



Gender Budget Watch Report 2025-26

Introduction

Gender equality requires more than policy papers and media statements—it demands sustained and measurable investment. Across Australia, governments have committed to empowering women, addressing gender inequality and preventing gender-based violence. However, the effectiveness of every commitment ultimately depends on how public resources are allocated and spent.

Our Gender Budget Watch Report provides critical oversight of government expenditure across federal, state and territory budgets. By tracking funding allocations related to women, gender equality and gendered violence prevention (WGEVP), the report helps identify gaps, inconsistencies and areas where funding falls short of what is needed to achieve meaningful change.

In our fourth annual report, **Commonwealth investment reduced marginally to 5.9% of total appropriations**, reflecting the impact of tighter fiscal environments, inflationary pressures and cost of living priorities. **At a state & territory level, investment in WGEVP also dropped**, with only Qld and SA showing a slight increase in expenditure. While Victoria's investment increased marginally, returning it top spot as WGEVP sub-national investor, interim findings of the Independent Review into the Public Sector have already started to bite, with unfortunate consequences for women's sport, health and wellbeing. **We call on governments to protect WGEVP investment from budget efficiencies.**

The GLA Gender Budget Watch Report is self-financed for social impact. It is designed to support the WGEVP sector with its budget advocacy and to mount a longitudinal case for increasing gender-based funding. Through re-investment of income raised via Gender Lens Australia's fee for service equality consulting, we are able to provide a report independent from government.

Our work is part of a network of gender responsive budgeting research undertaken by equality practitioners and feminist economists. Most of this work remains unpaid. **We also call on Treasuries to recognise the unpaid labour of women's organisations and feminist economists by funding independent, gender-based budget research to strengthen transparency of GRB across the country.**



Tanja Kovac & Dr Maree Overall
Co-Founders and CEOs
Gender Lens Australia

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01

Why we count

Government budgets are developed within a global economic system designed by men, which dis-counts women's work and services, resulting in investment bias and budgetary inequality.

This Gender Budget Watch Report counts investment in WGEVP to make government expenditure more transparent, fair and equitable.

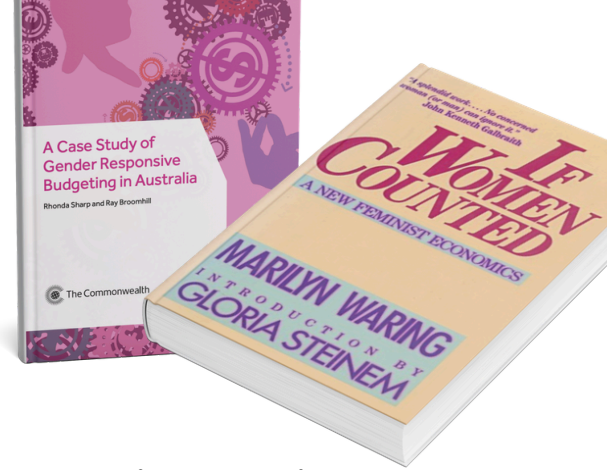
Why do government budgets discriminate against women?

Our current international monetary institutions were established in 1944 at the Bretton Woods conference, an international meeting to develop a new, collaborative economic order in the wake of WW2. 734 delegates attended the conference but only 2 of them were women. 99% of the decision makers were men.

The conference gave birth to new economic institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank - as well as a new metric - Gross Domestic Product or GDP - by which government's could measure productivity.

While GDP produced a stable, shared economic framework for nation-states to estimate tax revenue and allocate public spending, it excluded matters relevant to the lives of women from economic value. Reproductive labour, caring work, the natural resources of the environment, as well as the benefits of circular or sharing transactions, were deemed too difficult to quantify and so excluded from the terms of trade.

The consequences were devastating, impacting women's pay, wellbeing, the gender segregation of industries, under-resourcing of services and the exploitation of the environment.



Gender Responsive Budgeting

In the 1980's, pioneering, gender-based economic theorists, such as Dame Professor Marilyn Waring, began naming (and then correcting) gender biases in GDP and National Accounts. They demanded budgets be "Gender Responsive", applying a gender lens to expenditure on industries, programs, services and infrastructure, as well as macro-economic decisions, so that economies benefitted everyone, including women and children.

