Gender Equity Victoria

Submission to the Senate Standing Committees on Education and Employment Inquiry into *Jobs and Skills Australia Bill 2022 [Provisions]* and the *Jobs and Skills Australia (National Skills Commissioner Repeal) Bill 2022 [Provisions]*

GENVIC GENDER EQUITY VICTORIA

WOMEN IN ADULT & VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

August 2022

Submission to the Senate Standing Committees on Education and Employment Inquiry into *Jobs and Skills Australia Bill 2022 [Provisions]* and the *Jobs and Skills Australia (National Skills Commissioner Repeal) Bill 2022 [Provisions]*

Table of Contents

Who are we? 3

Our Response to the Inquiry 4

Evidence and Context to the Inequity of VET 5

Women's Work and Men's Skills 5

Gendered Experience through Reasons for Leaving 6

Gendered Capital and Funding– Gender Lens on Average VET Price 8

Gender Analysis 8

Subsidy and fee composition of national average price, top 10 qualifications (A/T Only) 9

VET is a Gendered Sector 12

A Note on Skills Migration 14

The Solution 18

Recommendations for Jobs and Skills Australia Bill 2022 20

Recommendations for Jobs and Skills Australia (National Skills Commissioner Repeal) Bill 2022 20

Conclusion 21

Who are we?

Gender Equity Victoria

Gender Equity Victoria is the peak body for gender equality in Victoria and we have a vision for gender equity across all places, organisations and industries in Victoria. GEN VIC leads, advocates and enables gender equity. We do this by listening to and supporting Victorian women and organisations across a growing gender equity industry.

We believe that gender inequity is the primary cause and key driver of gendered violence, especially violence against women. We believe that poor attitudes and behaviours towards women, such as sexist jokes, language, and the objectification of women, as well as the application of rigid gender roles and stereotypes at home, in the workplace and in community, creates the foundation for threats, abuse, harassment and violence. We believe that gender inequity leads to poor health consequences for all Victorians, but especially women and gender diverse people, who face sex and gender discrimination at work, at home and in community. Health consequences of inequity include both physical and mental health impacts. We believe that gender inequity leads to a persistent gender pay and superannuation gap as well as a higher risk of poverty for women, who face lifelong economic barriers because of unequal, gendered beliefs and attitudes towards paid and unpaid work and the sharing of parental responsibilities. We believe that gender inequity drains the wealth and productivity of women and, in turn, the wealth and productivity of our nation.

GEN VIC is an independent peak body for a growing gender equity industry with leaders across the Victorian community working for equality and change. We have over 50 organisational members and 100 individual members committed to feminist principles who strive for gender equity.

WAVE – Women in Adult and Vocational Education

WAVE is a national network of women involved in VET, adult education and the broad field of work-related education and training. WAVE provides seminars & workshops, research, policy advocacy and advice, as well as networking on an international, national and state basis. We are supported within each state by local representation that in turn contributes collaboratively to national events and governance. WAVE was formed in 1985, the first and only national and autonomous non-government organisation for Australian women in the adult, community and vocational education and training sector. For the first 14 years WAVE was called the Network of Women in Further Education (NOW in FE).

Our Response to the Inquiry

Australia's Vocational Education and Training system is not equitable for women.

Overall, Australian women are the best educated than at any point in our history and, globally Australian women consistently rank amongst the highest educated. However, this education has consistently failed to translate to equal success in Australian workforces.

For Skills and Vocational Education and Training policy - where the systems' ultimate measure of success is an employment outcome - this is important. The sad reality is that over years, VET's systems and structures have perpetuated and reflected those stereotypes and assumptions around gender, and intersectional experience which, has resulted in:

- Inequity in access and participation in education and training by women – our VET system reinforces and encourages gender stereotypes in the labour market but fails to address the gender segregation of learning and skills programs
- A gender blind approach to forecasting and measurement that does not present the real lived experience for women, or people with intersectional experience in the Australian VET system
- A gendered experience of completion whereby women leave training for "personal reasons" overwhelmingly more than men, who tend to leave for either work, or other education reasons
- Gendered funding whereby skills and programs that are feminized are funded significantly less than programs that are dominated by males – based often on the unchallenged assumption that the male dominated skills need more "resources".
- A failure of the quality system to measure and evaluate performance of RTO's across Australia to be gender equitable perpetuating gender inequity within the training system itself (WGEA Data of Education and Training Industry)

Evidence and Context to the Inequity of VET

The latest data from NCVER's total student collection shows that, at a meta level - despite variation in some years - the differences between genders in VET is reasonably equitable. If one looks at VET participation across the whole system it "looks" – from a numbers perspective – equitable.

Satisfying ourselves with this however, perpetuates inequity – applying a gender lens to the system shows that there is a gendered experience of VET that reflects our gendered segregated workforce.

