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

GENVIC

GENDER EQUITY VICTORIA

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ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

A guide to influencing decision-making for gender equity, women's health and the prevention of violence against women

ADVANCE EQUITY. PROMOTE HEALTH. PREVENT VIOLENCE.

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

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Developed by Lisa Heap, Adjunct Professor, Institute for Religion, Politics & Society, Australian Catholic University

Image credit: Gippsland Women's Health

Congratulations on deciding to take action to make a real change for women in our community

Your advocacy is part of a broader movement to:

- advance gender equity within Victoria
- promote better health outcomes for women and girls in our community
- prevent violence against women and girls before it happens
- coordinate community action to advance gender equity, promote health and prevent violence against women and girls.

By advocating for change you have the potential to change the lives of women and girls in your community in a positive way. You will also build alliances, networks and relationships that, if fostered, will support your work in the future.

THIS TOOLKIT

This kit is designed to give our members the tools they need to support their advocacy actions. It sets out some tips and tricks that will assist in making members' advocacy more effective.

A companion document sets out the priorities for action that GEN VIC has identified and the specific asks GEN VIC has in relation to each of these priorities.

For more information and to get the companion document, visit our website www.genvic.org.au

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1. The issues

There are many issues that impact on the position of women and girls in our community, their equality, health outcomes, and also their safety. To be successful in our advocacy we have to pick some specific areas for action and target our advocacy on these.

GEN VIC members have a great depth of understanding regarding what is needed to make positive change for women and girls in Victoria. Their reach extends across the state – metropolitan and regional. It includes expertise in women's health and the experience of migrant women, women with disabilities, women who are HIV positive and women from LGBTIQ communities.

Together these organisations have identified four areas for priority action from government:

- Advance gender equity
- Promote women's sexual and reproductive health
- Prevent violence against women
- Support the development of a sustainable peak body that can coordinate community action to advance equity, promote health and prevent violence

More details about these issues and GEN VIC's priority areas are available from www.genvic.org.au

TIP:

Most successful advocacy campaigns rely on identifying issues that many people in the community feel are important and which they feel strongly about. We call this being "widely and deeply felt".

If your advocacy is within your local community (say seeking support or action from your local member of parliament), it would be useful to contextualise the issues identified by GEN VIC with examples of what is happening for women and girls in your local area, or how the asks would impact in your local area so that decision-makers can understand the importance to women and girls in your community.

For example:

If discussing the importance of implementing Victoria's Gender Equality Strategy through initiatives in a rural town you could say:

We have identified that there is a real gap in women and girls participation in local sporting clubs and even in community leadership groups like the local council or in Rotary.

This has meant little attention has been paid to upgrading sporting facilities used by girls and women. It also means there is a risk that decision-making regarding allocation of resources within the community is largely in the hands of men. We know that men's control of decision-making and power in households and communities is a driver of violence against women and girls.

A commitment to Victoria's Gender Equality Strategy, with funds to support its implementation, would mean we can advocate for resources to help us introduce gender auditing and gender budgeting to sporting and leadership groups in our community. It would also provide important signaling that achieving gender equality is an important goal in our community.

TIP:

Successful campaigning also relies on having specific, achievable and measurable goals. The first questions decision-makers will have for you when you approach them are likely to be "*What is the change you are looking for*?" and "*What would you like me to do about this*?"

It's important that you are able to describe with some specificity the change that you want to see and identify how the decision-maker you are targeting can be part of making that change happen.

For example:

We want every woman in Morwell to be able to access a full suite of sexual and reproductive health services including contraception, emergency contraception, termination/abortion services and fertility support without having to travel further than x kilometres. This means that hospital X or health service Y will need additional funds and training support to be able to do this as they are currently unable to provide X, Y, Z services.

We would like you to publicly support this position. This includes advocating for this to be given priority in the election priorities of your party. Following the election we want you to advocate, with the relevant health minister, for this to be put into government policy and resources allocated to it.

If you provide decision-makers with details about how supporting GEN VIC's asks will make a difference in your community they are more likely to understand why they should get on board.

When you have specific asks for decision-makers it makes them more accountable for providing you with an answer about what they are prepared to do.

