



29 February 2016

Women and Royal Commission Branch
Department of Premier and Cabinet
1 Treasury Place
Melbourne Vic 3002
genderequality@dpc.vic.gov.au

Ask for: Kathleen McClusky
Phone: 9932 1004
Our Ref: A2277119

Dear Sir/Madam,

A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy Consultation Paper

Hobsons Bay City Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Victorian Gender Equity Strategy Consultation Paper.

Through Council's Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-17 and Gender Equity Policy Statement 2014, we have acknowledged the need to strengthen gender equity within the community. As such Council is committed to building a safe and just community, where every girl, boy, woman, man and gender diverse person is included and valued – where equal and respectful relationships and opportunities for meaningful participation are supported and celebrated.

Please find attached Council's submission to the consultation paper. We look forward to seeing the outcomes of the paper and continuing to work with the state government to create change.

If you have any questions regarding the submission please contact Kathleen McClusky, Manager Strategy and Advocacy on 9932 1004 or email kmccclusky@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Eddy
Chief Executive Officer



Hobsons Bay City Council's submission: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy Consultation Paper

Hobsons Bay is situated on Port Phillip Bay, approximately seven to 20 kilometres south west of Melbourne's Central Business District (CBD). The current population is estimated to be around 90,000 people (49.6% males and 50.4% females). In relation to gender equity within Hobsons Bay, below is a summarised gender analysis of the key social determinants of health and wellbeing.

Income and employment

Within Hobsons Bay, 39 per cent (16,341) of men are employed full time compared to 22 per cent of women (9,263). Of those employed, 18 per cent of women are employed part time compared to nine per cent of men (ABS, 2012). There are a higher percentage of women in Hobsons Bay that report being the primary carer of their own children. These women may spend some time away from the workforce followed by periods of part-time employment. Because the current superannuation system is linked to paid work, it overwhelmingly disadvantages women who are more likely to move in and out of paid work to care for family members. These factors contribute to the gender gap in retirement savings with the average superannuation payout for women in Australia being a third of the payout for men (\$37,000 compared with \$110, 000). This can lead to women being at higher risk of living their final years in poverty (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012).

Women also have a higher percentage of unpaid house work hours and hours providing unpaid assistance to a person with a disability compared to men (ABS, 2012). When looking at types of employment in Hobsons Bay, the majority of males are working as technicians and trade workers followed by professionals and managers. The majority of females are working as professionals (this has increased markedly since 2006) or clerical and administrative workers.

Education

The percentage of completion for year 12 or equivalent is very similar between men and women (40% and 42% respectively) (ABS, 2012). When looking at post graduate qualifications, men and women have a similar level of post graduate degree level however women in Hobsons Bay are more likely than men to have degrees, diplomas and graduate certificates (around 23% to 19% respectively). In addition around 17 per cent of men (7,211) have attained certificate level qualifications compared to only eight per cent of women (3,234) (ABS, 2012). Even though women have a higher education, as the employment data above indicates, this is not resulting in higher managerial positions or having a significant impact on differences within employment as professionals.

Housing

High costs of housing can lead to financial stress for individuals and families, limiting the ability to afford essential items such as food, transport, education and health care. Research indicates the supply of affordable rental housing in Hobsons Bay is becoming increasingly limited. In June 2013, there were only 43 rental properties, or 6.8 per cent



of total rentals, that were affordable for low income households. This compares to the 208 rental properties that were affordable a decade ago. At the 2011 Census, just over 22 per cent of low income renters in Hobsons Bay, or 2,324 households, were in housing stress, paying more than 30 per cent of their income in rent. Single parent families are also at high risk with 439 single parent families in Hobsons Bay experiencing housing stress.

Given that women in Hobsons Bay have lower individual weekly incomes than men, there is a higher risk for women to face financial stress due to housing costs, which could result in insecure tenure (*cited in Women's Health West, 2013*). Furthermore, 82 per cent of single parent families (3,066) are headed by women compared to 18 per cent headed by men (656) (ABS, 2012).

