Gender   
budget statement

VICTORIAN BUDGET 2022/23

# Message from the Minister

*The pandemic has been challenging for every Victorian, and it’s been especially hard on women.*

Women’s employment was impacted disproportionately by the pandemic – women lost more jobs than men and took on extra hours of unpaid care as children transitioned to remote learning.

Our policy response was swift, and the success of this government’s investment and engagement is now evident in our strong economic recovery.

Economic activity is back above pre-pandemic levels, our unemployment rate is the lowest since current records began at 4.0 per cent, and there are 25 000 more women with a job than before the pandemic – near a record high. However, the pandemic has exposed other inequities that limit women’s full and equal participation in our community and in our workplaces.

Which is why, in the *Victorian Budget 2022/23*, we’re putting women at the forefront of our policy agenda by continuing to invest in our nation-leading reform to improve gender equality and end family and gendered violence.

We are moving in the right direction – but there is still much more to be done.

That’s why the Andrews Labor Government is committed to improving outcomes for Victorian women, at every stage of life.

We are leading the nation on Gender Responsive Budgeting to consider gender in all public policy and investment.

It means that we consider women’s needs and aspirations with every dollar spent – and that we’re no longer limited by investing only in ‘women’s issues’.

Gender Responsive Budgeting will lead to social and economic benefits through stronger growth by ensuring public funds are allocated in ways that have more equal benefit.

This builds on the success of *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy 2017–2021,* the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, and the important research and consultation conducted by the Inquiry into Economic Equity for Women in 2021.

The investment in this Budget will build upon our Government’s landmark investments to improve outcomes for all Victorian women.

With this Budget, we’re working towards a stronger, safer and fairer community for all Victorians.

**Gabrielle Williams**Minister for Women  
Minister for Prevention of Family Violence  
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

# Overview

*When it comes to gender equality, Victoria leads the nation.*

We’re doing more than ever before to create more opportunities for women and girls.

And every day, we are making the state fairer and more equal for all.

The pandemic exacerbated many entrenched forms of disadvantage faced by Victorian women.

From cost of living pressures like childcare and women’s healthcare, to job insecurity and the risk of family violence – women continue to shoulder enormous burdens and face immense barriers to equal opportunity.

As a state, we’ve relied on women across our healthcare system – nurses, doctors, paramedics and cleaners – to keep us safe throughout the pandemic. We’ve also relied on women in caring and service sector roles, such as teaching and early childhood education.

If we want a strong, secure future for women, we need to consider the impact of investments on women at every stage of the budget process.

In 2021, Victoria became the first state to implement gender responsive budgeting.

The *2022/23 Budget* invests around $940 million in initiatives primarily focused on improving outcomes for women.

We’re putting women’s health first, with over $600 million going directly to improving access and equity for women-specific health services around Victoria.

We’re strengthening workforce participation, investing in skills and training, supporting women to become leaders in their field, and taking steps to protect women and children from family violence.

Because if we want to build a better Victoria, we must ensure that our systems and structures support all Victorians to achieve their full potential.

## BETTER DECISION MAKING

### Building on world’s best practice

Victoria is the first Australian state to implement gender responsive budgeting.

We are proud to join other leading international jurisdictions using gender responsive budgeting to advance equality. These jurisdictions are demonstrating how the gender responsive budgeting process can lead to real-life benefits.

Gender responsive budgeting tools have been trialled or adopted by nearly half of all OECD countries, including five of the seven largest economies in the world: Canada, France, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom.

Not only has gender responsive budgeting helped to make governments’ expenditure more transparent and accountable, it has also enabled governments to adapt policies and investment to better address gender inequity.

In Austria, it has enabled landmark tax system reform to provide greater incentives for women to participate in the workforce.

In Mexico, it has led to investment in programs for health conditions more likely to affect women, which aims to increase women’s life expectancy.

Victoria will continue to draw on international evidence to strengthen gender responsive budgeting practices and ensure fairer outcomes for every Victorian.

### What Victoria is doing

When we prioritise fairness and equity with every dollar spent, the entire state benefits.

Gender responsive budgeting is a way to create budgets that consider the impacts of investment decisions on all Victorians.

