
OUR WATCH

SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

December 2019

About Our Watch

Our Watch is an independent, not for profit organisation established by the the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments in 2013. Since establishment, all States and Territories have become members of Our Watch.

Our vision is shared with the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (the National Plan), namely an Australian community free from violence against women and their children.

The specific mandate of Our Watch is to focus on the primary *prevention* of violence against women and their children. We aim to provide leadership at national, state, regional and local levels to drive change in the social norms, structures, attitudes and practices that underpin, drive and support violence against women and their children. Our Watch has four key areas of work:

1. Design and deliver public campaigns that engage and educate individuals and the community
2. Promote a sustained and constructive public conversation
3. Enable organisations, networks and communities to effect change
4. Influence public policy, systems and institutions.

About this submission

Our Watch is pleased to contribute to the Victorian Parliamentary Public Accounts and Estimates Committee inquiry into gender responsive budgeting.

This submission focuses on how gender responsive policy-making and budgeting can contribute to the primary prevention of violence against women through the promotion of gender equality. It draws on key frameworks developed by Our Watch:

- *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women*
- *Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children*
- *Counting on change: A guide to prevention monitoring*

Recommendations

Our Watch recommends that the Victorian Government:

1. Sustain its strong commitment to gender responsive policy-making and budgeting across all government portfolios
2. Facilitates gender responsive policy-making and budgeting processes across government that identify both:
 - the differential impacts of policies and expenditure on different groups of women, men and non-binary people, and
 - whether policies and expenditure are contributing to or hindering the essential actions (set out in *Change the story*) to prevent violence against women

3. Utilise available tools to integrate an intersectional analysis into gender responsive policy-making and budgeting processes
4. Ensure that appropriate data is collected, disaggregated and regularly analysed to contribute to whole-of-government policy and budget development
5. Publicly report on its analysis, and on the outcomes of policies, programs and expenditure as part of the Government's commitment to gender responsive policy-making and budgeting
6. Support the public service to understand and implement gender responsive policy-making and budgeting by providing ongoing training and tools, potentially with Office for Women providing advice playing a supporting role to other agencies
7. Regularly engages with civil society to inform and provide feedback on policy and budget development processes
8. Investigate and consider additional options for strengthening the gender policy machinery of government

Gender equality and primary prevention of violence against women

Australia's shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children, [*Change the story*](#), identifies gender inequality as setting the necessary social context in which violence against women occurs. The framework demonstrates that there are particular expressions or manifestations of gender inequality that are most consistently associated with higher levels of violence against women. These are referred to in *Change the story* as the 'gendered drivers' of violence against women. A range of international evidence finds that these gendered drivers arise from unequal and discriminatory institutional, social and economic structures, social and cultural norms, and organisational, community, family and relationship practices. Together, these structures, norms and practices create environments in which women and men are not considered equal, and violence against women is both more likely to happen, and more likely to be tolerated and even condoned.

The gendered drivers of violence against women outlined in the framework are as follows:

- Condoning of violence against women
- Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public life and relationships
- Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity
- Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women

Change the story uses a socio-ecological model to explain individual behaviour in a social context and illustrate the dynamic interrelations between relevant factors located at the individual, organisational, community, systemic and social levels. This conceptual model is illustrated below.

