



13 December 2019

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Via email: paec@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Committee

Submission to the Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting.

Jesuit Social Services' understanding of gender inequality

Gender inequality refers to the way in which narrow, rigid gender norms and stereotypes limit individuals and groups of both men and women, thereby preventing them from living fulfilling and productive lives where they can flourish and reach their full potential.

Gender inequality is problematic for both men and women. Gender norms and expectations that have historically limited women's participation in public life and the workforce, and today see high rates of violence against women perpetrated by men, are also having a detrimental impact on men and boys.

Boys and men are over-represented in key indicators of harmful social behaviours and negative social outcomes such as the perpetration of violence and other crimes, in suicide rates, and in incarceration rates. Both women and men are more likely to experience violence at the hands of men, with around 95 per cent of all victims of violence in Australia reporting a male perpetrator. Research has shown that men who conform to dominant masculine norms (that men should be tough, stoic, dominant, daring, and in control) are more likely to engage in risky behaviours and less likely to engage in health promotion behaviours. They are also more likely to use physical violence and sexually harass women.

The reasons for these manifestations of systemic dysfunction are complex and multi-faceted but have much to do with the way in which boys and men are acculturated into dominant masculine gender norms. These norms derive from deeply embedded gendered beliefs and structures that have evolved over generations in a myriad of cultural contexts, and across major shifts in social, environmental and economic conditions throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

They are also the product of our collective failure – and particularly the failure of our largely male community leaders – to call out this inequality and put in place the processes and settings that foster behaviour change, stem poor trajectories or break cycles of inequality, exclusion and violence.

Our work to promote gender justice

Jesuit Social Services seeks to continue to improve our understanding of gender inequality and to commit to a proactive approach to addressing the harms associated with this inequality for women and girls, as well as for men and boys.

We have been working with boys and men for over 40 years. Many of the boys and men we work with use violence, and we see many of them hold harmful attitudes towards girls and women. Our work with men who have committed serious violent and sex offences seeks to ensure that they have a successful transition back into the community upon release from prison, with a lower risk of recidivism and improved community safety.

Drawing from this experience, The Men's Project was established in 2017 to provide leadership and to develop new approaches to reduce violence and other harmful behaviours prevalent among boys and men, to build new approaches to improve their wellbeing, and to keep families and communities safe.

The Men's Project incorporates a range of initiatives across four key approaches, namely to:

- Promote cultural and attitudinal change around issues of masculinity and gender to support primary prevention efforts
- Develop, deliver and evaluate interventions that address violence and other harmful behaviour
- Share knowledge across sectors about what works to engage boys and men, including developing a better understanding of their attitudes
- Build capacity across services to recognise and respond to violence and other harmful behaviours in boys and men.

Collectively, these initiatives seek to promote positive social change surrounding masculinity, reduce male violence and harmful behaviours, and improve men's wellbeing and relationships. An overview of our vision, goals and approach taken through The Men's Project is provided in Appendix 1.

The Man Box

In 2018, The Men's Project at Jesuit Social Services worked with global leaders in gender norms research, Promundo, to undertake a survey of 1,000 young Australian men. The focus of the survey was on men's attitudes and behaviours in relation to a set of questions about gender.

To do this work we used an analytical tool, the Man Box, to distinguish our findings between those young men who strongly adhered to rigid gender norms about masculinities (inside the Man Box) and those who were more progressive, or liberal in their understanding of masculinities (outside the Man Box).

Our findings are clear – the Man Box is alive and well in Australia today with the majority of young men agreeing there are social pressures around being a 'real man'.

A significant minority of young men personally endorse many of these rules, particularly around acting tough, being the primary income earner and being in control. However, there is also a gap between young

men's perception of the social pressures of the Man Box rules and their personal endorsement of these rules.

In general, young men hold more progressive views on what it is to be a 'real man' than what they believe society is telling them. These findings show that many young men feel pressure to behave in ways that align with the Man Box rules in order to be seen as a 'real man', despite not personally endorsing these beliefs, and despite these behaviours being harmful to both them and others.