TIP:

Having a credible, authentic voice will often be effective in swaying decision-makers on issues. It is recommended that women and girls who are affected by the issues you are raising form part of any advocacy efforts. Your advocacy will be more powerful (and less easy to discount or ignore) when the lived experience of women and girls in your community is at the centre of what is being discussed.

Case studies that are located in your community are also useful here.

> HAVING A CREDIBLE, **AUTHENTIC VOICE** WILL OFTEN BE EFFECTIVE IN SWAYING DECISION-MAKERS ON ISSUES.

2. Overarching principles for our advocacy

The following principles will underpin any advocacy action we undertake:

- Our advocacy is non-partisan – we give the same information, access to briefings and invitations to participate to all parties
- We found the strength of our advocacy in the expertise, breadth of reach, diversity and past successes of our member organisations
- Our methods support the empowerment of women and girls by giving them opportunities and supporting them to voice their stories
- We recognise the diversity of women's lived experience and that women may face a multiplicity of oppressions. This may include, for example, the intersections between race, gender, class, ability, ethnicity, age, sexuality, gender identity, age and rurality
- As a peak our work complements and amplifies the work of the organisations that are members of GEN VIC.

3. Timeline for action

To be effective, advocacy action needs a target.

The target might be to influence a government around budgets and funding, or it might be to persuade political parties to commit to priorities for action in the lead-up to an election.

Once you have a target it's important to map out a timeline for the action.

For example, if your target is to persuade political parties to commit to your priorities for action in the lead-up to an election the following timeline may help to focus your advocacy action.

2018

MAY

Review GEN VIC's priorities for government action and contextualise these with the examples from your community.

Identify women and girls in your community who are impacted by the issues and who are prepared to be involved.

Call together an advocacy team that includes those within your organisation, those from other supportive organisations and those from the community who have agreed to be involved.

Run an advocacy workshop using this kit for those who have agreed to be part of your advocacy team.

Map potential targets for action (see section 4 of this resource) and potential advocacy actions (see section 5 of this resource).

JUNE, JULY, AUGUST

Carry out identified advocacy actions.

Hold regular meetings with your advocacy team to discuss progress.

Post on social media about the actions that are happening.

Identify follow-up actions that are required.

Review materials coming forward from various political parties that impact this area. Incorporate responses to this in advocacy actions.

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER

Assess progress.

Follow up those who have indicated they will provide a response.

Identify targets for a final advocacy push.

Review materials coming forward from various political parties that impact this area. Incorporate responses to this in advocacy actions.

OCTOBER

Carry out final advocacy actions.

Consider making public the responses from decision-makers that have provided them.

NOVEMBER

Celebrate what has been achieved in terms of advocacy actions.

Regroup following the election outcome and analyse what this might mean for future advocacy efforts.

DECEMBER

Make contact with decision-makers after the election and make arrangements to meet with them to discuss future action to advance your issues.

Now might be the time to touch base with relevant departmental staff who will be working to develop briefing materials for an incoming Minister and starting the process of developing budget bids for the following budget cycle (May).

Make an advocacy plan for the coming year.

4. Mapping decision-makers, allies and opponents

An important part of successful advocacy is identifying who has the power to make the change that you want to see (the decision-makers) and who (other than you) has the power to influence those decision-makers.

Sometimes if you can't influence the decision-maker directly, others that you have a relationship with can. It's also useful to identify any groups that may be putting out a view that is opposed to yours and consider what influence they may have over decision-makers.

TIP:

Your advocacy resources are unlikely to be unlimited. Mapping decision-makers, allies and opponents lets you know who is on the scene. You can then make decisions about where you allocate your limited advocacy resources.

Target your limited advocacy resources to those areas where you think you can get maximum impact (given the challenge in front of you) rather than trying to cover all bases. For example, given the focus of this advocacy effort is initially on the upcoming state election it may be more useful to target efforts at political candidates in your local area than targeting action towards government bureaucrats.