Transport

When transport (active and public modes) is accessible, affordable, safe, reliable and well connected, it increases the communities' ability to be able to engage in and access essentials such as education, employment, health services, community and social events, and recreation.

In Hobsons Bay, 34.3 per cent of women have experienced difficulties in utilising transport in the past 12 months (*cited in Women's Health West, 2013*). It is acknowledged that how people use transport is often influenced by gender. Men are more likely to have access to a car whereas women are more likely to use public transport. In addition the perception of safety between sexes can differ. Women's perception of safety can be decreased when infrastructure is poorly maintained, there is limited activation of space, and lighting is poor. Due to gender differences and the positive impact access to transport has on individuals and families, it is essential to ensure gender is considered when planning for transport within Hobsons Bay (*Women's Health West, 2013*).

Health and Safety

When looking at sexual and reproductive health and family planning, women in Hobsons Bay have a higher teenage fertility rate and lower rates of contraception usage to avoid pregnancy when compared to Victorian and the Western Region. In addition, less than half (38.5%) of sexually active adolescents in Hobsons Bay practice safe sex with a condom, which is the lowest proportion reported for the Western Metropolitan Region (*cited in Women's Health West, 2013*).

In 2011 there were 267 notifications of Chlamydia, an increase of 31.5 per cent over three years (2009-11). The participation rate for pap screening among women in Hobsons Bay aged 20-24 years was 40.4 per cent, substantially less than the Victorian average of 60 per cent (*cited in Women's Health West, 2013*).

Victoria Police data reveals that reported family violence rates have increased in Hobsons Bay from 630.8 per 100,000 in 2010-11 rising to 920.7 in 2012-13 (Victoria Police, 2014). Hobsons Bay remains lower than the North West Metropolitan Region of 1051.7 and the Victorian Regional average of 1071.0 per 100,000. These figures



however do not include family violence incidents that are not reported to police, therefore likely to be an underestimate.

The perception of safety and feeling safe in society is equally important for women and men. In Hobsons Bay only 55.7 per cent of all females reported feeling “safe” or “very safe” walking alone at night in their local area compared to 64 per cent of males (*cited in Women's Health West, 2013*).

Culture

Hobsons Bay is a diverse community with approximately 31 per cent of residents born overseas (ABS, 2012). There are over 100 different languages spoken in Hobsons Bay with 29 per cent of residents speaking a language other than English at home and 22 per cent of residents who speak another language at home reported having low levels of English or not being able to speak English at all (ABS, 2012).

Women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds face additional barriers to equal economic and social participation, including language skills and lack of recognition of overseas qualifications and experience. As a result women from CALD backgrounds can face a greater level of discrimination on the basis of both race and gender.

Below is Council's response to the questions posed within the Victorian Gender Equality Strategy Consultation Paper.

How should Government partner with the community, corporate sector, non-profit sector and other stakeholders to advance gender equality?

Local governments, being the closest level of government to the community, have a key role in creating gender equitable communities and are legislated to do so under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act (2008)*, the *Local Government Act 1999*, the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, and the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Gender Equity in Local Government Partnership, 2012). Gender is also a key social determinant of health identified within the Hobsons Bay Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-17 and the Council Plan 2013-17.

Council's have the capacity to influence gender equity through its social and strategic planning, environmental management, economic development, urban design, community service provision, and internal human resource management policies and procedures.

In 2012 the Gender Equity Local Government Partnership identified six ways local governments can advance gender equity through using a gender analysis. These include the following:



1. Infrastructure

Infrastructure has a significant impact on our communities, creating inclusion, participation and social connections, therefore it needs to be planned, designed, and maintained to ensure it is accessible, relevant and welcoming for all.

2. Land use planning and design

The way places and spaces are designed has an impact on their usage; understanding the different ways that women and men utilise and perceive space helps to foster a healthy, socially inclusive community.

3. Promotion of women in leadership

Local government is able, and legally obliged through the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, to encourage and foster women's leadership, ensuring consultations, engagement opportunities and civic participation to enable and support an equal representation of women and men.