The research shows that men who endorse the rules of the Man Box are more likely than other men to have poor mental health. Of these young men:

- 44 per cent had thoughts of suicide in the last two weeks (twice as likely as those outside The Man Box);
- 83 per cent reported having little interest or pleasure in doing things in the last two weeks; and
- 72 per cent reported feeling down, depressed or hopeless.

The fact that those who most strongly endorsed The Man Box had thoughts of suicide at double the rate of those who were most outside of the box is particularly alarming, suggesting more concentrated experiences of poor mental health among this group. The data suggests those men who are not aware of societal pressures to be a particular type of man are more likely to personally endorse The Man Box rules. These men are likely to be at highest risk.

Future work is needed to understand why these men have greater awareness of societal pressures and how this awareness is linked to lower personal endorsement of the Man Box rules.

Implications and recommendations for Gender Responsive Budgeting

It is within this context that we believe Gender Responsive Budgeting offers a critical mechanism to help achieve gender justice. To ensure that gender equality commitments are fully realised, we believe that the Victorian budgeting framework should:

- take into account the effect of gender and associated norms and roles on the wellbeing of men, women and children
- develop clear measures that incorporate a gender perspective in all phases of planning and budgeting
- be informed by tools that effectively assess the different needs and contributions of men and women, boys and girls to existing revenues, expenditures and allocations
- be accompanied by broader initiatives, such as education and awareness raising, legislation, and other practical policy measures.

Gender Responsive Budgeting should aspire to provide a gender analysis of the impact of government budgetary decision-making processes. This requires transparent reporting on impact and analysis as well as commitment to ongoing change. It must work across the whole budget with a long-term view to assess the impacts.

On a fundamental level, Gender Responsive Budgeting should question the assumptions about what constitutes productivity and which activities should be measured, a telling example being that of unpaid work – gendered to women – which as it stands is not as worthy of measurement to the economy as paid

work (often gendered to men). It provides an opportunity to shift the narrative and have social infrastructure seen as just as worthy of investment as physical infrastructure.

Building on this, we believe the following actions and recommendations would make a significant difference in creating real change when it comes to gender equality.

1. Make budget decisions based on the cost of harmful masculine norms

In this year's budget the Government allocated \$2.7 billion to keeping women and children safe, \$121 million on dangerous driving, \$5.8 million on addressing bullying, and \$173 million on mental health.

The Man Boxⁱ research shows that men who most strongly agree with the Man Box rules are more likely to report committing acts of violence, online bullying and sexual harassment, involvement in car accidents, poorer levels of mental health, and engaging in risky drinking. This costs the economy in the form of workplace accidents, sick days, harassment claims, etc.ⁱⁱ

If these costs can be calculated, it would allow for monitoring of the continued escalation in costs attributable to harmful masculine norms. Subsequent investment into addressing the seven Man Box sub-pillars could be accompanied by a cost benefit analysis to guide policy direction.

2. Establish healthy masculinities action plans which explicitly recognise the influence that men's attitudes and behaviour can have on poor outcomes, including poor mental health, suicidality and use of violence

This would involve focussing on equipping the workforce with awareness of how gender and stereotypical masculine norms impact behaviours, and would leverage existing reforms for critical workforces, including:

- Child protection
- TAFES
- Prisons
- Mental health workforce
- Schools (including education programs such as road safety)
- Hospitals
- Police

3. Fund a State wide healthy masculinities campaign

We recommend the delivery of a campaign which reflects the changing roles and expressions of masculinity we seek to promote (e.g. in the household, as fathers, emotionally open and expressive, supporting gender equality). This could be incorporated as part of broader public awareness campaigns that are already running related to violence and sexual harassment.