Women's Work and Men's Skills

On the latest NCVER Figures we can see that men overwhelmingly occupy "trade" qualifications:

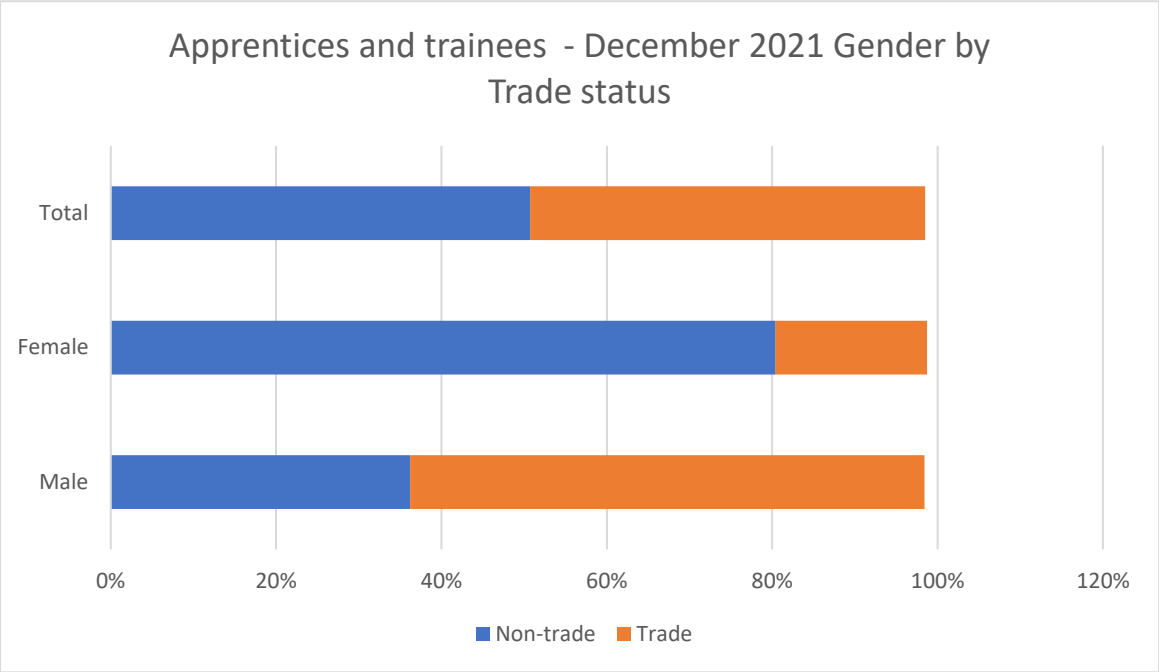


Figure 1 NCVER Apprentices and trainees - December 2021 x Gender x VOCSTATS

Are overwhelmingly represented in the Construction Trades:

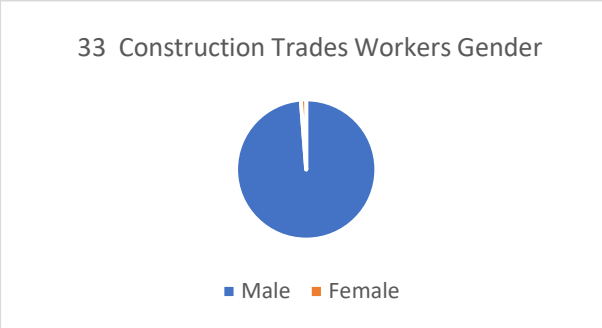


Figure 2 NCVER Apprentices and trainees - December 2021 (Occupation (ANZSCO - NTIS) group by Gender - 33 Construction Trades via VOCSTATS

And women in the Carer and Aide courses

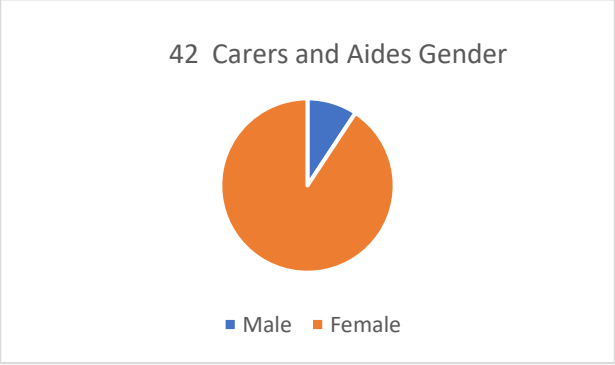


Figure 3 NCVER Apprentices and trainees - December 2021 Occupation (ANZSCO - NTIS) group by Gender 42 Carers and Aides

These both reflect the prevailing industry and occupational job segregation as reported on by the Australian Bureau of Statistics where Health care and social assistance had the highest proportion of women (77.9%) whereas Construction had the highest proportion of men (87.3%)[1] In addition the following graph shows the **percentage of women and men employed in two of the most gendered industries** – Healthcare and Social Assistance (feminised) and Construction (male-dominated) over the last 5 years. By reading the proportions disaggregated gender, we can compare how segregated the sectors are, noting the intransigence in this segregation over that time period.