It ensures that when we make decisions, we’re doing everything we can to break down structural barriers that hold women back.

It also helps us gain better insights, provide better outcomes, and share resources more fairly to address inequalities.

To meaningfully address the different needs of Victorians, gender equality needs to be considered at every stage of the policy process.

IN ACTION

We know that physical activity is important for all students, regardless of their gender. The Active Schools initiative completed a Gender Impact Assessment which identified that physical activity declines as young people get older, particularly for girls and women. As a result, the program design encourages schools to engage with their school community to promote a gender-inclusive approach to physical activity and sport. This will be monitored through program monitoring and evaluation.

### How we are doing it

Victorians want safe, secure jobs to provide for our families, good quality healthcare close to home, and a fair go for everyone.

The gender responsive budgeting process allows us to better tailor our investments to deliver the programs, services and infrastructure that Victorians deserve. It ensures we can better consider the impacts of other forms of disadvantage and inequality that intersect with and compound gender inequality, such as racism and homophobia.

We’re targeting services that directly impact women, children and the LGBTIQ+ community. That includes more support for women’s health services, and investments to improve the safety and security of every Victorian.

After legislating to require gender impact assessments, we’re now measuring gender impacts as part of the budget process in a more meaningful way – across health, education, transport and jobs.

Because we know that government policies and investment can advance gender equality and improve lives.

Gender Impact Assessments give us a more sophisticated tool to measure how government policy, programs and services will impact different people in the Victorian community.

They help assess and influence program design to ensure the Government is supporting equal access to opportunities and resources.

This is crucial, as many policy and program responses differ based on the gender of the person accessing government services.

The assessments provide improved information about gender impacts to decision-makers, enabling better-targeted investments.

And better budget decisions will create fairer outcomes for all Victorians.

### Our aims

Gender responsive budgeting will ensure that Government investment helps address and advance women’s needs and aspirations.

That means:

* Greater investment to support gender equality
* More targeted policies that consider the needs of all Victorians
* Services that are better targeted to the needs of women
* Increased transparency and accountability across government.

### Progress to date

**We’re already making significant progress in advancing gender equality through gender responsive budgeting.**

In the first year, we’ve delivered significant progress.

For example, as part of our investment into Building equity and excellence for rural and regional students, the Freeing Up School Staff to Lead and Teach initiative has been designed to support an increased focus on teaching for staff in country schools. Women are less likely to apply for Principal roles than men, even after controlling for other factors such as years of experience, and the nature of these roles could be a part of this. Through an easing of the added administrative burdens that many small rural and regional schools face, this initiative can remove some of those barriers and may create an environment to support more women to take on leadership roles within their school communities.

**Gender responsive budgeting can identify issues that need to be addressed in order to avoid further entrenching gender inequity.**

For example, the Head Start program is a statewide support system to provide pathways for students to undertake school‑based apprenticeships and traineeships. The Gender Impact Assessment recognised that boys and girls have different experiences of the apprenticeship and traineeship system. Women and girls are less likely to access vocational pathways, and when they do it is often into lower-paying industries. This understanding meant that the Head Start program could seek to increase awareness of male-dominated trades among women and girl students. By increasing awareness and challenging gender norms, a conscious effort is taken so that gender inequality is not further entrenched through continuing the status quo, and active steps are taken to work towards positive gender outcomes for women and girls.

**Gender responsive budgeting can identify which programs are contributing to gender equality.**

For example, it is not immediately apparent how the Events Recovery and Support program, which is designed to support the needs of an industry severely impacted by the pandemic, may advance gender equality. A Gender Impact Assessment conducted on this investment found that women made up only 9 per cent of senior roles in this industry. This information led to the initiative being focused on creating opportunities to balance gender equality across the sector by creating opportunities for women in the workforce.

These initiatives, along with many others in this Budget, have used Gender Impact Assessments to consider the needs of different genders to improve their design – allowing us to develop more targeted and effective programs that make a difference to the lives of Victorian women and girls.

As our gender responsive budgeting processes and capabilities mature, we will work towards ensuring that gender analysis is applied at every stage of the policy making process. From identifying budget priorities, through to policy design, decision making, implementation and evaluation.

