

**YWCA AUSTRALIA
SUBMISSION-**

**QUEENSLAND
WOMEN'S
STRATEGY**

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**GENDER EQUALITY
IS FOR ALL OF US**





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work, live and play and pay our respects to Elders past, present.

We recognise First Nations people as the Custodians of the lands, seas and skies with more than 60,000 years of connection, wisdom and relationship in caring for Country.

We work and live on stolen land and we have a responsibility to acknowledge the harm done and to work towards respect, recognition and self-determination of all First Peoples.

The Women's Strategy in Queensland so far have not addressed the need for intersectional and gender-responsive analysis and as a result, has failed to appropriately support and invest adequately in First Nations women and gender diverse peoples self-determination, leadership and communities.



CLIENTS, MEMBERS & STAFF

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"A gender-equal Queensland is where I can pursue my dream career but also know that I can have a family and it will never disadvantage me or cause me to sacrifice my career."

- YWCA Cyber Feminist (CBF) Member

"I want to see in my lifetime all genders retiring with equal super balances."

- YWCA Young Women's Council Member

"In today's world, women are not safe. Whether it be in their homes or out in the streets... As a woman, if I were homeless, safety would be my number one priority, especially during the night... Some homeless women also have young children with them. This only increases the risk."

- YWCA Young Women's Council Member

"Access to NDIS support shouldn't be gendered, but it is."

YWCA Staff member

"I think the instability of housing, the competitiveness of the rental market and how unattainable homeownership is, is a frightening reality for young people. Mental health issues and domestic violence are some of the leading causes of homelessness for women. There needs to be more intervention services before young people become homeless and targeted support services for these groups when they become homeless."

- YWCA Young Women's Council Member

'I want to see gender-based violence taken as a serious problem that needs to be addressed in a systematic, whole of community way to eliminate all gendered violence and promote gender equity so all people can live free of fear and in safety.'

- YWCA Cyber Feminist (CBF) Member

'Prioritise First Nations women and children. Bring First Nations and non-indigenous people together to try to find a shared language around the drivers of violence.' - YWCA CBF Member

'Some of the most critical issues include access to safety and safe spaces, freedom from violence, access to counselling and support, economic empowerment and independence, safety for their children and dependents, and having safe options to exit their relationships and keep safe and away from perpetrators.'

- YWCA CBF Member

'Women need access to safe, reliable accommodation to leave relationships.'

- YWCA CBF Member

"I want a future where Men will not make jokes/comments about women and their capabilities, e.g. assume we are worse at some tasks/activities/jobs. Is that too much to expect?"

- YWCA CBF Member

"How will it be equal if my friends who are sex workers don't have an industry that is safe to work in?"

- YWCA CBF Member

YWCA Australia (YWCA) is a proud women's specialist organisation that has been supporting young women and women in Australia for over 140-years.

During the Great Depression in the 1880's, Felicia Hopkins established the first YWCA in Queensland – Rockhampton – to provide a space for women to thrive and find community. Today, YWCA is a national organisation with over 270 staff across 16 locations throughout the country. We deliver programs and services aligned to our purpose relating to young women's leadership and women's housing. YWCA simultaneously undertakes advocacy that develops the leadership and collective power of young women, women and gender diverse people. We support individuals, their families and communities at critical times; and promote gender equality to strengthen our communities across Australia's diverse social and geographic landscape.

YWCA has considerable experience in domestic and family violence (DFV) programming over its history, which underpins our deep expertise in gender equality as well as leadership and housing. Our history of programming has included: Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes, Rise Above The Pack Bystander Intervention, respectful relationships education, Healthy Relationships, Domestic Violence Intervention Service, Family Abuse Prevention Service, Safer Pathways, Safety for Housing, women's specialist housing and homelessness support and Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services.

YWCA is the only national women's housing provider in Australia providing over 130,000 nights of affordable accommodation to women every year. In our commitment to action, we believe access to safe, secure and affordable housing is a fundamental factor in ending inequality for women.

As an organisation, YWCA:

- Provides services for the safety and empowerment of young women and women including domestic and family violence programs such as Y-Hand Up in Toowoomba which connects women in need with safe housing and supports.
- Delivers the Y Ability program in Toowoomba specifically designed for women with disabilities, specialising in skills development to support self-determination.
- Provides community housing including properties in Toowoomba and Townsville. In In Toowoomba we are able to offer short term affordable accommodation to women that supports up to 30 women a year. In addition to innovative community partnerships like Lakehouse in collaboration with CaSPA Care; providing emergency accommodation to women experiencing homelessness in Victoria and supported by a group of more than 40 private companies
- Offers support services for the relief of homelessness such as our Homelessness Support Services in Sydney's CBD.
- Operates profit for-purpose business' such as the Song Hotel and our venue hire in Rockhampton.
- Promotes and advocates for gender equality including promoting awareness of the causes and effects of sexual, domestic and family violence and amplifying young women and people of marginalised genders experiences and voices. In addition, we work to advance the leadership and advocacy of young women, women and people of marginalised genders inclusive of and centring lived experience of homelessness/ at risk of homelessness and violence
- Regularly collates and analyses quality improvement data, including demographics, outcomes and service capacity as well as research such as YWCA's "[Women's Housing Needs in Regional Australia](#)"ⁱ outlining key housing needs and challenges for women through national quantitative and qualitative research undertaken across regional Australia.
- Assists communities to build resilience through local engagement, education and understanding local social constructs.

“I want to see men in political leadership positions join the campaign to end gender inequality, and for young women like me to believe them when they say they will.”

- YWCA CBF Member

Executive Summary

The drive to address gender inequality is increasing globally, and it's everybody's business. Overwhelmingly, the evidence is difficult to ignore, equality isn't just a women's issue, gender inequality does not just negatively impact women, young women and girls, but also men, young men boys and gender diverse peopleⁱⁱ. Despite this, a concerning proportion of people in Australia believe that gender inequality is exaggerated or no longer a problem. Significant structural and cultural shifts, propelled by leaders within and outside of government, are required to see a measurable improvement in the impact of gender inequalities.

Before COVID-19 changed our lives forever, it was already clear that gender and the associated inequalities had a huge impact on economic stability; lower incomes, periods out of the workplace for caring, and longer lifespans.ⁱⁱⁱ Women are also the primary beneficiaries of housing support systems, making up most of the public housing tenants and Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) recipients^{iv}. Women are also more likely to live in low-income or single-parent households and therefore are more likely to experience housing stress. Women are more likely to be in receipt of Jobseeker payments for longer, and disproportionately outnumber men in the receipt of Parenting Payments, Aged Pension and Youth Allowance.

Anecdotal reports from YWCA members, clients, residents and staff have revealed young women, women and children have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Evidence has shown that during challenging times, like this pandemic, the challenges and the intersecting complexities of economic insecurity, increases in care responsibilities - including home schooling - as well as increased experiences of domestic and family violence are compounded for women. Women have accounted for 60 per cent of job losses, and while some have returned to workplaces and accessibility has increased, timeout of the workforce and increasing care loads has compounding and lasting impacts on wages and superannuation.^v

Gender inequality affects everyone differently but the data and evidence is clear, women face some of the most critical challenges in our communities. We are encouraged by the release of the positive impacts showcased in the Gender Equality Report cards and the improvements highlighted, and we wholeheartedly agree with the Premier, there's still so much more we have to do.

