

Gender Equality & Violence Prevention Consortium Loddon Region

GENDER EQUALITY BILL SUBMISSION



Q1: What do you think are the critical actions necessary for the success of gender equality legislation?

Recommendations:

- Formal equality is not enough – there needs to be transformative change, and substantial equality is needed. There is a concern that this bill will benefit white women but that those white women will be able to participate equally in a system that is based on the exploitation of people of colour.
- Actions should be evaluated and created to ensure:
 - i. Increase equality not produce further backlash
 - ii. They should disrupt and shake up the attitudinal belief systems of our communities
 - iii. Engage by using the tool of educate, enforce and social engineering
- Engage case studies and local stories to demonstrate the need for change.
- Acknowledge that an increase in equality will drive up the demand for response services and devise a plan for responding (including extra resources).

Q2: What other activities should the government undertake to support this legislation?

Recommendations:

- Develop resources that explain why the Bill and gender equality are important on a social, cultural and economic level. Ensure these resources are developed with a lens of intersectionality.
- Provide evidence-based materials on unconscious bias and sexual harassment in the workplace.

Q3: What do you think is best practice in measures to support implementation of legislation that drives lasting social change?

Recommendations:

- Clarify whether the Bill will employ targets or quotas
- Measure indicators through the OurWatch Change the Story approach and framework, the gender pay gap and the wealth gap
- Gender parity requires affirmative action until women as a class catch up

Q4: Do you agree that these are the critical principles and actions that should underpin the legislation? What should be added, or needs to be changed?

Recommendations:

- The actions should define what it means to take an intersectional approach including the consideration of rurality, age, childbearing/pregnancy and economic disadvantage.
- Recognise that some groups of women need more assistance than others to reach equality.

Q5: What else should be included in Gender Equality Action Plans to support demonstrating compliance to the principles?

Recommendations:

- There is a need to collect qualitative data as well as quantitative data, including questions around employee's perceptions of improvement
- Develop a robust plan for support that will enable participation for all women. This will include an investment in quality childcare, amongst other things.
- The State Government is a major provider of services. As such, the government needs to examine how they practice the delivery of their work, ensuring they operationalise feminist principles in their practices and services.
- Action plans should commit to OurWatch's Change the Story framework and measure against it.

Q6: What preparation, guidance materials or training is needed to support organisations to develop Gender Equality Action Plans?

Recommendations:

- The Women's Health sector needs to help design and deliver the training and materials that will support organisations.
- All materials should be developed with a gender lens. The Women's Health sector can advise on this.
- Training must be accessible and not cost prohibitive
- Communities of practice should be developed, resourced and maintained.

Q7: What kinds of public sector targets should be included in the regulations of the Gender Equality Bill?

Recommendations

- There are some industries where it is appropriate that there are more women, and the quota system should be flexible enough to reflect this.

Q8: What is needed to ensure representation of women from diverse backgrounds?

Recommendations:

- There needs to be quotas so that women from diverse backgrounds are represented.
- Develop a robust plan for support that will enable participation for all women.

Q9: What frequency or volume of reporting would strike a balance between transparency and accountability, whilst minimising regulatory burden?

Recommendations:

- Reporting can't be captured in just a point in time – reporting tools need to capture trends, shifts and movement throughout the year.
- Develop the tools for reporting and provide training in how to use the tools.
- Reporting to be graded over time so that it is easier to start with and then gets harder over time.
- Assist boards to work to embed change.

Q10: How can the Victorian Government leverage procurement and funding practices to promote gender equality in the wider community?

Recommendations:

- Extend the Bill targets to include procurement and funding practices

Q11: Do you think that the proposal for monitoring and compliance of the Bill is fair and balanced?

Recommendations:

- Different sized organisations have different accountability arrangements.
- Scaled approach should to be considered
- Minister should highlight positive examples rather than naming organisations that have not complied. There should be a robust process to support organisations that require assistance to comply.

- Reporting should be aligned with an existing reporting mechanism. The body that oversees reporting should be different to that which supports development of plans.

Q12: It is clear that the impact of gender equality is compounded by the way that gendered barriers interact with other forms of disadvantage and discrimination. What is needed to ensure that the advice of the Ministerial Council is considered in other policy areas that may compound or contribute to gender inequality?

Recommendations:

- Rename from the Ministry of Women to the Ministry of Gender Equality
- Develop mechanisms for conversations between organisations implementing action plans and other Ministries.
- Link to the charter of human rights

Q13: Do you think this timeline is appropriate for the proposed roll out?

We agree that this time is appropriate if it is supported by resources, trainings and community of practices.

Q14: What preparations are needed to ensure readiness of impacted organisations before legislation takes effect?

We recommend sharing the indications early so organisations can start making changes as soon as possible.

Q15: What should be done to encourage or incentivise broader sectors or organisations to voluntarily comply with the principles, even if they are not obliged to do so?

Recommendations:

- Implement as system of awards and recognition for positive work being undertaken.
- Mainstream these awards and recognition into existing awards programs. For example, adding a gender equality category to local business awards.