# Gendered impacts of the pandemic

*The pandemic highlighted existing inequities that continue to prevent women from fully participating in our economy and our community.*

As school‑aged children transitioned to remote learning and early childhood education and care services closed, many women had to cut back on work or leave their jobs to take on unpaid caring responsibilities.

And some of the industries hit hardest by necessary public health measures during the pandemic were those with a majority of female employees, such as hospitality, and administrative and support services.

Women were more likely to lose their jobs during the pandemic, with nearly 30 000 more women than men losing employment in 2020, and the Victorian full-time gender pay-gap widened from 11.2 per cent to 14.3 per cent between November 2020 and 2021.

But these statistics only tell part of the story. They represent thousands of women who had to choose between caring for their children or going to work.

They are women who may have sacrificed a promotion, or knocked back an extra shift, because they needed to care for their loved ones.

Victoria’s economy is now bouncing back, and the jobs recovery continues to be broad and inclusive. By early 2022, the proportion of women, young workers and single mothers in employment had recovered to above pre‑pandemic levels.

Nonetheless, structural inequalities remain. In Victoria as at March 2022:

* Women are more likely to be employed part‑time, with 45 per cent of employed women in part-time roles compared with around 20 per cent of employed men
* Women in employment are about 50 per cent more likely to be underemployed (wanting to work more hours) than men
* There were almost 200 000 less women in jobs than men.

This is why the Andrews Labor Government introduced the Australian-first *Sick Pay Guarantee* pilot for eligible Victorian workers in select industries. The two-year pilot will provide participating casual and contract workers with sick pay so they can take time off when they are sick or need to care for loved ones. It is anticipated that more than 150 000 workers will be eligible in the first phase of the scheme, and a significant proportion of these workers will be women.

As we continue to recover from the effects of the pandemic, we need to create new opportunities to enter employment, encourage greater workforce participation, increase flexibility and deliver more pathways to upskill or change careers.

There is always more work to be done to improve outcomes for women and address the structural barriers to gender inequality.

We will focus on improving representation to ensure that the diversity in the Victorian community is reflected in policies and spending. For example, up to mid-April 2022, of all the people helped into employment by the Jobs Victoria Fund, 63 per cent were women. The Fund’s initial target was to pay 60 per cent of wage subsidies to women, so these rates demonstrate that we are performing above our targets.

When every Victorian is represented in local communities, workforces and boardrooms, the whole community benefits.

# Investing in equality

*The Andrews Labor Government has a strong record of delivering fairer outcomes for women and girls.*

This Budget builds on our continued commitment to advancing gender equality.

The *2022/23 Budget* supports women’s health and wellbeing, strengthens women’s workforce participation, and invests in services for women and children experiencing family violence.

## PUTTING WOMEN’S HEALTH FIRST

The Andrews Labor Government is committed to prioritising quality of life for all Victorian women.

This is why the *2022/23 Budget* makes an investment of over $600 million in healthcare to benefit all Victorian women.

This includes funding for new and redeveloped hospitals, women’s specific healthcare, and support for our health workforce so that Victorian women can get the healthcare that they deserve. This Budget funds:

* More than $900 million for the new Melton Hospital which will include maternity and neonatal services
* Over $500 million to expand women’s and children’s services for the Barwon Women’s and Children’s Hospital
* $300 million for the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund to respond to local priorities for improvements to the quality and amenity of infrastructure in regional hospital facilities, helping regional women get appropriate healthcare wherever they live
* $236 million to redevelop and expand the Casey Hospital and Mercy Werribee Emergency Departments which will include a Gender Impact Assessment to make sure the needs of women and children are incorporated
* $25 million to construct a 10-bed early parenting centre in Shepparton for families with children up to four years of age to enhance the parent–child relationship and support parents with strategies to achieve their parenting goals.

We’re putting patients first, giving Victorian women the care and treatment they deserve, close to home.

An investment of $20 million will help expand breast screening services across the state to give more Victorian women access to the vital preventative breast scans and specialist treatment they need to identify cancer early. Funding is also provided for catch up vaccinations against the human papillomavirus (HPV) for young Victorians at secondary schools.

