Acknowledgement of Country

The Government of Western Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures, and to Elders both past and present.

We particularly acknowledge the caring strengths, resilience and central role of Aboriginal women within their families.
Contents

Time for Action .............................................................................................................. 3
Women’s Plan for WA 2020–2030 .............................................................................. 4
Making the vision reality .......................................................................................... 6
Priority area: Health and wellbeing ........................................................................... 17
Priority area: Safety and justice ............................................................................... 21
Priority area: Economic independence ..................................................................... 25
Priority area: Leadership ......................................................................................... 29
Consultation .............................................................................................................. 34
Key findings ................................................................................................................. 36
Outcomes framework ................................................................................................. 38
Definitions .................................................................................................................. 41
Appendix 1 .................................................................................................................. 43
References ................................................................................................................... 45
Western Australia is home to a modern, energetic and competent population and we need to maximise that potential. Empowering everyone to fully participate in all aspects of society is the smart thing to do.

Western Australians have been actively participating in the growing global momentum for gender equality and women’s rights, including the women’s marches and the #metoo and #timesup campaigns. The community has sent a clear message that more action is needed to achieve gender equality.

Too many women are still experiencing family and domestic violence, as well as sexual violence and assault. Women continue to be under-represented in leadership roles across almost all sectors, despite being well qualified and eager to lead. The gender pay gap and time out of the workforce mean that women are vulnerable to poverty and homelessness. This can lead to a cycle of disadvantage across generations.

There is powerful evidence that gender equality makes good business sense and will contribute to a strong economy for our State. It is everyone’s responsibility to take a stand for gender equality and it’s time to work together to build a stronger Western Australia.

The Western Australian Government is committed to driving gender equality and creating change to benefit our community.

The Women’s Plan has been developed as a framework for Government, business, and the community to take action. With this plan, we can all work together over the next 10 years to create a better, fairer and more equitable community in Western Australia.

**Time for action**

Western Australians are speaking out about gender equality and the need for action. We are listening.

Please be bold and courageous. Do not shy away from the challenging conversations. Thank you for doing this. I already feel a tiny bit safer and hopeful for the future :)

Survey respondent
Vision

Women and girls in Western Australia live and work safely in a community where diversity is embraced and where access to rights, resources, opportunities and protections is not determined by gender.

Principles

The plan to achieve this vision will be guided by the following principles:

- Everyone has the right to fully participate and succeed in the community.
- Achieving gender equality is everyone’s responsibility.
- We will take a lifespan approach to achieving gender equality.
- Equality will be achieved through equitable practices and access.
- We will work together to achieve equality.
- Gender inequality impacts some women more than others.
- Action is based on knowledge, evidence from research and community voices.

Extensive consultation occurred across Western Australia with government agencies, private companies, community groups and individuals to develop our vision.

This plan will help to change the conversation around gender equality. We need to plan together to bring about change.
## Priorities Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priorities</th>
<th>Goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health and wellbeing</td>
<td>Women are healthy, active and lead fulfilled lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and justice</td>
<td>Women live safely and have appropriate access to adequate legal protections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic independence</td>
<td>Women can be financially independent across all life stages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Women’s skills, achievements and strengths are valued, enabling them to participate equally in the community, including at leadership levels</td>
</tr>
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</table>

See the Outcomes Framework on page 38 for more detail.

### Future Western Australia?

Consultation attendees and survey respondents were asked what gender equality will look like in future WA.

- Men and women would have the opportunity to share family and income responsibilities equally (50/50) and both family and income roles would be equally valued.

- Women would feel safe and comfortable in all aspects of life, work and social situations. Women’s voices would be valued and sought after.

- Improved health, improved family relationships, stronger women, communities, workplaces.

- A more tolerant and diverse society with equal representation of gender in decision-making bodies, management and government resulting in a better and more accurate reflection of societal needs.

- Working arrangements would change as more men take on home duties roles - this is the only real way we will see change in the corporate sector - when it impacts men.

— Survey respondents

The Women's Plan sets out how the Government will lead the way to achieve generational change and move towards a future WA where these visions can become reality.
Making the vision reality

Government commitments will be announced when the Women’s Plan is launched in 2020.

“Having strong and relevant policies in place which are monitored for their benefit.”

Survey respondent
Achieving goals

A long-term approach

The Women’s Plan outlines an overall framework to achieve long-term change and will be accompanied by detailed action plans for implementation of specific initiatives over the next 10 years. The Women’s Plan will link actions to outcomes and will keep efforts focused on the long-term goals and vision. An initial outcomes framework has been developed and will be revised through the life of the plan to enable flexibility.

Actions

An evidence-based approach is used for this plan and best practice actions and initiatives in Western Australia and other jurisdictions will be considered. Feedback received from the community guides development of detailed action plans over the next 10 years. A consultation report will be available on the Department of Communities website.

Implementation

This plan uses a whole of community approach to drive gender equality. The Western Australian Government is leading the way by developing strategies and initiatives that support gender equality within the public sector. Action plans will recognise Government’s role working with all sectors in the community to develop initiatives under the four priority areas.

Monitoring

An evaluation plan will be developed as part of the first action plan and this will detail how actions will be evaluated over the life of the 10-year Women’s Plan. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensure continuous improvement. Evaluation outcomes will inform the development of each new action plan and regular updates on progress will be available to the community.

“Persistent, unwavering, cross-government commitment to addressing gender equality in every sphere - with a focus on underlying social norms that perpetuate inequality, but also recognizing need for equal women in leadership, need to prevent violence and address disadvantage.”

Survey respondent
**Relationship to other plans, policies and strategies**

The Women’s Plan is aligned to frameworks and instruments at international, national and state levels. There is an obligation through a number of international frameworks to continue to advance gender equality and support women’s rights in Western Australia. The frameworks include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 and the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women Beijing Declaration – for more information see Appendix 1.

In Western Australia, the Women’s Plan intersects and overlaps with other strategies and plans developed by the State Government. The most significant of these are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Our Priorities: Sharing Prosperity</strong></th>
<th>Western Australian Government</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sharing Prosperity</strong></td>
<td>This whole-of-government targets program was launched by Premier Mark McGowan in 2019. It sets measurable targets to deliver better social, economic and environment outcomes for the State. Targets that align with the Women’s Plan include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A bright future</strong></td>
<td><strong>A bright future</strong> – increasing participation in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) will address the underrepresentation of women and girl in STEM education and careers which disadvantages them financially and fails to use the entire talent pool to contribute to the economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aboriginal wellbeing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Aboriginal wellbeing</strong> – reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in custody will contribute to ending the cycle of family dislocation and disruption that is associated with intergenerational trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A strong economy</strong></td>
<td><strong>A strong economy</strong> – increasing the number of employed persons in WA will support economic independence for women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional prosperity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Regional prosperity</strong> – delivering stronger regional economies will support women in regional areas who are more likely than men to leave to find jobs in other areas and are less likely to have independent income if they stay.</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Western Australia’s Strategy for Reducing Family and Domestic Violence 2020-2030</strong></th>
<th>Department of Communities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy for Reducing Family and Domestic Violence 2020-2030</strong></td>
<td>This strategy will guide a whole of community approach to prevention and earlier intervention, victim safety and perpetrator accountability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Department of Communities</strong></td>
<td>Advancing gender equality is central to stopping violence against women. All strategies and initiatives that are developed under the Women’s Plan to advance gender equality in Western Australia align with the purpose of the Strategy for Reducing Family and Domestic Violence.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Western Australian Women’s Health and Wellbeing Policy</strong></th>
<th>Department of Health</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Western Australian Women’s Health and Wellbeing Policy</strong></td>
<td>This policy was released in September 2019 and is designed to improve the health and wellbeing women and girls in Western Australia. The policy prioritises areas of action for health issues that particularly impact on women. One of the principles of the policy is that gender is a social determinant of health. Target areas include the impacts of gender-based violence, sexual health and mental health.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Other State Government policies of significance to the Women’s Plan include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Ministry</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobs WA</td>
<td>Western Australian Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Disability Plan</td>
<td>Department of Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State STEM Skills Strategy</td>
<td>Department of Jobs, Tourism, Skills and Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australian LGBTI Health Strategy</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australian Strategy to Respond to the Abuse of Older People (Elder Abuse)</td>
<td>Department of Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australian Homelessness Strategy</td>
<td>Department of Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Australian Housing Strategy 2020-2030</td>
<td>Department of Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Plan for At Risk Youth</td>
<td>Department of Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australian Youth Strategy</td>
<td>Department of Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Years Initiative</td>
<td>Department of Communities</td>
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</table>
Benefits of gender equality