The following table may help you map:

	Decision-maker	**Their focus/area of interest** e.g. gender equality legislation, women's family planning and/or family violence	**Decision-maker rating** (positive, neutral, negative)	**Your advocacy action** e.g. letter/ delegation meeting/ invitation to attend forum or event
Victorian Government Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries	Premier			
	Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence			
	Minister for Women			
	Minister for Health			
	Minister for Families and Children			

Table continues on opposite page.

Continued from previous page.

	Special Minister of State			
	Attorney-General			
	Parliamentary Secretary to Premier			
	Parliamentary Secretary Human Services			
	Parliamentary Secretary Health			
Victorian Shadow Ministers	Leader of the Opposition			
	Families and Children/ Prevention of Family Violence/Health/ Country Health/ Women			
Victorian Legislative Assembly	(Pick those for your region)			
Local Members	(Pick those for your electorate)			
Candidates in state election	(Pick those for your electorate in addition to the current sitting member)			
Local authorities	(Pick those relevant to your area: target CEOs, heads of relevant departments and Councillors)			
Departmental representatives	Identify the departments and their representatives relevant to the issue you wish to highlight			
Peak organisations	e.g. Municipal Association of Victoria			
	Victorian Trades Hall Council			
Local community organisations/ influencers	e.g. Faith-based organisations, Rotary, Country Women's Association, local businesses, Trades and Labour Councils, unions, Chambers of Commerce and business associations, sporting clubs			

4. Mapping decision-makers, allies and opponents *continued*

Details for the names, addresses, electorates and portfolios for members of the Victorian Parliament and Ministers and Shadow Ministers can be obtained at

https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/people-in-parliament/members-search

TIP:

One way of expanding your reach and extending your limited resources is by recruiting others to be involved with you in your advocacy efforts. The mapping process outlined on pages 8-9 will help you to identify potential allies. When you find individuals, groups or organisations that are supportive, try to recruit them to be involved in your advocacy actions.

A recruitment conversation would go something like this:

- Ask the person/group what they think about the issue
- Ask them why they think a change in this area would be important
- Explain to them the change GEN VIC is advocating for, linking this to the concerns or ideas they have raised
- Ask them if they are prepared to help to make this change
- Address any concerns they may have about taking action
- Ask them to be involved in a specific action that might not be threatening e.g. *Can you help us prepare flyers to be handed out at next week's community festival?*
- Once they get involved with an action they feel comfortable with, ask them to do something a bit more challenging e.g. *Will you come and be part of a street stall at the community festival?*

> ONE WAY OF **EXPANDING YOUR REACH** AND EXTENDING YOUR LIMITED RESOURCES IS BY RECRUITING OTHERS TO BE INVOLVED WITH YOU IN YOUR ADVOCACY EFFORTS.

5. Advocacy actions

Advocacy can take many forms. When planning advocacy actions it is useful to keep in sight both our short and long-term objectives.

For example, meeting with a decision-maker behind closed doors may give the opportunity to persuade that individual. This is however not likely to raise awareness of the issue in the community or garner broader support that might be necessary to move the decision-maker if they are not on board.

Likewise, planning a large public forum gives decisions-makers the opportunity to speak about their views. However, this presents limited scope for persuading them to your view unless you include time for your own presentation.

TIP:

Match your advocacy actions with your short and longer term objectives and the resources you have at your disposal. Think outside the square in terms of actions that might be effective.

The following are some ideas of actions that can be undertaken.

Letter writing/email campaigns targeting the decision-maker Best to be in a person's own words however a template is contained at Appendix A. Letters to the editor, particularly in local papers, can be highly effective.	**Collecting petition signatures or seeking endorsements** of your position particularly from important organisations or individuals Make petitions/endorsements public.	**Making phone calls** to the decision-maker Particularly effective from members of the community who feel strongly on the issue.
Public events like stunts, protests or rallies, street stalls, shopping centre stalls (This can be used to generate local media – newspapers, radio etc. Can also create social media content.) Stalls are effective for handing out information and educating the community on the issue. This might be where you also recruit volunteers prepared to work on future advocacy actions.	**Meetings/delegations** Need to be well organised to be effective. (See section 6).	**Posting flyers or posters in public places** **Asking people to wear badges that support your ask** Photos of posters in public places and people wearing badges can be posted on social media to build momentum and demonstrate the level of support you have in the community.
Holding debates or public forums	Offering to **brief organisations** or provide a **public speaker** for events Always have written information you can leave behind including contact details for further information. Go with a specific ask for the audience.	Using **social media** to create a buzz Works best in conjunction with public events.