Gender Responsive Budgeting Today

Today, 60% of OECD nations have some form of gender responsive budgeting (GRB). In Australia, the quality of GRB has varied, depending on political support for economic equality by the government of the day. At present, GRB receives strong support from Treasuries, enabling longitudinal comparison of investments.

The Gender Budget Watch Report is the first report of its kind, tracking the quantum of expenditure on women, gender equality and gendered violence prevention at a national, state and territory level.

We count the quantum of investment in WGEVP because our economies and communities depend on women, gender equality and violence prevention receiving a fair share.

We count to make equality easy.

02

What we count

Methodology

The Gender Budget Watch monitors government spending commitments related to women, gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence across Commonwealth, state and territory budgets.

To compile the datasets for this report, the research team reviewed publicly released budget materials for each jurisdiction. This included Women's Budget Statements, budget overview papers, detailed budget measures documents, portfolio statements and relevant government announcements.

Only budget measures included in formal Women or Gender Budget Statements were included in WGEVP quantum analysis. While our researchers acknowledge that such statements have their drawbacks including a lack of consistency across jurisdictions about what initiatives to include, (as well as a tendency towards positive reinforcement of government decisions, rather than genuine critique and analysis) at present Gender Budget Statements provide the most consistent, comparable data.

Our analysis has been aligned to key themes in the Commonwealth's *Working for Women: a National Gender Equality Strategy*:

- *Gender-based violence (includes prevention, early intervention & response)*
- *Unpaid and Paid Care (includes support for women performing unpaid care work, as well as women working in caring professions)*
- *Economic Equality & Security*
- *Health*
- *Leadership & Representation*

Because government budget reporting practices vary significantly, some investments may be difficult to identify or may be embedded within broader program funding. As a result, the figures presented in this report should be understood as an indicative overview of identifiable spending rather than a comprehensive estimate of all gender-related government expenditure.

Investments have been tallied and expressed as a percentage (%) of total appropriations.

Let us girl math, for you.

**Total WGEVP
expenditure
per annum**



**Total appropriations
per annum**



**% of total
expenditure
on WGEVP**



Tracking Commonwealth \$

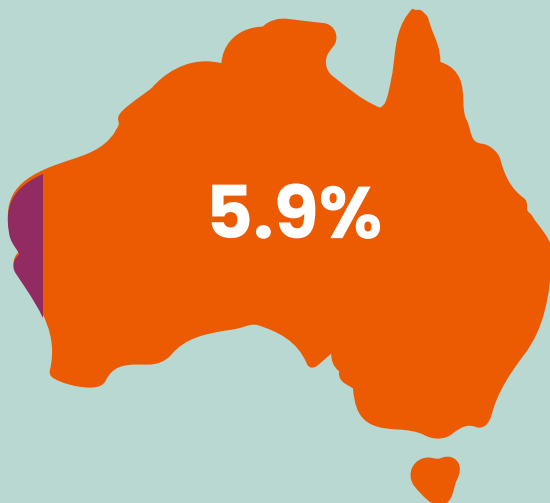
TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS:

\$785 BILLION

WGEVP APPROPRIATIONS:

\$46.6 BILLION

2025–2026 appropriations
5.9% on WGEVP



The Federal Government spent a total of \$46.6 Billion on women, gender equality and violence prevention initiatives in the fiscal year 2025–26. This represented 5.9% of total appropriations, a decrease from last year's budget 24/25 (6.6%). Once again, **despite an overall increase in total government expenditure, the share for WGEVP was down** another \$0.813B.

The big winner from the 25/26 budget was **Women's Health & Wellbeing**. \$12.02B in gender-based health investments, including \$7.9B for the creation of Medicare Urgent Care Clinics, \$0.7B for Menopause, Perimenopause, Endometriosis and Contraceptive Care; \$0.63B in Maternal Health Care and \$0.78B in cheaper medicines on the PBS.

Energy Bill Relief of \$1.8B and \$0.58B in student loan forgiveness contributed to **women's economic security**, along with \$0.4B in PayDay Superannuation. We're fans of the (albeit modest) investment of \$0.002B piloting innovations to Workforce Gender Segregation.

