

Submission to the Australian Government - Employment - White Paper Scope and Themes

NOVEMBER 2022

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Who is Tradeswomen Australia, and why should the terms of reference for the Employment White Paper matter to us?

The Tradeswomen Australia Group (TWA) was founded from the experience of women's barriers to getting and maintaining a job in male-dominated trades. The not-for-profit organisation seeks to address those barriers by providing services and support, to women and girls hoping to enter a trade, employers of tradespeople and the education and training sector to change gender inequality in these sectors.

Our vision is to see an Australia where women and girls want to, can and do, work successfully in trades.

We seek to realise this vision by creating equity and equality in trades by:

- Partnering with employers to shape culturally safe workplaces and
- Educating, supporting and mentoring girls and women in non-traditional trades

The Jobs and Skills Summit and the follow-up employment white paper represent a watershed moment for our vision. For the first time, the Summit showed a broad acceptance of the reality of women's inequitable participation in work. It was recognised for the impact it has on our economy, productivity, and of course, our social well-being.

The terms of reference for the upcoming white paper matter to TWA because it is an opportunity for our organisation:

- To contribute to generating solutions to address what we see as a key challenge for Australia's productivity and employment markets – gender segregation
- To share our lived experience of the consequence of women on gender segregation and the drivers that contribute to it, and the effects of it.
- To recommend from our perspective – and indeed, the view shared by other mission-aligned organisations – how the terms of reference for the white paper can be shaped to ensure that, as a nation, we can address this long-term problem in our labour markets.

Recommendations for Scope

TWA advocates and recommends that the Terms of Reference for the Employment white paper:

1. Include the impact of gender inequity in the form of gender bias and discrimination plays in employment and our skills system with a particular focus on highly gendered sectors, including trades.
2. Allow the white paper process to highlight strategies that need to be employed to address the discrimination and bias in our skills system and the labour market that drags on our national productivity and labour markets.
3. Encompass the impact of gender inequity and gender bias on productive workplaces, including mental health and well-being, sexual harassment and other psychosocial hazards that reduce productivity, participation and retention in our labour force.

To that extent, we also recommend that the terms of reference be adapted as follows:

4. Pay equity, including the gender pay gap, **gender discrimination in all forms**, equal opportunities for women and the benefits of a more inclusive workforce.
5. Labour force participation, labour supply and improving employment opportunities.
 - 5.1 Reducing barriers and disincentives to work, including the role of childcare, social security settings and employment services.
 - 5.2 Improving labour market outcomes for those who face challenges in employment, including First Nations people, those who live in rural and remote areas, younger and older Australians, people with disability, and those who may experience discrimination, **including discrimination against women in the workforce**.
 - 5.3 Skills, education and training, upskilling and reskilling, including in transitioning sectors and regions.
 - 5.4 Migration settings as a complement to the domestic workforce.
 - 5.5 **The impact of gender inequality on all the above aspects of labour force participation, supply and improving employment opportunities, including addressing gender segregation**
6. The role of collaborative partnerships between governments, industry, unions, civil society groups and communities, **place-based approaches, and recognising models, practices and evidence from gender equality and gender mainstreaming practice**.

On **approach**, we advocate that the process develop the white paper seeks to centre the lived experience of the Australian workforce as much as possible. In particular, that of women trying to enter the workforce and in the workforce trying to sustain their working lives. We especially recommend that this is done in a way that centres women trying to work in male-dominated trades as this will bring to the centre of deliberations the reality of barriers that are present to achieving pay equity and increasing workforce participation *and* skills utilisation.

The Evidence for our Submission and Context for our Recommendations

Australian men and women lead very different working lives. Men and women often do not work 'side by side'—but instead work in industries or occupations dominated by one gender or another. By international standards, we have a highly gender-segregated workforce.

The Senate, Finance and Public Administration References Committee: *Gender segregation in the workplace and its impact on women's economic equality, 2017*¹

Women's participation in male-dominated trades has been persistently low for decades.

In the senate committee report of 2017, the evidence presented found that out of every ten workers in Australia, six of them are employed in industries that are "dominated by one gender", or as the final report highlights, the majority of workers in Australia (60%) "don't know what it is like to work in an industry with balanced gender representation". The senate report drew this evidence from Australia's Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) in 2016. It noted that the "figures have remained relatively constant over the last twenty years."

In 2019 WGEA reported that this trend continued that ²

The proportion of women in traditionally female-dominated industries (Health Care and Social Assistance and Education and Training) has increased.

Some male-dominated industries (Construction and Transport) recorded a decline in female representation, while others (including Mining, Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services) recorded growth.

As recently as 2022, WGEA with the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre at the Curtin Business School showed that "gender segregation occurs by industry and occupation as well as employment type and leadership. Women and men are concentrated in different industries and occupations, and women are underrepresented in full-time employment and leadership positions."³ This work and that undertaken by WGEA with KPMG and the Diversity Council of Australia showed that this segregation is a crucial driver of the gender pay gap. The 2022 BCEC/WGEA report indicates that to address this persistent reality of underpayment of women; we need to "understand not just the different gender concentrations across industry sectors, but also the underlying reasons for such differences to have emerged."⁴

¹ Australian Government The Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee: *Gender segregation in the workplace and its impact on women's economic equality, 2017*

² WGEA, 2019 *Gender Segregation in Australia's workforce* <https://www.wgea.gov.au/publications/gender-segregation-in-australias-workforce>

³ Duncan AS, Mavisakalyan A and Salazar S (2022), *Gender Equity Insights 2022: The State of Inequality in Australia*, BCEC|WGEA Gender Equity Series, Issue #7, October 2022.

