THE VICTORIAN PEAK BODY FOR GENDER EQUITY, WOMEN'S HEALTH AND THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

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GENVIC
GENDER EQUITY VICTORIA

PRIORITIES FOR VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT ACTION 2018 -2021

ADVANCE EQUITY. PROMOTE HEALTH. PREVENT VIOLENCE.

NOW'S THE TIME FOR ACTION!

Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC) is the Victorian peak body for gender equity, women's health and the prevention of violence against women.

GEN VIC delivers and supports coordinated action on gender equity, women's health and the prevention of violence against women across Victoria. It's the only peak body working across all three areas.

Our member organisations are Victoria's leaders on gender equity, women's health and the prevention of violence against women.

Our membership reaches every region and community in Victoria.

OUR VISION

Equality, wellbeing and freedom from violence for every woman and girl, in every community of Victoria.

OUR PURPOSE

To advocate, influence and collaborate to improve outcomes in gender equity, women's health and in the prevention of violence against women.

GEN VIC MEMBERSHIP

GEN VIC represents organisations and individuals across Victoria who support our vision for health, equality and freedom from violence for every woman and girl in Victoria.

www.genvic.org.au

1

ADVANCE **GENDER EQUITY**

2

PROMOTE **WOMEN'S SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH**

Action has to happen in these four areas to make Victorian women **EQUAL, HEALTHY** and **SAFE**

3

PREVENT **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

4

SUPPORT THE **DEVELOPMENT OF A SUSTAINABLE PEAK BODY**

that can coordinate community action to advance equity, promote health and prevent violence

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This action will support the state-wide strategies that government has adopted following substantial consultation with the community:

- *Safe and Strong*, A *Victorian Gender Equality Strategy*
- *Women's sexual and reproductive health: key priorities 2017-2020*
- *Free from violence, Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women*
- *Building from Strength: 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response*
- *The Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-2019.*

BY TAKING THIS ACTION:

- **The voices of all women and girls will be at the centre of policy development, legislative change and the delivery of services to women and girls**
- **The diverse and intersectional experiences and needs of all Victorian women and girls will be counted**
- **The promotion of gender equity, women's health and the prevention of violence against women will be coordinated and evidence-informed**
- **A sustainable and enduring infrastructure for gender equity, women's health and the prevention of violence against women will be created within the community.**

Now is the time for making substantial headway to ensure all Victorian women are **equal**, **healthy** and **safe**.

Priorities for Victorian Government action 2018-2021

1 ADVANCE GENDER EQUITY

- Implement *Safe and Strong, A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy* by providing long-term, recurrent funding to specialist women's services as partners in the delivery of the Strategy at the community level.
- Drive the achievement of gender equity by adopting a gender analysis across all government policy, laws, regulations, budgets and government expenditure.

2 PROMOTE WOMEN'S SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

- Require all publicly funded health services to deliver accessible sexual and reproductive health services including contraception, emergency contraception, termination/abortion services and fertility support. Particular emphasis should be given to services being available in rural and regional communities and to those who experience barriers to their access including Aboriginal women, migrant and refugee women, women with disabilities and those who are LGBTI.
- Recognise the role that regional partnerships, led by specialist women's services, have in the area of sexual and reproductive health by providing adequate, recurrent and long-term funding to build capacity at the local level to deliver on Victoria's *Women's sexual and reproductive health: key priorities 2017-2020.*

Image credit: Gippsland Women's Health

3 PREVENT **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

- Allocate adequate, specific and recurrent funding to strategies to prevent violence against women. The amount for prevention should be at least the equivalent of 10 percent of the amount spent on the delivery of services for responding to violence against women.
- Recognise the lead role that women's health services have played in the area of prevention of violence against women. Provide adequate, recurrent and long-term funding to lead regional prevention partnerships. The additional funding need here has been costed as a minimum of $5 million per annum.

4 SUPPORT **THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SUSTAINABLE PEAK BODY**

- The Victorian Government, and Respect Victoria, commit to work with GEN VIC as the peak body representing the non-government sector in the areas of gender equity, women's health and prevention of violence against women.
- At a minimum, the Victorian Government needs to provide recurrent funding of $420 000 per annum (indexed over time) to support the establishment and ongoing operation of GEN VIC.

