



Victorian Budget
2023/24

Doing What Matters

**Gender Equality
Budget Statement**



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Budget Paper No. 4 – State Capital Program
Budget Paper No. 5 – Statement of Finances
(incorporating Quarterly Financial Report No. 3)

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Message from the Minister for Women

Victoria has led the nation in our work to make the state a fairer and more equal place for women and girls – and to build a better future for them.



We're the first and only jurisdiction in Australia to have enshrined public sector gender equality laws, requiring that new programs and services consider how they can improve and support gender equality.

In 2021, we became the first state to introduce gender responsive budgeting. Now, every year, we analyse and consider the impact of investment decisions on women at every stage of the budget process.

And in coming months, we'll release Victoria's new gender equality strategy. It's our state's first *Gender Equality Action Plan*, and a significant milestone from our groundbreaking *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

But when it comes to gender equality, there'll always be more to do and we will continue to fight to improve women's rights in Victoria.

That's why, with the *Victorian Budget 2023/24*, we've kept improving our decision-making processes, considering the ways in which the decisions we make affect people differently – and women in particular. We're better targeting our services and investments by:

- » Investing in health and wellbeing services used mainly by women, better responding to specifically identified needs
- » Aiming to increase women's participation and representation in male-dominated industries
- » Providing support to female-dominated workforces, and to sectors where women were disproportionately affected by the pandemic
- » Improving public safety, particularly for women
- » Improving economic and employment opportunities for women
- » Working to remove barriers in activities where women and girls participate at lower rates, such as community sport and recreation
- » Improving the participation of women and girls in STEM.

These are the things that matter to Victorian women – and they're what we'll keep delivering. Because gender equality is everyone's business, and we'll work to make sure it stays that way.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Natalie Hutchins".

Natalie Hutchins

Minister for Women
Minister for Education



Overview:

Gender equality in Victoria

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

The Andrews Labor Government has taken great strides towards making the state fairer and more equal for all.

We've invested in the things that matter to women and girls, and we're creating more opportunities for them than ever before.

Victorian women are among the most highly educated in the world. In May 2022, 38.2 per cent of Victorian women were university educated, compared with 31.6 per cent of men. And more women are studying, including in traditionally male-dominated areas such as IT and engineering.

In recent years, more women than ever before have joined the workforce, with the female participation rate reaching a record high of 63.4 per cent in March 2023. Over the four years to March 2023, the proportion of working-age Victorian women in paid work rose by 3.9 percentage points. Of more than 170 000 jobs created and taken up by women during this time, nine out of 10 have been full-time roles.

These strong labour market conditions have driven a sharp fall in the female unemployment rate, which is around its lowest level in nearly 50 years, while the female underemployment rate is around a 20-year low.

While positive, these numbers only tell part of the story.

The gender pay gap remains stubbornly high at 13.5 per cent, meaning the average Victorian working woman earns \$256.20 a week less than her male equivalent.

Women are often excluded from full-time work, as they continue to shoulder the major share of unpaid work. The division of labour within Australian families, with women as caregivers and men as breadwinners, is one of the most skewed in the developed world, with women doing 2.3 more hours of unpaid work and 2.2 fewer hours of paid work per day than men.

Australian women are twice as likely to be working part-time as men, largely because of their higher unpaid caring load. Women are under-represented in higher paying occupations such as managers, technicians, trades workers and machinery operators and drivers, often because the inflexibility of these roles is incompatible with women doing the majority of unpaid work.

Inflation and cost of living pressures are mounting. We know childcare fees are crippling family budgets and holding back parents – mainly mums – from returning to work. And we know women are also at much greater risk of financial hardship in retirement. At retirement age (60–64 years), 23 per cent of women have no superannuation, compared with 13 per cent of men.





More women suffer from chronic health conditions, especially mental health conditions. The proportion of Victorian women living with two or more chronic diseases rose from 19.3 per cent in 2015 to 22.1 per cent in 2019, and is now almost 6 per cent higher than the rate for men.

Women are also far more likely than men to experience physical, sexual and emotional violence by an intimate partner.

There has been significant progress and investment in family violence reforms following the Royal Commission into Family Violence, including making it easier and safer to report, and the rate of women who report experiencing family violence by an intimate partner is increasing.

In 2021, 23 per cent of women reported having experienced violence by an intimate partner since the age of 15 – up from 17 per cent five years earlier. This figure compares with 7.3 per cent of men. And a 2018 national survey revealed that 39 per cent of Australian women had experienced sexual harassment at work in the previous five years, compared with 26 per cent of men.

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

Removing these barriers gives us a chance to build a fairer Victoria. It also represents a huge economic opportunity for Victorian businesses that would have access to a wider and deeper talent pool. Australia's GDP would increase by 11 per cent if the gender employment gap was closed – that is if the same proportion of women were employed as men. And the Australian economy would gain \$8 billion if women moved from tertiary education into the workforce at the same rate as men.