⁴ *ibid*

To shift the dial would require more women to work in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as mining, manufacturing, science and technology. But it is as important that more men take up roles in historically female-dominated sectors – and that salaries in such roles reflect their actual value to society⁵

The reasons for this are well-known to those that work in gender equity and gender mainstreaming. The prevalence and entrenched reality of gender stereotypes in our society impact our employment markets and industry sectors. It results in discrimination across the life course of people's lives and, concerning skills and jobs, includes:

- The advice was given to women and girls and men and boys about apprenticeships and traineeships
- Occupational segregation
- Pay gaps
- Cultural norms manifest in bullying and harassment on work sites – this impacts both men and women but is driven by stereotypes that we apply to men in the workplace.
- Poor occupational health and safety standards
- Gender-blind and gender-neutral policies and procedures in the workplace that reinforce stereotypes

More broadly though, across society, these stereotypes result in family violence – where 95% of perpetration of violence is by men against women; the care burden being borne mainly by women, including significantly unpaid care work; women's lower superannuation; higher rates of homeless for women and in particular, older women.

Across Australia, the reality of this is reinforced in three key areas:

1. The learning environment - participation – commencement, completion rates
2. Safety and Respect: Workplace culture and environment for women who are apprentices
3. Discrimination against women in male-dominated industries

The Learning Environment: Participation, commencement, and completion

There is strong evidence that the diversity challenge in the sector itself starts in the talent pipeline that the trade industries rely on – apprenticeships, traineeships and vocational education and training.

It is consistently recognised that there are ongoing challenges across all the states and territories regarding apprenticeships and traineeships, including the persistent inequity of participation in engineering and technology areas of learning and work. This reflects the persistently low percentage of women in trade occupations – below 3% year on year since 1988. (Jobs Queensland, 2021)

NCVER data from 1995 to 2016 presented to the Commonwealth Government Senate inquiry into gender segregation in the Australian workforce shared that “the proportion of females commencing an apprenticeship or traineeship in the technician and trade occupations has fluctuated between

⁵ ibid

10% and 25% of all trade commencements." (National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), 2017) Further, of those trades, the NCVER notes that "these women are almost wholly concentrated in the lower-paid trades of hairdressing and food."

A 2019 report from Charles Sturt University on the barriers and proposed solutions for women in the manual trades⁶ Identified some structural, cultural and systemic issues contributing to the problem in trade training:

- VET lacks female teachers, mentors and role models
- Manual trade classroom environments in VET institutions have been described as highly masculine. Language and behaviour can be disruptive and deliberately exclude female students.
- Apprenticeship training focuses on the skills and knowledge needed to enter the occupation. There needs to be more consideration of career pathway training in trade fields and a specific lack of attention to management skills.
- There is competition between School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) for state government funding based on student numbers. Diversification of training providers creates variations in the understanding of industry currency – including equity, diversity and inclusion issues.

Women NSW found that a "culture of work and learning" was part of the evidence base for increasing women in non-traditional trades. In their summary of the evidence, Women NSW highlighted the "lack of access to information at schools" and "isolation of women in male-dominated work and learning environments." As well as other workforce supply issues such as "lack of role models" and the gendered distinction of "femininity" that girls learn in Australia. (Women NSW, March 2013) On this latter point, the Senate inquiry on gender segregation in workplaces identifies the "crucial role" that gendered stereotypes play in gender segregation of occupations and industries with cross-sector support from employers and unions to address this. (Parliament of Australia: Finance and Public Administration References Committee, June 2017)

In TWA's Consolidated Report entitled *Influencer Insights Women in Male-Dominated Trades Why isn't it Working (May 2019)*, the evidence points to some cultural drivers within the training pipeline that contribute to the barriers that women face. There is evidence that VET instructors tend to follow gender segregation and not take any active measures to encourage female participation. Systemically, the very structural threats to RTO funding may add as an additional deterrent to vocational educators encouraging participation. Specifically, opportunities to build a strategy to promote and engage educators in making the trade workforce by increasing women's participation and retention through learning are overwhelmed by many RTOs' focus on mitigating funding and operational risks.

In 2017 WGEA was advising the Federal Government (through its Senate Inquiry into Gender segregation in the workplace and its impact on women's economic equality)⁷ That ".....graduates are overwhelmingly entering fields dominated by their gender—almost 90 per cent of the graduates in health care and social assistance industry are women, while men continue to dominate construction (almost 80 per cent) and mining (almost two-thirds)...."

⁶ Bridges, D., Krivokapic-Skoko, B., Wulff, E., Bamberly, L., & Jenkins, S. (2018). THE FEMALE TRADIE SHORTAGE: WHY REAL CHANGE REQUIRES A MAJOR CULTURAL SHIFT.

