

12 October 2020

To the Hon Tim Pallas
Treasurer
Parliament of Victoria
By Email: treasurer@dtf.vic.gov.au

Victorian women need a Gender Equal Budget and COVID19 Recovery

We refer to previous correspondence on behalf of our members and the women of Victoria to once again call for gender responsive budgeting in the 20/21 and 21/22 budgets and beyond.

Last week, the Federal Treasurer delivered the national budget for Australia, allocating \$240.5 Million over four years to women's economic security. At a time when economists have labelled the impact of the pandemic on Australia a "she-cession" the decision to invest less than 1% of total national budgetary expenditure on women has been rightly met with condemnation across the community. GenVic has been vocal, along with women's organisations and media, about the lack of investment, innovation and priority given to delivering a gender equal budget at a national level.

We don't want the same mistake to be repeated in Victoria.

In November last year, we wrote to you about the importance of gender responsive budgeting with our strong view that it has not been occurring in Victoria with any rigour. We sought a number of commitments from Treasury, including the establishment of an expert advisory group, bringing together gender economists, academics and experts in gender-based productivity and job creation, to provide independent advice to Treasury on gender responsive budgeting (GRB). **The Budget submission for this work – which predates COVID19 – was a modest \$1.05M a year**, which would enable GenVic to bring together individuals and groups to support Treasury officials to improve economic outcomes for Victorian women. We also made submission to the PAEC inquiry into GRB. We have had no response from Treasury about this proposal. We are open to developing it further with you. But it is clear to us that there is a need for infrastructure both within and outside of government to drive gender equal accountability for budgeting funding, job creation and stimulus.

Further, we have been saying for some time that the envelope for gender equity investment across all portfolios is too low. It is especially low in the funding allocated for special measure gender equity initiatives led by DPC's Office of Women, with an average investment over the last 20 years of \$4Million. In a \$57Billion budget that's less 0.007% of expenditure on gender equity initiatives. It was not enough when we wrote to you about this in November. It is not enough now.

In a few weeks time, you will present the most important budget in recent Victorian history. It is a budget that must lift Victoria out of a recession and prepare it for a post-COVID19 world. With international travel and global trade restricted, you must create hundreds of thousands of jobs for

Australians through a self-sufficient program of infrastructure building, manufacturing and service delivery on shore.

But if the Victorian economy is to really recover from the pandemic and have any chance of growth over the next decade, it needs to ensure that its economic strategies are gender equal. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has found that countries that close the gender gap can expect a 35% increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Best economic practice demands that the Australian Budget delivers a gender equal recovery.

Even without the pandemic, Australia has a large economic gender gap, with women receiving less pay, less superannuation and less employment than they would like. The poorly constructed childcare system is only one of the disincentives to women's work and entrepreneurialism. The bias towards investing in male dominated industries and large and small businesses also plays its part.

You have a chance to build back better and put gender equality at the centre of the delayed Budget 20/21 and next years budget 21/22.

You also have an opportunity to correct the gender unequal nature of COVID19 expenditure so far. As we set out in our PAEC submission, the Parliamentary Budget Office's excellent independent tracking of COVID19 expenditure at the time of our submission, recorded \$9.4Billion of announcements of public funding for COVID19, with only 0.46% spent on special measures connected to gender, women and family violence. Less than 1% targeted investment is not enough.

Attached to this letter is a summary of submissions that have been made by our members and the broader gender equity and women's movement across Victoria for the 20/21 year which can help lift targeted investment above 1%. These initiatives pre-date COVID19 but remain no less important.

Our advocacy

Since March, 106 organisations have joined Gender Equity Victoria in calling for the Victorian Government to deliver a gender equal recovery from COVID19. We will be watching for your response tomorrow night, joining other women's and gender equity organisations across the country in examining your announcements and strategies in detail.

