



Gender Budget Watch Report 2023–24

Introduction

Setting public budgets is the most powerful instrument governments possess to influence social outcomes. Through decisions about taxation, spending and investment, Australian governments shape the resources available for programs that address structural inequalities, including gender inequality and gender-based violence.

In Australia, both the Commonwealth and state and territory governments play key roles in funding services, prevention initiatives and policy responses related to women, gender equality and gendered violence (WGEVP). However, these investments are often spread across multiple portfolios, budget measures and jurisdictions, making it difficult to assess the overall scale, direction and consistency of government spending.

While Women's Budget Statements have improved gender-based budget analysis, it has been difficult to track expenditure over time. Our Gender Budget Watch Report seeks to address that gap by systematically tracking the quantum of budget allocations across portfolios at national, state and territory levels. This is our second Budget Watch Report, building on the modest factsheet we produced last year analysing 22–23 investments.

Monitoring expenditure provides insight into whether policy commitments are supported by adequate and sustained funding, highlights trends in government investment over time, and identifies areas where resourcing shortfalls occur. In doing so, the report contributes to a clearer evidence base for policy development, accountability and interventions to better support WGEVP.

The Gender Budget Watch Report is our contribution to a growing body of work on gender responsive budgeting (GRB) in Australia. Our work would not be possible without a network of dedicated gender-based and feminist economists strengthening GRB practice across Australia, including within government itself. We particularly note the gendered analysis of government spending, tax and transfer decision-making by the National Foundation of Australian Women and the work of academic economists Professor Rhonda Sharp and Dr Monica Costa, whose research, Making Women Count: A casebook for gender responsive budgeting is sharing GRB best practice across the country.

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Co-Founders and CEOs
Gender Lens Australia



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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.

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

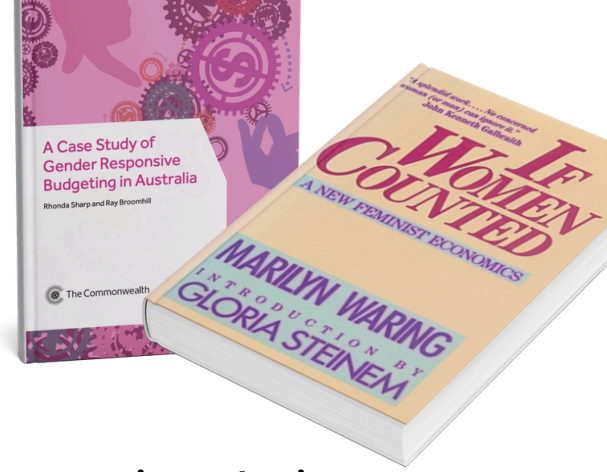
Why do government budgets discriminate against women?

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 fiscal framework, enabling nation-states to estimate tax revenue and commit public spending, it excluded matters relevant to the lives of women from having economic value. Reproductive labour, caring work, the natural resources of the environment, as well as the benefits of circular and 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 and Betsy Warrior, 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, support for and the quality of GRB has varied, depending on political commitment to 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 Report monitors government spending commitments related to women, gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence (WGEVP_ 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 these statements provide the most consistent, comparable data.

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

- *Gender-based violence (includes prevention, early intervention & response)*
- *Unpaid and Paid Care (includes support all 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 appopriations
per annum**



**% of total
expenditure
on WGEVP**





Tracking Commonwealth \$ 2023–2024

TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS:

\$684 BILLION

WGEVP APPROPRIATIONS:

\$64.3 BILLION

WGEVP % of total investment



The Federal Government spent a total of \$64.3 Billion on women, gender equality and violence prevention initiatives in the fiscal year 2023–24. This represented 9% of total appropriations, a significant increase on previous budgetary years of 22/23 (3.2%) and 21/23 (3.8%).

The increase was due largely to the inclusion of \$31.8B investment in Commonwealth Rent Assistance and other income support initiatives, which were all deemed to impact positively on women. This line item counted towards the Commonwealth's Gender-Based Violence initiative, boosting the total investment in this focus area to \$37.5B

Another key beneficiary of the 23/24 Budget was the highly gender segregated aged care workforce, where women make up 79% of employees. \$11.8B was allocated to support Award Wage Increases in the budget for these workers.

\$4.6B was also allocated to support a Childcare subsidy guaranteeing 3 days a week of care for targeted families.

Health investments were modest in 23/24, with notable investments of \$0.75B in Preventative Research and \$0.16B in Menopause and Endometriosis Care.

Resourcing for women's Leadership and Representation dropped well below 22/23 levels, going backwards from \$0.40B to \$0.07B. Priority area 5 in Working for Women continues to receive considerably less investment than other focus areas.