⁷ Parliament of Australia: Finance and Public Administration References Committee. (June 2017). Gender segregation in the workplace and its impact on women's economic equality. Canberra ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

Discrimination against women in male-dominated industries

In October 2019, the Victorian Minister for Industrial Relations, Tim Pallas MP, highlighted that even though more women than ever are entering the workforce, they make up only 2% of workers in Australian Construction. With this observation, the Minister announced the development of a strategy to increase women in construction via the Building Industry Consultative Council - a deliberate industry-focused tripartite structure to address the discriminatory barriers.

Male domination of trades and trade courses in the automotive, construction, mining and energy sectors is entrenched above 95%, despite the substantial pay advantage compared to other trades such as hairdressing and hospitality. Women make up just 3% of those employed in the electrotechnology and telecommunications trades, and only 1% of those working in construction, engineering and automotive trades.”⁸

We have known about these discriminatory factors in our workforce for some time.

The five-year report of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) tells us that while women comprise 51.4% of all non-manager roles, they comprise 14.6% of technicians and trade workers and 12.6% of machinery operators and drivers.⁹ Further, of those in construction, 12.1% are managers, up from 10.8% in 2013-14.¹⁰ The agency concludes that Australia's workforce is highly gender-segregated and is least represented in Construction and Mining (however, mining is one of two industries where women are not under-represented in management). In addition, the pay gap between women and men in the construction industry is 29.4% and is increasing. This is unique across all sectors.¹¹ By way of contribution, a 2013 report by the NSW Office for Women highlights that income distribution in trades is gendered, with "men (being) over-represented at the top end of the income spectrum... (and) women over-represented .." at the lower end of the income spectrum.¹² It is worth noting that the NSW analysis includes the hairdressing trade, but the gendered pay gap still needs to be eliminated even when it is removed.

“Chicks are for cooking and cleaning. They're not supposed to be on-site. Get back in your own space.' Those sorts of things and 'You don't belong here. You're not going to last. You couldn't handle it.' All these things were being said to my face or whispered to me so that other people couldn't hear them.”

RMIT 2020 Women in Construction: Exploring the Barriers and Supportive Enablers of Wellbeing in the Workplace

In 2020 RMIT for the Victorian Women in Construction strategy identified the reality of women in trades and semi-skills roles in the construction industry. The report (Holdsworth, Turner, Scott-Young, & Sandri, 2020) talks to three inter-related factors on worksites that frame the working experience for women in the industry:

(i) Women are outsiders: our results highlight how the culture of masculinity drives inappropriate behaviour; career pathway challenges and difficulty in accessing work aligned

⁸ Bridges, D., Krivokapic-Skoko, B., Wulff, E., Bamberly, L., & Jenkins, S. (2018). THE FEMALE TRADIE SHORTAGE: WHY REAL CHANGE REQUIRES A MAJOR CULTURAL SHIFT.

⁹ Workplace Gender Equality Agency. (November 2018). Australia's gender equality scorecard: Key findings from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency 2017-18 reporting data. Sydney: Australian Government.

¹⁰ ibid

¹¹ ibid

¹² Women NSW. (March 2013). Women in Trades: the missing 48 per cent (Women NSW Occasional Paper). Sydney: NSW Government Family and Community Services.

with skills and aptitude; being treated differently on-site due to gender, and the barriers faced around having family responsibilities and caring for children.

(ii) Consequence-free behaviour: our results identify how the masculine culture can be an enabler of inappropriate behaviour, the mistreatment of female apprentices, and the lack of workplace support for managing inappropriate behaviour.

(iii) Culture of silence: our results highlight the lack of transparent processes for reporting inappropriate behaviour, little to no consequences for co-workers who act inappropriately, and fear of punishment for reporting inappropriate behaviour.

Discrimination due to gender impacts career progression

"I've walked up to someone I didn't know very well, and he's kind of a guru. He had more tickets and more qualifications than anybody in our depot. There was this tricky piece of equipment, so I walked up to a small group of them and said, 'What's this?' I was curious as to this new equipment that we were installing. His response was, 'secret men's business.'"

A female worker described how information relevant to the progression of her role was withheld because she was female and she was not an accepted member of the workplace.

RMIT 2020 Women in Construction: Exploring the Barriers and Supportive Enablers of Wellbeing in the Workplace

Prevalence of Gender Bias in Australia and its impact on the community and our economy
Notwithstanding the ongoing evidence about gender inequality – something that is regularly in the public gaze through reporting on the persistent gender pay gap and prevalence of men's perpetration of violence against women gender biases persists in Australia.

The 2022 Report from KPMG, WGEA and the Diversity Council of Australia found that

gender discrimination remains the leading driver of the pay gap, contributing 36% of the \$2.56 hourly pay gap¹³

The components of this pay gap were the burden of care placed on women (33%) and the type of job and industry employment sector (26%).¹⁴

On International Women's Day 2022, the Global Institute for Women's Leadership (Kings College) and Ipsos released the results from *Global attitudes towards gender equality* – a survey from 30 countries that looked at attitudes to gender equality and bias.¹⁵ The results found that Australia is behind other countries' positive attitudes toward equality. Key findings for Australia were:

- One-fifth of Australians (22%) agreed that gender inequality doesn't exist. Men were more than twice as likely to agree (30%) than women (14%). Globally, men were more likely than women to agree that gender inequality doesn't exist (21% vs 14%).