We established the independent Inquiry into Economic Equity for Victorian Women (the Inquiry) to address long-standing systemic inequality and find solutions for problems such as unequal pay and workplace barriers to women's success.

Work is already underway to address the recommendations of the Inquiry, completed in September 2022. These include delivering strategies to support, upskill and mentor women in non-traditional sectors; driving the use of gender disaggregated and intersectional data across the public service to help us better understand who is using our services so that we can design them to meet their needs; and developing plans to better support the work of the care and community sector.

But the Andrews Labor Government recognises that gender equality is a long-term vision requiring deep cultural and structural change, and there is always more work to do.

That's why this Budget invests around \$2.7 billion in initiatives that directly address women's needs and work toward improving outcomes for women.

We're putting women's health first, with more than \$497 million going directly to improving access to 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.

Through this Budget and a new gender equality strategy we will take action on these issues. Because if we want to build a better, fairer and more equal Victoria, our work starts with doing what matters for Victorian women.



Doing what matters for Victorian women

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

Previous budgets have supported women's health and wellbeing, strengthened women's workforce participation, and invested in services for women and children experiencing family violence.

And this Budget builds on previous investments to continue our work to advance gender equality. We're giving women's health the focus it deserves, doing more to keep women safe, addressing reproductive rights, and improving women's economic security workplace opportunities.

Giving women's health the focus it deserves

Women and girls make up more than half of our population. And yet their health is somehow seen as a 'niche issue'.

Conditions including dysmenorrhoea (period pain), fibroids and menopausal symptoms will affect around 80 per cent of women in their lifetime. But still, they go under-diagnosed and untreated.

Women and girls are at greater risk of mental health issues than men and boys, including higher rates of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Between 2015 and 2019, 21 per cent of Victorian women reported high levels of psychological distress, compared to 16 per cent of men. And 36 per cent of Victorian women were diagnosed with anxiety or depression, compared to 24 per cent of men.

The Andrews Labor Government has made important investments in women's health, including funding Victoria's first clinic focused on women's heart health and our state's first ever sexual and reproductive health phone line. But there's still more to do.

In this Budget, we'll give women's health the serious focus we promised, and the funding it deserves, with:

- » \$65 million for 10 800 additional laparoscopies: these will help treat debilitating endometriosis that affects one in every nine girls and women
- » \$58 million for 20 new comprehensive women's health clinics and a dedicated Aboriginal-led women's clinic, to overcome some of the barriers to treatment that women face such as cost, confidentiality, geographical location of services, cultural and communication barriers. The clinics will mean women can access specialists – gynaecologist, urologist, along with specialist nursing and allied health – in one spot, making it easier and faster to access the world-class care women need and deserve
- » \$12 million for research initiatives that will directly benefit women's health, such as an inquiry into women's pain management and early work to establish a Women's Health Research Institute
- » \$10 million to establish nine sexual and reproductive health hubs in addition to the 11 existing hubs and to continue funding the Local Public Health Unit networked hub and spoke primary care model, to provide clinical services that, when they are available through a GP, are associated with out-of-pocket costs
- » \$5.3 million for a mobile women's health clinic to improve access to specialised women's health services for women in regional and remote Victoria
- » \$2 million in grants to women's health NGOs to provide women's health and wellbeing support programs, particularly online
- » \$2 million for women's health specialists' scholarships, to improve workforce capability and capacity.



Designs for the redevelopment of the Austin Hospital and Northern Hospital emergency departments will consider safe and welcoming environments for every Victorian, providing for breastfeeding parents through features such as lighting designed with safety in mind, and stronger privacy measures.

In particular, the Government is also delivering healthcare initiatives specifically supporting women's health, including:

- » \$86 million to help parents with their newborn babies, including more access to free Maternal and Child Health services and lactation consultants, additional support for fathers' groups and multicultural communities, investing in a new early parenting centre and creating a centre dedicated to Aboriginal families and children. Funding will also support the Baby Bundle program
- » \$50 million to help more Victorian families access public fertility care, with up to 3 375 treatment cycles funded each year
- » \$38 million to continue respite support for unpaid carers and assist with the physical and emotional demands of caring
- » \$23 million to help alleviate period poverty through providing free pads and tampons in public places
- » Up to \$19 million to give victim-survivors of sexual assault and harm within the justice system the care they need through timely and safe support in engaging with the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine by increasing workforce capacity
- » \$20 million for a community pharmacy pilot to make it easier to access healthcare and medicines like oral contraceptives and urinary tract infection treatments
- » \$10 million to support mothers experiencing acute mental health and wellbeing issues during that critical perinatal period
- » An additional \$10 million to upgrade mental health facilities across Victoria, including a focus on making women safer through the physical design of facilities. These investments will help ensure that more Victorian women can get the specialist care and treatment they deserve closer to home.



