

January 2022

Australian Gender Equality Council 2022 Pre Budget Submission

Executive Summary

Australia has never had a national strategy on gender equality which comprehensively identifies and seeks to address all aspects of gender inequality as set out in AGECE's Gender Equality Manifesto. Only when a comprehensive National Strategy is established by Government in collaboration with business and the broader community will Australia accelerate its pathway to achieving gender equality.

Given the marginal decline the gender pay gap over the past 20 years, ongoing gender segregation of industry sectors, unchanging gender role stereotypes, low levels of representation of women in leadership and politics, poor retirement outcomes for women relative to men, declining numbers of women CEO's in our ASX200 firms and ongoing violence against women, AGECE believes that it is time that the Federal Government initiated a formal national gender equality strategy through a comprehensive consultation process.

This should be a key pillar of the 2022-2023 Federal Budget, supported by a material increase in investment in all aspects of gender inequality including key areas of:

- **Women's Economic Security**
- **Family & Caring Responsibilities and Workplace Flexibility**
- **Women's Workforce Representation & Leadership**
- **Safety & Respect for Women**
- **Societal Norms and Gender Stereotypes**
- **Budget & Policies Decisions**
- **Government and Democracy**

Key Recommendations

1. Women's Economic Security

Strengthen women's economic security including -

- Superannuation paid on Government paid parental leave scheme
- Public reporting of companies' gender pay gap under the Workplace Gender Equality Act (WGEA)
- Fair Work Act reforms including an equal remuneration objective

2. Family & Caring Responsibilities and Workplace Flexibility

Create a more equal distribution of caring responsibilities between men and women including -

- Adopt a system of universal childcare to incentivise parents to remain in the workforce
- Eliminate gender bias in the Government paid and unpaid parental leave scheme
- Specifically addressing gender role stereotypes which inequitably divide domestic and caring work between men and women through a national advertising campaign

3. Women's Workforce Representation & Leadership

Increase women's workforce and leadership representation through -

- Investment in promoting increased female representation in male dominated industries
- Increased stimulus spend in female dominated care industries (childcare, aged care and disability)
- WGEA enhancements including extended reporting from Government organisations, detailed minimum standards for organizational gender equality measurement and practice and enforcement powers

4. Safety & Respect for Women

Ensure safety and respect for women through a material increase in investment in -

- Services and programs that support victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment
- Long-term programs to eliminate gender stereotypes, and promote respect for women and girls
- Adoption of all 55 recommendations of the Australian Human Rights Commission's Respect@Work report

5. Eliminate Societal Norms and Gender Stereotypes

Strategic and material investment in campaigns to remove the gender stereotypes that underpin all aspects of gender inequality in work, education, media and sports, including early childhood and primary STEM education, promoting women's sporting events and eliminating gender biased advertising.

6. A Gender Lens on all Budget & Policy Decisions

Mandate gender analysis of all Budget, policy and government programs including -

- Adopt measurable targets for key dimensions of gender equality
- Transparently report on expenditure and outcomes in the Women's Budget Statement
- Ensure gender balance in all Budget expenditure including health, sport and education

7. Government and Democracy

Increase women's participation and leadership in all levels of government through -

- Funding non-partisan organisations to run programs for women considering entering public life to increase the representation of women at all three levels of government in Australia
- Funding an education program in schools and universities which encourages and empowers girls and young women to consider leadership positions in public and community service
- Funding a national education program in schools and universities to positively shift the perception of women and in particular, those in public office

MANIFESTO OF THE AUSTRALIAN GENDER EQUALITY COUNCIL



ECONOMIC SECURITY

Gender should no longer be a factor in unequal levels of economic security during working life or in retirement.



WORKFORCE REPRESENTATION

Participation and representation in the Australian economy, at all levels, should be representative of the gender composition of society.



WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

All workplaces should operate under flexible work arrangements, which are accessed equally, regardless of gender.



FAMILY & CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents should share equally in the caring of children and must have access to free, universal, quality, accessible, all-hours early childhood education and care.



SAFETY & RESPECT

All people must be respected and be safe from the threat of violence and sexual harassment.



GOVERNMENT & DEMOCRACY

Parliaments and local governments must reflect the gender mix of the communities they represent.



HEALTH & WELLBEING

Reproductive rights are inviolable and there must be unimpeded access to healthcare to ensure control over these rights.