¹³ KPMG Diversity Council of Australia and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency *She's Price(d)less: The economics of the gender pay gap* (4th Edition) 2022

¹⁴ bid

¹⁵ Ipsos, Global Institute for Women's Leadership, & King's College London, 2022. *Global attitudes towards gender equality*. Viewed 31 March 2022, <<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/giwl/assets/iwd-survey-2022.pdf>>

- A quarter of Australians (26%) believed that feminism does more harm than good and one-fifth (21%) felt that men have lost in terms of economic and political power or socially because of feminism. Men were at least twice as likely to say this (36%) than women (17%).
- Fourteen per cent of Australians strongly/tended to agree that a woman must have sex with her boyfriend/husband even if she does not feel like it (the average globally is 9%). Twenty-two per cent of men agreed with this statement compared with 6% of women.
- Twenty-three per cent of men and 5% of women found it acceptable to use sexist or misogynistic language online. Across the 30 countries, Australia was second overall in accepting this behaviour. It is also worth noting that the same survey found that while 13% of Australians found it acceptable to use racist language, there was a difference based on gender, with 21% of men finding racist language online acceptable compared with 4% of women.

The findings from this study suggest that gender equality still has a long way to go in Australia. We lag behind many countries regarding gender bias and our perceptions of what is considered acceptable online. These views on the acceptability of physical and online gender-based violence by some people may be partly driven by the prevalence of harmful and misogynistic content online. The majority of these online messages can be seen to both contribute to and reflect broader issues of sexism and misogyny in societies.¹⁶

These results are consistent with the findings from Australia's *National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey* (NCAS), the periodic national survey that reports on "how people understand violence against women, their attitudes towards it, what influences their attitudes, and if there has been a change over time."¹⁷ Run by the Australian National Research Organisation on Women's Safety (ANROWS), the survey also gauges attitudes in the community to gender equality and "people's preparedness to intervene when witnessing violence or its precursors."¹⁸ The other vital aspect of NCAS is that policymakers can track change and progress across waves of the survey, which started in 1987.

The report on the 2021 NCAS results is yet to be published. However, the 2017 NCAS findings showed an improvement in community understanding of violence against women, support for violence against women, and support for gender equality since the 2013 survey.¹⁹

Concerning attitudes toward gender equality:²⁰

- There was a 13% point decrease in the proportion of people who believed men make better political leaders than women (from 27% in 2013 to 14% in 2017).
- Concerningly, only one in seven Australians did not agree that women are as capable as men in politics and the workplace.
- Nearly all Australians (97%) rejected the idea that it is okay for men to joke with their male friends about being violent towards women.

¹⁶ Jess Elgood in Ipsos, 2022. *One in five Australians thinks women who say they were abused often make up or exaggerate claims of abuse or rape – the highest of any western nation Ipsos and Global Institute for Women's Leadership survey*. Viewed 31 March 2022, <<https://www.ipsos.com/en-au/one-five-australians-thinks-women-who-say-they-were-abused-often-make-or-exaggerate-claims-abuse-or>>

¹⁷ ANROWS, n.d.. *National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)*. Viewed 31 March 2022, <<https://www.anrows.org.au/research-program/ncas/>>

¹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹ Webster, K., Diemer, K., Honey, N., Mannix, S., Mickle, J., Morgan, J., Parkes, A., Politoff, V., Powell, A., Stubbs, J., & Ward, A., 2018. (Research report, 03/2018). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS. *Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality. Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)*

²⁰ ANROWS, 2017. *Australians' attitudes towards violence against women & gender inequality*. Viewed 31 March 2022, <https://20ian81kynqg38bl3l3eh8bf-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/ANROWS_NCAS_Summary_Report.pdf>

- Concerningly, nearly one-quarter of Australians saw no harm in telling sexist jokes.

Also of concern was that:

- Two in five Australians believed many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia.
- One in three thought it was natural for a man to want to appear in control of his partner in front of his male friends.

Given the link between gender inequality and violence against women, it is also worth reflecting on the findings that NCAS reported on **community attitudes to violence against women**.²¹

While only a few Australians believed that women lie about sexual violence just because they do not report it straight away, it was concerning that two in five Australians believed that women make up false reports of sexual assault to punish men.

Also concerning was that:

- One in five Australians believed domestic violence is a normal stress reaction and that sometimes a woman can make a man so angry he hits her without meaning to.
- One in eight believed that if a woman is raped while drunk or affected by drugs, she is at least partly responsible.
- One in three Australians believed that if a woman does not leave her abusive partner, she is responsible for continuing violence.

The evidence shows that community attitudes result in minimising violence, mistrusting and not believing women's reporting of violence, and condoning male peer relations that are aggressive and disrespectful to women.

Safety and Respect

From an intersectional gender perspective, there are real and tangible reasons why we need to understand the gendered nature of safety and respect and its impact at work and in the skills and education environment. Poor workplace safety and cultures of low esteem negatively impact organisations (including in education settings) and our economy and society more broadly.