Women make up a majority of our health workforce – around 78 per cent – whether they're 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 our healthcare system is experiencing because of the pandemic, and support the Victorian workers who look after us when we need it most.

In this Budget, we're supporting our health workforce, with \$154 million to increase support for nurses and midwives, a female-dominated workforce heavily affected by stress, fatigue and burnout. We'll boost the workforce with sign-on bonuses and increase the number of nurses in emergency departments, maternity services, intensive care units and other high workload areas.

We know the importance of physical activity when it comes to uniting communities and improving physical and mental health. We are supporting the wellbeing of Victorian women by breaking down the barriers that make it harder for women and girls to get involved in sport and outdoor recreation, with:

- » \$201 million to improve community sport and recreation facilities including through the Local Sports Infrastructure Fund, and the Country Football and Netball Program, which include upgrades to create more female-friendly spaces with better changerooms and outdoor lighting, and broaden opportunities for women and girls to participate
- » \$7.4 million to make public parks more accessible, including safety features such as lighting, playgrounds with a range of active, quiet, free and structured play areas, seating for older people, accessible paths, and play equipment for children and carers with disability.

Keeping women safe

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 and harassment – continues 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. Family violence remains a leading cause of homelessness for women with children. And intimate partner violence continues to contribute to more death, disability and illness for women aged between 15 and 44 than any other preventable risk factor.

Victoria is leading the nation on women's safety, but we know there's a long way to go. By building on our record investments in family violence prevention, we will create a safe and positive future for all Victorians.

In this Budget, we'll invest in a range of measures aimed at preventing family violence – from early intervention through to better support for victim-survivors – including:

- » \$77 million towards ending family violence and sexual assault through intervention strategies such as crisis management support and behaviour change programs
- » \$43 million to deliver expanded primary health services in Victoria's two women's prisons, including increased access to medical officers and a focus on continuity of care for women exiting custody

- » \$23 million towards providing access to specialist family violence legal assistance including pre-court engagement strategies that may lead to fewer family violence intervention order breaches
- » \$6 million to support initiatives to address elder abuse, including prevention networks and the Senior Rights Victoria support service
- » \$3.3 million to enable victim-survivors of family violence to appear in court remotely from a secure location when applying for a Family Violence Intervention Order
- » \$2.1 million towards early intervention programs directly addressing the links between alcohol and other drug use and family violence.

We'll invest to make public spaces safer, particularly for women and girls, with \$340 million to improve safety and accessibility on public transport, including more regional train services on weekends, accessibility upgrades at Boronia Station and enabling infrastructure to support deployment of accessible Next Generation Trams on the network.

And we're improving access to legal assistance and support to give Victorians free, safe, and fair access to justice. This Budget invests \$14 million to continue funding community legal centres to support people engaging with the justice system.

Best Start, Best Life – unlocking economic participation

The childcare system is set up to work against working families.

Fees are high, with many parents having to do complicated sums just to weigh up the financial impact of going back to work – and that's if they can even find a place. It's crippling family budgets and holding back parents, mainly mums, from returning to work.

Caring for children remains the largest barrier to women's participation in the labour force. Across Australia around a quarter of women who want to work or to work more hours cite caring for children as the main barrier.

It shouldn't be this hard.

We are making kinder free at participating services, easing pressure on household budgets and giving every Victorian child the best start, for the best life.

That's why the Andrews Labor Government is rolling out *Best Start, Best Life* and Three-Year-Old Kinder. Building on the more than \$4.4 billion invested to date, we're investing a further \$1.7 billion to continue delivering this ambitious reform.

We are delivering more places at more kindergartens so parents can enrol their child at a great centre, close to home. With funding in this Budget, the Government's total investment to date in *Best Start, Best Life* and Three-Year-Old Kinder is \$6.2 billion.