Women's rights are human rights

Australia made a commitment to ensuring that women have equal access to rights and opportunities when the Charter of the United Nations was adopted in 1945. This commitment means that Australia has a responsibility to ensure that women are not treated unfairly in the way that laws, policies, regulations and rules are implemented in everyday life. Women have not always had the same rights as men so specific steps are necessary to ensure that women’s and girls’ human rights are understood and supported by everyone in the community.

Women’s safety

Evidence shows that beliefs, attitudes and behaviours relating to gender drive violence towards women. Perpetrators of family and domestic violence and sexual offences are overwhelmingly men. Individuals who do not see men and women as equal, or who believe in very traditional gender roles, are more likely to tolerate, excuse or condone violence against women. Working to achieve gender equality is fundamental to breaking the cycle of violence against women.

Economic benefit

There is clear evidence that gender equality in the workforce, and in leadership roles, brings benefits for the community. The Grattan Institute found that the Australian economy would increase by around $25 billion if women’s workforce participation increased by just six per cent. Research by McKinsey found that companies with several women on their boards financially outperform companies with no women, or few women.

Gender equality also creates financial benefits for women and their families by increasing their participation in leadership roles and in many of the higher paid industries such as science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM).

Men’s wellbeing

Traditional gender roles and stereotypes can also disadvantage men, who may feel pressure to fulfil unrealistic expectations associated with masculinity. Men can experience increased health risks and mental health issues from suppressing or denying emotions deemed ‘feminine’ or engaging in ‘masculine’ behaviours such as excessive alcohol consumption and risk-taking.

Gender equality empowers men to have a more active role in their children’s lives and supports them to do so. Enabling men to achieve better balance between work and family responsibilities can improve their overall wellbeing and their emotional connections. More equality in parenting roles, care-giving responsibilities and domestic chores also creates more opportunities for women to engage in the workforce and progress their careers.
Gender inequality impacts some women more than others

The term intersectionality refers to the different characteristics of a person’s identity that can intersect or overlap to affect their social experiences. Some women are affected by multiple types of bias or discrimination and face additional challenges or barriers to participation in their communities. Social attitudes and biases can lead to some women experiencing additional challenges and discrimination. Some of the overlapping identities and experiences that impact on women include:

Within each of these factors there will be a range of experiences. It is important to understand intersectionalities in order to respond to gender inequality. Some of the intersectional issues and barriers experienced by women are highlighted below.

**Women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds**

Language barriers can prevent women from CaLD backgrounds from accessing education and employment opportunities, information about their rights, legal information and support services. Cultural and religious practices can define women’s roles as wives and mothers and limit workforce participation and access to independent income.

**Women with disability**

Women with disability experience additional barriers to meaningful participation in their communities. Discrimination and prejudice can exclude them from being part of decision making on issues that affect their lives, such as their health care and reproductive health. Women with disability are in a high-risk group for sexual assault, abuse, exploitation and harassment. Women with disability experience bias in trying to gain employment and are more likely than either men with disability or other women to be in informal, low paid and vulnerable jobs.5
Specific issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

In Western Australia, 2.4 per cent of women identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; of whom almost 32 per cent live in the north of the state and 38 per cent live in the Perth metropolitan area.

Historically, Aboriginal women in Western Australia had significant responsibilities in their communities for maintaining cultural rules and passing on knowledge and history to younger generations. However, the impact of colonisation and the imposition of Western laws and policies have disrupted those traditional roles and contributed to ongoing intergenerational trauma in Aboriginal families and communities. In particular, the dislocation of many Aboriginal people from their lands has broken down cultural identity and prevented the traditional teaching of knowledge and social values.

Aboriginal women in Western Australia experience gender inequality within the context of the ongoing effects of colonisation on their communities. Families still experience grief, loss and trauma as members of the stolen generation deal with cultural disconnection and loss of
identity. Aboriginal women may not identify family violence as a gender issue, but rather as a consequence of colonisation.

Our Watch reports that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Australia experience much higher risk than non-Aboriginal women of physical or sexual violence and are 35 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence. While family violence is generally underreported, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have even lower reporting rates than non-Aboriginal women. This may be due to cultural factors such as shame and stigma, reluctance to approach authority figures and past experiences of culturally inappropriate responses.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are more likely than non-Aboriginal women to talk of lateral violence being perpetrated by members of their community against each other. This is understood as the expression of living with anger and fear as the result of generations of cultural oppression and being forced to live in a way that is at odds with traditional culture.

It is important that responses to the issues experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are culturally specific and are developed in partnership with women. Engaging with Aboriginal communities and empowering women by recognising their strengths and authority are central to bringing about positive change. Landmark work by Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar AO in 2018 set out principles for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls. These include self-determination, participation in decision-making, respect for and protection of culture, and equality and non-discrimination.
Gender inequality across the lifespan

Gender inequality affects women across the lifespan, from childhood to older age. It is important to understand how attitudes and expectations develop and the significant ways that many small actions and behaviours can build up to negatively impact women’s lives.

Children (ages 0 – 12)

Children’s identity begins to develop in utero and from birth as they are impacted by the behaviours of those around them. Observing traditional gender roles influences children’s activities and behaviours, which is further reinforced by encouragement to play with particular toys, wear certain clothes or like specific colours. Studies have shown that boys and girls are guided to engage in different types of play activities. Phrases such as, “boys don’t cry”, or “you throw like a girl”, can affect children’s ideas about gender differences and their expectations, actions and choices. These gendered learnings are reinforced over time, often unintentionally, through popular culture, the media, sales marketing and by family and peers. The early years set the foundations for lifelong attitudes about gender roles.

Adolescence (ages 12–18)

Young women and girls report that sexual harassment and public objectification begins from a young age – often before the age of 15. In adolescence, young women’s appearance is subject to a high level of scrutiny, and they are at much higher risk of developing eating disorders and body image issues than young men. Young women are also more likely than young men to experience sexual assault and sexual violence, which can include everything from drink-spiking and non-consensual sexting, through to date rape and family violence. Social media plays a significant role in reinforcing the gendered expectations that have already become entrenched for many adolescents.