For women, it can mean not feeling safe at work and can impact their health and well-being. It can create a negative culture for the organisation, loss of income and independence and poor outcomes for families and the community.

Again we have known about this for some time.

One of the key pieces of research into women in trades provides evidence since the 1980s of women trade workers confronting discrimination, intimidation, sexual harassment and isolation.²²

Submissions to the Senate inquiry on gendered segregation of the workplace, regularly report the widespread gender-based violence in the Australian Workplace with the Victorian Trade Hall Council Women in Male-Dominated Industries Conference in 2016, collecting detailed evidence of the prevalence of this in trades.²³

²¹ *ibid*

²² Shewring, F. (2009). *The female 'tradie': Challenging employment perceptions in non-traditional trades for women*. Adelaide SA: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

²³ Victorian Trades Hall Council. (2017). *Submission to the Inquiry on Gender Segregation in the Workplace and its Impact on Women's Economic Quality*. Canberra ACT: Commonwealth of Australia p. 7

For organisations and the broader economy, it is a substantial financial burden, including lost productivity, staff turnover, and absenteeism. We know that:

The cost of sexual harassment in lost well-being to our economy is \$2.6 billion or \$4,989 per victim.²⁴ Employers bear 70% of the financial costs of harassment cases.²⁵

The cost of Family Violence in Victoria (2015-16) is estimated to be \$5.3 billion²⁶ with \$60 million borne by the business due to the costs of staff absences or replacements and general business processes and \$403 million in lost 'economies of scale.'²⁷ Nationally, the cost of violence against women and children is \$11.3 billion.²⁸

In addition to the above statistics on **sexual harassment**, the Australian Human Rights Commission's Sex Discrimination Commission, Kate Jenkins, codified further prevalence of sexual harassment in Australian workplaces in the 2018 *Everyone's Business: Fourth survey on sexual harassment in Australian Workplaces*. The survey found that across Australia, sexual harassment is widespread.

- Seventy-two per cent of Australians have been sexually harassed in their lives, and of these, 85% are women. In the last five years, 39% of women and 26% of men have been harassed at work; during the previous 12 months (2017), 23% of women and 16% of men have been sexually harassed.²⁹
- A male perpetrates seventy-nine per cent of sexual harassment cases.³⁰
- If you are aged 18-29 years, you are more likely to be sexually harassed than other groups (45%).³¹
- At least one person witnessed forty per cent of sexual harassment cases, but in 69% of cases, the witness did not intervene.³²
- Just under half of the respondents to the survey said the sexual harassment had happened previously at the same workplace, and 45% said that the harassment had been going on longer than 12 months.³³

Intersectionality also increases the risk of workplace sexual harassment with higher rates experienced by women who already experience disadvantages, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (53% compared with 32% of non-Indigenous people) and people with a disability (44% compared with 32% of people without a disability).³⁴ It is also important to note the consistent evidence that the following lived experiences are at higher risk of workplace sexual harassment:³⁵

- Young workers aged less than 30 years.
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or intersex (LGBTQI) workers.

²⁴ Deloitte Access Economics, 2019. *The economic costs of sexual harassment in the Workplace: Report for the Sexual Harassment National Inquiry*. Viewed 20 March 2022, <<https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/economic-costs-sexual-harassment-workplace.html>>

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ KPMG, 2017. *The Cost of Family Violence in Victoria: Summary Report*. Viewed 30 March 2022, <<https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-05/Cost-of-family-violence-in-Victoria.pdf>>

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ KPMG, 2016. *The cost of violence against women and their children in Australia: Final report*. Viewed 30 March 2022, <https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2016/the_cost_of_violence_against_women_and_their_children_in_australia_-_summary_report_may_2016.pdf>

²⁹ Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018. *Everyone's business: Fourth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces*. Sydney: Australian Human Rights Commission.

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ *ibid*

³² *ibid*

³³ *ibid*

³⁴ *ibid*

³⁵ Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020. *Respect@Work: National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces*. Sydney: Australian Human Rights Commission.

- Workers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.
- Migrant workers or workers are holding temporary visas.
- People in working arrangements are described as 'precarious' or 'insecure'.

Despite its prevalence, the reporting of sexual harassment is low. Only 17% of respondents who have experienced sexual harassment made a formal complaint or report in the last five years. Yet, women are more likely to experience negative social consequences due to workplace sexual harassment despite being the victim, not the perpetrator.³⁶ The social norms that blame female victims for abuse perpetrated against them or see whistle-blowers being treated with hostility as 'trouble makers' negatively impact women's employment, career or work (25%).³⁷

The evidence is clear that sexual harassment and family violence are driven by gender inequality and **poor attitudes and negative behaviours** informed by gender stereotypes, racism, homophobia, ableism, ageism and discrimination. These attitudes set the necessary context and conditions for harassment, family violence, and violence against women to thrive. Importantly, this analysis also drives the inequity faced in workplaces and the resulting outcomes of inequitable participation in the workforce.