### Mental health

The Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System told us that when it comes to accessing mental healthcare, Victorians don’t know where or who to turn to.

Women and girls are at greater risk of having some mental health issues than men and boys, including higher rates of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

When the Andrews Labor Government announced the Royal Commission back in 2018, we promised to deliver on every one of the Commission’s recommendations. Progress has already been made on 67 of the 74 recommendations.

This Budget builds on our record $3.8 billion commitment to deliver a better mental health system for Victoria, so that Victorians can get the care they need sooner and much closer to home, including:

* $218 million to deliver bed-based services for Victorians in need of mental healthcare, including expanded support for the treatment of eating disorders, and additional support to women
* $196 million to replace and expand the existing mental health facility to increase acute and community mental health services at Goulburn Valley Health in Shepparton, and plan for two more in regional Victoria, including gender specific areas as recommended by the Royal Commission
* $62 million to improve safety for those being cared for in mental health intensive care areas, including safe spaces for women
* $54 million to deliver integrated treatment, care and support for people living with an acute mental illness and substance use or addiction
* $30 million to create healthier communities and address loneliness through promoting social inclusion and targeting suicide prevention across our community
* $12 million to support families in regional Victoria whose children are accessing acute care. Funding provides group-based sessions for parents to strengthen relationships with their children and increase their skills and confidence to support emerging mental health and wellbeing challenges.

### Health workforce

Women make up a majority of our health workforce – whether they be nurses, doctors, paramedics, cleaners or administrative staff.

While we can’t ever thank them enough for what they’ve done for us, we can give them the extra pair of helping hands they need to keep delivering the best of care.

That means we’ll work to reduce the pressure points exposed across our healthcare system due to the pandemic, and support the Victorian workers who look after us when we need it most.

The *2022/23 Budget* includes investments to boost the health workforce and significantly reduce the pressure on our hospitals. This includes:

* $58 million to establish over 1 125 new Registered Undergraduate Student of Nursing (RUSON) positions per year over two years around Victoria, to improve the retention of student nurses as they move into graduate practice. Graduate mental health nurse rotations will be expanded into the community sector, with 75 new positions
* $7.9 million for a flexible maternity staffing boost to support the midwifery workforce
* $3.5 million for networked sexual and reproductive health services and specialist nurses (blood-borne viruses and sexually transmitted infections)
* $1.4 million for 75 Registered Undergraduate Student of Midwifery (RUSOM) positions.

This Budget also includes investment to expand the entry points into mental health professions, such as:

* $139 million to expand Victoria’s psychiatry training pipeline
* $56 million to expand public psychology registrar positions
* $22 million for Junior Medical Officer rotations
* $17 million to support senior clinicians to enter the mental health sector
* $4.7 million to pilot new earn and learn models for navigation and wellbeing support roles
* $2.4 million to enhance LGBTIQ+ service responsiveness
* $1.6 million for clinical supervision training for senior clinicians
* $1.2 million to build cultural safety across mental health services.

To support nursing entry points into mental health professions, we’ve also invested:

* $49 million to expand allied health and registered nursing graduate programs
* $11 million to continue enrolled nurse graduate positions
* $4.6 million to continue the postgraduate scholarship scheme for allied health and nursing professionals.

The *2022/23 Budget* also invests a record $698 million in healthcare at home.

IN ACTION

We know the importance of physical activity when it comes to uniting communities and improving physical and mental health. This is why we are funding $88 million to meet Victoria’s demand for local sport and active recreation. This includes dedicated funding for our Female Friendly Facilities Fund to help local clubs and organisations develop grounds, pavilions, courts and lighting to enable more women and girls to participate in sport and active recreation.

## IMPROVING ECONOMIC EQUITY

Now more than ever, we need to invest in people.

And we know that education and employment are the key to good, meaningful and rewarding jobs.

Many Victorians experience a range of barriers to education and employment that limit their potential to find work and earn a secure wage. These barriers are often due to discrimination, disadvantage and gender stereotypes and norms. This is why the Andrews Labor Government established an independent Inquiry into Economic Equity for Victorian Women, to find solutions to long‑standing issues of systemic inequality, such as unequal pay and workplace barriers to women’s success.

