

Minister for Human Services
Minister for Women

Level 8 10 Murray Street HOBART TAS 7000 Australia
GPO Box 123 HOBART TAS 7001 Australia



08 MAR 2016

Senator Jenny McAllister
Chair
Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator McAllister

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee inquiry into domestic violence and gender inequality.

While there is no single cause of violence against women and the relationship between gender and violence is complex, it is now widely recognised that gender inequality is a key driver of family violence, often in intersection with other social inequalities such as age, race ability and social class.

Both men and women in Australia experience substantial levels of violence. However, the overwhelming majority of acts of family and sexual violence are perpetrated by men against women, and this violence is likely to have more severe impacts on female than male victims. Men do not experience violence on pandemic levels nor as a result of gender inequality. Men largely experience violence at the hands of other men and most likely in a public place. Violence against women is likely to be 'hidden' at home rather than in public places. Most violence against women is perpetrated by men who are known to them, such as a current or former intimate partner, an acquaintance or a relative¹. In Australia, domestic and family violence is the most prevalent form of violence experienced by women and is the leading preventable cause of death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44 years².

These distinct patterns in the perpetration and impact of violence point to gender being a key factor.

On 10 November 2015, Our Watch, in partnership with VicHealth and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), launched *Change the story: A shared framework for the prevention of violence against women and their children* (Change the story). This is a national primary prevention framework, which provides a comprehensive summary of the latest international research and evidence on what drives violence against women and their children. The major theme of the research was that gender influences patterns of violence and victimisation more than any other variable. It highlights the role of deeply entrenched social structures, norms and practices of gender inequality, rigid adherence to gender stereotypes and the normalisation of violence. The research clearly identified that in order to end violence against women, we must begin with gender equality and respect.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2012, *Personal Safety Survey 2012* cat no. 4906.0, viewed 12 February 2016 <<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4906.0Main+Features+2012?OpenDocument>>

² Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), *The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence* (2004), p 8.
16/2279

The Tasmanian Government has previously provided a submission to the Senate Inquiry into Domestic Violence in Australia in 2014. The Final Report of that Inquiry also acknowledged the gendered nature of violence.

Gender inequality is present in almost all human societies, with men generally having greater access to power, status and resources than women. These inequalities are understood to be socially constructed, rather than the result of biological differences between the sexes.

Australia is ranked 24th on a global index which measures gender equality³. There has been progress, but attitudes, beliefs and unconscious bias continue to create and maintain gender inequalities. Women and girls experience inequality and discrimination in many important parts of their lives, which can limit the choices and opportunities available to them. There are significant differences between women and men in terms of economic security, education, health and welfare indicators, unpaid work and positions of leadership. These differences include a gender pay gap, women earning less on average than men, women having interrupted work patterns, the experience of gender-based workplace discrimination, under-representation in leadership roles across the private and public sectors, and greater reliance on the Age Pension and likelihood of experiencing poverty in retirement⁴.

- The gender pay gap in Australia, which is currently at 17.9 per cent, has remained between 15 and 19 per cent for the past two decades. This equates to women having to work an additional 65 days each year to earn the same pay as men for doing the same work⁵.
- While the gender pay gap in Tasmania is one of the smallest gender pay gaps in Australia, as of May 2015 it was 11.8 per cent⁶.
- Women earn less per week than men, as a result of occupational and job segregation, and simply because of their gender. Australian women are over-represented as part-time workers in low-paid industries and in insecure work⁷. As at May 2015, the average weekly ordinary time earnings of women working full-time were \$284.20 per week less than men⁸.
- Women are more likely to have interrupted work patterns, particularly following the birth of a child or caring for family members. The majority of unpaid caring work is undertaken by women; women do two-thirds of the unpaid caring and domestic work in Australian households and they spend almost three times as many hours each week looking after children compared to men⁹.
- Negative gender stereotypes and discrimination also restrict women's access to work. For example, one in two mothers report experiencing discrimination in the workplace at some point during pregnancy, parental leave or on return to work¹⁰.