1. ADVANCE **GENDER EQUITY**
2. PROMOTE **WOMEN'S SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH**
3. PREVENT **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**
4. SUPPORT **THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SUSTAINABLE PEAK BODY**

1. Advance **Gender Equity**

Victorian women and girls experience significant inequality. Women are still underrepresented in senior leadership roles in the public and private sector; they still perform the majority of care work (paid and unpaid), and domestic duties within the home; and there is still a substantial gender wage gap.[1]

Women are overrepresented in lower paid positions in the workforce and insecure forms of work, in particular those women who have a non-European or Indigenous background.[2] Women still experience profound rates of sexual harassment and violence in the workplace, and are overwhelming the victims of family violence.[3]

> Gender equity is the vehicle through which we can achieve gender equality. By recognising diversity and disadvantage, and distributing resources based on need to produce equal outcomes, we can help to achieve equality, wellbeing and freedom from violence for every woman and girl in every community of Victoria.

We know that gender inequality sets the necessary context for violence against women to occur, and that working towards gender equitable outcomes means reducing violence against women.[4]

Advancing gender equity within Victoria will provide many benefits including greater social cohesion, safer neighbourhoods, improved women's health status and increased productivity.[5]

To achieve gender equality we have to remove the structural barriers to equality and change norms, behaviours and practices that perpetuate inequality and gender stereotypes.

To advance gender equity we need leadership, expertise, coordination and a range of tailored strategies. It is a long-term goal that requires consistent effort across the entire state.

Safe and Strong, *Victoria's Gender Equality Strategy* provides a framework and focus to guide action to advance gender equity. Implementing the Strategy within government and the community will drive success.

Specialist women's services have extensive expertise and a solid track record in developing and delivering initiatives that contribute to the advancement of gender equity. By working together, specialist services and the Victorian government can advance gender equity.

TAKING ACTION TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUITY

In order to ensure a consistent focus to advance gender equity the Victorian Government should:

- **Implement *Safe and Strong, Victoria's Gender Equality Strategy* by providing long-term, recurrent funding to specialist women's services as partners in the delivery of the Strategy at the community level.**
- **Drive the achievement of gender equity by adopting a gender analysis across all government policy, laws, regulations, budgets and government expenditure.**

2. Promote **Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health**

Women have a right to understand and control decision-making regarding their sexual and reproductive health.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INCLUDES A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO:

- healthy and respectful relationships
- access to inclusive, safe and appropriate reproductive health services
- access to accurate information
- effective and affordable methods of family planning and fertility regulation.[6]

Exercising reproductive choices, including access to information about modern contraceptives as well as medical or surgical termination of pregnancy, is a key determinant of women's reproductive and general health.[7]

Within Victoria there are barriers to access to information about sexual and reproductive health and also barriers to accessing services associated with this.

There are significant disparities in sexual health outcomes between rural and metropolitan Victoria.[8]

Victorian young women in general find it challenging to access reproductive health services. There are added barriers to information and access to appropriate services for women who are Aboriginal, have a disability, who are older, come from migrant or refugee backgrounds or who are LGBTI.

In order to ensure that women can access appropriate, affordable and timely sexual and reproductive health services, we need to break down social, economic and geographic barriers. Victoria's *Women's sexual and reproductive health: key priorities 2017-2020* provides a framework for action. Through consistent, adequate, recurrent funding to implement this plan, the sexual and reproductive health of all Victorian women will be improved.

TAKING ACTION TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

In order to break down social, economic and geographic barriers to women's sexual and reproductive health the Victorian Government should:

- **Require all publicly funded health services to deliver accessible sexual and reproductive health services including contraception, emergency contraception, termination/abortion services and fertility support. Particular emphasis should be given to services being available in rural and regional communities and to those who experience barriers to their access including Aboriginal women, migrant and refugee women, women with disabilities and those who are LGBTI.**
- **Recognise the role that regional partnerships, led by specialist women's services, have in the area of sexual and reproductive health by providing adequate, recurrent and long-term funding to build capacity at the local level to deliver on Victoria's *Women's sexual and reproductive health: key priorities 2017-2020.***

3. Prevent **violence against women**

The violence women experience has a profound impact on their health and wellbeing and their social and economic status.