This funding includes:

- » \$1.6 billion to roll out Three-Year-Old Kinder and increase capacity by building new kindergarten facilities
 - » \$1.4 billion for Free Kinder to give Victorian parents – especially mums – the choice to return to work if they want to and provide savings to families each year, up to \$2 500 in 2023
 - » \$1.3 billion to build up to 100 new kindergartens including land acquisition, with the majority to be located at or nearby government schools to help avoid the double drop off
 - » \$921 million to deliver 35 new government-owned and operated Early Learning Centres by 2027 including land acquisition
 - » \$303 million for around 35 new early learning facilities at low-fee non-government schools, and to expand early learning facilities on local government sites.
- Kinder gives the youngest Victorians the very best start in life, and gives parents – particularly working mums – the choice to do what's best for their families. That's why we made kinder free, and with this Budget we're building more kindergartens as part of our *Best Start, Best Life* reforms.
- Funding will progressively transition four-year-old kindergarten to Pre-Prep, providing 30 hours per week of play-based learning and to attract and retain the kinder workforce, as recommended by the Inquiry.
- We promised to deliver Three-Year-Old Kinder and introduce a new year of Pre-Prep and that's exactly what we're doing. This year, three-year-old Victorian children can access between 5 and 15 hours of funded learning each week, while four-year-olds can access 15 hours before expanding to 30 hours over the next decade.
- In this Budget we are investing \$1.8 billion in early childhood and Pre-Prep, including funding to make our existing kinders even better by investing:
- » \$48 million to support existing kinders and toy libraries to purchase equipment, provide additional Bush Kinder programs, and create 10 new bilingual kinders and continue the existing services
 - » \$18 million to strengthen and modernise existing inclusion support for children with disability and additional needs
 - » \$10 million for local councils and eligible providers to improve local kindergarten facilities.





Work and economic security

Women and men should have equal opportunities and economic security.

The Andrews Labor Government is taking targeted action to address barriers to women's workforce participation.

We've made significant investments in women's economic security by supporting more women into jobs, extending initiatives to help families to better balance work and care, and providing new professional development opportunities.

With this Budget, we'll go a step further – by working to remove the barriers that stop women entering and staying in the workforce, easing the pressure of the rising cost of living, and improving education opportunities for all Victorians.

Education to support future economic opportunity and equality

From kinder, to great local schools, all the way to TAFE and uni – education changes lives. We're creating even more opportunities for women and girls to get the education and training they need for the jobs they want, with:

- » \$116 million for six new tech schools, encouraging more girls to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)
- » \$40 million to develop lesson planning and curriculum materials to take the burden off teachers and improve STEM teaching, helping girls narrow the gap in these subjects

- » \$17 million for the Student Excellence Program, including training teachers to identify how high ability can present differently in girls, so teachers are better equipped to spot bright young students and ensure they get the support they need to achieve their best
- » \$16 million to support female students, for example, by providing free period products in all government schools.

We're investing in targeted support for students who need it, particularly vulnerable students, students with disabilities, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Crucially, this support also considers the different needs of girls and boys:

- » \$203 million to expand the High Intensity Outside School Hours Care program to provide free care to kids with complex disabilities, as well as improving access to the NDIS and other health services and extracurricular activities as recommended by the Inquiry
- » \$14 million for health and wellbeing programs to support vulnerable students, including those from multicultural and LGBTIQ+ communities.

Women represent 63 per cent of the education workforce. We'll invest in re-engaging inactive teachers, helping more women to advance to senior positions and teachers in leadership roles to take up flexible working arrangements.

Investing in reducing the gender gap in work

To achieve gender equality at work, you need women in the room, around the table, and in positions with power to drive real change.

But we know women continue to face barriers to participating in traditionally male industries, including construction, manufacturing and trade.

In this Budget, we'll invest in:

- » **Manufacturing** – \$21 million to strengthen and expand Victoria's manufacturing capability, which will support input into the Women in Manufacturing Strategy. The input into the Strategy is expected to include the development of policy options aiming to increase women's participation in manufacturing by supporting parental leave and flexible working arrangements, reducing sexism and sexual harassment in the workforce, and identifying pathways for women, as recommended by the Inquiry
- » **Trade** – investing \$12 million to support Victoria's trade sector and boost global engagement, involving the Global Victoria Women group to give women more opportunities to broaden their trade networks and participate in trade and export activities, as recommended by the Inquiry
- » **Innovation** – \$5 million to expand the successful Alice Anderson Fund, which supports women-led startups to leverage private sector capital
- » **Construction** – \$2.4 million to increase women's participation in construction and improve gender equality in the sector, as recommended by the Inquiry.

This Budget will also invest directly in initiatives that will improve economic and employment outcomes for women:

- » \$36 million for planning initiatives to help support housing growth and supply, which may benefit lower socio-economic groups, including those most at risk of homelessness, such as people with disability, older women and single parents
- » \$100 000 to provide skills-based learning and employment support for migrant, refugee and asylum seeker women to improve their economic security.

To achieve gender equality at work,
you need women in
the room, around
the table, and in
positions with power
to drive real change



Supporting Aboriginal women as we work towards Treaty

As Victoria progresses towards Treaty with our First Peoples, we're working to make sure the benefits will be shared by all Victoria's First Peoples.

We're investing \$191 million in Treaty and First Peoples initiatives that will be accessible to all First Peoples and will ensure there are opportunities for women to be heard and involved in decision making.