Once again, investment in **Leadership & Representation** – Priority 5 in *Working for Women: A National Gender Equality Strategy* – is a meager \$0.03B allocation. \$0.01B to 5 National Women's Alliances over 5 years is barely enough to cover basic administrative and executive office support, let alone oversee collective gender equality advocacy.



Tracking Commonwealth \$ Working for Women – Strategic Themes 2025–26 Budget Year



W4W Priority Area

TOTAL Investment (\$B)

25/26 Key Initiatives (\$B)



**Gender-Based
Violence**

\$16.7B

Social Housing	\$9.6B
National Access to Justice Partnerships	\$3.0B
First Nations Women - ACCOs	\$0.84B



**Paid & Unpaid
Care**

\$12.0B

Aged Care Workforce Award Wage Increase	\$6.4B
Child Care Subsidy - 3 Day Guarantee	\$4.6B
Care Workforce Retention Pay Boost	\$3.6B



**Economic Equality
& Security**

\$5.8B

Energy Bill Relief	\$1.8B
Student Loan Forgiveness	\$0.6B
Future Made in Australia	\$1.7B
First Nations Women - Clean Energy	\$0.07B



Health

\$12.0B

Medicare Urgent Care Clinics	\$7.9B
Menopause, Endometriosis & Contraceptive Care	\$0.79B
Maternal Health Care	\$0.66B

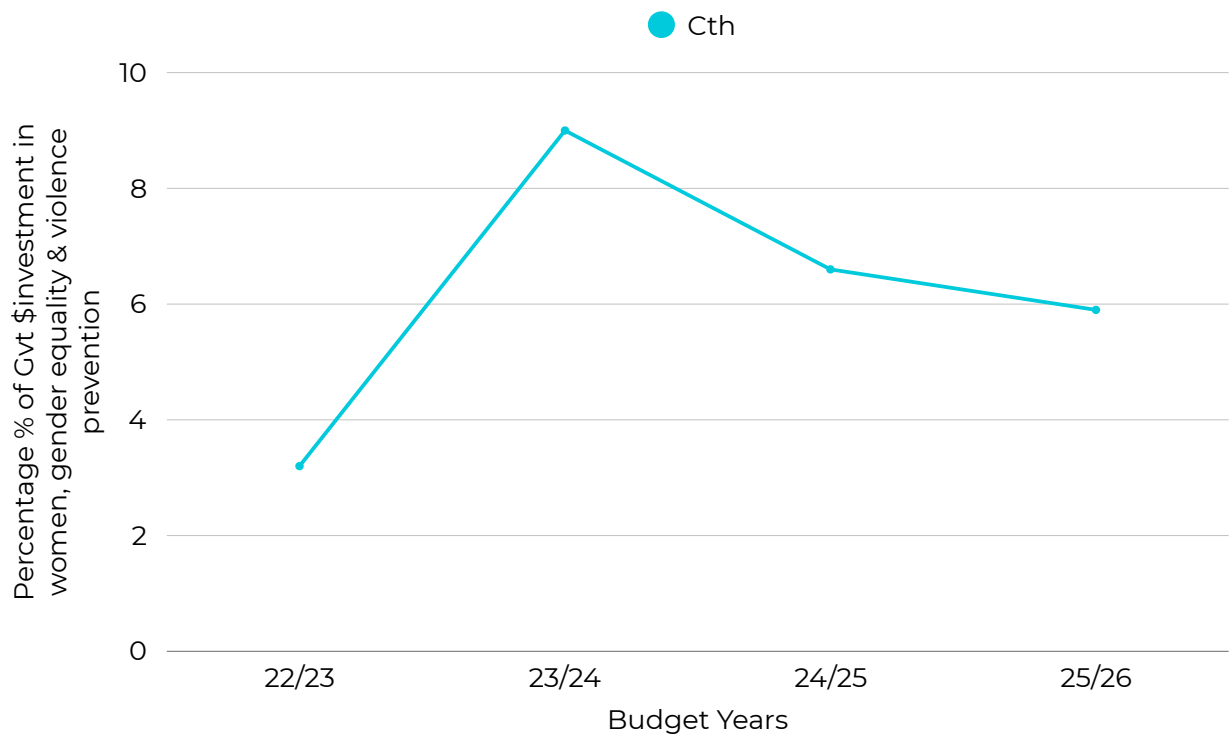


**Leadership &
Representation**

\$0.03B

National Women's Alliances	\$0.01B
Women's Asian Cup	\$0.015B
Support for First Nations Women Businesses	\$0.003B