The *2022/23 Budget* will improve education opportunities, invest in skills, provide support to students, drive growth in small businesses and deliver an inclusive recovery for Victoria.

This includes:

* $131 million to ensure all four-year-olds are able to access high-quality kindergarten, including in conjunction with long day care, which will help parents, particularly women and single parents, take up and maintain employment opportunities. An additional $2.2 million will expand the kindergarten fee subsidy to vulnerable children
* $90 million for Community Service Organisations to support jobs in their predominantly female workforces
* $86 million to provide universal access to high-quality VET in government schools by introducing an expanded offering of vocational and applied learning pathways and certificates, making it easier for girls to access a traditionally male education pathway
* $69 million to fund Head Start apprenticeships and traineeships for all government school students, creating more opportunities for senior secondary students to undertake apprenticeships and traineeships. This will improve outcomes for young women and girls by offering expanded career pathways, encouraging equitable and inclusive participation in schools and improved workforce participation
* $37 million to enhance the Navigator program that helps young people re‑engage in education when they fall behind. Services that understand the unique challenges women face will help young women overcome complex barriers which can be gendered
* $5 million to increase the pipeline of graduates and diversity in the community services workforce
* $4.5 million to support at-risk students to ensure they continue to engage in education. These programs provide tailored support to students, which can reduce gender-based barriers to engaging with education.

We are also investing to improve the skills of Victorians and support economic recovery and employment following the pandemic, including:

* $12 million to ensure apprentices are supported to finish their training, helping more Victorian women into safer, more secure jobs
* $9.8 million to support disadvantaged metropolitan communities hit the hardest by the pandemic
* $4.4 million to support Victoria’s events industry to recover from the pandemic and create opportunities to balance gender equality across the sector by creating opportunities for skilled women workers
* $760 000 to deliver an inclusive recovery for Victoria, which will continue a community‑led recovery for Victoria’s most vulnerable communities. This includes funding for the continued roll-out of the Social Enterprise Strategy which delivers local solutions for greater social and environmental impact.

We will continue to work with, and advocate to, the Commonwealth Government to address other economic equity issues which sit outside state responsibility, such as the cost and accessibility of childcare, and reducing the inequality in retirement income. Women are at greater risk of financial hardship in retirement, which could be alleviated by paying superannuation on paid parental leave and increasing Commonwealth Rent Assistance for pensioners. Women’s workforce participation would also be improved by investing in affordable childcare.

## Keeping victorians safe

Women and children deserve to live in safe and secure homes, free from violence. We believe in a future where all Victorians are safe in their homes, at school, at work and in the community.

Violence against women, including family violence, sexual violence, harm and harassment, continue to inflict devastating harm in our communities. The findings from the 2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence were clear – gender inequality is the key driver of family violence. This Budget will assist us towards meeting all 227 recommendations.

Victoria is leading the national conversation on women’s safety, but there is still a long road ahead of us. By building on our record investments in family violence prevention, we will create a safe and positive future for all Victorians.

This is why we’re making significant investments to increase family violence and child protection support, including:

* $69 million to consolidate and expand the existing statewide family violence refuge and crisis response that supports victim survivors of family violence
* $43 million to ensure victim survivors of family violence receive timely interventions and support to stay safe, recover and take steps to live a life free of harm
* $39 million to deliver a victim-centred financial assistance scheme that will enable victim survivors to access the financial support they need and to recover from injuries sustained from violent crime. This scheme will provide more support to more people by considering the different needs of women, men and gender diverse people after experiencing violence
* $30 million to continue delivering timely and tailored family violence perpetrator interventions to reduce family violence and better protect victim survivors
* $30 million to continue operations of the Central Information Point, to keep women and children safe, and reduce harm posed by perpetrators of family violence
* $19 million to help Respect Victoria continue driving coordinated, statewide and evidence‑based efforts to stop all forms of family and gendered violence. This investment will support the primary prevention of gendered violence before it occurs, so all Victorians can live free from violence
* $2.9 million including support to continue the Elder Abuse Prevention Networks, which raise awareness of elder abuse and deliver primary prevention activities
* $1.2 million for tailored early intervention and prevention initiatives, including programs delivered by Djirra, enabling more culturally appropriate family violence interventions.