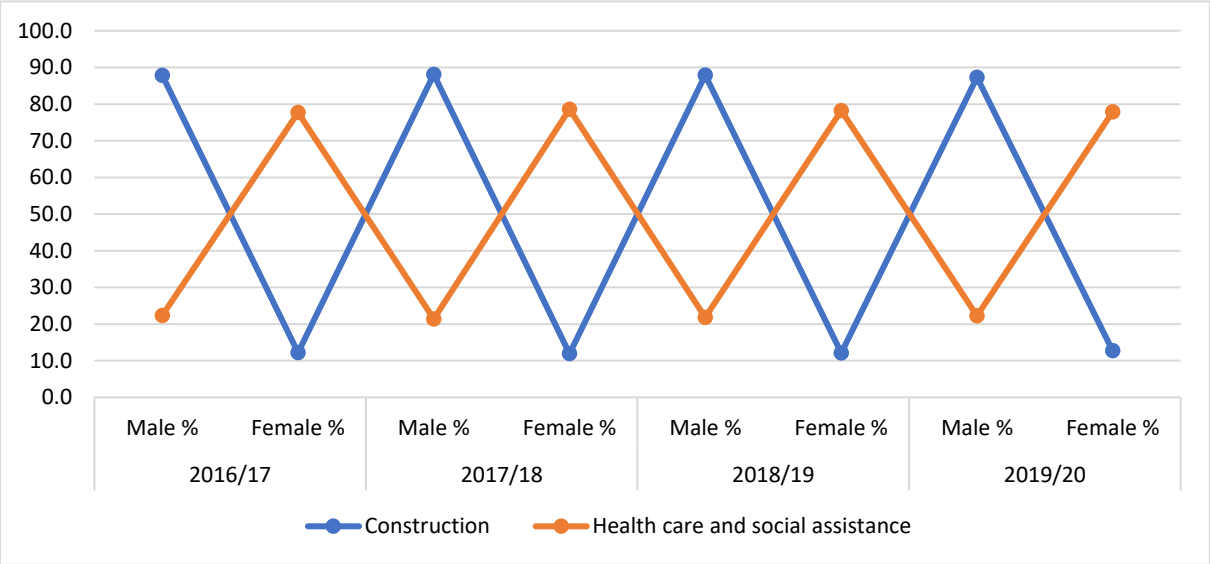


Figure 4 Employment by industry. ABS gender breakdown of both Construction sector and Health Care & Social Assistance sector.[2]

Gendered Experience through Reasons for Leaving

Another gendered experience is the participation in and completion of learning. While there is overall equitable positive experience about the learning itself (based only on NCVER data) impacted of gender stereotypes and other barriers that impact women and their participation in work and learning is seen in the reasons for leaving.

Overwhelmingly women leave training for "personal reasons" and lack of flexibility, whereas men for employment and because the goals of the training were achieved.

[1] https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/gender-indicators-australia/latest-release#key-series-and-indicators
[2] ibid

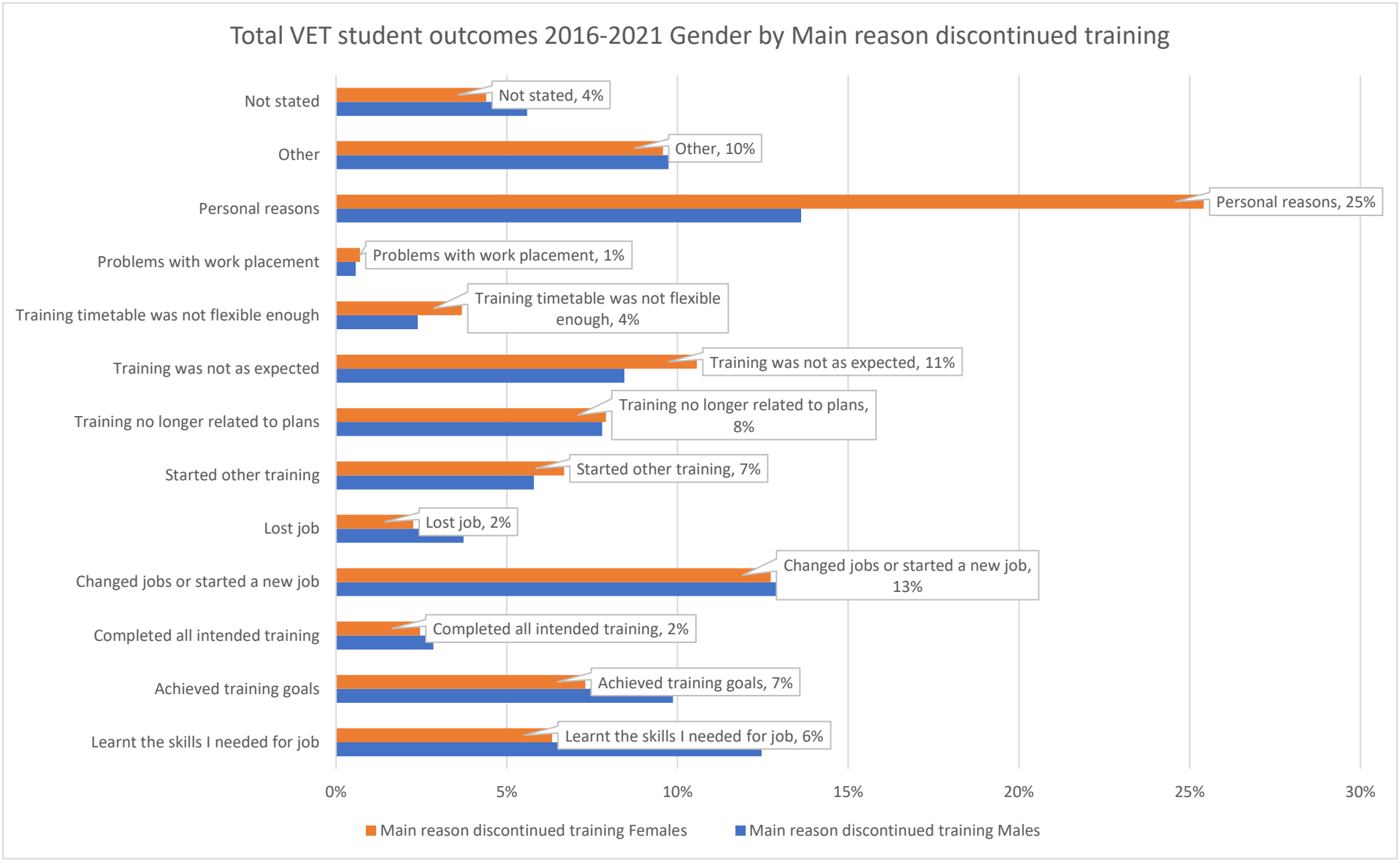


Figure 5 NCVER Total VET student outcomes 2016-2021 Gender by Main reason discontinued training via VOCSTATS