Gender stereotypes and behaviours learned in childhood influence decisions made by adolescents, including school subject choices. Social expectations and attitudes, rather than ability, continue to steer fewer girls than boys into science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects in school. Although girls are more likely than boys to finish high school, they are less likely to choose career pathways in the relatively well paid STEM fields.
Adulthood (ages 18–60)

More women than men complete tertiary education yet the average graduating salary is 3.6 per cent higher for men.\textsuperscript{15} This pay gap extends throughout the lifespan with Western Australian women’s full-time earnings, on average, being 22 per cent less than men’s.

Women are most likely to be the primary carer within traditional family structures, impacting on their workforce participation, income level and leadership progression. Even when working full-time, women undertake more hours of unpaid domestic duties than men.

Women’s risk of family and domestic violence is significantly higher than men’s and more than a third of women in Western Australia who experienced violence from a partner reported that this occurred during pregnancy.\textsuperscript{16} Women also face a much higher risk of sexual assault or abuse than men, and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women,\textsuperscript{17} or women with disability, that risk is further increased.\textsuperscript{18}

Maturity (ages 60+)

The inequality experienced throughout their lives, culminates with older Australian women retiring, on average, with superannuation balances that are half the amount of men’s. This increases women’s risk of experiencing poverty and homelessness in older age, and impacts on their ability to access health services and make lifestyle choices. Women can expect to live longer than men, which means their superannuation has to stretch further.

Older women are at a higher risk of elder abuse than men, with research showing an emerging pattern that can include the continuation of intimate partner abuse experienced during earlier years, as well as abuse by family members.\textsuperscript{19}
Snapshot of Western Australian women

For further data relating to women in Western Australia please see the Women’s Report Card 2019 on the Department of Communities website www.communities.wa.gov.au.

- **50%** of Western Australians are women and girls
- **50%** of positions on Western Australian Government boards and committees are held by women
- **2.4%** of Western Australian women identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- **56%** of university graduates are women
- **4.9%** of women in Western Australia have profound or severe disability
- **48%** of people accessing homelessness services in Western Australia are adult women and a further **28%** are children
- **50%** of Western Australians are women and girls
- **1,301,364** Population in 2018

**Life expectancy**

- **Women**: 85 years
- **Men**: 80 years
- **Aboriginal women**: 58 years

**The gender pay gap in Western Australia is 21.78%**, which is the worst in Australia. The national average is **13.99 per cent**

- **46%** of women in full-time custody in Western Australia are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

**AIHW, 2018**

**ABS, 2016**

**ABS, 2018**

**Dept of the Premier and Cabinet, 2019**

**ABS Gender Indicators, 2018**

**ABS, 2019**
Priority area: Health and wellbeing

Goal: Women are healthy, active and lead fulfilled lives

Women experience specific health factors that can affect their opportunities, social engagement and general wellbeing. Many of these factors relate to biological sex, such as sexual, reproductive and maternal health as well as some cancers like cervical or ovarian cancer. Other factors are social determinants which impact on women to a greater extent than men. These include family and domestic violence, sexual violence and family caring responsibilities which can make it difficult to access health care due to lack of time and financial resources.

Strategies and initiatives that aim to improve women’s health must consider both biological and social factors, as well as addressing the particular needs of specific groups of women. They must also respond to the changing health and wellbeing needs of women at different life stages.

Changes to rates of life expectancy and risk factors provide an indication of the overall health of a population. The life expectancy for non-Aboriginal women in Western Australia is 84.8 years, which has increased from 81.1 years since 1998. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women on average experience poorer health outcomes than other women in Western Australia. Life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is 58.2 years, a small increase from 57 years in 1998.

Women in Western Australia have reduced many of the risky lifestyle behaviours that can contribute to poorer health outcomes, such as smoking and excessive consumption of alcohol, and are engaging in more exercise.
However, rates of obesity have increased significantly and around one-third of women in Western Australia are now classified as being obese, which increases risk of injury and overall poorer health outcomes.

Women experience high levels of many mental health issues, including depression, anxiety and eating disorders. These can be linked to biological health factors, lifestyle behaviours and to social determinants such as sexual violence. People from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background typically define their experiences within a social and emotional context which includes connection to body, mind and emotions, family and kinship, community, culture, language, country, spirit, spirituality and ancestors.

Regular physical activity is important to maintain both physical and mental health. It can enable connection to the community and it can positively impact on women’s and girls’ self-esteem. However, 82 per cent of women in WA do not do the recommended amount of physical activity. Gendered differences in rates of participation in organised sports are evident from an early age and research indicates that half of all teenage girls in Australia quit sport by the age of 17. Limitations in the range of sports available for females, as well as unequal media coverage of women’s sport and physical activities, has impacted on participation rates and reinforces other social norms about gender roles. Women’s opportunities to participate in physical activity can also be negatively affected by competing demands from their multiple roles in the workforce and the family. The increased focus on elite women’s sport in recent years is starting to have a positive impact on rates of participation among young women and girls, and creating a change in community attitude towards women’s sport.

What we heard from consultations

- Access to health services, particularly specialists, can be more difficult for women in rural and regional areas, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
- Cultural issues can also be a barrier for some women whose roles are heavily regulated by cultural and religious imperatives. This can restrict their autonomy and their options to seek independent health care.
- There is a need for education and focus on accessing preventative measures, including awareness raising of existing services for women.
- More research and doctors specialising in women’s health is needed.
- More research on gender specific consequences of disease and treatment is needed.
- Gender inequality in the workplace and the home are linked to poorer health and mental health outcomes.

Issues in health and wellbeing need to be addressed for women especially mental health stigma and discrimination need to be addressed as well as cultural issues related to women’s health particularly in Indigenous communities.”

Survey respondent
In 2018, the Minister for Sport and Recreation initiated a policy to quarantine at least $500,000 of Community Sporting and Recreation Facilities Fund (CSRFF) funding annually specifically for the upgrade of existing sporting facilities to better encourage female participation. This recognises that grassroots clubs are a vital pathway for women and girls to engage in sports and develop skills to higher levels.

In 2019-20 the Government allocated more than $3 million towards nine projects that directly upgrade sporting facilities to make them female friendly.

**Desired outcomes**

- Women are healthy and have a positive sense of wellbeing.
- Women have access to health (including maternal, sexual and reproductive health) and mental health services which reflect their needs according to their life stage, race, social, cultural, psychological and economic circumstances.
- The gap in life expectancy and health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women is closed.
- Women lead healthy lifestyles and their exposure to injury, illnesses and diseases is minimised.
- Aboriginal and CaLD women increase their participation in screening for breast and other cancers.

**Women’s sport**

Services and practitioners with better family and domestic violence training, including culturally specific training, would offer better protections for women.

There is a need for locally based women’s groups to provide social support and activities – there are men’s sheds and seniors’ clubs but nothing comparable that’s specifically for women.

In 2018, the Minister for Sport and Recreation initiated a policy to quarantine at least $500,000 of Community Sporting and Recreation Facilities Fund (CSRFF) funding annually specifically for the upgrade of existing sporting facilities to better encourage female participation. This recognises that grassroots clubs are a vital pathway for women and girls to engage in sports and develop skills to higher levels.

In 2019-20 the Government allocated more than $3 million towards nine projects that directly upgrade sporting facilities to make them female friendly.