Our recommendations are based on the input of YWCA members and opportunities identified from international, national and other state insights of gender equality mechanisms.

We are looking forward to seeing the strategy prioritise facilitating the following, whereby:

- All Queenslanders live in a safe and equal society
- All Queenslanders have equal access to power, resources and opportunities
- All Queenslanders are treated with dignity, respect and fairness
- All Queenslanders benefit from gender equality

- The Queensland Government modelling best practice, culture, quotas and targets for women's leadership across all departments.

The review process underway of the Women's Strategy needs to consider a whole-of-government, intersectional and gender-responsive approach to effectively address the structural disadvantages experienced by women and gender diverse people^{vi}. This approach would centre the prevention of domestic and family violence, by engaging specialist services, experts and young women leaders to come together to address and respond to the gendered drivers of inequality. As well as taking a flexible and tailored approach to implementation, this approach would ensure that more vulnerable and marginalised groups are reached and supported.

YWCA brought members together for a joint consultation with the Queensland Office For Women led by Queensland Young Women's Council Member Maninder Kaur. In addition, a YWCA member survey was conducted in September 2021 to determine our key areas of focus for the upcoming review of the Queensland Women's Strategy. We have integrated voices shared during the consultation process and included experiences of our frontline services, clients, tenants and residents with evidence-informed analysis.

We welcome this opportunity to provide a submission to the further development of the Women's Strategy, and commend the Queensland Government on their commitment to implementing structural change to comprehensively address gender inequality. The Queensland Government has a unique opportunity to lead Australia's efforts, building on an incredible body of international and state driven work in tackling gender inequalities and showcase on a world stage, innovative and ground-breaking initiatives that improve the lives of everyone living in Queensland.

Our four key areas include:

- **Leadership, celebration and culture change**
 - **Safety**
 - **Economic Security**
 - **Health and Wellbeing**

Recommendations

"(There is a) real opportunity to create a gender equality framework that has the potential to impact everyone... This framework must recognise the specific challenges that groups of different women face, as well as addressing the shared experiences that women identify as a problem to achieving gender equality in their lives. Moreover, this framework should aim to go beyond meeting the basic human rights of all women but should strive to empower them, which will overall contribute to the growth and development of the region as a whole."

Young Women's Council Member

Leadership, celebration and culture change - Everyone benefits from gender equality.

- a. Gender Equality affects everybody; **Rename the Women's Strategy to the Queensland Gender Equality strategy.****
- b. A commitment to the inclusion of recommendations made in the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Report.**
- c. The Women's strategy to include ambitious outcomes, quotas and targets to enhance and measure progress and impact, while still allowing for a flexible and tailored approach.**
- d. The implementation of affirmative action measures or 'temporary special measures'^{vii}, which evidence shows is effective in contributing to achieving gender equality.**
- e. Government to encourage and enable workplaces to undertake gender audits that include analysis of workplace policies, practices and culture.** This should be followed by concerted efforts to increase diversity and equity and to build women's leadership and workplace responses to violence (e.g. through the Our Watch Workplace Equality Respect standards).
- f. Implementing Gender Equality Action Plans into all government departments to embed gender equity into workplaces and increase leadership pathways for women and gender diverse people.**
- g. Fostering youth and emerging leadership initiatives for women and gender diverse people to support a pipeline of new leaders through development, networking and mentoring.**
- h. Adoption of ILO Convention 190.**
- i. Advocate for aligned materials and resources (workforce capacity/individual advocacy) to be able to identify what intersecting discrimination looks like.**
- j. Engage with organisations like YWCA and Equality Rights Alliance to continue to centre the voices of young women, women and gender diverse people as critical co-designers on the initiatives the strategy takes to address barriers to young women's leadership, safety and impact on housing security for women**
- k. Providing training for public sector employees such as Unconscious Bias Training and Bystander Intervention Training to shift attitudes and behaviours based on gender inequality in the workplace.**
- l. Supporting women and gender diverse people on boards in leadership programming to provide flexible support packages for pursuing a board career, including through networking, scholarship programs, mentoring and capacity building.** YWCA currently has 50% young women on its board with a 30% quota commitment.
- m. Investing in Indigenous women's leadership initiatives (for example through programs such as YWCA's Aboriginal Women's Leadership Program.**
- n. A commitment to Intersectional and gender-responsive analysis and budgeting, including that the Queensland Government adopt global best practice in the establishment, implementation and resourcing of gender responsive budgeting, that this be aligned with the Women's Strategy and any accompanying legislation and include civil society such as YWCA Australia.**
- o. Working with and influencing the evolution of the Anti-Discrimination Act.**
- p. YWCA Australia recommends the implementation of something like YWCA's Young Women's Council, and the Victorian Government's 'citizens' jury' where committees made up of diverse community members inform and analyse the implementation and impact of policies with a gender lens. An example of internal application of this could be implementing a gender lens into Queensland policy review committees. In addition to mandated targets and indicators, organisations and individuals who achieve gender targets should be rewarded and incentivised.**

- q. YWCA New Zealand have created the NZ Equal Pay Awards, finding phenomenal success celebrating leaders in pay parity. YWCA is keen to work closely with the Queensland Government in sharing our expertise.

Safety - We need gender equality urgently. Gender equality prevents violence against women.

- r. Expansion of professionals and services who support children and young people impacted by Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence (FSDV).
- s. Increase in medium-to-long-term supported accommodation services for young people, particularly those with complex needs.
- t. Expand eligibility of crisis services to women on Temporary Visas.
- u. Investment in research and evaluation - including data on the direct and indirect impact of domestic violence on Australian communities, impact on housing pathways and young people and FSDV.
- v. Support recommendations from the Pathway to Nowhere and Blueprint for reform report.
- w. Young people co-designing primary prevention campaigns and initiatives aimed at them.
- x. Support and investment in women's rights organisations and civil society networks addressing backlash and discrimination – eg. Men's Rights Activists/Transphobia.
- y. Healing-focused, prioritising, and strengthening culture, using strengths-based and community strengthening approaches adapting to different community, demographic and geographic contexts.
- z. Non-Indigenous organisations working as allies in culturally safe ways.
- aa. Address factors that reinforce gendered drivers of violence- including the need to Raise The Rate for economic accessibility, access to safe affordable housing and challenging the normalisation of violence as an expression of dominant masculinity as preventative measures.
- bb. Long-term extended funding commitments for primary prevention. It is essential that we access long term funding commitments for a holistic approach to FSDV the Queensland Government provide adequate, long term funding for FSDV primary prevention, early intervention, responding to victim survivors and professionalisation, prioritising specialist women's services practitioners and organisations, First Nations specialist services, migrant and refugee specialist services, disability specialist services, children and youth services, LGBTIQ+ specialist services and men's behaviour change specialist services that are culturally appropriate and adaptable to all levels of education.
- cc. Support for Establishment of a National Plan on Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and centring of Wiyi Yani U Thangani recommendations.
- dd. Increase investment in collaboration on primary prevention between and within sectors, including business, not-for-profit, community, and government
- ee. Reorganise social care and establish an Inter-Ministerial Taskforce to adequately value care.
- ff. Implementing community Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles into urban planning, which is proven to reduce criminal activity and increase perceptions of safety in the community. Integrating a gender mainstreaming approach into urban and environmental design is also key to ensuring women's experiences and interests are incorporated.