We're listening to First Nations Victorians when it comes to gender norms, roles and relations and how they might affect equal access to opportunities for First Nations men and women. We're ensuring balanced gender representation in participants, decision makers and suppliers for cultural events and awards such as the Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll. And we're addressing accessibility barriers for Aboriginal women who may face disadvantage and pressure when completing funding applications.

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Gender responsive budgeting

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 deliver 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 impact 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.

Applying policies and programs to everyone in the same way may sound fair, but people will experience them differently. Our needs and experiences are affected by who we are, including our gender. These differences are compounded for women of colour, women with disability and women from other minority groups.

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

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



Gender responsive budgeting in action

Extensive research shows the huge role reading plays in a child's development, whether the child is reading alone or being read to. The benefits to the developing mind are formative and lifelong.

In 2018 we established the Books in Prep Bags program – giving a bag of four to five books to prep students and their families – to make sure they have access to high-quality books and well-written stories. Between 2019 and 2022, the program successfully delivered over 1.3 million books to Victorian students.

In this Budget, we reviewed the program using a gender impact assessment to consider how selected books could better support the diverse needs of our prep students and their families, in ways that improve gender equality.

We used school data to identify the key characteristics of the prep student cohort – and we've combined these insights with survey data from parents, families and

teachers to determine further areas of interest and need. This research clearly told us there is a greater need for female protagonists, female authors and female illustrators.

So now, when suppliers submit books for the program, we can ask them to provide books with strong female characters – books that do not reinforce gender stereotypes or gender biases, and that are from female authors and illustrators.

And going forward, when we assess this program, we'll consider how children establish gender stereotypes and gender bias early, and how this can easily be reinforced through books.

It'll help us give our prep students access to great books that set them up for the lifelong benefits of reading – and to support their confidence, career aspirations and sense of identity in ways not limited by gender stereotypes.

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



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. And we need to consider more than just gender. The day-to-day experiences of women of colour can be very different and mean that governments need to provide different services in different ways. It ensures we can better consider the impacts of other forms of disadvantage and inequality that intersect with and compound gender inequality, such as disability, 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 help 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: embedding gender responsive budgeting

We're making significant progress in advancing gender equality through gender responsive budgeting.

In the second year, we've made even more progress.

We've delivered gender impact assessment training to almost 400 staff directly across the Victorian public service and even more as a result of train-the-trainer programs.

As a result, we're seeing higher quality gender impact assessments in this Budget – underscoring the value these insights provide, and how they support better decision making.

Now, we're working towards securing and future-proofing gender responsive budgeting by enshrining it in legislation – as recommended by the Inquiry.

And while that work continues, we'll invest \$1.1 million to support and embed gender responsive budgeting for the next two years.

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

For example, Triple Zero – a service that has been provided for more than 50 years – is a critical link between the community and emergency services agencies. It would be easy to assume Triple Zero is one-size-fits-all service, but by undertaking a gender impact assessment, we can better understand the different ways in which women engage with it – and the different times when they may need to.

Nearly two-thirds of Victorian women feel unsafe while walking alone at night. Thirty-nine per cent of Victorian women have experienced physical or sexual violence. Sometimes, it may not be practical – or even possible – to pick up the phone. By investing in the next generation Triple Zero service that will enable the introduction of other potential options for connecting to Triple Zero such as via SMS, video or even social media, we're allowing women to get the help they need, in a safer way.

And sometimes, it can be the smallest considerations that have some of the biggest impacts. Providing personal protective equipment is one way to protect the wellbeing of our healthcare workers. Supplying personal protective equipment that fits all genders, sizes and ages is a way to better support them all.

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

One example is our pledge to provide free period products in schools and public places. Cost of living affects everyone, but for some women and girls it can make it more difficult to access period products, preventing them from fully participating in society, and meeting their full potential. By providing free pads and tampons in schools and public places, we can change that. A change that appears simple can still make big progress.

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.

Safe and Strong: a Victorian gender equality strategy

Safe and Strong: A Victorian gender equality strategy laid the critical foundations to make Victoria a more equal place – for everyone – setting out a framework for enduring and sustained action over time.

Since the 2016 release of *Safe and Strong*, we've enacted major reforms across Victoria to better promote gender equality across the entire community. We introduced the

Gender Equality Act 2020, and established the Commissioner for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, achieved gender parity on government boards and set up the Gender Responsive Budgeting Unit in the Department of Treasury and Finance.

Since 2017/18, the Andrews Labor Government has invested more than \$160 million into initiatives that supported the implementation of *Safe and Strong*, with key highlights being shown in the table below.