% Commonwealth Budget Investment in Women, Gender Equality & Violence Prevention 22–26



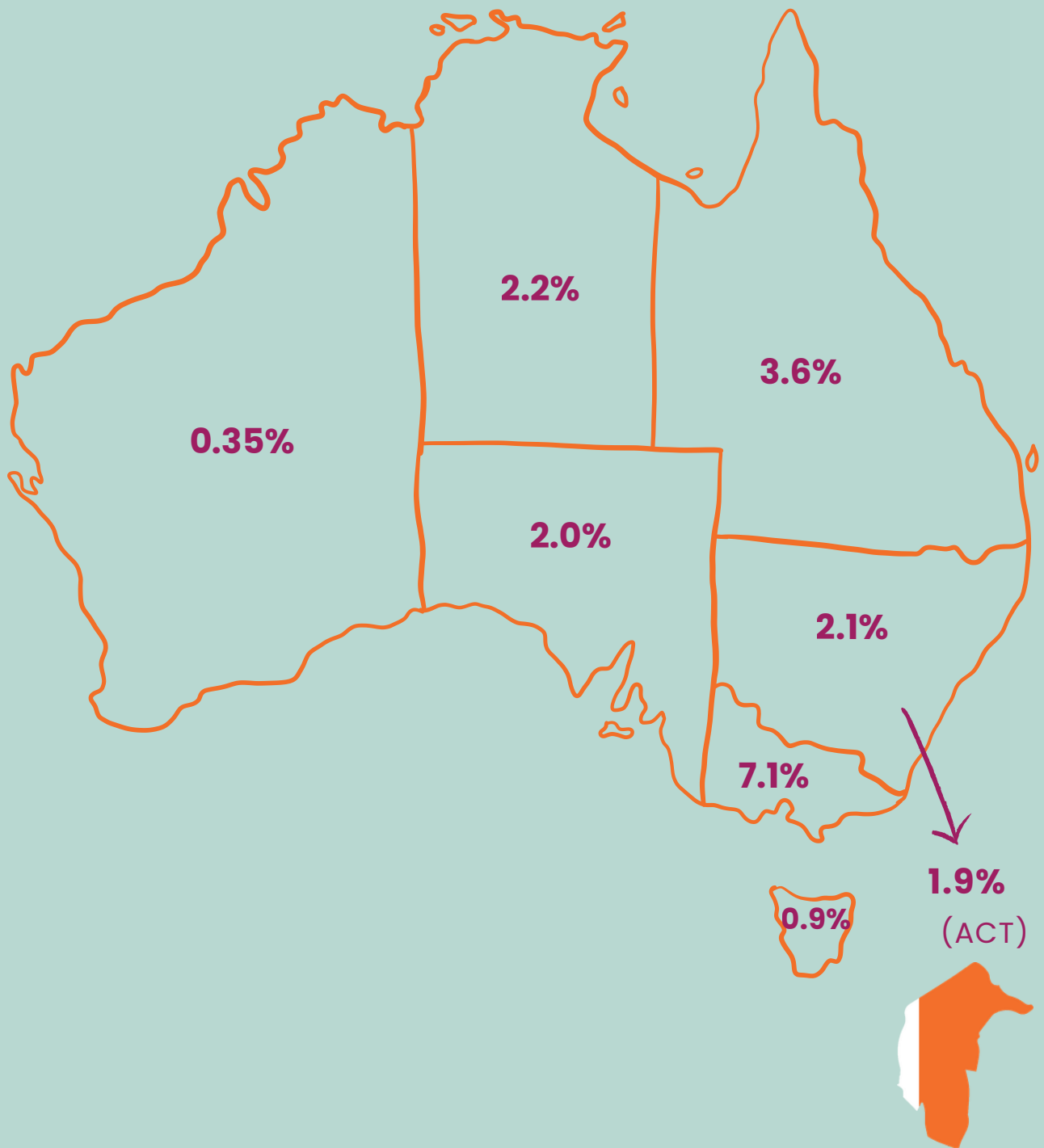
04



Tracking State & Territory \$ 2025-2026



Share of State/Territory Budgets allocated to Women & Gender Equality 2025-2026 Budget Year