This included:

- Windelya Sports Association - $400,000 towards the construction of four unisex changerooms and amenities for Melville City Hockey Club;
- City of Wanneroo – $250,000 towards the construction of six unisex changerooms at Wanneroo City Soccer Club; and
- City of Swan - $350,000 towards the construction of four unisex changerooms at Lilac Hill.

Women in leadership targets have been developed for all State Sporting Associations and Industry Representative Organisations. Organisations that do not achieve the target of 50 per cent female board directors in a three year time frame will be subject to funding implications.

Multicultural female uniform guidelines have been developed to enable women from CaLD backgrounds to participate more easily in sport.
What the Western Australian Government is currently doing

Western Australian Women’s Health and Wellbeing Policy: Lifting the health profile of women and girls was launched in September 2019. The policy provides a strategic, coordinated, and gender-responsive approach by the Western Australian health system and its partners. The policy coordinates equitable, accessible and appropriate services that optimise the health, safety and wellbeing of women and girls in Western Australia.

A new $1.8 million Family Birthing Centre opened at Fiona Stanley Hospital in July 2019. The centre features three birthing suites, specially designed equipment and birthing pools. Research has shown that birthing surroundings can positively impact birth outcomes. Perth women living south of the river will now have another choice for a more home-like, holistic birthing experience.

What we can do together

- Improve women’s awareness of existing services that support women’s health and wellbeing.
- Create supportive and safe environments to encourage healthy behaviours among women in place-based settings, including facilitating social inclusion activities.
- Build awareness and understanding of gender-based violence and the associated health impacts.
- Increase awareness of reproductive health services, particularly for women in rural, regional and remote locations, and minimise stigma in relation to sexual health.
- Promote and encourage women’s and girls’ participation in sport and physical activity.
- Challenge stigma associated with mental health issues.

Key facts

One in three women in Western Australia were categorised as obese in 2017, compared with one in five in 2002.

The fertility rate for women in Western Australia declined from 2.1 in 2008 to 1.87 in 2016.

Western Australian women giving birth by caesarean section increased from 15.6 per cent in 1986 to 34.8 per cent in 2014.

Western Australian women’s rate of hospitalisation for dialysis increased by 22.6 per cent between 2002 and 2017, with 48.2 per cent of the 2017 hospitalisation being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

22.1 per cent of women in Western Australia had a mental health diagnosis of depression, anxiety or stress related problems, in 2017.

Women in Western Australia are far more likely than men to experience physical or sexual violence during their lives. Women who do experience violence are at increased risk of poor health and mental health outcomes in addition to the impact on their work, relationships and family. One in five women in Western Australia report having experienced partner violence since the age of 15, and more than one-third of those women reported that the violence occurred during pregnancy. The rate of family and domestic violence in Western Australia is higher than the national average. Social, emotional, religious, financial and technological abuse are all forms of family and domestic violence.

Women express high levels of concern about becoming victims of assault and violence in public places, on public transport and in their homes, which impacts on their activities and movements in the community. Women’s fear of violence is the result of the real risk of violence they face, yet women are frequently encouraged to take responsibility for their own safety by modifying their behaviour. There is a strong relationship between achieving gender equality and ending violence against women. It starts with promoting respect and all Western Australians have a role to play.

Offender and imprisonment rates in Western Australia are significantly lower for women than men but are high compared with other Australian states and territories. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are overrepresented in imprisonment rates in Western Australia.
What we heard from consultations

- Women’s participation in their communities and especially in social activities is negatively impacted by the risk, and perceived risk, of violence and sexual assault.

- The drivers of family and domestic violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are complex and must be treated within a socio-cultural context.

- There is a strong correlation between women’s risk of violence or assault and attitudes towards women – education from a young age is needed to bring about cultural change. Sexual harassment is still very common in everyday situations and particularly in the workplace, online and at pubs and clubs – trivialised by a ‘boys will be boys’ attitude.

- The onus should not be on women to keep themselves safe.

- More appropriate justice responses are needed that are consistent with the harm caused by violence towards women. This would also act as an incentive for victims to report without stigma or blame.

- Housing security in relation to poverty, financial insecurity and relationship breakdown is an issue for women of all ages.

- Planning of buildings and spaces should consider safety aspects, including CCTV, adequate lighting. Regional areas often don’t consider safety issues.

Desired outcomes

- Women are safe and free from violence, discrimination and harassment in their homes, at work and in the community.

- Perpetrators change their behaviour and are held accountable for their actions.

- Western Australian Aboriginal women’s imprisonment and involvement in the criminal justice system are reduced.

Key facts

One in five Western Australian women reported experiencing partner violence since the age of 15.

Western Australian Police data shows that in 2017–18 there were almost 3,400 breaches of family violence restraining orders issued in relation to female victims.

In 2017–18, 700 women in Western Australia reported being victims of recent sexual assault, compared with 44 men.

In 2016, 27.7 per cent of Western Australian females did not walk alone after dark because they felt unsafe, compared with only 3.8 per cent of men.

Physical violence was experienced by 3.3 per cent of Western Australian women in 2016, compared with 2.2 per cent of men.

What the Western Australian Government is currently doing

The State Government is developing a 10-year Strategy to Reduce Family and Domestic Violence that aligns with this plan and will guide a whole-of-community approach to prevention and earlier intervention, victim safety and perpetrator accountability.

The strategy includes a focus on access and inclusion as well as considering the needs of Aboriginal people, people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTIQ+ people, and people in regional and remote Western Australia.

Specific programs and initiatives that are being developed to address family and domestic violence include:

- a Respectful Relationships Teaching Support Program in Western Australian schools.
- two one-stop hubs co-designed with the community to bring together services and support for people experiencing family and domestic violence.
- an additional Communicare Breathing Space therapeutic program for men who have been violent in the family environment and wish to change their lives.
- two additional women’s refuges
- culturally appropriate support to people from Aboriginal and CaLD backgrounds who are experiencing family and domestic violence
- implementation of the national Family Violence Restraining Orders scheme.

Western Australian Homelessness Strategy is being developed with the goal of ensuring that everybody has a place to call home and is supported to achieve stable and independent lives. The strategy will focus on developing sustainable pathways out of homelessness, as well as prevention and early intervention actions.

Safer Venues WA has been funded to work with the entertainment and music industry to raise awareness and improve inclusivity and safety.

The Government has committed to a 23 per cent reduction in the number of Aboriginal adults in prison in Western Australia by 2028–29.

The Western Australian Government is working with other Australian jurisdictions to form a nationally consistent approach to vehicle registration laws and offensive advertising. This action results from ongoing complaints and concerns about inappropriate and offensive messages on vehicles for hire. Legislation in Queensland and Tasmania addresses such complaints but does not allow for action to be taken if a vehicle is registered in a different jurisdiction. The Western Australian Government is committed to pursuing a national approach for reform.
What we can do together

- Ensure that people who experience family and domestic violence are supported through workplace policies and initiatives that recognise their particular needs, such as additional leave.
- Develop policies and strategies that reinforce the right to work in an environment that is free from sexual harassment and abuse.
- Reinforce language and attitudes that challenge all violence towards women and girls.
- Be an active bystander – speak up if you witness harassment, abuse or stereotyping and support other people who speak up.

The State Government provided funding to community sector organisation Safer Venues WA to work with entertainment venues to make them safer for audiences, artists and staff.