Tracking Commonwealth \$ Working for Women – Strategic Themes 2023-24 Budget Year

W4W Priority Area

TOTAL Investment (\$B)

23/24 Key Initiatives (\$B)



**Gender-Based
Violence**

\$37.4B

Cth Rent Assistance	\$31.8B
National Women's Safety Plan	\$2.3B
Family, Domestic & Sexual Violence Services	\$1.7B



**Paid & Unpaid
Care**

\$15.9B

Aged Care Workforce Award Wage Increase	\$11.3B
Child Care Subsidy - 3 Day Guarantee	\$4.6B
Care Workforce Scholarships	\$0.07B



**Economic Equality
& Security**

\$7.0B

Income Support Payment Increase	\$4.9B
Expansion of Single Parent Payment	\$1.9B
Pilot Innovative Solutions to Workforce Gender Segregation	\$0.005B



Health

\$3.93B

Strengthening Medicare Bulk Billing	\$3.5B
Cheaper Medicines	\$1.00B
Breast Creen Australia	\$0.02B

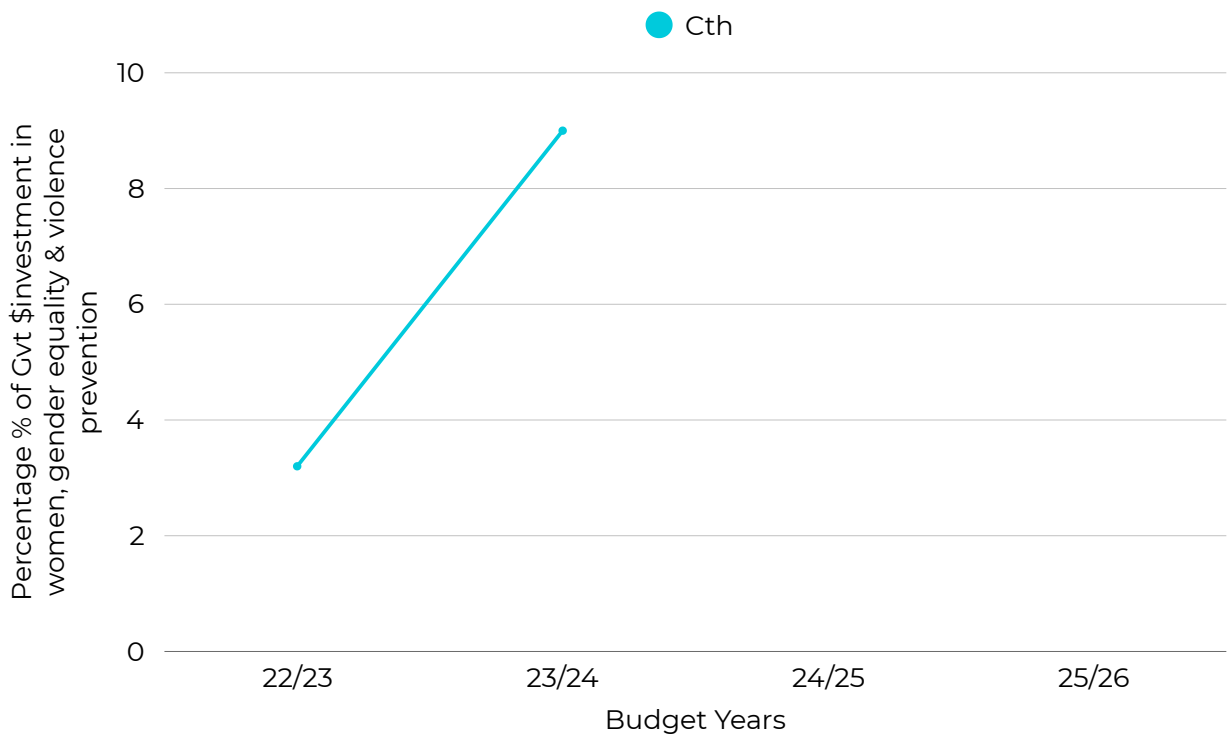


**Leadership &
Representation**

\$0.007.0B

FIBA - Women in Basketball	\$0.002B or \$2M
Women for Election	\$0.005B or \$5M

% of Commonwealth Budget Investment in Women, Gender Equality & Violence Prevention 22-24