Budget Investment in women & gender equality and violence prevention over time

ACT

The ACT again reduced its investment in WGEVP dropping by almost half in dollar terms. Disappointingly, this is the second year there has been a substantial cut in spending. For detailed outline of investments see [ACT Women's Budget Statement](#)

NT

NT Treasury does not produce an annual Women's or Gender Equality Budget Statement and The Women in the Territory [Factsheet produced in 24/25](#) has not been repeated in 25/26. Investment in WGEVP remains static.

SA

SA has continued its [Office of Women's Investing in Equality Analysis](#) and this year there was a return to similar levels of investment as in 23/24, largely due to a housing package although only 3% is allocated directly to women.

VIC

WGEVP share of annual appropriations in Victoria has increased from 24/25, a sign of the impact of the Treasury based GRB Unit although the womens policy portfolio budget has been gutted. Interim findings of the Independent Review into the Public Service (Silver Review) claimed its first casualty - the Office for Women in Sport & Recreation is no more. This year is the first with a woman Treasurer. For more detail on WGEVP investments see Victorian Gender Equality Budget Statement [25/26](#).

NSW

NSW investments dramatically decreased to less than one third of the previous 2 years in dollar amounts and dropped to its lowest proportion of total spend in the past three years. For detailed investments see [NSW Gender Equality Budget Statement](#)

QLD

QLD almost doubled their investment from the previous two budgets, uplifting in health and wellbeing, economic security and housing. *For detailed investment see [Qld Women's Budget Statement](#)*