6. Making advocacy meetings effective

If you are successful in getting a meeting with a decision-maker you are likely to have limited time.

This is not the time to provide detailed information or to blitz them with extensive facts and figures. The purpose of the meeting is to persuade the decision-maker to take the action you want them to take. Therefore the focus should be on identifying the specific change you want and the action request you have for them.

The more you can contextualise the issue you have with matters that are important to the decision-maker the better. As also pointed out, particularly when dealing with local politicians, putting the stories forward of women and girls who are affected by any change you are proposing is highly useful.

Here are the steps to take to make any advocacy meeting you have more effective:

1. Make a request for a meeting in writing. Make sure you check out who it's best to send this request to and get their email address so that you know it's getting beyond the admin@ email address. You can check this out by ringing and asking for the correct email address.

2. The written request should be short and contain the following information:

    a. Name, address, email address and phone contact details of the author
    b. A short sentence or couple of sentences about the organisation the author represents
    c. A clear statement about the purpose of the meeting
    d. Who will be attending from your organisation
    e. A suggested venue for where to meet
    f. Proposed dates to meet
    g. Request for a reply by a particular date.

3. Attach the GEN VIC election priorities document with the written request for the meeting. This gives the decision-maker and their staff the opportunity to read the detail in advance (also take more copies to the meeting just in case).

4. After a number of days follow up your written request with a phone call to confirm that it has been received and ascertain when you will have a response.

5. Prepare prior to the meeting. Have a practice conversation with all those who are going to attend the meeting well in advance of the meeting. Work out what needs to be said and who is going to say it. Make sure everyone understands and commits to your key messages. Practice this conversation and build the confidence of others.

6. Choose a key spokesperson (your chair) who will keep the meeting on track and who will ensure you get through all the items you want to raise.

7. Also designate someone who can take notes of the conversation including when follow up and responses are going to happen.

8. Arrive for your meeting 15 to 20 minutes early. Make sure all of your group is there on time.

    During the meeting:

    a. The spokesperson introduces the team
    b. Give an overview of how you thought you would approach the meeting and confirm this is OK
    c. Give an overview of the issue/s and why it is important
    d. Have a member of the community state how the issue impacts them
    e. Set out the change that you want to see
    f. Make a specific request or ask of the decision-maker. Ensure you include timelines for that action

g. Be prepared to answer any questions

h. At the end reconfirm the key points and the actions that have been agreed

i. Thank the decision-maker for their time

j. Take a photo with your team and the decision-maker so that you can post this on social media and others can see what is going on.

9. At the end of the meeting exchange business cards. Make sure you have left something in writing with contact details included. Where advisors or other senior staff members are involved make sure you get their contact details.

10. After the meeting:

a. Debrief with your team about how the meeting went and discuss ideas to improve the meeting in the future. Allocate follow-up work within your team. Make sure everyone knows what they are responsible for

b. Write a short note of thanks for the meeting and reconfirm any actions that are to be taken

c. Where further information has been sought from the decision-maker make sure you follow this up in a timely way

d. Follow up on any action if you haven't heard from the decision-maker in the agreed time frame

e. Let GEN VIC know about your meeting and what's happening so we can share and build a picture of all of the advocacy that is occurring across the state.

TIP:

Try to think of an overarching statement of your issue/s that will give the decision-maker a sense of what you want to discuss. One sentence is good. This is called framing.

Just like when you put the right frame around a photograph or painting, when you put a frame around your discussion all of the points that you go on to make are seen within this context and are drawn together. It's useful if you have thought about the frame that might appeal most to the decision-maker that you are talking to.

For example, if talking to a local politician you might say

We are here today to discuss how we can work with you to make women and girls in Shepparton safer and ensure they reach their full potential.

When you are talking to a departmental representative you might say

We would like to discuss with you how we can help deliver the government's programs effectively and ensure key priority actions are resourced.