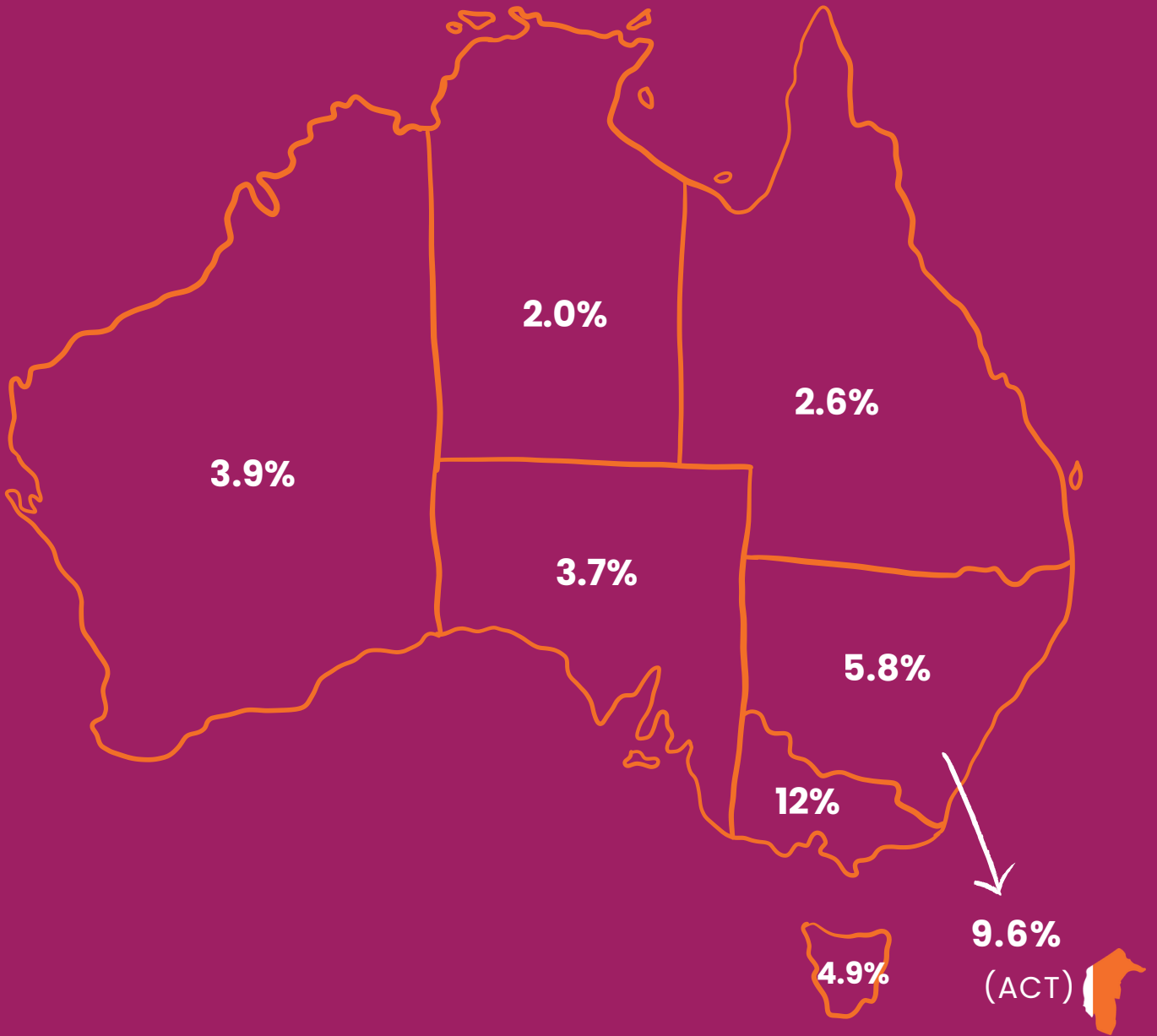
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Tracking State & Territory \$ 2023-2024



% Share of State/Territory Budgets allocated to Women & Gender Equality 2023-2024 Budget Year



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

ACT

The ACT housing investment accounts for 39% of the allocation to women however \$4.5M was allocated to a specific women's initiative. Only \$37M was directed to women's safety. A substantial investment of \$28M was directed to First Nations Women. 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. The largest investment is \$55.1M in DV frontline services and another \$55.7M in women's health. For full details see [NT BP3 Statements](#).

SA

The SA Budget did not report spending on WGEVP. There was investment in DV services and national partnerships, a new women's and children's hospital and paediatric care and a royal commission into early childhood. The [23/24 Budget statement](#) can be viewed here.

VIC

WGEVP in Victoria rose with major investment in early childcare and kinder. However, the gender based violence spend halved from the previous year and prevention investment only represented 3% of the response spend. Refer to the [Gender Equality Budget Statement](#).