EDUCATION

Access, participation and outcomes, at all levels of education, should not be affected by a student's gender. There must be equal recognition of all genders in educational curricula.



MEDIA

The gender composition of society must be reflected in the proportional air-time of presenters as well as the reporting and representation of all media content including sport, news media, the arts, entertainment and community.



INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure for work and community facilities must reflect the needs of all genders for equal participation and safe access.



SOCIETAL NORMS

No institution, secular or religious, is permitted to differentially value or deny opportunities on the basis of gender and should use inclusive language in all communications and interactions with society.



SPORT

There should be equal access to and participation in professional and recreational sport, regardless of gender.



Australian Gender Equality Council

working for balance



Detailed Recommendations

Recommendation 1 Women's Economic Security

Strengthen women's economic security including -

- o Superannuation paid on Government Paid Parental Leave
- o Public reporting of companies' gender pay gap under the Workplace Gender Equality Act (WGEA)
- o Fair Work Act to include an equal remuneration objective and re-evaluate low pay rates for carers

Women's economic security is one of the primary impacts of gender inequality and is intrinsically tied to so many of the dimensions of gender equality in AGECC's Gender Equality Manifesto.

Measures of women's economic security include -

- o The Gender Pay Gap - stubbornly high at 20.9% of total remuneration and increasing since 2020, with the base salary pay gap the same as it was in 2004¹
- o The Gender Pension Gap – currently women retire with 23.4% less superannuation than men²
- o Homelessness Rates for Women increasing - the highest rate of increase for women aged over 55³

Research shows the gender pay gap results from a number of factors -

- o Gendered Industry Segmentation - the low wage rates in female dominated industries (primarily caring industries, such as childcare, aged care, disability care and healthcare) in contrast to male dominated industries (such as mining, construction and trades) (accounting for 20-30% of the gap)
- o Level within Leadership Hierarchy - the low levels of women' representation in leadership roles which attract higher rates of pay (accounting for 15-20% of the gap)
- o Position within Salary Bands - Differential pay rates for women and men within seniority bands (accounting for 10-15% of the gap)
- o Discrimination/Bias -Discrimination or bias in evaluation of women's performance and capability or the value of their roles, including like for like role pay differentials (accounting for 30%-50% of the gap)

Although the Gender Pay Gap is publicly reported on a sector basis, individual employers are not required to report their gender pay gap by the WGEA. Mandatory public reporting by individual companies, introduced in the UK and Europe, will further incentivize employers to address the gender pay gap within their own organisation, addressing some of the drivers of the pay gap.

To improve women's economic security, closing the gender pay gap must be considered an economic necessity and prioritized in the 2022-2023 Budget initiatives. To do so requires a suite of actions which will influence the various drivers of the gender pay gap as outline above.

The 2022-2-23 Budget should also include measures which go to directly address women's lower retirement savings in the short to medium term, as improvements to the gender pay gap will only benefit women

¹ WGEA (2020), Australia's gender equality scorecard, https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2019-20%20Gender%20Equality%20Scorecard_FINAL.pdf. Latest data indicates a jump from 20.1% to 20.9% in total remuneration; 13.4% to 14.2% in the base pay gap, largely as a result of the construction stimulus reflecting the role of gendered industry segmentation in the pay gap. The pay gap is highest in sectors such as Professional, Scientific and Technical Services and Financial Services reflecting the gender bias in leadership in those sectors.

² <https://www.wgea.gov.au/publications/gender-workplace-statistics-at-a-glance-2021-19-August-2022>. There are several contradictory statistics regarding the gender pension gap and unfortunately data is not produced annually on the retirement's savings gap of men and women.

³ Older Women's Network NSW, Submission to the Inquiry into Homelessness Submission 181

returning in the longer term. The Government should also report annually on the Gender Pension or Retirement Gap.

To improve women's economic security, AGECE recommends that as part of the 2022-23 Budget -

- The Fair Work Act be amended to include an equal remuneration objective and the Commission undertake a holistic review of pay rates in female dominated industries and the effectiveness of Equal Remuneration Orders.
- Superannuation Guarantee be paid on Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave Scheme, with no distinction between primary and secondary caregiver.
- WGEA introduce mandatory public reporting of the gender pay gaps by employers with >100 employees.⁴
- The Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave Scheme to increase from 18 weeks to 26 weeks paid parental leave each for both parents on a "use it or lose it" basis, and removing the distinction between primary and secondary caregiver.

