is used to reflect pre-pandemic labour market conditions. Industries are listed in order of average earnings of all workers.

Table 6: Estimated average hourly rate of pay by industry, Australia (2019)

Industry	All workers	(Std. error)	Women	(Std. error)	Men	(Std. error)	Gender gap
Mining	\$53.43	(1.90)	\$40.30	(1.90)	\$55.82	(2.15)	*
Financial and Insurance Services	\$47.32	(1.87)	\$40.75	(1.87)	\$55.00	(3.48)	*
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	\$46.39	(1.21)	\$41.53	(1.21)	\$50.88	(1.58)	*
Public Administration and Safety	\$45.36	(0.71)	\$42.66	(0.71)	\$47.58	(1.04)	*
Education and Training	\$40.22	(0.57)	\$38.95	(0.57)	\$43.28	(1.39)	*
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	\$39.73	(2.94)	\$38.70	(2.94)	\$40.80	(2.62)	
Information Media and Telecommunications	\$39.61	(1.98)	\$36.01	(1.98)	\$42.54	(2.35)	
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$39.20	(0.64)	\$37.32	(0.64)	\$46.79	(2.12)	*
Construction	\$36.93	(0.76)	\$36.76	(0.76)	\$36.95	(0.75)	
Wholesale Trade	\$36.54	(1.28)	\$32.62	(1.28)	\$38.24	(1.66)	
Manufacturing	\$36.18	(0.82)	\$33.19	(0.82)	\$37.10	(0.79)	
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	\$35.87	(1.01)	\$34.28	(1.01)	\$36.37	(1.23)	
Administrative and Support Services	\$31.13	(1.23)	\$30.77	(1.23)	\$31.53	(2.06)	
Arts and Recreation Services	\$30.69	(1.09)	\$31.32	(1.09)	\$30.22	(1.47)	
Other Services	\$29.51	(0.83)	\$27.24	(0.83)	\$31.03	(1.10)	
Retail Trade	\$26.09	(0.38)	\$25.59	(0.38)	\$26.76	(0.61)	
Accommodation and Food Services	\$24.00	(0.50)	\$24.36	(0.50)	\$23.44	(0.62)	

Source: Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey 2019. Estimated of hourly rate are calculated using data on employed workers' self-reported gross weekly earnings for their main job and the number of hours they usually work per week in this job. Sample is trimmed to exclude workers who report zero income or zero hours, and for whom hourly wage is calculated to fall below \$10 or exceed \$300. Sample size of 4594 women 4580 men. Industries are listed in order of estimated hourly wage of all workers. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Gender differential is denoted by (\*) if statistically significant at 95% level. Estimates are not reported for industries with small sample size. (Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry; Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services)

Table 7: Estimated average hourly rate of pay by occupation, Australia (2019)

Industry	All workers	(Std. error)	Women	(Std. error)	Men	(Std. error)	Gender gap
Managers	\$47.78	(0.86)	\$44.39	(1.26)	\$49.96	(1.15)	*
Professionals	\$47.38	(0.57)	\$44.38	(0.64)	\$51.51	(1.00)	*
Technicians and Trades Workers	\$34.72	(0.52)	\$27.47	(0.71)	\$36.16	(0.60)	*
Clerical and Administrative Workers	\$33.25	(0.49)	\$32.66	(0.57)	\$35.15	(0.93)	
Machinery Operators and Drivers	\$33.16	(0.88)	\$35.99	(6.82)	\$32.87	(0.68)	
Community and Personal Service Workers	\$29.87	(0.36)	\$28.56	(0.40)	\$33.02	(0.72)	*
Labourers	\$26.55	(0.39)	\$25.82	(0.68)	\$26.93	(0.48)	
Sales Workers	\$25.89	(0.47)	\$25.35	(0.58)	\$26.85	(0.78)	

Source: Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey 2019. Estimated of hourly rate are calculated using data on employed workers' self-reported gross weekly earnings for their main job and the number of hours they usually work per week in this job. Sample is trimmed to exclude workers who report zero income or zero hours, and for whom hourly wage is calculated to fall below \$10 or exceed \$300. Sample size of 4627 women 4618 men. Occupations are listed in order of estimated hourly wage of all workers. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Gender differential is denoted by (\*) if statistically significant at 95% level.