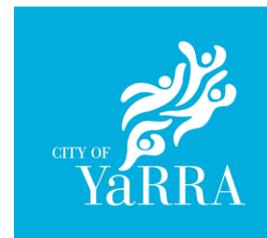


In reply please quote reference

**Reference:** D18/167662

**Contact:** Suzi Hayes



26 September 2018

Hon Natalie Hutchins  
Minister for Women  
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Dear Hon Natalie Hutchins

**Subject: Gender Equality Bill submission**

I write in response to the request for submissions on the Gender Equality Bill Exposure Draft.

The Andrews Government has a unique opportunity to enshrine gender equality principles, actions and obligations in Victorian law under the Gender Equality Bill. We applaud the government's commitment to this work and express our broad in-principle support for the measures outlined in the Bill.

In the wake of the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the government's commitment to implementing all 227 recommendations the State of Victoria is well placed to cement the promotion of gender equality in the foundations of our democracy. Under the umbrella of 'Safe and Strong' we believe that Victoria is well on its way.

Yarra has a demonstrated commitment to gender equality evidenced by a range of actions under our Gender Equity Strategy 2016-2021. Select initiatives include:

- Executive endorsement of a target for women in leadership roles at Yarra of 40% by 2020,
- A procurement policy that preferences providers with demonstrated commitment to supporting social justice principles and activities,
- An employee diversity and inclusion policy formalising the organisation's commitment to employee diversity and inclusion noting women as a priority focus area,
- An endorsed diversity statement supporting flexible work policy, toolkit, culture and accessible working arrangements for all, and
- A Diversity and Inclusion Unit in People and Culture Branch charged with supporting gender equity actions internally.

In what follows we provide responses to several of the key questions on which submissions are being sought.

**Measures to support implementation of the legislation and drive lasting social change**

Key measures to support implementation of the legislation and drive lasting social change include:

- Adequate resourcing to equip organisations for compliance,
- Education to embed an understanding of the principles and bring about cultural change, and
- Best practice guidance and capacity building to assist organisations move from principles to outcomes.

## **Principles and actions underpinning the legislation**

Yarra City Council agrees that all Victorians should live in a safe and equal society, be treated fairly, and have equal access to power. To this end we recommend:

- An overview of gender equity be included in the definition section of the Bill. This will enshrine the use of an equity approach in the pursuit of gender equality for all,
- The Bill make explicit the disproportionate impact of gender inequality on people with multiple intersecting diverse identities and outline equity measures for redressing such compounded disadvantage, and
- Consideration be given to the inclusion of transgender and gender diverse individuals in the definitions and body of the Bill.

## **Preparation, guidance materials and training needed to support implementation of the legislation**

Organisations will need targeted capacity building to assist them to move from compliance to commitment. Specifically, organisations will need to draw on the expertise of those already working in this space – namely women’s health organisations – to help them bridge the gap between commitment to principles and reporting on outcomes. At present local governments are ill equipped to implement actions in a consistent and measured way, due partly to resourcing issues and partly to lack of expertise. While Yarra City Council has two dedicated diversity and inclusion officers this is not the case for all councils. This level of resourcing is entirely at the discretion of individual councils and allocations of this nature can only be made at the expense of other priorities in a rate capping environment.

## **Public sector targets for inclusion in the Gender Equality Bill Regulations**

The Executive of Yarra City Council has endorsed a target for women in leadership roles of 40% by 2020.

## **Frequency and volume of reporting**

Frequency and volume of reporting for local government entities should align with reporting on Community and Council Plans, including Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing plans. Care should be taken to ensure measures are standardised so that single data sets may be collected for internal reporting and reporting on the Gender Equality Plans.

## **Preparation for impacted organisations**

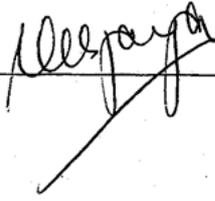
Impacted organisations will need sufficient advance warning of requirements prior to legislation taking effect, along with adequate resources to put in place the training, structures and changes that will be required to ensure compliance.

## **Encouraging and incentivising broader sector and organisational compliance**

The creation of a best practice recognition framework, applicable to impacted and other organisations, may incentivise compliance with the principles. For example, providing organisations with a gratis accreditation acknowledging their good practice and leadership in the gender equality space would enhance reputation – and therefore business – thus incentivising non-mandated entities to perform at a higher level.

We would like to thank the government for this chance to contribute, acknowledging the significant consultation conducted on the legislation to date, and note our interest in reading the finalised report on submissions in February 2019.

Yours faithfully



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vijaya Vaidyanath', is written over a horizontal line. A diagonal line extends downwards from the end of the signature.

**Vijaya Vaidyanath**  
Chief Executive Officer



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