Equally important as these initiatives, are the recommendations that follow, seeking to address women's workforce representation in male dominated sectors and in leadership, and those designed to achieve more equal family and caring responsibilities, workplace flexibility for women and men and women's safety. Only a multi-faceted approach will provide the impetus necessary to effect real and lasting change in women's economic security.

Recommendation 2 Family & Caring Responsibilities and Workplace Flexibility

Create a more equal distribution of caring responsibilities between men and women including -

- Adopt a system of universal childcare to incentivise parents to remain in the workforce
- Eliminate gender bias in the Government paid and unpaid parental leave scheme
- Specifically addressing gender role stereotypes which inequitably divide domestic and caring work between men and women through a national advertising campaign

Gender equality, particularly women's economic security, is significantly hampered by the fact that women undertake a disproportionate share of family and caring responsibilities. Bearing the majority of the burden of this unpaid work⁵ significantly reduces women's ability to participate in the paid workforce relative to men.

In turn, a lack of workplace flexibility further limits the opportunity for women to participate in the paid workforce, where women are expected to trade off family and caring responsibilities with paid work opportunities. Combined, these factors impact a woman's ability to participate in the paid workforce, the types of roles women undertake and the continuity of women's participation, impacting women's seniority and potential to increase their earning capacity over time.

⁴ AGECE Submission to the WGEA Review, 21 November 2021.

⁵ There are multiple sources that reference the amount of time Australian women devote to unpaid work. WGEA estimate that women spend 64.4% of the total work day on unpaid work compared to 36.1% by men. A recent AGECE survey of 2,000 people indicated that before COVID women spent on average 4.06 hours per day on family and caring responsibilities compared to 2.59 hours by men, and during COVID 6.29 hours per day compared to men's 4.56 hours. The annual Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey released in December 2021 covering data collected in 2019 pre COVID indicating women did 20.9 hours more unpaid work at home than their male counterparts with women doing 48.7 hrs per week and men 27.8 hours. ABS data in May 2021 during COVID indicated that 62% of women spent 5 or more hours on unpaid indoor housework compared to 35% of men. Similar results were found for unpaid caring or supervision of children.

Increasing women's workforce participation is the single, most powerful economic stimulus measure available to the Government in the 2022-2023 Budget. Free childcare existed briefly under COVID and was demonstrated to be a boon to the economy and women's workforce participation. Australia has among the lowest rates in the OECD of three-year-olds attending preschool. The Grattan Institute estimates that a universal subsidy set at 95% of childcare costs would cost about \$12B and boost GDP by \$27B a year.⁶ This investment pales into insignificance when compared to COVID stimulus spend or the cost of a new submarine fleet, and will provide better long term returns to the economy and to gender equality.

The 2021-2022 Budget measures to increase the childcare subsidy benefits only about ¼ of families participating in the childcare system (250,000), and completely ignored those who use in-home care. Such changes are incremental and will not fundamentally change women's workforce participation and economic security, and will not address the lack of early childhood learning for so many children who would benefit.

The Grattan Institute have also released a Report on the benefits of more gender equal parenting.⁷

While COVID-19 resulted in most employers introducing greater workplace flexibility in terms of enabling working from home, and varying work hours, it also demonstrated the entrenched nature of women's family and caring responsibilities, with women continuing to undertake the majority of unpaid family and caring responsibilities. While men's participation in unpaid family and caring responsibilities increased during COVID-19, women's did also, with the gender disparity remaining unchanged.⁸

To achieve gender equality, women and men must share equally in unpaid family and caring responsibilities, and benefit equally from workplace flexibility.

COVID-19 has demonstrated that gender-based roles are so entrenched, that change will only occur with the removal of financial disincentives in our system of childcare subsidies. The current system of subsidised childcare acts as a disincentive to dual income earners both working full-time, when they have pre-school aged children. Under the current system, parents who work outside the traditional work hours (shift workers in healthcare, construction, transport, hospitality etc.) are only eligible if they use a registered provider, making those with private nannies or other forms of childcare often ineligible.

Men's slow uptake of workplace flexibility and paid parental leave also means that the majority of caring responsibilities remain with women, inhibiting women's ability to fully participate in the paid workforce. With gender norms remaining and women mostly the primary caregiver, there is less opportunity for men to take parental leave and establish a pattern of shared domestic responsibility.