Research by Safer Venues WA found that harassment, intimidation, discrimination and assault are widespread at Western Australian entertainment venues and disproportionately affect women. Nearly half of people experiencing such incidents had left a venue as a result and 19 per cent considered personal safety as a barrier to attending entertainment venues. Ten per cent of respondents had experienced non-consensual touching and 1.5 per cent had experienced violence.

The funding will support Safer Venues WA to work with audiences, artists and the music industry to improve inclusivity and personal safety, develop resources to create awareness and provide valuable training and educational tools.

Women must feel secure at home and in the workplace to enable them to reach their full potential.

Survey respondent

20.2% of women in WA experienced partner violence since age 15, compared with 6.3% of men.
Goal: Women can be financially independent across all life stages

The gender pay gap in Western Australia is the highest of all states and territories in Australia and has been for many years. There can be confusion about what is meant by gender pay gap, which is calculated from average full time weekly earnings of men and women.

The pay gap is caused by a number of factors, such as the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles as well as the undervaluing of occupations that have traditionally been female-dominated, such as child care. Research has also found that gender bias in recruitment and promotion practices contributes significantly to the gender pay gap. Women's higher rates of contribution to unpaid care and unpaid domestic duties make it more difficult for them to engage in paid work. Women are more likely than men to be single parents – almost 82 per cent of single parent families are headed by women. Extended family support is less likely to be available for women in Western Australia than in other states, due in part to the high numbers of people moving to the state to work resulting in the lack of family networks. In couple families, women are far more likely than men to take parental leave to care for young children and are also more likely to provide care for elderly family members. Even when women work full-time, they spend more time in unpaid domestic duties than men who work full-time.

The stereotypical gender roles that are learned from childhood and reinforced across the lifespan influence women's career choices and participation in fields that generally attract higher wages, such as science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). Even when they pursue STEM careers, women experience obstacles and biases, including harassment, lack of flexible work arrangements and lack of mentors, which act as disincentives to remain in STEM.

"Many women stay at home with young children for several years and miss out on topping up superannuation during this time."

Survey respondent
Over their lives then, women continue to face barriers to participating and progressing in the workforce which results in lower lifetime earnings than men and increased risk of reaching retirement without financial independence.

Key facts

The school retention rate for 2017 in Western Australia was 87.5 per cent for non-Aboriginal girls and 53 per cent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls, which is a significant improvement from 43 per cent in 2010.

In 2016, the labour force participation rate in Western Australia was 74.1 per cent for non-Aboriginal men and 62.7 per cent for non-Aboriginal women. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men the rate was 53.6 per cent and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women the rate was 45.1 per cent.

On average, half of all employed women in Western Australia work full-time, compared with almost four out of five men.

Underemployment refers to people who are employed but would like to work longer hours. In 2018, 12.9 per cent of Western Australian women were underemployed.

In 2015–16, 22 per cent of women in Western Australia aged 55–65 had no superannuation at all.


What we heard from consultations

• Women are very concerned about poverty in older age due to low levels of superannuation resulting largely from career breaks to be primary carers.

• Traditional gender roles in families leads to lower financial literacy for women when men are responsible for household finances. This disadvantages women if relationships breakdown.

• The gender pay gap impacts on women’s ability to leave family and domestic violence situations.

• Access to education and training to upskill or transition to new roles would increase women’s financial

• Pay inequity and undervaluing of caring occupations which are predominantly female has a significant impact on women’s income across their lives.

• Affordable, accessible and flexible child care and after school care supports women’s workforce participation and career progression.

• Conscious and unconscious bias are still very evident in recruitment, career progression, workplace culture and expectations (long working hours).

Desired outcomes

• Women attain financial independence, including in retirement.

• Women and girls participate in a broad range of education and training fields, including in disciplines traditionally dominated by men such as science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM).

• Women have access to secure and affordable housing.

• Women receive the same pay as men for doing the same work or work of comparable value.

• Participation of women in the workforce is supported and expanded.

• Women and men are supported to share caring responsibilities.
What the Western Australian Government is currently doing

The Government’s Our Priorities framework sets out measurable targets to ensure that all of Western Australia can share in the State’s prosperity. This includes a commitment to increase participation in STEM.

Future Jobs, Future Skills: Driving STEM skills in Western Australia is the State’s first ever STEM skills strategy and will contribute to addressing the Government’s Our Priorities target of 85 per cent of Year 12 students completing two or more STEM courses by 2024. A key objective of the strategy is to address the lack of gender diversity in STEM education and careers.

The Government provides free financial counselling services for Western Australians who are facing financial hardship. The program supports people who are struggling with bills to gain control of their finances. Financial counsellors are specially trained to support people experiencing family and domestic violence.

The Economic Empowerment project is supported by the State Government to provide financial literacy training for women who have experience family and domestic violence. The program is a train-the-trainer model, with professional development being delivered to staff in family and domestic violence services to support service users. Resources, tools and a curriculum are also being developed through the program.

Aligned to the Economic Empowerment project is the Your Toolkit online resource which was developed by Financial Toolbox with Government funding. The toolkit helps to build financial knowledge and skills for women in Western Australia to support their economic independence. The resource was developed for women who have faced financial abuse and/or family and domestic violence. The toolkit includes guides to help women identify financial abuse and take steps towards gaining control of their finances.

Western Australia has long been the only state where defacto couples who separate do not have to share their superannuation. This has resulted in disadvantage for many people, most often women, who are likely to have less superannuation than men. When married couples separate, their superannuation is treated like any other asset during property settlements. The Western Australian Government has put pressure on the Australian Government to ensure that changes to the relevant legislation are introduced into Federal Parliament as soon as possible to enable this anomaly to be corrected.
The State Government launched its landmark Aboriginal Ranger Program in 2018 to provide new jobs and training opportunities. The $20 million program is helping Aboriginal organisations employ and train rangers to undertake land and sea management including conservation, cultural, tourism and education activities across the State.

The first round of funding employed over 100 Aboriginal people, 60 per cent of whom were women, in a wide range of projects. Another 47 Aboriginal women (at least 50 per cent of overall employment) are expected to be employed in the second round.

The employment brings social, cultural and economic benefits for rangers and contributes to improved community wellbeing. It also builds leadership skills and enables partnerships with private sector organisations.

What we can do together

- Partnerships between government and the corporate sector to improve women’s participation in employment pathways that have traditionally been male-dominated.
- Organisations to assess and address gender pay inequity.
- Develop programs and initiatives to improve women’s financial literacy, particularly women who are vulnerable or at risk of poverty and homelessness.
- Promote broad dialogue to encourage a more equal division of labour in the home to enable women’s workforce participation.
- Develop strategies to highlight STEM and trade career pathways for women and girls.

Superannuation balances

Average superannuation balances at the time of retirement in 2015-16 were $270,710 for men and $157,050 for women. Around 50 per cent of women in the 60-64 years age group had super balances of nil or less than $40,000.
Goal: Women’s skills, achievements and strengths are valued, enabling them to participate equally in the community, including at leadership levels.

There is significant evidence that increasing the number of women in leadership roles provides a number of significant benefits.