4. Recognise and factor in unpaid work as a contribution to society

Gender Responsive Budgeting should recognise unpaid work – often gendered to women – as a form of productivity and contribution to society. As women are more likely to provide unpaid work than men, public services that reduce the amount of unpaid work needed can have a major effect on women's economic opportunities and employment.ⁱⁱⁱ

This also has implications for men, because Gender Responsive Budgeting can drive changes in stereotypes around unpaid work and its value, providing men with more choice in terms of the contribution of activities and productivity that they provide to society – paid or unpaid.

5. Build understanding of attitudes on Dads staying at home

Undertake research into alternatives to ‘Daddy Leave’, as mentioned in the Victorian Gender Equality Strategy^{iv} – which encourages short term leave, to find out what (apart from the gender pay gap) keeps Dads at work and Mums at home throughout children’s toddler and pre-school years. A Sydney Morning Herald article^v articulates the problem, that “according to the Australian Institute of Family Studies, about one in 20 Australian fathers take primary parental leave, which is low by global standards”.

6. Budget expenditure should take into account the different needs of men and women, girls and boys

Budgets should be assessed in terms of the impact of expenditure on meeting the needs of different groups of men, women, girls and boys, depending on their income, age, ethnicity, or whether they or rural or urban-based. In this way, assessment can be used as a tool to analyse the potential gender impact of economic policies, address injustices in current approaches, and develop policies that will promote equality between women and men.^{vi}

7. Research into commonalities in the wants and needs of men and women in relationships

In the current budget there is an allocation of \$214 million to ensure new parents have the support and care they and their baby need, and \$2.7 billion to keeping women and children safe. However, there is a lack of emphasis on ‘understanding ourselves’ and education on the changes a new baby brings to relationships, as well as positive ways of adapting to these changes. The role of gender in parenting is one aspect, as well as meaningful equality and healthy relationships.

More work could focus on building a greater understanding of what men and women’s expectations are in relation to care giving and how these affect people’s wellbeing, as well as how they play out in relationships.

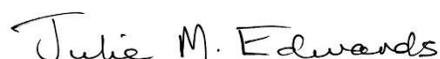
Some examples are: Manfred Max-Neef’s Fundamental human needs^{vii} and Tony Robbins 6 human needs^{viii}.

8. Take active efforts to incorporate the views of civil society

We believe it is of the utmost importance that the Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting incorporate and value the views of civil society to ensure the process is genuine, thorough, and inclusive of a diversity of perspectives. Civil society has a significant role to play in achieving gender justice and equality in partnership with the Victorian Government, thus all efforts should be made to promote a culture of collaboration.