Economic Security- Gender Equality = economic prosperity

- gg. **Developing a gender-responsive approach to housing and homelessness and play a leading role in negotiating with the Commonwealth Government to develop National Housing and Homelessness Agreements that address gender and other forms of marginalisation.**
- hh. **Social and affordable housing addressed as a priority to achieve gender equality -** Significantly increasing social and affordable housing stock to ensure women, young women and girls have access to safe and affordable housing, particularly in regional and remote areas, in an effort to increase their economic security
- ii. **The Queensland Government support for addressing with urgency the inclusion of housing and related investment as part of their commitment to the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and their Children and the national summit for women's safety in September 2021.** This includes:- Implementing recommendations of the Nowhere To Go report by Equity Economics, Everybody's Home, YWCA Australia, DVNSW, DVVIC/RC, Women's Housing Company, Homelessness NSW and Victorian Women's Housing Alliance and invest in 16,800 additional social housing units for women, children and young people experiencing FSDV costing \$7.6 billion which would immediately result in economic benefits of \$15.3 billion and the creation of 47,000 new jobs
- jj. **Incorporate analysis and recommendations from YWCA's Regional Housing Report**
- kk. **Providing twenty days of paid domestic violence leave for employees experiencing domestic and family violence to ensure a supportive culture within the workplace and ensure victims are not financially disadvantaged or experience job insecurity.**
- ll. **Promoting and supporting women's entrepreneurship and small businesses through grant mechanisms and other opportunities, with a focus on First Nations women, disabled women, migrant and refugee women and LGBTIQ+ people.**
- mm. **Partner with organisations like YWCA Australia and the Equality Rights Alliance and listen to and involve the voices of women, young women and girls in the development, implementation and evaluation of economic security initiatives**
- nn. **Implement measures to address women's economic inequality, given growing evidence on the gendered drivers of violence including: - Gender Pay Gap - Unpaid Care and women's overrepresentation in underpaid roles - Addressing gender inequity in superannuation**

Health and Wellbeing - Societies that value all genders as equal are healthier and happier

- oo. **Long-term coordinated funding for Women's Specialist Services, like our women's specialist NDIS support in Toowoomba**
- pp. **Increasing access to affordable and appropriate sexual health services in Queensland**
- qq. **Making comprehensive sexuality education encompassing respectful relationships education available to every young person in Queensland**
- rr. **Promoting positive health norms to boys and men that contradict gender stereotypes that men must be physically and emotionally strong and dominant**
- ss. **Increasing investment in health promotion and primary prevention services to improve health outcomes for First Nations women, particularly those in rural and remote areas**
- tt. **Providing support for people who have experienced female genital mutilation**
- uu. **Partner with organisations, like YWCA Australia, and listen to and incorporate the voices of women, young women and gender diverse people in the development, implementation and evaluation of health and wellbeing service provision and campaigns.**
- vv. **Long-term coordinated funding for Women's Specialist Services**
- ww. **An intersectional and gender-responsive approach to technology safety by design**

Leadership, celebration and culture change

First Nations Peoples

We wish to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work, live and play and pay our respects to Elders past, present. We recognise First Nations people as the Custodians of the lands, seas and skies with more than 60,000 years of connection, wisdom and relationship in caring for Country. We work and live on stolen land and we have a responsibility to acknowledge the harm done and to work towards respect, recognition and self-determination of all First Peoples. The approach to safety and housing in Queensland has so far not addressed the need for intersectional and gender-responsive analysis and as a result, has failed to support and invest adequately in First Nations self-determination, leadership and communities. This has resulted in severely unequal distribution of wealth that means the impact for young First Nations people is felt in a compounding way, especially in home ownership and experiences of homelessness.

First Nations women and people of marginalised genders are more likely to experience compounding risk factors of geographic isolation and some may experience family violence and intimate partner violence within a broader context of state, institutional and financial abuse. First Nations women are also more likely to encounter discrimination in the private rental and housing sector and are more likely to experience Intimate Partner Violence as a result of inadequate or cramped housing situations. First Nations women are approximately 34 times more likely to be hospitalised for injuries arising from DFV than non-Indigenous women, and 11 times more likely to be killed. The disproportionately higher rates are related to intergenerational trauma associated with Australia's ongoing colonial heritage. Colonial violence includes 'the disadvantage, dispossession and attempted destruction of Aboriginal cultures'.

First Nations Peoples are best placed to lead change to ending housing insecurity in their communities as well as in all formally recognised places of decision-making. YWCA also support the inclusion of recommendations made in the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Report.

"Now is the time to re-set and enter a transformative relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and settler Australia, as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike, in the face of crisis, envisage a stronger, more compassionate and caring nation."

- **June Oscar AO - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner**

Gender equality leadership is crucial to the implementation of a gender equality framework. Data from WGEA shows that women and men are concentrated in particular industries, six in ten Australians work in an industry that is dominated by one gender. The Queensland government can play a significant role in enabling structural and cultural change in workplaces to encourage more women to feel supported to make complaints. As an influential employer in the state, this includes reviewing and updating policy and processes for reporting, providing staff training, and framing workplace sexual harassment within Workplace Health and Safety approaches

Intersectionality

When we refer to 'Intersectionality' we are speaking to the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation.

Aspects of identity can include but are not limited to social characteristics. Individuals may be First Nations, a disabled person, a refugee or an LGBTIQ+ person with differing asylum status, age,

socioeconomic status and ability. Different aspects of identity can intersect to create additional risks, barriers or forms of isolation that influence the way people experience economic insecurity, DFV and homelessness or housing insecurity.

“YWCA uses a feminist-intersectional, strengths-based approach to case management. This looks at the family unit as a whole and all individuals as a victim survivor in their own right – needing individual care plans and supports. This is particularly important with vulnerable cohorts including First Nations people, gender diverse people, migrant and refugee clients and people living in remote regions.”

- YWCA Staff member

As a women’s specialist service, we seek intersectional and gender-responsive approaches to solutions that are framed within a model of gender equality. The social determinants that underpin health and wellbeing, DFV, economic stability, homelessness and housing insecurity require gender equality and intersectionality, this is at the centre of our drive for change. This should also be considered as a mainstreamed context across Government, Non-Government and Community responses.

“More needs to be done to get men involved and make them accountable for community norms, the work should be not just about women and survivors doing all the work. There needs to be more active discussion about the effects of dominant masculinity, male entitlement and violence, and structural sexism. It is essential that gender diverse people, men and boys are part of a societal shift that benefits everyone, a ‘Women’s Strategy’ reinforces the notion that structural and systemic challenges are only really a women’s problem.”