4. Workplaces

Local government is a key employer in the community. Supporting a fairer and more flexible workplace is essential for gender equity, positioning local government as an employer of choice, and overall improvement to business.

5. Sports and recreation

Local government is responsible for a range of recreation centres as well as open space, parks, and playgrounds. Sport and recreation provides great physical and emotional benefits as well as community benefits such as community connections, social inclusion and activation of space. Women and girls are still underrepresented in key sporting roles such as coaching, referees and leadership as well as participation; therefore it is imperative that gender is included in all planning, design and maintenance of sport and recreation. In addition sport and recreation must consider the needs of gender diverse people, encouraging participation on an inclusive basis.

6. Access to services

Local governments provide a range of services for the community. Successful service provision relies on understanding the needs of different genders, and different barriers and constraints they experience as a result.

While local governments have the skill set and proven success in supporting gender equity, with the continuous tightening of budgets and increased community demand resources to continue and build on this work are becoming limited therefore, if government are to partner with local government resourcing needs to be considered.

Other organisations such as community and women's health as well as corporate organisations have also had some great success in supporting gender equity and can provide valuable lessons as well as broader reach if included within partnerships.



How do we address the pay and superannuation gap for women in Victoria?

The pay and superannuation gap for women in Victoria can be addressed through a range of strategies including:

- increasing paid maternity/parental leave (the amount paid and the length of time in which it can be taken) and increasing support and encouragement from organisations and society for men to take this up
- increasing the number of women in management positions
- ensure pay is even, based on position description rather than negotiation
- continue superannuation payments during maternity/parental leave
- allow long service leave to be accrued during maternity/parental leave
- actively encourage couples to consider co-parenting and provide support and guidance on how to navigate this

What is the role of men in a gender equality strategy?

Men have a role within the gender equality strategy. They need to be included in the development and implementation however in order for the strategy to be successful male privilege needs to be acknowledged in order to recognise what the current environment is and what changes need to be made. The responsibility for change needs to be shared equally by men and women and men need to articulate why gender equality is needed and how this key message is best shared with men in Victoria.

Messages in a gender equality strategy should be mindful of not reinforcing gender stereotypes. Labeling men, who participate in gender equality efforts, as 'real men' who are strong, authoritative and protective of women is not egalitarian or pro-feminist as it implies that women are weak or inferior to men and that men who take an active stance against gender inequality deserve particular acclamations.

In addition, girls, boys and young adults need to be taught about respectful relationships and see these being modeled throughout their peers, role models and community at large.

What needs to be done to promote women's health and wellbeing?

In order to keep women well, equitable access to community infrastructure and services is required. This includes but is not limited to:

- ensuring women and girls have access to be able to actively participate in their sport of choice
- women are able to feel safe exercising in public spaces such as parks, trails and paths
- girls and boys are taught about respectful relationships and these practices are implemented and promoted throughout adulthood
- family planning and maternal and child health services are inclusive of both males and females and are trained to identify and action potential risks of men's violence against women



- women and girls, especially those with a low socioeconomic status and or newly arrived migrants, are actively supported and provided opportunities to engage in education, skill development and employment
- a gender analysis needs to be applied to services and infrastructure to ensure we are planning and building services and infrastructure that meet the needs of women and children. Applying a gender analysis minimises the likelihood of our decisions and actions causing harm by inadvertently reproducing inequities

What are the most urgent areas of gender inequality that Victoria should tackle first?

Key areas which need to be addressed are:

- pay equity and workforce- superannuation during maternity leave, increasing access to childcare services to increase women's economic participation and independence, increasing access to parental leave, transparent sex disaggregated reporting of recruitment and female and male leadership positions (CEO, board, and senior management positions in business as per Workplace Gender Equality Act)
- the limited representation of women in leadership positions (especially politics)
- funding family violence response and recommendations of Women's Health West's submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence (see here: <http://whwest.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/WHW-Royal-Commission-FV-submission-290515.compressed.pdf>)
- funding long term primary prevention

How do we ensure we meet our objectives over the long term?