We can also see that even from the point of view of funding, there is inequity in the resourcing of courses/skills that have more commencements by males than females.

Gendered Capital and Funding– Gender Lens on Average VET Price

In response to ongoing concerns from policy and the public on the inconsistent pricing approach of vocational education and training qualifications, the National Skills Commission (NSC) undertook a project to review the pricing and subsidy structure and understand the cost drivers. The first public output of this project was the report "VET average price benchmarks: Findings from the national VET average price benchmark database" on 26 March 2021.[72] The NSC's analysis revealed that across VET, there is variance across the states and territories (jurisdictions) on:

- Government subsidies for qualifications and students
- How much the subsidy contributes to the full price of the qualification
- Standardized schedules
- Difference between private and public funding/price
- Collection of fee data

Significantly, these variations exist "despite all jurisdictions basing their subsidies….On the cost of delivery [and with] similarities in cost calculations."[73] The major differences across jurisdictions lie in the application of cost per hour, number of hours funded and portion of the final price that is subsidized by jurisdictions.

The dataset used by the NSC leads to a number of revelations in the final analysis. The NSC reported that 17,000 observations were made across 2,000 qualifications and national skill sets.

Working with Deloitte Access Economics, the analysis focused on 50 "priority qualifications" as identified by the 2018 government-funded enrolments for 'standard students'. A standard student is defined as metropolitan-based, does not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, does not have a disability and is not long-term unemployed.

Gender Analysis

This analysis only focuses on the disparity of pricing on gender which we acknowledge is only one part of a broader set of characteristics and lived experience of individuals that overlap to create systems of disadvantage. Applying an intersectional lens across the data (in this case, the NSC Pricing analysis) would be more valuable than a gender lens for understanding how pricing impacts on students and their future.

Across all analyses, data is key. At this moment, this paper is drawing upon available NCVER data which typically has been disaggregated by gender.

The data selected has been chosen mainly due to the ability of the authors to access and analyse publicly available data on the qualifications that the NSC report refers to. Our analysis focuses on the apprenticeship and traineeship pricing as a start with the hope that this initial review can start a conversation about pricing and its impact on current and potential workers from a gender perspective. In effect, this analysis briefly looks at the price signal expressed for apprenticeship and traineeships through a gender lens.

Subsidy and fee composition of national average price, top 10 qualifications (A/T Only)

Table 1 applies a gender lens to the top 10 qualifications by observing the level of female enrolment (Commencement information from 2018 from NCVER) in the qualifications analysed by the NSC. The order of qualifications in Table 1 aligns to the percentage of women enrolled in the qualification.

Table 1 Costings for Qualifications and the Proportion of Women Enrolled.[74]

Qualification	Apprenticeship /Traineeship?		Subsidy (%)	Fee (%)	Average Price	Women Enrolled
Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care	A/T		91%	17%	$6,600	95%
Certificate III in Business Administration	A/T		88%	12%	$4,100	89%
Certificate III in Individual Support	A/T		89%	11%	$5,800	84%
Certificate III in Hospitality	A/T		88%	12%	$4,500	63%
Certificate II in Kitchen Operations	A/T		80%	20%	$3,700	36%
Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician	A/T		93%	7%	$16,000	3%
Certificate III in Carpentry	A/T		95%	5%	$15,100	1.95%
Certificate III in Plumbing	A/T		95%	5%	$21,700	1.22%

As can be seen in Table 1, the qualifications with higher levels of female participation are those that tend to attract less subsidy (with the exception of the Diploma of Early Childhood Education). Furthermore, the qualifications with significantly fewer female enrolments (e.g., under 3%) have two to three times higher average price.