- YWCA CBF Member

Gender Equality and Equity

“A lack of equal representation at each decision-making level, especially in an economic, health & environmental crisis, has further subjected women to structural inequalities within a coercive welfare system and inadequate criminal justice system. The result is further economic insecure, increased risk to safety and a widening of gendered gaps in pay, victimisation rates and experiences of homelessness.”

- YWCA Member

Gender equity as “the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women, men and gender diverse people. The concept recognises that people have different needs and access to power and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalances across genders. It is not about the equal delivery of services or distribution of resources; equity recognises diversity and disadvantage, and seeks to direct resources and services towards those most in need to ensure equal outcomes for all (Australian Women’s Health Network, 2014; UNDP, 2001 as cited in GEN VIC, 2018)”. Gender equality as “the outcome reached through addressing gender inequities. It is the equal participation of women, men and gender diverse people in all spheres of public and private life and the equal valuing by society of women, girls, boys, men and gender diverse people (State of Victoria, 2011 as cited in GEN VIC, 2018).

Government machinery

“All organisations and bodies should be required to have a gender audit.”

- YWCA Member

YWCA Australia affirms the need for inclusion of mechanisms and initiatives into a gender equality framework that make tangible and measurable progress on gender inequality. Below we highlight some key opportunities for leadership and best practice in this space.

These recommendations are:

- **Gender Equality Action Plans within and across government**
- **Gender Expert Facilitation and Partnerships with non-government**
- **Reporting and Accountability mechanisms**
- **Tackling policy and legislative change**

Importantly, a gender equality framework should include partnerships between government and gender equality specialists including representation from diverse backgrounds, much like the YWCA and OFW consultation collaboration held September 2021.

It is critical that the evolution of the Women’s Strategy drives best practice and evidence based frameworks and facilitated by experts in gender equality. For example, the Queensland Government could partner with YWCA Australia as experts in gender equality facilitation and implementation, on initiatives including:

- Collaboration on implementation of innovative housing models that address the driving factors behind women’s housing insecurity and homelessness, such as domestic and family violence and economic disadvantage. Examples include YWCA’s women’s specialist housing pathways, such as our ‘Pathways to Independence’ program for women at risk of homelessness, or ‘pop up housing’ models that provide medium-long term housing security such as Lakehouse in Victoria for women escaping domestic and family violence.
- Collaboration with the women’s sector on the rollout of a campaign to shift social attitudes to gender equality. The 50/50 by 2030 Report on social attitudes to gender equality highlights a ‘profound knowledge gap’ in understanding of gender inequality in Australia. This highlights the critical role of government and their partnerships with gender experts in filling that gap and bringing about systemic as well as cultural change.

Reporting and Accountability mechanisms

Reporting and accountability mechanisms are essential for measuring and mandating the success of a gender equality framework. The below mechanisms are best practice examples of how effective reporting and accountability can be integrated:

Outcomes, targets, quotas and indicators

Quotas, rather than targets, are essential for creating immediate and lasting change for gender equality.

“I want to see celebratory initiatives in community support that challenge gender stereotypes and create safe spaces for everyone to be involved. Campaigns focused on how you can address peers, friends, family etc. that perpetuate gender inequality through 'jokes', language and bias.”

- YWCA Staff Member

There are key differences between targets and quotas. Targets are “specific measurable objectives, generally set by an organisation at their own discretion, with discrete timeframes in which they are to be achieved” -Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2014. Targets allow us to set goals for expected percentages of women to be in or be nominated for positions but with minimal or no enforcement mechanisms or sanctions for failure to achieve the goal.^{viii} Quotas however, are government and/or industry mandated percentages of representation or numbers of each gender. The mandated percentages are paired with clear enforcement mechanisms. For example, close monitoring and application of financial or operational penalties on the entities that do not comply with the quota.^{ix} Reporting requirements alone are not related to a substantial increase in women’s representation relative to having no regulatory action.^x For example, evidence from Norway suggests that the introduction of a 40% target in 2003 did not achieve the expected results until after 2005 when the target was converted to a quota through the introduction of stronger enforcement mechanisms (Sojo et al., 2016).

In contrast, enforced quotas, rather than targets, will help not only to get equality of opportunity but equality of result. This is particularly the case when quotas are coupled with investment in long term social and cultural programs that help change the norms and practices that impact on the employment opportunities of women. This investment is important because while quotas are key for gender equality, particularly at the leadership level, they do not guarantee gender equality within leadership boards (Rebérioux & Roudaut, 2017). While quotas are crucial to gender equality they have to be accompanied with long term and recurrent investment in programs that challenge gender stereotypes, norms and practices.

The Queensland Government procurement is one of the largest drivers in the Queensland economy. Influencing and leveraging procurement and funding practices is a critical area to realise gender equality. The government’s purchasing power, as large as it is, must be used for necessary social, cultural and economic change in the area of gender equality.

Intersectional and gender-responsive analysis and budgeting (IRGB)

“Gender responsive budgeting is an analysis of the impact of the budget on gender equality and a process of changing budgetary decision-making and priorities.”

- **Emeritus Professor of economics Rhonda Sharp AM, of the University of South Australia’s Hawke Research Institute and Research Institute for Gender Studies**

Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) practices vary over the world, however, three areas are consistent.

- Gender-informed resource allocation whereby individual policy decisions and/or funding allocations take into account the impact of the decision on gender equality
- analysis at the sectorial level of the impact of decisions on gender equality within that sector or industry
- and overall assessment of the budget as a whole as to whether it is positive or negative for gender equality. gender-assessed budgets where the impact of the budget as a whole is subject to some degree of gender analysis.^{xi}

An effective GRB process in government would:

- sit at a range of points across the policy and budget development cycle, rather than at a single point in the process.
- identify intersectional and gender biases and improve awareness of intersectionality and gender among policy and decision makers.
- identify the resources needed to achieve equality.
- increase transparency and accountability on gender issues.
- incorporate an increasingly sophisticated intersectional analysis as the process builds over time.

There is a critical need to address factors that reinforce gendered drivers of violence - including the need to Raise The [Rate](#) for economic accessibility, access to safe affordable housing and challenging the normalisation of violence as an expression of dominant masculinity as preventative measures.

Investment in research and evaluation is also critical - including data on the direct and indirect impact of domestic violence on Australian communities, impact on housing pathways and young people and DFV. This supports an intersectional approach to gender-responsive budgeting approach and provides an evidence base to build upon.

Tackling policy and legislative change

There is compelling evidence, through the International Gender Gap Index, to suggest that gender disparity can be tackled effectively through legislative action on quotas, action plans and reporting.^{xii} This research also shows that gender equality legislation improves gender equality overall, including outside of the public sector. In other words, legislating on gender equality is effective in speeding up the pace of change and is critical to shifts in policy, social norms, attitudes and expectations. The Women's Strategy and any underpinning legislation can thus play a significant role in facilitating real progress for women and other marginalised groups.

YWCA Australia recommends the implementation of a Gender Equality Bill to mandate action on gender equality across the Queensland government. This will require a bi-partisan approach across all levels of government, including in the development and implementation of the legislation. This could include implementing mandates and incentives for the broader workforce, and updating anti-discrimination legislation which must be rigorously implemented. In line with this, the Queensland Government should consider revision and development of all government and public sector policies with a gender lens, with clearly delegated responsibility to all departments. This also includes encouraging the workforce more broadly to undertake policy review and more rigorous implementation of existing policies including special measures and flexible work arrangements.