The introduction of a system universal childcare would eliminate these disincentives, and have a significant impact on women's workforce participation as was demonstrated during COVID when childcare was fully subsidised. Combined with improvements to the government paid parental leave scheme, it would also encourage men to take on family and caring responsibilities, with the financial disincentives removed.

To improve gender equality by creating a more equal distribution of caring responsibilities AGEC recommends the 2022-2-23 Budget include -

- Introduction of a system of universal childcare and early childhood learning, including tax-based subsidies for parents, the nature of whose work makes them unable to use institutional childcare.
- Increase from 18 weeks to 26 weeks paid parental leave under the Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave Scheme for both parents on a "use it or lose it" basis, removing the distinction between primary and secondary caregiver.

⁶ Wood, D., Griffiths, K., and Emslie, O. (2020). *Cheaper childcare: A practical plan to boost female workforce participation*. Grattan Institute. <https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Cheaper-Childcare-Grattan-Institute-Report.pdf>

⁷ Wood, D., Emslie, O., and Griffiths, K. (2021). *Dad days: how more gender-equal parental leave would improve the lives of Australian families*. Grattan Institute. <https://grattan.edu.au/report/dad-days/>

⁸ AGEC and NAWIC sponsored unpublished study of COVID indicated women's estimated hours of unpaid work increased from 4.06 to 6.29 and men's estimated hours 2.59 to 4.56 hours.

Recommendation 3 Women's Workforce Representation & Leadership

Increase women's workforce and leadership representation through -

- o Investment in promoting increased female representation in male dominated industries
- o Increased stimulus spend in female dominated care industries (childcare, aged care and disability)
- o WGEA enhancements including extended reporting from Government organisations, detailed minimum standards for organizational gender equality measurement and practice and enforcement powers.

Women's workforce participation remains well below that of men, and women's representation in leadership positions and in high paid male dominated industries remains low.

Women currently represent 47.7% of the workforce, but only 38% of the full-time workforce.⁹ The workforce participation rate for women is 75.4% compared to 83.5% for men (15-64).¹⁰ Women's participation in the workforce has a strong sector bias towards caring industries such as childcare, aged care, health and education, with low representation in traditionally male dominated industries such as mining, energy and construction. In the finance sector, where women have represented more than 50% of the workforce for several decades, women are predominantly in non-revenue generating roles and represent only 18.3% of CEOs (ASX200 CEOs 5%) and 32.5% of key management personnel.

This skewed workforce representation is a major contributor to the gender pay gap, poor economic outcomes for women and entrenched views about the role of women in society more broadly. COVID demonstrated that this skewed representation, also disproportionality disadvantaged women who are strongly represented in the hospitality, childcare and health sectors. Targeted incentives in the male dominated construction sector, worked against women as a primary driver of the now increasing gender pay gap. There was a missed opportunity by the government to tie COVID stimulus incentives for the construction sector to increased employment of women in the sector including the creation of more trade apprenticeships for women.

Conversely increased investment in industries dominated by women, including childcare, aged care and health, would support women's economic wellbeing and likely increase the attraction of men to those sectors, helping to bring gender balance to all industry segments. With COVID-19 demanding more from the health sector, and the opportunity for government to invest further in childcare, through the introduction of universal childcare, such measures would have a significant impact on economic activity and bring us closer to gender balance across industry.

Achieving gender equality in women's workforce representation (and improved economic security) requires women to share equally in leadership positions across all sectors, and elimination of the gender segmentation and segregation of industries. Achievement of this objective will require enhancements to the WGEA regime, significant financial incentives and a shift in the traditional gender stereotypes that drive this segmentation.

No longer do the majority of occupations require the physical attributes mostly held by men, and with technological advances most, if not all, occupations and roles even in heavy industries can be carried out by women. Leading employers have demonstrated this kind of change is possible but there are many remaining barriers, both social norms and infrastructure, that hamper change across industry more broadly.

The Government 2021-2022 budget initiatives impacting women's workforce representation targeting approximately \$170M to STEM related careers over several years were very narrow in scope and vastly insufficient to address the widespread and entrenched nature of industry gender segregation. No doubt useful in their own right, they will not solve the systemic issues nor address powerful underlying societal

⁹<https://www.wgea.gov.au/publications/gender-workplace-statistics-at-a-glance-2021> 19 August 2021

¹⁰<https://www.wgea.gov.au/publications/gender-workplace-statistics-at-a-glance-2021> 19 August 2021

norms that drive industry segregation.