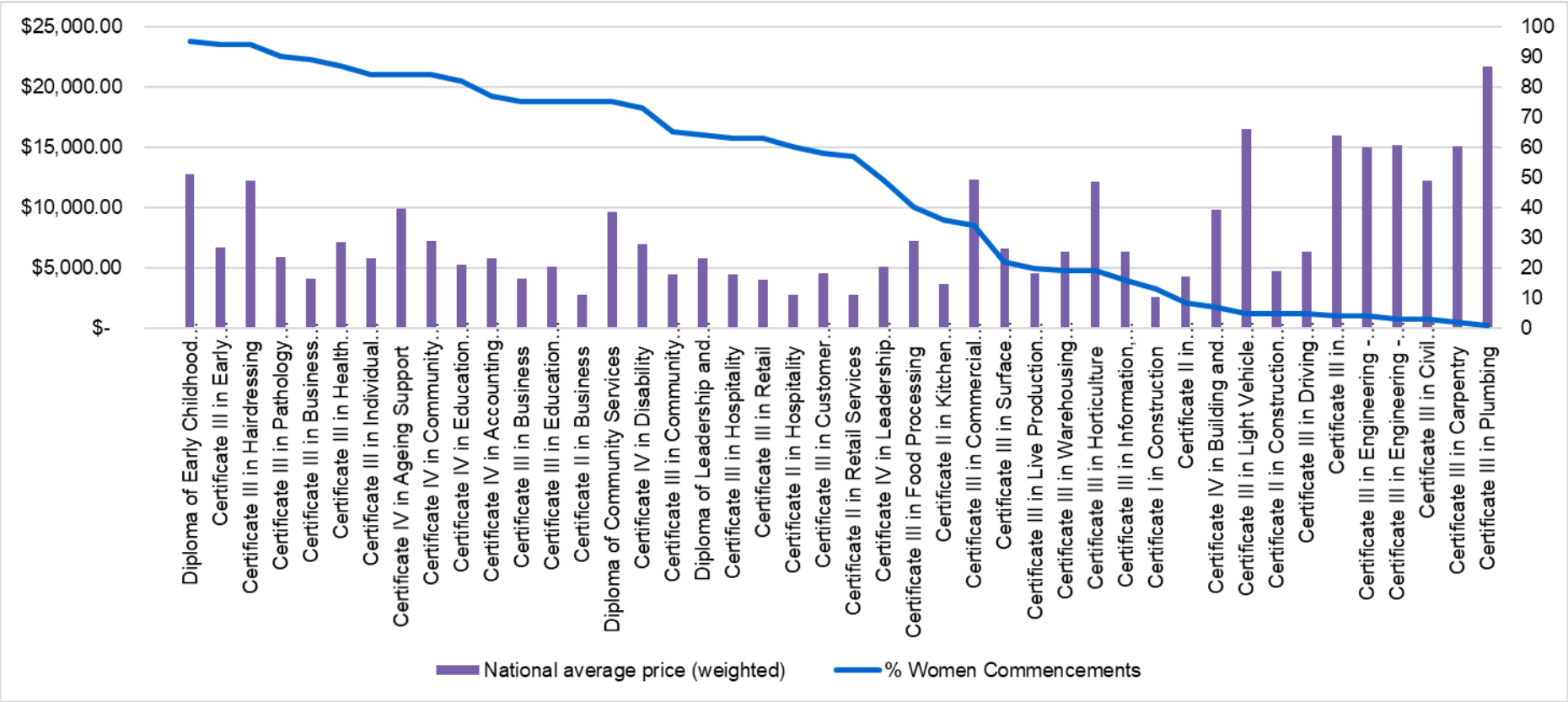
What is the value of analyzing VET Apprenticeship and Traineeship Price?

We are often advised that the VET sector is a market. Often governments release reports about the market and how it is tracking for improving skills for our economy. For instance, in January 2021, the Victorian Government released a report on the training market[75] highlighting growth and movements in enrolment. The indicator of enrolments is used in these reports as an indicator of value, of "the impact of the COVID-19 crisis", of the success of such initiatives such as "free TAFE", and "continuing enrollments" and "positive trends in greater participation" across a range of programs and providers. While a similar report has not been produced for some time, in 2012, the Higher Education and Skills Group of Victoria's Department of Education and Training "commissioned Deloitte Access Economics to work with Victorian Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABs) to produce the 2012 ITAB Market Effectiveness Report…The purpose of the Market Effectiveness Report is to present an overview of skill needs in the Victorian economy, including analysis of occupations in demand and experiencing critical skill shortages, and to provide a summary of market effectiveness in the Victorian market for vocational education and training."[76] The report summarises several examples of market failure and market success. While the specifics of that report are not for discussion here, the intent of the VET sector as a market may go some way to helping understand the importance of noting the impact of evaluating pricing from a gender lens.

While it is not clear from the NSC analysis what the "price" of qualification means, from an economic perspective, pricing has a very specific role. In a market, it is a way for consumers to indicate demand and a signal for producers of services and goods about the change in demand. It does indicate a value for a product and a service at the very least by consumers. What is not clear in our analysis, however, is who is the consumer and who is the producer.

From a gender perspective, the evidence indicates that the pricing is not delivering equitable access to the skill. If anything, it could be argued that the pricing is not generating equitable access for jobs/roles.

This observation is more pronounced when one simply compares female commencements across all the qualifications that the NSC have analysed in their pricing report. When we look at what the data says, women are represented in apprenticeship enrolments with the lower price per qualification, whereas men are significantly represented (often above 80%) in those qualifications that attract a higher price.



National average price by female commencements. Adapted from National Skills Commission 2021 VET Average price benchmarks' (Table c1) combined with NCVER data.[77]

VET is a Gendered Sector

Finally we have two sources of data on the inequity of the sector itself. This is important because the sector that is itself unaware or unable to address its own gender inequity will struggle to then provide a platform to support gender equity in the programs and learning it provides.