Anti-Discrimination Act

In May 2021, the Attorney-General asked the Queensland Human Rights Commission to undertake a review of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991. The ADA plays an important role in preventing discrimination and promoting social inclusion in Queensland and can do a lot more. There is significant potential for structural reforms, including to ensure the current legislation protects and promotes equality and non-discrimination to the greatest extent possible.

The current Act assumes that discrimination occurs for only one reason (sex, age etc). If a young woman is refused a tenancy because she is both young and female, making a complaint under the current Act is difficult. The Act is poorly structured for making complaints of intersectional discrimination. We recommend that Qld should refer to ILO 190, which requires governments to make sexual harassment a workplace health and safety issue, which will also highlight the Federal Government to ratify the convention as per recommendation 16 from the Respect@Work report.^{xiii}

The current Act assumes that discrimination occurs for only one reason (sex, age etc). If a young woman is refused a tenancy because she is both young and female, making a complaint under the current Act is difficult. The Act is therefore poorly structured for making complaints of intersectional discrimination. The ADA is a very blunt instrument for achieving social and systemic change. The ADA is a complaints-based mechanism. While this is important to have, relying on individuals to make complaints is not an efficient means of achieving the elimination of discrimination, as it places the burden of change on the most vulnerable person in the situation. Eliminating discrimination for young women in particular requires proper attention to and resourcing of attitudinal change work at the social level, along with the identification of structural barriers to gender equality. The ADA needs to be better integrated with other tools, such as Change the Story (Our Watch), the National Plan to Reduce Violence, Queensland's Human Rights Act 2019 etc.

The Federal and State-level discrimination Acts were intended to implement the provisions of CEDAW. However, the limited grounds in the Act mean that some rights in CEDAW (such as the right to public participation by young women) are not protected. We recommend that the Act be amended to ensure it covers all the areas listed in CEDAW, explore how the ADA integrates with other social change and structural work, especially work on removing barriers to gender equality and align with Queensland's approach to gender equality.

Leadership, Celebration and Culture Change Recommendations - Everyone benefits from gender equality.

- a. Gender Equality affects everybody; **Rename the Women's Strategy to the Queensland Gender Equality strategy.**
- b. **A commitment to the inclusion of recommendations made in the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Report.**
- c. **The Women's strategy to include ambitious outcomes, quotas and targets to enhance and measure progress and impact, while still allowing for a flexible and tailored approach.**
- d. **The implementation of affirmative action measures or 'temporary special measures'^{xiv}, which evidence shows is effective in contributing to achieving gender equality.**
- e. **Government to encourage and enable workplaces to undertake gender audits that include analysis of workplace policies, practices and culture.** This should be followed by concerted efforts to increase diversity and equity and to build women's leadership and workplace responses to violence (e.g. through the Our Watch Workplace Equality Respect standards).
- f. **Implementing Gender Equality Action Plans into all government departments to embed gender equity into workplaces and increase leadership pathways for women and gender diverse people.**
- g. **Fostering youth and emerging leadership initiatives for women and gender diverse people to support a pipeline of new leaders through development, networking and mentoring.**
- h. **Adoption of ILO Convention 190.**
- i. **Advocate for aligned materials and resources (workforce capacity/individual advocacy) to be able to identify what intersecting discrimination looks like.**
- j. **Engage with organisations like YWCA and Equality Rights Alliance to continue to centre the voices of young women, women and gender diverse people as critical co-designers on the initiatives the strategy takes to address barriers to young women's leadership, safety and impact on housing security for women**
- k. **Providing training for public sector employees such as Unconscious Bias Training and Bystander Intervention Training to shift attitudes and behaviours based on gender inequality in the workplace.**
- l. ***Supporting women and gender diverse people on boards in leadership programming to provide flexible support packages for pursuing a board career, including through networking, scholarship programs, mentoring and capacity building. YWCA currently has 50% young women on its board with a 30% quota commitment.***
- m. ***Investing in Indigenous women's leadership initiatives (for example through programs such as YWCA's Aboriginal Women's Leadership Program.***
- n. ***A commitment to Intersectional and gender-responsive analysis and budgeting, including that the Queensland Government adopt global best practice in the establishment, implementation and resourcing of gender responsive budgeting, that this be aligned with the Women's Strategy and any accompanying legislation and include civil society such as YWCA Australia.***
- o. ***Working with and influencing the evolution of the Anti-Discrimination Act.***
- p. ***YWCA Australia recommends the implementation of something like YWCA's Young Women's Council, and the Victorian Government's 'citizens' jury' where committees made up of diverse community members inform and analyse the implementation and impact of policies with a gender lens. An example of internal application of this could be implementing a gender lens into Queensland policy review committees. In addition to mandated targets and indicators, organisations and individuals who achieve gender targets should be rewarded and incentivised.***

- q. ***YWCA New Zealand have created the NZ Equal Pay Awards, finding phenomenal success celebrating leaders in pay parity. YWCA is keen to work closely with the Queensland Government in sharing our expertise.***

Safety

- **1 in 3 Australian women over 15 has experienced physical violence**
- **Gender stereotypes affect behaviour, study choices, ambitions and attitudes about relationships**

To realise gender equality the Queensland Government must support the provision of adequate, long term funding for FDSV primary prevention, early intervention, responding to victim survivors and professionalisation, prioritising specialist women's services practitioners and organisations, First Nations specialist services, migrant and refugee specialist services, disability specialist services, children and youth services, LGBTIQ+ specialist services and men's behaviour change specialist services that are culturally appropriate and adaptable to all levels of education. It will be critical for investment into women's specialist DFV services, including crisis and emergency accommodation, health and legal services, to respond to increased need the impact of Covid restrictions change nationally. In addition, increased measures for oversight of women living in closed residential settings, and training and advice to community service providers to recognise and respond to violence must be protected both in crisis and recovery. xi

YWCA shares the following human rights-based definition of violence against women from the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993), and adopted by the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022.

“any act of gender based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life”.

This definition includes all forms of violence that women experience, comprising but not limited to physical, sexual, emotional, cultural/spiritual violence and financial abuse. These experiences are all gender-based and acknowledge that the violence is either directed towards women as a direct result of their gender, or that women are disproportionately affected by violence. Violence can be described in many ways, and definitions vary according to the legislation in each Australian state and territory.

In recent years, we have contributed to a range of initiatives in various states and territories aligning with the National Plan including: New South Wales Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016–2021; Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change; South Australia's Women's Safety Strategy 2011–2022 ; The Northern Territory's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018–2028.

Australian statistics reveal that across the life course, one in three women will experience some form of FDSV compared to one in 19 men^{xv}. Stable rates of partner violence contrast with falling rates of overall violence. The number of people accessing services such as police, hospital, child protection and homelessness services due to FSDV continues to rise,ⁱⁱⁱ and one woman is killed every nine days. For the purposes of this submission, FSDV is considered as gender-based violence and violence against women. Regardless of the type of violence, perpetrator/s are seeking power, dominance and control. YWCA believe everyone should be able to live free from violence and that anyone who experiences FDSV should be supported in their recovery journey.