2017/18 Budget

Budget Measure	Status
\$12 million to establish a Prevention Agency – Respect Victoria	Delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » In response to recommendation 188 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, Respect Victoria was established on 4 October 2018 as an independent statutory authority under the <i>Family Violence Prevention Act 2018</i>. » The first agency of its kind in Australia, Respect Victoria is dedicated to the primary prevention of all forms of family violence and violence against women. Its focus is on stopping violence before it starts by changing the norms, practices and structures that allow it to happen. Respect Victoria is central to the Victorian Government's ongoing work to build a state free from violence.
\$6.2 million to drive female participation in sport by increasing representation on sporting boards, expanding the number of female sporting projects and promoting female role models, leaders and coaches	Delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » We implemented the 40 per cent women on sport boards quota for all peak organisations receiving program funding from Sport and Recreation Victoria and VicHealth. » More than 93 per cent of bodies now meet this target, up from 44 per cent in 2017.
\$4 million to expand the Female Friendly Facilities Program to build or upgrade women's change rooms and facilities	Delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The Female Friendly Facilities fund initiative provided grants of up to \$500 000 to help clubs and communities, through their councils, develop local sports infrastructure projects that make a real difference for women and girls – creating safer and more welcoming spaces for them in sporting clubs across Victoria.

Budget Measure	Status
\$2.5 million to expand a women's Victorian Government Leadership Program	Delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » We launched the Women on Boards Leadership Program to provide flexible support packages for women pursuing a board career, including through networking, scholarship programs, mentoring and capacity building. » We established the Her Place Women's Museum in East Melbourne, to record the history of women in Victoria and promote women's leadership roles in the Victorian community. » We launched the Joan Kirner Young and Emerging Leaders Program for Women, enabling a pipeline of new leaders through development, networking and mentoring.
\$1.7 million to re-establish the Rural Women's Network with employment, education and mentoring support for women living in rural areas	Delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » We supported the re-establishment of the Victorian Rural Women's Network in 2017, acknowledging the barriers that rural and regional women face in accessing leadership opportunities. In 2019, the Network brought together women at events across Victoria to network and share ideas, and has also supported rural women through mentoring and leadership programs.
\$1.4 million to promote women's self-employment opportunities and business skills	Delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » We provided career support for parents through the online Grace Papers program. The program acts to reduce the barriers faced by parents returning to work and to strengthen connection between parents in the workplace.
\$1.1 million to improve financial security for vulnerable women through financial literacy programs	Delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » We delivered a Peer Support Program with the Brotherhood of St Laurence that enabled women with low levels of English literacy and numeracy to build their foundational knowledge of Australian business systems and share experiences, increasing the likelihood of business success and fostering women's leadership. » We developed and launched a free financial wellbeing toolkit to support women over 50 to build confidence in money management and protect themselves against financial abuse, in partnership with Women's Information Referral Exchange. » We delivered financial capacity workshops to women in rural and regional areas, leading to improvements in women's knowledge about financial systems, resilience and understanding of credit contracts, utility bills and how to identify future financial risks.
\$800 000 to assist women to deliver gender equality in their community through social entrepreneur programs	Delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » We created economic opportunities for women through the first all women trade delegation to China and provided small business workshops to mentor and upskill women entrepreneurs. The program delivered participants great business connections and networks, involving buyers, distributors, influencers and potential business partners.

2018/19 Budget

Budget Measure	Status
\$24 million to support behavioural change campaigns through Respect Victoria	<p>Delivered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Two behaviour change campaigns were released in the Respect Women series, and the first Respect Women: 'Call it Out' (Café) active bystander campaign was launched on 29 March 2018. This coincided with the second anniversary of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. The second campaign, Respect Women: 'Call It Out' (Public Transport), launched on 7 April 2019, urged Victorians to 'call out' sexual harassment on public transport.
\$8 million for improving gender equality in Victoria through the continued implementation of <i>Safe and Strong</i> , in the public sector, private sector workplaces, sporting organisations and other settings	<p>Delivered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Through initiatives under <i>Safe and Strong</i> we have supported thousands of Victorian women through the delivery of economic security, financial capability and empowerment programs tailored to Victorian women facing the most significant barriers and discrimination. Programs have supported women's economic participation and financial security, particularly for women from migrant and refugee backgrounds. » We expanded the reach and visibility of the Victorian Honour Roll of Women to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of Victorian women. Nominations increased by 67 per cent between 2016 and 2021. » We funded the Stella Prize to run Girls Write Up gender-conscious writing workshops, which brought together writers and artists with vulnerable groups of young people, including young people in out of home care, young mothers, Aboriginal young people and young people who were disengaged from school. The workshops equipped participants with the skills and confidence to share their own stories and challenge gender norms and stereotypes among their peers. » We developed a model for valuing unpaid work and care and its impact on the Victorian community, help us assess the impacts of policy, social and economic changes to unpaid work on women's economic security, workforce participation and health and wellbeing, as well as state productivity and Gross State Product (GSP). This initiative has been relied upon in policy and advocacy and laid the foundations for the current focus on structural change promoting equality through the care sector. The model showed the value of women's unpaid work equated to more than \$205 billion – almost half of Victoria's GSP in 2021-22. » We supported the Victorian Local Governance Association with funding to help more women apply as candidates for the local government elections in 2020.
\$5 million to boost jobs through better procurement. The Government will use its infrastructure investments and broader procurement activities to promote secure work and job opportunities for women	<p>Delivered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The Victorian Government Social Procurement Framework (SPF) commenced operation in September 2018. The framework includes women's equality and safety as one of the seven social procurement objectives. The SPF aims to use government infrastructure investments and broader procurement activities to promote secure work and job opportunities for priority groups, including women.