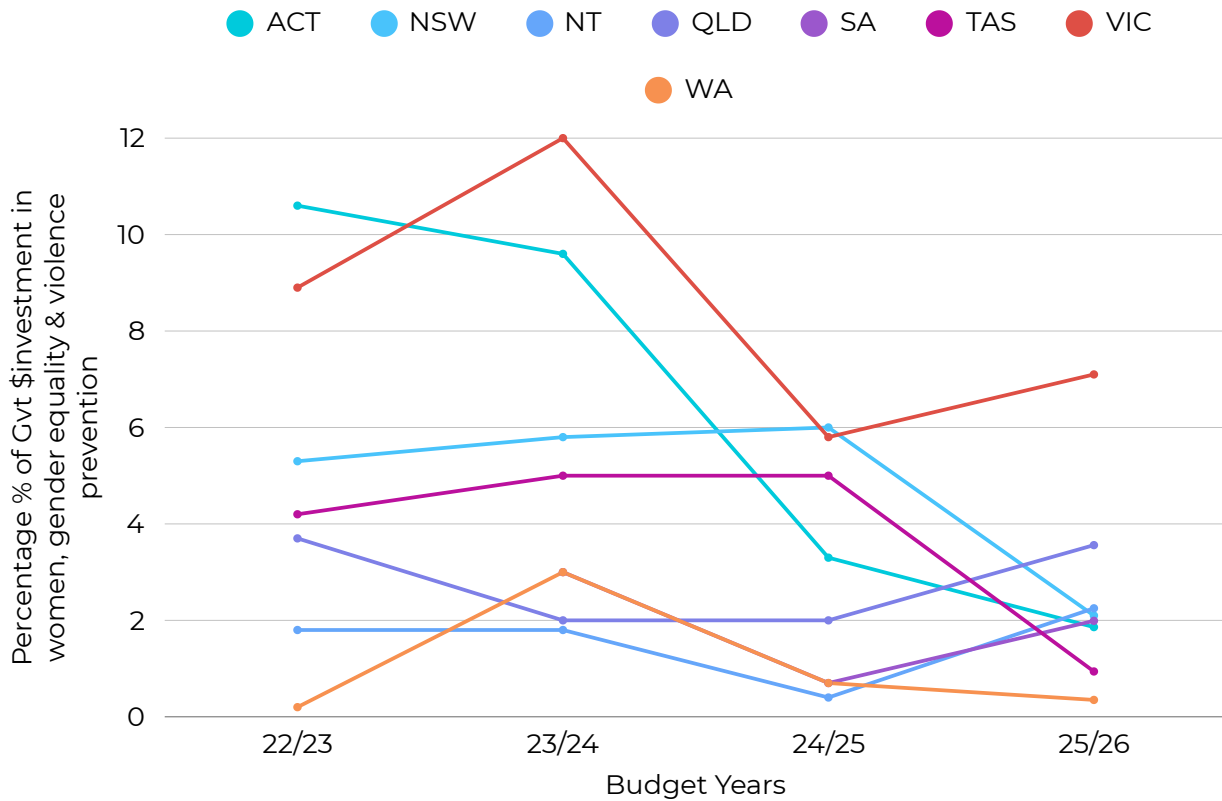
TAS

Tasmania's May budget was deferred to November as an interim budget following the snap election. Treasurer Abetz did not produce a women's budget statement and investment fell from 5.4% to 0.9%. [Refer here for budget papers.](#)

WA

WA's investment in WGEVP continues to lag behind the rest of the nation, due to a lack of transparency over investments. There continues to be an absence of women and gender-based budgetary analysis and reporting. Estimated [expenditure in 25/26](#) halved from the previous year.

% Share of Total Gvt Budget Investment in women & gender equality and violence prevention 22-26



Although VIC bounced back slightly in 25/26 with an increase in % share of investment up from 5.8% to 7.1%, funding is still much lower than record highs of the years post the Royal Commission into Family Violence. The small increase did not protect the much beloved & impactful Office for Women in Sport and Recreation - a post RCFV innovation - from being cut by interim Silver Review recommendations.

NT, Qld & SA all had increased investments, but still remain comparably low, with under \$0.004B per annum.

NSW fell the most dramatically, down to 2.1%, dropping from top spot investor last year. ACT, TAS & WA also reduced investment.

Budget efficiency is significantly impacting WGEVP.

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In Focus



Focus on Victoria – Tracking women’s policy

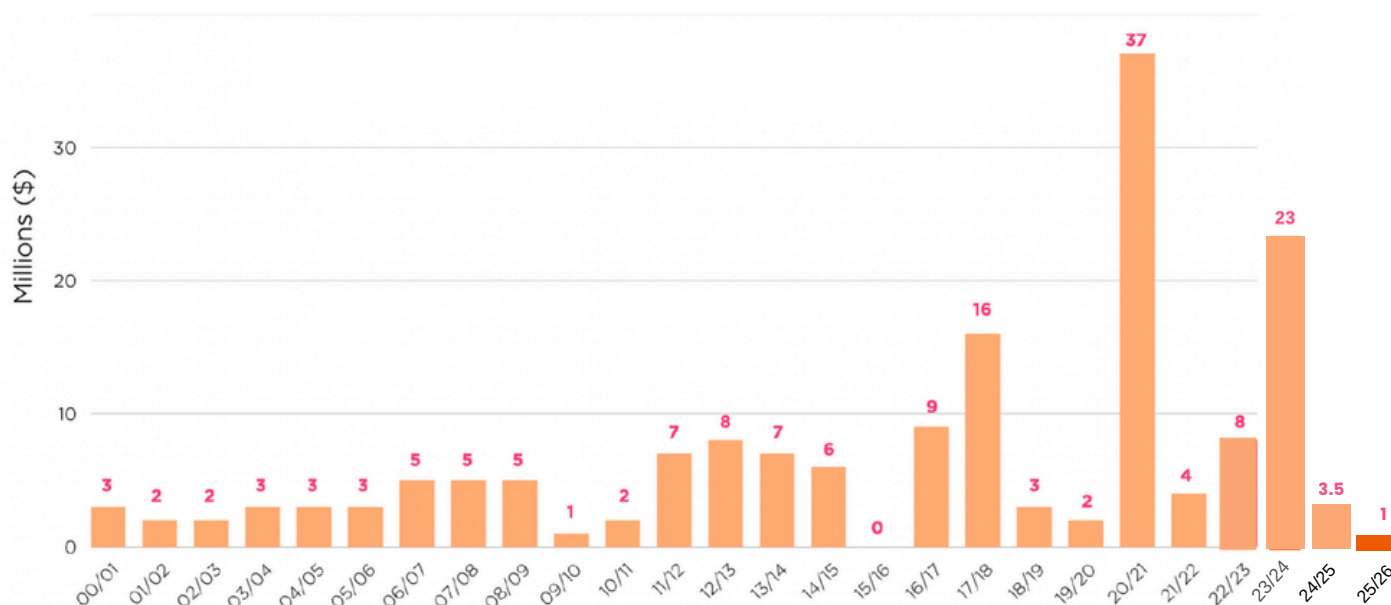
Every year, we place a special spotlight on investment in women’s policy in Victoria, as transparently outlined in *Victorian Budget Paper 3: Service Delivery*, to highlight detailed budgetary and policy decision-making at a sub-national level.