We have no other option than to reflect upon the compounding factors facing communities across Australia including bushfires, drought, and the unprecedented response and recovery to a global health pandemic. FDSV services across Australia, including our own, have seen overwhelming

demand pre COVID-19. In the middle of COVID-19, we face a reality confirmed by recent research by the Australian Institute of Criminology, which shows an "alarming" increase in family violence, including in homes where it had never occurred before, with almost one in 10 women in a relationship saying they experienced domestic violence during the coronavirus crisis. Recently released data shows Google searches related to family violence have increased by 75%^{xvi}. This is some of the most detailed information available in the world currently. We have a responsibility to respond to this data and urgently address an escalating impact, faced overwhelmingly by women. We believe ongoing and genuine reform is possible with long-term strategic prevention approaches, investing in increased secure funding for specialist services, a commitment to research and continuous evaluation, and consistent, integrated FDSV responses.

Primary prevention

As an evolving intersectional feminist organisation working within communities as a women's specialist service, YWCA supports primary prevention as a long-term, coordinated, whole-of population approach aiming to stop violence against women, children and young people occurring in the first place. We endorse Our Watch's inquiry submission as industry experts focussed on prevention and as authors of Change the story^{xvii}: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women. Investment and focus on primary prevention approaches, however, should not be at the expense of comprehensive support for victim survivors.

In particular, we value the Change the Story^{xviii} and Changing the Picture frameworks for understanding the 'gendered drivers' of violence against women, whilst addressing the legacies and ongoing impacts of colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities, and non-indigenous people^{xix}. To end gender-based violence, these drivers must be addressed, including challenging the condoning of violence, redefining narrow gender roles and stereotypes, increasing women's independence, and promoting respectful relationships.

Primary prevention is firmly a national priority and it must remain so until we change the trajectory of gender-based violence in Australia. In responding to a new National Action Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children and setting out the Women's Strategy, the following elements to primary prevention work must be included as part of a best-practice, evidence-based approach to preventing violence:

- All primary prevention work contains a gender analysis of power and gender inequality
- There is a strong intersectional lens, and initiatives must include principles of diversity, including consideration of sexual orientation, gender identity, migrant and refugee communities, people living with disabilities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Primary prevention initiatives align with but also evolve Changing the Picture. Significant structural and cultural shifts, propelled by leaders within and outside of government, are required to see a measurable improvement in the impact of gender inequalities.

We refer to support for the 'National Gender Equality Plan'^{xx} currently being developed by the Equality Rights Alliance (ERA) which outlines a universal and inclusive approach to consistent and sustainable policy development to promote gender equality. Australia needs a national gender equality strategy and plan to prevent gender-based violence. Over its history YWCA has delivered a suite of best practice, evidence based primary prevention initiatives across a number of settings, including respectful relationships education in schools like Everygirl, Links to Learning and Girl Almighty programs, bystander intervention workshops and campaigns. YWCA also delivers programs that develop the leadership of women, young women and girls, and advocates for gender equality more broadly. As a national organisation, we understand the need to increase capacity and scale up these types of programs. Primary prevention is particularly effective when aimed at children and

young people, and when carried out at a whole of setting level. However, it is critical that responsibility for the prevention of gender-based violence must become a priority for all individuals, organisations and all levels of government. Prevention activities must occur in all settings and be carried out by individuals and communities. In educational settings, respectful relationships education is critical for ensuring that young people experience healthy, safe, respectful and mutually positive relationships. In workplace settings, efforts must include embedding gender equitable policies and practices and culture while building capacity to respond to and prevent violence and disrespect towards women. In community settings, awareness raising campaigns and community-led initiatives can drive cultural change and foster safe and respectful spaces for women, young women and girls, as well as other marginalised communities. The new Women's Strategy must include long term and sustainable funding for primary prevention practitioners and gender specialists to carry out whole-of-setting initiatives that includes long term evaluation

Young women

Young women aged 16-24 are among the most vulnerable to varying forms of violence. For example, young women experience significantly higher rates of physical and sexual violence than women in older age groups.^{xxi} Young women as young as 11 years old report street harassment of a sexual nature^{xxii}, and one in four young women in Australia have reported experiencing the non-consensual sharing of sexual images.^{xxiii} The strongest predictors of attitudes supportive of violence against women are people having a low level of support for gender equality and a low level of understanding of the behaviours constituting violence against women (relative to other respondents).^{xxiv}

Recognising and responding to experiences of domestic and/or family violence for children and young people is critical to breaking the cycles of violence, decreasing the likelihood of further trauma and increasing feelings of safety and recovery. We know that comprehensive support is required at this critical time of development for young people.

There is a significant lack of medium-to-long-term supported accommodation for young people across Australia, particularly young women experiencing domestic and family violence. Over 10 percent of the 22,200 applicants on the Queensland's public house waiting list are known to be at risk of DFV.^{xxv} Reliance on crisis accommodation can mean young people are rushed through into independent living without the right supports, often setting them up to fail. Young people who have experienced trauma and unstable housing need critical support to reengage them in education and employment and build social cohesion within their community.^{xxvi} Some young people with complex needs may not be suited to shared accommodation, often provided as a solution to housing affordability. In addition, LGBTIQ+ young people experiencing homelessness may not seek support due to fear of, and actual, discrimination and stigma. This can also be the case with young people from culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is essential that support services promote inclusivity and cultural responsiveness to welcome diverse communities.

Young migrant women and women from refugee backgrounds experience additional barriers to securing and maintaining safe, affordable and appropriate housing, due to social, cultural and language factors, this can look like outright discrimination or microaggressions. Census data shows that 74% of those who were born overseas and arrived in Australia in the last five years were living in "severely" crowded dwellings and 13% were living in boarding houses.^{xxvii} Women on temporary visas face also barriers to accessing both temporary crisis accommodation and permanent housing, due to legal barriers as well as inability to access income because they do not have the right to work, or because they have children in their care.^{xxviii} Domestic violence services across the country report large numbers of women on temporary visas experiencing family and domestic violence being turned away because there are no resources to support them long-term.^{xxix}

Primary drivers of young single women's homelessness continue to relate to economic challenges by being trapped in cycles of economic insecurity, low income and inadequate affordable housing. However, this is also impacted by the reciprocal link between violence against women (in itself both a driver and consequence of women's inequality), a women's housing crisis and the prevalence of young women overrepresented in both experiencing violence and homelessness.^{xxx} Safe and appropriate housing is one of the most crucial forms of support for women experiencing violence, with such structural and systemic division in affording or accessing accommodation young women really do bear the brunt of these intertwined crises.

Young people make up around a quarter of people experiencing homelessness, and the largest number of women experiencing homeless in Australia are women aged between 25-34 years.^{xxxi} Domestic and family violence and sexual assault are the main reasons for young women seeking homelessness services and young women aged 15-24 have the highest rate of assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services. It is important to note that while women make up just under half of those experiencing homelessness, young women in particular are often "invisible" and their homelessness is hidden. Most are forced to find a safe place to sleep by couch-surfing, staying in crisis or temporary accommodation, exchanging sexual favours in exchange for accommodation or sleeping in their cars.