Workplace culture and environment

In 2022, Western Australia's report on sexual harassment in the FIFO workforce (Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, 2022) identified a workplace culture that fails to protect women. Like the RMIT report, the investigation by the WA Government identifies "habits of behaviour that have become prevalent in the mining industry", which have, over time, reinforced and perpetuated more behaviours, norms and practices. The report rightly points out that: "...there is nothing 'natural' about any of this. These behaviours might be industry habits, but they are not inevitable or irreversible." (Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, 2022, p. 21) The investigation similarly reflects themes from the RMIT report and the national findings from the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Respect@Work* that "Mining in general and FIFO employment in particular, have long had most if not all of these risk factors...

Poor culture – including the general 'tone' of a workplace, especially where incivility is common and accepted as 'the way we do things here'; acceptance by leaders of poor behaviours; protection of 'high-value workers above others'; and the misuse of alcohol.

Gender inequality includes rigid roles and stereotypical relations, aggressive male-male peer relationships, and disrespect for women.

Power disparity in the workplace – where managers and overseers have increased power of dismissal, promotion, reward and the like.

AHRC *Respect@Work* quoted in Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, 2022, p. 22

Many FIFO workplaces have only male management, which makes it extremely hard for a woman to raise issues of sexual harassment. Again, it felt like any woman raising a point would be branded a troublemaker, and many managers would view women as the problem on-site.

³⁶ *ibid*
³⁷ *ibid*

People do not believe it until you are in that experience where you are being told, 'Well, if such and such wants to make a career here, then she's just going to have to get down on their knees.' You know, you say that flippantly, but that is genuine what is said on-site.

Quotes taken from personal submissions to the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee Enough is Enough 2022

We also know that this culture permeates through the national skills system where there is evidence that gender discrimination and inappropriate behaviour towards women in trade pathways persists. Again from the 2020 RMIT report, we know that:

Of the participants interviewed, 18% had experienced inappropriate language from male students and teachers at trade schools. Participant 36 stated that: "in class, guys talking about disgusting, inappropriate stuff, yeah, that still happens sometimes". Participant 36 was able to: "speak with the teachers at school about that [inappropriate language], and most of them pulled up the students". This is counter to the experience of Participant 42, who recalled: "on my first day at trade school I was looking for the department, and I came across my trade teacher for the year...I said I was looking for the construction department and he said, "you must be [name removed]. You have me for the year, and if I've got anything to do with it, you won't be here... by the end of the week". The language used by the trade teacher was both threatening and unsupportive. Similarly, Participant 1 commented on the poor behaviour she had experienced from her teacher, who consistently used demeaning language to describe her work, commenting in front of other teachers and students that it was "rubbish...a dog's breakfast. " Participant 1 describes that the teacher "made your life miserable" to the point that she "decided to go to [Organisation B] the second year [of her apprenticeship] " and that this behaviour was in her opinion was a result of her being female "...it was definitely a female thing". (Holdsworth, Turner, Scott-Young, & Sandri, 2020, p. 63)

This reality is also reflected in the 2022 Queensland Training Ombudsman's report into Apprentices and Trainees, focused on female apprentices in male-dominated occupations. (Queensland Training Ombudsman, 2022). The report looked at the effectiveness of current arrangements and whether there was a differential in outcomes because of gender. Strangely, and despite the clear evidence, the Ombudsman's report concludes that " whilst major systemic changes are not required, enhancements can be made that focus on" supporting apprentices and employers in a coordinated manner. The information then goes on to list 12 recommendations, each underpinned by work to address gender inequity and stereotypes in the apprenticeship program. The report also highlights evidence of a gender-segregated learning pipeline in its apprenticeship system by demonstrating the gendered nature of its apprenticeship system across multiple industries – both in commencements and completions. In addition to that, the report notes that concerning addressing the gendered stereotypes that contribute to safe workplaces: (Queensland Training Ombudsman, 2022):

large employers are more likely to have implemented formal policies and procedures to deal with issues like domestic and family violence, whilst small employers are less likely to have formal policies in place and lack the money and time to address these types of issues proactively

and

27% of apprentices in the construction industry experienced bullying and harassment, and over 30% had suicidal thoughts over

12 months

The Ombudsman's literature review undertaken by Jobs Queensland speaks to some of the drivers of poor workplace experiences for apprentices. The study highlights research that states that “...27.3 per cent of construction apprentices had experienced workplace bullying with 20 per cent experiencing severe bullying. Thoughts about suicide were high with 30 per cent having some thoughts about suicide in the previous twelve months to the study...” (MATES in Construction Report (Griffith University 2020) in Queensland Training Ombudsman, 2022). The review also notes the prevalence of these poor workplace environments in the hospitality industry as well and a range of factors and reasons across the sectors, including:

- Age – 18 to 25 (Young Adult)
- Unsecure work and training arrangement
- Identifying as LGBTIQ+
- Stigma by association
- Power and inequality
- Social and organisational norms and practices that reinforce and perpetuate the lack of psychosocial safety in the workplace

Gender equality and its application to men in our community

The application and benefits of gender equality to women and through women to broader society and economy are understood. However, there less is the understanding of how gender equality benefits men.