NSW

NSW investments are mostly in infrastructure – rail safety and new preschools, bill relief and health workforce, a female dominated industry. DV services received \$39M. For detailed investments see [NSW Gender Equality Budget Statement](#)

QLD

Queensland sophisticated Women's Budget Statement highlights significant investment in women's safety \$461M, economic security \$325M and health \$157M. *For detailed investment see [Qld Women's Budget Statement](#)*

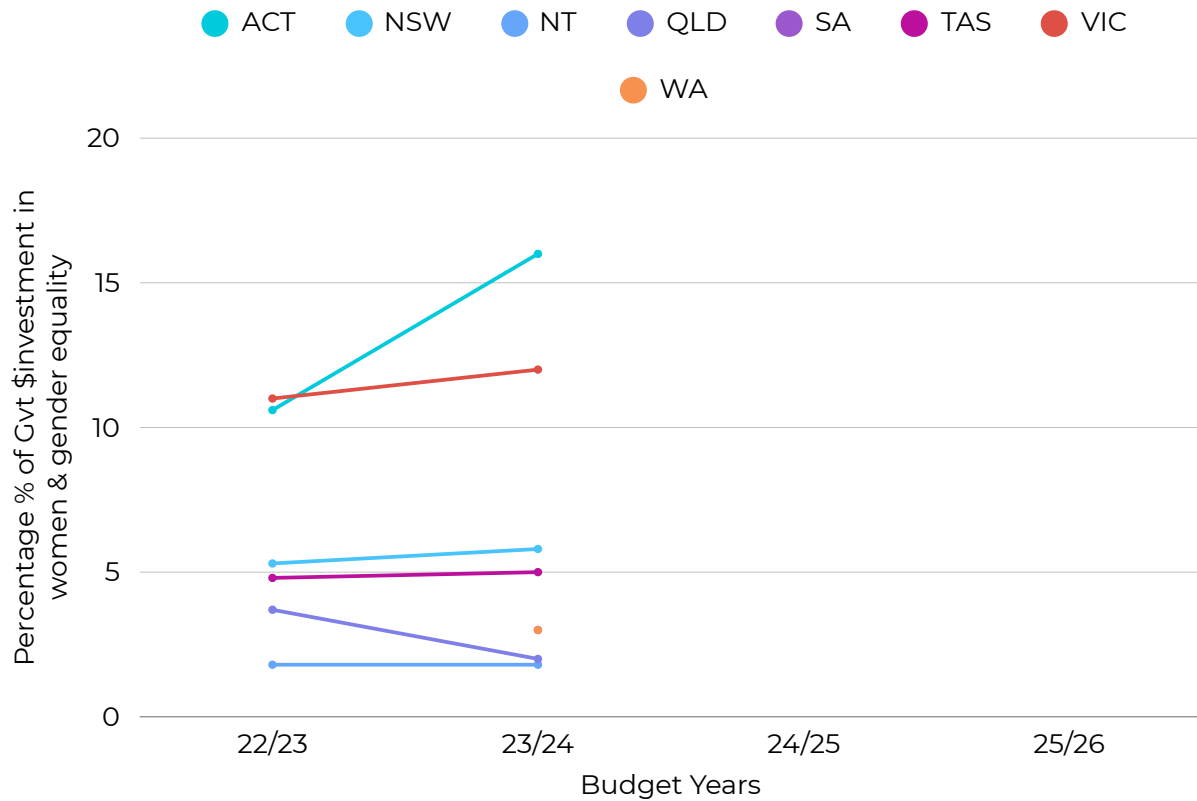
TAS

Tasmania introduced a gender budget snapshot as a step towards gender impact assessment. They invested \$65.1M in women's safety but the remaining funds were more generic health allocations. See the [snapshot](#) for traffic light indicators of Tasmania's progress.

WA

WA's investment in gender violence response of \$48.6M with larger infrastructure spends in women's health and sport, and in social housing. WA do not have a women's budget statement but their [23/24 Budget is here](#).

% of State/Territory Budget Investment in women & gender equality and violence prevention 22-24



Most jurisdictions maintained consistent and modest budgetary expenditure on WGEVP in 23/24, with only the ACT increasing investments significantly.

With only two years of Gender Budget Watch analysis, it is difficult to assess any trends at this stage, but we intend to maintain our comparative reporting over time with a view to assisting women, gender equality and gendered violence sectors to strengthen their advocacy for greater funding.