Our comparative data analysis of the Victorian women’s portfolio commenced during our time as Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor for Australia’s First Family Violence Prevention & Women’s Minister during 2015–2017. It was designed to support advocacy – in and outside government – to boost investment in women, gender equality and violence prevention and shine a light on the budgetary gender gap.

We continue our monitoring and reporting for the same reasons.

The Women’s Policy line item is the only expenditure directly in the Victorian Women’s portfolio control. The average spend on women’s policy over 25 years is \$6.4M per year. With very rare exceptions, it does not achieve double figures.

Women’s Policy Portfolio Investments in the Victorian Budget 2000 – 2026



In the 2025/26 budget, the allocation to the Women’s Portfolio was only \$1M, despite Women Deliver, a global women’s conference, being held for the first time in Melbourne during the fiscal year.

Once again, allocations to Women’s Policy continue to be less than investments in young people, LGBTIQ Victorians and Veterans, placing further pressure on the women’s and gender equality sectors.

While there is investment in gendered violence prevention, the sums are insufficient to meet the growing needs of the sector, according to peak body, Safe & Equal.

Focus on Gender Violence Prevention

In 2016, research commissioned by the Victorian Government, reviewed the quantum of investment necessary to reduce gendered violence over time. Examining successful primary prevention initiatives across Australia focussed on reducing death and injury from skin cancer, workplace accidents and traffic accidents, researchers uncovered a sweet spot - a recommended level of sustained investment required to change attitudes and behaviours and reduce death and injury.

That level is 9-12.5% of the total public costs of responding to the problem.

Prevention spending as a proportion of total expenditure is estimated at

12%

smoking cessation

8.6%

skin cancer reduction

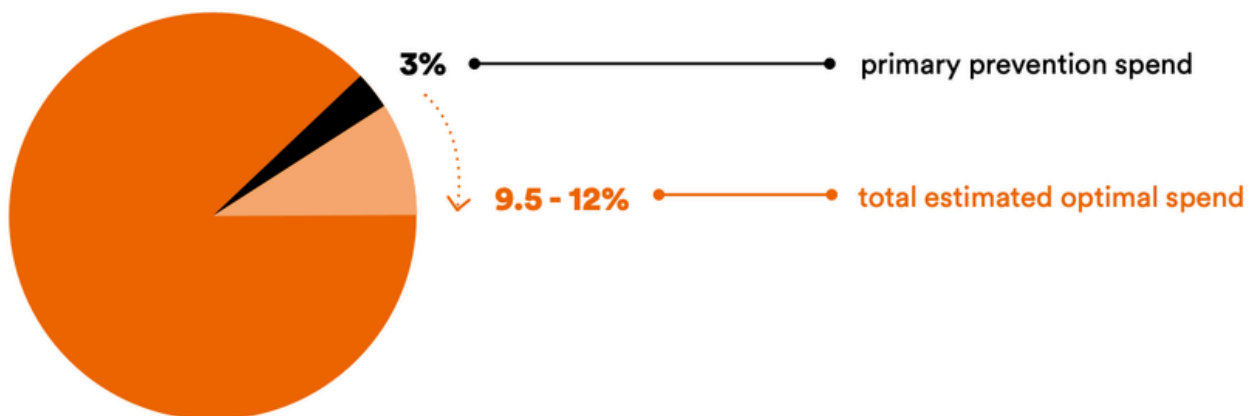
7.1%

road safety

This has led to corresponding outcomes in decreased smoking prevalence, reduced incidence of sunburn and skin cancer, and a halving of the road toll.