To achieve gender equality through improved women's workforce representation and leadership, AGECE recommends that as part of the 2022-2-23 Budget -

- Government incentives for investment increased women's representation in male dominated industries
- Increased stimulus spend in female dominated care industries (childcare, aged care and disability)
- WGEA to include public sector reporting, light touch reporting for private sector >50 employees, mandatory minimum standards and stronger WGEA enforcement powers

Recommendation 4 Safety & Respect for Women

Ensure safety and respect for women through a material increase in investment in -

- Services and programs that support victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment
- Long-term programs to eliminate gender stereotypes, and promote respect for women and girls
- Adoption of all 55 recommendations of the Respect@Work report by the Human Rights Commission

"Everyone has the right to safety. Addressing all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic, family and sexual violence, must be a priority for all Australians to achieve our shared vision of a community free of violence against women and children."

- **National Summit on Women's Safety, Delegates' Statement, September 2021**¹¹

The FY22 Budget included an unprecedented commitment to invest \$1.1B over 4 years towards safety and respect for women. Despite the significant increase this investment represents, recent events have underlined that the size of the problem requires a far greater intervention than this investment can provide. And the problem is growing not declining.

The economic impact in Australia of family, domestic and sexual violence alone was estimated in 2016 as approximately \$26 billion each year, with victims and survivors bearing a significant proportion of that cost.¹²

As well as the financial impact, the impact on women of family and domestic violence, sexual assault and sexual harassment and misconduct, whether at work or in the community, goes well beyond what the current level of government investment can possibly address.

AGECE believes that the investment required is at least double this amount and likely more. Compared to the estimated annual cost of \$26B, materially increasing the investment in ensuring women's safety and respect is more than justified from an economic and human rights perspective.

Greater investment is required in both short-term responsive support to women, to law reform to ensure consistent and appropriate responses to victim's protection, and to long-term change programs including consent and gender stereotypes, and programs which support offenders. These programs need to be tailored to address the unique needs of all communities and languages, in particular indigenous communities.

AGECE supports the creation of a dedicated agency to address these issues, the Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Commission (the FDSV Commission). However, we caution the risks of creating another small agency

¹¹ Statement from Delegates – 2021 National Summit on Women's Safety, 2021, p.1 <http://www.womenssafetysummit.com.au/>

¹² KPMG. *The cost of violence in against women and their children in Australia – Final Report*. Department of Social Services, Canberra, 2016.

with limited budget and resources to tackle such a large problem. To be effective the FDSV Commission must have whole of government support and significant co-ordination and collaboration with other agencies, like WGEA, Sex Discrimination Commissioner and the Office of Women, as women's safety and respect is intricately connected with other aspects of gender inequality.

AGEC is currently preparing a response to the **Draft National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children**, which will supplement the recommendations in this Pre-Budget submission in relation to 2022-2023 Budget initiatives on Safety & Respect for Women.

"The National Plan commits to ten years of ambitious and sustained action, partnership across sectors and levels of government, and effort to end violence against women and children. It sets out a long-term vision that supports and promotes gender equality, where human rights are protected and respected and patterns of discrimination, inequality and disadvantage are addressed to end the drivers of violence against women and children."

The **Draft Plan** identifies **4 National Pillars** for change – Prevention, Early Intervention, Response and Recovery and **4 Drivers** - Condoning violence against women, Men's controlling decision-making, Rigid gender stereotyping and Cultures of masculinity.¹³

The Draft plan acknowledges that gender inequality is a key driver of violence against women and establishes as a principle that *"addressing gender inequality is key to ending violence against women"*. At p24, the Draft Plan goes further to state

"Gender inequality is present when unequal value is afforded to women and men and there is an unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunity between them. While progress has been made through policies and laws to support the rights and opportunities of women, there is more work to be done to advance gender equality in Australia. Gender inequality is maintained today through:

- *Social norms such as the belief that women are best suited to caring roles*
- *Practices such as differences in child-rearing practices for boys and girls*
- *Structures and practices that limit women's participation in the workforce and perpetuate the gender pay gap.*

Gender inequality does not exist in isolation. It intersects with other forms of structural and systemic discrimination and disadvantage. This means that some women face higher rates of violence, are at a heightened risk of experiencing or being exposed to certain forms of harassment, and can experience greater barriers to accessing support and recovery.