We will be looking out for evidence of:

1. Gender-equal economic decision making. We will be looking at the investment envelope allocated to the Gender Equality Act. This is the most important legislation to create gender equity in the public sector – including in Treasury. If it's funding is not adequately provided for we have little confidence in the government's capacity and commitment to maintain a gender lens on anything. We would expect to see investment in the range of a minimum of **\$16M for this initiative.**
2. Investment decisions made on the basis of gender-disaggregated data – job losses show that women in Victoria are losing employment in far greater numbers than men. We want to see announcements which recognise the gendered impact of the COVID19 disaster and a gendered nuanced response. **We would expect to see an explanation of the steps that will be taken to ensure gender equal job creation.** Further we look for investments in job creation through the establishment of a statewide gender and disaster workforce. **We expect to see \$6.7M in investment into this project to create regional jobs for women to help address the gendered consequence of all disasters such as pandemic, bushfire and**

climate change. Our Budget submission for this was submitted to you during the establishment of the Bushfire Recovery Agency. The workforce remains important.

3. A return to gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) so investments in recovery do not worsen or entrench gender inequality. We will be looking for evidence that you have heard us on the need to lift gender economic analysis in Treasury. **We would expect to see funding for the Gender Equal Budget Group initiative of \$1.05M as a starting point.**
4. Investment in women's health. Women's Health Services, which provide essential health information, promotion and prevention asked for a \$16.8M before the pandemic. Their workload has increased since COVID19 meaning they do even more with less resources. **We expect to see \$16.8M in funding for the women's health services program.**
5. Economic recovery and jobs growth based on an intergenerational commitment to health, wellbeing, climate justice and a just transition.
6. Increased funding for preventing and responding to gender-based violence in crises and emergencies. **We would expect to see an incremental lift in violence prevention investment from its current state at less than 3% of response expenditure to best practice levels of 9-12%. We also expect to see a lift in expenditure for legal assistance to women experiencing violence of \$19M.**
7. Invest in affordable and accessible large-scale public and social housing as part of broad based economic recovery and stimulus investment. **Prior to COVID19, our members and the broader housing movement advised that \$1B per annum was required to bring Victoria in line with other state's public and social housing investment.** We'd like to see homes, not just roads, be part of Victoria's economic recovery.

As expected by our members, Gender Equity Victoria will be marking the Victorian Government's performance against each of these criteria on Budget Day. We hope to be able to report positively on State Government initiatives.

Yours faithfully



Tanja Kovac
CEO
Gender Equity Victoria

cc. Premier; Minister for Women & the Prevention of Family Violence; Minister for Health

Summary of Gender Equity Budget Submissions made by GenVic members for 20/21 Budget

Gender Equality Project	Lead Agencies	Quantum	Department
Women's Health			
Boost to Women's Health Services, including services for culturally and linguistically diverse women and digital improvements to the Women's Health Atlas	12 Women's Health Services	\$16.8 Million	DHHS
Sexual & Reproductive Health Strategy & Services	Various	\$19.2 Million	DHHS
Women's Economic Security – Job Creation			
Gender & Disaster Workers (Bushfire & COVID19) State-wide Roll-Out	12 Women's Health Services	\$6.7 Million	DHHS; DELWP
Migrant & Refugee Women's COVID19 Workforce	12 Women's Health Services	\$0.9 Million	DEDJTR
Establishing a Gender Equality Budget Group	Gender Equity Victoria	\$1.05 Million	DTF
Funding the Gender Equality Act	Various	\$16 Million	DPC
Gendered Violence Prevention & Response			
Legal Assistance to family violence survivors & Family Law Programs for at risk women	Women's Legal Service	\$19 Million	DJCS
Gendered violence prevention investment to address the Shadow Pandemic	Various	Lift from 3% to 9-12% response budget spend	DHHS, DPC, DJCS
State-wide Sexual Assault Strategy & service boost	CASA Forum	\$13.5 Million	DHHS
Urgent public & social housing for at risk women	Various Women's Property Initiatives	\$1 Billion	DHHS
Gender Equality Leadership			
Strengthening Gender Equity in the Community	Gender Equity Victoria	\$4.8 Million	DPC
Gender Equality in the legal profession	Women's Legal Service	\$0.5 Million	DJCS