No jurisdiction in the country spent 9-12% of the cost of gendered violence to prevent it in 2025-26. That is why we continue to see incidents of gendered violence rising and deterioration in attitudes towards gender equality, as revealed in the National Attitudes to Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS).

The average spend on women, gender equality and violence prevention by governments is only 3%.



Source: *Investing in primary prevention of family violence: Discussion paper* (PricewaterhouseCoopers for the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet 2016)

Until ALL governments are annually spending 9-12.5% on women, gender equality & violence prevention we will not see a reduction in gendered violence.

06

Conclusions

When government budgets tighten, women, gender equality and violence prevention pays a price. Our Gender Budget Watch Report 25–26 reveals a continued drain on WGEVP investment, as post-COVID budget constraint and inflationary pressures focus government decisions on debt-reduction and cost of living initiatives.

When austerity measures and budget cuts result in lower levels of investment for WGEVP – historically under-valued and under resourced policy areas – they hit harder than in other government portfolio areas. This is because losing staff in Offices for Women, cutting women in sport programs and reducing violence prevention spending rolls back Special Measures investment designed to tackle inequality. While a cut to road infrastructure expenditure may be absorbed without service and program loss, this is not the case in funding for women’s services and programs.

Cuts to Special Measures programs don’t evolve into gender-mainstreamed activities. They just disappear. And that sets gender equality back even further.

Transparent analysis of government budgets through a gender lens enables us to shine a light on budget inequities. It places focus on what we gain through public funding, but also what we lose when WGEVP is treated as non-essential.

When spending is tracked over time and across jurisdictions, it becomes possible to assess whether governments are making sustained progress toward reducing gender inequality and preventing gender-based violence, or whether strategic commitments are tokenistic and having little impact.

We hope our Gender Budget Watch Reporting continues to play a role in strengthening evidence-based policy, advocacy and investment in women, equality and violence prevention.

Want to know more about Gender & Public Money?

Join us for our *Gender Budget Watch – Special Briefing: A Gender Lens on the 26/27 Federal Budget – 20 May 2026*

Come along to our *Gender\$ Webinar Series* in August 2026.

Gender Budget Watch – Special Briefing

FREE

Gender Lens Australia



Gender Budget Watch – Special Briefing

A gender lens on Federal Budget 26/27

Join us for an indepth analysis of what the federal budget means for women, gender equality and violence prevention.



 20 May 2026

 12:30-1:30pm

Presenters
Tanja Kovac
Dr Maree Overall
Co-Founders & CEOs

Register at
genderlensaustralia.com.au

Gender\$ Webinar Series

FREE

Gender Lens Australia



Gender\$ Webinar #1

Understanding Government Budgets

Learn to read federal, state/territory budgets. Identify opportunities for procurement and learn to advocate effectively to close gender funding gaps.



 **Date**
5 August 2026

 **Time**
12:30-1:30pm

Presenters
Tanja Kovac
Dr Maree Overall
Co-Founders & CEOs

Register at
genderlensaustralia.com.au

Gender\$ Webinar Series

FREE

Gender Lens Australia <<<<



Gender\$ Webinar #2: Introduction to Gender Responsive Budgeting

What is Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and how does it strengthen advocacy for gender equality? Learn to apply GRB in your organisations.



Date
12 Aug 2026



Time
12:30-1:30pm

Presenters

Tanja Kovac
Dr Maree Overall
Co-Founders & CEOs

Register at

genderlensaustralia.com.au

FREE

Gender Lens Australia <<<<



Gender\$ Webinar #3 Preparing a gender-based Budget Bid or Business Case.

Gain an understanding of all the elements you need to submit a successful gender-based budget bid or business case for your organisation or program.



Date
26 August 2026



Time
12:30-1:30pm

Presenters

Tanja Kovac
Dr Maree Overall
Co-Founders & CEOs

Register at

genderlensaustralia.com.au

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