Safety Recommendations - We need gender equality urgently. **Gender equality prevents violence against women.**

- r. **Expansion of professionals and services who support children and young people impacted by FDSV.**
- s. **Increase in medium-to-long-term supported accommodation services for young people, particularly those with complex needs.**
- t. **Expand eligibility of crisis services to women on Temporary Visas.**
- u. **Investment in research and evaluation - including data on the direct and indirect impact of domestic violence on Australian communities, impact on housing pathways and young people and FSDV.**
- v. **Support recommendations from the Pathway to Nowhere and Blueprint for reform report.**
- w. **Young people co-designing primary prevention campaigns and initiatives aimed at them.**
- x. **Support and investment in women's rights organisations and civil society networks addressing backlash and discrimination – eg. Men's Rights Activists/Transphobia.**
- y. **Healing-focused, prioritising, and strengthening culture, using strengths-based and community strengthening approaches adapting to different community, demographic and geographic contexts.**
- z. **Non-Indigenous organisations working as allies in culturally safe ways.**
- aa. **Address factors that reinforce gendered drivers of violence- including the need to Raise The Rate for economic accessibility, access to safe affordable housing and challenging the normalisation of violence as an expression of dominant masculinity as preventative measures.**
- bb. **Long-term extended funding commitments for primary prevention.** It is essential that we access long term funding commitments for a holistic approach to family, domestic and sexual violence the Queensland Government provide adequate, long term funding for FDSV primary prevention, early intervention, responding to victim survivors and professionalisation, prioritising specialist women's services practitioners and organisations, First Nations specialist services, migrant and refugee specialist services, disability specialist services, children and youth services, LGBTIQ+ specialist services and men's behaviour

change specialist services that are culturally appropriate and adaptable to all levels of education.

- cc. **Support for Establishment of a National Plan on Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and centring of Wiyi Yani U Thanganivii recommendations.**
- dd. **Increase investment in collaboration on primary prevention between and within sectors, including business, not-for-profit, community, and government**
- ee. **Reorganise social care and establish an Inter-Ministerial Taskforce to adequately value care.**
- ff. **Implementing community Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles into urban planning, which is proven to reduce criminal activity and increase perceptions of safety in the community. Integrating a gender mainstreaming approach into urban and environmental design is also key to ensuring women's experiences and interests are incorporated.**

Economic Security

- **In Queensland the Gender pay gap has increased from 15.3% in 2020 to 15.8% in 2021 +0.5%**
- **Women in Queensland are more than twice as likely to work part time and also receive almost 33 per cent less in superannuation.**

Women and in particular, young women, still face obvious barriers to workplace equality and economic security. A common theme in our consultations with young women is that they want action now, they can see the impact that a lifetime of disproportionate earning has on superannuation and their economic security in the future. There is a clear mandate for governments, businesses and the not-for-profit sector to take the gender pay gap seriously and address it comprehensively through a gender equality framework that has buy in across government. This should be coupled with efforts to promote flexibility and better work-life balance for all people in the workplace. Over the past 20 years the number of female-run small businesses in Australia has increased significantly, at almost double the rate of male-run small businesses. Promoting entrepreneurship as an economic opportunity is a key avenue for women, particularly for newly arrived migrants and refugees, those in regional areas, and those living with a disability.¹⁵ In Australia women are in part-time employment at three times the rate of men. Significant numbers of women choose part-time and casual employment below their skill level so they can manage unpaid care and paid work. This pay gap begins at a young age and builds throughout women's lives, resulting in women retiring with on average half the amount of superannuation than men. Young women are also more likely to experience economic disadvantages. For example, young women are at a higher risk of 'sexually transmitted debt', which is debt inherited from a partner or a relationship with a former partner.

Care and domestic work is another key area for women, and despite being a critical element to a functioning society, it is drastically undervalued. Women in Queensland according to the Gender Equality Report cards largely carry the burden of providing economic security for families through unpaid care and domestic work. Many First Australians living remotely have further challenges around work and labour. Work 'on country' where First Nations peoples undertake customary work for their livelihoods is severely undervalued and rarely incentivised by government policies.^{xxxii}

Women and Housing

An intersectional and gendered analysis tells us that Queensland's regional affordable housing stock needs to be significantly expanded and diversified to meet the needs of all women, particularly young women, low-income women, women with disability, women with caring responsibilities and women over 55^{xxxiii}. We know this is not under the remit of the Women's Strategy but wish to highlight the need for a multi-faceted approach to transforming power structures that keep women trapped in cycles that are unsafe and contribute to challenges and compound systemic discrimination that drive the barriers of access safe, affordable, accessible homes. Without a housing and homelessness lens to this strategy equality can't be truly in the picture.

YWCA's Women's Housing Needs in Regional Australia^{xxxiv} report found that Gen Z (born 1995-2009) and Gen Y (born 1980-1994) are the most stressed generation when it comes to housing, finance, wellbeing and safety. Young women are more likely than young men to be primary carers for children, which adds a further burden on women, and can lead to difficulty in obtaining and retaining affordable and safe housing.

Women's economic disadvantage contributes to instability and unaffordability in housing, due to lower incomes, periods out of the workplace for caring, and longer lifespans .^{xxii} Women are the primary beneficiaries of housing support systems, making up most of the public housing tenants and Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) recipients^{xxxv}. Women are also more likely to live in low-income or single-parent households and therefore are more likely to experience housing stress. Women disproportionately outnumber men in the receipt of Parenting Payments (93.8% women compared to 6.2% men), Aged Pension (55.9% compared to 44.1%) and Youth Allowance (54.1% compared to 45.9%). Studies show that single women who are recipients of these payments had access to 0% of the rental market based on affordability and appropriateness. ^{xxiv}

"Not being able to transition from Safe Houses into community or private rentals due to high rents and/or no available community housing is continually heartbreaking and frustrating and can make it really hard to build trust when there aren't many options, especially in regional areas."

- YWCA Staff Member

In approaching economic recovery to COVID-19, the construction of social and affordable housing should be considered as economic stimulus. In line with recommendations from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), social housing must be seen as social infrastructure with a government subsidy to drive equity related asset class products. A January 2020 AHURI Report found that there are few feasible pathways out of social housing and into private rental. The NSW Government must also play a role in creating pathways for people to exit out of social housing and into affordable private rental^{xxxvi}.

YWCA Australia recently partnered with Everybody's Home, Equity Economics, Homelessness NSW, DVNSW, DVVIC/DVRC, Women's Housing Company, and Victorian Women's Housing Alliance on the 'Nowhere To Go' Equity Economics report^{xxxvii} and analysed the benefits of providing long term social housing to victims of family violence, determining it as the leading reason women and children seek specialist homelessness services, something we see in our services every day. A convening housing and violence crisis is something no one wants to see in their own community. The report is clear, if the Commonwealth Government invested in 16,800 additional social housing units costing \$7.6 billion there would be immediate economic benefits of \$15.3 billion and the creation of 47,000 new jobs. Not only would we see the obvious economic benefits, but we would see a variety of other savings by investing in housing - additional social housing would generate savings of \$122.5 million

in a year due to women not returning to a violent partner and a further \$257 million in a year in savings due to women not experiencing homelessness after leaving their homes due to family and domestic violence.