To end violence against women and children, we must address gender inequality in all its forms and expressions. This includes improving women's representation in leadership and decision-making roles and addressing barriers to women's economic and financial security.

Despite this acknowledgement, there is little in the National Pillar on Prevention, that indicate a significant increase or change in initiatives designed to shift the societal gender norms described, or to address inequality more broadly than the subject of violence. For other National Pillars (Early Intervention, Response and Recover) to succeed in reducing violence against women, there must be a step change in the nature, resourcing and impact of the initiatives to address underlying gender inequality to which the Plan refers.

The **Draft Plan** also does not appear to include any explicit commitment to significant additional funding to address this national crisis, or a clear strategy shift to achieve the targeted outcomes more quickly. In the medium terms, Response and Recovery funding must materially increase to address the immediate problem and allow time for the preventative measures to be effective.

AGEC believes all people must be respected and be safe from the threat of violence and sexual harassment. AGEC fully supports all 55 recommendations of Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report

¹³ *Draft National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children, p12.*

by the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Australia had a proud history in tackling sexual harassment. We believe that to tackle sexual harassment in the workplace all the Australian Human Rights Commission's recommendations need to be implemented. Additionally, the Convention on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work should be ratified. We believe that the budget should allocate funds to enable these recommendations to be implemented.

The 2022-2023 Budget must include a material increase in funding of programs that ensure safety and respect for women including -

- Services and programs that support victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment providing housing and income support.
- An expansion of long-term programs to eliminate gender stereotypes, and promote respect for women and girls.
- Adoption of all 55 recommendations of the Respect@Work report by the Australian Human Rights Commission and greater progress on all other dimensions of gender inequality as set out in this submission.

Recommendation 5 Eliminate Societal Gender Stereotypes

Strategic and material investment in campaigns to remove the gender stereotypes that underpin all aspects of gender inequality in work, education, media and sports, including early childhood and primary STEM education, promoting women's sporting events and eliminating gender biased advertising.

Gender stereotypes and traditional societal norms on the roles of men and women underpin all aspects of gender inequality, whether women's safety and respect, family and caring responsibilities predominantly being undertaken by women, women's career choices, women's sport and even gender differences in the amount boys and girls receive as pocket money. Gender norms are deeply entrenched in our everyday lives and though subtle have a powerful influence on what we do, what we wear, how we play and the choices we make; they start the day we are born and influence everything we do.

AGEC Research¹⁴ has shown that gender stereotypes play a critical role in women's career choices, which are formed at a young age and steer women predominantly into caring and support professions and vocations, many of which are lowly paid or insecure. Gender stereotypes continue to be reflected in sporting events, in advertising, in the media and in our education system.

True gender equality will only be achieved with the elimination of gender stereotypes and gender norms. The majority of government led gender equality initiatives seek to address the symptoms of inequality, such as the gender pay gap, the lack of women in male dominated industries or sexual harassment. Whereas initiatives that target the elimination of gender stereotypes which would address the root cause of inequality and are necessary to support the impact of other initiatives are completely lacking.

Despite some shifts in recent years for a more gender balanced approach to promotion and coverage of sporting events, there remains significantly more investment in men's sporting events and priority given to media coverage of sportsmen and male sporting events.

Overseas experience has demonstrated school and community-based programs supported by enhanced media standards, such as exist in the UK and Europe, are needed to comprehensively address this issue across all cultural boundaries. For example, the UK has a well-established program for the elimination of gender bias in advertising which goes well beyond traditional standards to eliminate sexualized advertising, which is the current approach in Australia.

¹⁴ Fitzsimmons, T.W., Yates, M. S., & Callan, V. (2018). *Hands Up for Gender Equality: A Major Study into Confidence and Career Intentions of Adolescent Girls and Boys*. Brisbane, Qld: AIBE Centre for Gender Equality in the Workplace – The University of Queensland.

Significant expansion and investment is also required in primary school-based programs, such as the Bright Future STEM program run by AMMA, which seek to dispel the gender norms associated with traditional male dominated occupations and career by providing non gendered role models across all occupations at a young age.