2019/20 Budget

Budget Measure	Status
\$6 million towards reproductive health including through: planning for public IVF services that will, once established, provide bulk-billed and subsidised treatments for up to 4 000 Victorians a year and continued funding for the Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority, which provides critical support for families accessing assisted reproductive services	Delivered/in progress <ul style="list-style-type: none">» We continued funding services under the Family and Reproductive Rights Education Program to support the healthcare needs of women who have undergone female genital mutilation and facilitate attitudinal change in communities.» The planning for public IVF services was delivered.» The Victorian Government provided further funding in the <i>2021/22 Budget</i> to establish public fertility care services which commenced roll out in October 2022.

2020/21 Budget

Budget Measure	Status
\$17 million investment to support women and organisations at the heart of gender equality, including funding for women's participation, leadership, and recognition in the community, and additional funding for the iconic Queen Victoria Women's Centre to continue supporting and empowering Victorian women from all walks of life	Delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Hundreds of women from a range of backgrounds have participated in the last five years of the Women's Board Leadership Program. This has included funded places to increase rural women's economic participation, professional development and wellbeing, and culturally relevant peer support to culturally diverse women. The program provides formal courses and networking to help women increase their capacity and expertise in becoming a member of a board. » The funds supported the operation and capital repairs of the Queen Victoria Women's Centre. The Queen Victoria Women's Centre is an iconic Melbourne landmark that supports women (cis, trans and non-binary inclusive) through creative experiences, community resources and the power of connection.
\$13 million to support implementation of the <i>Gender Equality Act 2020</i> , including establishment of the Commission	Delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The <i>Gender Equality Act 2020</i> (the Act) commenced on 31 March 2021. It is the first of its kind in Australia and is recognised globally as leading workplace gender equality legislation. » The Victorian public sector has demonstrated extraordinary commitment to gender equality with all 300 defined entities completing their first ever workplace gender audits in December 2021, which established the most comprehensive dataset on public sector workplace gender equality in Australia. » In August 2022, the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector released its inaugural Baseline Audit Report, and also published audit results via its Insights Portal.
\$10 million for the Women's founders Angel Sidecar Fund, which will provide investment support for innovative early-stage startups founded by women. The fund will increase access to finance for women founders, helping to grow early-stage startups, and increasing the participation rate of women in Victoria's startup economy and creating new jobs	Delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Named after the founder of Australia's first all-woman motor garage in the 1920s, the Alice Anderson Fund is a \$10 million angel sidecar fund supporting women-led startups. » Our fund co-invests between \$50 000 and \$300 000 in early-stage deals put forward by investors to increase the funding pool available to Victorian women. Our investment is structured so that only 85c in the dollar is taken as equity; the rest is provided as a non-dilutive grant to the startup. This gives our women-led startups an extra upside. » With every dollar matched by three dollars of private investment, the Alice Fund will unlock close to \$40 million for women founders by 2024.

Budget Measure	Status
\$5 million for the Women in Construction program, which will provide funding to deliver the actions outlined in the Women in Construction Strategy and implement the Building Equality Policy by creating employment opportunities for women on major government construction projects	Delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The Victorian Government launched the Building Equality Policy (BEP), which creates training and employment opportunities for women through government procurement. The BEP seeks to disrupt the existing gender stereotypes, norms and roles in the construction sector. It is comprised of actions that seek to address the structural and cultural barriers women face.
\$2.4 million for the Women in Transport program, which provided training and employment opportunities to women in the transport sector, including supporting jobs for 300 women to become heavy vehicle drivers	Delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The Government developed the Women in Transport program, contributing to an increase in the number of women working, as well as holding senior management roles, across the transport sector.