A pay now and save forever model YWCA wholeheartedly support.

A commitment to adequate, long-term funding is needed to address the critical shortage of accommodation and homelessness services, in particular for specialist services for women and children facing violence. Older, single women are increasingly vulnerable to housing stress, insecurity and homelessness. ^{xvi} In 2015-16 there was a 17% increase in the number of women over the age of 55 seeking assistance from homelessness services, which was twice the rate of growth for the general homelessness services population. There are a range of factors contributing to this, including the financial disadvantage women face over their lifetime, as well as domestic and family violence. Older women who experience domestic violence are often faced with no financial security and no safety nets, and so enter into the homelessness sector for the first time. 65% of YWCA tenants are over 50, with many being first time users of the welfare system in Australia. Young women continue to be the population most at risk of safety and housing insecurity Innovative programs that appropriately support young women experiencing domestic and family violence such as YWCA's developing Young Women's Trauma Recovery Program are great examples of approaches that can be taken that not only address the need for a home but the underlying systemic drivers that keep inequality in place.

Older Women

Older, single women are increasingly vulnerable to housing stress, insecurity and homelessness. their lifetime, as well as domestic and family violence. Women retire with on average half the superannuation of men, a reality which many older women are now grappling with. Older women who experience domestic violence are often faced with no financial security and no safety nets, and so enter into the homelessness sector for the first time. 65% of YWCA tenants are over 50, with many being first time users of the welfare system in Australia. Research on housing futures, age and gender tell us that women who are older and living alone will be poorer than men their age, less able to maintain homeownership and less able to compete in the private rental market for affordable accommodation. The number of older women becoming homeless will continue to rise whilst gender inequality combined with a general lack of affordable housing remain in Australia. YWCA endorses recommendations from the Retiring Into Poverty report^{xxxviii} on increasing housing security for older women, including addressing financial insecurity for women and its underlying causes, as well as the establishment of a Seniors Housing Gateway program to better address the housing support needs of older women. YWCA also recommends government investment into innovative housing models such as co-housing or co-ownership models, and shared equity models. In building consistent best-practice initiatives to support older women's housing, we urge the federal government to work in collaboration with states and territories, and across other federal government departments such as ageing and aged care.

Economic Security Recommendations- Gender Equality = economic prosperity

- gg. **Developing a gender-responsive approach to housing and homelessness and play a leading role in negotiating with the Commonwealth Government to develop National Housing and Homelessness Agreements that address gender and other forms of marginalisation.**
- hh. **Social and affordable housing addressed as a priority to achieve gender equality -** Significantly increasing social and affordable housing stock to ensure women, young women and girls have access to safe and affordable housing, particularly in regional and remote areas, in an effort to increase their economic security
- ii. **The Queensland Government support for addressing with urgency the inclusion of housing and related investment as part of their commitment to the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and their Children and the national summit for women's safety in September 2021.** This includes:- Implementing recommendations of the Nowhere To Go report by Equity Economics, Everybody's Home, YWCA Australia, DVNSW, DVVIC/RC, Women's Housing Company, Homelessness NSW and Victorian Women's Housing Alliance and invest in 16,800 additional social housing units for women, children and young people experiencing FSDV costing \$7.6 billion which would immediately result in economic benefits of \$15.3 billion and the creation of 47,000 new jobs
- jj. **Incorporate analysis and recommendations from YWCA's Regional Housing Report**
- kk. **Providing twenty days of paid domestic violence leave for employees experiencing domestic and family violence to ensure a supportive culture within the workplace and ensure victims are not financially disadvantaged or experience job insecurity.**
- ll. **Promoting and supporting women's entrepreneurship and small businesses through grant mechanisms and other opportunities, with a focus on First Nations women, disabled women, migrant and refugee women and LGBTIQ+ people.**
- mm. **Partner with organisations like YWCA Australia and the Equality Rights Alliance and listen to and involve the voices of women, young women and girls in the development, implementation and evaluation of economic security initiatives**
- nn. **Implement measures to address women's economic inequality, given growing evidence on the gendered drivers of violence including: - Gender Pay Gap - Unpaid Care and women's overrepresentation in underpaid roles - Addressing gender inequity in superannuation**

Health and Wellbeing - Societies that value all genders as equal are healthier and happier

The evidence is clear: gender is considered one of the most powerful determinants of health outcomes. Women and gender diverse people are significantly affected by systemic, cultural and social gendered health inequalities and an intersectional approach to health and wellbeing would seek to address this. Although Australian women have one of the best life expectancy rates in the world, shockingly, this is not the case if you are an Indigenous woman, with a gap in life expectancy of ten years (82 for non Indigenous women compared to 72 for Indigenous women).

A critical and yet often overlooked issue that disproportionately affects young women is the need for comprehensive sexuality education. A survey of young women aged 18-30 in Australia^{xxxix}

showed they believe sex education is limited and does not meet their needs.¹⁴ This survey also indicated that young women want more education on positive and respectful relationships, which should be incorporated into sex education in schools and communities. An intersectional approach to health and wellbeing in Queensland must also consider how to address violence, risk-taking behaviours, and excessive alcohol consumption by young men. Young men are also more likely to work in dangerous occupations and less likely to visit the doctor or follow up a consultation. These are harmful cultural norms that perpetuate gender roles and stereotypes, which impact on mental health, and contribute to the high suicide rates in young men. Another great reason to rename the Women's Strategy.

Health and Wellbeing Recommendations- Societies that value all genders as equal are healthier and happier

- oo. Long-term coordinated funding for Women's Specialist Services like our women's specialist NDIS support in Toowoomba**
- pp. Increasing access to affordable and appropriate sexual health services in Queensland**
- qq. Making comprehensive sexuality education encompassing respectful relationships education available to every young person in Queensland**
- rr. Promoting positive health norms to boys and men that contradict gender stereotypes that men must be physically and emotionally strong and dominant**
- ss. Increasing investment in health promotion and primary prevention services to improve health outcomes for First Nations women, particularly those in rural and remote areas**
- tt. Providing support for people who have experienced female genital mutilation**
- uu. Partner with organisations like, YWCA Australia, and listen to and incorporate the voices of women, young women and gender diverse people in the development, implementation and evaluation of health and wellbeing service provision and campaigns.**
- vv. Long-term coordinated funding for Women's Specialist Services**
- ww. An intersectional and gender-responsive approach to technology safety by design**

Conclusion

YWCA Australia thanks the Queensland Government for the opportunity to provide feedback to the development of the Women's Strategy and we look forward to a robust and comprehensive strategy, and implementation of its next iteration. Please visit our website for more information on our programs and services in the Australia and the Queensland. We have also attached our submission into the National Plan and our Regional Housing Report: <https://www.ywca.org.au/>

For more information, please contact bobbie.trower@ywca.org.au

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