WGEA tells us that for the tertiary education sector – the most representative of education organisations that are delivering skills programs including vocational education and training – while the majority of employees are women, the majority of those in leadership are male, and the pay gap is 8.4%

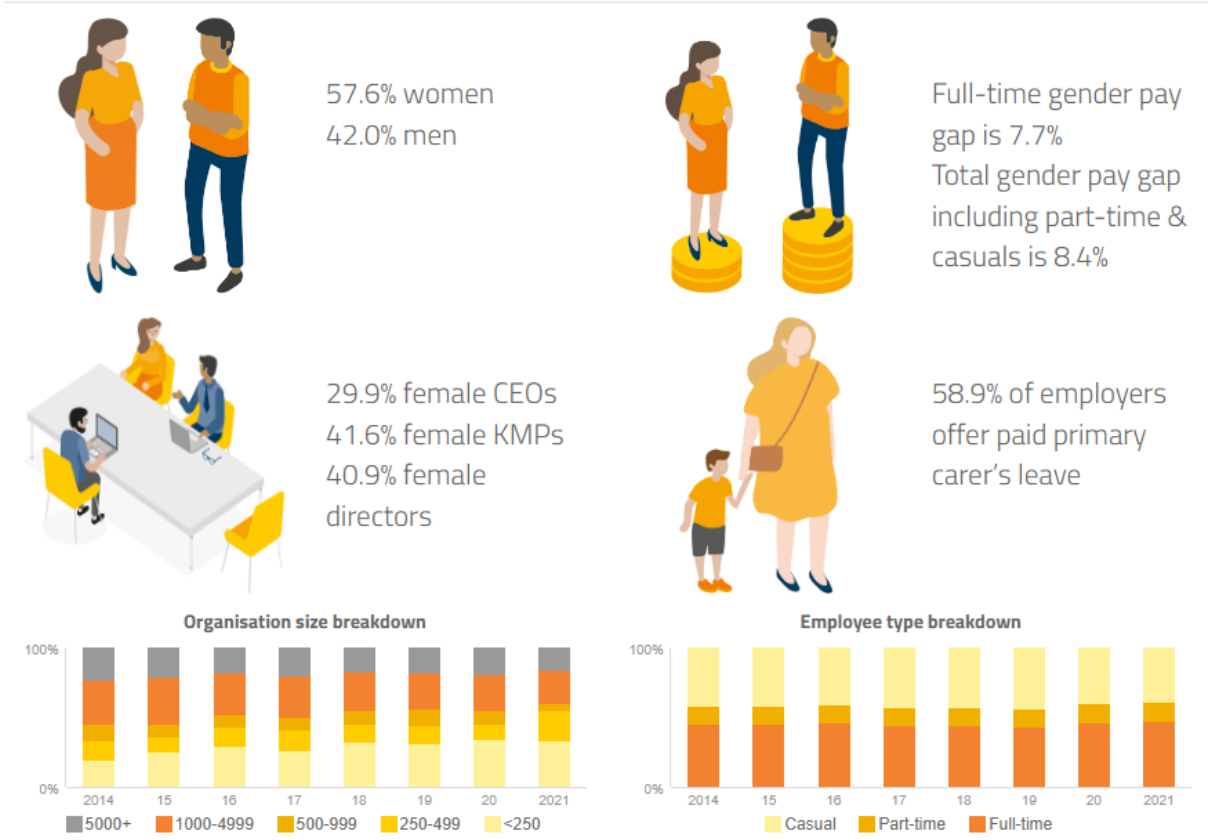


Figure: Workplace Gender Equality Agency – Tertiary Education within Education and Training Summary Diagram of 232,075 employees within 107 organisations of any size. As at 17/08/2022

In addition to this, we have the outcomes of the recently completed Gender Equality Action Plans for a number of major education and training institutions (public) in Victoria. The evidence presented is a result of the Gender Equality Act that came into effect in March 2021 and compels all public entities (amongst other activities) to undertake a workplace gender audit against a range of indicators and produce a gender equality action plan. For the purposes of this submission, we will reflect upon the evidence communicated about workplace sexual harassment of staff which, it must be noted, was collected during one of the lockdowns in Victoria in 2021.

The following information was shared by some of the public providers with regard to evidence about workplace sexual harassment. It is described in this submission not to highlight the issues with the specific institution – in fact their transparency and deliberate intention to address the issues that they have uncovered needs to be applauded and celebrated – but rather to provide an indication of the prevalence of the issue in our VET sector and, that as a workplace safety issue it needs to be address. This submission *further* notes that this evidence is of staff reporting, not students.

For the Gordon in 2021: [3]

> "There was 1 formal complaint of sexual harassment made at The Gordon in FY21. However, 6% of People Matter Survey respondents reported experiencing sexual harassment (compared to 4% average for Victorian TAFEs). Sexual harassment was experienced by 4% of men and 4% of women, 16% of respondents who selected 'Prefer not to say' or 'use a different term' for their gender. 73% of respondents agree that The Gordon encourages respectful workplace behaviour, however 44% of respondents didn't agree that they felt safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work."

To highlight the People Matters survey shows that more than one quarter of staff do not support that the workplace encourages respectful workplace behaviours.

For GOTAFE in 2021: [4]

> "There were no formal complaints of sexual harassment made at GOTAFE in FY21. 2% of People Matter survey respondents experienced sexual harassment. 89% of respondents agree that GOTAFE encourages respectful workplace behaviour, however a lower proportion, 65% of respondents, agreed that they felt safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work."

To put another way, 11% of the GOTAFE workforce are not favourable to the idea that their organization encourages respectful behaviours and another 35% do not feel safe to challenge in appropriate behaviour.