³ World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2013*, (2013). Available at < <http://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2013>>

⁴ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Face the Facts: Gender Equality* (2014). Available at <<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/FTFGender.pdf>>

⁵ Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *Gender pay gap statistics* (September 2015). Available at <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Gender_Pay_Gap_Factsheet.pdf>

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015, *Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, May 2015*, cat. no. 6302.0, Table 11F (Trend) viewed 12 February 2016, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6302.0Main+Features1May%202015?OpenDocument>>

⁷ Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *Gender pay gap statistics* (September 2015). Available at <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Gender_Pay_Gap_Factsheet.pdf>

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015, *Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, May 2015*, cat. no. 6302.0, Table 2 (Trend a) viewed 12 February 2016, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/6302.0Main%20Features3May%202015?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=6302.0&issue=May%202015&num=&view=>>>

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006, *How Australians Use Their Time*, cat. no. 4153.0, viewed 12 February 2016 <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4153.0>>

¹⁰ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Face the Facts: Gender Equality* (2014). Available at <<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/FTFGender.pdf>>

- In Australia, women have significantly less money saved for their retirement which means they are more likely to experience poverty in their retirement years and be more reliant on the Age Pension than men¹¹. In Tasmania women are less likely than men to have a superannuation account and have significantly lower superannuation account balances where accounts do exist¹².
- Women are underrepresented in leadership roles in both the private and public sectors, in boardrooms and in parliaments, despite the fact that women outperform men in higher education¹³.
- Women made up just one-third of 2016 Australia Day honours recipients; a consistent figure over the last twenty years¹⁴.

A critical aspect of achieving gender equality is the empowerment of women. This may include equal treatment, or treatment that is different but which is considered equality in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. Section 25 of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (Tas)* provides a general exception that allows a person to discriminate against another person if it is for the purposes of carrying out a scheme for the benefit of a group which is disadvantaged or has special need because of a prescribed attribute, including gender.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to addressing the underlying factors which create and maintain gender inequality and empowering and enabling women and girls to reach their full potential. We are actively working to ensure that policies, programs and services are responsive to the needs of women and girls; are representative of their views; and reduce barriers to their participation.

The *Tasmanian Women's Plan 2013-2018* (the Plan) aims for equality for all women and girls and their full participation in the economic, social, political and community life of Tasmania. In recognition of the gender inequality that women and girls may experience in all spheres of their lives, the Plan addresses six priority areas; economic security; education and training; health and wellbeing; housing and homelessness; leadership and community participation; and safety and justice.

A key initiative of the Plan is the *Women on Boards Strategy 2015-2020* (the Strategy), which was launched on 1 July 2015. The Strategy is aimed at addressing the gender imbalance of government board membership. Increasing the number of women on boards is an important step to reducing disadvantage and improving democratic governance. The Tasmanian Government is committed to a target of 50 per cent representation of women across Tasmanian Government boards and committees by July 2020.

Other initiatives under the Plan include:

- Providing scholarships for women to develop their leadership skills through the Australian Institute of Company Directors;
- Exploring opportunities through the Tasmanian Women's Council to engage the business community to encourage education and training of women and girls post year 10;
- Rolling out the My Education approach to career and life planning across Government schools;
- Trialing and implementing the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business by the end of 2017;

¹¹ Tanton, R., Vidyattama, Y., McNamara, J., Vu, Q. N. and Harding, A. (2009), *Old, Single and Poor: Using Microsimulation and Microdata to Analyse Poverty and the Impact of Policy Change among Older Australians*. Economic Papers: A journal of applied economics and policy, 28, pg 15.