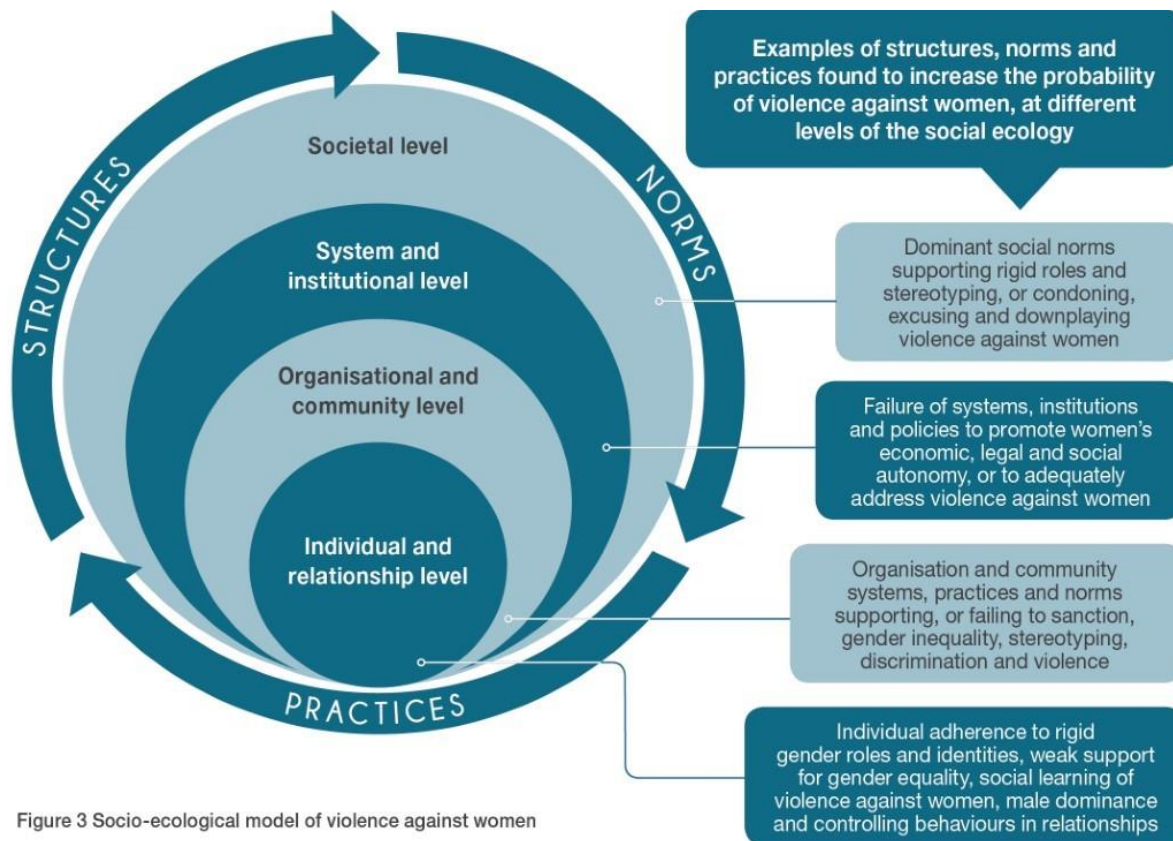


Figure 3 Socio-ecological model of violence against women

Source: *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth (2015).

Change the story has been embedded in *Free from Violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women*. The framework has also been integrated into the Third and Fourth Action Plans of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, endorsed by all Australian governments through COAG in October 2016 and August 2019 respectively.

Gender inequality intersects with other forms of inequality and discrimination

Change the story shows that, while gender inequality is always influential as a driver of violence against women, it cannot be considered in isolation, nor is it experienced in the same way by every woman. Other forms of systemic social, political and economic inequality, discrimination and disadvantage influence and intersect with gender inequality in complex ways, and at all levels of the social ecology. In some cases, they can increase the frequency, severity and prevalence of violence against women. This means that while gender inequality is a significant factor, it needs to be considered and addressed alongside and together with a range of other significant factors that may be significant in some cases, such as racism, homophobia, the impacts of colonisation and ableism.

The specific intersections relevant to understanding and preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in particular are outlined in [Changing the picture](#), a resource produced

by Our Watch and based on significant research, consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Aiming to support national efforts to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, *Changing the picture* sets out a model for understanding the specific intersecting drivers of this violence, namely:

- The ongoing impacts of colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- The ongoing impacts of colonisation for non-Indigenous people and in Australian society
- Gendered factors – both gender and inequality in a gender sense, and specific gendered drivers of violence that are a consequence of colonisation

The intersection of these drivers is illustrated in the diagram below.

