



Ending Violence Against Women Queensland (EVAWQ)

Bringing Together Women's Health, Refuges, Sexual Violence and Domestic & Family Violence

October 6th, 2021.

Office for Women and Violence Prevention & Department of Justice and Attorney-General

Subject: EVAWQ submission to QWS Consultation

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Queensland Women's Strategy

Ending Violence Against Women Queensland (EVAWQ) provides a representative and united voice for Queensland women and children affected by gender-based violence, and the individuals and service agencies that provide specialist support. EVAWQ represents the domestic and family violence, women's health, refuges, and sexual violence sectors in Queensland. We aim to inform and share the depth and diversity of knowledge from specialist services within the women's sector to a broad range of government and non-government stakeholders in relation to all aspects of gender-based violence against women.

Gender inequality persists in our community despite the positive changes made to women's status and roles over the past century. This restricts women's ability to participate fully in the social, economic, and cultural opportunities that Queensland offers. There are steps that can be taken to reach gender equality in Queensland. We urge the Queensland Government to prioritise the following recommendations into the next Queensland Women's Strategy:

- 1. All government departments apply a gender and diversity lens to their policy, budgetary, and procurement decisions.**
- 2. Core funding for community services incorporates rising wage and running costs, is accurately indexed, and modelled to meet service demand.**
- 3. Women's homelessness in Queensland is addressed through increased affordable and stable housing for women.**
- 4. Increased investment in community designed and led programs, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs.**
- 5. Consent and respectful relationships education, including sexuality and sex positive concepts, is mandated as part of the Queensland school curriculum.**
- 6. Primary prevention of violence is funded as a priority to create the change needed to end men's violence against women.**



1. Government departments apply a gender and diversity lens to their policy, budgetary, and procurement decisions.

The 2020-21 Queensland Budget acknowledged some ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected women, reflective of women's heavy share of the industries that were most affected by the pandemic. [Australia fell on the Global Gender Gap Index](#) from 15th in 2006, to 50th in 2021. The responsibility of addressing gender inequality and discrimination needs to be embedded through all departments and functions of government. Gender mainstreaming, moving gender equity from the margins to the centre of [all decision making across policies, programmes, functions and structures](#), is identified by the United Nations as the [key strategy to creating gender equality](#).

Using a gender and diversity-lens needs to be embedded as an essential process for every policy, budget, and procurement decision made by government, as every decision has the potential to impact men and women differently, even if the policy is designed to be gender-neutral. This is evident from the [15.3% gender pay gap present in Queensland](#), as opposed to Australia's 14.0%.

Adopting gender responsive budgeting across all government departments will allow Queensland to be actively creating equity for women. Budgetary decisions have the capacity to strongly advance gender equality. This active approach to embedding a gender lens as part of the policymaking process provides an important lever for achieving gender equality across all functions of government.

Government procurement practices that require all providers to be meeting an equity and diversity standard will significantly expand business and community engagement with gender equality. Government spending should reflect a best practice approach through requiring government providers to be actively advancing equity and diversity through meeting key measures such as gender pay equality, women in leadership, reconciliation commitment, human resources practices and advertising standards amongst other key measures.

2. Core funding for community services incorporates rising wage and running costs, is accurately indexed, and modelled to meet service demand.

With a variety of different organisations in Australia providing services to victim-survivors of violence, it is important to recognise the proven efficacy of the established specialist women's services sector, and to apply more support and increased funding to these services.

These services are at the forefront of ending violence against women. The impact and effectiveness of these specialist services is underpinned by a set of good practice principles that are supported by international research and evidence-based practice. However, without adequate funding, the services cannot function. Core funding needs to appropriately incorporate wage costs, running costs, and be indexed in line with actual rising costs. It must respond to CPI indexes and legislation impacts, including the portable long service leave legislation impacts on funded agencies. Funding modelling also needs to incorporate



population growth, priority groups and address staffing recruitment issues for remote communities.

Just recently, the government implemented a 2.5% increase to awards and national minimum wages for 2021. Whilst this is a great initiative, there was no support offered to women's organisations and services, who must juggle the increased costs of wages and increased superannuation costs. Increased wage costs mean that services can afford less staff to meet the same funding outputs, while demand for service is at an all-time high.

Furthermore, the funding arrangements for the specialist workforce need to be strengthened to meet demand and utilise evidence-based interventions to achieve outcomes. This requires new, specific investment in primary prevention and in early intervention as a priority, increased and longer-term investment in tertiary victim support services and significantly expanded focus on sexual violence prevention and response services.

3. Women's homelessness in Queensland is addressed through increased affordable and stable housing.

[Throughout Queensland there are close to 10,000 homeless women, including over 2,000 in the Brisbane area alone, that are homeless at any given time.](#) Domestic violence is cited as the leading cause of homelessness for women. Additionally, there is currently a 1% vacancy rate in rental properties throughout Queensland, limiting sustainable and affordable housing options for women trying to re-build their lives following DFV. To appropriately address the impacts of domestic and family violence on growing homelessness issues across Queensland, the Women's Strategy needs to prioritise provision of increased housing access to address homelessness.