In 2020, the Men’s Project with Dr Michael Flood published *Unpacking the Man Box: What is the impact of the Man Box attitudes on young Australian men's behaviours and well-being?*³⁸ This report builds on the Men's Project's first report in 2018, which focused on the associations between stereotypes of manhood and masculinity and the behaviours of men aged 18-30 years across Australia. The Men's Project codified the reality of "The Man Box" which is a structure and way of belief demonstrating the profound adverse effects of male stereotypes on men, their health and well-being. When men endorse the stereotypes in the Man Box, it is more harmful to themselves and others than *any other demographic variable*. The evidence shows that the social stereotypes and pressures on men to stay within these stereotypes of manhood are significant and that some groups of men endorse traditional stereotypes of masculinity more than others. The stereotypes that drive the creation of the Man Box are, in fact, a set of rules that, like those applied to women, speak to assumptions on behaviours, physique, sexuality, behaviours and social norms. In short, the rules are that a “real man”:

- Is Self-Sufficient – real men are not respected when they talk about their fears and worries, and real men work out their problems.
- Acts tough – real men are weak if they do not fight back, and guys should always act strong even if they feel vulnerable or nervous.

³⁸ The Men's Project & Flood, M (2020), *Unpacking the Man Box: What is the impact of the Man Box attitudes on young Australian men's behaviours and well-being?* Jesuit Social Services: Melbourne

- Is physically attractive – it is hard for real men to be successful if they do not look good, but do not fuss too much about your clothes, hair or skill because women will not be attracted to you. Men that spend too much time on their looks are not manly.
- Sticks to rigid gender roles – men should not have to do household chores and are breadwinners (not women). Also, men provide for families, not look after children, and it is not suitable for boys to be taught how to do housework and look after younger children.
- Are hypersexual, not gay and homophobic – real men should have as many sexual partners as possible and never say no to sex. Real men are not gay, but it is okay if you are straight to be friends with gay guys.
- Are aggressive and controlling – real men can use violence to get respect, if necessary, and men should have the final say in any decisions in relationships or marriage. If a guy is in a relationship or marriage, he has a right to know where his wife/girlfriend is at all times.

According to the evidence from the Men's Project, adherence to these rules of the Man Box accounts for:

- Over 25 per cent of men's likelihood of perpetrating: (i) physical violence, (ii) sexual harassment, and (iii) online bullying;
- Over 25 per cent of men's possibility of suffering: (i) physical violence; and (ii) online bullying;
- Around 15 per cent of men's likelihood of binge drinking; and
- Over 10 per cent of negative mood.

One way we see this practically impacting our community is through the violence perpetuated by men. Reflecting on the findings of the Man Box, we can then deepen our connection with (but not condone or accept) the reality that men perpetrate violence on others and themselves:

- 95% of people who have experienced physical or sexual abuse (family violence or otherwise) name a man as the perpetrator.³⁹
- Around four in five family and domestic violence offenders are men.⁴⁰
- More than one in three Australians have experienced violence by a male perpetrator since they were 15, compared to one in 10 by a female perpetrator.⁴¹
- While females are more likely to be suicidal than males, with a higher prevalence of suicidal ideation, males are more likely than females to die by suicide.⁴²

Impact on the workforce

In a 2019 study of men's participation in early education and care work,⁴³ researchers discovered two key stereotypes that men in these care settings are subject to: "the possible perpetrator" or "the fun guy". This examination of gender-specific stereotypes as applied to men found that when men work in non-traditional jobs, harmful gender stereotypes get activated.

³⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018. *Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia 2018*. Cat. no. FDV 2, Canberra: AIHW.

⁴⁰ *ibid*

⁴¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017. *2016 Personal Safety Survey*. Viewed 30 March 2022. <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release>>

⁴² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2021. *Suicide & self-harm monitoring*. Viewed 30 March 2022, <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring>>

⁴³ Hedlin, M., Åberg, M. & Johansson, C., 2019. Fun guy and possible perpetrator: an interview study of how men are positioned within early childhood education and care. *Education Inquiry*, 10(2), pp. 95-115.

This reality is further supported by research into male participation in broader feminised workforces where the discriminating effect of bias and stereotypes results in:⁴⁴

- Hiring managers discriminating against men in feminised workforces;
- Men discriminate against themselves from working in roles that they consider feminised;
- The lower pay provided to women's workforces reinforced this gendered discrimination; and
- Creating the "glass elevator/escalator effect" whereby men have noticeably faster career advancement in feminised workforces but also are impacted by stigma due to gender stereotypes for undertaking frontline roles (see the discussion on the glass escalator effect later in this analysis).

We can see the impact of these gender stereotypes on men in our skills and jobs system in Australia. Our highly segregated labour and skills systems put in place structures and systems that punish men for working in jobs that are counter to the rules of the Man Box.

Gender-Based Violence in Education and Training settings

In the last 2 years, some foundational pieces of work have been produced on the prevalence and reality of gender-based violence in education and training settings.