AGEC recommends the FY23 budget include \$50m to develop a comprehensive national strategy to -

- Understanding the influence of and identify long term initiatives to eliminate entrenched gender role stereotypes
- Reform of advertising standards to eliminate gender biased advertising and programming
- Increasing investment in targeted programs for girls in primary education, including STEM and sports
- Addressing stereotypes and bias that impact LGBTIQ+ people

Recommendation 6 A Gender Lens on all Budget & Policy Decisions

Mandate gender analysis of all Budget, policy and government programs including -

- Adopt measurable targets for key dimensions of gender equality
- Transparently report on expenditure and outcomes in the Women's Budget Statement
- Ensure gender balance in all Budget expenditure including health, sport and education

AGEC's analysis of the dimensions and drivers of gender inequality reveal that many important decisions - of business, government and in the community - are made without due consideration to their impact on women and often without input from women. Adopting decision making processes that explicitly consider the impacts on women, and including women with relevant experiences, in decision-making, removes implicit gender biases, makes a demonstrable difference to the outcome of decisions and avoids unintended negative impacts on women.

To underpin the various targeted initiatives of government in the 2022-2023 Budget, the government should underpin its commitment to gender equality by embedding a gender lens in all political processes and all government decisions. All policy recommendations and business cases in government must give explicit consideration to the impact on women and demonstrate participation of women in the relevant decision or commendation.

The re-introduction of the Women's Budget Statement in the 2021-2022 Budget was a much-needed first step towards ensuring a gender lens is applied to key decisions and one that women's groups had been calling for over many years. It provided a useful starting point on which the 2022-2023 Budget must build by providing improved transparency on the funding of women's initiatives, and a basis for comparison year-on-year on the progress of gender equality in Australia.

It used recognised and respected sources and acknowledged data gaps, which need to be filled to inform future policy initiatives. It also provided a consolidated account of the various factors impacting women and a point of comparison year on year.

In 2022 - 2023 the **Women's Budget Statement** should measure the progress of past initiatives and account for and reconcile the expenditure associated with each initiative year on year, including expenditure related to women in each of the portfolio budget initiatives, comparing actual against budgeted expenditure relative to the policy outcome achieved.

The **Women’s Budget Statement** should include a single table listing all the Women’s Budget initiatives (including recurrent expenditure related to women), and the relevant portfolio responsible for policy implementation, from which budget funds are sourced. The **Women’s Budget Statement** should adopt a format consistent with the presentation of each of the portfolio budgets and the Cross Portfolio Budgets.

It should also provide a year-on-year account of actual expenditure against the budget, and an assessment of performance against the targeted outcome, financial and non-financial. Adopting this approach will provide the necessary longitudinal insights of the effectiveness of various policy initiatives, and the associated economic benefit.

To build further on this base, the government should include in the 2022-2023 Budget measurable targets for key dimensions of gender equality including women’s economic security, workforce participation and representation and safety and respect for women. Only by establishing such targets will it and successive governments properly be held accountable for achieving gender equality outcomes.

The government should also initiate administrative action to ensure all government decisions and policies have regard to the impacts on women and gender equality. For example, that would include consideration in NHMRC grant funding of the impacts on women and girls, and the gender balance in overall funding of research grants. Only with such explicit consideration of gender impacts will progress be made.

In 2022-2023 the government should also require budget portfolios to demonstrate how their budget allocations adopt a gender-neutral approach to funding. Such action will include ensuring government incentives and sponsorship are balanced between men and women, whether sporting events funding, funding of health initiatives and education related funding. All government procurement should measure the gender equity performance of tendering organizations and should establish minimum standards for such procurement.

All public sector employers should be subject to the reporting and minimum standards set under the WGEA.

Recommendation 7 Government and Democracy

To increase women’s participation and leadership roles in all levels of government through support for programs to elect women to office and education to empower women to consider leadership roles in politics and all walks of life through:

- o Funding non-partisan organisations to run programs for women considering entering public life to increase the representation of women at all three levels of government in Australia
- o Funding an education program in schools and universities which encourages and empowers girls and young women to consider leadership positions in public and community service
- o Funding a national education program in schools and universities to positively shift the perception of women and in particular, those in public office

2022 is the 120th anniversary of Australian women being able to both vote and stand for public office. Whilst Australian women were the first in the world who could stand for public office, today Australia stands at 54th out of 155 countries for women’s political empowerment¹⁵. Australia now lags behind Iceland (1), New Zealand (4), Rwanda (6), Ireland (11), UK (23) and Canada (29). In 2006 Australia was 32nd in the same Gap Report. At present:

1. The number of women ready to stand for election across all parties needs to improve.

¹⁵ The World Economic Forum 2021 Global Gender Gap Report

2. The pipeline of women ready for pre-selection is insufficient to meet any equality targets in the near term. But there is not a lack of interest, with feedback from organisation's such as Women for Election indicating that their training events are consistently sold out months in advance of events. The demand for their programs has been overwhelming.