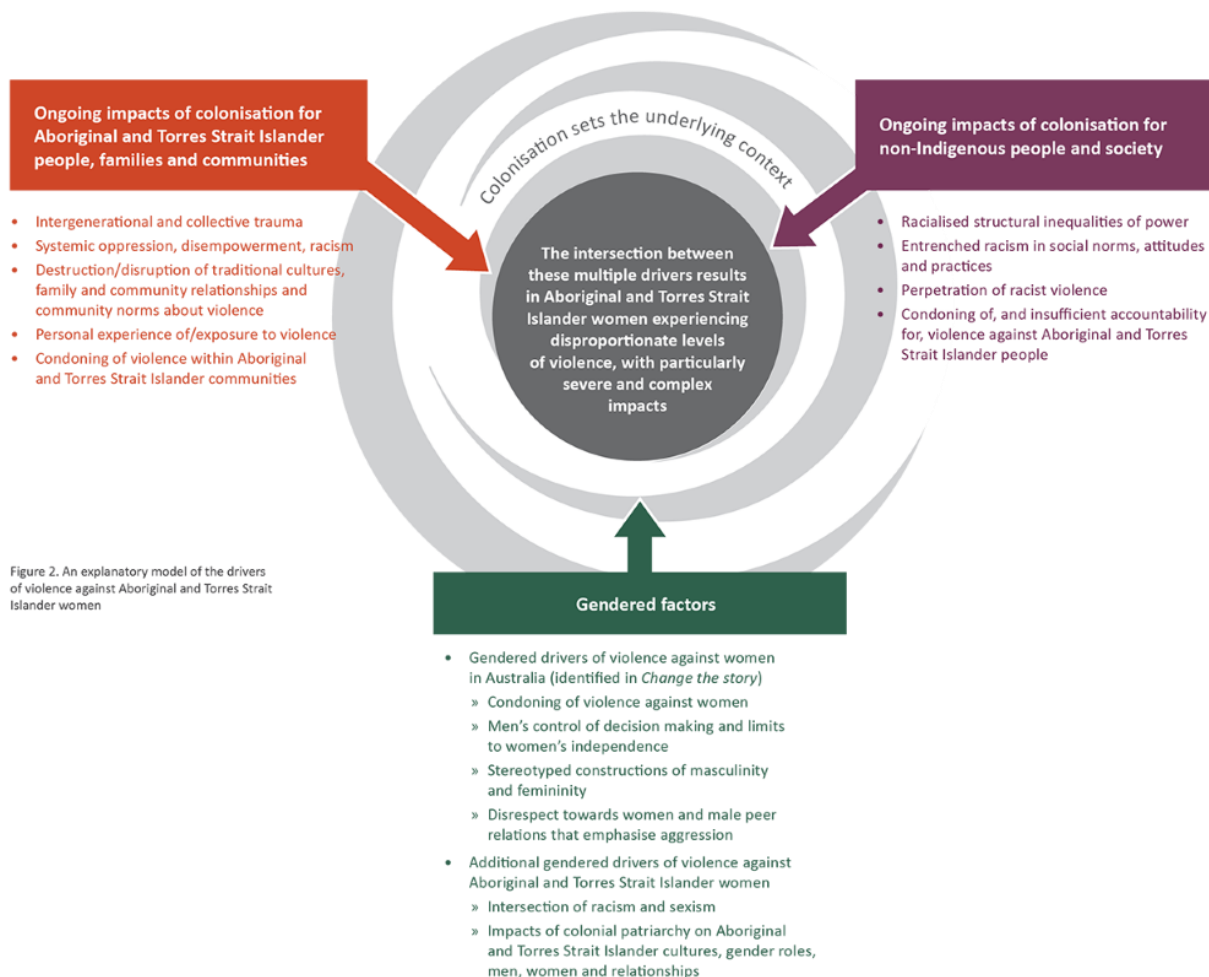


Figure 2. An explanatory model of the drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Preventing violence against women

Violence against women is prevalent but not inevitable. The drivers of violence against women are deeply entrenched across society, but they can be shifted through sustained efforts to progress gender equality.

Change the story sets out five essential actions that comprise such an approach, by addressing the gendered drivers of violence against women. These actions have been adopted by the Victorian Government in *Free from Violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women*. They are:

1. Challenge condoning of violence against women
2. Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships
3. Foster positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles
4. Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys
5. Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life

There are opportunities to contribute to these essential actions across many public policy areas, for example in portfolios as diverse as health, education, justice, housing, regional development, occupational health and safety, and transport.

It is crucial that approaches to the primary prevention of violence against women are multi-faceted and sustained, involving multiple techniques in different settings (workplaces, schools, sporting clubs etc) and working across the life course. Single primary prevention programs and techniques (for example, direct participation programs, organisational development, and communications and social marketing) may have a positive impact, but the impact of each on their own is generally limited to the specific participants or audiences and is likely to be small in scale and short-lived. This is why a sustained, whole of population approach, involving many different, mutually reinforcing efforts, which seek to target all areas of people's lives, is critical for primary prevention to be effective.

Further, the implementation of primary prevention programs and initiatives 'on the ground' needs to be supported by complementary political and institutional strategies, including public policy, legislation and regulation in order to shift the social structures that enable, drive or effectively condone violence against women. It is for these reasons that gender responsive policy-making and budgeting across all areas of government should be seen as having a critical role to play in prevention – enabling, supporting, reinforcing, amplifying and complementing other efforts to prevent violence against women.