2021/22 Budget

Budget Measure	Status
\$12 million to support women's participation and gender equality in sport, including improving the visibility of our female athletes	Underway <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » We developed the Women in Sport Recruitment and Retention Guidelines and the Women in Sport Communication and Marketing Guidelines and distributed them to sporting associations throughout Victoria to guide sports in best practice to promote gender equality. » We developed design principles for organisations to pilot gender equality and prevention of violence principles within sport and recreation settings and 'Tackling Violence Against Women: Guidelines for Taking Action Through Community Sport' to support key organisations working directly with community sport clubs to build cultures that are safe, inclusive and prevent violence against women. » We supported more than 100 women working or volunteering in sport and recreation to access professional development opportunities to improve leadership pathways for women in sport. » We developed the Change Our Game Champions program over two years to support CEOs of sport and recreation bodies to develop gender equity frameworks that drive diverse and inclusive workforces.
\$10 million to extend the Female Friendly Facilities Fund to deliver community pavilions, change rooms, playing grounds, and courts, enabling more women and girls to get involved in grassroots sport	Underway <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Following the success of the Female Friendly Facilities Fund in 2017/2018, this fund was further extended.
\$4.3 million to ensure the needs of women are being considered at the heart of government, including establishing a gender responsive budgeting unit to ensure outcomes for women are measured as part of the budget decision-making process.	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » We established the Gender Responsive Budgeting Unit, the first of its kind in Australia. » The funding also supported more than 1 000 women at greater risk of economic insecurity, addressing the needs of women at different stages of their employment. It provided support and mentoring to build confidence and skills to pursue employment, establish a small business or access further education.

Budget Measure	Status
\$2.3 million for initiatives that promote gender equality and respectful relationships among young people, and address drivers of sexual and family violence	<p>In progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » More than 1 950 Victorian schools have signed on to create a culture of gender equality and respect in their school community by implementing the Respectful Relationships whole school approach, as recommended by the Royal Commission into Family Violence. This includes all government schools. » The Victorian Curriculum provides the basis for teaching and learning about respectful relationships and identifies the knowledge, skills and understanding for students to be able to engage in respectful relationships. » The Respectful Relationships initiative also includes professional learning to strengthen the capacity of up to 7 700 early childhood educators in Victorian Government-funded kindergarten programs to promote respectful relationships, positive attitudes and behaviours within their integrated teaching approach, to enable children to build healthy relationships, resilience and confidence.
\$1.8 million to improve the representation of women in local government, to ensure local councils better reflect the communities they represent	<p>In progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Significant progress has been made toward gender parity in local government. In the 2020 Local Government elections, Victoria elected 272 women – 43.8 per cent of councillors, the most in Australian history. The <i>Safe and Strong</i> target of achieving 50 per cent women councillors and Mayors by 2025 will be carried over into the new gender equality strategy.
\$1.4 million to assist the Victorian Rural Women's Network to upskill and support the professional development of women living in our rural communities	<p>In progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The Rural Women's Network run two Leadership and Mentoring Programs. » The Mentoring Program pairs rural women together for a peer-to-peer exchange of skills and experience. There are also capped allowances for childcare, travel and accommodation are available for those who require this support. » The Leadership Program provides women with support to participate in training and study that accelerates their development as leaders. Each participant is eligible for up to \$10 000 (excl GST) in funding support toward the agreed costs of study, travel, accommodation, and childcare.

2022/23 Budget

Budget Measure	Status
\$8.3 million Investing in Victoria's new gender equality strategy	Being implemented <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Funding was provided to implement the <i>Gender Equality Act 2020</i>, including training, education and resources to support gender impact assessments, upgrading the Gender Equality Act reporting platform and developing a new dispute resolution case management system.» Funding was also provided to deliver the Women of Colour Leadership program, which aims to address structural barriers for women from diverse backgrounds seeking leadership opportunities.
\$1 million for gender pay equity initiatives including funding to support the Equal Workplaces Advisory Council	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none">» The funding was provided to promote gender pay equity workplace initiatives and the functions of the Equal Workplaces Advisory Council, and to undertake relevant research. The focus will be on gender pay equity in all Victorian workplaces through advice on issues relating to pay equity, equality and productivity.

Safe and Strong has delivered 30 out of 31 of its founding reforms to set Victoria up for further progress on gender equality



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And significant progress has been made on the final reform, of achieving gender parity in local government, toward the 2025 target.

All 40 early actions outlined in *Safe and Strong* have been completed, helping individuals and organisations across workplaces, businesses, sporting associations, health providers, media and the arts to improve gender equality.

Following the successful implementation of *Safe and Strong*, the Government will release a new Gender Equality Action Plan and Strategy in the coming months. This will set out a framework for coordinated action in Victoria to improve gender equality, as required under section 50 of the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

Progress towards implementing the new State Action Plan and Strategy will be reported on and tabled in Parliament every two years as required by the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.



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Victorian Budget

2023/24

Gender Equality
Budget Statement

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