Firstly, it benefits individual women who are rewarded for their experience and skills and enabled to contribute to high-level decision making. In addition, women’s leadership contributes to their communities as they become positive role models for other women and can mentor or sponsor women to develop their own careers. Women champion cultural change in their organisations to better support women and ensure more flexible and equitable workplaces that enable women at all stages of their careers. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, there is compelling research that shows there are economic benefits for organisations that have more gender balance in leadership. Women bring a diversity of views and opinions to leadership roles and foster stronger connections with stakeholders and clients. Companies with more women on their boards financially outperform companies that have no or few women.28

Evidence shows that diversity in leadership can also safeguard business profits during times of recession or market volatility.29

Women in Western Australia face significant barriers and challenges in progressing to leadership positions. Traditional gender roles in families can mean that women in leadership still find themselves juggling family responsibilities more so than their male colleagues. Conscious and unconscious bias within organisations can see women being overlooked for promotion opportunities, even if they have relevant qualifications and experience. The Committee for Perth’s Filling the Pool report found that the
corporate culture in Perth is highly masculine and the valuable business networks that can enhance men’s careers may be inaccessible for women. Findings from the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey indicate that 14 per cent of people believe that men make better political leaders than women.

The community sector affords women more opportunities for leadership, although the financial benefits are almost always lower than the private or public sectors.

**What we heard from consultations**

- Leadership should not be defined by the traditional male model – women may have a different leadership style which can be more effective; collaborative instead of competitive.
- Access to leadership enables women to have influence and power – this includes the power to advocate for other women and to be positive role models.
- Quotas and positive discrimination may be a necessary step to address unconscious bias and change norms and attitudes. The ‘merit’ argument is not equally applied and often relies on criteria which can inadvertently discriminate against women, such as years of continuous service.
- Women from marginalised groups can face additional barriers to accessing leadership positions.

**Desired outcomes**

- Women in leadership are more likely than men to be juggling family care responsibilities which disadvantages them and is a disincentive for other women to pursue leadership roles. Male leaders are more likely to have someone else who is primary carer for their children.
- Western Australian women participate fully at leadership levels within community, business and government organisations, including boards and committees.
- Western Australian women participate fully in appointed and elected offices.

**Survey respondent**

More women leaders will filter down to more women being promoted.
What the Western Australian Government is currently doing

In 2017, the Government committed to 50 per cent representation of women on Government boards and committees and achieved this by mid 2019. OnBoardWA was launched in 2017 and enables people to register their interest in joining a board or committee. A new website was developed and includes an online register which boards and committees can consult when seeking new members. Women are particularly encouraged to register with OnBoardWA and to keep their details updated.

The WA Women’s Hall of Fame is supported by funding from Lotterywest and the Department of Communities and acknowledges the contributions of women to Western Australia’s community, culture and history. Women who are role models in business, education, culture, arts, sport, STEM, health and community are recognised for their achievements.

Senior female leadership in the Western Australian public sector has increased significantly in the last two years, with seven women now holding Director General positions. The Government has also appointed women to many of the most senior positions in judicial authorities in Western Australia, resulting in four of the seven positions now being held by women.

The Public Sector Commission is developing a whole-of-government workforce diversification strategy for Western Australia. The strategy will incorporate agency reporting on key diversity data and toolkits to measure progress. Women in leadership will be one of the focus areas of the diversification strategy.

Key facts

The percentage of women in Senior Executive Service positions in the WA public sector has increased from 22.5 per cent in 2007 to 33.3 per cent in 2018.

Almost 30 per cent of elected local government mayors or presidents are female, a rise from 24 per cent in 2005.

The proportion of women on government boards and committees in WA has risen from 41 per cent in 2013 to 50 per cent by mid 2019.

The proportion of female delegates on the council of UnionsWA has increased from 25.4 per cent in 2003 to 40.1 per cent in 2018.


The ‘boys clubs’ still exist at management level in most businesses. Women often take extended periods from work to have children and this sets them back career-wise.

Survey respondent
In 2016 the Law Council of Australia launched a new national model Equitable Briefing Policy aimed at driving cultural change within the legal profession, supporting the progression and retention of female barristers and addressing the significant pay gap and underrepresentation of females in the superior courts. King Wood Mallesons (KWM) was one of the first group of law firms to commit to the policy which encourages anyone responsible for counsel briefing to make all reasonable endeavours to brief female barristers with relevant seniority and experience.

To assist in the identification and recommending of female barristers, KWM has developed a National Female Barrister Directory which provides a listing of some female junior and senior barristers across Victoria, NSW, Queensland, WA and ACT. This directory is not exhaustive and does not include all female junior and senior barristers across Australia, but is a guide or tool that may be used when considering recommending or retaining female barristers. KWM also holds regular events to bring together counsel and clients to create connections and share information to collectively further equitable briefing.

KWM measures their equitable briefing progress bi-annually and since the introduction of the new targets it has seen upward movement in relation to junior female counsel briefings with some upward movements also in relation to senior counsel across jurisdictions.

What we can do together

- Encourage business initiatives that increase women’s participation in traditionally male-dominated industries, for example the Pink Ship Program introduced by Austal shipbuilders in 2019 and the Women in Engineering Program delivered by Chevron through the South Metropolitan TAFE.
- Celebrate organisations that are doing the right thing and taking steps to enable women to enter and remain in the workforce and progress to leadership roles if they wish.
- Consider mentoring, sponsoring and supporting women into leadership roles if you are in a position to do so.
- Recognise your influence – decline opportunities that represent bias or inequality such as speaking on all-male panels or at conferences.

King Wood Mallesons – equitable briefing

In 2016 the Law Council of Australia launched a new national model Equitable Briefing Policy aimed at driving cultural change within the legal profession, supporting the progression and retention of female barristers and addressing the significant pay gap and underrepresentation of females in the superior courts. King Wood Mallesons (KWM) was one of the first group of law firms to commit to the policy which encourages anyone responsible for counsel briefing to make all reasonable endeavours to brief female barristers with relevant seniority and experience.
10 tips for driving workplace gender equality

Addressing gender equality within organisations will not happen without dedicated effort. Like any business issue, a strategic and systematic approach is required.

| 1 | Take a strategic approach to addressing gender equality |
|   | Conduct a thorough diagnosis of the status of gender equality in your organisation. This will help inform your strategy. See the WGEA Gender strategy toolkit. |
| 2 | Hold leaders accountable |
|   | Commitment by leaders at all levels is the key to gender equality in every organisation. Leaders should be held accountable. Research has found that actions to correct gender pay gaps are three times more effective when combined with reporting to the Executive or Board. |
| 3 | Support managers to lead flexible teams |
|   | Managers play a critical role in enabling and embedding workplace flexibility. Support managers to implement productive, successful flexible working arrangements, including by providing training, workplace policies, tools and resources. |
| 4 | Address gender pay equity |
|   | Conduct a gender pay gap analysis, set goals and take action. Regularly review your gender pay gap data, implementation of the strategy and actions and changes as a result of actions. |
| 5 | Mainstream flexible working |
|   | Equitable access to flexible ways of working enhances talent attraction and retention, employee engagement and productivity. Research has found that flexible work arrangements coupled with reporting to Boards increases the share of part-time female managers by 13.6 percentage points. |
| 6 | Set targets for gender composition |
|   | Gender-balanced organisations tend to have greater employee engagement and retention. They also have the potential to perform better than organisations that are dominated by one gender. |
| 7 | Provide employer funded paid parental leave |
|   | Research has found that employer-funded paid parental leave (PPL) schemes covering at least 13 weeks, halves the share of female managers who stop working during PPL relative to those who access only the Australian Government PPL scheme. |
| 8 | Provide professional development, networking, mentoring, sponsorship opportunities for all employees, including part time workers |
|   | Professional development, including networking, mentoring and sponsoring are all important to promote gender balance in an organisation. Research suggests that without deliberate focus, these opportunities can be delivered in a biased way that is not gender-balanced. |
| 9 | Review recruitment, selection and promotion processes |
|   | Gender-balanced recruitment, selection and promotion play a key part of workplace gender equality and inclusion. Robust data analysis and rigorous practice in this area can help to shine a light on gender biases that may occur during recruitment and promotion processes. Look at WGEA's guide on gender equitable recruitment and promotion. |
| 10 | Prevent gender-based harassment and discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying |
|   | Educating workers on their rights and obligations regarding gender-based harassment and discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying is important. The aim should be to eliminate harassment, discrimination and bullying in the workplace and promote an inclusive culture through behaviours reinforced by education and training. |

All Western Australians were invited to have their say through an extensive consultation process that used a range of formats to encourage input from a wide range of individuals and groups.