In 2021, Chanel Contos started a petition calling for "sexual consent education" and sought testimonials from school students about their experience of sexual assault. The result was overwhelming but, unfortunately, unsurprising. As of 31 March 2022, Contos's work has received 6,756 testimonials of the lived experience of sexual harassment and assault in our schools and almost 45,000 signatures on a petition for mandatory, holistic and earlier consent education to be introduced into schools.⁴⁵ Since then, Contos has met with the Prime Minister to discuss the requests in the petition. In February 2022, all state and federal education ministers agreed to "see explicit references to teaching consent and respectful relationships adopted into the curriculum from foundation to year 10 in an age-appropriate way."⁴⁶

A summary of the proposed changes, obtained by The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age, include revisions to the curriculum's Health and Physical Education component to address the role of gender, power, coercion and disrespect in abusive or violent relationships.⁴⁷

From years 7 to 10, the teaching of the concept of consent will be tied to sex education, while the broader idea of consent will be embedded across the health curriculum from foundation years.⁴⁸

On 23 March 2022, the results were released from the *National Student Safety Survey* (NSSS), which reports on the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault among university students.⁴⁹ The results clearly describe the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault in another part of the education system. The results are confronting but not surprising, given what we already know about

⁴⁴ Williams, C. L., 1992. The Glass Escalator: Hidden Advantages for Men in the "Female" Professions. *Social Problems*, 39(3), pp. 253-267.

⁴⁵ Teach Us Consent, 2022. Viewed on 31 March 2022, <https://www.teachusconsent.com/>

⁴⁶ Visentin, L. & Chrysanthos, N. 2022. Consent and coercion in sexual relationships to be part of the national curriculum. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 February. Viewed 31 March 2022, <<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/consent-and-coercion-in-sexual-relationships-to-be-part-of-national-curriculum-20220218-p59xmx.html>>

⁴⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁸ *ibid*

⁴⁹ Heywood, W., Myers, P., Powell, A., Meikle, G., & Nguyen, D., 2022. *National Student Safety Survey: Report on the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault among university students in 2021*. Melbourne: The Social Research Centre.

the prevalence of gender-based violence. The NSSS found that females, non-binary people, transgender people, those with migrant refugee and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, people with a disability, and people who identify as LGBTQI+ or unsure were particularly affected by sexual harassment and sexual assault on university campuses. Critical findings on prevalence were:⁵⁰

One in five (21.3%) females had experienced sexual harassment compared with 7.6% of males *and in the last 12 months*, one in 10 (10.5%) females had experienced sexual harassment compared with 3.9% of males.

Two in five (40.3%) non-binary students and one in four (25.8%) transgender students had been sexually harassed, and *in the last 12 months*, one in 10 (11.7%) students aged 18-21 years had experienced sexual harassment.

One in three (29.1%) students with a disability had been sexually harassed, compared with 13.5% of other students. *In the last 12 months*, one in seven (13.7%) students with a disability had been sexually harassed compared with 7% of other students.

One in five (21.4%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students had been sexually harassed compared with 16% of other students. *In the last 12 months*, one in eight (12.0%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students had been sexually harassed compared with 8% of other students. The study also found that when adjusting for other factors, "it is probable that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are more likely to have been sexually harassed in a university context when compared with other students...[and] in the past 12 months when compared to other students."⁵¹

Furthermore, 39.7% of pansexual students, 33.1% of bisexual students, 23.3% of students who were unsure or questioning their sexuality, and 22.9% of gay or lesbian students had been sexually harassed compared with 13% of heterosexual students.

Of students who speak English at home, 18.6% had been sexually harassed, compared with 9.6% of students who speak a language other than English at home.

In addition to the above, the study found that nearly half of students who had been sexually harassed had their most impactful experience in the last 12 months; it occurred on campus, and they were more likely to report it (60.7%) if they were learning on campus. The incident more likely involved a single perpetrator, but around 24% involved two or more people, and one in two students knew all or some of the people involved. If the incident happened in a private home/residence, the perpetrator/s were more likely to be known (reflecting the data on the perpetration of violence in domestic settings where the victim is very likely to know the perpetrator). Interestingly, females were more likely not to know any of the perpetrators of sexual assault and harassment.

Overwhelmingly, the perpetrators of sexual harassment and sexual assault on university campuses are male (84%) and students (60.7%). Furthermore, 92% of female students are harassed by a male perpetrator, with 52.1% of male victims harassed by another male.

This analysis highlights that at the point of developing this skills plan, Australia's Vocational Education and Training Sector is the only part of Australia's Training and Education system to have

⁵⁰ *ibid*

⁵¹ *ibid*

yet examined and reflected on the prevalence and impact of gender-based violence within its ranks.⁵²

While the conclusions and ramifications of this study are still to be worked through by the University sector, it is clear that without a fundamental change in attitudes to violence against women, gender stereotypes and intersectional gender inequity, this violence will continue. The trauma that this violence and harassment create in individuals' lives and those that love and care for them does and will impact our workforce, our skills utilisation and the economy at large (as Deloitte Economics analysis for Federal Treasury previously advised).

Increasing skills utilisation can also include support and alignment with strategies that address and prevent sexual harassment and gender-based violence, not only in education and training settings but also in the workplace and community.

END

⁵² Concerning insights on the prevalence of gendered-based violence in schooling, we refer to findings on this made through such commissions of work as the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse and a petition as that conducted by Chanel Contos <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/one-year-since-consent-campaign-changed-school-curriculum-20220218-p59xub.html>