This includes prioritising increased affordable and accessible housing for women and children fleeing domestic violence and a commitment to make temporary accommodation to people perpetrating abuse to access temporary accommodation so that the family can stay at home safely and are not dislocated from their own schools, networks, and communities.

4. Increase investment in community designed and led programs.

By utilising and applying community development, place-based programs, we can address the unique service delivery needs of regional and remote Queensland and build local capacity. Place-based programs are more effective in addressing local issues and achieving longer-term outcomes as they tend to have the following features:

- a focus on the local level
- a shared, long-term vision and commitment to outcomes
- governance at a local level
- broad engagement with the community
- experimentation, prototyping, and action learning.

Overcoming the challenges associated with a place-based approach to funding requires an investment in local resources. It also needs place-based approaches that are co-designed



by community and delivered by community-based organisations, in order to empower these regional and rural communities to self-sufficiency and growth.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have unique strengths of culture, connection to land, and connection to community. The impacts of colonisation are ongoing, and it is essential that funding is increased for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and led programs and services to support women and girls.

5. Consent and respectful relationships education, including sexuality and sex positive concepts, should be mandated as part of the Queensland school curriculum.

It is imperative young people are taught consent, respectful relationships, and sex positive concepts before they reach the danger zone for both experiencing (young women), and perpetrating (young men), sexual assault [which starts at age around 15](#). Currently, sexuality and sex positive concepts are not being effectively or consistently taught. These are important lessons that need to occur in an age-appropriate manner from formative years in an education setting. Not only does this create a huge shift in culture, but there is well supported evidence this approach prevents the occurrence of gendered violence.

Furthermore, the sex education needs to be completely inclusive of LGBTQI+ students, to make sure they are not alienated by peers or missing out on important health and relationships information that may also lead to violence in later years. Removing the heteronormative lens from education is imperative considering the growing number of children and young adults identifying as a part of the LGBTQI+ community.

In addition to the revised curriculum, EVAWQ recommends incentives or mandates should be introduced for schools to receive expert training and/ or support for staff and teachers. This ensures a consistent evidence-based whole-of-school approach to consent, sexuality and respectful relationships education addressing the drivers of gendered violence such as harmful stereotypes and norms leading to inequality, disrespect, and violence. It is important that these concepts are included across curriculum areas such as Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, The Arts and English. A whole of school approach, as outlined by [Our Watch](#), is shown to be the most effective method of introducing and reiterating these concepts.

6. Primary prevention of violence is funded as a priority to create the change needed to end men's violence against women.

Primary Prevention remains the single most important goal to reduce violence against women and their children. We call for expanded investment and support for primary prevention, with an evidence-based, whole of community approach.

Addressing the gender-based drivers of domestic violence is the key to prevention for the future and is essential to the development of the next Women's Strategy. Acknowledging that gender inequality is both the core of the problem, and the heart of the solution. Where power and resources are equally distributed between men and women, and people do not believe



that men and women have specific characteristics that make them unequal results in reduced violence against women.

Gender inequality is a social condition that manifests through the unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunity within society and is reinforced through social norms. The Women's Strategy needs to address gender equity as the fundamental key to preventing violence against women and children.

Reports of domestic violence are still rising sharply across Queensland, with figures revealing police responding on average to more than 400 cases a day. Queensland police data shows that from July 1 last year to March 31 this year, officers responded to [113,779 domestic and family violence \(DFV\) occurrences](#). The Women's Strategy needs a substantial commitment to funding coordinated evidence-based primary prevention of violence initiatives. Investing in prevention creates substantial long-term savings for government and the community by stopping the violence from occurring in the first place. Carceral solutions lead to an ongoing financial burden, while effective evidence-based prevention reduces pressure across all parts of the social services, health, housing, and criminal justice system. Alongside the financial savings, actively preventing men's violence against women and children reduces the huge human toll that encompasses trauma, ill-health, reduced social participation, injury, and death.

Conclusion

To ensure that the next Queensland's Women's Strategy is a success, it is integral that there are clearly defined actions and KPIs so that outcomes can be effectively measured. EVAWQ would welcome to opportunity to work closely with the Office of Women to help establish and define these measures of success.

Regards,

Emma Iwinska

President of Ending Violence Against Women Queensland





Signatures of Support

Mackay's Women's Service



Women's Health Queensland



Children by Choice

CHILDREN BY CHOICE
ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

**Lutheran Services
Mary & Martha's Domestic
Violence Refuge**



**DV Connect
DVCCONNECT**
Be heard. Be safe.

Sera's Women's Shelter



**Domestic Violence Action
Centre**