Gender responsive budgeting and policy-making

Gender responsive budgeting “seeks to ensure that the collection and allocation of public resources is carried out in ways that are effective and contribute to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. It should be based on in-depth analysis that identifies effective interventions for implementing policies and laws that advance women's rights. It provides tools to assess the different needs and contributions to men and women, and boys and girls within the

existing revenues, expenditures and allocations and calls for adjusting budget policies to benefit all groups”.¹

Gender responsive budgeting is supported by gender responsive policy-making, which considers policy processes more broadly than only in relation to expenditure and budget development.

The use of gender responsive policy-making and budgeting is crucial in order for governments to address gender inequalities across Australian society, change the broad and underlying conditions that produce and support violence against women, and effectively uphold our international human rights obligations.

Gender responsive policy-making and budget development can identify government levers to address gender inequalities, for example by promoting women’s independence and decision-making, challenging gender stereotypes, and promoting and normalising gender equality in public and private life. Gender analyses of government budgets and policies should not only be about considering impacts on women – they should include consideration of the impact for men, for example by assessing whether policies and budget allocation are likely to have the effect of maintaining or reinforcing dominant forms of masculinity (which help to maintain gender inequality²).

The Victorian Government has already made important commitments in *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy*, including to progressively introduce gender impact analysis in policy, budgets and service delivery and establish a Gender Equality Act. Our Watch provides information and recommendations below to inform and build upon these commitments.

Recommendation 1: Our Watch recommends that the Victorian Government sustain its strong commitment to gender responsive policy-making and budgeting across all government portfolios

Recommendation 2: Our Watch recommends that the Victorian Government facilitates gender responsive policy-making and budgeting processes across government that identify both:

- the differential impacts of policies and expenditure on different groups of women, men and non-binary people, and
- whether policies and expenditure are contributing to or hindering the essential actions (set out in *Change the story*) to prevent violence against women

Intersectionality and gender responsive budgeting

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categorisations – such as gender, race, class, disability or sexuality – as they apply to a given individual or group, which are regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination and disadvantage as well as

¹ UN Women, ‘Gender Responsive Budgeting’, accessed: <https://unwomen.org.au/our-work/focus-areas/what-is-gender-responsive-budgeting/>

² Our Watch, *Men in Focus: Unpacking masculinities and engaging men in the prevention of violence against women – Summary of evidence review* (2019)

power and privilege.³ An **intersectional analysis** is therefore an analysis of the ways in which different and multiple systems and structures of oppression and discrimination intersect and reinforce each other, rather than operating separately. This analysis focuses particularly on the negative consequences and complex impacts for those people who are positioned at the intersection of two or more of these systems of inequality.⁴

Integrating intersectional analysis and gender responsive budgeting is a key contemporary challenge. Without an intersectional approach, gender responsive policy-making and budgeting process are likely to be limited because they will not address the ways in which policies and expenditure impact on different groups of women, men and non-binary people.

Intersectional prevention (of violence against women) work requires a structural and systemic focus to address the social systems, structures, norms and practices that create complex intersecting forms of discrimination and privilege, and that influence patterns of perpetration as well as experiences of violence. Integrating intersectional analysis into gender responsive policy-making and budgeting processes can play an important role in supporting efforts to address the intersecting drivers of violence against women. For example, understanding the ways in which racism and sexism intersect, and the ways in which laws, policies, economic measures, and organisational and institutional practices can have discriminatory impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in can inform more effective strategies to address the specific drivers of violence against Indigenous women.

Examples of tools and approaches to support policy-analysis that applies an intersectional analysis include:

- [Gender Based Analysis Plus](#) developed by the Status of Women Canada – “GBA+ is an analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men and non-binary people may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The “plus” in GBA+ acknowledges that GBA goes beyond biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences.... Achieving gender equality depends on closing key gaps between diverse groups of women, men and non-binary people”⁵
- [Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis Framework](#) which “aims to enhance the decision-making capacity of a wide range of stakeholders, including analysts working in the health and health-related policy sectors, community organisations and researchers. IBPA provides a new and effective method for understanding the varied equity-relevant implications of

³ Our Watch. (2018). *Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women*, 79.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Status of Women Canada (4 December 2018), ‘Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+)’, <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-acis/index-en.html>

policy and for promoting equity-based improvements and social justice within an increasingly diverse and complex population base”.⁶

Recommendation 3: Our Watch recommends that the Victorian Government utilise available tools to integrate an intersectional analysis into gender responsive policy-making and budgeting processes

Data for gender responsive policy-making and budgeting

Data is crucial for informing gender responsive policy-making and budgeting processes, analysis and decisions. Governments have access to rich quantitative data sets, and it is important that these data sets be appropriately disaggregated in order to understand the impacts of policies and expenditure on different groups. Additionally, these quantitative data sets should be complemented by other forms of data including community engagement and consultation and other qualitative sources to more fully understand the impacts on different groups.