To ensure the objectives of the strategy are met they need to be realistic, developed in partnership with others, and measureable with accountable indicators. In addition the state should:

- work with the women's health sector as they have two decades of experience and are experts in capacity building around gender equity. In addition they have a state-wide and regional reach to community
- fund the prevention of violence against women and prevention more broadly through integrated health promotion (a multi-sectoral, long-term primary prevention approach to redress the social determinants of poor health and health inequity- taking both a universal approach and a tailored approach to recognise compounding disadvantage experienced by certain groups)
- ensure the budget includes the allocation towards primary prevention and gender equity strategies/gender budgeting. Currently there are no increases in the budget for primary prevention despite commitments within the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-19

How can we improve childcare access?

To improve access to childcare the services need to be accessible, high quality and affordable. In addition parental leave needs to be encouraged for fathers as well as extended to include grandparents. Innovative options should also be explored such as



Sweden's parental leave policy where (in heterosexual couples) both parents are required to take parental leave to fully access the Government's paid scheme.

How do we encourage women and girls to take up leadership roles?

In order for women and girls to take up leadership roles the promotion of women in leadership and role modeling needs to occur. In addition the leadership roles need to be in a supportive environment e.g. if in a traditionally male dominated setting, men need to be respectful, not disempowering or discriminating because of gender. Strategies such as young women's mentoring programs and mandating that all paid board positions are advertised publicly could also support this.

How do we get women to participate in non-traditional careers, in particular STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)?

In order for women to increase participation in STEM, promotion of women in these roles and role modeling is important. Traditional gender roles are also often reinforced in the education system through books and stereotyping. Strategies that could help support women to participate include, gender balanced children and young people's toys and learning materials, promotion of women in non-traditional education pathways, workplaces that are inclusive of women, position descriptions that are written with a gender lens and include flexible work practices.

How should we celebrate and recognise women's achievements?

Women and girls should be celebrated by promoting their achievements to other women, girls and the community at large. In addition we should be building on the supports and infrastructure enabled them to succeed.

What strategies do we need to ease the strain of balancing work and caring responsibilities?

Balancing work and caring responsibilities can be supported through a range of strategies that challenge traditional gender stereotypes in regards to roles and responsibilities and the division of labour in heterosexual relationships. For example:

- the promotion of flexible work practices and the benefits of this to the organisation as well as the staff
- improving access to childcare, promoting the use of parental leave, as well as exploring innovative options such as Sweden's parental leave policy where (in heterosexual couples) both parents are required to take parental leave to fully access the Government's paid scheme

What is the role of business in addressing gender equality?

Businesses are a primary platform to demonstrate gender equitable practice as employment is the cause and solution to so many instances of gender inequity. They can do this through changes to Enterprise Bargaining Agreements (EBA), providing leadership and actively implementing gender equitable practices.

What are the barriers to creating more flexible workplaces?

Often smaller businesses find it difficult however they are still able to support and provide a gender equitable workplace through ensuring equal pay, position descriptions



that are gender equitable and environments that are supportive of female management roles. Smaller businesses can find it more difficult to provide flexible work practices due to limited staff and set operating hours however these barriers can be overcome with a review of organisational business plans.

How do we address inequality among the most diverse and disadvantaged groups of women?

Addressing inequality amongst the most diverse and disadvantaged groups of women should be a key priority of the Victorian Gender Equality Strategy. This includes single mothers, women on low income, women that have limited education and employment, women that are at risk of or experiencing homelessness, women with a disability, newly arrived women, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Accessible, affordable, and appropriate opportunities need to be available to support these women including ensuring that they understand their rights, have access to supports for housing, income, education and employment, and health services. Women need to be empowered and involved in development and supporting these opportunities in order for them to appropriately meet the needs of individuals and their communities.

Cultural traditions and views will also need to be understood by services and public infrastructure to ensure engagement can occur and women and girls can be included into society.

How do we shift embedded attitudes about women and their role in society?

Through doing all of the above in an integrated, sustainable and collaborative way this should occur, creating a community of respect, visibility, recognition and equity.