



487 King Street,
West Melbourne, VIC 3003

PO Box 60,
North Melbourne, VIC 3051

P: 03 9321 2222

F: 03 9321 2233

E: info@netballvic.com.au



Wednesday, 26 September 2018

Gender Equality Unit
Office for Women
Department of Health and Human Services
50 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000

Via email: gender.equality@dhhs.vic.gov.au

To Whom It May Concern,

Gender Equality Legislation

Netball Victoria welcomes the Victorian Governments commitment to Gender Equality, and specifically the creation of the Gender Equality Bill to champion the vision.

As the State body for Victoria's leading female sport, Netball Victoria is committed to the provision of innovative and sustainable netball programs to facilitate social change and empowerment of Victorian communities. Simply, we exist to enrich Victorian communities through the sport of netball.

Netball is the leading women's team sport in Victoria, with over 110,000 members state-wide. Our network of 200 registered Associations provides a significant community footprint and offers the perfect vehicle to deliver social change. Of our statistics the following are significant:

- 97% of our members are female
- Our membership is almost equally split between metropolitan and regional Victoria
- 62% of our members are under the age of 18

A response to the discussion paper questions is provided below, within the scope of our role as an advocate for Women and girls, a sporting/community body and a non-government not for profit.

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

Gender Equality action plans that progress organisations towards clear targets will be central to the success of the legislation. Consistency across State Government will provide a clear mandate and have greater reach and impact, highlighting the benefits to the wider community and encouraging voluntary participation from private enterprise.

**WE MAKE
CHAMPIONS.**

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

The development of this legislation is exciting, whilst directly impacting government agencies, its ability to influence wider private organisations should be an expected benefit. Delivering best practice in government and highlighting change and success in these departments/organisations will bring greater exposure to the benefits of equality action plans and their role in all organisations.

Providing resources and information for the not for profit sector and others through existing relationships with government agencies could assist smaller organisations to progress these changes for their own organisations. In the instance of sport, Sport and Recreation Victoria could facilitate this as they have supported initiatives such as the mandatory 40% female representation on boards.

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

We suggest that models such as those documented in the Our Watch Policy Brief¹, An Emerging Theory of Change would be an appropriate resource to assist in driving change. The Our Watch Theory relies on six interrelated principles, these being:

1. We cannot create change alone – we need to work with others and ‘build a movement’ to prevent violence.
2. Change comes from identifying and addressing the root causes of a problem.
3. Different approaches are needed to create change at individual, community and institutional levels.
4. A multi-faceted, long-term program, with activities that reinforce each other – will maximise change.
5. Whole-of-population work and tailored approaches for different groups are required.
6. Continuous evaluation and testing will guide the work.

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?

We support the identified principles and actions and are pleased to see the acknowledgement that change is the responsibility of all Victorians.

We query whether the language of “*make reasonable adjustments and take special measures to achieve substantive gender equality.*” Is this skirting the potential for quotas, or a deliberate attempt to leave the possibility open to each organisation/department as required? We believe the timing is right to capitalise on current discussions and global trends, to advance a significant community discussion regarding quotas. The current rate of change without this proactive measure simply has not been keeping pace with community expectation. Government has the ability to continue to shine a light on the unintended consequences of previous policy/circumstances and elevate significant responses to the same. For example, the proposal to continue superannuation payments for employees on

¹https://www.ourwatch.org.au/getmedia/019ea712-d856-468f-b98d-0cc10e2c1558/Accessible_Policy_Brief_2_Theory_of_Change.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf

parental leave, the majority of these being women, will address the growing super gap for women who currently take on the greater load as carers.

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

Action plans should include clear measurable targets against the principles as an impetus for action and driver for change.

These targets should be staggered and realistic to enable genuine development of effective initiatives that support individual departments and organisations.

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

We consider that each of the following would support organisations and departments to develop Gender Equality action plans:

- Communication of the proposed legislation and intended timing to enable future planning and allocation of resources in future budgets etc to support timely implementation following formalisation of the legislation.
- Case studies and examples of action plans from other countries who have demonstrated success in implementing gender equality action plans
- Consider learnings from existing policy which has been driven from *Safe and Strong*, such as mandatory board quotas, and how this action has been addressed through Sport & Recreation Victoria and in partnership with Vicsport (vicsport.com.au/board-quotas)
- Online resources that can be accessed by wider community and are therefore not limited in their availability to private or community organisations seeking to implement their own Gender Equality Action Plans.

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

We feel the recommendations in *Safe and Strong* are based on solid research and are therefore appropriate targets.

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

The proposed actions acknowledge the need to “*have regard to the fact that an individual’s experience of gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of discrimination and disadvantage.*” Ensuring representation from women from diverse backgrounds is a proactive step in providing insight and addressing some of these forms of discrimination and disadvantage.

The inclusion of women from diverse backgrounds on the Ministerial Council will provide a voice at this level. Furthermore, the action plans also allow for special measures which could potentially include quotas and measures directly targeted to address diversity.

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

Annual, moving to bi-annual once Gender Equality Actions plans are embedded in the departments/organisations.

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

Imbedding in contracts Gender Equality conditions in the same way the Major Project Skills Guarantee requires the construction industry to engage Victorian apprentices, trainees or cadets (https://jobs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/118599/9489-DEDJTR-Employment-Programs-Building-Victoria-Building-Skills-Explanatory-Guide.pdf)

Or Environmentally Sustainable Design principles are mandatory in Sport and Recreation Victoria funding applications (<http://sport.vic.gov.au/grants-and-funding/our-grants/community-sports-infrastructure-fund>)

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

We are comfortable with the proposal for monitoring and compliance. It is our opinion that for the action plans to be effective that departments/organisations cannot self-monitor.

Whilst comfortable with the Minister for Women being ultimately responsible for monitoring and compliance there is an argument that Gender Equality being the responsibility of all Victorians that the responsibility for monitoring could sit within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, which may better reflect the Governments investment in this policy.

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?

Appointments to the Council need to be people of profile, or rising profile whose opinions will be sought, this will afford the Council prominence.

Within government process and procedure, the Council must be used to support government policy as the Office of the Victorian Government Architect would be an architectural concern. The elevation and prominence of the Council would be its best sponsor.

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

We are comfortable with the proposed timeline.

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

See response to Q6.

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?

Highlighting non-mandatory participants as well as those achieving within the legislations scope. Profiling such organisations through case studies and recognition through means available to government.

In summary, Netball Victoria would once again thank the Victorian Government for the opportunity to contribute to the Gender Equality Bill and offer our ongoing support in working collaboratively to improve gender equality for the benefit of all Victorians.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rosie King', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rosie King
Chief Executive