The Victorian Government has already made important steps by committing to review the full range of existing data sources and data sets available to inform gender equality in Victoria, and establish Victoria’s gender equality baseline.⁷

Recommendation 4: Our Watch recommends that the Victorian Government ensure that appropriate data is collected, disaggregated and regularly analysed to contribute to whole-of-government policy and budget development

Public reporting on analysis and outcomes

To promote transparency and accountability, governments should publicly report on their gender responsive budgeting and policy-making analysis and outcomes. This supports civil society engagement with government policy and budgets, and assists with improving public understanding about the differential impacts of policies and expenditure on the community.

Public reporting of this kind should go beyond a list of funding commitments relating to women and gender equality, and instead include actions such as publishing gender-focused analyses in the Department of Treasury and Finance’s budget processes for both revenue and expenditure. This type of analysis would assist to answer the kinds of specific questions that are at the centre of gender analyses of budgets and policies, including ‘who is and is not benefitting from public expenditure?’ and ‘how are policies and budgets helping to change the gendered drivers of violence against women?’.

Recommendation 5: Our Watch recommends that the Victorian Government publicly report on its analysis, and on the outcomes of policies, programs and expenditure as part of the Government’s commitment to gender responsive policy-making and budgeting

⁶ O Hankivsky (ed) (2012) *An Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis Framework*, accessed: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/46176>

⁷ *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy*

Supporting the public service to implement gender responsive policy-making and budgeting

Our Watch recommends that governments invest in developing the capacity and skills of the public service to undertake gender-responsive budgeting and policy-making on an ongoing basis. Training should also seek to increase awareness of and commitment to gender equality and the *Safe and Strong* strategy. This kind of capacity building would be a practical way in which the Victorian Government could uphold its commitment to ‘modelling best practice for gender equality in the Victorian public sector’.⁸ It would provide clear recognition of gender analysis as a valued area of expertise in the public policy process.

There is potential for the Office for Women to play a key role in implementing this commitment, by providing advice and support to other agencies to build their capacity to develop gender-responsive policies and budgets.

Recommendation 6: Our Watch recommends that the Victorian Government support the public service to understand and implement gender responsive policy-making and budgeting by providing ongoing training and tools, potentially with Office for Women providing advice playing a supporting role to other agencies

Civil society engagement

Gender responsive policy-making and budgeting can be supported by mechanisms for consulting with and seeking advice from civil society throughout the policy and budget development and implementation process. These mechanisms can support policy-makers to better understand the impacts of proposals on different groups in the community and develop policy solutions that support gender equality and the essential actions set out in *Change the story* and *Free from Violence*.

For example, the Ministerial Council on Women’s Equality (established under *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy*) is an important mechanism which can provide expert advice to the Minister for Women.

Recommendation 7: Our Watch recommends that the Victorian Government regularly engages with civil society to inform and provide feedback on policy and budget development processes

Strengthening the gender machinery of government

The Victorian Government’s commitment to gender-responsive policy making and budgeting (set out in *Safe and Strong*) is significant, and adopting the recommendations discussed in this submission will go some way to supporting its implementation, by helping to identify appropriate analytical approaches and beginning to build capacity within the public sector.

However, to realise and deliver on the full potential of gender-responsive policy-making and budgeting, there will be a need to strengthen the gender policy machinery of government – the kinds of structures and processes within government and the bureaucracy that help ensure expert

⁸ <https://www.vic.gov.au/about-women-victoria>

gender analysis is applied at those points in policy and budget development and implementation processes where it can have most effect.

Opportunities to strengthen this policy machinery include by establishing:

- processes to require gender impact statements in all policy and budget proposals as part of the budget development process
- processes to enable gender analysis of Cabinet submissions, specifically involving the Minister for Women and incorporating expert advice from the Office for Women
- an interdepartmental mechanism to coordinate gender equality initiatives across other agencies and ensuring reporting – this could be a specific function of the Office for Women

Recommendation 8: Our Watch recommends the Victorian Government investigate and consider additional options for strengthening the gender policy machinery of government.