¹² Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, *Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation: State Tables, April to July 2007 (re-issue)*, cat. no. 6361.0.55.003, viewed 12 February 2016 <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@nsf/mf/6361.0>>

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006, *How Australians Use Their Time*, cat. no. 4153.0, viewed 12 February 2016 <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@nsf/mf/4153.0>>

¹³ Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *Australian Census of Women in Leadership 2012* (2012). Available at <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2012_CENSUS%20REPORT_0.pdf>

¹⁴ Elvery, S 2016, 'Australia Day: Women receive just one-third of honours – again', *ABC News Online*, 26 January 2016. Available at <<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-01-26/australia-day-honours-women/7107858>>

- Exploring a partnership between the Tasmanian Women's Council and Equal Opportunity Tasmania to promote flexible workplaces;
- Recognising and supporting carers through implementation of the *Tasmanian Carers Policy 2013* and *Tasmanian Carers Action Plan 2013-2018*;
- Launching a website and Facebook page to assist women and girls to access information on available government programs and services;
- Supporting women to secure housing and assist those who are at risk of homelessness;
- Updating and re-issuing the biennial *Women and Girls in Tasmania Report*, to measure progress and provide a profile of the status of women and girls in Tasmania. In 2016 these will be released as a series of fact sheets that will be available at the Department of Premier and Cabinet's website (www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/csr/for_and_about/women);
- Assisting in the development of a report on women's participation and leadership in sport through the Committee of Australian Sport and Recreation Officers Women in Sport Working Group; and
- Working to ensure the safety of women and their children.

Violence against women, which includes family violence, is one of the most pervasive expressions of gender inequality. In August 2015, the Tasmanian Government released *Safe Homes, Safe Families, Tasmania's Family Violence Action Plan 2015-2020* (Safe Homes, Safe Families) as a coordinated, whole-of-government response to family violence in Tasmania. Safe Home, Safe Families allocates \$25.57 million to new and direct actions addressing three priority areas; changing the attitudes and behaviours that lead to family violence (primary prevention), supporting families affected by family violence, and strengthening the legal response to family violence to hold perpetrators to account for their behaviour.

The links between the views, beliefs and attitudes which demean and diminish women and the existence of violence against women must be addressed. As Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull MP stated, "disrespecting women does not always result in violence against women, but all violence against women begins with disrespecting women".

Primary prevention strategies seek to prevent violence before it occurs by challenging the attitudes, beliefs and values that lead to violence. It includes engaging the institutions that reinforce, allow or do not challenge these attitudes to make change.

Through Safe Homes, Safe Families, the Tasmanian Government is committed to primary prevention actions:

- We are developing and delivering respectful relationships programs in all government schools from kindergarten to Year 12. The programs will encourage young people to develop healthy and equal relationships, and to reject violence. Support is also being provided to non-government schools to implement respectful relationships programs.
- White Ribbon's Workplace Accreditation Program is being delivered to staff in all Tasmanian Government agencies.
- The Tasmanian Government is working with other jurisdictions and the Australian Government to support the development and delivery of the \$30 million Council of Australian Governments' national campaign.
- Tasmania has also joined Our Watch, the national organisation established under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (the National Plan), to drive nation-wide change in the culture, behaviours and attitudes that lead to violence against women and children.

Our Watch's mandate is to stop violence before it happens and the organisation has a key role to play in addressing family violence in Australia. Our Watch is driving primary prevention initiatives such as the National Media Engagement Project and the Sports Engagement Program. Our Watch is also responsible for the delivery of *The Line*, a primary prevention behaviour change campaign for young people aged 12 to 20 years, which also supports parents, carers, teachers, educators, coaches and other influencers.

All levels of government in Australia have indicated their support for addressing family violence, and responses must include addressing gender inequality.

Gender inequality will be a key theme of the National Plan's Third Action Plan, *Promising Results 2016-2019*, which is due to be released in mid-2016. Gender equality and women's economic independence is a standing agenda item for the Women's Safety Ministers' meetings.

The 2015 Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, started a national conversation about family violence. She has emphasised the need to address gender inequality in order to stop the violence. The 2016 Australian of the Year, David Morrison AO, has signaled his intention to continue the national conversation, with a focus on gender equality and diversity.

While governments have a key role to play; taking action is everyone's responsibility. Violence is preventable if we all work together. We should promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life. We can challenge stereotypes, call out sexist remarks and strengthen respectful relationships, in our schools, workplaces, sporting groups and social clubs. Together we really can change the story.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide a submission to this inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Hon Jacque Petrusma MP
Minister for Women