Spotlight on Victoria – Tracking women’s policy

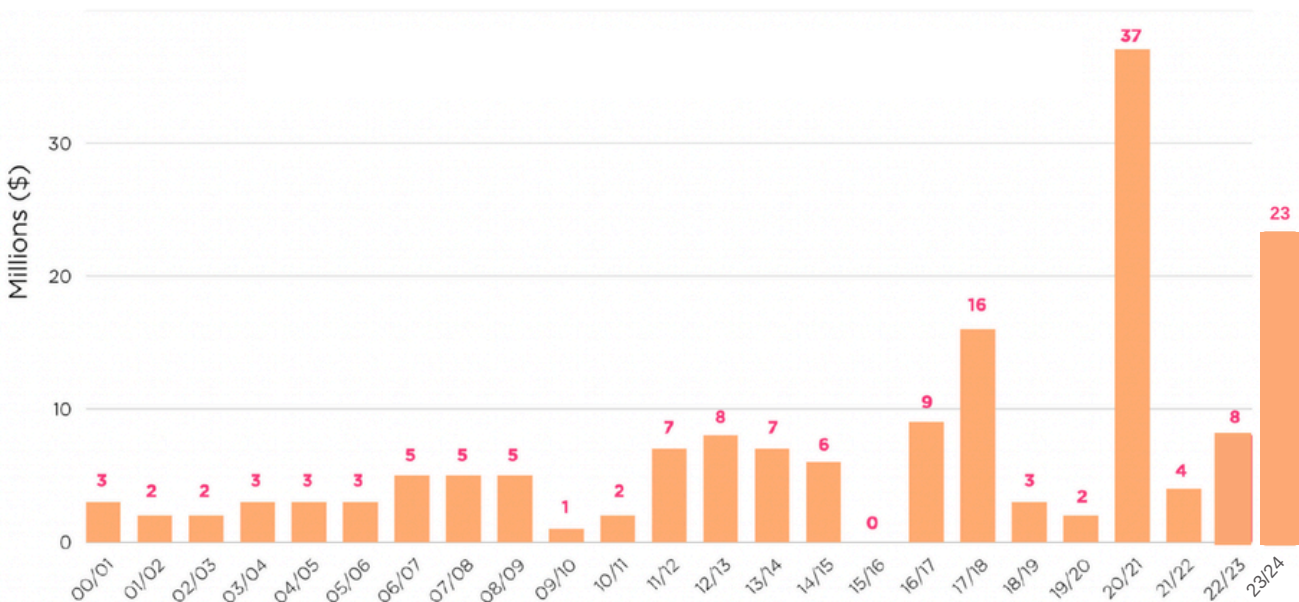
Every year, we place a special spotlight on investment in women’s policy in Victoria, as transparently outlined in *Victorian Budget Paper 3: Service Delivery*, to highlight detailed budgetary and policy decision-making at a sub-national level.

Our comparative data analysis in the Victorian women’s portfolio commenced during time as Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor for Australia’s First Family Violence Prevention & Women’s Minister during 2015–2017, to support advocacy – in and outside government – to boost investment in women and gender equality, particularly post the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the development of Victoria’s first Gender Equality Strategy, *Safe & Strong*.

We continue our monitoring and reporting for the same reasons.

Women’s Policy line item is the only expenditure directly in the Victorian Women’s Ministerial portfolio control. The average spend on women’s policy over 24 years is \$6.8M per year. With rare exceptions, it does not achieve double figures.

Women’s Policy Portfolio Investments in the Victorian Budget 2000 – 2024



Significant increases to women’s portfolio in Victoria are aligned to key policy initiatives and legislative reform. \$16M in 17/18 reflects investment in the first Victorian Gender Equality Strategy, \$37M in 20/21 relates to the establishment of the *Gender Equality Act 2020* and Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, while 23/24 reflects election commitments to provide free pads and tampons in public places.

Conclusions

The 23-24 budget year was marked by strong investment focussed on addressing key areas of the care economy at the Commonwealth level, particularly Aged Care Worker Award Wage Increases. This has lifted the income of women in the sector by an estimated 20%, contributing to further closure of the gender pay gap.

Cost of Living pressures and housing affordability continue to shape fiscal decisions at a National and State/Territory level. We expect to see an ongoing prioritisation of initiatives to address women's homelessness caused by gender-violence and economic insecurity.

Many signature investments in WGEVP are targeted interventions to improve the lives of individual women and their families, while opportunities for funding collective efforts through peak bodies and key WGEVP stakeholders in the private, public and community sector, are rare and modest.

Women's organisations have been concerned for some time about service demand pressure and under funding. Our Gender Budget Watch Report makes clear that government support for services in gender violence prevention, as well as leadership and representation, continues to be constrained, impacting on the sustainability and security of women working in these sectors.

We hope to see stronger investment across the next budget cycle.

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