Intimate partner violence is the leading cause of death, disability, and injury for women between the ages of 18 and 44 in Australia.[9]

One woman a week is killed by a partner or former partner in Australia.[10]

One in three Australian women has experienced physical violence since the age of 15 years. One in five has experienced sexual violence since the age of 15 years.[11]

Change the Story, Australia's national framework for the prevention of violence against women, identifies that violence against women is likely when:

- Violence against women is condoned
- Men's control of decision-making, in both the public and private spheres is allowed
- Rigid gender roles and stereotypical attitudes to masculinity and femininity are promoted
- Disrespect towards women and male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women are supported.[12]

We can stop this violence before it occurs by promoting gender equality, challenging violence, supporting the empowerment of women and girls and building respectful relationships.

Safe and Strong, A *Victorian Gender Equality Strategy* and *Free from violence, Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women* are a significant foundation on which to build concerted efforts to prevent violence before it begins.

TAKING ACTION TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In order to build on the foundations of *Safe and Strong, A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy* and *Free from violence, Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women* the Victorian Government should:

- **Allocate adequate, specific and recurrent funding to strategies to prevent violence against women. The amount for prevention should be at least the equivalent of 10 percent of the amount spent on the delivery of services for responding to violence against women.**
- **Recognise the lead role that women's health services have played in the area of prevention of violence against women. Provide adequate, recurrent and long-term funding to lead regional prevention partnerships. The additional funding need here has been costed as a minimum of $5 million per annum.**

4. Support the **development of a sustainable peak body** that can coordinate community action to advance equity, promote health and prevent violence

The Victorian Government needs partners in the community that have the depth and breadth of expertise to deliver on strategies to advance gender equity, promote women's sexual and reproductive health and prevent violence against women.

The number of individuals and organisations involved in delivering gender equity and prevention of violence against women programs is growing rapidly and there is a pressing need for a united, expert voice for Victorian women to inform and advise government.

Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC) is the collective voice for gender equity, women's health and the prevention of violence against women in Victoria. GEN VIC members include nine regional women's health services and statewide women's services including Women's Health Victoria, Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, Women with Disabilities Victoria, Women's Information and Referral Exchange (WIRE), The Royal Women's Hospital and Positive Women. Our membership continues to grow.

GEN VIC ensures the delivery of consistent, intersectional and high quality gender equity, women's health and prevention of violence against women work across Victoria.

GEN VIC (including via its predecessor Women's Health Association of Victoria) has the runs on the board as Victoria's leader in this space.

TAKING ACTION TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SUSTAINABLE PEAK BODY

In order to partner with the community to deliver on strategies to advance gender equity, promote women's sexual and reproductive health and prevent violence against women:

- **The Victorian Government, and Respect Victoria, commit to work with GEN VIC as the peak body representing the non-government sector in the areas of gender equity, women's health and prevention of violence against women.**
- **At a minimum, the Victorian Government to provide recurrent funding of $420 000 per annum (indexed over time) to support the establishment and ongoing operation of GEN VIC.**

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GEN VIC MEMBERSHIP

GEN VIC welcomes as members any organisations and individuals who support our vision for health, equality and freedom from violence for every woman and girl in Victoria.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Gender Equity Victoria acknowledges the traditional custodians of country across Australia and we pay our respect to Elders past and present. *We recognise and apologise for the human suffering and injustice that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have experienced as a result of colonisation and generations of discrimination and marginalisation. We acknowledge that the removal of children has and continues to devastate individuals, families and entire communities and that the intention of those policies has been to assimilate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a sovereign people who have never ceded their sovereignty of this land and we acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's human right to self-determination. We are committed to working in solidarity and partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to improve women's health, safety and wellbeing.*

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PREVENT VIOLENCE

EQUALITY, WELLBEING AND FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE FOR EVERY WOMEN AND GIRL IN EVERY COMMUNITY IN VICTORIA.

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