Continued investments in child protection and youth justice will help safeguard Victorian children and ensure more children are diverted away from the justice system. The *2022/23 Budget* includes $58 million for targeted and specialised family services to divert children away from the statutory system, as well as increased support for child protection workers.

The Andrews Labor Government is also improving access to legal assistance and support because Victorians deserve free, safe, and fair access to justice, with investments such as:

* $50 million to allow Victoria Legal Aid to respond to increasing demand for services to give Victorians, including gender diverse people, fairer access to justice. This will also provide additional support to women and children, who are overrepresented as victim survivors of family violence
* $20 million to operationalise the new Bendigo Law Court, which will provide specialist court services, including a new Koorie Court and a previously funded family violence court
* $8.4 million to support the decriminalisation of sex work in Victoria and ensure workers, primarily women and LGBTIQ+ people, are safe and supported
* $6.5 million to enable the community legal sector to provide early intervention programs for disadvantaged Victorians and respond to demand for legal assistance. This will provide community members with greater access to legal support for complex legal issues, including family violence and workplace harassment.

## Leadership and representation

Victoria is leading the way in gender equality. This Budget continues to invest in systemic reforms to make real progress, including through the *Gender Equality Act 2020* and embedding gender responsive budgeting across government.

We know that gender equality cannot be achieved by the Victorian Government alone. The Andrews Labor Government is supporting women to become leaders in their field so that we have leaders who represent the diversity of the Victorian community.

Equality in leadership and better representation across our state will make Victoria a better and fairer place to live, work and raise a family. It will also improve business performance, boost productivity and increase living standards.

This Budget is investing:

* $15 million to implement the LGBTIQ+ Strategy and continue leading by example. Funding will support the provision of the specialist LGBTIQ+ legal services at the Victorian Pride Centre, a trial of Safe Spaces for LGBTIQ+ youth in Western Victoria, LGBTIQ+ Grants Program, Pride Events and Festivals Fund, Midsumma and Melbourne Pride
* $8.3 million to implement the Gender Equality Strategy, including training, education and resources to support gender impact assessments, and deliver the Women of Colour Leadership program to address structural barriers for diverse women seeking leadership opportunities. Funding of $1.1 million is also provided to embed gender responsive budgeting in Victorian legislation, ensuring an equality lens for future budget processes
* $1 million for gender pay equity initiatives including funding to support the Equal Workplaces Advisory Council
* $450 000 to support leaders in regional communities, including support for the Country Women’s Association to continue assisting women, children, and families experiencing hardship or disadvantage.

## Strengthening accountability

The Andrews Labor Government is laying the groundwork to achieve gender equality in Victoria, with the introduction of nation-leading reform and investment.

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* strives to close the public sector gender pay gap for good.

It legislates real action against sexual harassment in the workplace and will help recruit more women into leadership roles across the state.

Because to realise gender equality – you need women in the room, around the table, and in positions with power to drive real change.

Under the Andrews Labor Government’s new legislation, that’s exactly what we’re doing.

Since March 2021, public sector, universities and local councils have been required to promote gender equality in their policies, programs and services and take real action towards achieving workplace gender equality.

In December 2021, entities were required to submit their first workplace gender audit and in March 2022, to provide the first round of Gender Equality Action Plans under the Act.

Following a round of compliance checking by the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, these Plans will be published and the Commission will undertake a qualitative assessment process to better support all entities to drive meaningful progress on workplace gender equality.

Transparency is integral to progress to ensure compliance with the Act, to measure our collective achievements and to learn from best practice models in workplaces around Victoria.

In this document when this document refers to

‘woman/women’ or ‘man/men’ it refers to female or male identifying people; this includes transgender people, cisgender people, and others who identify themselves within the spectrum of the gender identity of woman or man. This document also uses the term ‘gender diverse people’, who may identify as non‑binary, trans, genderfluid or with any other term.

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Budget Paper No. 2 – Strategy and Outlook Budget Paper No. 3 – Service Delivery

Budget Paper No. 4 – State Capital Program Budget Paper No. 5 – Statement of Finances

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