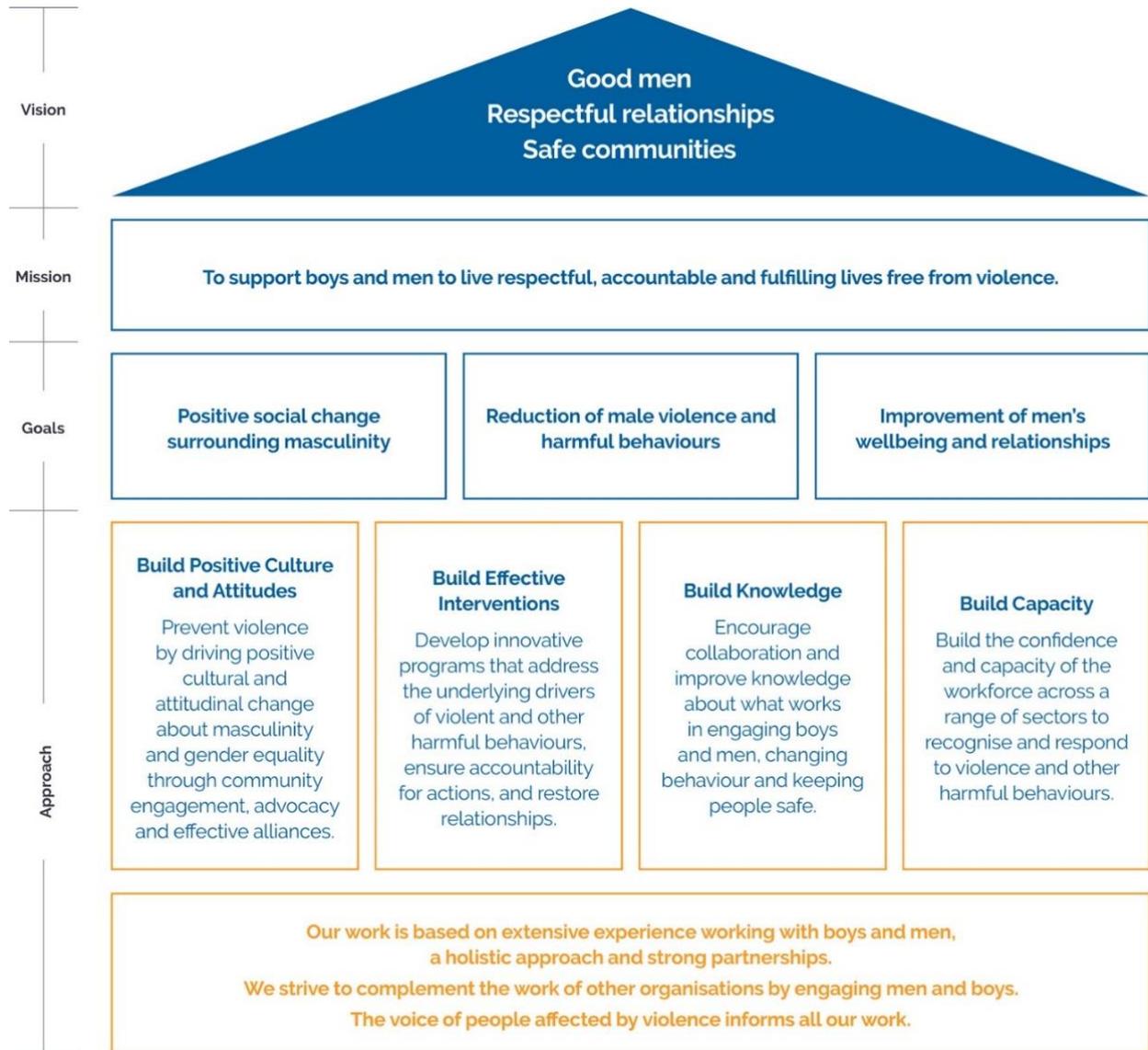
We appreciate the Committee taking these matters into consideration, and would appreciate the opportunity to present at public hearings, pending their scheduling.

Yours sincerely



Julie Edwards – CEO, Jesuit Social Services

Appendix 1: The Men's Project



References

- ⁱ Jesuit Social Services (2018). *The Man Box: A study on being a young man in Australia*. ([link](#))
- ⁱⁱ Heilman, B., Guerrero-López, C. M., Ragonese, C., Kelberg, M., and Barker, G. (2019). *The Cost of the Man Box: A study on the economic impacts of harmful masculine stereotypes in the US, UK, and Mexico - Executive Summary*. Washington, DC, and London: Promundo-US and Unilever. ([link](#))
- ⁱⁱⁱ UK Women's Budget Group (2018). *A casebook for gender responsive budgeting groups*. ([link](#)).
- ^{iv} Victorian Government (2016). *Safe and strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy*. ([link](#))
- ^v Ireland, Judith (2019). 'We've still got a way to go': Labor looks to Nordics for next paid parental leave plan. *Sydney Morning Herald*. ([link](#))
- ^{vi} UK Women's Budget Group (2018). *A casebook for gender responsive budgeting groups*. ([link](#)).
- ^{vii} Manfred A. Max-Neef (1991). *Human Scale Development*. Apex Press, 1991.
- ^{viii} Team Tony (2019). *Do you need to feel significant? The need to feel important and why it makes you sabotage your own success*. ([link](#))