



The Hon Fiona Richardson MP
Minister for Women
Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence
Via email: minister.richardson@minstaff.vic.gov.au

16 November 2016

Dear Minister Richardson

Re: Support for the Victorian Government's Gender Equality Strategy

Women's Health West would like to congratulate the Victorian Government on the development of Victoria's first ever Gender Equality Strategy. This is a milestone document for women and girls across Victoria.

A Gender Equality Strategy is important for all Victorians, and women and girls have the right to live as equal participants in all aspects of their lives. Failure to redress gender inequality is inextricably linked to increased levels of men's violence against women and other human rights abuses. Women's Health West is pleased to see the Victorian Government has committed to redressing the problem of violence against women and the Gender Equality Strategy is an important mechanism to support this process. Working toward the achievement of gender equality will also contribute significantly to women's economic security, independence and participation in society while also benefiting Victoria's economic growth and development more broadly.

Women's Health West has actively contributed to the health, safety and wellbeing of women in the western region of Melbourne since 1988, through a combination of direct family violence service delivery, research, health promotion, community development, capacity building, group work and advocacy. We are leaders in the development of regional strategies to prevent violence against women and promote gender equity, seeing partnership within and outside the health sector as crucial for bringing about effective and sustainable outcomes for women and children.

The women's health program, which is unique to the state of Victoria, plays a unique role in leading regional action plans, and has many strong and existing partnerships designed to achieve gender equity, prevent men's violence against women and promote sexual and reproductive health. As such we can unequivocally state that there is a great deal of support for continued and concerted gender equality activity among our stakeholders.

PHONE (03) 9689 9588
EMAIL info@whwest.org.au
FAX (03) 9689 3861
WEB www.whwest.org.au
ABN 24 036 234 159

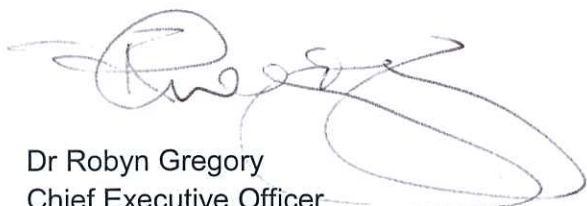
317 - 319 Barkly Street
Footscray VIC 3011

Women's Health West commends the Victorian Government for their commitment to date and we look forward to continuing to work with the Government toward the achievement of gender equality for all women and girls in the west of Melbourne.

Women's Health West recommends that the Victorian Gender Equality Strategy include the following measures in order to be sustainable and have the greatest impact on the community;

- The Victorian Government's Gender Equality Strategy has bi-partisan commitment, yearly action plans and funding for a minimum of ten-year
- The Gender Equality Strategy sits within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and an inter-ministerial governance structure supports a whole-of-government approach to gender equity
- The Gender Equality Strategy is aligned with and leverages off the *Victorian Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-2019* and Victorian public health and health promotion sectors are mandated to mainstream gender equity
- The Victorian Government funds Victoria's women's health services to lead, coordinate and facilitate gender equity action plans
- The Gender Equality Strategy is strongly aligned with the forthcoming Victorian reproductive health services strategy as led by the Minister for Health, the Hon Jill Hennessey
- Local government's municipal public health and wellbeing plans include prevention of violence against women as a public health priority as per the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robyn Gregory', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Dr Robyn Gregory
Chief Executive Officer
Women's Health West