Consultations occurred throughout 2019, with ongoing conversation as the plan is developed and implemented.

A draft Women’s Plan was circulated for further feedback from the community.

**Online survey**

- 1,963 people took the online survey
- 3.16 per cent of respondents identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- 72.34 per cent were born in Australia
- 9.17 per cent speak a language other than English at home
- 8.31 per cent identify as a person with disability
- 6.88 per cent identify as LGBTQI+
- 29.92 per cent live in a rural, regional or remote location
- 92.86 per cent identify as female

**Age groups**

- 14.14% 18–29
- 30–39
- 40–49
- 50–59
- 60–69
- 70 and over 2.88%
- 0.33% under 18

**Postcards and posters**

Postcards and posters were available for organisations to promote the consultations to their communities and support their members and networks to have their say.
The postcards asked people to identify the three main issues for women in Western Australia and were made available at Community Resource Centres, women’s health centres, universities and community organisations.

This method was intended to enable people to have their say even if they don’t have access to the internet.

- A total of 109 completed postcards were received.
- 93.6 per cent identify as female
- 77.2 per cent live in metropolitan locations
- 22.8 per cent live in rural or regional locations

**E-postcard**

An online version of the postcard was available for people who have access to the internet and preferred to send a brief comment, rather than complete the survey.

- 220 people completed the e-postcard on the Department of Communities website
- 95 per cent identify as female
- 64 per cent live in metropolitan locations
- 20 per cent live in rural or regional locations (16 per cent not stated)

**Submissions**

A total of 25 written submissions were received from business and community sector organisations.

**Consultations**

Consultation sessions were held throughout Western Australia, hosted by Members of Parliament, local governments, peak bodies, business and community sector organisations and women’s groups. This method of consultation enabled people in the community to participate in consultations within settings that were familiar and responsive to their specific circumstances. This can be particularly important for people from marginalised and vulnerable groups who may feel inhibited within mainstream settings and their voices may not be heard.

- 23 organisations held a total of 45 consultation sessions
- Over 650 people participated in the consultation sessions
- 10 per cent of participants identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- 23 per cent identify as culturally and linguistically diverse
- 3 per cent identify as a person with disability
- 1 per cent identify as LGBTQI+
- 39 per cent live in a rural, regional or remote location

Please note: demographic data is not available for all consultations.
Key findings

Gender equality

The online survey asked respondents whether they believed there is currently gender equality in Western Australia.

- 28.42 per cent of survey respondents consider that gender equality has NOT been achieved in Western Australia
- 57.22 per cent believe gender equality has been achieved in SOME areas
- 11.43 per cent believe gender equality has been achieved in MOST areas
- 2.93 per cent believe gender equality has been achieved in ALL areas

Leading issues identified from the survey and during consultation

Survey respondents identified the following issues as having significant impact on women in Western Australia:

- balancing work and family responsibilities
- family and domestic violence
- attitudes to women
- women’s leadership
- financial security/insecurity.

Community organisations held consultation sessions with specific groups that experience multiple, intersecting levels of disadvantage. Several key issues were identified in these sessions:

- Culture is central to the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and strong culture supports healing and connection. Women’s empowerment is important to their future. Cultural practices need to be embedded in services.
- The concept of gender equality may be unfamiliar for some women from refugee and migrant backgrounds, whose cultures have very strict gender roles that define women as subordinate to men. Women from these cultures may find it difficult to have these roles and their religious beliefs challenged.
• It is acknowledged that different social identifiers can overlap or intersect resulting in some women experiencing multiple layers of discrimination and/or disadvantage.

• There is a lack of opportunities and access to services and supports for women in some rural, regional and remote geographical locations which can perpetuate ongoing gender inequalities.
## Outcomes framework

### Priority area: Health and wellbeing

**Goal:** Women are healthy, active and lead fulfilled lives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired outcomes</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Actions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women are healthy and have a positive sense of wellbeing</td>
<td>Women's self-reported health status increases</td>
<td>WA Women’s Health and Wellbeing Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved mental health outcomes for women</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Women have access to health (including maternal, sexual and reproductive health)</td>
<td>Increased contact with health services by women from vulnerable groups</td>
<td>Expand telehealth and interactive technologies for women in regional, rural and remote WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and mental health services which reflect their needs according to their life stage, race, social, cultural, psychological and economic circumstances</td>
<td></td>
<td>Enhance and support equitable access to maternal, reproductive and sexual health services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The gap in life expectancy and health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women is closed</td>
<td>Increased life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, lower rates of diabetes</td>
<td>Initiatives to co-design programs that increase healthy lifestyle awareness and behaviours for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women lead healthy lifestyles and exposure to injury, illnesses and diseases is minimised</td>
<td>Increased women’s participation in sport and physical activity</td>
<td>Promote and actively support healthy behaviours and healthy ageing in all women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improvement in lifestyle and risk factors</td>
<td>Increase messaging to women about modifiable risk factors associated with the development of chronic conditions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on early intervention, diagnosis and access to mental health care</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Provide information to educate and support women with chronic conditions to navigate the health system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and CaLD women increase their participation in screening for breast and other cancers</td>
<td>Increased rates of cancer screening for Aboriginal and CaLD women</td>
<td>Increase education and access for cancer screening</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Promote culturally secure health screening and testing services</td>
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</table>
### Priority area: Safety and justice

**Goal:** Women live safely and have appropriate access to adequate legal protections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired outcomes</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women are safe and free from violence, discrimination and harassment in their homes, at work and in the community</td>
<td>Reduced reports of sexual abuse and harassment Reduced reports of workplace gendered discrimination</td>
<td>Health services to prioritise the delivery of safe, trauma informed services for women experiencing violence Develop capacity for early intervention across sectors Support victims to rebuild their lives Strengthen understandings and responses to victims from diverse groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrators change their behaviour and are held accountable for their actions</td>
<td>Reduced rates of violence against women. Increased participation in perpetrator programs</td>
<td>Improve accessibility and options to engage in behaviour change programs, including in regional and remote areas Explore and expand the knowledge base on supported accommodation programs for perpetrators Consider the role of the judicial system in administering consistent consequences for perpetrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA Aboriginal women's imprisonment and involvement in the criminal justice system are reduced</td>
<td>Reduced number of Aboriginal women in prison</td>
<td>Working in partnership with Aboriginal communities on prevention strategies to enable and empower Aboriginal people to live healthy and prosperous lives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Priority area: Economic independence