The Victorian Department of Education and Training's own GEAP report shows that within the GTS [5]

- Seven per cent of GTS respondents indicated that they had experienced sexual harassment behaviours in the last 12 months.
- Overall experience of harassment behaviours did not differ between men and women (7% and 6% respectively).
- However, men experienced harassment behaviours less often than women – 66% were subject to harassment less often than once a month (versus 60% for women).

[3] The Gordon Gender Equality Action Plan https://www.thegordon.edu.au/about/organisational-information/gender-equality-action-plan#:~:text=The%20Gordon%20is%20a%20defined,Equality%20Action%20Plan%20(GEAP).
[4] GOTAFE Gender Equality Action Plan https://www.gotafe.vic.edu.au/whats-on/news/gender-equality-iwd#:~:text=The%20Gender%20Equality%20Action%20Plan,and%20inclusive%20place%20to%20work.
[5] Department of Education and Training Gender Equality Action Plan, Workplace Gender Audit Summary Report https://www.vic.gov.au/workplace-gender-audit-2021-summary-report/gts-workforce

- Women were more likely than men to take avoidant actions and indicate that they did not submit a formal complaint because they didn't think it would make a difference (46% versus 39%).
- Women who had the following intersecting identities were more likely to have experienced sexual harassment than other women:
    - Women with disability (17% versus 7% of other women)
    - LGBTIQ+ women (18% versus 7% of other women).

And within the VPS[6]:

- Three per cent of VPS respondents indicated that they had experienced sexual harassment behaviours in the last 12 months.
- Women who had the following intersecting identities were more likely to have experienced sexual harassment than other women: – Women with disability (6% versus 3% of other women). – LGBTIQ+ women (5% versus 3% of other women).

A Note on Skills Migration

This submission also wishes to advise the Committee that the Skills Migration program is also gender inequitable.

Firstly the call should be that the skilled migration program (including the "occupation list") needs to have an intersectional gender lens applied to it.

Secondly, the evidence that the skilled migration program benefits women is poor. Anne Bourher (London School of Economist and also ANU rightly says that we can raise (as a start) three key questions

- How skills migration policy currently institutionalises gender roles through law and policy;
- How it perpetuates intersectional barriers of inequality
- Gendered data collection and publication.

Bourcher raises vital questions which we recommend the new JSA needs to reflect upon if it is going to address inequity that is perpetuated by the Skills Migration Program. Constructs such as the "dependant female migrant" compounded with social construction of skill need to be understood interms of the inequity that they do contribute to in our economy and community. As noted by Bourcher, "the construction of skill holds important ramifications for women who, for a range of reasons might not attain occupational skills in the same way, within the same time period and to the same extent as men."

What is clear in Australia is that we do not undertake gender auditing of our skills migration program to the extent of other countries and we should be doing this.

[6] Department of Education and Training Gender Equality Action Plan, Workplace Gender Audit Summary Report - https://www.vic.gov.au/workplace-gender-audit-2021-summary-report/chapter-1-vps-workforce#workplace-sexual-harassment

Other international resources/evidence[7] shows us that the process of skilled migration are biased against women – eg admission pathways that priortise male dominated work/skills. The **solution** is to apply a gender lens by using such frameworks as the GenderImmi data set [8] (again as referenced

[7] International Organization for Migration (IOM) "Harnessing Knowledge on the Migration of Highly Skilled Women" Conference Proceedings Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation 2014

[8] Anna Boucher *Chapter 2 Gender Awareness of skilled immigration policies across the OECD: Presenting the GenderImmi data set* in Gender Migrat

Gender Equity Victoria

Submission to the Senate Standing Committees on Education and Employment Inquiry into *Jobs and Skills Australia Bill 2022 [Provisions]* and the *Jobs and Skills Australia (National Skills Commissioner Repeal) Bill 2022 [Provisions]*

G+V GENVIC GENDER EQUITY VICTORIA

August 2022

ion and the Global Race for Talent Oxford Academic February 2016

by Anne Boucher) and certainly current analysis shows that Australia is lacking on some of the key data points in this framework.

The Solution

Addressing one or two barriers to breakdown intersectional gender inequality will not be enough. For instance, we cannot improve equity in building and trades but simply focusing on increasing the number of females enrolling in trade courses. This is an important part of the work but it also requires a range of interconnected systemic strategies to address the segregation in this sector and the training leading into it.

Addressing gender inequity and the resultant workforce underutilisation requires an ecological approach that combines both the body of knowledge of gender equality/gender mainstreaming and skills utilisation/workforce development.