3. The barriers to women's preselection are numerous and need to be addressed if the number of women elected is to improve. One clear way to do this is to have training programs available for women considering standing for election so they understand the pathways, the requirements and the processes. This investment would drive the rapid growth in the numbers of women being trained, prepared and understanding the political processes.

In order to increase women's leadership knowledge and gender equality in elected bodies we propose the Government funds programs which equip women with the confidence, skills and knowledge to stand for public office. Programs provided by the non-partisan, not-for-profit groups Women For Election Australia (WFEA) and the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) have a proven record of electing more women to office. The recent NSW council elections saw the percentage of women elected increase from 29.5% to 39.5%. Before the 2021 December council elections both WFEA and ALGWA held a series of workshops and programs across the State both in-person and on-line. The programs increased women's understanding of local government, how it operates and provided the campaign skills and governance knowledge to enable women to stand for election. ALGWA has also run successful campaigns in council elections in other states, which has seen the percentage of women elected increased. Following these campaigns women are now 43.8% of the councillors in Victoria and 39.3% of the councillors in WA. There are council elections in both South Australia and Tasmania in 2022. We know many elected councillors go on to both State and Federal parliaments.

AGEC proposes that the Government commits to additional funding both WFEA and ALGWA. For WFEA this would fund their EQUIP training program for aspiring candidates plus scholarships for marginalised and disadvantaged women. We endorse and support both WFEA's and ALGWA'S separate pre-budget submission in tackling this critical issue. In particular WFEA has a comprehensive proposal to train women candidates for all levels of government and ALGWA would run council candidate programs in South Australia and Tasmania, to be held before the municipal elections later in 2022.

To tackle the adverse perceptions of political office for women AGEC suggests that the Federal Government develop and implement a public education campaign whose goal is to positively shift the perception of women, with particular reference to those standing for public office.

AGEC also recommends that the Federal Government provide ongoing funding for a program in schools and universities which encourages and empowers girls and young women to consider leadership positions in politics and all walks of life.

To increase women's participation and leadership roles in all levels of government through support for programs to elect women to office and education to empower women to consider leadership roles in politics and all walks of life through:

- Funding non-partisan organisations to run programs to increase the representation of women at all three levels of government in Australia
- An education program in schools and universities to positively shift the perception of women, in particular those in public office
- And education program in schools and universities which encourages and empowers girls and young women to consider leadership positions in politics and all walks of life.

About the Australian Gender Equality Council (AGEC)

AGEC is a non-government, not for profit organisation – a peak body across a wide range of industry and community sectors advocating for gender equality. We use an evidence-based approach to highlight the facts, the benefits of change, and to ensure initiatives achieve long-term, sustainable change. We have a strong social media and online presence that focuses on building awareness across the community of the need for change with messages that connect with everyone. Our members include Engineers Australia, FINSIA, Women in Aviation, the National Rural Women’s Coalition, Women in Construction, Women in Banking & Finance, Australian Women Lawyers, Women in Technology and many others. We operate on an entirely voluntary basis and rely on grassroots and in-kind funding. For more information on AGEC see our website www.agec.org.au

Member organisations of the Australian Gender Equality Council

Australasian Women in Emergencies Network (AWEN)
Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW)
Australian Federation of Business & Professional Women (AFBPW)
Australian Local Government Women’s Association (ALGWA)
Australian Women Lawyers (AWL)
Australian Women in Resources Alliance (AWRA)
Economic Security for Women (eS4W)
Elevate Her (Lean in)
Engineers Australia
Financial Services Institute of Australasia (FINSIA)
National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) Women in Super (WIS)
National Association of Women in Operations (NAWO)
National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC)
Older Women’s Network (OWN)
Tradeswomen Australia (TWA)
Transport Women Australia (TWA)
Women and Leadership Australia (WLA)
Women for Election Australia (WFEA)
Women in Automotive (WinA)
Women in Aviation Australian Chapter (WAI)
Women in Banking and Finance (WIBF)
Women in Digital (WID)
Women in Gaming & Hospitality (WGA)
Women in Super (WIS)
Women in Technology (WIT)