**Goal:** Women can be financially independent across all life stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired outcomes</th>
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<th>Actions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women and girls participate in a broad range of education and training fields, including in disciplines traditionally dominated by men such as science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM)</td>
<td>Increased rates of women completing Year 12 courses in STEM Increased rates of women entering and remaining in STEM occupations</td>
<td>Implementing initiatives that support female students to pursue STEM based subjects to Year 12 level Promoting and encouraging STEM outreach programs, partnerships, scholarships and awards that target women Developing and supporting initiatives across all sectors that highlight female role models in STEM Encouraging a commitment across all sectors to increase female participation in STEM and reduce barriers for women in STEM roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Indicators</td>
<td>Actions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women have access to secure and affordable housing</td>
<td>Reduced rates of women identifying as homeless or accessing homelessness services. Decreased rates of women living in poverty.</td>
<td>Input pending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women receive the same pay as men for doing the same work or work of comparable value</td>
<td>Reduced gender pay gap. Improved superannuation balances for women at retirement</td>
<td>Implement initiatives including gender pay audits, reporting of outcomes of audits, development of policies to reduce gender pay gaps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation of women in the workforce is supported and expanded</td>
<td>Increased rate of workforce participation for women</td>
<td>Supporting initiatives that increase women's financial literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and men are supported to share caring responsibilities</td>
<td>Increased rates of fathers accessing flexible work arrangements to care for children</td>
<td>Improve access to flexible working arrangements and encourage take-up by men and women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Priority area: Leadership**

**Goal:** Women’s skills, achievements and strengths are valued, enabling them to participate equally in the community, including at leadership levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women participate fully at leadership levels within community, business and government organisations, including boards and committees</td>
<td>Increase in percentage of women on government boards and committees. Increase in percentage of women at SES level in State Government agencies. Increase in percentage of women on ASX200 boards. Increase in the percentage of women at CEO and key management levels in the corporate sector. Increase in numbers of senior lawyers and barristers.</td>
<td>Policies and strategies to enable women to access leadership and pipeline roles. Provide incentives to business to employ women in traditionally male-dominated trade occupations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women participate fully in appointed and elected offices</td>
<td>Increased rates of women in elected positions in state and local government. Improved rates of female judges and magistrates.</td>
<td>Implement initiatives that attract and support women to nominate for public office.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Definitions

What is gender equality?

Gender equality means that all people, regardless of gender, have equal opportunities, rights, resources, and access to wellbeing, safety and justice.

Gender equality doesn’t mean that everyone has exactly the same abilities or strengths. It does mean that we value women’s achievements, strengths and opinions objectively rather than measuring them against men’s achievements, strengths and opinions.

The terms gender equality and gender equity are both used in this plan but have different meanings. Equity refers to strategies that are intended to ensure fairness overall, taking into consideration any existing inequalities or past unfairness (Figure 1).

It is not just about trying to fit women into a world shaped to fit men, but reshaping the structural fabric, rules, practices and norms to fit both women and men.

Survey respondent

The United Nations notes that gender equality is a fundamental requirement for achieving a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.35

Figure 1. Equality vs Equity
Common Terms

- **Women** in the context of the Women’s Plan includes anyone who identifies and lives as a woman.

- **Sex** identifies biological differences, typically categorised on the basis of reproductive organs.

- **Gender** refers to socially constructed differences between women and men. These social differences are learned, changeable over time and vary within and between contexts and cultures. Gender is learned through social systems, cultural beliefs and attitudes.

- **Sex-role stereotyping** refers to entrenched and pervasive expectations and beliefs about the roles of women and men.

- **Intersectionality** means the many ways that different social categories can overlap or intersect resulting in some people experiencing more than one type of discrimination or disadvantage.

- **Family and domestic violence** refers to the intentional and systemic use of violence and abuse to control, coerce or create fear. It most commonly refers to violence and abuse against an intimate partner but can also occur between other family members. It may include emotional/psychological abuse, physical assault, sexual assault, social isolation, financial abuse and spiritual abuse.

- **LGBTIQ+** is used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, questioning and queer identifying people. It is recognised that this acronym has limitations in accurately representing the diversity of identities, sexualities, genders and lived experiences.

- **Colonisation** in the Australian context refers to the British invasion of land that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had inhabited for tens of thousands of years. The land was defined by the British as terra nullius, or unoccupied, and Aboriginal people’s rights were ignored resulting in conflict. Policies were implemented that treated Aboriginal people as inferior and denied them many rights.
Policy Context

The Women’s Plan is informed by a range of national and international frameworks and other instruments that advance gender equality and support women’s rights. Western Australia has obligations to meet the objectives of many of these frameworks.

International

- **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).** Australia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the Convention) in 1983 and reports periodically to CEDAW on compliance with the Convention.\(^{36}\)

- **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals – Goal 5.** In 2015, 193 members states, including Australia, adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 5 is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.\(^{37}\)

- **United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) – Beijing Declaration.** The CSW is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. In 1995, Australia and other countries attending the World Conference on Women adopted the Declaration and Platform for Action which affirms that equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice.\(^{38}\)

- **The Global Gender Gap Index.** This was developed by the World Economic Forum to measure the progress made by countries towards closing the gender gap across four areas of human rights – health and survival, educational attainment, economical participation and political empowerment. Within this index, Australia is currently ranked 39th out of 149 countries in 2018; a drop from 15th in 2006.\(^{39}\)
National

- **Our Watch.** In 2017, Western Australia became a member of Our Watch, which is a national organisation that was established to drive change in the culture, behaviours and power imbalances that lead to violence against women.40

- **National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (National Plan).** The Council of Australian Governments endorsed the National Plan in 2010 to set out what governments are doing to ensure that Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities.41

- **Change the Story:** National framework for the prevention of violence against women and their children. This framework is an initiative of the National Plan and was developed by Our Watch, VicHealth and Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS).42

- **National Women’s Health Strategy 2020–2030.** National approach to improving health outcomes for all women and girls in Australia.43

- **Women’s Economic Security Statement.** Released by the Office for Women in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in 2018 to support measures to increase women’s workforce participation.44

- **National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012–2018.** A whole of government policy to implement the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and related resolutions under the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The 2019-2029 action plan is currently being developed.45

- **Women in STEM Decadal Plan.** Released by the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering in 2019 to support work towards improving the representation of women in STEM.

State

- **Our Priorities: Sharing Prosperity.** The Western Australian Government’s targets program to deliver better outcomes for all Western Australians.46

- **Equal Opportunity Act 1984.** The aim of the act is to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination and harassment and to promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the equality of men and women.47

- **The Policy Framework for Substantive Equality 2014.** Developed by the Equal Opportunity Commission to guide the development and review of services in Western Australia to achieve equitable outcomes.48

- **Department of Communities Strategic Plan 2019–2023.** A plan that outlines the Department’s purpose, values, and directions. The purpose is to create pathways that enable individual, family and community wellbeing.49

- **Draft Community Services Outcomes Measurement Framework.** Developed to meet the government’s election commitments to ‘Deliver an agreed-upon framework to measure outcomes across the community services sector’.

- **Draft Department of Communities Outcomes Framework.** Establishes a suite of outcomes, including associated indicators and measures, to link Departmental activity to its contribution in achieving our desired outcomes.
References


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Our Watch: Who We are: Purpose. https://www.ourwatch.org.au/Who-We-Are/Our-Purpose