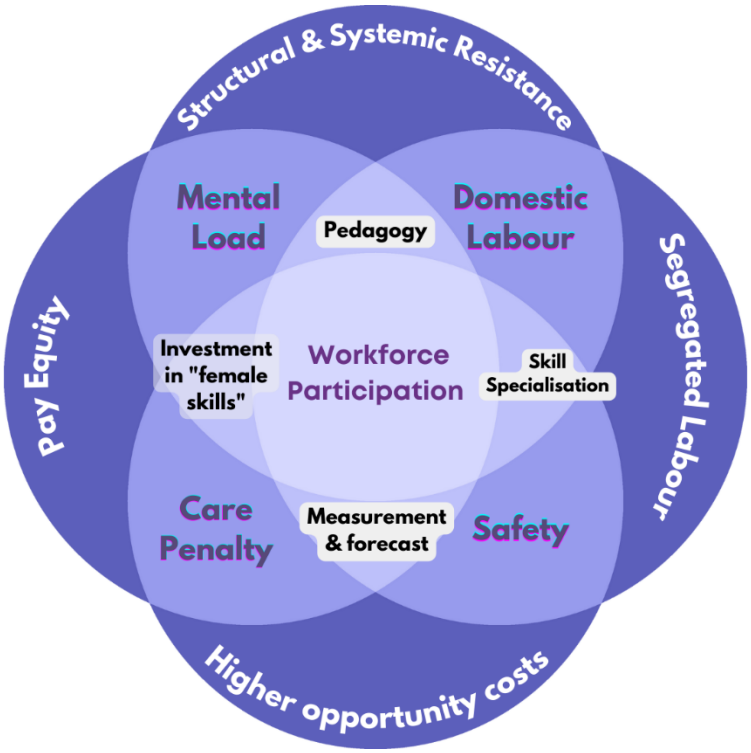


Figure 6 An ecological model for skills utilisation and workforce participation of women.

In tight labour and skills markets, policy makers often reach for increasing the utilisation of skills and development of skills. While development is often concerned about the increased levels of supply of skilled workers, often in the form of increasing the number of people already in and coming into the labour market with qualifications, utilisation tends to focus on demand side issues.[9] *Both are of importance to policy makers for if not understood well, there is the risk of decreased productivity and poor outcomes for taxpayers due to wasted funding.*

[9] Buchanan, J. et al., 2010. Skills Demand and Utilisation: An International Review of Approaches to Measurement and Policy Development. *OECD Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Working Papers*, No. 2010/04, Paris: OECD Publishing.

The new Jobs and Skills Australia should have a dedicated unit and mechanism to drive intersectional gender equity through the national skills system including the equity in our training and education providers and, though the way that we assess quality, forecast labour needs, evaluate success of our training system and the cultural/policy settings (inclusive of funding, education/training practice and advisory mechanisms) This unit *can also apply the gender lens to skilled migration in partnership with Immigration.*

This will require a bringing together of Skills Utilisation/Productivity Policy with Gender Mainstreaming Practice/Policy.

Practically this would result in:

- Establishment of a unit in Jobs and Skills Australia to drive intersectional gender equity
- In partnership with Industry, undertake a Gender Audit of VET participation in key skill priority areas inclusive of commencement, completion and reasons for non-completion. Assess this against employment pathways and remuneration outcomes
- Apply a gender lens to the skilled migration policy inclusive of the skills priority list and, work with immigration on reforming and improving equitable outcomes in Australia's skilled migration program
- Undertake a national gender impact assessment on two key priority areas of skill needs – trades aged care and child care. On this point we highlight that the age care sector is falling on the shoulders of women both as patients and carers.
- Undertake a gender impact assessment on the way that we promote and advertise skills pathways
- Work with WGEA and the Human Rights Commission to undertake a assessment on safety and wellbeing in our VET settings
- Review the quality standards for RTO's to strengthen definitions of "equity" to include gender equity
- Build capacity and capability of key jurisdictional agencies on applying a gender lens to skills policy

Recommendations for Jobs and Skills Australia Bill 2022

For the above reasons we recommend that:

A. The Functions of Jobs and Skills Australia be modified so that :
    a. Advice to the Minister or the Secretary includes the adequacy of the Australian system for VET and its capacity to improve intersectional gender equity
    b. Capacity studies including for emerging industries and occupations and the capacity studies of the system to increase skills development and utilisation for all members of the Australian workforce and community
    c. That workforce forecasting includes gender analysis in order to address gender segregated labour market
    d. Research and analysis is inclusive of addressing intersectional gender barriers in funding and resourcing for RTO's and the creation of quality VET courses
    e. That data is collected, analysed and published that is gender disaggregated across the complete learning journey of students and participants in the VET system
    f. JSA should have a role where it works collaboratively with other parts of the Skills Policy ecosystem including Migration (Skilled Migration Policy) and the Quality architecture (ASQA)
B. That the functions of Jobs and Skills Australia include a leadership and capacity building role for the agency to work with jurisdictions to increase the capability of the skills system to utilize all available labour in Australia and through this, address intersectional gendered barriers to participation in VET and achievement of outcomes for national productivity and skills utilisation.
C. With regard to the skills and resources that JSA will need to undertake this role, we note the skills shortage that is current across Australia, and in particular, within the current VET system and Australian public service on gender equity. In addition to this, JSA should not perpetuate those realities of impermanent employment that perpetuate gender inequity and for that reason we encourage the Bill to allow the Director to employ skills for gender equitable outcomes, outside of the Australian Public service (Rather than by consultancy agreement which can perpetuate inequity.)

Recommendations for Jobs and Skills Australia (National Skills Commissioner Repeal) Bill 2022

We provide no recommendations for this Bill.

Conclusion

We thank the Committee for receiving and considering this submission.

The matter of increasing productivity and skills utilisation can be addressed if we apply an intersectional gender lens to the VET system and skills policy. Australia needs to address our gender segregated labour markets and we can contribute to this by addressing the gender inequity in our skilling system. We can’t do this by simple pilot projects, or efforts to simply address supply of learners or by increasing the number of women who are interested in male dominated trades. Their needs to be systemic and structural change as our policy settings and implementation channels all contribute to the inequity.

We need to really appreciate that its not that women can't work, or don't want to work, its the other systemic barriers to participation in skills development and work in their lives and a world that holds a range of expectations based on gender t. Address that and JSA will go far to helping address the skills shortage.