7. Sharing ideas and successes

One of the benefits of working together is that we can learn and take inspiration from one another. We also maximise our advocacy reach.

Please keep GEN VIC updated on your progress so that we can share this around.

If you need any further information or support don't hesitate to contact the GEN VIC office at genvic@genvic.org.au or (03) 9418 0921.

Appendix A
Sample resources

Appendix A – Sample resources

DRAFT LETTER REQUESTING ACTION

[Your name and address]

[Date]

[Title and full name of decision-maker]

[Decision-maker's address]

Dear [Title] [Last name]

Topic Title: A short sentence outlining the reason for your letter.

For example: Support for GEN VIC priority areas of action for women and girls.

First paragraph: Say who you are/who you represent/what GEN VIC is.

For example: I am a concerned mother

I am the CEO of X organisation

[Organisation name] is a member of Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC), Victoria's peak body for advancing gender equity, promoting women's health and preventing violence against women.

Second paragraph: Say why you are writing to them.

For example: I'm writing to ask you to take action to promote gender equality, make health services more accessible for women and girls and end violence against women and girls by supporting GEN VIC's priorities for action.

Third paragraph: Set out why action on these priorities is important to you and/or important in the context of your community. Local data is useful here.

Fourth paragraph: Set out the specific ask you have of them. Outline how they can can take action.

For example: I would like you to advocate that this becomes a priority for your party for the forthcoming election and that you will pursue implementation of it if you are elected to government.

Final paragraph: Thank them for their consideration of your concerns. Ask them for a response by a particular date. Tell them of other advocacy you are undertaking with respect to this matter. Include your contact details for follow up.

Closure:

Yours sincerely *or* Yours faithfully

[Your signature]

[Name]
[Title]

[If appropriate, your title and organisation name]

Include a copy of the GEN VIC priorities document with your letter.

You will need to include the appropriate title and salutation.
For Victorian Government ministers and shadow ministers, visit
https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/people-in-parliament/addressing-members

DRAFT LETTER REQUESTING A MEETING

[Your organisation name and address]

[Date]

[Title and full name of decision-maker]

[Street address]

ATTN: [Staffer, title]

Dear [Title] [Last name]

I am writing on behalf of [state your organisation name]. The mission/purpose of our organisation is to [state mission/purpose here]. Our organisation is a member of Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC). GEN VIC is Victoria's peak body for advancing gender equity, promoting women's health and preventing violence against women.

As the [position title] of [organisation], I would like to schedule an appointment with you to discuss GEN VIC's priorities for government action prior to the Victorian state election.

As you may be aware [Insert two or three sentences about any successful events or projects that the organisation has undertaken, and the organisation's reach and capacity to discuss the matters contained in the GEN VIC priorities for action document.]

A small delegation from [organisation] including [list names and details of those attending] would like to meet with you as soon as possible. I would be happy to work with your staff to find a convenient time to meet.

I can be contacted [insert contact details].

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from your office.

Sincerely,

[Your signature]

[Name]
[Title]

Attach copy of GEN VIC priorities document

Appendix A – Sample resources *continued*

DRAFT THANKYOU LETTER FOLLOWING A MEETING

[Your organisation name and address]

[Date]

[Title and full name of decision-maker]

[Street address]

ATTN: [Staffer, Title]

[Street address]

Dear [Title] [Last name]

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and other representatives of [organisation name] last week [or give date] regarding Gender Equity Victoria's priorities for government action [include local project or subject of meeting].

We enjoyed meeting with you and [other staff present]. I'm glad we had the opportunity to discuss an issue that affects so many women and girls in [community]. We especially appreciate your commitment to [describe any commitment made by the decision-maker].

Our organisation would greatly appreciate your support. As discussed we look forward to hearing from you by [agreed date] in response to the matters raised in the meeting.

Should you need any further information or wish to have any follow up conversations please contact [insert details of who to contact and their contact details].

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Your signature]

[Title]

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.

CONTACT

GEN VIC
Phone: 03 9418 0921
Email: genvic@genvic.org.au

Postal address:
GEN VIC
Suite 207, 134 Cambridge St
Collingwood VIC 3066

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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